Baranovich

בּאַראַנאָוויטש

The Trilogy

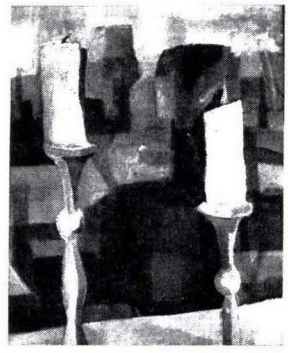
Baranovich

באראנאוויטש

The Trilogy

ספר זכרון באראנאוויטש

The Baranovich Memorial Book



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A Trilogy Comprised of

The Baranovich Yizkor Book, Tel Aviv 1953
Baranovich in Martyrdom & Resistance, Joseph Foxman, Editor, New York 1964
The Struggle to Stay Alive by the Jews of Baranovich, Nechama Zukerman, Publisher, Israel 1992

English Translation Prepared and Published by

Jacob Solomon Berger

Mahwah, New Jersey, USA
2012

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First Edition

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Other Books by Jacob Solomon Berger

The Zelva Memorial Book
The Book of Remembrances
The Dereczin Memorial Book
The Volkovysk Memorial Book: A Trilogy
The Zamość Memorial Book
The Szczebrzeszyn Memorial Book
The Cieszanow Memorial Book
The Tomaszow-Lubelski Memorial Book
The Belica Memorial Book

Published in the United States
by Jacob Solomon Berger
Mahwah, New Jersey

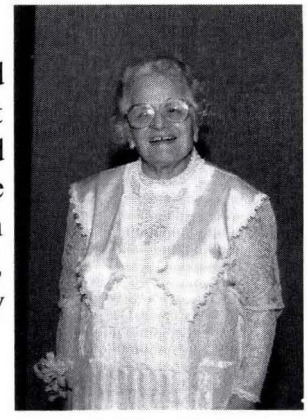
Printed in the United States of America

DEDICATION

These I shall remember... אלה אזכרה...

I remember those who came before me, who had an important impact on my life, my thinking, and sense of family values, and who have, over the past decade, gone to their eternal rest. The images are taken from those happy moments, when we came together at family weddings.

My mother ***Sarah Freed Berger*** (1913 - 2006), who, as a two year-old infant during the first months of the First World War, lost her hearing, but survived a typhus epidemic, in her birthplace of Zelva in Eastern Poland (today Belarus), that killed her six year-old brother Boruch. She would live to come to America as a young girl, though her life would be fraught with personal frustration and lack of fulfilment. She brought me into this world, lived to dance at her granddaughter's wedding, and saw the birth of many great-grandchildren.



Sarah Freed Berger

From Left to Right:



"Aunt Bea," "Uncle George," Moshe

Beatrice Melnick (1920 - 2011), daughter of my Great-uncle Isidore Freed, who was responsible for extracting our family from Eastern Europe in the early 1920s. "Aunt Bea" emerged as a true Family Matriarch, who graced our lives with her kindness and love. At times, in my youth, when I felt alone and unwanted, she was my Guardian Angel, who let me know that I also counted for something. She extended this caring and maternal oversight to my children and grandchildren, who will forever cherish her memory.

Dr. Jacob Melnick (1908 - 2001), "Aunt Bea's" benevolent and gracious helpmeet through life. The span of his medical career is best characterized by the fact that he offered medical care to six generations of our family, beginning with my great-grandmother Genendel, all the way down to my granddaughter Daryn Javer. "Uncle George" as he was called, was an ever-present mainstay in our lives, bestowing on all of us, the attributes by which we have come to remember him: wise, gentle, kind.

Moshe Freidin (1928 - 2010), a scion of the family of the late Yitzhak (Itchkeh) Freidin, that fate decreed would find refuge for himself and his family in the Holy Land. In Moshe, I found the counterpart kindred spirit, who was tireless in his dedication to assure that our families would remain forever entwined, despite the geographic distances that lay between us.

Supporters Honor Roll

The following members of our extended family of landsleit, friends and well-wishers, provided financial contributions to help make the publication of this book possible. Their generosity assures the preservation of this heritage for future generations, by which they have earned a large measure of our collective gratitude.

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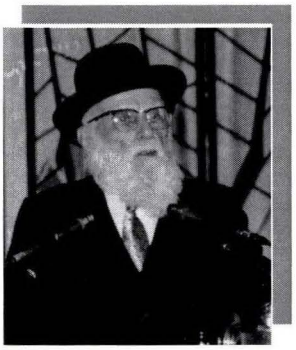
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Foreword to The Trilogy [1]

There is an expression often used in works on Jewish history to describe certain major Jewish population centers: "A city and a mother in Israel" (taken from II Shmuel 20:19). The question is, in what sense can a city be referred to as a "mother"? A popular explanation given is that such large centers nourished the spiritual needs not only of their own inhabitants, but those of the surrounding communities as well. This description aptly describes the Jewish community that thrived in Baranovich before World War II.



By The Renown *Gaon* Rabbi Leib Baron זצ"ל
A Principal Disciple of R' Elchanan Wasserman

I make this statement from first-hand knowledge, having had the privilege of studying for five consecutive years in Baranovich's famed Ohel Torah Yeshiva, under the auspices of the *Rosh Yeshiva*, the saintly Torah luminary, R' Elchanan Wasserman, הי"ד, and the sagacious and pious *Mashgiach*, R' Israel Yaakov Lubczansky הי"ד. I spent three of those five years under the system of '*essen teg*,' whereby yeshiva students were hosted for their meals on a regular basis by the local populace. It was through this contact with the 'ordinary people' that I was able to witness and come to appreciate the unique character of the town's population.

More than two hundred of the yeshiva's three hundred students were sustained through this "*teg*" system. There was almost no Jewish family in Baranovich that did not host at least one yeshiva boy for at least one day a week (on a yearly basis). It was through this extraordinary generosity on the townsfolk's part that the yeshiva was able to function during its peak - the final twenty years. During this time, the institution served thousands of students, many of whom went on to become some of the greatest leaders of Torah Judaism.

The yeshiva, which catered to younger students (*Yeshiva Ketana*), was originally founded by laymen. In particular, there was R' Chai'kl, who was known throughout the community for his extraordinary energy and dedication to public affairs. Together with the saintly Mrs. Kaplan, הי"ד, (her oldest son, R' Henoch, הי"ד, was one of R' Elchanan's foremost disciples and was known as one of the most righteous men in town; R' Mendel זי"ל, her second child, subsequently made his way to America via Shanghai, and became a well-known *Rebbe* at the *Yeshiva Gedola* of Philadelphia, Pa.), he undertook the herculean task of setting up and organizing the yeshiva. Starting from scratch, he built a truly magnificent edifice. Not only was R. Chai'kl the institution's founder, but he subsequently became one of its main administrators, in charge of organizing '*teg*' for all the boys. He was beloved by the entire community; it was said of him that he never once raised his voice to any person, and always spoke in the kindest and gentlest manner. Twice a year, he used to take a group of

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[1] This Foreword is an adaptation of the original, written for the English translation of *The Baranovich Haggadah*, and appears here through the kind permission of the author's son, Rabbi Elchanan Baron of Jerusalem, Israel. We were saddened to learn that this venerable sage, passed away on 5 Tishri 5772 [October 3, 2011] and did not live to see the appearance of this work.

about thirty boys - once after *Sukkot* and again after *Pesach* - and walk with them down the streets of the city. As he passed a Jewish home, he would knock on the door, and every woman who answered the knock and saw Reb Chai'kl with his group of students would greet him warmly. Knowing immediately what he wanted, she would enthusiastically undertake to host one of the boys with '*teg*' for the entire year. In this manner, Reb Chai'kl managed to make arrangements for every student who required this service. I might add that not one of the boys ever complained that his hostess for '*teg*' did not undertake the task with love and generosity.

Many Torah students of the pre-war era began their studies at the Baranovich yeshiva, and subsequently continued their studies at various *Yeshivot Gedolot* (yeshivas for older boys). They adjusted to their new places of study, and eventually were numbered among the leading students in these institutions. In this manner, the *Yeshiva Ketana* of Baranovich indirectly became one of the major spiritual benefactors of the greatest European yeshivas.

Baranovich was different from most other yeshiva towns in Europe. In most other places, the yeshiva had little influence upon the lives of the city's local inhabitants. The yeshiva was usually housed in a large building or complex, and for all intents and purposes, functioned as a self-sufficient, independent community. The fact that there was a large concentration of Torah scholars in that immense, remote 'ivory tower' had little, if any effect upon the town's spiritual life. In Baranovich, however, due to the townsfolk's extensive contact with the students, and their personal acquaintance with the institution's founders and directors, they were profoundly influenced by the intensity of the Torah study that took place there. As a result, the city became a true *Makom Torah* - a 'place of Torah' through and through. It is no exaggeration to say that as a result of the yeshiva and its spiritual leaders, R' Elchanan (who was famed and respected for his piety and scholarship even among the *Hasidic* community) and R' Israel Yaakov (who was known throughout the yeshiva world as both a genius and as one of the most righteous men of the generation), Baranovich as a whole became a Torah community on a level that was unique in the Jewish world.

Among the population of the city there were several distinguished *balebatim* (laymen). Reb Pinia Kaplan, the most eminent among them, was the brother-in-law of the *Afikei Yam* (R. Yekhiel Mikhl Rabinovich), and was also a brother-in-law of Rabbi Zalman Walkin, the brother of Rabbi Aharon Walkin, הי"ד, the famed last rabbi of Pinsk. There were several well-known Torah scholars among the populace as well, such as R' Sholom Dereczin, הי"ד, one of the wealthiest men in town, R' Mendl Goldberg, הי"ד, who was a distinguished student of the *Chafetz Chaim* and served as the president of the large local synagogue known as the 'Orlansky Schul,' and R. Yekhiel [Mikhl] Rabinovich, the most prominent local supporter of the yeshiva. There were also several eminent families in town, such as Vigodsky, הי"ד, and Yosselewicz, a wealthy family that included a well-known son-in-law, R' Yaakov Mavshovich, who had studied in the famous Slobodka yeshiva. This R' Yaakov was the brother of the saintly R' Daniel Mavshovich, הי"ד, the last Dean of the Kelm Yeshiva. He served as the editor of one of the foremost Torah-oriented newspapers of the day, *Dos Vort,* which was published under the guidance of R' Chaim Ozer Grodzhensky, ז"ל. Another outstanding member of the community was R. Shmuel Zakheim, הי"ד, who through his connections with the Pilsudski government, was able to prevent the Polish government's deportation of R' Elchanan who was a Latvian citizen.

It is interesting to note that in Baranovich, the entire Jewish community consisted of *Shomrei Shabbat* (at least in public); it was absolutely unheard of for a Jewish store or business to open on *Shabbat.* R' Elchanan and R. Israel Yaakov themselves, would walk around the market streets every Friday afternoon to remind the store owners that it was time to close their businesses. When the shopkeepers saw these noble figures coming, they would hasten to shut down their businesses before they arrived. [In] that way, the saintly men would be spared the trouble of having to walk the extra few steps down the street to issue their reminder.

I remember that one time a Jew from Vilna moved to Baranovich, and set up a business that he kept open on *Shabbat*. The news reached the yeshiva during the *Shabbat* morning prayers. R. Israel Yaakov was shaken to the core upon hearing the report, and urgently approached R' Elchanan to confer with him. They felt that it was vital for them to act swiftly, and unequivocally protest the blatant sacrilege, for there was a grave danger that others might be quickly influenced to follow suit. Due to the gravity of the situation, they decided to interrupt the services and immediately proceed to the scene of the *Shabbat* desecration.

Accompanied by the entire student body, they set off on their mission. On the way, they passed the *Bet HaMedrash* of the Slonim *Hasidim*, where the services were also interrupted so that the congregants could participate in the protest. R' Mendl Goldberg of the Orlansky Schul was also informed of the events, and he, too, stopped the prayers in order to join the protest with his congregants.

Altogether, over two thousand people gathered shouting, '*M'khalel Shabbat* - Shabbat desecrator! Close down your shop.' But the merchant stubbornly held his own, and, instead of expressing regret, summoned the police. Audaciously, he complained that the crowd was committing the crime of staging a demonstration without a permit. As a result of his impudence, R' Elchanan and R' Israel Yaakov were placed under arrest.(They were soon released, thanks to the efforts and connections of R' Pinia Kaplan.) Before leaving the scene, however, R' Israel Yaakov did have the chance to declare to the sacrilegious store owner, 'You will see! You will close the store in any event.' And so it was - some two weeks later, the man went bankrupt. The news quickly spread around town that R' Israel Yaakov's curse had miraculously been fulfilled. In a sense, though, it was a fore-gone conclusion, for R' Israel Yaakov was so beloved and respected by the townspeople that no one would even think of buying from an establishment that had aroused the saintly man's ire. Thus the store quickly went out of business, at that site, for lack of customers.

Baranovich was home to a large *Hasidic* community as well, and in particular, it served as a prominent center of the Slonim variety of *Hasidism*. There were approximately five hundred families in Baranovich who belonged to this community, which was initially headed by R' Avrem'eleh Weinberg (the grandson of the '*Yesod Ha'Avodah*''), זי"ל, and then by his son and successor, R' Shlom'eleh, הי"ד, who was killed by the Nazis, ימ"ש. The Slonim *Hasidim* formed an integral part of Baranovich's community. There was no sense of tension or divisiveness between the *Hasidic* and non-*Hasidic* congregations. Indeed, the opposite was true; their respective members fully cooperated to serve and strengthen the overall Jewish community of the town, especially when it came to religious matters such as *Shabbat* observance. One of these Slonim *Hasidim*, R' Zaydl the Baker, הי"ד, used to accompany R' Elchanan and R' Israel Yaakov on Friday afternoons to the town's marketplace to remind the store owners to close their shops.

The Slonim *Hasidim* also had a yeshiva in town, in which a good number of students were enrolled. The *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rabbi Hirszowicz, was a member of the famed Bloch family of Telz. One of the members of the Slonim community, R. Moshe Midner, had been a student of R. Chaim Soloveitchik. I myself saw R' Elchanan visit this great *Talmid Khakham* several times, and listened to them engage in lengthy, erudite discussions regarding various Talmudic topics.

Thus, the Slonim *Hasidim* played an important role in shaping Baranovich's character as "a city and mother in Israel." The Slonim connection to Baranovich persists even to current times. The previous *Rebbe* of Slonim, who recently passed away, was a native of Baranovich.

The following story bears witness to the extent to which Baranovich was held in esteem by the Jewish world at the time: While I was studying in [the Yeshiva] *Ohel Torah*, a student of the Mir Yeshiva became engaged to a girl from Baranovich, a member of the Abramowicz family who owned a local meat-packing business. The famous *Mashgiach* of Mir, R' Yerucham Levovitz, made a special trip to Baranovich to participate in the engagement celebration - something that was quite rare for him to do. As he

addressed the guests, he quipped, 'To marry a girl from Baranovich - now that's already half a dowry!' We see from this that even in the eyes of the greatest Torah leaders of Israel, Baranovich was considered an unparalleled and unique community.

I once heard an explanation from a great Torah scholar concerning an anecdote related in the final chapter of *Pirkei Avot*:

> R' Yossi ben Kisma was once approached by a man, who asked him, 'Rabbi what town are you from?' ' I am from a great city, where there are many scholars and teacher's he replied.' ''Rabbi,' the man continued, 'would you like to live in our town, and I will pay you millions of dinars, in addition to precious stones and pearls?' R. Yossi turned down the offer without hesitation, explaining, 'Even if you give me all the money in the world, I will not live anywhere except in a place of Torah...'.

The question has been asked, why did R' Yossi not accept the man's generous offer? With such a fortune at his command, the great sage could have built many new *yeshivot* and *Battei Medrashos*! The answer, however, is quite simple: one cannot build a 'place of Torah' with money alone; he can build only lifeless buildings for Torah! Of all the towns in Europe where Judaism and Jewish life thrived, it was perhaps Baranovich - where the entire community was permeated with the spirit of Torah - that has most suitably earned for itself the titles of distinction: 'place of Torah' and 'a city and mother in Israel.' It was in this environment steeped in Torah, that the Torah luminary R' Elchanan Wasserman, along with the saintly *Mussar* luminary R. Israel Yaakov Lubczansky developed their students at the Baranovich yeshiva.

It is for this reason that I and my son R' Elchanan - named after my *Rebbe,* R' Elchanan Wasserman - have founded the Yeshiva *Ahavat Torah Baranovich* in Jerusalem, in memory of the community of Baranovich, and its famed yeshiva with its saintly leaders. As we are taught in *Baba Kama* 16a, this is the most fitting tribute one can make to a deceased Torah scholar. Although relatively new, the yeshiva has already earned itself an outstanding reputation.

Last year we published a commentary (in Hebrew) on the *Haggadah* entitled, "*The Baranovich Haggadah*" which is based on the teachings of the great masters who disseminated Torah knowledge in the Baranovich yeshiva.

The publication was received with enthusiasm and earned much praise within the Torah community.

This year my son has undertaken to have it translated into English, so that these precious teachings may be made available to those who are not able to read them in their original language. I extend to him my heartfelt blessings, and wish him success in this and in all his endeavors to further the study of the Torah. May he merit to fulfill the maxim of the Sages: 'When one starts to do a mitzvah, he is told: Since you have started it, see it through to its completion.'

Translator's Foreword

In approaching this, my ninth endeavor, I was anticipating doing 'yet another book,' and then moving on. Curiously, and interestingly, the initiative took on a different character, and blossomed in an unexpectedly gratifying way. First and foremost, it evolved, that not only one *Yizkor Book* deserved consideration. Accordingly, this endeavor became the second time, in ten years, for the end product to emerge as a *Trilogy*, encompassing three separate, if overlapping works, that addressed the subject at hand: preserving the memory of the Jewish history of the city of Baranovich, which is in modern-day Belarus.

As a socio-geographic phenomenon, Baranovich is a relative newcomer to the world scene. It was spawned in the middle 1870's as a consequence of the expansion of railway systems in what was then the Czarist Russian Empire. In this respect, it has a great deal in common with such Western American cities like Wichita and Denver. In contrast to the United States, where the 'push' of the railroad was primarily East-to-West, Czarist Russia had the additional imperative to create links that would tie North to South. The intersection of these two undertakings is where Baranovich came into being.

The tragedy of the Holocaust meant that the Jewish community in Baranovich only existed, as such, for about seventy years. However, this belies deep Jewish roots, that succored and nurtured its Jewish community. That community drew its founding human capital from the ancient Jewish settlements of nearby Mys and Ljahaviči, which had been in place for many centuries. In no small measure, this foundation enabled Baranovich to achieve prominence as a 'City and Mother in Israel,' an appellation awarded to those locations, that provided cultural, religious and scholastic leadership to world Jewry.

The exceptional nature of its role in Torah scholarship is best evidenced by the fact, that its survivors, in Israel, have labored assiduously to establish and maintain the *Yeshiva Ahavas Torah* in Jerusalem, as a successor to the renown Baranovich Yeshiva, *Ohel Torah*, headed by the eminent Scholar and Teacher, Rabbi *Gaon* R' Elchanan Wasserman, הי"ד.

In its fleeting existence, the Baranovich Jewish community went through the full gamut of joys and sorrows experienced by all of its sister Jewish communities. It was subject those same winds of change ,that buffeted both the Jewish and secular world, as Western Civilization began the painstaking, and often tortuous emergence, from medieval into modern times. It bore the brunt of all the waves of anti-Semitic predation, visited on the Jews of Eastern Europe, from the outbreak of Czarist pogroms in the 1880's through the terrors of the Holocaust itself.

Yet, in this bubbling stew, of multi-hued perspectives and persuasions, a tranquil *modus vivendi* existed between the likes of *Hasidim* and *Mitnagdim*, where antagonism and tension was more the norm, that existed on the fault line between the ascetic scholarship of the Lithuanian north, and the more mystically-oriented Galician south.

While, again, it is true that the tragic outcome of the recounting of this city's history is known in advance, the record is enriched by the endeavor of these writers, to tell this tale from their own unique perspective.

I have often maintained, that the 'Jewish World' is a small one, and the 'degrees of separation' between people of our ethnic origin is much less than the span of our current operating cognizance. This project has highlighted one such 'relationship,' and surfaced three others. Closest in these instances, is my connection to Abraham H. Foxman, the Executive Director of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). In fact, the second book of this *Trilogy,* is edited and published by Abe's late father, Joseph Foxman ע"ה. I am comfortable in

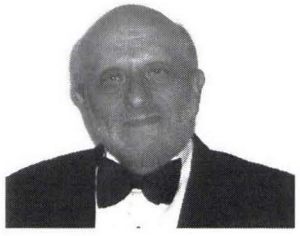
using a familiar address in referring to him, because, many years ago, Abe and I attended high school together, with him graduating the year after I did. To compound this connection, my good friend and high school classmate Samuel (Shmuel) Blumert, today, living in Jerusalem, is one of the people who keeps me 'honest' in matters of Hebrew language, when I need the occasional help. He too, is a schoolmate of Abe's. Abe's forbears before Baranovich, came from the nearby, and more ancient, Jewish community of Mys.

It was interesting to discover that the last Attorney General in the administration of President George W. Bush, is also a scion of Baranovich. AG Michael B. Mukasey, has forbears who came to Baranovich from Ljahaviči.

In my participation in the International Association of Yiddish Clubs (IAYC), I chanced to meet Vivian Felsen of Toronto, who is a scion of Baranovich. And finally, in circulating information about the Baranovich émigrés to South Africa, I was elated to discover that my daughter-in-law Dana Spanger's (Berger) aunt, in Toronto, Mrs. Aura Greenberg, was born a Bilczyk (Bilchik), from Baranovich.

Fostering such connectivity is an important extra dividend that comes from this work, and engenders no small amount of satisfaction among those affected.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the very fine support that I receive from certain key people, who help me to assure the highest level of integrity and accuracy in my translation work. I am indebted to Tomasz Panczyk, in Poland, and Leon Szyfer of Vancouver Canada, for their assistance in assuring that my rendition of Polish names and places, transliterated from Yiddish into English, were done correctly. Leon also deserves an extra vote of thanks for clarifying Russian usage, and for rendering such Russian, in Cyrillic script, on my behalf. As already noted, a special vote of thanks goes to my classmate, Sam (Shmuel) Blumert for his insight into some esoteric Hebrew. A special vote of thanks goes to Rabbi Eli Baron, in Israel, for his moral support, and making the time and talent of his assistant, Yoram Raz, available to scan in all the images from the original Yizkor Book. This makes it the first time the text in one of my works has been enriched by pictures. Last, but by no means least, my thanks also go to Yeshaya Metal, the reference desk librarian at YIVO in New York City, who, as usual, was ever ready with a suitable insight regarding the occasional esoteric word that would surface from time to time, and whose absolute command of the formidable resources there, assures that no question goes unanswered.



WINTER 2012

Jacob Solomon Berger

Maps of Interest

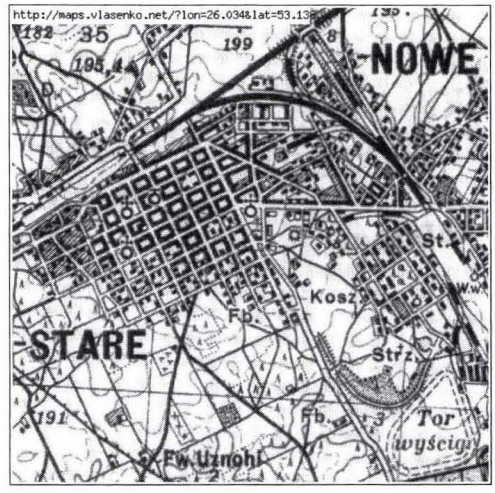
(In Overview, and In Detail)

1.Geographic Map



Location in Belarus
Coordinates: 53°08'N 26°01 'E

2. City Map



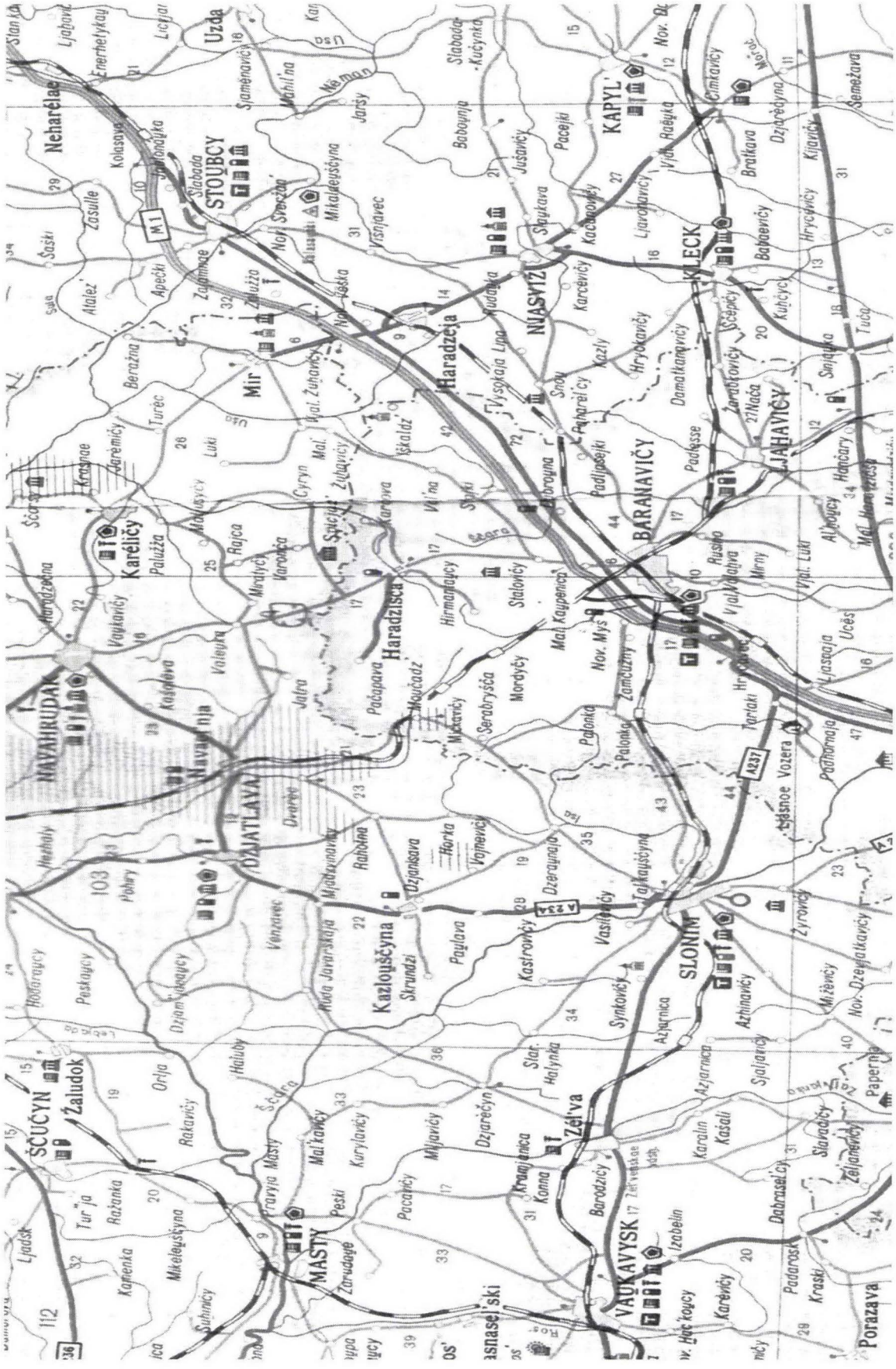
3. Ghetto Memorial



The Holocaust memorial in Baranovich, Belarus commemorates the Jewish ghetto that existed in the town from 1941 until 1942 when it was emptied and the Jews killed.

The text reads "During 1941——1942 there was a Jewish ghetto in the town; 12 thousands citizens became victims of it."

Geographic Map



Map of the City of Baranovich By The Engineer, Mattityahu Zuckerman, from Memory, 1953

תוכנית העיר ברנוביץ, ע"י מהנדס מתתיהו צוקרמן, לפי זיכרון, 1953

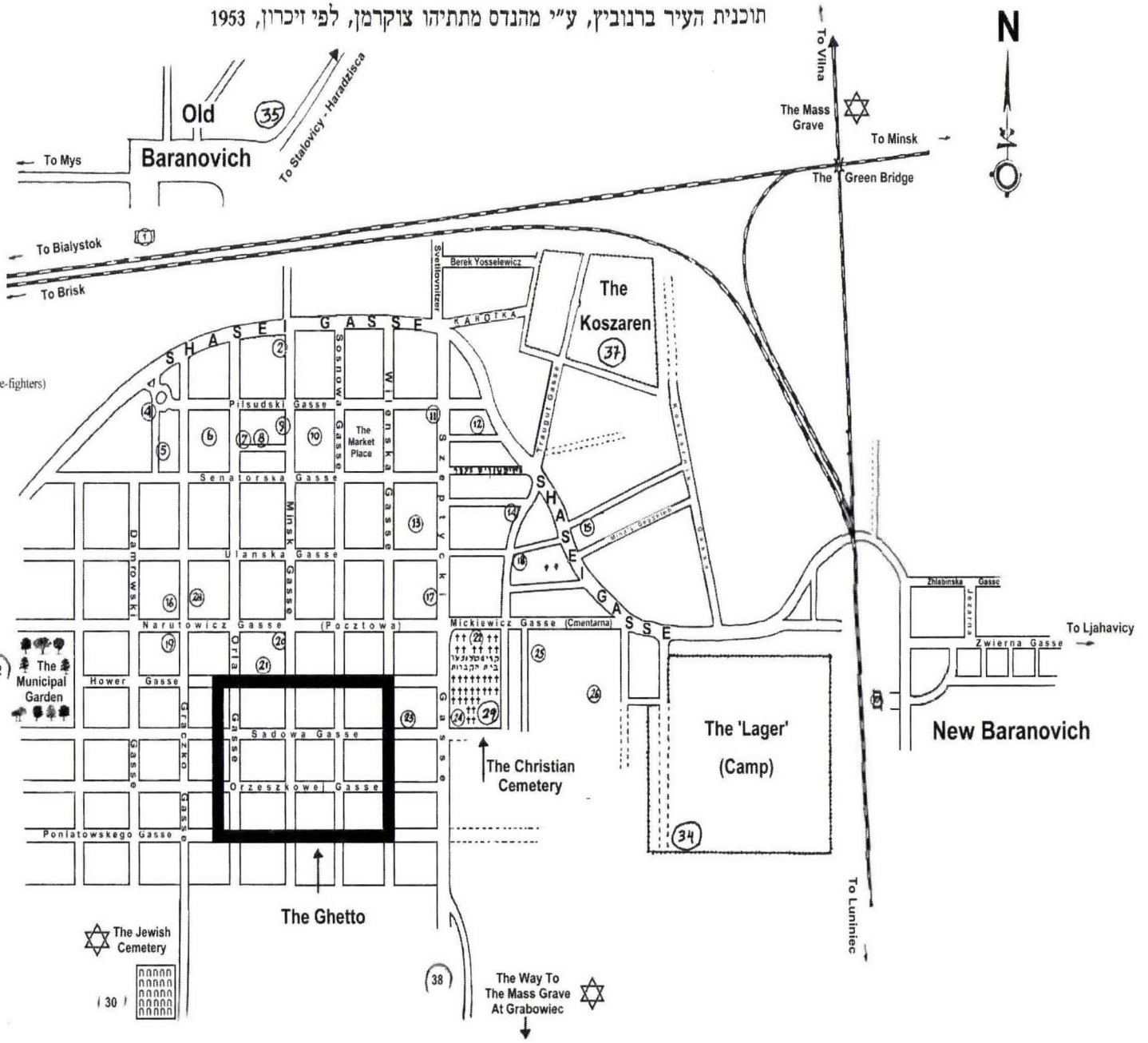
Map Legend

1. The Old Train Station
2. The Slonim *Shtibl*
3. The Zionist Synagogue
4. The Old *Bet HaMedrash*
5. Yeshiva *Torat Hesed* (Hasidic)
6. A Russian Orthodox Church (Церква)
7. The Bath House
8. The Talmud Torah
9. The Great *Bet Hamedrash*
10. The Craftsmen's *Bet Hamedrash*
11. The Community Building
12. The Kaidanov *Shtibl*
13. The New *Bet HaMedrash*
14. The *Bet Hamedrash on* Pozharna *Gasse* (Fire-fighters)
15. The Maccabi Sports Field
16. The Roman Catholic Cloister
17. The Municipal Building
18. The Fire-fighters' Building
19. The Seat of the *Starosta*
20. The *Bet Hamedrash* on Pocztowa *Gasse*
21. The Yeshiva *Ohel Torah* (Elchanan's)
22. A Russian Orthodox Church (Церква)
23. *Bet HaMedrash* on Sadowa *Gasse*
24. Bank Polski
25. The Post Office
26. The Municipal Court
27. The Polesia Train Station
28. The Orphanage
29. The Christian Cemetery
30. The Jewish Cemetery

32. The Municipal Garden

33. The 'Lager' (Camp)
34. Old Baranovich

38. The Way to the Mass Grave at Grabowiec
39. The Army Barracks



City Map

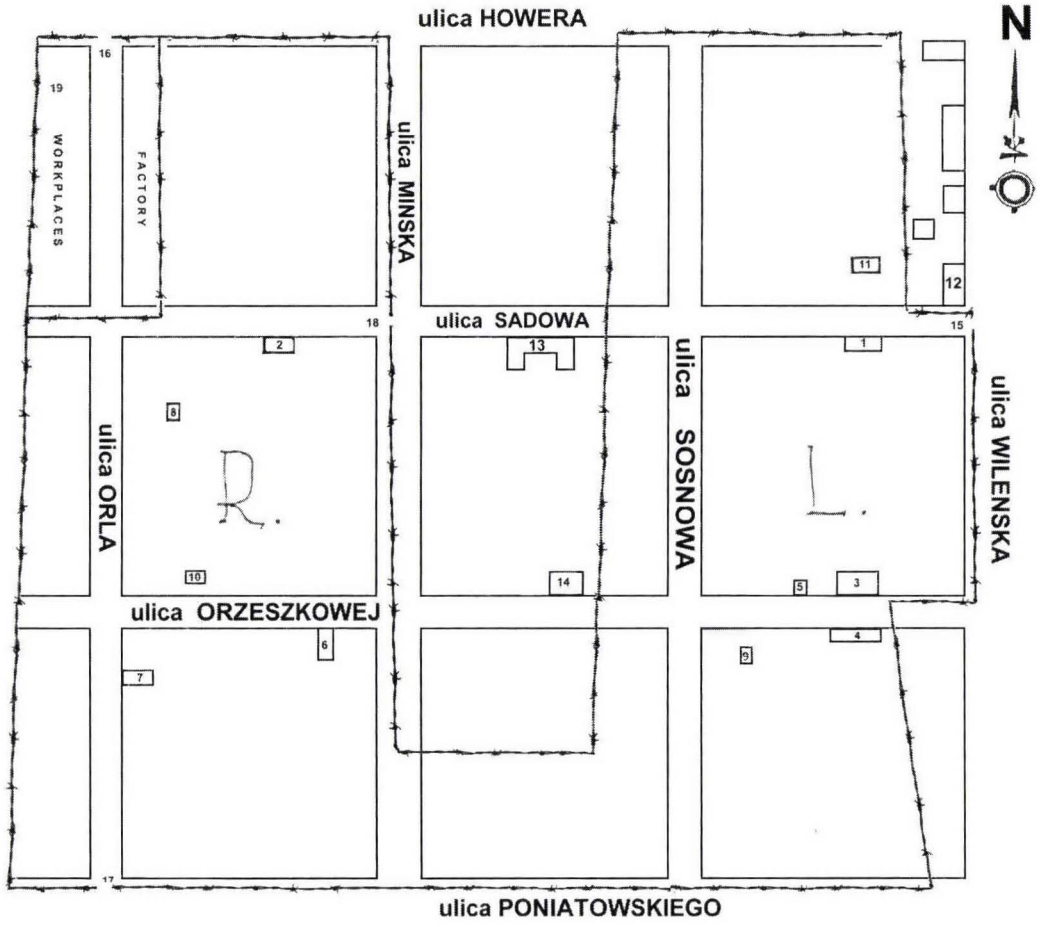
The Baranovich Ghetto Map

תוכנית גיטו ברנוביץ', לפי צילום ועדה מרכזית היסטורית במינכן

17.12.1942 - 12.12.1941

Ghetto Map Legend

1. *Judenrat* I and II
2. *Judenrat* III
3. The General Hospital
4. The Hospital for Infectious Diseases
5. The Mental Hospital
6. Old Age Home & Orphanage
7. Public Kitchen
8. Public Lodging (*Bund* HQ)
9. Ghetto Laundry
10. Fire Fighters
11. The Ghetto Police
12. The Ghetto German Guard
13. The Municipal Bath House
14. The Bakery
15. Principal Ghetto Gate at *ulica* Sadowa
16. Side Gate on *ulica* Orla
17. Gate to the (Jewish) Cemetery
18. The Last Exit Gate from the Ghetto
19. Workplace Factories



Ghetto Map

Copy Taken from The Central Historical Committee
Munich, Germany

Baranovich
בּאַראַנאָוויטש
The Trilogy



Part I

The Baranovich Memorial Book
ספר זכרון בּאַראַנאָוויטש

A Publication by the Organization of the Émigrés of Baranovich in Israel

5714 **Tel-Aviv** **1953**

The Major Sections

Chapters of the History of Baranovich



Scholastic and *Hasidic* Baranovich



Political Parties



Memories & Folklore



Personalities



THE HOLOCAUST



Scions of Baranovich All Over the World

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Baranovich

בּאראנאוויטש

At the Time of the Appearance of The Book

It is with a sacred trembling, that we approached the task of publishing the *Yizkor Book* of Baranovich Jewry, which was gruesomely exterminated in the years 5701-57-03 (1941-1943).

Years have flown by since then, but the voice of that spilled blood called out from the mass graves, and demanded of us to set up a shrine to the memory of our martyrs.

We struggled with a variety of difficulties. Baranovich, as a young city, was not blessed with historical monograph documents, and the little that did exist, was lost. We made all the efforts possible to gather that material that was left to us in the end. We also made the effort to contact people, who in the past, were active in the Jewish community life of Baranovich, to tell us of their memories. This is how The Book was created, which is a collective effort on the part of tens of participants, and into its chapters are woven the soul of precisely this deeply-rooted folksy Jewish people, of rare precious personality; its committed and dedicated readiness to do good, and unique virtues, its love of humanity and its people, that directed their actions, into the passion, honesty and truthfulness which was its hallmark, and also of its joy, and suffering in calamity and destruction – and all of this, without ignoring both the negatives and weaknesses.

From the many photographs, the shining countenances of fathers and sons look down upon us, grandfathers and grandchildren, in forced labor during the initial German occupation and in the factories of liberated Poland; in the variegated synagogue life, and community social life, fire fighters and institutions of support – and up to the extermination; entire generations, deeply rooted in the life of the people, and its tradition, who, in their hearts carried – each in his own unique way – the dream of his or her liberation, and before all else – the dream of Zion.

We especially took care that The Book should encompass and reflect all of Baranovich Jewry, in all walks of life, its their pursuits and nuances; from the establishment of the congregation to its denouement, from Torah and *Hasidism* to the '*Bund.*' Also, where possible, we sought to assure that each document would be internally consistent and authentic..

Despite our considerable efforts, we unfortunately, were unable to obtain materials about a variety of people and institutions, organizations and societies, who occupied a meaningful place in the life of Baranovich Jewry. May the achievement of those properly documented serve as a compensation for those whom we could not document.

It was also not easy to identify all the people in the photographs, especially in group photos. It is therefore possible, despite all of our efforts, that errors were committed in identifying the acts of heroism and self-defense, the suffering and heroism of the partisans from Baranovich, who exacted vengeance from the enemy, of whom many saved themselves, and were privileged to make *aliyah* to the Land of Israel. They shared in the fate of a Jewish underground fighters. dispersed and spread out among all manner of camps – and we were not given to reach them all, and record their memories and experiences and to gather this material about their struggle and battles.

A problem that we faced was the question of language. Our *landsleit* around the world demanded that The Book be prepared in Yiddish, while by contrast, the Baranovich émigrés in Israel took the position that the Book should be in Hebrew, as a legacy for coming generations [to read]. We were, therefore, compelled to produce this book in both languages, in the language of the writer and teller. Because of financial constraints, we were unable to produce two separate books.

We express recognition to other scions of the city in Israel and the Diaspora, thanks to whose help and effort, we were able to produce this book would , especially Dr. N. Kroshinsky, and the Editor, A. S. Stein.

The Organization of the Émigrés of Baranovich in Israel

Chapters of the History of Baranovich

פרקים צו דער געשיכטע פון באראנאוויטש

פרקים לתולדות ברנוביץ

Introduction

By Dr. Nehemiah Kroshinsky

...Yet let a blessing escort my past,
The sovereignty of the land where my people dwelt,
The field, and golden forest, the one with pines,
That surrounded those pious residents.
The root is no longer, the ash will disperse,
Only the heavy pall remains of that root,
What does one do with those generations of prayer and faith?
Forget them, erase them? And leave simply nothing.

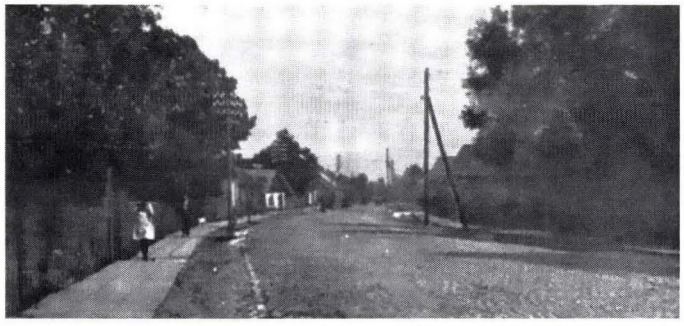
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Were I to forget the way to my yesterday
They I would have to forget the way to my life.
Because without our yesterday, even a bad one,
One's heart is torn out and there remains a void.

Z. Segalovich

When one wishes to portray the history of this, or the other settlement, the first thing pushed out into the foreground, ahead of all else, is the total antiquity of which that city consists.

Baranovich had no foundation of a legacy, as did a whole array of old Jewish communities in Poland: it had no ancient cemetery; there were no traces here of ancient synagogues; the traces of medieval noble fortresses and palaces were missing...



Page 11, 12: A Portion of the Main Thoroughfare which runs from Szeptycka in the direction towards New-Baranovich

On the contrary, Baranovich was young and new, sprouting and growing with vigor and young life. The word 'old' had an alien echo here – a foreign thing, that was dragged in from the surrounding villages that had a past of hundreds of years...

Baranovich was new city that had come on the scene, on whose place, not long ago, there stood a thick forest. A city, that had just recently begun to create its tradition, its pedigree, its history – and the Jews filled a continuing role in its growth and development.

In the course of several decades, Baranovich became a modern city. Thanks to its geographical situation, and the wide connective network of its trains, it became a first ranking military-strategic point, as well as a highly important communications and commercial center: it was the unofficial capitol city of the entire region.

True, it cannot be said that Baranovich was a large city. It's population – at its peak – reached 28,000 people, of which approximately something less than half were Jewish.

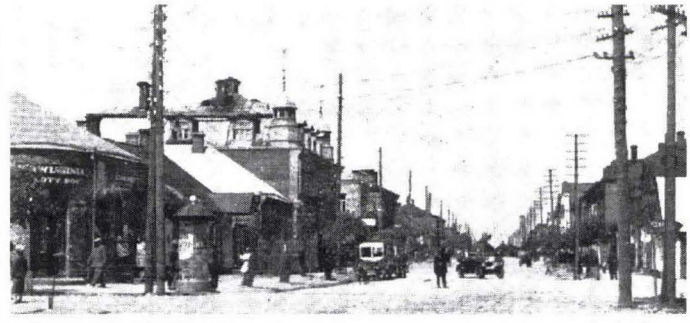
Local authenticity, mixed with big city virtues, caused it to stand out sharply from an array of other cities and towns. Baranovich seethed more, it was more alive, and more transparent: everyone can see the city, and the

city can see everyone in it. It was as if it stood 'outside' – free and open, for each guest, and for anyone who sought a refuge there. It grew in stormy times, and because of this, it obtained the sobriquet of the 'Place of Polish Chicanery' on the *Kressen*[1]. Others called it the 'Polish Minsk,' equating it to the Minsk of yore, because of the sense that it, Baranovich, had a center for communications and commerce. It was also likened to a 'Little Warsaw' because of its populace, which had come to live here from a variety of places.

It was very homey here. Each and every person felt good about being here. The following anecdote is well-known: One time, an itinerant beggar, that wandered from city to city, was asked, where he was from? 'What do you mean, from where .... I am a native! – he replied – 'understand that upon arrival in Baranovich, one immediately becomes a native!'

The city itself was drawn out and spread all over, 'it was hard to identify the center, – the entire city seemed to lie a bit outside of itself.'

It consisted of three sections: Old-Baranovich, New-Baranovich, and of the city itself. The long stretched out main road, or as '*Sholom Aleichem*' named it, the '*Szaszeh*[2] *Gasse*' connected them all together.



Page 11, 12:The Principal Street Szeptycka (Marinska). On the left, the two-story building was the Magistrate Building.

The city plan was wondrous, and the topography as well: practical, long, wide parallel streets, of standard length and symmetrically cut out to match one another. There was not a trace of a rising hill, or a falling depression. The entire city was like a network of rectangular boxes – analogous to a chessboard. And all about it – forests...

In 1914-15, Baranovich was, for a specific time, the headquarters of the Russian General Staff, as well as the temporary residence of Nicholas II – the Emperor of all Russias and the King of Poland. During the first German occupation, 1915-1918, it became famous as an important military base, with the headquarters of the Division staff. For a number of years, the '*Baranovicher Kriegs-Zeitung*' appeared in German. Baranovich developed quickly under Polish rule. Jewish live pulsated here intensively and in a lively manner. The Jewish population here consisted of a large number of storekeepers, manual laborers, merchants, fur transporters, and jobbers. A merchant-small business- manual trade union functioned here, as well as a variety of professional unions. All of the commercial business and manual trades were in Jewish hands. The level of industrialization was not meaningful, Apart from a single large factory, and several smaller industrial concerns, there were practically no large factories. Most of the local Jewish occupations centered about a variety of locations where craftsmen plied their trade, and people employed in commerce. In the 'free' professions, what caught the eye was the proportionally large number of doctors. The largest number of Christians made up the government

---

1 The large area of Eastern Poland, the so-called '*Kressen*,' geographically belonged to Polesia. The southern part of this area lay within the bounds of the well-known Polesia swamps. However, further to the north, an area spread out that was covered with large, thickly wooded forests, a sandy land and dry, and a climate not so damp and potentially unhealthy.

2 Perhaps an elision of the Yiddish name *Shasei*, taken from the Polish, *Szosa,* meaning a highway.

employees and military personnel.

The relationship between the Jews and Christians looked one way under Russian rule, and differently during the Polish regime. In general they were not bad. The employees would willingly patronize Jewish businesses, and Jewish craftsmen. In the final years, before the Second World War, since the time that the intense economic boycotts had ensued, the relationships substantively deteriorated. The attitude, ands the relationship of the local Christians to Jews, during the time of Nazi rule, is a chapter unto itself.



Page 13, 14: Narutowicz Gasse (Pocztowa) *To the right is the one-story building of the 'Apollo' Theater. the street went to the 'Starostwo,' the municipal park, radio station, and ended at the flat highway.*

Baranovich had a large Jewish community. It encompasses the municipalities of: Mys, Moucadz', Palonka and Haradzišča.

Cultural life, especially, developed richly. Speeches would be give, literary exchanges and discussions, especially with the participation of local lecturers. There were six Jewish weekly newspapers published in the period between the two world wars.

The life of partisan politics was variegated, under the banner of the bitter struggle between the Zionists and the '*Bund.*' The tortuous struggle between the worker parties and the revisionists was expressed here very sharply.



Page 13, 14: Mickiewicz Gasse (Kladbishchenska) *This street led to the camp and to New Baranovich*

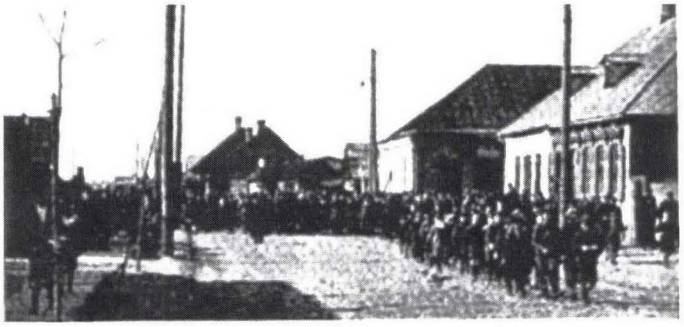
Baranovich was a center of Torah [study] and a bulwark of *Hasidism.* Two larger yeshivas existed here. There was the Yeshiva *Ohel Torah*, at whose head stood the *Gaon* R' Elchanan Wasserman זצ"ל, concentrating about it the Headmasters of the yeshivas who were the authorities in Torah and *Musar*, and students streamed to it from the larger outside world. The great *Hasidic* Yeshiva *Torat Hesed*, the only one in all of Polish Lithuania, integrated both scholarship and *Hasidism* in its learning curriculum. The spiritual leader of the yeshiva was the *Gaon, Tzaddik* and Kabbalist, R' Moshe Midner זצ"ל. Both yeshivas developed a strong influence on the spiritual-religious character of the Jewish community in the city.

Baranovich was also the seat of the Kaidanov court. In it, the last of the Kaidanov *Rebbes* lived and spread their influence, these being Rabbi Nehemiah and Rabbi Alter זצ"ל. Here also, could be found the largest '*shtibl*,' around which the *Rebbes* of Slonim, R' Abraham and R' Shlomo זצ"ל concentrated themselves, in their last years.



Page 15, 16: A Corner of the Market

Page 15, 16: Rog Shosowa-Minska[3]



Page 15, 16: Rog Shosowa-Minska
The Funeral Procession of R' Mordechai Chaim Lifschitz נ"ע *(In Iyyar 5695)*

If Baranovich still exists geographically, as a part of Soviet Russia, and continues its history – then the Jewish part, which was so dynamic, so creative and multi-colored, that Baranovich – is dead. Its history came to a halt at the enormous mass graves of our martyrs, with the extermination of over 12,000 Jews. Our community of Baranovich no longer exists, and will never again be restored.

And if we cannot resurrect the dead – let us at the very least erect an eternal shrine to their memory, in this *Yizkor* Book, which will always remind us of our 'Old Home' and everything that was connected to it.

Let this Book be a memento for the children of this generation and for the children of children, in coming generations. Let them know where and how their fathers and grandfathers lived, and – how, and at whose hand they were murdered.

We learned a great deal from them, and we still have a lot more to learn from them. their spirit lives in us, and with us, in Israel and in the world at large.

Under Russian Czarist Rule

"Baranovich stands outside"
– *Sholom Aleichem*

How Old is Baranovich?

To this question, how old is Baranovich? – it is difficult to give a clear and precise reply.

The foundation structure of Baranovich was laid exclusively by Jews, simple Jews, who were capable of appreciating the significance of the arrival of the railroads for the development of the city.

You can understand, that in the musty archives of Russia and Poland, the specific details have gotten misplaced, that bear on this matter; regrettably, these archives are, today, not accessible. Folios and specifications, – even if they did at one time exist, were destroyed during the period of the last war. The one source available to us, are the memories of older residents, and entirely separately, the Hebrew and Yiddish periodicals: *HaMelitz*, *HaTzefira*, etc.

Elyakim Kushnir, and elderly resident of Baranovich (passed away 11 Tishri 5711 [September 22,1950], t the age of eighty years), averred that Baranovich was established in the year 1878. In contrast, Israel Kapilovich (who died in Israel on *Rosh Hodesh* Tevet 5709 [January 2, 1949] at the age of seventy-two)

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[3] This appears to be the corner intersection of the Shasei *Gasse* with the Minsk *Gasse*

knew enough to tell that in the years 1868-9, Yitzhak Berezovsky was already living in the Baranovich forest, and was providing railroad ties for the Moscow-Brisk rail line, which was then in the process of being built. His son, Moshe Abraham, had already been born in Baranovich in 1872.

In the *HaMelitz* of 1897 (Number 171) Joseph Gavrielov writes about the first citizen of Baranovich among other things:

> "... this city has been standing on its location for only twelve years, and was built only at the time that the railroad to Rovno was built..."

That means that Baranovich was established in 1885.

In the *HaMelitz* of 1899 (Number 139) Yeshayahu Berkman writes:

> "...this city is narrow in width but long in length. Fifteen years ago, in its place, stood only two hotels for guests, but within earshot of the shrill fife of the railroad locomotive whistle, many of the families of our Jewish brethren gathered, to live between the two stations on its two sides, and this desolate place was transformed into a residential city..."

According to his calculation, the origin of Baranovich is to be brought back to the year 1884.

In the *HaMelitz* of 1900 (Number 222) 'Yehudi' writes, *inter alia*:

> "Twenty years ago, the city of Baranovich was a small village, with not many balebatim, the majority of whom were Jews, and the village had been founded together with the station of the railroad from Moscow to Brisk...."

This means that in 1880, Baranovich was a small village.

In the *HaTzefira* of 1901 (Number 253) B. Rabinovich writes:

> "..it is now about twenty-five years since the founding of our city..."

According to his calculation, Baranovich was founded in the year 1886. It is possible that all of these estimates and assessments are really consistent with the reality; it may only be a matter of subjective estimates, the construction of a railroad line, the erection of a train station, the construction of a single house, or several houses, in the middle of the forest, any of which could have been taken for the formal beginning of a city.

In the '*Baranovicher Vokh*' of 17 March 1933, we read a notice under the heading: 'Fifty Years of Baranovich:'

> "In the year 1933, it will be fifty years since the establishment of Baranovich as a settlement. As we are advised, the Magistrate is readying to celebrate this Jubilee of our city. This undertaking on the part of the Magistrate is certainly praiseworthy. It would be of no small significance to publish a special book, in which to collect and reflect the entire history and development of the city of Baranovich, for the past fifty years."

The '*Baranovicher Vokh*' one of the six Jewish newspapers, that were published in Baranovich – is

undoubtedly justified in being the most credible source; and this means that Baranovich was established as a settlement in the year 1883.

The Nearby Vicinity

A. Stalovičy

The establishment and development of Baranovich is very intimately connected with the names of a whole array of small Jewish villages and settlements. A few of them, such as Stalovičy, and especially Mys, were close by, and played a great role in its establishment.

The old, small *shtetl* of Stalovičy lay seven miles from Baranovich. Its populace consisted of the native Christians (*Mieszczany*) and several hundred Jewish families.

At first glance, what struck the eye was the large marketplace, with its tall white church, and near it – the whiskey monopoly, and all about – a large number of stores, the workplaces of craftsmen, and several inns. The *shtetl* had the reputation of being one of the most important entrepôts in the area. Four streets intersected here, going in four directions: the Slonim *Gasse* which led to the tract towards Palonka, Slonim and beyond; the fortifications of the Zawiener *Gasse*, served as the start of the large tract in the direction of Snoy, Njasviz, and Sluck; Downhill, the Haradzišča *Gasse* stretched out in the direction of Haradzišča and Novogrudok; the Kaupenica *Gasse* laid along the way from Baranovich to Mys.

At that time, when the sole means of transport was the Jewish wagon-driver and his horse and wagon, these tracts has great significance. It was not for nothing that Stalovičy was renown for its large market fairs, even in the most distant places of Russia and Poland. Who among the elderly of Stalovičy does not recall those times when the fairs took place? The entire town went into motion as if it were on wheels. Preparations for the fairs was like preparing for a festival holiday. There was the evening before the fair, and also the day after the fair. They would stretch over several days, and even for an entire week. Time was not marked by the names of calendar months in those times, but rather by the fairs and festival holidays.

During the summer, one would lie in the gardens and orchards, and in the winter, geese were fed, and then taken into the city.

The Great *Bet HaMedrash* stood on the Slonim *Gasse* , and on the *Schulhof* – the 'Cold' Synagogue. Not far from it, stood the old cemetery, with its tall trees, and half fallen stone wall. In the distance [standing] on the inn, the vanes of two wooden windmills peered out. Immediately behind the houses – and you are standing at the edge of a small, tranquil brook, with clear, pure water, and the long shadows of high trees.

The Jews live their own genuine lives, and wove a Jewish tradition that extended back for generations. The whole of the little *shtetl* was like one large family.

B. Mys

Who from Baranovich did not know that *shtetl* with a pedigree, Mys? It was as if it stood at Baranovich's cradle. It was from Mys that the fledgling settlement suckled its first nourishment.

The small *shtetl* of Mys is old, despite its name of Novy-Mys (a courtyard a mile from the *shtetl* is called

Old-Mys). In the *Pinkas* of the *Va'ad Arba Aratzot,*[4] the 'New-Mys' is mentioned frequently, having been in existence for 500 years. Mys, however, is much older than the *Pinkas*.

The little *shtetl*, small as it was, produced great men. The first of the orations of the *Maggid* of Kelm[5] were given in Mys. The legendary *Gaon* and *Tzaddik* Rabbi Yekhiel of Mys, was renown; and who had not heard of the '*Myser Rebbe* ,' Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Chafetz, who was a renown Kabbalist? Who among those from Mys does not recall the son of the *Myser Rebbe,* Rabbi Israel Yehonatan Yerusalimsky? Recognized as a genius while still young, and later in life a great *Gaon* and Scholar; he was a Rabbi in prominent places, died young, but left an immortal name as a great scholar in Hebrew (see the supplement '*HaKerem*' by Atlas), and the Hazzan, R' Nathan Neta, a Scholar and polyglot, and a great friend to people, a friend to R' David Gordon of '*HaMaggid.*' Also, an array of other prominent Jewish personalities.

In Mys, there was an old *Pinkas* going back hundreds of years. In the last years, it was maintained by the young folklorist Shlomo Foxman. Tragically, both the young writer together with his work, were destroyed in the Holocaust.

Mys lay about four miles to the west of Old-Baranovich. It was a small shtetl of a couple of streets, a few side streets, hills and dales, a long shallow ditch with two bridges, a tranquil small river, several synagogues, and old *Bet HaMedrash*, and an old cemetery. According to the census of 1897, Mys had 2995 residents, of which 1764 were Jews.
For a period of time before Baranovich emerged from the forest, Mys was one of the most blessed of towns, where the Jewish storekeeper and the Jewish craftsman had an abundance of work; grain and forest product merchants carried on extensive trade, Also, the women here were yoked to the task of making a living; they would stand in the small stores, helping their husbands, or would run the stores on their own. However, since the time that the new city was built nearby, this came to an end. Bad times descended. A large part of the Jewish population moved to Baranovich, and, a little at a time, set down roots here. However, one must not forget, that the fledgling town of Baranovich, at that time in its first decade of existence, was much smaller than Mys. It is true that the train stations offered great promise for a good future, and people flowed here not only from the surrounding towns, and villages, but also from more distant places – but the living conditions here were not particularly easy. Because of this, many were compelled to move across the sea. Indeed, in the 1890's, a major emigration took place from Mys to [South] Africa and America. In '*HaMelitz*' of 1895 (Number 83) M. Alka writes, among other things:

> "...the movement to emigrate to America has, once again awoken in our city. Many families traveled to America this past winter, and many families are planning to take to that way, subject to selling their homes. And even those who came to our city from new places, are now returning to the places from whence they originally came."

In '*HaMelitz*' of 1895 (Number 135) we read correspondence from Mys, written by the same individual:

> "...In the past week, a Society of '*Gemilut Hesed*' was established in our city, to provide

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4 The Committee of the Four Lands. A Jewish governing body of this area of the Pale of Settlement.

5 Rabbi Leib *Hasid* (1828 - 1899), a Lithuanian preacher. He studied under Israel Salanter at Kovno, and later became the envoy and preacher of the *Mussar* movement. He traveled throughout the Pale of Settlement and also lived in London.

support in the form of interest-free loans, to people whose businesses have deteriorated, and the exigencies of the time were the contributing factor to this failure. The loan is always in the amount of between five and ten rubles. At the head of those leading this effort was the *Gaon*, Mr. Hendel Fein (in memory of his only daughter Ms. Baylah ע"ה who was taken from us in the bloom of youth on 8 Sivan of this year). Because, upon seeing the condition of our impoverished brethren, that it was indeed bad, he saw the need to provide support, so they would not permanently be ruined. He girded himself to be concerned for them, and everyone in need was given the opportunity to borrow between five and ten rubles, with security, and to find some way to make a living..."

In '*HaTzefira*' of 1896 (Number 86) we read the following notice:

" Mr. Y. Malashitsky writes anew that the unsatisfactory plight of his townsfolk continues to deteriorate day by day. Poverty is intensifying, and because of this the emigration movement grows stronger, and the number of departures from the city grows from day to day."

The longer it went on, the worse the condition of the Jews of Mys became. Baranovich grew day by day, and Mys declined day by day, whether in economic activity, or spiritually. In '*HaTzefira*' of 1900 (Number 99) we read a lengthy report of M. Alka, under the heading '*Mys and Baranovich – One opposite the Other*' and this is what is written there about Mys:

"The little city of New-Mys, comprised of about eight hundred heads of household, of our fellow Jews – five hundred, and among them: grain merchants, storekeepers and craftsmen. All the stores are in the hands of our brethren. Also, the women do not sit idle, whether helping their husbands run the stores, or running the stores on their own. About ten years ago, this city was one of the most fortunate. All the prominent grain merchants, and merchants of forest products, did their business beside it, and the residents of the city derived blessings from their efforts.

Now, from the day that the city of Baranovich was built, at a distance of not more than five versts, this city has remained like a distressed guardhouse. Craftsmen are without work, and life is without spirit – for lack of work, people loiter about all day outside on the city streets, and their plight is aggravated by idle talk. Before, many of the luckless would leave for the 'golden countries' of Africa and America, however, even a change of venue did not bring any blessing to those who undertook it, because the emigrants there support themselves only under great duress and want, and it is only at rare intervals that they can send back a little bit of money to their wives and children whom they left behind in distress, and a number were compelled to return home, crestfallen.

To my perplexity, I am not able to relate much regarding the acts and institutions of charity and good will. We have nothing of those societies that were created, like the ones in all Jewish cities, and even the few that we do have, like the *'Hevra Talmud Torah*' and '*Linat Tzedek*,' lack coherence and organization, and they are unintelligently led because of a lack of unity, and pursuit of public adulation. The society '*Gemilut Hasadim*,'set up to provide interest-free loans to small businessmen, and to craftsmen to sustain themselves during a time when they cannot find work – is absent, and a number of skilled workers have fallen without any prospect of getting back on their feet, for lack of generosity and compassion.

The education of children is being conducted indolently, and the worst is that the *Haskalah* a has no substance to it, and no advocate. And I will not be exaggerating anything if I say that in this entire city there is not a single person with any clue as to our literature and a concept of our faith who was willing to extend a hand for the public benefit in these recent times. This city is isolated, and it has nothing to do with the rest of the cities of Jewry. There

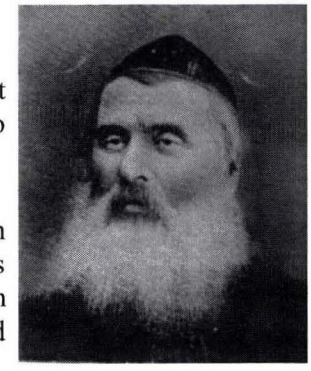
are no readers of periodicals here ,because the contents of the periodicals are nothing to them – and only the paper '*HaTzefira*' even gets here..."

As previously said, the *shtetl* of Mys occupies an important place in the history of Baranovich. The first pioneers and settlers were almost all from Mys. The name, 'Mys' for a long time, served as a direction finder for those who did not know where Baranovich lay. Letters carried on them the designation: 'Baranovich by Mys,' yet to this day, it remains unclear why the two towns did not merge. It is possible that this might have happened, had the Moscow railroad line passed close to Mys. Incidentally, there was not much missing to make this happen:

It was known to tell that the engineers who worked out the plans for the rail line from Baranovich to Brisk, were stationed in Mys. The Mys residents, apparently, could not be persuaded, and didn't even want to hear of it. And this was the case, simply out of fear of the train, that it should not bring any trouble to the tranquil settlement... the gentiles complained additionally that the train is driven by 'unclean power.' Whether we can place any faith in this story, is, as you can understand, difficult to say.

And thus, Mys had no train, and remained cut off, but Jewish Mys, a little at a time, transferred itself to Baranovich, and helped to build the new settlement. The foundation of the new city, and at the very least, its spiritual foundation, derives much of its substance from that deep Jewish wellspring that was called Mys.

C. The First Days of Baranovich



Page 25:Shy'keh Baranovicher – the First Citizen of Baranovich

As the Hebrew-Yiddish writer, Hillel Malakhowsky, who came from a village not far from Mys, recalls, that at the location of the city of Baranovich, there used to be a large forest of pine trees.

True, there was a 'Baranovich,' but this was a village off to the side, and also an estate of the nobility. There also was a inn in the middle of a field, which was called 'Baranovich.' The inn stood at the intersection of two roads, one road from Ljahavičy, and the second from Stalovičy. At the inn, the two roads merged, and became one that led to Mys.

The large tract, on which the city of Baranovich was built, was in the possession of three separate owners. By far the largest portion, the entire forest up to the future main street, Marinska (Szeptycka) belonged to Graf Rozwadowski.[6] The second part was in the possession of peasants from the nearby village of Svetilovnitz. This was village property, on which Jews

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[6] Author's footnote: To whom did the assets of Graf Rozwadowski previously belong? How did it come into his hands? – We cannot provide a clear answer to these questions.

Old residents of our area knew enough to tell, that the forest, at one time, belong to a nobleman named 'Baranow,' who had taken part in the Polish Rebellion (1863) on the side of the rebels. As punishment, the Russian régime confiscated his assets, and out of gratitude, gave it over to a 'high' military man, as a reward for his military distinction in suppressing the rebellion in the Baranovich area. Some time later, the officer sold off this gift to Graf Rozwadowski. The Graf, however, was a Roman Catholic, and he was not permitted to buy it in his own name; for this reason, the forest was registered in the name of his wife, Maria, who was Russian Orthodox.

were not permitted to dwell. It encompassed all of the fields, that were on the east side of Marinska, and stretched out in the direction of the future 'Сухарни Завод',[7] and the New Baranovich, as well as being on the side of the Moscow-Brisk rail line. The third part, the so-called 'Kozioner Forest' belongs to the government itself, and remained fallow and untouched until The First World War. This forest lay in that corner which subsequently bordered on the Marinska and Kladbishchenska (Cmentarna)[8] Streets.

It is worth knowing all these details, because they played a great role in the building and development of Baranovich.

The Moscow-Brisk rail line reached the vicinity of Baranovich at the end of the [18]60's, and in the first years of the [18]70's, it was in full operation. It ran through the fields of Svetilovnitz, along the edge of the forest. By the road, that led to Mys, opposite the Graf's estate, stood a wooden building, which bore the sign: 'Baranovich Station.'

Our *landsman,* Leib'eh Zablodsky (who passed away not long ago, in America, at the age of 81) additionally remembered how this area of Baranovich appeared in the year 1873, when his parents took him along on their trip to Mys. And this is what he had to tell, among other things:

'...my parents lived in Potapoviche, five kilometers from Ljahavičy. It happened, that on a cold winter's day, my grandfather in Mys was making a wedding to marry off a daughter. All of us traveled to the wedding. It was a distance of about 25 kilometers to Mys. A great misfortune occurred, and the road became covered and blocked. We blundered about all night, looking for the road. It was only before dawn, barely alive, that we fell into the hands of Pinia Hirever. We warmed ourselves up around a boiling samovar, rested our broken bones a bit, and continued our travel. finally, we arrived at Baranovich. At that time, the Moscow-Brisk rail line had already been completed, and as it happened, it was precisely on that morning that the very first train traveled through. As said, this was in the year 1873. We ran to see this great wonder, that moves itself without horses or oxen. In the forest, on the other side of the train tracks, opposite the station, only a few houses stood, which had been built during the time that the rail line was build, The following people lived in those houses: Shlomo Turetsky, Ar'keh Miskin (Ar'keh Znayer), Yitzhak Berezovsky, Shlomo Krasnopiurka, and others.[9] There was no evidence of a 'New-Baranovich,' there was not a trace of the little town of Razwodowo. Across the way, the train station was being built, and opposite it, on the way to Mys, stood Shy'keh's inn, and a few other buildings, among them the house that belonged to 'Big' Israel (Israel the Thief). Behind Shy'keh's inn was Graf Rozwadowski's estate, and not far from it – the village of Baranovich. In the '*HaMelitz*' of the year 1897, (Number 102) we read a long article about a judgement that was rendered in the Navahrudak district court. It is worth recording a frightening robbery and murder that was carried out in the year 1875, in one of the forests on the way to Palonka –Moucadz'–Slonim. The victim was a Jewish merchant from Austria, who came here to buy horses for the Austrian government. Concurrently with the sentence, we discover that, in the year 1875, and even a number of years before that, horses were loaded onto transports in the old station in Baranovich, for export.

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7 A bread-biscuit factory

8 These are, respectively, the Russian and (Polish) names for the 'Cemetery' Street.

9 Author's footnote: Approximately in the year 1907, the provincial government ordered these houses to be moved, because they were old ruins, and to all intents, did not fit in harmoniously with the more pleasant panorama of the train station.

The first days of Baranovich are intimately tied up with the names of its first pioneers: Shy'keh Baranovitzky, Yitzhak Berezovsky, and others.

Shy'keh Baranovicher, or just plain 'Shy'keh,' – that's how he was called in the city – was the first Jew that settled in the Baranovich area, when it did not yet even exist yet. He built the very first houses, and the inn, which stood in Old-Baranovich.

As used to be quipped at one time: 'Baranovich is called Baranovich, because Shy'keh Baranovicher lived in Baranovich.' It was meant to indicate that the town took its name from his.

The wagon drivers, their wagons and horses, would stay at Shy'keh's inn. Grain merchants and forest product merchants would also lodge here, as well as a variety of miscellaneous guest, in order to get some rest, and revive themselves. And it was possible to get something to eat at Shy'keh's and also get involved in a rather wide-ranging conversation, and, indeed, get to hear some rather interesting stories – in this latter respect, he was quite the expert.

Yitzhak Berezovsky – known by the name 'Itcheh *der Gabbai*,' – was one of the first pioneers of the young settlement in Baranovich, and was known to be a learned Jew, an ardent Hasid and a God-fearing man. At the same time, he was a man of energy, and entrepreneurial spirit. In those time, a Jew like him required a great measure of courage – the *Gabbai* and life's spirit of his Hasidic *shtibl* in Mys, – to leave his ancient home, and everything to which he was connected, and come to build his solitary house, in the middle of the forest, far from other Jews, and a Jewish life. It was nothing short of his strong instinct, that warned him of the weakness in the winds blowing for the earning capacity of Jews, and ethereal means of sustenance in his small town of Mys, and he was able to perceive the prospects of the new settlement, as a rail connection point in the area.

For the time being, there was nothing but forest all around. Jews, however, understood, that wherever the train station was located, in time, a larger settlement would be built, that would, for all intents and purposes, expand in the direction of the little *shtetl* Mys.

It was first in the period 1880-1883 that the Polesia rail link made the breakthrough in all of these expectations. It became rather clear, that the new settlement will expand along the rail line between the two train stations.

The coming of the rail network created an upheaval in the area. Jews in the surrounding settlements opened their eyes towards the potential of the trains, which held out the possibility of providing a secure source of income. Also, the Graf understood how to exploit the attendant competition. The parceling out of the streets and fields, was carried out, it would appear, in accordance with a precise plan, depending on the constraints of the topography. It was from this that the future appearance of the city was set out.

The Graf did not want to sell the fields; rather, he leased them out for a fee of between 20 and 25 rubles a year. With this, it appears that he sought to remain the sole proprietor of these lands, until such time that the city will develop, and the property will escalate in value. He also made an effort to have the city adopt his name. For a length of time, Baranovich was indeed known as '*Mieszczeczko Razwodowo*.'

The appetite to lease land was very intense, and one did not need much money. Jews flocked to take advantage of this bargain; Baranovich began to be built. A small settlement was constituted.

D. Baranovich Becomes a Settlement

The history of Baranovich as a settlement begins in 1883.

During the decade of the eighties, the small town did not expand at a rapid pace. The old center, around Shy'keh Baranovicher remained nearly unchanged, despite the fact that several houses were built. It was only in a while that several large-scale businesses and hotels opened up; it challenged 'Old-Baranovich.'

The new center, which was created on the territory of the Graf's forest, was already growing more quickly. But even, in this case, the construction proceeded at a somewhat moderate pace. Initially, those neighborhoods were built from which the city itself sprung, and before everything else, the Elizabetskaya (Pilsudski) *Gasse.*[10]

Jews began to demand a house of worship and a *mikva.* And indeed, no sooner had Elizabetskaya been built, when a *Bet HaMedrash* appeared – known as '*The Old Bet HaMedrash*,' – and, by contrast, not far from it, a bathhouse and a *mikva.*

Up till now, the one assembly place was at Shy'keh's. For a long period of time, a small *Bet HaMedrash* stood in his courtyard, which was called '*Shy'keh's Bet HaMedrash.*' So long as it remained close at hand, the Jews who lived in the forest came here to pray.

Shy'keh was very proud of his *Bet HaMedrash*, in which he was not only the owner, but also the *Gabbai,* and often the one who led services. He was a learned Jew, a very generous host, and an ardent Kaidanov *Hasid.* The elderly Kaidanov *Rebbe*, R' Aharon זצ"ל, when he would travel through Baranovich, he was always the guest of Shy'keh Baranovicher, who would receive the *Rebbe* in a very festive manner. Shy'keh was a clever man, and in time, his inn developed into a full-fledged hotel, where important guests would come to lodge. He also ran substantial businesses in forest products and grain trading. His brother Shlomo Luker was the business manager. Everyone loved Shy'keh, and accorded him much respect. He was quite a wit: his quips were literally carried about around town. 'Woe unto us,' he would say, 'Potatoes are our food, and Shy'keh is the leader of prayer services[11].'

Life here, during this early period, was not easy. The *shtetl* was not built up densely, but rather spread out over larger areas, with one house at quite a distance from another; and each house was surrounded by forest – and what a forest! With the coming of evening, one was fearful of stepping out across the threshold, because of the large number of wolves, who would, from time-to-time, get close to the houses.

Community life was half-dead. Apart from the *Bet HaMedrash*, the fledgling settlement had nothing. It was necessary to depend on those neighbors who were closest, in order to get a hold of the essential necessities. The Rabbi and *Shokhet*[12] resided in Mys, and the cemetery was there as well.

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10 The presence of a Russian, and then a Polish, name is indicative of the change in sovereignty that took place in these turbulent times, leading up to the re-establishment of the Polish Republic after The First World War.

11 It is 'witty' in Yiddish, where this couplet rhymes.

12 A Ritual Slaughterer

The little *shtetl* began to stand on its own feet towards the end of the decade of the eighties. The settlement decided to free itself from dependence on Mys. To accomplish this, required the retention of a Rabbi, a ritual slaughterer, and a cemetery.

All of this happened in the space 1886-1888.

E. The First of the Ritual Slaughterers and the First Rabbi

Baranovich hired its first *Shokhet* in the year 5646 (1886) (having had their fill of 'slaughter' by those in Mys), R' Moshe Ephraim HaLevi Kapilovich, who came from Byten', and was a Slonim *Hasid*, very learned, and a God-fearing man. He came from Mys (he was a son-in-law there) at the advice and wish of the Rabbi of Slonim, Rabbi R' Shmuel זצ"ל, who apparently had an interest in placing a *Hasidic Shokhet* into the new settlement. The Rabbi persuaded Shy'keh to support him in this respect.

A short while later, the *Mitnagdim*[13] brought in their own *Shokhet,* named R' Abraham; it was told of him, that when he 'took over' Baranovich, he recited the biblical phrase, 'And Abraham took the ram...'[14]

Immediately after his arrival, a dispute broke out between the two ritual slaughterers. Both sides, in the end, agreed to go to a Rabbinical Court (*Din Torah*). The *Mitnagdim* brought in the Rabbi of Mir, R' Lipa'leh, and from the *Hasidic* side, sat the Rabbi of Mys, Rabbi R' Lejzor Yehuda Epstein. The Rabbinical Court ruled that R' Moshe is to receive 60% and R' Abraham 40% [of the business].

At the beginning of the nineties, R' Moshe Mordechai Rabinovich came from the small *shtetl* of 'Swierzen'. He was immediately retained as the *Hazzan* and *Shokhet* in place of R' Abraham the *Shokhet*, who had left Baranovich.

On 23 Heshvan 5653 (1893) the *Hasidic Shokhet* R' Moshe HaLevi Kapilovich passed away, at the age of 32 years, leaving a widow and two children. His place was taken by R' Moshe Feingold from Slonim. And, once again, a sharp dispute broke out, because of a disagreement, which involved the widow and the community, as well as the two ritual slaughterers.

With the help of the local Rabbi, and through the intermediation of the Slonim Rabbi, R' Shmuel, the dispute ended in an agreement, in which the *shtetl* assumed responsibility to support the widow, for a period of a year, and each of the Ritual Slaughterers agreed to a take of 50% of the slaughter revenue.

There was no slaughterhouse yet. and the butchers would perform slaughter in their stables. Later on, a place was set aside for this purpose, but this, too, was a stable somewhere on the Orla *Gasse* near Yosh'eh the bathhouse attendant's.

The first Rabbi of Baranovich, Rabbi R' Chaim Leib Lubczansky זצ"ל, was retained as a Rabbi in the year1887. We learn this fact from '*HaMelitz*' of the year 1887 (Number 179), in connection with an article which deals with the activities of the '*Tomkhei Torah*' group of Minsk:

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13 Those who stood 'in opposition' to the *Hasidic* movement.

14 In Yiddish, the word for a 'ram' is 'baran.' This then becomes a play on words

'.... in the year 5647 there already was a sitting Rabbi for the Jewish settlement in the city of Baranovich. His name was: The Rabbi *Gaon* and *Tzaddik*, R' Chaim Leib, from the city of Mys. Before coming to Baranovich, he studied as a disciple in Minsk under the aegis of the Minsk group '*Tomkhei Torah.*'

He married Chaya Bluma, the daughter of Yaakov Zablodsky of Mys. Immediately after the wedding, the young couple went off to Minsk, where he studied in the '*Tomkhei Torah' Kollel,* and lectured over a page of the *Gemara* before the congregation in the *Bet HaMedrash*, which was called '*Gesellen-Schul.*' He received Rabbinical ordination in Minsk. Together with his family – he was already the father of two children – he spent a certain time in Minsk and waited for a position to become available, that would be offered to him as Rabbi.

The prospects were not, however, particularly encouraging, since all of the neighboring communities had sitting Rabbis already – and what sort of Rabbis – and there were no new places being built, and then, along came Baranovich.

The *Rebbetzin*, Chaya Bluma, passed away in 5701 (1941), at the age of 82 years. She was a wise woman, with rare good qualities – a truly righteous person. And her daughter, Yehudis Dvora הי"ד was just like that – who later on became the *Rebbetzin*, the wife of, may he be separated for long life, Rabbi R' David Weitzel שליט"א.[15]

The Rabbinical seat was taken by R' Chaim Leib thanks to the efforts of Shy'keh *Baranovicher,* who was an uncle of the *Rebbetzin*, Chaya Bluma. Incidentally, being the Rabbi in a small settlement in those years was far from being a way to make a living, that would permit a Rabbi to support his family. For the time being, he was not paid any salary, and the sole sources of income were those derived from running the Rabbinical Courts, and performing wedding ceremonies. Accordingly, Chaya Bluma needed to help out, because from her husband's income, there was enough for '*water to cover the kasha.*' She sold yeast for the baking of *Challahs* for the Sabbaths and festivals. One lived frugally. Despite this, they were quite content with their lot. This was still better than having to sit in Minsk, waiting for a 'position....'

F. The Beginning of the Cemetery and the Establishment of a *Hevra Kadisha*

In the end, they finally also approached the issue of dealing with the dead; to this end, the *Graf* designated a part of the forest, not far from the village of Znayes. In fact, they had already been thinking about having their own cemetery for a long time, but it appears there were specific drawbacks.[16]

As it happened, the little *shtetl* was rocked by tragic misfortune: the bath used to be heated once a week,

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[15] Author's footnote: Rabbi R' David Weitzel **שליט"א** who became Rabbi in Baranovich after the passing of his father-in-law (5666) is today located in Tel-Aviv. He was the Rabbi in Baranovich for close to 35 years (until 1941), when the Russians exiled him to Siberia, and thanks to that, he was saved. His wife, the *Rebbetzin* Yehudis Dvora **הי"ד**, was killed in the Baranovich ghetto, together with her two daughters and the elder of her daughters in-law, with her children.

[16] Author's footnote: According to a custom, it was not considered proper to inaugurate a cemetery without having someone to bury.

every Friday, as told by the older residents, and that the mikva was a bit too deep; it was necessary to descend many steps. In the middle of the mikva, stood a large kettle, in which coals were burned. Two older boys, one of them – the Rabbi's son, were bathing in the mikva (it appears not at the scheduled time) and they drowned. It is possible that they had previously gotten themselves confused. According to a different version, they drowned while bathing in the lake neat the village of Svetilovnitz.

The funeral took place on Sunday. The entire little *shtetl* escorted the two victims with a great deal of keening, and for whom the very first of the graves were dug on the Baranovich cemetery. Several Rabbis offered eulogies, who saw fit to come from surrounding settlements, among them the Rabbi of Ljahavičy, The Rabbi *Gaon* R' Simcha HaLevi Hurwitz.

This is the way the cemetery at Baranovich was initiated, as a result of circumstances out of the ordinary, in the year 5648 (1888).[17]

With the opening of the burial ground, a *Hevra Kadisha* was established, at the head of which stood the homeowner, R' Yaakov Judkowsky. For his entire life, he was the Chief *Gabbai* and resident authority. For his entire life, he was committed to the work of the *Hevra Kadisha* with his entire heart and soul. In the last years, a number of other *balebatim* began to get involved in the *Hevra Kadisha*, such as, R' Dov Kurkhin, R' Yitzhak Zvi Yosselewicz, R' Levik Rutkowicz and others.

In general, the *Hevra Kadisha* in Baranovich consisted of the more prominent craftsmen. Among others, the technical personnel consisted of: Moshe Winikowsky (Tall Moshe, or Dark Moshe), a Jewish man with an unusually good heart, always at the ready to do someone else a good turn; Yitzhak Orlansky (Itcheh, the Deaf Carpenter), a simple Jew, a dedicated technical worker for the *Hevra*; Chaim-Etch'eh would concern himself with the burial shrouds; Abraham Zelwin (Avrem'l the Shoemaker); Nehemiah Pilnik ('Khem'eh the graves man, or 'Khem'eh the Smith); Kapusta, and after his death – his son, Alter Kapusta, and others.

The activities of the *Hevra Kadisha* in Baranovich were conducted exactly the way they were conducted in other cities. If a man of substance passed away, someone who was rich – in their parlance, it was: 'we caught a fat fish.' Arguments were of no help, the family had to pay, because otherwise the deceased would not 'move from his place.'

Finally, Baranovich frees itself from its dependence on Mys, and becomes self-standing.

G. The Development of the City

The end of the eighties, and the entire decade of the nineties, passed under the imprint of intensive construction activity, and growth in the population. In the north and the east, already from the earliest of times, it remained bounded by both of the rail lines: the one possibility for expansion remained on the side towards the forests, in the direction of the west and south.

And, indeed, this is how it came to pass.

The Russian authorities decided to transform the new point into an important military-strategic center,

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[17] Author's footnote: Over the gate of the cemetery, there was a sign: established in the year 5648 (1888)

because of its favorable geographic position, and the large intersection of the trains. In time, the line from Moscow – Baranovich – Warsaw established its great importance, as part of the line from Paris to Moscow, connecting Paris, Berlin, Warsaw and Moscow. The Polesia rail line was also very important, that connected the large Russian cities of Petersburg, Dvinsk, Vilna, with the Polesia regions in south Russia (Kiev – Odessa). Contact with Warsaw was by means of the railroad lines; Baranovich– Brisk, and Baranovich – Bialystok. The value of this military-strategic point was also established during both World Wars. In the year 1914-1915 it was the seat of the Commander-in-Chief Nikolai Nikolayevich[18], and the Chief of the Russian General Staff General Yanushkevich and his staff.

In the last years of the eighties, or at the beginning of the nineties, not far from the Polesia station, the first of the barracks of the military camp were already in palace on the tract of the government-owned forest land, and the military immediately occupied it, which up to that point, had been stationed in Navahrudak, and the vicinity of Jatra ammunition dump.

With the arrival of the military, the *shtetl*, a little at a time, began to come to life. Along with the arrival of the railroad battalions, a number of wealthy Jews also arrived, of which the familiar families were: Limon[19], Fyvel of Jatra, Mitropolitansky, and others. They came from Navahrudak and Jatra, where they provided provenance and a variety of products for the resident military.

The broad reach, with which the Russian authorities, already at that time, in the decade of the nineties, approached the implementation of its sovereign objectives in Baranovich, gave good prospects for the rapid growth of the city. The military camp, as well as both of the train stations, continuously expanded, and the [construction of the] formidable 'Сухарни Завод[20]' was in full swing; it was being built by the Russian General and Engineer named 'Baron von Dirshov.'

The wooden construction work was carried out by the local contractor Jonah Shilayner together with the land manager and carpenter (Jonah Oshmiansky). Brick for the all the buildings was supplied by the well-known contractor from Minsk, Frumkin, who, for this purpose, had constructed a large brick kiln works on the road to Mys, where there was a rather wide expanse of unused land. Henoch Fein was the manager of the brick works, also from Minsk; a time later one, it was transferred over to his ownership, and for a longer period of time, it was known as 'Fein's brick works.' Old Man Feinman was the one who undertook all the dye work. Schlossberg from Minsk brought in Jewish locksmiths, and other employees, to carry out the locksmith work.

The larger part of those who came to Baranovich did not subsequently leave, and in time, they became fused into the local population.

Private development accompanied the substantial government undertakings. Many houses were added. The

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18 Grand Duke, and Uncle of Czar Nicholas II.

19 The transliteration of this name, from the Hebrew characters, is somewhat ambiguous. The rendition 'Limon' is selected over 'Lehman,' based on the recollection of Abraham H. Foxman, in listening to how his father, Joseph Foxman ע"ח, a native Yiddish speaker, would pronounce the name.

20 *Sukharny Zawad* – An industrial scale bread and biscuit baking complex.

number of residents continued to grow steadily. Baranovich entered a new phase of its development.

There was also, already, a sizeable non-Jewish population, which consisted mostly of railroad employees, workers in the depots, as well as a sizeable number of military people. It is understood that all of this happened in concert with one another, in the last decade of the prior [sic: nineteenth] century.

In the year 1894, Baranovich was a small *shtetl* with a population close to three hundred Jewish families. The land around the Old *Bet HaMedrash* was more or less built up. It was from here that the Elizabetskaya (Pilsudski) Gasse stretched out. A small number of houses stood on the streets: Alexandrovska (Senatorska), Petrovska (Ulansky), and on the neighboring side streets: Grafska, Orla, Minska (Szkolna), Sosnowa and Wilenska. The eye was greeted by many parcels that were unbuilt, and empty land, overgrown with thorns, and wild grass. Oak and pine trees could be seen all around. As to places, it was difficult to tell the difference between the *shtetl* and the forest. Here and there, one could see 'skeletons' of unfinished houses standing. There were only a few houses to be found on Marinska on the side that belonged to the Graf. The pharmacy of the Provisor[21] Tetz was in the house of Yehoshua from Hancavičy (Sukharewsky). There was a permanent prayer house in the house of Abraham Shmuel Zablodsky – between Shimshelewicz and Yankl Beryl Neufeld, where *Hasidim* and *Midnagdim* prayed together. There were a number of gentile houses on the second side of the Marinska *Gasse*. On the Minsk *Gasse*, the skeleton of the Great *Bet HaMedrash* already stood. The wholesale trade and the hotels were in Old-Baranovich. The retail [trade] - on Elizabetskaya *Gasse*.

Baranovich grew especially quickly in the latter half of the nineties. The population grew daily. The empty parcels, a little at a time, began to be frilled up. The forest, a bit at a time, began to recede. Streets and byways began to take form. In general, the construction proceeded from the northwest to the northeast, spreading itself out also in concert to the south east.

As previously mentioned, only one side of Marinska took form, whose parcels had been let out by the Graf. On the other side of Marinska, and beyond, in the direction of the Polesia station, and the 'Сухарни Завод', as well as toward the fields of the village of Svetilovnitz, Jews were not permitted to live. In this area, the famous temporary appointees of 1882 were settled, in accordance with the prohibition of Jews to settle on village property.

In this way, Marinska became the boundary between the city and the village.

On this 'sacred' ground, only Christians were permitted to live in those times. Accordingly, two Christian centers developed here over time: one around the Polesia station, which was called 'New-Baranovich,' while the second – across from the military camp, around the so called Caucasian Street (Kaupenica).

H. The Social Physiognomy

The internal life of Baranovich, in the last decade of the previous [sic: 19th] century, slowly began to align itself to the needs and demands of the enlarged settlement. The populace had arrived from all manner of locations. The settlers, who had moved here from the surrounding villages, brought along the ambience and

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[21] A semi-official designation, identifying the individual as a purveyor of the goods (medicines) in question.

atmosphere of rural village life, just like those who came form a variety of small towns, near and far. A variety of forms and meaning were created which were a mix of open and community life. In '*HaMelitz*' of 1897 (No. 171) we read:

> "... all of the Jews who reside here, act as if they were a world unto themselves, and does not mix with his neighbor that is close by, out of a fear that the status of the neighbor will not measure up to his own, because Baranovich was called 'the second America,' because of this ragtag mixture of people that had come here to put down roots. This is so, even though Baranovich was not like America: there, the great distance can conceal and hide away each and everyone's roots, and he can blend in with the mass. However here, it is different, because most are from relatively nearby towns, who know of their deeds, and about their family pedigree, and many of them have skeletons in their closet, and this creates a separation between those that belong, and the ones that do not, never consort with them...."

I. The Leadership

Approximately at the beginning of the nineties, the government authorities sent in an overseer and several gendarmes. Up until this point, police representatives were stationed in nearby the towns of Stalovičy and Mys.

It is self-evident that the new leader constantly was on the lookout for things to do, and ways to make money; He would never, God forbid, be found idle, with nothing on his hands. In fact, he became the sole boss and giver of opinions, over the lives and assets of the Jewish populace. And because of this, the Jews attempted to develop with him a 'convenient' friendship...

II. Life in General

The little *shtetl* grows quickly, and with it, also the community needs and concerns. The authorities demanded that a Jewish *Starosta*[22] be appointed. For the first time, the question of '*Korobka*[23]' arises. Oftentimes, a decree comes through that requires immediate response; from time-to-time a really troublesome decree comes through, that demands an immediate intervention in the district, or in the provincial capital itself. We also cannot forget, that a great part of Baranovich was considered to be a village, to which a different set of constraints applied. The number of worshipers keeps on growing – this requires that new *Batei Medrashim* be built. The population gets larger, and along with it , there is a growth in need and poverty. The chronically ill, and poor pregnant women, demand medical assistance, etc.

The life of a Jewish settlement, under a foreign régime, in those times, demanded all sorts of activists and those who would look after the common welfare. The *shtetl* itself, had no tradition in how to deal with community issues.

The fledgling settlement had no sort of organized Jewish community of any sort. All community issues were dealt with and decided upon at meetings of *balebatim,* at which the principal opinions were held by the *Gabbaim* of the *Batei Medrashim*, the well-to-do, and prominent Jews in general; also, the Rabbi took part here in an important capacity. Do understand, that here and there, disputes would erupt, despite the

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22 An official town Elder.

23 Monies exacted by the authorities in a way that was punitive..

observation that Baranovich, in hindsight, was a rather sedate small *shtetl*.

Abraham Moshe Pikelny was elected as the first *Starosta* of the Jewish 'Мещанская оправа.[24]'

III. '*Korobka*'

For the first time, the '*Korobka*' was implemented. This was a payoff for meat, that the authorities levied on the Jewish populace – a form of an indirect tax on kosher meat. The procedure worked in the following way: the authorities themselves did not want to get involved with the entire issue. The 'Korobka' itself was put up on an open market (in the Navahrudak district) and was given in lease for a period of four years to the individual bidding the highest price. That individual would become the collection agent. These funds were to be uses to support the local institutions, which were officially recognized by the authorities. In fact, the Jews derived minimal benefit from these monies. Needs were quite considerable; Jews needed to worry about many things that the authorities either didn't want to provide, or simply took no cognizance of them. A Jewish settlement was always involved in a variety of clandestine activities, which absorbed a meaningful sum of money. It is clear that the community did attempt to utilize the 'Korobka' for its maximum benefit. The collector would assume the obligation of providing a specific sum, which the shtetl levied against him. The power of the community and the Rabbi was sufficiently great; at any time, the Rabbi was able to rule that the meat is not kosher. The entire negotiation over the '*Korobka*' would be played out in the *Batei Medrashim*, and at assemblies. Permanent sources of conflict and sharp exchanges would constantly be elicited. The collector would often retain a partner as an employee, who carried out all the required duties; and the business was not a bad one. The employee was called the 'Trusted One.' One of the first collectors in Baranovich was Fyv'eh from Jatra, together with a partner. The manager remained Velvel the Trustee. Later on, the '*Korobka*' was held by Hirsch Feigman with Nissan Goldberg, and in the end, it remained in the hands of Moshe Noah Bitensky (Moshe Noah the Butcher) and Velvel the Trustee.

IV. Social Conditions

As previously indicated, with the rapid growth of the population, a substantial number of problems and issues surfaced, which demanded the immediate attention of a total array of social institutions and charitable organizations.

An unending stream of individual people, and entire families, continuously flowed into the fledgling city, with the hopes of finding work and a means of sustenance. The largest part consisted of craftsmen who were desperate for work, and storekeepers without any means. There was also no lack of unemployed, and just plain idlers.

The sanitary and hygiene conditions were not good, and the standard of living of the populace was not particularly high. The houses were all made of wood, and were without any conveniences. The crowding, and bad living conditions abetted the spread of a variety of diseases. There also was no hospital, in which the sick could be isolated, in case of epidemics. Medical help was encumbered with great difficulties. The shtetl only had one *Feldscher* by the name of Weiner. The nearest, and only, doctor, who serviced not only Baranovich, but also the entire surrounding area, resided in Haradzišča, more than 20 km from Baranovich, – a great distance by the standards of the means of transportation of those times. This was the well-known doctor Ščepurzinski, a Christian. And when it was necessary to bring him in for a difficult birth, or during

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[24] Citizen's Jurisdiction

a misfortune, or in the instance of other exigencies, one was compelled to call him through the intermediation of the pharmacist, and to pay 25 rubles up front, practically a fortune in those times. And the medicines were remorselessly expensive. Mostly, it was the poor people who suffered from this.

The education of Jewish children was very limited, and was in the hands of old-fashioned *melamdim*, who taught Hebrew, praying, Pentateuch, and the review of the portion of the week, often with the help of a whip. The children were tied down to the Heder for an entire day. The older children were used as an apprentice in the store, bringing water, and to carry out the used pails. Poor children, in general, simply loitered around with nothing to do.

The craftsman and small businessman had a need for small loans for small needs, and there was no place to turn to for such loans.

Despite this, Baranovich was no exception in the mix of other Jewish towns. During the course of the nineties, it manifested the creation and development of a network of a variety of charitable and social institutions, without which, no Jewish settlement could exist in those times.

It is true that, initially, it felt a great deficiency in these resources; however, with the passage of time, and with the benefit of hindsight, this too, resulted in change for the good. In the years 1893- 1894, elements with greater means and capacity to do good works for the public, began to concentrate themselves. Large manufacturing businesses opened up, department stores, ironmongers and food stores. Gradually, a circle of men and women who devoted themselves to the social good began to take form, who were committed to this sort of objective.

In the second half of the nineties, the social life in Baranovich already stood on a higher level, equivalent to that in the surrounding settlements. Baranovich became a lively and dynamic little *shtetl.* In the summer, this was a favored place to have a dacha. Hundreds of people would travel here, from all over, and from a distance, not only to enjoy the fresh, dry air of the forest, but also to enjoy their time. In '*HaMelitz*' of 1897 (Number 171), Joseph Gavrielov portrays life in Baranovich in those years. among other things, he writes:

> "...most are able to make a living from the profit; there are among them grain merchants, wood merchants, storekeepers and a variety of craftsmen, all of whom live a good life. And even if the city is like a center of Lithuania, despite this, a citizen of the city is not recognizable by distinct Lithuanian signs, such as: a dark lean and impoverished visage, patched garments, with patches on patches, because most of the town residents are people of action, and their faces are always cheerful.
>
> In the summer, many come here to inhale the pure air out in the grass fields, because a forest , full of grown trees is close to the city. Among those who come, there are those who recognize that to come to Baranovich to breath the air, and to rejuvenate their energies, is worth doing in order to add to their health and length of life. And there are also those who come to simply discharge an obligation to the latest fashion, and especially among the fairer sex. The reason, is that it was, in this period, considered shameful for a Jewish girl to sit inside, as if she was the king's daughter, and the times demanded that she see, and be seen...
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> In the past week, heavy rains came, as they usually do at this time, and because of this, it was not possible to go out to the forest to take the air, and to improve one's health, and they were compelled to gather in one house, the home of a local lady, to make it a festive party day.

Every one of the women, looking to take the fresh air, wanted to be lodged in a residence close to the forest. Because of this, as many as ten women lodge in one house, and the crowding and pressure is very considerable, and therefore, they pay a great deal of attention to focus on spending, at least the evenings, engaged in pleasantries. And in accordance with the customs of the rest of the world, they partake in those activities appropriate to this season, with parties and dancing.

The difference is, only in that the gentiles eat meat, bread, cream of wheat, and drink wine; the Jews discharge their obligation by eating salted fish, and pickled cucumbers, and at these sorts of affairs, they cut up a salted fish and eat it with a slice of black bread. After this, they drink buttermilk. It is simple enough to grasp that a great groan comes forth, from within, for every extra penny spent, and breaks their bodies, for having lost money..."

I. The First Institutions

1. "Kosher Food"

As previously noted, Baranovich became an important military-strategic point. A large military camp was already standing during the decade of the nineties, in which a large number of Jewish soldiers could be found, whose number grew from year to year. For these soldiers, the town establishes a 'Kosher Food' organization, which in time, developed into a large genuine charitable institution of its own.

At the head of this group, stood R' Picker, who tried with all of his energies, that 'Kosher Food' should stand on and appropriately high level. The income came from a variety of collections, from among the Jewish populace.

A short evaluation of the activities of 'Kosher Food' is given in '*HaMelitz*' of 1895, Number 283:

"...also a large military host came to set up camp here, approximately three thousand in number, and they constructed a base and its appurtenances. There are a variety of charitable groups here, and the scions of this city are especially deserving of praise for preparing kosher food for the consumption of the Jewish soldiers who work here, approximately seventy souls, good and satisfying food; despite the fact that this is a considerable expense, it does not request any assistance from the other towns in the area."

'Kosher Food' is mentioned a second time in '*HaTzefira*' of the year 1901 (Number 251), where, among other things, we read:

"... At the head of 'Kosher Food' stand R' Picker, who tries with all of his might to increase the income to the initiative, and to provide food for the one hundred twenty Jewish soldiers who reside in our city, – meat and warm cooked food, which is given to them twice daily."

The Jewish populace had a warm relationship with the Jewish soldiers, who were stationed here. A number of them took an active part in the social life of the Jewish community in Baranovich.

(Later on, under Polish rule, 'Kosher Food' was re-instituted in Baranovich, and was active for many years.)

II. '*Bikur Kholim*'



Page 38: The Midwife, Khavkina-Chernikhov

Approximately in the years 1893-1894, two sisters of the well-known Khavkin family came to Baranovich from Kharkov. One of them was the wife of the contractor Rumkin, and the second later married the dentist, Chernikhov. They were intelligent women with unique qualities, and much loved in the *shtetl*, for their standing readiness to provide help, and their good-natured attitude to the poorer of the populace. Their vital and philanthropic community work was an object of wonder. Both sisters threw themselves into this work with their lives and skin, and in a short time, demonstrated a capacity to surround themselves with a tight circle of inspired helpers.

The principal activist was Mrs. Khavkin. Being a graduate midwife by profession, and a very accomplished nurse, she was well acquainted with the need and requirements of the indigent sick. With the help of her sister, who was an outstanding organizer, she was able to create the important Ladies Auxiliary of '*Bikur Kholim*.'

We find the first news of Mrs. Khavkin's activity in '*HaMelitz*' of the year 1895, Number 283:

> "...the young midwife, Mrs. Khavkin founded a Ladies Auxiliary to facilitate help for those women who are due to give birth, but have no means, to support them with all things that they are missing. May their names be for a blessing!"

The objective of '*Bikur Kholim*' was to look after the indigent sick, and to help them with all their requirements: a doctor, medicines, medical equipment, ice, and many times, also with foodstuffs and a variety of nourishments. A special level of attention was paid to the indigent pregnant women.

> "...in the absence of a hospital, these young and refined women would dedicate their efforts the coordinated raising of the donations to the *Bikur Kholim* and they deal with the needs of the sick person, to bring the doctor, to give medicines, and meat and wine to restore the sick person to health and vigor."[25]

The work of this group was made more difficult by the absence of a doctor who had a heart for the sick Jewish person. However, after extensive effort, and striving, with time, it became possible to retain a Jewish doctor by the name of Margolin, who had enough of his own whims, but one way or another, they managed with him. A visit to someone who was sick cost 15 kopecks, Part of the medicines and medical paraphernalia were provided by a local pharmaceutical store. the remainder of the medicines had to be provided by the pharmacy of the Provisor Tetz.

The necessary means to support the 'Bikur Kholim' came from a standing weekly contribution, which was gathered from the Jewish community, and at the variety of gatherings at happy occasions. In the later years, these weekly contributions, and other sources of income, rose significantly.

Both sisters stood at the head of this Ladies Auxiliary for many years, and directed its activities diligently. In the year 1897, we also find Mrs. Baranovitzky among the working activists of the '*Bikur Kholim*.'

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[25] Author's footnote: Yeshaya Berkrman: '*HaMelitz*' 1899 (Number 139).

> "...there also is a '*Bikur Kholim*' Society that was founded by distinguished women and young ladies. The founder was Mrs. Khavkin, and now the director of the society is Mrs. Baranovitzky."[26]

The Rumkin family left Baranovich after the Russo-Japanese War. Mrs. Khavkin-Chernikhov also occupied a very respected position in the socio-cultural life of the city, and engaged with Baranovich before the outbreak of The First World War.

III. '*Talmud Torah*'

As previously mentioned, education in Baranovich was in the hands of private *melamdim*. Many poor parents did not have the means to send their children to a private *Heder*. A deep concern began to penetrate into the hearts of the Jewish activists with regard to the children of the poor, who loitered about with nothing to do, in the streets. It was decided to found a '*Talmud Torah*' (in 1894).

The prime mover, and founder, was a Jewish man named Zvi Yerusalimsky – known in the city as Hirsch *Cyryner* – an important member of the balebatim and a highly visible community activist, a formidable scholar, and God-fearing man; he was one of the first arrivals in the new settlement. He came to Baranovich from the small shtetl of Cyryn, and helped to build the 'Old *Bet HaMedrash*,' in which he was the *Gabbai* and the leader of prayers, beloved in the city. Every year, before Passover, up to The First World War, he would be seen together with the Rabbi canvassing the city to gather funds for *Maot Khittim*,[27] and he personally, would distribute it among the poor and needy. At the time when the old Rabbi, R' Chaim Leib זצ"ל did not have the agreed to sum for the dowry to marry off his daughter Chaya Bluma to the future Baranovich Rabbi R' David Weitzel, once again, R' Hirsch *Cyryner* was the one who gathered not only the dowry funds, but also covered the expenses of the wedding itself.

This man was committed to the '*Talmud Torah*' with his life and soul, at whose head he stood for all of his life. He invested an unusual level of dedication and superhuman energy into this institution, which struggled so hard to maintain its existence. At the beginning, he would personally rent the classrooms, and collect the money for the salaries of the teachers, often covering the deficits with his own money.

Nominally, it was called the 'Talmud Torah,' but in reality, it was a series of rented rooms in the homes of a number of *melamdim*, who on Friday afternoons, would themselves have to pound the pavement to the thresholds of the *balebatim,* in order to collect their meager pay, which came to between 3 and 5 rubles a week.

We find the first news of a *'Talmud Torah*' in Baranovich in '*HaMelitz*' of 1897 (Number 171). J. Gavrielov writes, in a correspondence from Baranovich, among other things:

> "...they also have a '*Talmud Torah*, in which forty students study, and is conducted like all such Talmud Torahs in our smaller towns."

Despite the fact that the local populace responded generously to each call for donations and support, the

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26 Author's footnote: Joseph Gavrielov: '*HaMelitz*' 1897 (Number 171).

27 The traditional Passover donations to help provide food for the needy.

money that was gathered for the '*Talmud Torah*' was always in short supply, but despite this, it never ceased its activity.

The rented rooms did not measure up to the minimum required standards of hygiene. A lot of children were squeezed into an uncomfortable and crowded room, without fresh air and light. And teaching was done by the older, less enlightened methods.

We read a short assessment of Hirsch *Cyryner's* activity on behalf of the '*Talmud Torah*' in '*HaMelitz*' of 1899 (Number 139), in which Yeshaya Berkman writes:

> "... and as is the case in a large city, there are different parties here as well, and like most, they are inclined to assist the indigent, to provide him with sustenance for his household, by means of the society '*Khonenei Dalim*,'[28] and also providing a good education for his children, for which the honorable Mr. Zvi Yerusalimsky is deserving of thanks and praise, who dedicated most of his energies to the benefit of education, which when the 'Talmud Torah' is without means, the hires good teachers, and until funds become available, pays for the teachers and room rent out of his own money. "

In '*HaMelitz*' of 1900 (Number 222) the well-known Zionist thinker, Rabbi Y. Y. Nissenbaum writes under the pseudonym '*Yehudi*' among other things:

> "... the dire straits of the residents of the city, most of whom are storekeepers and craftsmen, is not bad. The two railroad stations, and the many military troops located in the city, provide a decent source of income to the Jewish community, and all of its communal institutions are extant: '*Talmud Torah*,' '*Bikur Kholim*,' '*Kosher Food*,' and the remaining charitable organizations.
>
> What is called the '*Talmud Torah*,' – are three rooms in three separate houses, and in each class, the teacher receives a salary of from three to five rubles a week, and this salary he only receives after going around for the entire day of Friday to the doors of all the city residents, and gathers his 'pennies of the week.' These pennies do not suffice to cover all of the needs of the '*Talmud Torah*,' and the townspeople stand from afar, waiting for the arrival of The Messiah., because one of the two signs is perpetually before their eyes: the coin vanishes from the pocket of the teachers for all the days of the week, until the Eve of the Sabbath arrives, and with the fall of darkness 'all the strength in the body gives out.' But there is one *Gabbai* of the '*Talmud Torah*' who dedicates the better part of his efforts to its welfare, and he makes up the shortfall. Approximately fifty youngsters get taught subjects from Hebrew language to *Gemara*. As is self-evident, because of the effort involved, we are be able to understand the extent of knowledge achieved by the students.
>
> Nevertheless, there are residents in Baranovich, on whose idle gossip the entire world turns, and it is correct to say that their idle gossip is so extensive, that it can be a foundation, if not for the entire world, at least for one courtyard, and accordingly they are relieved of taking a position on 'the idle chatter of the youngsters in the house of their teacher.'
>
> Despite this, there are people who understand the worth of the 'Talmud Torah' in the life of Jewry, and that it would be shameful for them to ignore this great and important undertaking. It is from the sons of the affluent that the Torah will emanate, with its hand on its head. And the *balebatim*, who love to poke fun at the escapades of 'the rich,' especially in those things

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[28] Hebrew for 'Those Who Show Compassion to the Poor.'

that are exempt from donating money, then they cry, 'well we are coming!'

At the threshold of the new century, Baranovich bustled with the activity of Zionist groups, which in large measure, began to influence the cultural life in the Jewish street. And its influence expressed itself immediately in a variety of improvements, which were instituted in the '*Talmud Torah*' both in the pedagogical methods and in the hygienic conditions.

In '*HaTzefira*' of the year 1900 (Number 99) M. Alka writes:

> "...because of the effort of the Gaon and honorable Mr. Zim'l Mintz, the head of the Palestine Committee in Odessa, and the lawyer, Mr. Adler, two societies were established: '*B'nai Zion*, and '*Bnot Zion*.' These societies breathed life into all the branches of charitable activity and generosity in the city. The 'Talmud Torah' for the education of the poor, which had been seriously out of control until now, is changing for the better, with the help of the Zionists who have modeled it after the '*Heder Metukan*.'[29] Apart from the Talmud, which is taught by teachers who are expert in this subject, they are adding outstanding teachers (without asking to receive any prizes) for three hours a day, to teach these children of the poor, how to write in Hebrew, and the national language, as well as adding skillful principals who will provide oversight for these recent additions. And there needs to be someone to clothe them and give them shoes.

In '*HaTzefira*' of the year 1901 (Number 253) B. Rabinovich writes:

> "... The general condition of our city with regard to tradition – is at a high level, with many institutions to do charitable works, and generosity is fulfilled in them, such as: *'Talmud Torah,' Gemilut Hasadim,' Kosher Food,'* and Zionist societies, the '*Linat HaTzedek* Ladies Auxiliary, and others.
>
> In this regard, the elementary school '*Talmud Torah*' is worthy of being recalled in a praiseworthy fashion, as the premier example of such charitable works. To this school, come the children of the poor, and abandoned orphans, who receive an education in Torah and Enlightenment. The number of students reaches about one hundred fifty, divided among the various levels, each individual in accordance with their capacity and extent of knowledge. The classrooms are large and spacious, and are arranged to conform with hygienic standards. Expert teachers, known to be Torah scholars, were appointed to provide them with lessons, and the Rabbi Gaon, and Sitting Rabbi of the City, and others from the city's elite and respected citizens, take part in managing the affairs of this elementary school. Apart from the Talmud, the students are taught Hebrew, *Tanakh*, Jewish History, drawn from our sacred texts."

Despite this, for a long time, there was no separate building for the '*Talmud Torah*.' It was only in later years, that R' Hirsch *Cyryner* bought a *shtibl*, which stood on a parcel behind the Great *Bet HaMedrash*. In it, the '*Talmud Torah*' got its own small quarters. However, the city got larger with time, and the number of students grew rapidly, and the small building, became seemingly smaller and more crowded.

At that time, in Baranovich, there was a lady who lived there by the name of Volya Yosselewicz ע"ה, the mother of the brothers Jonah, Leib, Moshe, and separated for long life, Aharon Yosselewicz, who today can

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29 A school that is 'reformed' in the sense of adopting the modern pedagogical disciplines that were emerging during the late nineteenth century.

be found in Israel. They came from the village of Berezovka, not far from Baranovich, and for this reasons they were called 'The *Berezovkers*.' This lady donated 400 rubles.

A second Baranovich resident, by the name of Eliyahu Szwiransky (He was called Ely'eh *Krasnoyar*, because he came from the village of 'Krasnaya'), donated several hundred rubles to build a place to receive guests.

When the funds from both donors were combined, and a single large building was built on the same location, both the '*Talmud Torah*' and the 'Guest House' were co-located there.

R' Hirsch *Cyryner* stood as the head of the '*Talmud Torah*' until the outbreak of The First World War, at which time he went off to Russia. After The War, he returned to Baranovich, but was already weak and ill, and he passed away a short time later. His successor was R' Hannan Leib Feinman, who continued to concern himself with the '*Talmud Torah*,' with the help of R' Zim'l Kushnir and Chai'kl the Scribe.

IV. The 'Great *Bet HaMedrash*'

By the year 1894, the skeleton of the Great *Bet HaMedrash* was already up on the Minsk (Szkolna) *Gasse*. The old *Bet HaMedrash* – practically the only one that the *shtetl* had – was already too crowded to accommodate the increased number of worshipers. The building, however, stood for a long time, and did not fall into disuse.

The necessary resources were not lacking, because the Jews of Baranovich gave donations generously to sacred causes and charity. But, simply, the plan was not right, and did not please a number of the *balebatim*; the reason was, that according to the plan, the building was to have four walls, and the *balebatim* held that it should only have one wall – and eastern wall. A substantial dispute broke out over this, and the entire issue was left hanging in the air.

A tragic event caused the two sides to eventually make peace with one another.

This took place in 1895, on the second day of Passover. A band of drunken hooligans decided to whoop it up a bit. They fell upon Jewish passers-by, broke window panes, and perpetrated other misdeeds. On the spot, a large group of strong-armed young Jewish boys immediately came running, and the drunkards got the just and proper beating of their lives. This round of fisticuffs happened to have taken place near the old *Bet HaMedrash*, at a time when it was full of worshipers.

On the spot, the representative of the local authorities arrived immediately, the *Uradnik*[30] with his retinue, and the one thing that he saw fit to do was – to seal up the synagogue; that is to say, one worshiped there without the sanction of the authorities... (a similar fight had broken out near the *Bet HaMedrash* a few years earlier, on the first day of *Rosh Hashana*).

And here is what we read in '*HaMelitz*' of 1895 (Number 89) about the incident of the Great *Bet HaMedrash:*

> "...in our city, about four hundred families of our Jewish brethren reside, and for this – they

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30 A chief constable

have only one house of worship, whose interior cannot even accommodate one-third of this number from the city. And now, even this 'insufficient' holy site has been lost to them, because on the second day of Passover, the city official came and he put a seal of prohibition on its doors, even before receiving occupancy permission from the provincial officer.

And this is about a year and-a-half since they started to build a large, and spacious house of worship, but to this day, it is not even half finished, and the residents of the city feud with each other on every detail, but suspended the work because the building had – four walls, and the residents of our city want it to have only one wall – an eastern wall... Each and every person covets a spot of his own, and only on the eastern wall, and without any possibility of compromise, they decided not to build any further.

And here, this incident has aroused the people of our city to try and achieve a consensus with regard to the new house of worship, and on the very same day, they called for an assembly, but decided nothing, except – to have yet another assembly!..."

A great outcry ensued: 'What do you mean, locking up a *Bet HaMedrash*, and right in the middle of Passover!' – the community activists ran about like 'poisoned mice.'[31] The tumult became so great that the Uradnik himself became frightened. He was most certainly satisfied that they reached 'an understanding' with him, and the Jews were able to continue observing their '*prazdnik*' (festival).

But the issue did not budge from its spot. The dispute dragged on further. It is hard to specify when, and under what conditions it was finally resolved. We know only that in connection with the collections in the Zionist donation plates,[32] the name of the '*Great Bet HaMedrash*' appears for the first time on Yom Kippur Eve of 5658 (1897).[33]

Among the principal initiators of the Great *Bet HaMedrash* were: Zim'l Mintz, Yaakov Shimshelewicz, Yekhiel Rabinovich, ?? Shereshevsky, Jonah Araner (Oshmiansky), Nissan Goldberg, Yaakov Moshe Pikelny, Dov Kurkhin, R' Hirsch *Cyryner*, and others. We have to especially recall R' Abraham Mitropolitansky, who invested a great deal of energy into this building. Before he passed away, he made a donation of a set of *Shas*[34] to the *Bet HaMedrash*.

The *Shammes* was named Yitzhak Radess (Itcheh *der Shammes*). The Torah reader was Aharon Itcheh the *Melamed*, the Cantor – Moshe Joseph Mordechai Rabinovich.

V. The Craftsmen's *Bet HaMedrash* (*Poalei Tzedek*)

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31 This appears to be a favored Yiddish metaphor for someone who is running around completely out of control.

32 A common custom, in Eastern Europe, before the *Kol Nidre* service, was to put out a series of plates, in the vestibule of the house of worship, where the incoming congregation could put money, in support of their favored charitable causes, as an expiation for their various sins (real or perceived), prior to the Day of Atonement worship.

33 Authors footnote: '*HaMelitz*' 1 Shevat 5658 (1898, Number 9).

34 A complete set of the 'six orders' of the Talmud.

At the time when the large assemblies took place to complete the building of the Great Bet HaMedrash, the craftsmen stepped forward to build their own house of worship. In the course of a short time span, right across from the skeleton of the Great *Bet HaMedrash*, on the Minsk *Gasse*, their building already stood [sic: completed] which was known under the name '*Baal Melakha Sha'ar Bet HaMedrash.*'[35] It was located far back from the great expanse, that the Graf had donated as a gift for this purpose.

Among the principal initiators of this *Bet HaMedrash*, was R' Yaakov Judkowsky. Because of this, until the time of his death, he was the Chief *Gabbai,* and nothing was done without his personal cognizance of the matter.

After the death of the old Rabbi, R' Chaim Leib'l זצ"ל, when his son-in-law and successor, separated for long life, needed a manse for his family, and for the elderly *Rebbetzin*, with her children, R' Judkowsky worked with his *Gabbaim* and worshipers to deed a part of the parcel in front, on the Szkolna *Gasse* that belonged to their *Bet HaMedrash*. With the help of the *Gabbai* of the Great Synagogue [sic: *Bet HaMedrash*] R' Abraham Yitzhak Abramowicz, and the balebatim R' Leib Yosh'eh Kaplan, R' Yitzhak Aharon Strelowsky, and R' Moshe Snovsky, he brought together the necessary funds to complete the construction of the building of the Rabbi's manse (in the year 5758). Thanks to this, the Rabbi had his own house in the center of the city, across from the Great *Bet HaMedrash*, where he always prayed. This was convenient, both for him, and for the community.

At the collection plates, the first time the name of the *Bet HaMedrash 'Poalei Tzedek'* is mentioned was on the Eve of Yom Kippur of 5657 (1896).[36]

In the first years, not only the craftsmen and butchers worshiped here, abut also a sizeable number of other *balebatim* who, for a variety of reasons, didn't find 'their place' in other houses of worship. The Craftsmen's *Bet HaMedrash* was not as large and roomy as the one that stood across from it, but because of this, it was more homey and intimate. A *Shas* study group, or a *Mishna* study group, could always find a warm corner, and a large group of learned *balebatim* grouped themselves around them – the religious intelligentsia of the city. You can understand that a community social atmosphere arose there, in which a variety of questions, concerning community life, were deliberated. The first Yeshiva had its permanent location here, which was known as 'Fyt'l Isser's Yeshiva.'

As a consequence, the craftsmen of the city had an important center, from which they projected their influence on community life.

VI. '*Gemilut Hesed*'

In the year 1897, after the death of the prominent activist R' Abraham Mitropolitansky, his sons, Eliezer and Yitzhak, together with the sons-in-law, the lawyer Gurwicz, and to be separated for long life, Zvi Izikson, decided to found a Loan Society in Baranovich with the objective of helping the need craftsmen and hard-pressed storekeepers with interest-free credit, and in this manner, memorialize the name of the deceased.

The initiative to found such an institution stemmed from the standing prayer quorum that was arranged to

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35 "The Gate of the Craftsmen House of Study.'

36 Author's footnote: 'HaMelitz' 25 Elul 5657 (1897, Number 206)

be held at the home of the mourners. A fund of 200 rubles was created from the money provided by the heirs and the worshipers in the *minyan*, on condition of repayment when circumstances made it possible. A lottery, for the benefit of the Loan Society, brought in an additional 70 rubles.

The 'Bank' began its activity under the name '*Maskil al Dal.*'[37] Income came from a variety of collections, and from standing weekly contributions, which came to 7-8 rubles a week.

It is superfluous, to try and describe the importance of such an support institution, considering the economic circumstances of those years. It represented a salvation to tens of families. To a large measure, the Bank helped out the poor craftsman and storekeeper, and was very popular for a longer period of time. Loans were made for up to 10 rubles to be repaid at the rate of one ruble a week, without interest.

Regarding the '*Gemilut Hesed*' Bank, we find the following few lines in '*HaTzefira*' of 1901 (Number 253):

> "...the work of '*Gemilut Hesed*' engenders a surfeit of blessing, in the provision of money loans, to the distressed poor, without interest, and asking for repayments in small instalments."

During the years of unrest, an attempt was made, at the advice of the local *Pristav*, to legalize all of the philanthropic institutions. Finally, in the year 1903, government licenses were obtained for both the *'Gemilut Hesed*' Bank and '*Linat Tzedek.*'

After the Russo-Japanese War, the needs of the craftsmen and storekeepers lessened, but by contrast, the needs of those who were ill, or financially distressed, rose. An activity of anonymous charity giving was initiated.[38] Despite the satisfactory results of this work, contradictory reports were heard in town about the activities of the Bank, and this led to a great deal of friction and dispute.

In 1907, the activity of this group was extinguished. The books, with the notes and inventory were turned over, by the management to the Rabbi.

VII. '*Linat Tzedek*'

Ignoring the improvement in the economic situation, and despite the fact that the weekly income continued to rise – the work of '*Bikur Kholim*' became consistently less effective. Baranovich became much larger, and the number of the sick grew. A lack of initiative was sensed, that would broaden and improve the extent of the philanthropic help for the indigent sick – and this was felt in the activity of the '*Bikur Kholim,*' and placed its future existence in serious danger.

In the year 1899, and through the initiative of the ladies Khavkin, Mintz, Shimshelewicz and Polonsky, and with the help of the '*Bnot Zion,*' a fundamental re-organization came about in the process of allocating help to the indigent sick. The '*Linat Tzedek*' society was founded, which took over all of the responsibilities of the previous '*Bikur Kholim.*'

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37 'Sensitive to the Indigent.'

38 Known in Hebrew by the name '*Matan BaSeyter.*'

In '*HaTzefira*' of 1901 (Number 154), B. Rabinovich writes about the activities of '*Linat Tzedek*:'

> "...the *Linat Tzedek* Society, that was founded here, a few years ago, as a result of the much-regarded community effort of: Mintz, Polonsky, Khavkin, Shimshelewicz, and the young ladies of the *Bnot Zion*, that are their assistants, continue to unfold and develop. The goal of this Society is, to provide help and support to the sick among those of the people that are indigent. [It is] to send them a doctor, and to provide them all of those needs required, until they return to their normal strength, all at the expense of the Society. Apart from this, the Society extends food money to poor families, and a fee for those who nurse the infants of the poor, and other things.
>
> Therefore, first I must call attention to the very respected leaders, the absence of a separate hospital facility for isolating the sick with infectious diseases, or sick people in general, who because of their straitened circumstances, and the suffocating atmosphere that reigns there, cannot achieve a complete cure. And not also, that their bad situation is greatly responsible for the spread of disease, to anyone in contact with them.
>
> And they do not lack for money, and they also have the skill and more than enough aggressive spirit to do the right and charitable thing, requiring only the desire and will. Were they to address this deficiency, the reward would involve a very special boon to the sick, who are cast about awaiting calamity in decrepit houses, and they would do a great charitable deed for the sick and the healthy as well."

As we see, the absence of a hospital created a great deal of suffering and pain for the poor populace. The need for such an institution was of pressing importance.

Accordingly, we find, in '*HaTzefira*' of the year 1896 (Number 118) a short notice from M. A. Shereshevsky about a party that took place in Baranovich in honor of the coronation day of Czar Nicholas II. From this notice, it can be seen how important it was to establish a hospital in Baranovich. Here is what is written there:

> "In the new marketplace, the townspeople organized a great feast in honor of the day, and Graf Razwodowo, whom we honored with an invitation, for him also to attend this party, and the celebration, donated a large house to be used as the hospital, whose absence in the city was palpable."

It is difficult to understand why the hospital had not been previously founded, for so long a time.

The Beginning of Zionism in Baranovich

When the *Hovevei Zion* movement was established in Russia, Baranovich did not yet exist as a settlement. The city, also, did not experience the stormy epoch of the Enlightenment.

In the first half of the nineties, there could be found isolated individuals, who had been influenced by the new nationalist movement.

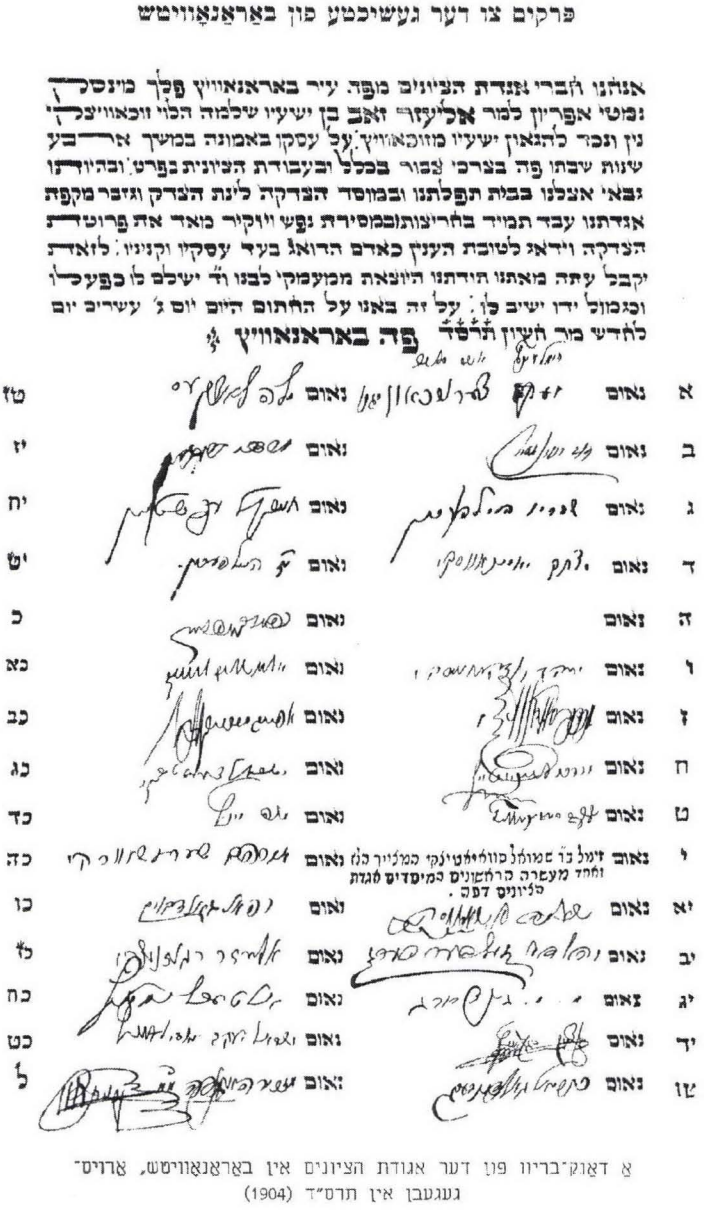
We find the first official news that there was a Zionist activity in our city, for the time being, in the area of fund-raising and expenditures, in '*HaMelitz*' of the year 1897 (Number 206), where a short list is displayed

of funds, that were raised in the *Batei Medrashim* 'Houses of Worship' and '*Poalei Tzedek*' on Yom Kippur Eve of 5757 (1896). The list also records the collection that had been carried out at the wedding of Mr. Yitzhak Jasinowsky to Rivka Treszczinsky on 10 Tevet 5757.

In '*HaMelitz*' of the following years, beginning in the year 1898, we find more explicit records of expenditures, which were collected each Yom Kippur Eve in the plates, as well as at the various celebrations and other opportunities.[39] In these lists, every *Bet HaMedrash* and every *minyan* is listed, as well as the names of all the donors, and the exact sums that each one of them contributed. They also contain the names of a whole array of active Zionist workers, who organized and implemented all of these fund-raising activities. It is worth underscoring the names of these workers who made up the core of the Zionist movement in those years.

Accordingly, we learn, for example, that the first leader of the *Hovevei Zion* in Baranovich, was Mr. Zim'l Mintz. Those who attended the collection plates on Yom Kippur Eve, for the years 5758, 5759, 5760 were Yitzhak Jasinowsky, Moshe Razwilowsky, Yekhiel Mavshovich, M. M. Chernikhov, Eliezer Moshe Szymanowicz (The *Melamed* from Jeremicze), Shlomo Milkonowsky, Yitzhak Mednicky, Yehuda Jeremicky, Yitzhak Sakir, Shlomo Goldberg, Aharon Baruch Reznick, Shlomo Shimshelewicz, Shaul Schwartz, the pharmacist, Yehuda Leib Tetz, Hannan Kantorovich and others.

These were the first people who stood beside the cradle of Zionism in Baranovich.



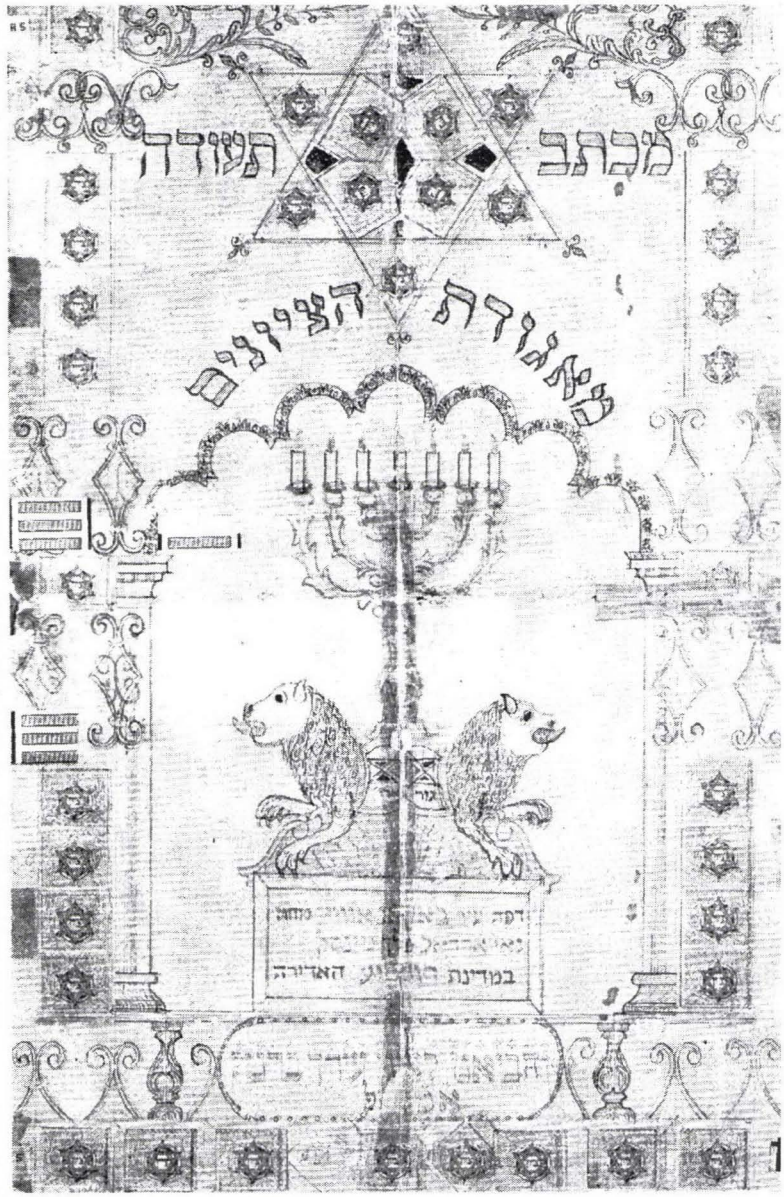
Page 49: *A Thank-You Letter, issued by* 'Agudat HaTzionim' *in Baranovich in the Year 5664 (1904)*
Sent to: Mr. Eliezer Ze'ev ben Yeshayahu Shlomo HaLevi Zhukhowicky

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39 Author's Footnote: '*HaMelitz*' 1 Shevat 5758 – 1898, Number 9; 7 Heshvan 5759 – 1898, Number 222; 16 Iyyar 5759 – 1898, Number 84; 7 MarHeshvan 5760 – 1899, Number 211; 23 Elul 5760 – 1900, Number 200

It was first, in the year 1898, that one of the best inspirational people from the *Hovevei Zion*, visited Baranovich, who founded '*Agudat HaTzionim*' in Baranovich, with Zim'l Mintz at its head.

Zim'l Mintz's father was a landowner in Adukhovščina[40], near Baranovich. After the Russians confiscated all of his fixed assets, the son, under no circumstances, wanted to remain among gentiles. He moved to Baranovich, and helped to build the new settlement. He has a paper business on Marinska, at the home of Shlomo Kaupenicer, which later burned down. His business location was always a gathering place for Zionists and various activities, who came to him with community matters. He would always attend the local '*Agudat HaTzionim*' gatherings and conferences. We find him among the delegates of the first all-Russian Zionist Conference in Minsk, in the year 1898, and at the second Regional Zionist conclave in Minsk in the year 1901. He stood at the head of the local '*Agudat HaTzionim*' until 1906, when he, and his entire family emigrated to America. He was committed heart and soul to Zionism for all of his days. in the year 1931, he came to the Land of Israel, where he passed away on 16 Menachem Av 5696 (1936) at the age of 76 years. His resting place is found on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem.



Page 51:The Frontispiece of the Thank-You Letter

Among the founders of '*Agudat HaTzionim*' also were: M. M. Chernikhov, Yaakov Chernikhov, Yitzhak Jasinowsky, Zim'l Svjacicky[41], Yekhiel Mavshovich, Alter Limon, Nathan Adler, Moshe Razwilowsky, Yaakov Judkowsky, Israel Zalman Heilperin and others.

Among the active Zionists, we especially take note of the name of the lawyer Adler. In '*HaMelitz*' of 1899

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40 Possible Arabauščina

41 In Yiddish, this name is often rendered as Savcicky (or Sawczytzki). In the text, we attempt to adhere to the map spelling of the *shtetl* of Svjacic, from which the name is apparently derived.

(Number 129) we read about him, among others:

> "... even the Zionist concept is the root in the middle of all those groups derived from the efforts of the lawyer Mr. Adler, who speaks before large crowds on every available day, and he adorns the words that come from his heart with aphorisms from our Great Sages, in order to bend the hearts of his listeners to this exalted concept, and to enable his words to bear fruit. It is because of him that a 'reading house' in Hebrew was founded, to permit all those within it to achieve the goal of reading in Hebrew, at the cost of ten kopecks a month. A hope is projected that, as the city will expand, as is expected – that additional houses for the tens of its scions will be built and that our Jewish brethren will avail themselves within their walls – and in this way broaden it impact, as a result of the respected works of its good leadership."

In '*HaMelitz*' of 1899, Number 253 (27 Kislev 5760), the name of Menachem Mendl Ginsberg ז"ל is mentioned for the first time, among an array of greetings and expenditures for the benefit of the organization, in honor of the wedding of Dr. Abraham David Margolin to Olga Heilperin.

The period we are dealing with here – the nineties of the previous century – ends with the year in which this Zionist activist moved into Baranovich. But even from the beginning of his activity, he demonstrated the capacity to breathe new life into the local Zionists. We will not be overstating the case in saying that the arrival of M. M. Ginsberg can be considered the beginning of anew era in the history of Zionism in Baranovich – a period in which Zionism began to emerge from its confined channels into a broad field of fruitful work and development. The new arrival immediately assumes a leadership role among the active participants of the '*Agudat HaTzionim*.' In the year 1902, we find that he already is the representative of Baranovich at the second general Zionist Conference in Minsk. After the emigration of Mr. Zim'l Mintz to America, he takes over his position as the sitting leader and director of the local Zionist organization, at the head of which he stood for nearly three decades, participating in all of its tribulations and triumphs.

The '*Agudat HaTzionim*' carries out an unlimited reorganization in its activity. Two youth organizations are founded: '*B'nai Zion*' and '*Bnot Zion*,' which develop multi-pronged work. Their influence is felt especially strongly in the areas of cultural and social help.

In general, the populace related to the new national movement sympathetically. This stands out strongly in the extensive funds collected, which came from all sectors of the populace. However, it cannot be said that, from the outset, they had not anticipated getting on without any resistance. Here and there, one did encounter opposition, especially from Hasidim, and orthodox fanatics. However, at not time did the friction become sharp. Baranovich, in general, was not a particularly fertile ground for stormy controversy and disputes. It is also necessary to note that the shtetl had no developed industry, and the Jewish labor organizations, such as the Bund, S. R., and others began to organize here much later, and because of this, the activity of the Zionists proceeded without any obstacles, and benefitted from a more tranquil atmosphere than in other places.

In the year 1899, a Zionist reading room was founded, and a library. The reading room – known by the [sic: Russian] name, '*Chitalniya*'– was originally found at Mr. Limon on the Alexandrovska Gasse, in the house that stood in the courtyard.[42]

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[42] Author's footnote: In the later years, Limon's houses were one of the centers for Jewish self-defense, and revolutionary activity.

At that time, the '*Chitalniya*' played an important role in the life of the Jewish populace. It immediately became the central nerve of the Zionist movement; often, every evening, it was extensively patronized, especially on Friday nights, Saturdays, and on Festival holidays. Here, it was possible to read '*HaMelitz*' and '*HaTzefira*,' a variety of periodicals, and brochures, in Hebrew, Yiddish and Russian. It was possible to obtain Hebrew, and other books at the library. Here, debates and lectures took place. In general, the '*Chitalniya*' was a place to carry on discussions about a variety of problems in Jewish life.

Despite the fact that the activity of the Zionist organization was carried out on an illegal basis, and under no circumstances were any open public gatherings permitted – the Zionists found a way. Larger gatherings would take place in the Bet HaMedrash, smaller ones – in the '*Chitalniya*.'

In '*HaMelitz*' of 1899 (Number 212), we learn about a gathering that took place on the first day of *Hol HaMoed Sukkot*, in the Great *Bet HaMedrash*, in honor of the delegate to the Third Zionist Congress, the lawyer, Shimshon Rosenbaum from Minsk, who had come to give a report about the Congress to his constituents from Baranovich. His report made a strong impression, and drew many to Zionism.

Sh. Rosenbaum was one of the most active Zionist leaders in Russia. In August 1902, he helped to organize the second all-Russian Zionist Conclave in Minsk, and he is selected for the central leadership of the Russian organization. He dedicated himself principally to the work of the Jewish National Fund and the Colonial Bank. From the second to the eleventh Zionist Congress, he appears as the delegate of the Russian Zionists. At the seventh Zionist Congress, in Basel 1905, he is elected to the 'Greater Action Committee.' In 1906, he is sent as a deputy of the Minsk Province to the first Russian Parliament, the 'Государственне Дума.'[43]

Baranovich prospered and grew, and became an important Zionist center. A variety of emissaries would come here, and the best of the recruiters from '*Hovevei Zion*.' Reports and correspondence began to appear, in the Hebrew press, about the activity of Zionists in Baranovich.

In the year 1899, the well-know Zionist recruiter Rabbi Y. Y. Nissenbaum visited Baranovich. In the Hebrew press of those years, under the pseudonym '*Yehudi*,' there appeared a series of reports about his travels around the Jewish circuit in Russia, as the official emissary of the 'Odessa Committee' of '*Hovevei Zion*.' And here is what we read in '*HaMelitz*' of 1899 (Number 84) about his visit to Baranovich:

> "This station, B.____ is 'A City of come from Sorrow.' Several decades ago, there were only a few Jewish families. Now there are almost four hundred heads of such families. Many men of valor reside here, and many families are able to make a living from their work. The condition of the city is very good, and its population continues to grow from year to year. It is especially the trade craftsmen who seem to be growing in number, and they seem to be able to earn a living handsomely.
>
> A year ago one of the leaders of 'Hovevei Zion,' stopped by here, and established a Zionist group. He also appointed a leader to the support committee. He also went around to the doors of donors, and gathered the contributions of the members. A year went by, and a number of recruiters did recruiting in the various houses of study, but the group grew weaker, and declined; the members did not pay their dues. Disruptive elements arose against it from within and without, and it nearly ceased to function entirely. But isn't it said that 'On the day Moses died, [a new] Moses was born,' and also the Zionists of Baranovich were restored to

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43 The Government Deliberative Body (Legislature).

life at the time that they thought themselves to be moribund. Now, they have begun to teach the words of the Prophets, and our history to the people, and involve themselves in all the needs of the community, both in the [Holy] Land and in the Diaspora. I sat until midnight at a celebration of the '*Hovevei Tzion*' there, when I sensed the stirring of some bad sentiment between a number of them, that threatens dissolution. However, it is my hope that as Zionists, they will understand the importance of the unity of the various factions, and the pursuit of status and aggrandizement has no place in the participation of their activities and keeping the peace."

In the year 1900, Rabbi Y. Y. Nissenbaum again visited Baranovich. This time, a longer article appeared in '*HaMelitz*,' in which the writer portrays his impressions of community life in Baranovich. We reproduce here, a few fragments that have a bearing on the Zionist activity:

"...The city, today counts about six hundred, and above [sic: families], constituting an important Jewish community. Before, there was one small *Bet HaMedrash* at the edge of the city, in which the *Mitnagdim* and *Hasidim* worshiped together, and today, there are already four *Batei Medrashim* for the *Mitnagdim*, and two *shtiblakh* for the *Hasidim*.

There are also Zionists in the city, both the *Bnot Zion* and *Yaldei Zion*.[44] The Zionists are involved in their familiar activity: they sold about 160 bank subscriptions, gathered one hundred silver rubles in currency, and also donate for the benefit of the *Yishuv* in the Land of Israel. Here, I underscore the word 'donors' with a line, because apart from the leadership, there are no members, and up to this point, no effort has been made to recruit any. At all the weddings, of which there are many, in this crossroads, there is not one mention of Zion, if the members of the wedding will not recognize it; and this is the same at all the other festive occasions that seem to go by, without any attempt to 'raise Jerusalem above the highest joy over their heads.'

The opened a library and reading room as well, in which there are a variety of Zionist newspapers. However, there were also days, when an active Zionist man, but very strong and unmoving in his opinions, caused people to not comply, but also not oppose him. This led to him taking leave of the other members. He argued to the 'working people' – all of this is in accordance with the custom of the Zionist supporters in the larger cities.

'*Bnot Zion*' established modernized classrooms, separately for the boys and separately for the girls, in which *Tanakh* was taught., Hebrew language, and the language of the country, and the boys are seeing benefit from their studies (I did not test the girls). But there is not a single overseer with managerial skills, and if the Talmud Torah is short of money, why should the 'modern schools' also not suffer from this as well? And this deficiency is felt in reality very frequently, to the point that the lady principal is compelled to seek a variety of means to make up for the shortfall, means that there is room to complain about.

And the '*Yaldei Zion*' established a library of their own of 'Children's Literature,' and they read there more than do the adult Zionists; and they also sing Zionist songs.

In general, the state of Zionism in the city is not bad. The Zionists work at their tasks, and if not with any special diligence or enthusiasm, at least in a satisfactory way, and the townsfolk are not distant from them.

There are, however, many opponents, among whom, the 'smart guys' feel quite superior, and

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[44] Possibly a variant of *B'nai Zion*.

one of these 'sages' wanted very much to demonstrate his wisdom to the public at large. It was on '*Shabbat Nachamu*,'[45] and a large crowd of people had assembled at the Great Bet HaMedrash, and were called to the Torah making handsome donations for the benefit of the community, each and every person, in keeping with their means, and this person also came up and in a loud voice announced a donation of 'half a gulden' and seven kopecks out loud, and half to let everyone know what a wise person he was.

And most of the opponents are *Hasidim*, whose *Rebbe* is a great opponent of Zionism. It is said about this *Rebbe,* that he is a great 'Lover of Zion' for those of his *Hasidim* that reside in Jerusalem, for whom he gathers tens of thousands of rubles every year., while he, himself makes do with the least of the least, taking only six rubles a week, and to his *Hasidim* in Jerusalem, who number into tens of families, he gathers about a thousand rubles per family – that being twenty rubles a week, So precious is this *Rebbe,* to the *Hasid* residing in Jerusalem, that they gather up three times this amount on behalf of the *Rebbe*, but he displays an intense anger toward Zionism, and perhaps, in his heart he knows the reason for this, as a righteous man knows the sentiment of his beast of burden. An I do not wish to speculate at all about him, because 'a speculation is equivalent to a fact,' it is therefore better at the very least to hear the opinion of others. And in addition to what I have already said, I have nothing further to say."

In '*HaTzefira*' of 1901 (Number 253) B. Rabinovich writes, among other things:

"...the Zionist societies here does a lot of work to raise the level of knowledge about the tradition among the children of our city, towards which purpose, a library has been established for the reading of books, and almost every member of the community participated in this endeavor.

About one hundred and seven lottery tickets were sold, apart from a sizeable sum that was gathered by the treasury of the more fortunate committee in Odessa. Mr; Zim'l Mintz is at the head of this society. At frequent intervals, the Zionists here organize celebrations whose proceeds are dedicated to the needs of our city."

In '*HaTzefira*' of the year 1900 (Number 99) we find an article by M. Alka, on the theme: 'Mys and Baranovich Compared.' We bring here that part that has a relationship to our city:

"...in comparison to the city of Mys – its younger sister Baranovich, which is nearby – there are six hundred Jewish households that reside here, divided into two camps, each of which grows and branches out considerably. The first group are the merchants, among which are found those whose business had flowered, they have considerable means, and they have a great many business development interests; apart from the remarkable merchants of wealth and substantial worth, there are also rich people of middling means, and who have more average businesses. There are other intelligentsia, whose material worth is not known, relative to the merchants, and these are in the second class, which is small, and are thought to support themselves through the manual trades, among whom there are only few who are wealthy. And most are able to derive their living with relative ease. In general, the residents of this city are on a fairly high plane, in material means, relative to the remaining cities in the area.

The state of traditional knowledge, among the residents of this city, is very good. they have large houses of study and a prayer house for the *Hasidim* of Slonim, and a *Shas* study group,

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45 The Sabbath after the Fast of the Ninth of Ab.

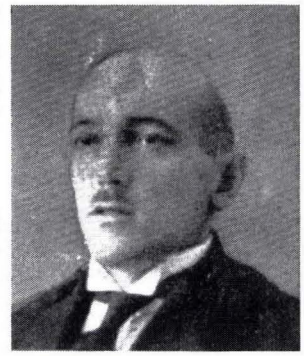
and also for *Mishna*. Most of the young people are drawn to the study of Torah and knowledge, and a number of them are fluent in Hebrew literature and the literature of the country. In this connection, girls also study, reading and writing in Hebrew.

The education of the boys and the girls is good together. Fathers send their sons to school, where apart from the st subjects: the language of the country, arithmetic, country history, and composition, they hear lessons in the Hebrew language, and the history of the Jewish people, or they are lectured by teachers with the specific pedagogical skills, known to be able to educate them to become faithful sons to their people. In addition to this, they will also acquire all the knowledge they need for good citizenship. And a special satisfaction is derived from listening to the sons and daughters gossiping with one another in Hebrew."

On the threshold of the twentieth anniversary, there already was, in Baranovich, a strong Zionist organization, with Zim'l Mintz as the sitting head, Yaakov Chernikhov – the Vice-Chairman, Eliezer Ze'ev Zhukhowicky – Treasurer, M. M. Chernikhov – Secretary.

In the coming years, we find the 'Zionist Societies' in the full flower of their development. 'Actions' of the Colonial-Bank are sold, and signs of the '*Keren Kayemet*' are spread about. Speakers are brought in: known personalities, from the Zionist movement, come here to visit. Baranovich delegates its representatives to the conclaves and gatherings that take place often in Minsk. The local Zionists take an active part in the elections to the first Russian parliament, and help to get the Zionist candidate elected, the lawyer, Shimshon Rosenbaum, asa deputy from the Minsk *Guberniya.* The '*Chitalniya*' becomes too crowded to absorb the increasing numbers of visitors to hear lectures, and it is moved to the house of Mr. Kapilovich, Dog Alexandrovska-Sosnowa. But here, as well, the premises are not particularly large. In the years 1906-6 a Zionist Synagogue was built. After the back of the Russian revolution was broken, and the dark times of the reaction set in, in Russia, the activity of the Zionist movement became weakened, but it did not come to a halt. The Zionist Synagogue and the homes of M. M. Ginsberg, and Yitzhak Jasinowsky become the principal centers for Zionism in Baranovich. The work gets accomplished up to the outbreak of The First World War, and the Germans occupy our city.

Among the Baranovich Zionists of that period, it is especially worth taking note of the Engineer Yaakov Berman, who was in the Polish delegation of the eighth Zionist Congress, and took part in the forth conference of the Russian Zionists in The Hague in the year 1907, and in the third conference in Hamburg in the year 1909.



Page 58: Engineer Yaakov Berman

As we see, Zionism in Baranovich, immediately from the onset, was very much alive, and laid down the most solid foundation stones, which during nearly four decades, carried on itself the great and productive edifice of Zionism in Baranovich.

In the Years 1900-1915

During the years 1900-1915, we encounter a period of the continuous growth and development of the city itself, and of its Jewish community, in all respects.

The first years of the twentieth century passed under the rubric of struggle for removal of the limitations on

the Pale of Settlement, which divided the young community of the city and its village, and to unite the small *shtetl* of Razwodowo with the gentile neighborhood, where the Jews were not permitted to live. The successful result of this struggle has great significance for the future of Baranovich. Also other events, like the beginnings of the labor movement, the unsuccessful attempts at pogroms in 1905-6, etc., were important dates in the life of the city.

Additional Building Activity

As already mentioned, for a long time, Baranovich was counted as a village, and the properties were considered part of a rural area, that belonged to the peasants of Svetilovnitz, that for a long time, stood vacant. The Jews waited for an opportune moment to be able to settle there.

Already, in the last years of the nineties, a favorable movement finally came to pass. By some means or another, permission was granted for Jews to live on this gentile property, but only to live there – it was still forbidden for them to either buy or lease the property itself, or to build houses.

Despite this, Jews found a means to cope. they began to build using gentile names. The barrier of The Pale of Settlement fell, Marinska Gasse ceased to be the boundary between the city and the village, even if it was necessary to suffer no small amount of trouble and indignity; it was not only once that there was a threat to be driven back to the previous locations.

This uncertain situation lasted until these rural parcels were formally absorbed by the city. This was in December 1903, when New-Baranovich, in accordance with a order of the Ministerial-Committee, was released from the 'temporary orders' of the year 1882, in which Jews were prohibited from occupying the village parcels.[46]

A large building program again ensued, which stretched out in the direction of where people made their living – to the Polesia Station, to the Military Camp, to the 'Сухарни Завод' (the bread factory), and most important of all, to the main highway.

This expansion abetted the jealousy of the peasants towards the Graf, who literally swept in gold from the leasing out his lands, and at the time when their own parcels were artfully compelled to remain empty and be worthless.

The young settlement began to spread out in the direction of the east. New streets were installed here: Pozharna, Kladbishchenska (Cmentarna) the extension of roads, and a whole array of smaller side streets. A new center of commerce came into being, in New-Baranovich, opposite the military camp, which was entirely in Jewish hands, despite the fact that the majority of the populace in that neighborhood always remained Christian.

It is worth mentioning a further stage in the building activity of the city, for the years 1910-1914, when the settlement began to expand in the southwest direction. At that time, the Pocztowa *Gasse* grew, and the

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[46] Author's footnote: Руководство к русск-закон. о евр. (Зизд.), дополн. стр5

Alexandrovska (Senatorska), Petrovska (Ulanska) and Kver[47] streets were lengthened.

Despite the rapid process of urbanization, a large part of the Graf's forest in the southwest, and the government (*Kozioner*) forest remained in the actual center of the city. Man, city and forest co-existed. The populace still was able to inhale the forest air, and along with the general appearance, it still was able to retain the old romantic character of the one-time sanatorium.

This idyll did not last long. The forest was the first victim of the German occupation, in The First World War – they chopped down almost all of it – and the same Germans, in The Second World War, also wiped out the city, and murdered the entire Jewish population.

The Growth of the Populace

At the threshold of the twentieth century, Baranovich was already a substantial town, which awed everyone with its vigorous growth and development. The Jewish population becomes larger from year-to-year. The last of the settlers in its ambience, forsake their villages, and move into the city. The flow from the surrounding towns is great, and especially from Mys. A large influx from larger cities, near and far, is also noteworthy.

The means to make a living are more accessible here than in other places. Baranovich was an attraction also because of its superior educational facilities for children.

On the even of The First World War, the Jewish community stands at about 9-10 thousand souls (over 60% of the general population), and were it not for the mass emigration to lands across the sea, the Jewish community would have been much larger.

Accordingly, at first glance, the city in hindsight made a much greater impression; it possessed a formidable [military] camp, and one of the most important bread factories in Russia, and there were always transit passengers milling about here.

At the outbreak of The First World War, when our city became the headquarters of the Russian General Staff, and a sort of temporary residence for Czar Nicholas II, the largest detachment of the Petersburg Gendarmerie came here along with many employees, as well as the entire aristocracy from the Czar's Court.

Fires

Fires were a rarity in Baranovich; and when a fire did break out, not more than one house or barn was consumed.

In contrast to the surrounding towns, the houses in Baranovich were spread apart from one another, and surrounded by large courtyards and gardens. Apart from that, Baranovich also had a well-organized fire-fighters society, who would come to be of help in the neighboring settlements.

The expression goes: 'After a fire, one becomes rich.' Indeed, this is what happened in Baranovich. After

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47 Possibly referring to what is elsewhere called the *Hower* Gasse

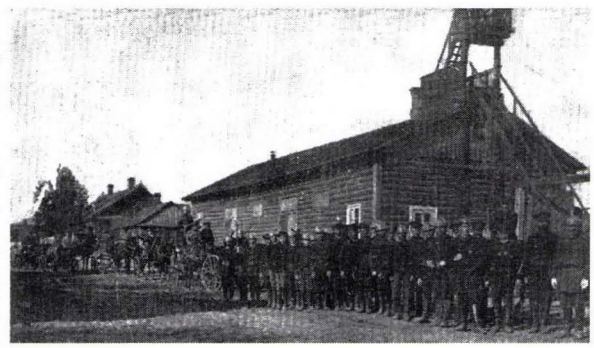
a shack burned down – a house would be built in its place, and after a [sic: wooden] house – a stone structure, especially in the commercial center, and around the principal street, the Marinska.

It is hard to enumerate all of the fires from that time, but regarding one fire, that by circumstance came to be immortalized in '*HaTzefira*' of the year 1913 (Number 201)[48], it is worth taking a pause. It is characteristic for Baranovich as a center for weddings, or 'The Wedding Industry' as the wags called it.

> " Some time ago, the house fo the local Rabbi, ?? Dr. Shapiro, burned down, and among other of his possessions, all the birth certificates and marriage contracts were incinerated. The loss of these documents caused a great deal of damage, and not only to the people of our community, but also to several hundred people from other places – because since both of the stations were here, the Alexandrovska and Polesia, that were transit points to the residents of many cities. Accordingly, they serve as a 'center' and many couples come here to celebrate their marriage, and the certificates of marriage are inscribed in the books of the local Rabbi.
>
> Now, these people arrive, whose number is quite large, to demand their certificates from the Rabbi, and the latter is compelled to react negatively towards them, because he does not have the means to assist them either a little or a lot.
>
> The Rabbi attempted to obtain permission from the provincial officer in charge, to have the central authority provide him with copies that they have in perpetuity, in special ledgers. But for this a small fee, and a fee for the clerk was demanded, and the like. After this, the Rabbi turned with his request to the local council, to give him the requisite amount of money, but this too was turned down, in a decision not to comply with his request, for the simple reason that they do not engage in such transactions... and the Rabbi was compelled to withdraw from his undertaking, – and those demanding these certificates were leaving on a daily basis, downhearted, and returning just as they came."

The Fire-Fighter's Society

The volunteer Fire-Fighter's Society in Baranovich had a long tradition of devoted service to insure the security of the resident population.



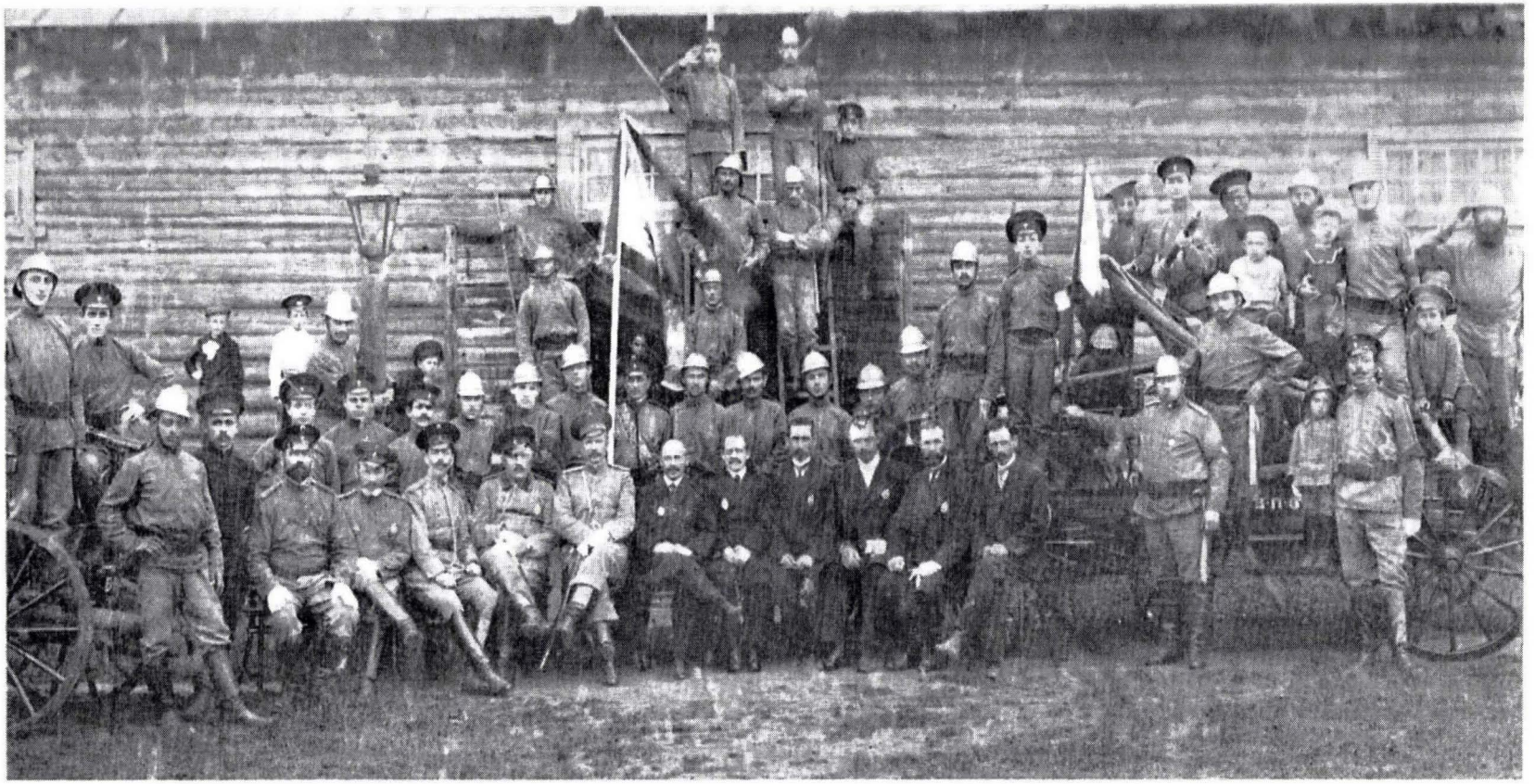
Page 62: The Fire Fighter's Building ('Serai') on Mošči̇čka (Пожарна) 14.

In its essence, it was an expression of the Jewish impulse for autonomy. Folk-like in its character, it served as a base for community work for a variety of circles and walks in the Jewish populace, as well as a means of achieving harmonious cooperative endeavor between Jews and gentiles.

If, during normal times, the Fire Fighter's Society was popular and beloved, it especially demonstrated its total importance during times of unrest, when one was under the danger of pogroms, or during wartime, when the city passed from one hegemony to the other. In

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[48] Author's footnote: The writer of the article – He is Y. M. Zakin



Page 64: ***A Group of Fire-Fighters from the 'Fire-Fighter's Brigade' in the year 1912***

From the right, sitting: 2. Yankl Judkowsky. 4. The Lawyer Bagumin. 5. The Dentist Chernikhov. 6. The Lawyer Gurwicz. 9. Levikov. 10. Chaim David Turetsky. 11. Nikczetny

Right, near the vehicle wheel: Yom-Tov Yosselewicz (with his child)

Standing in the middle: Njasvizky (behind Banatin), 5. Borowsky (behind Gurwicz), 6. Michael Kroshinsky (near the flag), 7. Gorinowsky, 'Irschel Judkowsky, 10. Liobowicky.

On the vehicle, to the right: Schaja Kirschchinsky (saluting), Gamm (holding the hose), Ahar'eleh Turetsky (with a white armband), Wolf Mukasey (near Turetsky).

On the vehicle to the left: Ahar'eleh Judkowsky (right), Yankl David Chaimowicz (left).

On the Ladder: Shmuelowicz (top right), Eliowicz (top left), Moshe Winikowsky (middle left),

Near the street lamp: Pinchas Mukasey.

the dangerous periods of interregnum, it was the Fire Fighters who took on the oversight and concern for the security of the city, and its residents.

The history of the Fire Fighters in Baranovich begins in the decade of the nineties. Fires would break out from time to time. The example of the surrounding towns, where entire quarters, or half a town would burn down, elicited concern and unrest. The houses and the stores were not yet insured.

Because of the initiative of the Messrs. Shilayner, Szymansky, Dr. Chernikhov, Zvi Izikman, the lawyer Gurwicz, Chaim David Turetsky, Yehuda Zilberberg, Moshe Winikowsky, Zelig Dobkowsky, Yankl Judkowsky, and others, the volunteer Fire-fighters Society was founded in our city (Пожарна Овщество).

The elderly Avinowicky from Haradzeja was brought in as an organizer and instructor, who was known in the area as an accomplished expert in these matters. Mr. Shilayner was appointed as the chief commander. An old pump was dug up, along with a couple of barrels, several ladders were cobbled together, and the 'Fire-Fighter's Brigade' as it was called, became operational. The implements stood in Shilayner's yard for a long period of time.
In the year 1904, when the new *Pristav* Szklarewicz came to Baranovich, and the Jews sought ways by which to befriend him, he was put at the head of the 'Fire-Fighter's Brigade.' Several years later, he left the city, and transferred to Minsk. His successor was the Notary, Berkowsky. After a short time, the position of *Nachalnik* went over into the hands of the nobleman Lisowsky, who remained in his position until the outbreak of The First World War.

Under his direction, the Fire-Fighter's Society developed a vibrant activity. It numbered over one hundred firemen (almost all Jews), and developed its own location with its own building, which carried the respected name of 'Пожарна Серай' (The Fire-fighters' Hall). Water reservoirs were also built, at various points throughout the city. Several pumps were already also procured and many other tools, and most of all – several beautiful horses, and their own orchestra.

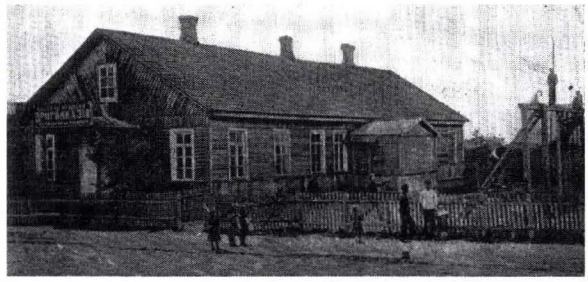
There were also a number of Christians represented in the leadership, from amongst the distinguished residents of the city, such as the *Pristav*, Graf Rozwadowski, as honorary members, and others.

Lisowsky's first adjutant was Os'keh Tetz, the actual leader of the organization. Messrs. Mansky, the lawyer Gurwicz, Zilberberg, Ger'l Goldberg, and others were designated as *Nachalnik* and members of the staff.

Expenses were covered by monthly fees that were paid by the *balebatim* who had means. Once a week there were the usual training exercises, and from time to time, surprise drills were arranged. As a victim, they normally selected a homeowner who had refused to pay a share. There was nothing to envy him: a flood of water would be poured down his chimney until the entire house was 'drowned.'

The Baranovich Fire-fighters had a good name in the entire area. At its annual traditional celebration, delegates from all of the surrounding settlements would come in. These celebrations were the greatest attraction in the city. (About the further development of the Fire-fighters' Society, see '*The Fire-fighters' Society, in the Period of Polish Rule*' by B. Avinowicky).

The Educational System



Page 67:Szulicki's Gymnasium

The first teachers, and the first of the modern '*Heders*,' were already visible in the decade of the nineties, or as they were called, 'classes.'

Among the first pioneers in such schools were the teachers: Razwilowsky, Yekhiel Mavshovich, Chernikhov, Szlimowicz, Ragonitsky, Gordon, and others. They were all active participants in the Zionist movement, and supported the implantation of the Jewish national spirit and Hebrew language among the youth. Already, in these years before The First World War, Baranovich already had the reputation as a city where Hebrew was spoken freely.

M. Genesin ל"ז, in his trip through the Jewish towns of Poland, Lithuania and Russia, together with the writer Yitzhak Katznelson, the artist Rudolf Zaslawsky, and others, also visited Baranovich, in the year 1913, where he came to present '*Uriel Acosta*,' in Hebrew. In his book, '*My Journey through the Jewish Theater*,' he dedicates nearly an entire chapter to this visit, and among other things, he writes in the chapter titled 'With Yitzhak Katznelson in Baranovich' as follows:

> "... After Lodz, came Częstochowa, Bondyn and other cities in Poland, and of these – a leap to the city of Baranovich, that belonged to Russia. Even here, as in the cities that came before it, the dignitaries of the city, and officers of its community institution, came to greet the Hebrew actors at the train station. Here, Katznelson was also impressed with the seriousness of the importance of Hebrew, and even the Yiddishists felt there was no point in engaging in idle dispute. This city was in my view, with regard to its Hebrew speakers, analogous to the city of Rehovot in the Land of Israel. Not only did those who came to receive us spoke Hebrew, but also the majority of the the men of the city spoke Hebrew. I walked the length and the breadth of its streets, and I hear a fluent Hebrew..."
> "...the affection for everything associated with the Land of Israel was great, for its literature (Israeli literature at that time found its expression in '*HaPoel HaTza'ir*,' and in 'Moledet,' who had many loyal subscribers in this city)..."

Until the year 1907, Baranovich had no gymnasium or state-run school. The first four-class '*Kozioner*' pro-gymnasium for women, was founded in 1907, approximately. This school was enabled to satisfy the wishes of the city Christian populace. This gymnasium was available to Jewish female students as well, but to a highly restricted extent, that being the children of families of *balebatim* with means. the happiness of the fortunate parents did not last very long. The gymnasium was located far from the city, in New-Baranovich, and in a Christian neighborhood, and the female Jewish students immediately, from the outset, tasted the bitter taste of anti-Semitism from their classmates and the teaching personnel.

When the situation became unbearable, the Jews saw that they would be compelled to establish (in the year 1910) their own such school, with the name 'Древня Ёврейская Учйтелйа,[49]' whose director was the well-known teacher Shapiro.

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[49] Traditional Hebrew School.

In the year 1907-9, a four-class men's gymnasium was established with government rights – the so-called 'Szulicki's pro-Gymnasium' (named for the Christian proprietor, Szulicki). This was a private undertaking, which has a great reputation in the Jewish community, and enjoyed its loyalty and support. The building was located in a well-to-do Jewish neighborhood, and the students were almost exclusively Jewish. The language of instruction was Russian (as was also the case in the Jewish Girls' School) and the studies – within the ambit of a government gymnasium. At the conclusion of school training, very difficult 'deputation' final examinations were administered (The name of the examination – 'deputation' – which the government would delegate from the Vilna School Curate), and the students, who withstood the ordeal, obtained a diploma, which gave them the right to pursue their studies in the further [sic: higher] classes of the government schools, to the extent that they were made accessible to Jews. Only the children from families with means were able to take advantage of this private middle school, because of the high tuition.

In the year 1900, the government opened a city school for men in (Городская Уителиче) which also consisted of four classes. created for the less affluent element from the local and surrounding Christian populace. The access here, for the Jews, was according to a set percentage (five percent) and the attitude towards them – a distinctly hostile one. Here, at least, they had access, also for the Jewish children of less affluent circumstances, who had to demonstrate certain special abilities on the difficult entrance examinations.

There was also a one-year *Volksschule* (Народная Уителиче) to which one would automatically transfer in the first class of the municipal school. Access for Jews here was much easier.

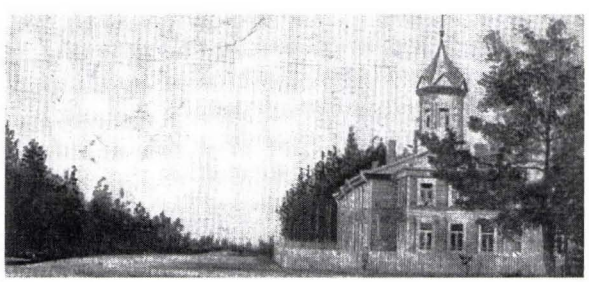
During this time, in the area of Jewish religious study, and modern Jewish education, Baranovich in those years did not stand at a low level at all, general education was limited. Youth was compelled to travel out to distant locations to complete their education; women – mostly to Volkovysk, and the men – in Vilna, in the famous private gymnasium of Kagan.

Without taking note of it, Baranovich had a blossoming cadre of school youth, and a dynamic intelligentsia.

In those years, the 'Jewish Artistic-Literary Society' was very active, with its well-known theater circle, which had a great deal of input to the spiritual and cultural development of the Jewish populace.

The Inception of Jewish Theater in Baranovich

The later 'Jewish Drama Union' in Baranovich, was a continuation of the one-time 'Friends' Circle' which, in the years before The First World War, was a significant part of the so-called 'Jewish Literary-Artistic Society.'



Page 69: The building of the first theater in Baranovich (Rog Pocztowa Grafska)

Already, by the late nineties of the prior century, the town had the pleasure of warmly receiving those Jewish actors that visited the town.

In the year 1893, the Jewish troupe, 'Antsipovich' visited the town, with the famous choirmaster 'Liav,' and a year later, the Jewish troupe 'Adolph Kampaneyetz' came. They performed a number of operettas, and several

of the creations of Goldfadn and Gordin. The presentations were completely filled in the not-yet-completed Greenspan house on Marinska *Gasse,* and in the granary, which stood in Limon's yard.

The appearance of a Jewish theater, as well as the subsequent visits of Jewish theater performers, enchanted many young people, and made a strong impression on a group of young people, who began to dream of their own theater circle. It didn't take long, and such a circle was indeed organized.

At the initiative of the ladies, Khavkina-Chernikhov, Walkina, Beladubrowska, and the Messrs. Bussel, Ratner, Mansky, Beladubrowsky, etc., with the support of a number of talented Jewish soldiers from the military garrison in Baranovich, Gold, Spitz, and others – a group came together that began to give substance to the idea of a Jewish theater circle in our town.

With a great expenditure of energy, these inspired amateurs would, from time-to-time, appear before the Jewish audience on improvised stages, in unfinished houses, barns, and the like.

The older members of the later 'Drama Society' would tell, in a humorous way, about one of these presentations, which had been organized in a grain silo which had been cleaned out only with a great expenditure of energy; the walls and decorations on this primitively constructed stage were plastered with colored paper. And when it came time for the general rehearsal on *Hol HaMoed* Pesach, the paper had been torn up and eaten by vermin.

The first theater building that was erected in our city was built during the Russo-Japanese War by the local nobleman, Graf Rozwadowski, and it happened not out of any love he had for the theatrical arts, but rather as a circumstance that had underlying it, a specific romantic episode. This particular theater was located on *Rog Pocztowa Grafska*, on the road to the Jewish cemetery. It is pronounced this way – *Pocztowa, Grafska*! In reality, these were the names of nearby streets, because all around, there were yet no houses, but only wild grasses and trees.

For a variety of reasons, the Jewish amateurs seldom performed here.

On the spot of the theater building, the local post office existed in the years 1909-10.

Much before that, approximately in the years 1905-6, in New-Baranovich, in the so-called Общественое Собрание (Social Gathering Place), a large theater was put up, with a huge hall, and a beautiful modern stage, on which the most famous artists, singers and musicians appeared, who almost always made a stop in Baranovich on their travels to Moscow, Warsaw, Petersburg, and Kiev. Also, famous Jewish artists, and even cantors would, from time-to-time, appear before the Jewish and even non-Jewish public.

Many of the scions of Baranovich will certainly recall the presentation of Esther Rachel Kaminsky and her troupe, which left a strong impression on the Jewish populace, as well as the concerts of the famous cantor [sic: Gershon] Sirota, on the stage of this theater.

The truth, however, is that the Jewish amateur players, and the Jewish public in general, got little use from it. The theater was under a Christian management, and was, in general, rather far from the city. in a dark, and mostly gentile neighborhood.

The Jewish Literary-Artistic Society

The question of a Jewish center and a gathering place for the Jewish populace, a sort of literary-cultural center, became more and more urgent.

Finally, in the years 1907-8, the previously mentioned "Jewish Literary-Artistic Society" was founded. The initiators were: Chai'kl Epstein, Beladubrowsky, Yitzhak Jasinowsky, the Dentist, Chernikhov, Mitropolitansky, Mansky, Szymansky, Ozserowsky, Jeremicky, Moshe Limon, Ratner, Yud'l Bussel, Max Shilayner, Fiedler, and the ladies Walkina[50], Khavkina, etc.

The society was located in the house of Lieber Rabinovich, Rog Petrovska-Marinska. It took up the entire second floor. Here, there was a reading room and a library, as well as a long theater room, and a stage for presentations, which was small and not comfortable. In general, the location did not afford much space, but it was much nicer, and the important thing, it was located precisely in the middle of the city, and everyone felt warm and welcome there.

The circle of supporters consisted of a full array of talented women and men, who earned a reputation not only from the local Jewish populace, but also from theater circles across the border from our vicinity. The names of Joseph Goldschmid, Yud'l Bussel, Ratner, Beladubrowsky and Mrs. Beladubrowsky, Mr. & Mrs. Walkin, Max Ljahavicky, Mansky, Mishalov, Frad'l Epstein, Rosa Adler, Zlat'keh Poupko, Malka Miskina, Faygl Eisenstadt, and set apart for long life, Minna Rubinstein (now in America), are definitely etched into the hearts and minds of many residents of Baranovich.

The Literary-Artistic Society, or as it was called in town, ' Литратурная Обществео' was, in the years before The First World War, was the living nerve of social life in Baranovich and the sole place where cultural activity was concentrated. The '*Lyubitelas*' found a true home here, and a wide open field for their endeavors. It was here that theater presentations took place, concerts, jubilee celebrations, Hanukkah gatherings, and traditional Purim balls, as well as literary evenings and other gatherings. Itinerant Jewish troupes, and the most prominent of the talents from the Jewish Warsaw theater, who from time-to-time would come to visit Baranovich – always found a warm, welcoming place along with a friendly attitude.

Who, of the older generation from Baranovich, has no residual memory of the visit of *Sholom Aleichem*, the acting of Julius Adler in "The Mad Father," and the visit of M. Gnessin in 1913. At that time, '*Uriel Acosta*' was produced in Hebrew, under the direction of Menachem Gnessin (The lead role: Rudolph Zaslawsky).

And it was in this fashion, that the activity of the amateur circle went on, until The First World War.

Despite [the war], the activity did not completely come to a halt. In the spring of 1915, when the war was at its most intense peak, the Jewish '*Lyubitelas*' put on the 'Kreutzer Sonata' (in Russian). The piece was performed with great success; the Russian aristocracy from the Christian neighborhood attended, as well as the entire general staff, which at that time, resided in Baranovich. The revenue received was used for the benefit of the war-wounded.

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50 It is worth noting that the feminine suffix 'a' may mislead the reader in understanding the identity of the individual. The root last name here is Walkin.

With the further development of the war, and the approach of the German army near to our city, a number of the most active of the members of this circle evacuated themselves deep into Russia. Others found themselves new homes in lands over the sea.

The Economic Character

Located at the crossroads of three rail lines – Baranovich had the reputation as a visible center of economic activity in the entire area of western Russia. Commerce occupied an important place. A significant number of the local Jews derived their living from it: merchants, storekeepers, agents, fur transporters, brokers, coachmen, porters, and indirectly – the entire Jewish populace. Also, it was known to relate so-called good fortunes, that the Baranovich Jews were making from the large military garrisons, that were stationed in the city.

What is true, is that the economic circumstances of the Baranovich Jews was a lot better than that of other comparable cities and towns.

The formidable 'Сухарни Завод' one of the biggest quartermaster bakeries in Russia, engaged in the baking and drying of military rolls, which served as an 'iron reserve' for the military, in times of want, and in the event of a war. This bread factory required huge quantities of flour, kindling wood, and other technical materials.

The same can be said for the large military camp in the city proper, and the famous 'Skobelov-Camp' about 20 km from Baranovich, where the armies in the local area would gather in the summer for maneuvers. It was situated near the village of Tartaki (5 km from the Ljasnaja station), and ran the length of the Bialystok Road in the direction of Baranovich. The principal suppliers for the military, and the trains, were local Jews. These were the so-called 'contractors' who provided all manner of building materials, kindling wood, grain, flour, meat, and other products.

So, for example, Yaakov Turetsky supplied ties for the railroad, building wood and firewood for the army; Limon would provide iron, and other technical materials; Gurwicz and Zablocky – Hay and feed for the horses; the butchers Narkonsky and Szenicky provisioned the camps with meat; Iliutowicz – with potatoes and kraut. Mordechai Sadowsky stood at the head of a group of Jewish merchants, who supplied hundreds of thousands of pood of grain and flour for the bread factory, and made a yearly income of approximately a million rubles.

The anti-Semitic Czarist régime could find no better suppliers than the Jews; in those days, when there were no automobiles or telephones, and the network of roads was not so well-developed, and everything had to be carried out using muddy roads and byways – exceptional organizational skills were required, and administrative skills, in order to provide everything at the scheduled time, and in a proper amount, according to orders.

Apart from all of these provisions for the military, officers and their families lived in the garrisons, from which the city derived much custom and earnings. The Russian officer loved wearing his own private boots and uniform, provided by the local Jewish shoemakers and tailors. their wives and children were always well clothed, and their wardrobes were tailored by the best Jewish craftsmen. The same was true of the Polish nobility of the local area.

Many employees, with their families, lived around the train stations and railroad works in New-Baranovich, conductors and machinists, who were also often customers of the Jewish craftsmen and storekeepers.

Apart from having a large local consumer base, Baranovich also drew on a wide province, from which people would come traveling to purchase all manner of goods from the wholesale businesses. And indeed, large businesses and a substantial number of stores were opened. Well-known and famous, were the large wholesale manufacturing operations (Moshe David Shereshevsky, Zvi Izikson, and later – Getzowicz-Shereshevsky, Itzkowitz-Kaplan, Baruch Galay, Spector, and others), iron and construction material (Limon, Halperin), Finished clothing (Gershon Bergman, Goldin) shoe wear (Salutsky), etc.

In contrast, however, to the economic development of the city as a center of commerce and trade, it did not have any particular distinction in the area of industry. Yes, there were, proportionately several larger and smaller industrial concerns, such as, for example, Kushnir's factory, the factory that made millstones and mill machinery '*Sukmal*' belonging to Ragonitsky-Bruk, the oil factory of Shimshelewicz, Gubar's tar production works, the small soap factory of Lejzor Berenstein, etc. These few businesses were started in the first years of the twentieth century. In the year 1909, the iron and metalworks factory of Shmuel Zhukhowicky was added.

After the First World War, the following millstone factories were started: 'Kremen' of Stolovicky, and 'Mehlnik' of the Borishansky brothers, the oil factory of Gold, and a small factory for drying apples, a small factory for meat preservation 'Kressexport' (in the thirties, mostly export), a large furniture operation (on a cooperative basis), and others, mostly smaller undertakings, but large factories that employ hundreds and thousands of workers, did not exist in Baranovich.

That same center of communication that promoted the development of commerce, on the other side, proved a barrier to industrial growth. It was easier and cheaper to transport finished goods and products with the trains, that to produce it locally and compete with the older, well-developed factories.

As is known, Baranovich lay in an area which was rich in forests; because of this, the city was known as a commercial center of forest products, and thanks to its large factories, and export center fo all manner of wood materials both inland, and out fo the country. The same held true for food products such as grain, cheese, eggs, meat, etc.

As regards certain raw materials, it was not cheap to transport unfinished stuff because of the lack of a river, both into the country and for export. Accordingly, because the neighboring city of Slonim, that lay on the banks of the Szczara River, lumber transport went by water (ferries, rafts, etc.).

A similar situation existed with regards to leather. The finishing of leather required a lot of water.

In general, Baranovich did not have those kind of jobs that needed water, such as fishing, tanning, water mills, etc.

That which pertains to other raw materials such as milk, grain, seeds, wood, bark, pitch, clay, etc., were, as it is said, used up more or less on a local basis, in the previously mentioned businesses.

Baranovich lay on sandy ground, but the small expanse of clay, which was located on the road to Mys, was fully utilized by the three brick works of the day (Fein, Pikelny, and Raphael Kaplan).

Along with the commerce in our city, there was also a very large trading center with many agents, and expediting offices, intermediaries, commissioners, fur transporters, etc. Finally, it is also worth noting both of the Baranovich forests, one of which, the 'Kozioner' stood literally in the middle of the city, and the second, the *Graf's* forest, was a remnant of what used to be the onetime thick forest, which in its day, covered all of what became Baranovich. The city was noted as a sanatorium for people with lung ailments, and also a place for rest.

Before The First World War, Baranovich still inhaled the healthy dry air of its forests, and indeed, hundreds of vacationers would come here, and the city benefitted from them in a material sense. Many of the Baranovich residents earned part of their living from this summer season.

Most of the Jewish populace here made a living from small business or the crafts. Apart from the rich contractors, wealthy forest and grain merchants, owners of the large undertakings and businesses, who represented only a thin sliver of the population, Baranovich had a significant amount of poverty. That is the truth. Also the small storekeeper, and craftsman, benefitted from the military and the railroad, even so, there were many among them that were poor and oppressed.

As economic life continued to develop further, slowly, a lack of money began to be felt. The large-scale merchant, one way or another, was able to find a way to deal with this, being able to get credit in the purchasing locations in Warsaw, Lodz, etc. However, the practical circumstances of the small storekeeper and craftsman, was a lot worse. The former made use of small, short-term loans, to buy the bit of merchandise, to fill his store and shop for a market day, that took place once a week, and was an important source of income for the little store, and everyone that made a living from the market. Naturally, the gentile would leave behind, the largest portion of the money he earned, in the various shops and saloons in the city. The manual trades and craftsmen were on the lookout for a few extra rubles, in order to provide themselves with the most necessary implements. Raw materials, and accessories for work.

The *'Gemilut Hasadim'* Bank, which had already existed in Baranovich since the decade of the nineties, brought much support in this area. It faithfully served the needs and requirements of the segments of the society without means. However, because of intrigues, it failed.

The only sources from which one could still obtain a smaller loan, were the usual moneylenders, who demanded a high interest. There were also two private money lending offices, those of M. M. Ginsberg and Sholom Tzekhanowicz, but they demanded certain guarantees, or endorsements.

The situation took a turn for the better when, at the initiative of Ber'l Kurkhin, a 'Спода- Сберегательная Касса,' (a Savings Bank), was founded,, which led to a revival of commerce and helped the poor craftsman and storekeeper. One could get loans at lower rates, to be paid out in smaller installments. This bank, however, did not have the means to satisfy the large demand for credit.

Much later, the Bank 'Взаимого Кредито' was established (Mutual Credit). The principal initiator and director there was Alter Limon. This bank helped the merchants and storekeepers in many ways. Small-time forest merchants would be able to obtain money to go into sections of government forests, and storekeepers could develop their businesses. In the end, all of the capital remained in the hands of the forest merchants, because when The First World War broke out, the storekeepers returned their loans, but the forest product merchant had nothing with which to pay, and could not meet his obligations.

In the year 1913, a branch of the 'Ruska-Francesca' Bank opened in Baranovich. It functioned for only a short time, and its impact on the city was minimal, apart from the fact that it was require here to pay most checks, which were brought here for encasement.

But Baranovich looked different during the years of the German occupation (1915-1918). During that time, the city went through a frightening economic crisis.

Baranovich lay right at the front. It was not possible to travel in or out. Economic life came to a standstill. The entire population went to do forced labor, and the businesses stores and manufacturing places were close; food products of the first use was gotten from an allocation made by a citizen's committee. Other things could not be bought, and there was nothing to buy with. The city was flooded with military personnel their support staff and field kitchens. Those Jews, who were relieved of forced labor, sought a new way to make a living – they opened tea houses; it was not so much to sell a small glass of tea to the soldiers and officers, as much as to consummate a relationship with them, to derive benefit from the military canteen, and the essential thing, make a variety of commercial deals with them.

Only in 1918, after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk between the Soviet Union and Germany, did the city begin to slowly come back to life, The Germans made a deeper mover into Russia and the Ukraine, from which they transported plundered Russian valuables back to Germany. On the way, wherever the echelons would stop for an interval of time, as was the case in Baranovich, full wagons of merchandise were sold off through the escorts themselves. Many Jews became rich from this.

Social Differentiation and the Beginning of the Labor Movement

The beginning of the Jewish labor movement in our city, can be traced back to the years 1903-4.

Baranovich had no factories, and as a consequence, no industrial labor force. In contrast to this, there was a large number of craftsmen in a variety of trades, who employed workers and apprentices in the smaller operations, in which from 2 to 10 recruits worked.

The Jewish tailor and shoemaker, he and his children, had to work late into the night, in order that he maintain his position to provide his family with a bit of bread and potatoes, provide his many children with shoes and clothing, and to pay tuition, give his wife a few kopecks to obtain provisions for the house for the Sabbath and Festivals, save a few coins for a new machine, and necessary accessories for his work. There were many craftsmen, who lived worse than their workers they employed. Often, they worked, ate, and lived together.

It was precisely from these small-scale workplaces, that the first organized Jewish workers were recruited. Regarding these workers, their plight was a difficult one. Mostly, they were the children coming from impoverished families, who had to leave the *Heder* bench, and go off to learn a trade, work a few years without pay as an apprentice, and only then, see their first few groschen worth of earnings. Jewish girls, whose parents had no means, already in their childhood years, go off to learn a trade, and turn over their hard-earned kopecks to their father, or a groschen at a time, begin saving for a wedding dowry, etc.

Many Jewish boys and girls would leave the homes of their hard-pressed parents, in the surrounding settlements, and come to Baranovich. They would take up residence with a relative, or a close friend, mostly working for a business for there food and lodging, and occasionally for a few coins in addition, for out-of-pocket expenses.

In general, both the craftsman and the worker lived in very poor circumstances. Food consisted mainly of potatoes, cabbage, a herring, and the luxury of a small piece of meat was permitted to one's self only for the Sabbath or a Festival Holiday. It was necessary to work hard, and there was not always work available. One worked from sunrise to sunset, and in the winter, late into the night, the pay involved was minimal, and the social circumstances hard. Social security, like a sick fund, mutual aid, and paid vacation. did not yet exist. During a period of illness, the sick worker was not paid. The apprentice suffered especially hard; for all practical purposes, he was a slave, who had to do anything and everything that his master or the master's wife ordered him to do, and not rarely, have to endure beatings and cursing.

In the ranks of the military garrison, stationed in Baranovich, there was a rather substantial core that was infiltrated with revolutionary spirit, and even went so far as to demonstrate that it could infect a certain segment of the local Jewish intelligentsia, which had joined the so-called S. D. (Social-Revolutionary Party).

We knew to relate a specific episode about this part of the military, which, even though I relate it along with a specific caution – it is nevertheless sufficiently characteristic. When Czar Nicholas II once traveled through Baranovich, the honor guard of the local military garrison, which was mustered out on the train station, opted not to reply with the traditional call, at the greeting of their all powerful sovereign. There was an intense investigation – and those found responsible, were punished.

These railroad battalions, which belonged to the elite of the elite of the Russian military, and who enjoyed a reputation in the widest Russian military circles for their intelligence, played a great role in choking off the single, solitary pogrom, that was to come off in our city, in the year 1906 (see – 'Unsuccessful Attempts at a Pogrom in Baranovich').

There were not yet any [sic: political] parties on the Jewish street, apart from the relatively well-organized '*Agudat HaTzionim*,' which had already been active for several years, but was either not visible, or did not make any effort to penetrate into the ranks of the local labor community. I believe that this was because of the sharp socio-economic and societal separation, that the *balebatim*-citizens, elected to impose, with regard to their relationship to the Jewish craftsman and worker.

From the standpoint of perception, in Jewish life, status was accorded to people of 'proper' pedigree, those who didn't have to work, Menachem-Mendl's[51], and plain people who had no means of support. The Jewish craftsman was considered to be a Jew on a lower level, a 'man fit only for the anteroom,' a marginal person, less worthy element, and unlettered. To enter into marriage with a craftsman – worse, God forbid, than abandoning the faith. In Baranovich, this particular distance brought about by pedigree, was particularly pronounced. The city was young, the people transplanted from a variety of places. And until such time as they really got to know one another, -- where he comes from, and most essentially, from whom he came, and what his pedigree was – one related to such an individual with reserve. And this took no account of the fact that, the craftsman was no such kind of marginal element, whether in being lettered, or in intelligence, and certainly not in a moral sense. Such people such as Zind'l the Shoemaker, and Bogat the Tailor, Ahar'keh the Turner (who learned *Mishna* with the people), David the Wagon Driver (who was the Torah reader in the *Bet HaMedrash*), Moshe Aharon the Smith, and so forth, certainly didn't had nothing to feel anything ashamed about, in connection with the 'finest' *balebatim* of the city.

The craftsmen felt this sense of unworthiness keenly, and saw a need to confront it and remove it.

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[51] An allusion, by a specific name, to people not having to work for a living.

As already mentioned, Baranovich at that time did not have a community [sic: structure], and the official Jewish representation to the authorities was done through the *'Kozioner Rabbiner'* (a Rabbi designated by the authorities themselves), Dr. Shapiro and the '*Mieszczanski Starosta'* (The community elder) Yaakov Moshe Pikelny (later Mikhl Galay). In reality, all of the community prerogatives lay in the hands of the Gabbaim and the more important of the *balebatim*, and so-called community activists.

However, the craftsmen also wanted to have an influence on municipal matters, and they consolidated themselves in, and around, their craftsmen's *Bet HaMedrash 'Poalei Tzedek'* under the direction of their *Gabbai*, the activist Yaakov Judkowsky, and created a well-organized force to defend their interests.

Two rival factions emerged. On one side were the teachers and their supporters from among the *balebatim*, and on the other side – the front of the craftsmen and plain ordinary people. The physical strength, self-evidently, was with the latter. It was in their hands that the *Hevra Kadisha* was always found. It was their people who made up the larger majority of the Fire-Fighters Association. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the previously mentioned [sic: class] differentiation reached its zenith. Community friction and stubborn-minded disputes were not a rare thing. One of the sharpest disputes took place in the year 1906, after the death of the first Rabbi, Rabbi R' Kh. L. Lubczansky ז"ל. The teachers argued that Baranovich had already become a leading Jewish city,' and is entitled to have a more seasoned Rabbi, a 'great' spiritual leader. The craftsmen's side, supported by the butchers, categorically demanded that the replacement should be the young son-in-law of the deceased, who, by the way, would also support the widow and her family. Both sides contested with each other angrily and stubbornly, one assembly following on the heels of the other – to no avail, including the involvement and intermediation by disinterested Rabbis from the outside. In the end, the physical power prevailed... that of the craftsmen and the butchers.

The general unrest of the years 1903-5, you understand, did not dally at the gates of our city; it penetrated it, and found the local labor force in a condition that was ripe for its manifestation. The Jewish worker sought a means , that should first of all, improve his day-to-day life, and he found this in the new wave.

The *Bund* found a broad and free field for its activity. It was established in the year 1904, approximately, and immediately dominated the Jewish labor street. It demonstrated a strong level of activity in organizational and professional areas, organized the workers by their trades, and carried out many small and larger strikes, especially in the needle trades, who had an objective to shorten their working hours, and to raise their wages. By an large, the strikes would be ended by a compromise. Simply, it was not easy to fight against and employer, and for this, he was beholden to his organization – the *Bund.*

The *Bund* also carried on an intensive training effort. Speakers would visit, and gatherings would take place on the Sabbath and the Festival holidays, mostly during the day, in the Graf's forest, near Halinka, and around the Jewish cemetery; during the weekday evenings – on the *Birzheh*[52]. The *Bund* took the strongest role in the '*samobarana*' (self-defense). And in this way, its activity went on, with greater cessations, until the Russians left Baranovich in The First World War. Many of its fighters, in the years 1905-6, were forced to flee to countries overseas; a few of them continue to live there to this day (see the chapter: 'The *Bund*' by Dobkowsky).

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52 Likely the local gathering place, where day-laborers might come together, not only to seek work, but also to socialize, after hours.

The Failed Pogrom



Page 80: Leib'eh Zablocky

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a new *Pristav* came to Baranovich, by the name of Nikolai Shkliarevich, who had been entrusted with the task of keeping a sharp eye on the local people, and on everything that was going on around the city. The Jews, understandably, tried to find ways to befriend this new ruler, and among other things, designated him as the Head of the 'Fire-Fighters Command,' which consisted mostly of Jews.

As a matter of appearances, he made an attempt to be friendly with the Jewish populace, but in fact, he was faithful to the trust placed in him. He was a big careerist, and sought to curry favor with his superiors in the echelons of the provincial authority (Baranovich was in the Minsk Province). It occurred to him, that the best way to achieve his goal was – to organize a pogrom in Baranovich, which would certainly please the higher authorities. Here is what the Baranovich resident, Leib'eh Zablocky ל"ז had to say about this matter:

"... shortly after I took up residence in New-Baranovich, after returning from the United States, I went out, on a Sabbath day, to take a walk to the Polesia Station, together with the children, and my sister Rivka, who at that time, was working in my business. On the way, I ran into the deputy *Nachalnik* of the depot, Lepko, with whom I was friendly with me. He called me over to a side, and confided in me, that the *Pristav*, Shkliarevich is organizing the depot workers (a few thousand in number) to launch a pogrom on Baranovich; go, immediately, he says to me, and let your Jewish people know about this, so they can take the necessary steps, and most of all, be prepared for this misfortune.

You can understand that I immediately left my sister and the children, and ran back into the city, to fulfill my sacred duty. On the way, I ran into Chaim David the Shoemaker, and I requested that, immediately and without delay, that he round up all of the *balebatim*, such as Zim'l Mintz, Lieber Rabinovich, Szymansky, Chaim David Shereshevsky, and others. The assembly took place in Zim'l Mintz's house in the presence of 10-15 important community activists, who decided to go to the instigator himself, and to say to him, that we know about his activity at the railroad depot.

You can understand, that he stubbornly denied everything. A few days later, in Lepko, together with the Russian student Drukov, chained in irons, was taken off to Minsk. But the pogrom, did not occur. Apparently, it cost something...

Immediately afterwards (this was in 1905) the troublemaker went off to Minsk, where he became the deputy police chief. Already, in the first days of his being in his new position, he uncovered an illegal printing operation, and many people were arrested. It became dark, when he came out of Sutin's Hotel (where he took up residence) and got himself ready to t6ravel to the governor to give him a report about his discovery. Upon leaving the hotel, he was shot several times; severely wounded, he was brought to the hospital, where he did not survive the night."

Baranovich breathed a bit more freely, because he knew many secrets about our city...

The defeats in the Far East, and the revolution in 1905, brought a new wave of pogroms, which this time, also enveloped White Russia, and a number of cities in our areas, such as Bialystok, and others. The Jewish

populace of Baranovich, as well, began to prepare itself for whatever eventual trouble might arise. A self-defense force was created, in which all strata of the society participated, and entirely separately, the already well-organized *Bund.* We also remained in contact with the revolutionary core of the railroad battalions, with the help of Jewish recruits and their intermediation.

It is worth underscoring a noteworthy and rare occurrence from those times, which found expression among us, in Baranovich.

In all places where pogroms took place, the local military garrisons stood on the side of the pogrom instigators, and helped them in their bloody work. So, for example, in the Bialystok pogroms of 1905 and 1906, the military not only took an active part, they also fired on the Jewish self-defense group. And the self-defense in Bialystok was rather well-organized, and most certainly would have been able to find a way to deal with the feral mob, were it not for the 'intervention' of the local garrison against the Jews. In hindsight, Baranovich, in those years, may have been the only city in Russia, where the local military was not only opposed to pogroms in general, but also fully, and with all of its might, stood on the side with the Jews.

And it is perhaps this that we have to be thankful for, that on that terrible day, the previously failed pogrom was not attempted anew, to carry out a slaughter in Baranovich.

This happened in one of the summer days of 1906. It was on a Sunday, and ordinary market day, and peasants from the surrounding villages crowded into the expansive marketplace, which was located in the exact center of the city. Suddenly, a shot was heard, and immediately afterwards, one of the *Black Hundreds*[53] climbed up on a high wagon, and shouted out: 'Жиды бомбы босают!' (Jews are throwing bombs!)

It is necessary to grasp that the pogrom was deliberately organized and prepared in advance. For several month, certain suspicious personalities were loitering about, wearing Cherkassy uniforms, and other underworld types (who could be identified by how they were dressed, and recognized as strangers from faraway places), who carried on a wild incitement against Jews, among the city Christian populace and in the surrounding villages, with the help of the local *Black Hundreds*.

The provocative gunshot, and call, were apparently, according to their plan, supposed to serve as a signal for a wild assault by an incited mob and angered participants on Jewish houses and places of business. However, their accounting did not foresee the psychology and eventually the reaction of the Byelorussian peasant. Immediately after the shot, and the call, that the Jews were throwing bombs, a terror and fear befell the gentiles; and indescribable panic and pandemonium ensued on the marketplace. With great haste, they abandoned their valuables, and fled. Many peasants let their wagons stay, and fled, while riding on their horses; a number, along the way, lost their wives and children. They forfeited the specter of the Jews and the Jewish bombs for the entire way, until, deathly-afraid, they returned to their villages.

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53 The Black Hundreds (sometimes The Black Hundred), also known as the black-hundredists (Чёрная сотня, черносотенцы in Russian, (or *Chornaya sotnya, chernosotentsy*) was an ultra-nationalist movement in Russia in the early 20th century. They were a supporter of the House of Romanov and opposed any retreat from the autocracy of the reigning monarch. The Black Hundreds were also noted for extremist Slavophile doctrines, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and incitement to pogroms.

The marketplace looked like a real pogrom had actually taken place: capsized and broken wagons, spilled sacks of potatoes and grain; chickens, pigs and calves ran about unrestrained and trampled vegetables and fruit. I remember how my older brother , Fyvel הו"ד, came running to pick me up at *Heder*, which was not far from the marketplace. Like a bolt of lightning, he flew past the marketplace, carrying me on his back.

Understand, that the city as a whole was in a state of chaos, houses and businesses were quickly bolted shut; I can remember the slamming of the doors and windows, and the pale frightened faces of the people. Grandfathers and grandmothers, from the surrounding villages, immediately dispatched wagon drivers for the purpose of extracting their daughters and grandchildren. We were tossed into a large wagon with a cover over it, and together with my mother ז"ל, were taken off to our grandfather in Stalovičy.

The city became emptied of women and children. Only the men remained. When it began to get dark, the streets became empty, and it took on the appearance of a dead city. There was a fear, that the attempt at a pogrom would start up again at a later hour. By the beginning of the evening, everyone sat crowded and locked in their houses.

In the meantime, the self-defense made all the necessary preparations, and the organized working people immediately got in contact with the railroad battalions. Also, our community activists did not sit around idle-handed. They immediately intervened with the general, and other high officers of the military, with whom they were acquainted, and received calming assurances.

On that night, nobody got a wink of sleep. And when it began to dawn, through the slats in our shutters, we saw a substantial military patrol, on the move through the streets, at full military readiness. They stood on watch from the beginning of the evening. They ordered that houses, and places of business be opened, and offered assurance that so long as they were present, a pogrom will never occur in Baranovich. The city immediately returned to its normal life.

The Visit of *Sholom Aleichem* to Baranovich

The visit of *Sholom Aleichem* in Baranovich in the year 1908, would have been a very import6ant cultural event. Regrettable, because of his sad experience – with the tragic breakdown of the author in the middle of a presentation and his forced remainder with us during the curse of his illness – was transformed into a burden, which all year long, had and influence on the cultural and social life of Baranovich Jewry.

In that year, *Sholom Aleichem* undertook a tour through the Jewish Pale in Russia, Poland, and Lithuania. After a series of visits in a variety of cities and towns, he was invited to give a presentation in Baranovich.

The visit, of the beloved Jewish folklorist, was a sensational event in the life of this provincial city and its surroundings. For weeks before his arrival, one could sense a certain aura all about, in the businesses, manufacturing places, and on the street, talking about *Sholom Aleichem* and his works.

A welcoming committee was created, and tickets were immediately sold out. With every day, the anticipation grew stronger. Jews from the surrounding settlements literally streamed into Baranovich; many came on foot, covering tens of kilometers. The houses were overflowing with relatives, friends, and acquaintances, either who traveled in, or were from the area, in order to see this famous author and to hear him read from his own works. At least having one time to laugh, to laugh and laugh in pleasure.

On a fall day, at the beginning of August 1908, the important guest rode through the streets of our city, escorted by the city notables. *Sholom Aleichem* looked tired and worn out from his many travels, banquets, and readings [sic: that he gave] during the hot summer months –'Not spending the night where he held forth.' He traveled off to Shimon Dob'eh's (Shimon Misky) – a hotel on Alexandrovska [*Gasse*] near Limon. This was a long, single-story building, with low windows. The house was besieged for the entire day by the children from the vicinity. Who stubbornly stood around, and for whatever price, wanted to catch a glimpse of *Sholom Aleichem*.

After a festive and hearty welcome, *Sholom Aleichem* held his presentation in the evening, in the building of the summer theater, which stood in the so-called 'Graf's Park.' The place was over capacity with the enormous crowd.

Suddenly, in the middle of the reading, the writer felt unwell – and he fell down from an embolism in his lungs. The last smile on his deathly pale face vanished, and was transformed into a bloody rictus of a 'red-laugh.'

An enormous crowd gathered around. The local doctors were immediately given the alarm, and under their strict supervision, this seriously ill patient was transferred to an adjacent two-story building, which was one of the nicest hotels in the city – the 'Slavic Hotel.'

This sad news traveled with lightning speed through the city. The best doctors from Minsk and Vilna came, who discovered that the blood clot was the result of a relapse of acute hemorrhagic tuberculosis; the condition of the patient is very serious, and under no circumstances is he to be moved.

And so, this way, this Yiddish author remained confined in our city for close to two months, until the end of September. The local Jewish intelligentsia did everything that was in their power, in order to ease the plight of the beloved guest. A special *Linat Tzedek* was created, made up of the most prominent ladies and gentlemen, who kept watch, day and night, at the bedside of the patient.

The mood of the Jewish community was, at the start, distressed; there was considerable aggravation and an even larger sense of guilt. It was as if each individual felt a personal responsibility for this misfortune. Later on, when the patient regained some of his energies, and was already able to stand on his own two feet, the mood became elevated. Every day, emissaries from the surrounding cities would come, along with correspondents, in order to obtain information about the condition of the patient.

The young, progressive *shtetl* of Baranovich, 'that sensed an important event in the life of World Jewry – it had rescued *Sholom Aleichem* from death' – became famous overnight.

After *Sholom Aleichem*'s departure, for Nervi (Italy), following the advice of doctors, accompanied by his wife Olga, and youngest son, Num'chik, *Sholom Aleichem*'s family, in the course of specific interval of time, made their home in Baranovich. His daughter, Lya'lya arranged to give private lectures here, and remained with us for over a year. In the summer of 1909, his oldest son, Misha Rabinovich, came to Baranovich ('home' for vacation time), who at that time was a student at the Gymnasium in Kiev. In general, almost the entire family of *Sholom Aleichem* traveled into Baranovich that summer – his wife, his daughters Marusy and Ernestina, with her child, as well as her husband, the Jewish writer, Y. D. Berkowicz.

From Italy, *Sholom Aleichem* himself carried on a regular correspondence with Baranovich for a longer

period of time, and also sent along his pictures; he left behind many acquaintances here, with whom he had struck up an acquaintance during the time of being laid up in Baranovich, especially with Dr. Berman, Dr. Chernikhov, Singalowsky, Mansky, and others.

It is a shame that so many of the pictures of *Sholom Aleichem* were lost during the great Holocaust, as well as the valuable memories, who by virtue of M. Mansky's efforts, appeared in the 'Baranovich Week' in the year 1933, under the heading: 'Twenty-Five Years Ago.'

Sholom Aleichem did not forget Baranovich, which remained lodged in his heart, and he memorialized it in one of his works, 'Let the Baranovich Station Burn.' The content of this story, actually has nothing to do with our city, and this shows, that he borrowed its name, in order to memorialize it – because it was dear to him.

At the end here, a few words about *Sholom Aleichem*'s local assessment, and characteristic of our Baranovich, in the time that he spent in it. Regarding this question, what, dear writer, will you say about our Baranovich – to which *Sholom Aleichem* replied laconically and meaningfully: 'A *shtetl* without a fence around it!...'

At the time, we understood this very well: - A *shtetl* without 'refugees'...

And, in fact, Baranovich was not cordoned off, being free and open to any incoming guest. The greatest part of its ground was still covered in forest, and because of this, the impression it made on the writer was 'a small *shtetl* standing on the outside'...

Sholom Aleichem expressed himself a second time with respect to our city: 'On both sides, two large train stations, and in the middle – a big mud hole'...

In his letters to friends and acquaintances, *Sholom Aleichem* often expressed himself with regard to Baranovich and its Jews, with affection and longing. Baranovich never forgot *Sholom Aleichem*, and would always remember him on his *Yahrzeit*. In the year 1939, a memorial plaque was built into the new TOZ building, with a bust of the likeness of the writer, artfully sculpted by Amatzia Singalowsky.

A nice portrait of that era, can be found in the work of the well-known author Y. D. Berkowicz (*Sholom Aleichem*'s son-in-law): 'The First Who Were Like People.'

The Beginning of the First World War and End of the Russian Czarist Regime

The outbreak of the First World War, in July 1914, reverberated like a clap of thunder on a clear day.

Immediately unrecognized and mysterious people began circulating about the city, who, as it later became clear, were agents of the Czarist '*Okhrana.*' The city was divided into two police districts: Baranovich, and

New-Baranovich. Residential ledgers were created, with precise recording of the residents.

The movement of the local citizenry came under stringent control. Every new arrival was required to present themselves within 24 hours, and apart from this passports were distributed to all residents aged 16 and above. A whole array of politically suspect people, were sent out of the town, Jews and Christians.



Page 89: Marinska Gasse in 1915

A separate unrest was created by the fact that for the longest time in Baranovich, there was a large circus, under the direction of Heinrich Richter (an Austrian citizen) with a large staff, including 12 women. It later was revealed that all of this was a front to cover up an espionage ring against Russia.

Baranovich was designated as the seat of the Russian General Staff, and the representatives of the allied government, and also as a sort of temporary residence of Czar Nicholas II. Czar Nicholas II, and the Chief Commander of the Russian Army, Nikolai Nikolaevich, lodged in the sleeping cars of the Czarist train; this is as opposed to the Grand Dukes, senior officers, and the remaining personnel, who set themselves up in the local military camp.

Several squadrons from the Czar's personal bodyguard regiment also came to town, the so-called 'Don-Cossacks.' Baranovich and its environs were under strict guard by mounted Cossack patrols. The Czar resided with us for a month's time; and every time he would leave Petersburg and travel to Baranovich, an official notice would appear in the Russian newspapers, that the Czar had wanted to go travel to the fighting army, meaning, to the front...

We in Baranovich, you will understand, laughed up our sleeve when we read this notice in the paper, seeing how this omnipotent 'hero' tranquilly takes his stroll through our city streets...

At the beginning, the nightmare of the war was no so readily detectable. In an economic sense, the city benefitted from an increase in commercial activity, and Jews did good business. The contact between the Jews and the members of the staff was a close one: for many of them, their first encounter with Jews was overwhelming, and in a variety of opportunities, they openly expressed their wonder, since Jews had been portrayed to them in negative ways. The local Jews became agents of the staff, and the Czarist courtyard, and benefitted from their access to otherwise controlled places, according to personal instances.



Page 91/92 (Top): The Polesia Train Station before The First World War (Before it was destroyed)

No matter how stringent and secure things were, from time-to-time, 'military secrets' would leak out. So, for example, it was possible for a certain Jewish woman, who would provide chickens to the Czarist courtyard,

knew to tell in the name of the chief cook, that a ringing telephone had awakened the Chief Commander Nikolai Nikolaevich in the middle of the night. He took the call in his underwear, and in an agitated state, immediately left to travel to the front.

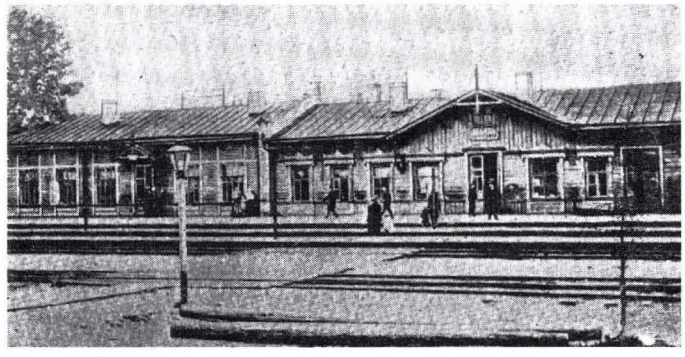
This was during the time of the great defeat of the Russian armies in the Masurian Lakes in East Prussia, when General Rennenkampf's army disintegrated. The reaction of the Russians was to blame the Jews for the defeat of the army, and as a result of this incitement, the tragic expulsion decrees were promulgated against those Jews in the zones at the front.
In the spring of 1915, the first wave of Jewish refugees came to Baranovich. The sick and the weak stopped in Baranovich, while the rest continued their journey into far Russia and the Ukraine.

The first victories of the Russian army raised the spirits of the populace. There were, however, Jews who attached their skepticism to the whole enterprise, and after the great Russian victory at Lvov, they argued: Who knows? We, as yet, have no certain proof, and cited the maxim: '*Va'omar ahm to'ay levav heym,'* etc.

Almost every day, transports would pass through Baranovich with echelons of the wounded. The Jewish populace created a special committee, which undertook to supply aid to the wounded soldiers. Young people, too, were drawn into this endeavor. Every time, after heavy fighting in the fields, we became ready to fulfill our mission: carrying large containers of products to the large number of hospital transports, which would always make a stop at the stations of our city.

Nikolai Nikolaevich, with his Goliath-like frame, would often be the first one to visit the wounded, snatching a bit of conversation with the, and decorating them with medals. After him the Czar's daughter, Tatiana would come with her various presents (She was the Sponsor of the All Russian Red Cross), and only after that, would the rest of the coterie show up with their gifts.

A certain number of the more lightly wounded would be taken over to New-Baranovich, in the building of the spirits refinery, which in part, had been converted into a hospital. The local Jewish populace took a great interest and dedicated a lot of attention to the Jewish wounded. I recall the Passover of 1915, when all the Jews carried kosher food to the hospital.



Page 91/92 (Bottom): The Alexander (Old) Station (Burned by the Russians before evacuating the city in The First World War)

As already mentioned, in parallel with the defeats at the front, an unrestrained incitement was leveled against the Jews. They were accused of causing the defeats and all other troubles. A wave of decrees, sentences, arrests, expulsions and persecutions, caused a flood of Jews into the zones at the front. Because of this, the leading authorities of the Jewish community sent the Moscow Rabbi, Rabbi MZA"H[54] זצ"ל, to the Chief Commander Nikolai Nikolaevich in Baranovich, with the objective of intervening on behalf of the innocent Jews.

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[54] Rabbi Yaakov MZA"H (1859-1924), who, in 1893, was appointed as the Chief Rabbi of Moscow, after the departure of his predecessor, R' Zelig Minur. His last name is the Hebrew acronym, ***MiZera Aharon HaKohen***, indicating his lineage harkens back to Aaron the (High) Priest.

In the interim, there was still a truly idyllic state that reigned in our city. On a day-to-day basis, many Baranovich Jews would come in contact with the officers and other important personnel of the 'Ставка' (the staff): A few – even with the Grand Dukes from the Czar's suite. In general, at that time, the Jews of Baranovich felt themselves to be 'close to the regime.' From time-to-time, once could spot the Czar taking a walk with the War Minister Sukhomilnov, escorted by his personal bodyguard, a Don Cossack, who was a giant of a man.

One time, when the Czar was riding through the *Shasei Gasse,* a ball, with which Jewish children were playing, accidentally fell into his car. Immediately, the entire security detail was on its feet; you can appreciate that a tumult ensued, but to everyone's fortune, the 'incident' passed uneventfully.

At that time, Baranovich acquired a festive air. In honor of the Christian courtyard, and the General Staff, the paving of a number of the central streets was completed, and the laying down of wooden sidewalks. Rumors began to abound, that Nikolai Nikolaevich had in his mind to enlarge and beautify the city, and to change its name to Novonikolaievsk, and to give it the status of a regional city [sic: provincial seat]. The rapid development of the war, and especially the defeats at the front, such as the fall of the fortresses at Modlin, Warsaw, Kovno, etc., nullified these intentions.

Baranovich, as a great communication center, stood under the watch of the armies retreating to the east. The city and its environs were overloaded with homeless refugees, among which there spread the dangerous epidemics of dysentery and cholera, and people dropped like flies. Large sanitation wagons would go around loaded down to overflowing with corpses.

Day and night, without ceasing, peasant wagons and conveyances, by the thousands, would pass through the streets, loaded with people and goods. The potatoes, in the fields, as well as the fruits , and vegetables from



Page 93/94: A Corner in the Cemetery
(Yankl Judkowsky (in the middle), Chief-Gabbai of the Hevra Kadisha, and his wife, Malka, with her brother Moshe Domokhowsky

the orchards and gardens, were pillaged by the onslaught of the refugees. Wherever there was a wooden board, every bit of wood and little board vanished overnight. The houses stood bare and naked. The entire city looked like it was after a great storm.

Already at that point, the Cossacks were implementing the tactic of 'scorched earth,' and on their way back, they sowed blood and fire, with panic and confusion among the helpless populace. They burned down whole houses, and drove their occupants away.

The caravans of the armies and the homeless stretched on for weeks and months. Even the veteran soldiers were savvy enough to know that they were retreating to Mogilev. Amidst great chaos, the Czar suddenly vanished, his courtyard, and the General Staff as well. Just as no one knew precisely when and how they arrived, so we did not know how they disappeared. The days of Russian hegemony for us, were numbered, after the fall of Brisk. We could already7 hear the reports of artillery from the front, and at night, the skies were lit up by projectiles aimed at airplanes. A heavy-hearted mood reigned over everyone. The Russian employees, and railroad workers received orders to evacuate the city. Also, the Jews from the wealthier classes began to voluntarily evacuate themselves into deeper Russia.

Several days before leaving the city, the big spirit refinery was set on fire, which was in New-Baranovich, after all the spigots were opened, and the spirits were allowed to run out over the nearby fields. The Cossacks and the local gentiles, threw themselves like thirsty animals at the free-flowing channels and puddles, and at least once in their lives, drank themselves to satiety with this brewed and bitter drink.

It was a great danger for the Jewish populace... and even greater was the miracle, that the city almost did not suffer from this (a couple of years later, a group of Baranovich Jews received a concession from the German occupational authorities, to extract these spirits from the ground, and the business was not a bad one) The smoky clouds from the burning factory spread over the city, and created the impression of being a dark harbinger of something dark and unknown.

On the last day, the Eve of *Sukkot* , the retreating Russian army began to systematically tear up the railroad lines, [destroy] the stations, and various workplaces that provided for military needs. An alarm spread on the first night of Sukkot, that the military commandant had abandoned the city, and it was made known that an order was issued for all the young people aged 16 and up, have to be evacuated into Russia.

The order had been prepared several weeks beforehand, but thanks to the energetic efforts on the part of community activists, it became possible to delay the issuing of this decree until the last minute. You may understand that this cost quite a bit of money.

The last of the Russian troops continued to stream along for the entire night. The sky was red from the burning buildings, the air shuddered from explosions. Jews didn't shut an eye. On the following morning, an eerie silence reigned in the city. The sun lit up the dumbstruck and fear-enveloped city. Shutters were closed, and doors were bolted shut. Everything, and everyone, was set out at the disposal of fate. From time-to-time, single mounted Cossack riders would appear. From one instance to the next, one heard the shouts and calls for help from Jews who were being attacked and robbed.

Suddenly, the breath of life in the city came to a halt. Everything became as if turned to stone, the blood in ones veins seemed as if congealed. At that moment, we lived in a state of anxious anticipation, like someone who has been judged waiting for the sentence to be passed.

On the second day, September 24, 1915, at about three or four o'clock in the afternoon, the first patrols from the Austrian army appeared, and immediately after them, entire divisions streamed through all the streets, on their continuing way to the front.

The Jews got a feeling of being under pressure; we had been liberated from the nightmare of pogroms, and the specter of death. Old and young alike emerged from their holes, everything was outside.

It was a moving experience, when among the Austrian soldiers, we saw our own Jewish brethren from Galicia, who received the local Jews with the greeting '*Gut Yom Tov!*', and inquired if there is somewhere around a place where it would be possible to recite a blessing over an *Etrog.* Suddenly, it was perceived that, indeed, it was *Yom Tov*, and permitted ourselves to be overtaken by a true Festival feeling...

A Jewish officer riding by called out: 'Jews! Don't rejoice, it is not the Messiah yet'!

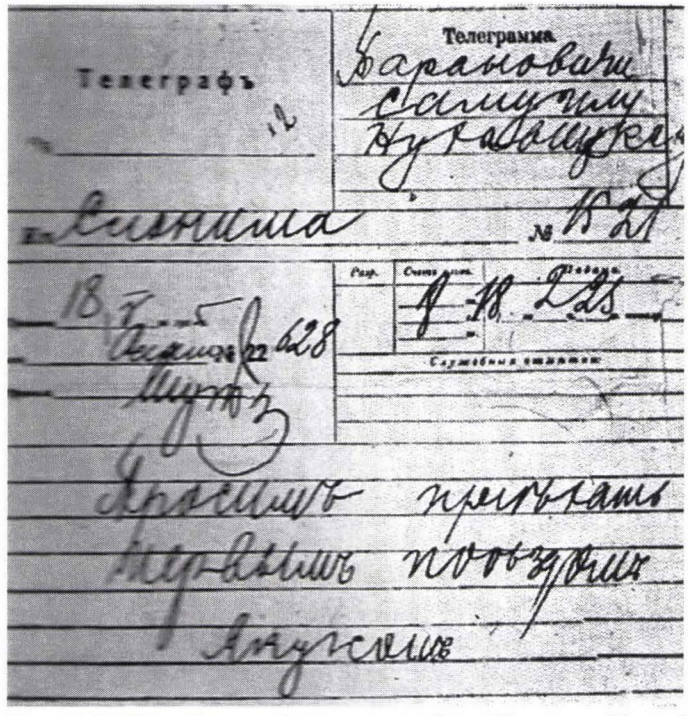
As was later seen, he was right...

Baranovich During The First World War

By Shmuel Zakif (Zhukhowicky)

I moved to Baranovich in the year 1909, with the objective of establishing a factory for the refining of steel to make agricultural machinery.

And the city itself – was in the throes of a construction boom. In every corner, buildings were sprouting and going up, streets, yards, built of wood, spread about, following no plan, each person acting in accordance with his own taste. The first settlers – the Jews from the area, lumber merchants, '*Yishuvnikehs*,' and many of them, understandably, the agents working the forests, and their assistants, leasers of land parcels, owners of dairy operations. In the nearby forest, a military camp was put down, with its various work locations, provisioned by the Jews of Baranovich. As commerce developed, and increased, various businesses were set up in tandem, each according to its own type: Kushnir's sawmill, the oil factory of Shimshelewicz, the flour mill, and others. And along with this, among the first builders of the city, you also find workers and craftsmen, such as Yaakov Dov Neufeld the Carpenter, Yaakov Judkowsky, Kroshinsky the Tailor, Zaklad the Tailor, Velvel (Ze'ev) Musky, the Builder, Vlatman the owner of a laundry, and others, who also took an active part in the life of the people and the community.

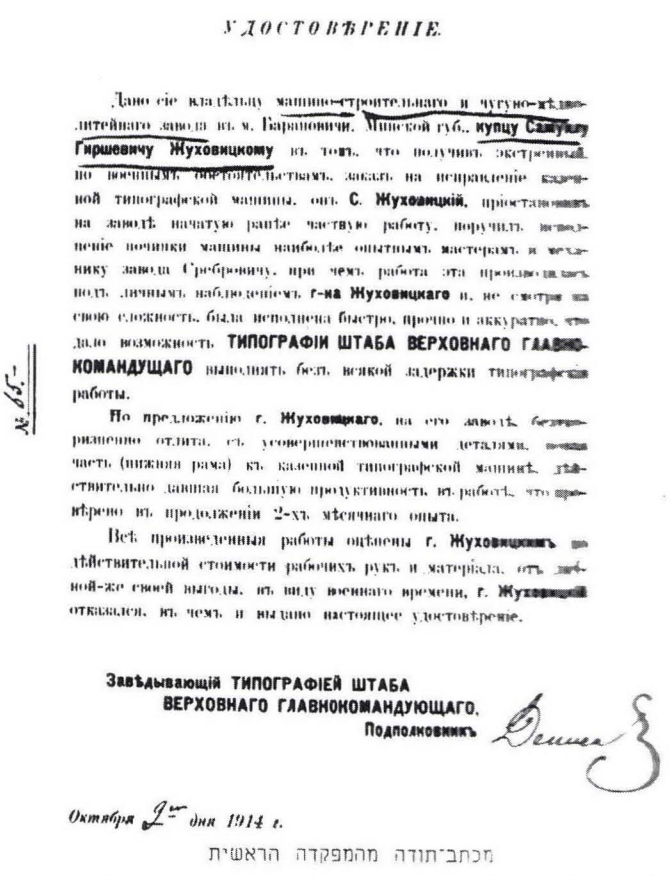

Телеграфъ
Телеграмма

Page 96: The telegram that was sent from Slonim to Shmuel Zhukhowicky by the Lawyer Jacobson, and this is the message: 'Please come by the first train possible.'

For the sake of truth, it is necessary to underscore that in Baranovich, there was also a place to be found for businesses set up on defective foundations, and I will pause here to describe two of them.

There is the instance of a German, whom the Russian regime gave a license to set up telephones in the city and outside of it. He set up a central station in the middle of the city, beside the post office, and he held all of the telephone concessions – both military and civilian. He prepared maps of the area, and in his camouflaged deployment of inter-city telephone lines, he assembles important details about the city and its surroundings in his hands. At the outbreak of the war, it became known that he, and his helpers, were spies.

And in another instance, someone was given a license to build a plant for making salami and smoked ham. His output was used to supply all of the big cities – even as far away as Berlin. He set up his operation in New Baranovich, that was close to the military camp, and beside it, he put up a meeting place, whose patrons were military officers and others. He too, along with his helpers, were subsequently exposed as spies, but it became possible for them, with the outbreak of the war, to flee to Germany.



Page 97: Facsimile of the Letter of Thanks from the Senior Command

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With the outbreak of The First World War (*Tisha B'Av* 5674), when the front was still in areas mostly settled by Poles, the plight of the Jews worsened. The Poles spread all manner of false accusations, and stood to the right of the Russians – and against them. The Russian command facilitated predatory assaults against the Jews. The top command, and its abettors, permitted the commands of the solitary military commands to expel the Jews from those places where, in their view, they posed a danger, as it were, at the front – and entire communities were uprooted from their places. In a number of places, Rabbis and community elders were taken as hostages. Approximately two hundred thousand people were expelled. But even those, who were not exiled, were exposed to danger, because every Jew, in the eyes of the army, was suspected of being a spy. The fear of pogroms and extermination hung over them. The committee, at whose head stood the lawyer Gutenberg, and the Rabbi MZA"H, looked for ways to avoid a calamity. Lawyer Gutenberg nominated a research committee, made up of lawyers, whose purpose was to visit those locations where accusations had been leveled against Jews, to gather material to counter those charges, and neutralize them. And in this way, it was made clear that, for example, A Jew – the head of the city of Mariampol – was accused by someone who turned out to be a German spy (a charge of espionage). And not only once, did the army publish, in its daily reports, accusations against Jews that were non-existent, and were not fact, and whose names were compromised by informers seeking to harm them. The committee prepared a memorandum to the head authority, and looked for the way to reach it. This was not a simple matter, because all of these means of

access were sealed off to the Jews. As luck would have it the senior authority was located in Baranovich – and the Rabbi MZA"H was sent to Slonim, to the committee member, Lawyer Jacobson, and he was the one who invited me, by telegram, on 18.5.1915, to visit him (picture on page 96).

When I arrived, I found the Rabbi MZA"H from Moscow already there. His opinion was that the fate of the Jews rested entirely in the hands of the official Nikolai Nikolaevich, who is located in Baranovich, and accordingly, there is a need to reach him, even if the process is fraught with danger.

With this advice, I put my mind to it, because in Baranovich there was to be found a Jewish dentist – Dr. Fiedler, who had earned a good reputation among the ranks of the military, and on the strength of their recommendation, he had begun to treat the teeth of the senior commander.



Page 101: A Group of Young Boys and Girls at Forced Labor

Similarly, in my hands, I had a letter of thanks from the top command (dated 9.10.1914) and a permission for entry by appointment to the army camp, in recognition of an important service that I had rendered to the command, that I had done not to receive any recognition. This letter of thanks was read into the daily report of the army, and because of this the army officers would come to visit my office and my home, and I became friendly with a number of them.

Incidentally, among the things that I thought appropriate to tell the Rabbi MZA"H – also about my son, Gedalia, nine years old, who, out of curiosity, liked to follow behind the Czar when he used to walk, not only once, in the vicinity; the lad would often give the Czar a salute, and in response, the latter would respond in kind, as was customary in the army.



Page 102: A Group of Jewish Women, Traveling to Forced Labor

After an extensive consultation, it was decided to attempt to involve the commander by means of the intervention of the dentist, Dr. Fiedler, the trust of the regime in the writer of these lines, and my son Gedalyahu (for purposes of turning over the memorandum through him, to the Czar). And to this end, a memorandum was prepared, that the lad was supposed to, an auspicious time, hand to the Czar. A letter addendum was attached to the memorandum, and this is its content (according to my memory):

'To Your Most Exalted Honor,

I have taken it upon myself the task to convey to Your Most Exalted Honor, this memorandum, after all other means to reach Your Honor were closed. I am aware that I am eligible for all punishment that is suitable for having intruded on Your Honor, but I have heard from the mouth of the representative of our people, Rabbi MZA"H about the danger that

hovers over the heads of hundreds of thousands of Jews, at the hour when hundreds of thousands of Jewish soldiers stand at the front, in defense of the land of their birth.

Accordingly, I have asked for access to Your Honor, in order that he read the memorandum, in order that he find proof of the injustice that has been perpetrated against the Jews, by the dissemination of false libel. Rabbi MZA"H has investigated all the facts, and he stands ready at your service at any time of your asking.

I am prepared to accept whatever punishment that you will levy against me, your loyal servant.'

Nothing, afterwards it was decided to wipe out all the correspondence, as will become clear later on.

On the following day, on 19.5.1915, Rabbi MZA"H rode with me to Baranovich and we began to feel about and search for ways to complete our agenda – and in completer secrecy. The citizens of the city did not know of the presence of the Rabbi MZA"H in the city, and everything was done as I outlined above – The Rabbi MZA"H conducted this with Dr. Fiedler.

After examining all of the possibilities at their disposal, it was agreed to first approach the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, who has great influence with the commander, connected with an entreaty that he should attempt to have the commander receive a deputation from the Jews, or at the very least, the Rabbi MZA"H. The Commander refused, but he agreed that the Patriarch may receive the Rabbi MZA"H.

The Rabbi MZA"H was happy to have even this possibility, but was in a quandary, since he did not have his rabbinical attire – and the meeting was set to take place in two days time. It was concluded, somehow, to bring the tailor, Mr. Yaakov Judkowsky, to prepare garments for him. The latter was overwhelmed and struck dumb when he heard of the mission that was assigned to him. And after he had composed himself, he said: 'Master of the Universe, is it true that such an awesome privilege has come my way, that I, with my needle, will be able to provide some assistance in so revered an issue? My dear Rabbi, I shall not cease my work, either by day or night, and I will have the clothing ready before the required time.' And in a trembling voice, he added – 'I will buy the fabric, all on my account, and do not pay anything. It is my desire to carry out this *mitzvah i*n its entirety.' And that is the way it was. On the appointed day, the Rabbi appeared before the Patriarch, and after about two hours, returned to my house in a military vehicle, bent over with stomach pain. I called the Doctor, Nakhumowsky, who established that the pain was caused by aggravation.

When his distress eased, I sat next to him, and he read the lines from the prayer" 'You know the mysteries of the universe and the things hidden from all living beings. You are able to look into everyone's innards (an indirect reference to his own stomach pains) – and he told of his impressions of the meeting, which he assessed as definitely being positive. And in fact, the high command intimated that it would refrain from spreading and libel about Jews that had no basis. There were some that said, that in his orders, it was suggested that 'pogroms and attacks were not desirable.'

The Rabbi MZA"H left Baranovich for Moscow very satisfied, but the expulsions continued, and many refugees passed through Baranovich.

The local people organized a committee, whose members stood at the railroad station, and would provide those who had been expelled, with foodstuffs, medicines, etc.

It is necessary to say, for the sake of truth, that especially those refugees that were expelled on military

orders, their situation was better than the plight of the gentiles who left of their own good will. These latter, would travel in wagons on the roads, and the retreating army would shove them to the side, damaging cows and horses, and many of these people died in the tribulations of the road travel.

The mishaps befalling the army multiplied – and the situation in Baranovich became very unsettled, despite the fact that for all the days of the war, until the defeat – the circumstances, from an economic perspective was very good. The Baranovich community grew, and the number of residents swelled to approximately fifteen thousand souls. Among them were government officials, gentile merchants, and now, they all decided to leave the city. It was passed along, that in their retreat, the Russians were setting fire to, and destroying all manufacturing facilities, work places, and any location that could be of use to the enemy. However, the Jewish factory owners decided to remain, regardless of the consequences, to find ways to avoid destroying them. These were, the factory owners Kushnir (owner of the sawmill), Shimshelewicz (the oil factory), and myself, the owner of the steel refinery, Rogoznicky, the owner of the flour mill, and Stolovicky, the owner of the millstone manufacturing business. After consultation with the representatives of the army, and with their written permission, I went out to Slonim, to General Ivanov, who was appointed to destroy all assets in the event of a retreat, I brought him the following proposal: Seeing that in the end, we believe in the victory of the Russian army, it is a shame to destroy such important manufacturing facilities, and we are therefore prepared to dismantle the machinery and hide them by burying them in the ground, so that the Germans will not be able to use them. And in order that our proposal be further 'convincing,' we added a sum of money that was significant. The general agreed under the condition that he first send a photographer, who will photograph the machines in their totality, and especially – my factory, whose building will be bombed; and so after the last troop of Cossacks will blow up a few machines, and those from among the worst. We completed our agenda in its entirety. We took apart all of the important parts of the machinery, and left only those things that were built into the foundation. The windows and doors were broken. The last unit of the army to pass through Baranovich, whose mission was to burn and destroy, arrived on Yom Kippur 5675 (1915) – and we left our prayers, and together with the army officers, and we went over in front of the factories, for the purpose of arranging the protocol for the destruction, and to take the pictures (only my factory was photographed). If nothing else, the core of the retreat imposed fear on us, because the Cossacks in the final divisions would rob, and also take the young of the city along with them. But, we succeeded in getting a letter of protection from General Ivanov, and on the strength of this, we were permitted to organize the fire-fighters to maintain order. And since the letter was in my name, -- I was compelled to put on a fire-fighter's hat. The commander of the fire-fighters, Muszinsky, turned over his hat to me, and was de facto my deputy. It is the last night. In the distance, flames are seen rising from the army camp, and the storage dumps that were set fire by the army itself. The retreat was carried out in military fashion, and to our wonder, did not affect us at all. The danger lay not from the retreating army, but rather from those divisions that remained behind to destroy the buildings, and to collect valuables that might have been in the camp, and whose mission was also to extract all the young people, and anything that conceivably could be of use to the enemy. And here, in the middle of the night, two officers appeared, and demanded that Muszinsky and I enlist all of the fire-fighters in order to put out all of the fires in the surroundings. We understood this to be a stratagem by which they wanted to capture us in a trap, -- and we avoided carrying out this order. With the coming of daylight, there was no trace of them. The great retreat was over, but small groups of Cossacks ran about hither and thither, without supervision, who began to break into the closed stores. Armed with the letter of protection from General Ivanov, we confronted the Cossacks bent on plunder – but in that very hour, we spied the vanguard of the Austrian army, mounted cavalry – and the Cossacks fled for their lives. And so ended the chapter, of the Russians, in Baranovich.

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On the second day of *Sukkot* 5675, 24.9.1915, the Austrians entered the city. The citizenry senses an easing, as if the dangers that had hovered over us were transformed. However, it only took a couple of hours, and we were bitterly disappointed: the Austrian soldiers spread out in the darkness of night, into the houses, and plundered necessities, confiscated dwellings, and their conduct was, for the most part, characterized by cruelty.

Towards nightfall, the dignitaries of the city came to the headquarters of the command, in order to organize the requests we were going to make of him, at the head of whom was the eldest of the group – Pinchas Kaplan – a well-known activist and doer, who was also wise. The commandant entered. It was in our mind to seek as friendly and as personal relationship as possible. But imagine our surprise, when the officer opened with the question from his side: Was there a house of prostitution in the city? Mr. Kaplan tried to put on a face that indicated he did not understand the question. But finally, reddened with anger, he answered: My companions and I don't require such things, and we did not know that the powerful conquering army would send us so young an officer, and that this would be his demands. But the officer stood his ground. I opened with words of the conquered, and asked the officer to try and understand our temperament at this time, that we had not imagined among ourselves, that with the arrival of the forces of a cultured nation – in his first meeting with the dignitaries of the place – that he would ask of us to bring our daughters to the army, or that we concern ourselves with a house of prostitution for him – and that we were of the mind that we would be dealing in issues of provisioning, the rule of order, billeting of the soldiers and officers, and other important things. And if, despite this, he be adamant in his request – we ask that permission be granted for us to present ourselves to the General, and to obtain his thoughts regarding this matter. When the officer heard our reply – he got up and left without adding a word, and we did not see him again. It appears that he left the city, and was replaced by another. Matters began to get organized. The Austrian soldiers even began to fraternize with the Jews of the city, remaining there for 26 days. In the meantime, the Russians launched a major attack on Baranovich, and even bombed it. By a miracle, there were no victims. The residents of Baranovich were suffused with fear in the face of the Russians, who stood ready to capture the city, and many fled to Slonim. In the meantime, a force of Germans arrived, and the attack was put off. The Germans took the Austrians out of the city, and on 20/10 German forces entered the city, and began to set up their order. While during their interval, the Austrians permitted the stores to conduct business, and did not confiscate merchandise, under the Germans, a different discipline was felt. Immediately, orders for confiscation appeared. Only that

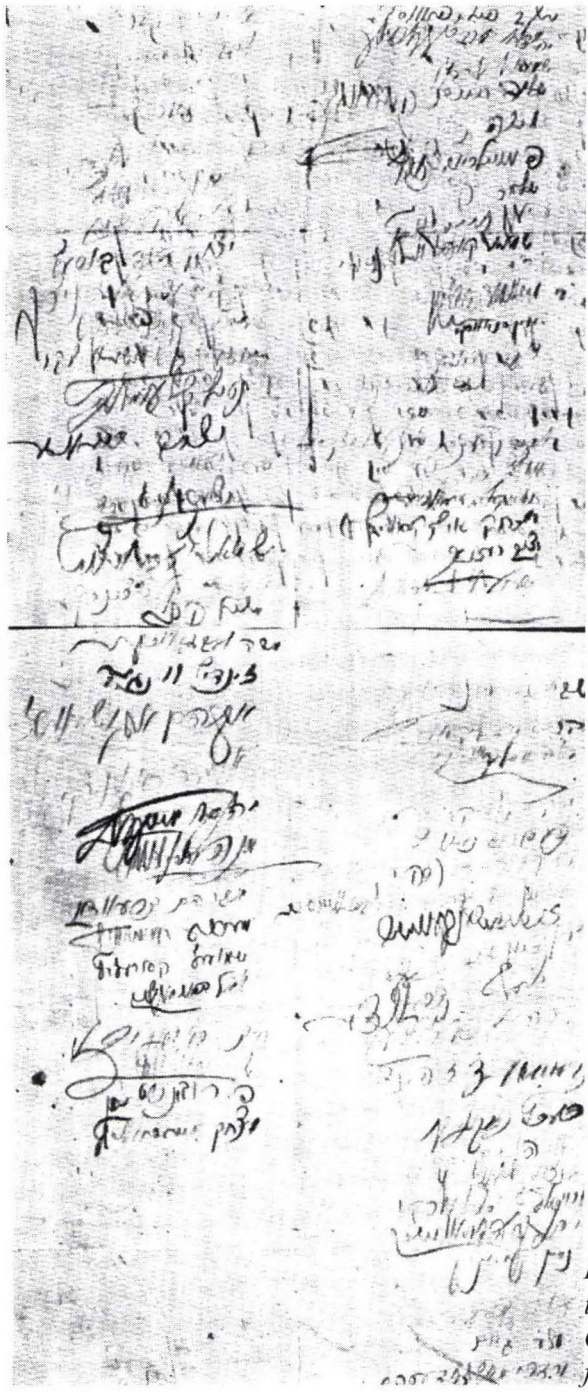


Page 105: *A Stringed Instrument Ensemble Organized by a Group of Youth In Order to get out of Work*

From the right: Mikhl Szolomowicz, Berkowsky, Kalman Brawda, Mordechai Lifschitz, N. Rudnitzky, Sarah Lifschitz, Bliznianski (Behind Sarah), Simcha Judkowsky (Behind Bliznianski), Grisha Bagatin, Szolomowicz, Yisrolik Rudnitzky (Behind Szolomowicz), Joseph Rubinstein, Shmulewicz, Aharon Jasinowsky, Abraham'l Kovensky, Chaim Minkowicz

merchandise that was in stores was confiscated: building materials, foodstuffs, etc., but many of the residents were able to cache and hide a variety of goods. We were ordered to provided candidates to be nominated for a committee. We decided to conduct the elections by residents in accordance with a rule that was accepted in those days: every ten people picked one, and these 'heads of ten' went into conclave, and selected a committee of seventeen people. The commandant received our idea with restraint, because it was his privilege to disqualify anyone that he felt it was necessary to. At the beginning of November 1915, a committee, in its entirety, was elected, with the consent of the Commandant; I was selected as the head, with Mr. Kaplan as my deputy.

It was the custom of the Germans to 'seize' people to do work. Every morning, the soldiers would go out to perform the work of seizure, and they would deploy these people to do different sorts of labor. The committee, first,



מכתב עם חתימות תושבי העיר שנשלח לראש הועד האזרחי (בירגער־קאָמיטעט) בקשר עם התפטרותו מתפקידו

Page 107/108 A Letter, accompanied by Signatures of the City Residents, that was sent to the Head of the Citizen's Committee in Connection with His Resignation from His Post.

turned to the first Commandant with a request to stop such seizures, and took it upon itself to provide the necessary workers for important work; after clarifying the pressing work that needed to be done, especially – the unloading of goods from the trains – we came to an agreement to pace at his disposal, forty people to be deployed at his discretion. The committee invited people who did such work, and paid them a salary, and they did the work to the satisfaction of the army. We placed the burden of doing this work on each and every resident, for one or two days a week, and whoever did not want to work, could not get out of working – he would have to pay a reparation, and in his place, a salaried worker was retained. In a like manner, the committee took upon itself the responsibility of billeting the soldiers, and in this way, avoided the confiscation of dwellings. In view of the fact that we were able to fulfill all the requests – the army conveyed its satisfaction regarding the arrangements that we made, even to the point of extending us some trust, to the extent of turning over the city (its administration and security) into the hands of our council. (Two incidents of accident and theft occurred. I reported on these events to the commandant, with the request to keep this quiet for the time being; he shared our opinion, because he did not want to blemish the name of his soldiers, but nevertheless, they communicated a stern warning to the soldiers). Even these incidents encouraged the commandant to accept the notion of turning over the security and administration of the city into our hands, with a broad range of autonomy on our part, and the discretion to appoint our own police, police chief, court jail, distribution of the bread that we received from the army, etc.

Many rulings arose in the council with regard to these kinds of questions, and there were those that opposed taking on this responsibility, out of a suspicion that we were being set up for failure, and the punishment that would come in its aftermath, but the majority ruled positively, when they saw that this was good for the community as a whole, because the fear of the 'arbitrariness' of the soldiers was great, because in each house, many forbidden items were hidden away. This also enabled us to set up educational facilities for the children, which in every instance gave us the opportunity to impose taxes. The council then decided that the Jewish police was not there to serve the army, and had no role to play in the army's affairs, and should it occur, for example, that the army needed to arrange a search for its own reasons – our police neither will escort them, and is not at the ready to take their orders or to serve them. This specific issue aroused an extended discussion with the army command, which demanded complete cooperation from us, even in these cases; The general, who was responsible for this arrangement, allowed from his side, invited me as head of the city, to stand opposite his objection and its motivations. I explained to him, that the council is the selection of the local settlement, and its first and foremost mission, is to protect the interests of the residents and to shield them from the army. I emphasized the mission of defender, to see the lightest punishment even in the case of someone who had transgressed, and that our police cannot serve two masters at the same time, because this would weaken the trust that the community had in us. The general agreed with my thinking, and he made it the responsibility of the commandant to invite the members of the police, and to maintain supervision over them. However, he reserved for himself, the right to disqualify any Jewish policeman, if he were to suspect that person for political motives, and he also did not repeal the prohibition against lawful public assembly.

In this manner, we laid a foundation for the autonomous governance of the city. We selected a Jewish police force, and at its head, we placed Eliezer Limon. His deputy was Gedalyahu Stolovicky. We selected the judges, and we organized the distribution of the flour, and the bread we received from the army. The economic situation in the town was very bad; the army gave enough bread to distribute 100 grams to each individual daily, and beside this ration – there could be found no fat or meat in the city. Most of the earnings of the residents came from the most menial of labor, but despite this, people went to work willingly, because of the food that they received, in addition to the pay they got for the work. It was in this way, that friendly relations were created between the soldiers and the workers, who would get from their hands, from time-to-

time, additional containers, chocolate, and brown sugar that normally was fed to the horses. Many homes would wash the laundry of the soldiers that would come for a furlough from the front. A terribly poverty reigned, and there were those who also suffered from hunger. The council did whatever was in its power to get an increase in the flour ration, and we purchased foodstuffs from the neighboring villages that they had hidden in pits.

Exit from the city was, in general, forbidden, but a contribution of five golden rubles got you a permit to leave, and those who came back, brought a bit of food. Thanks to the effort we made, we were able to secure an increase in the ration from 100 to 250 grams daily; having no means, we distributed the bread without charge, and this was made possible by an increment of some amount to the general process. There were instances, where for a number of days, we felt a shortage of flour and bread – and because of this, we gave first priority in distributing to the poor. We conducted free education, and also ran the courts this way (and there were no lack of cases involving theft, beatings, insults, etc.). We were forced to use a heavy hand to assure proper order, and not to fail in the eyes of the army. We were also forced to find the right communal solutions, not to arouse dissatisfaction from one side or another – and to instill proper respect towards the Jewish policeman, who was also a scion of the city.

With the worsening of the economic situation, we decided that men should begin to work the parcels of land in their yards, and also empty parcels beside the city. We opened with an open approach and we distributed seeds, especially potatoes, cucumbers, beets, etc., such that during the summer months, most of the residents had gardens either in their yards, or outside the city. All of this was done to eliminate hunger.

With this, we turned to the commandant in writing, with a request to allow us to undertake initiatives in matters of tradition and religion; for this purpose, I made use of the Rabbinical Ordination Certificate in my possession – and permission was granted. Thereby, assemblies were held, and lectures, during which I provided a full accounting of our efforts, and an accounting of our finances, and through this we established strong bonds with the community. At the beginning of March 1916, I started up the schedule of talks, and in it, I stresses the importance of communication to sustain the spirit, and cultural activities, especially under these difficult circumstance.

It is worth explaining, that, especially those people who suffered from hunger and want – they were the ones most aroused by my calling, and it was in this fashion that we began to run or cultural meetings and activities – and by doing so, we injected a breath of life into the city as a whole.

In the meantime, decrees were promulgated upon us that were difficult to bear. We succeeded in getting a few of them repealed. The Germans demanded that we turn over the gold that was found with the residents, in accordance with the list of the owners that they had given us. They tasked us with raising a specific sum of money, and demanded that it be turned over in 14 days. After a consultation, and an effort on our part, we caused this decree to be set aside, arguing that the council is unable to organize searches among the residents of the city, because an agreement exists between us, that the council does not carry out army missions. We also explained, that if the army were to carry out these searches – they will find nothing, because it is very easy to hide gold, and it is not reasonable to hold the entire community responsible for the actions of several individuals. However, their true purpose, was to expel all the Jews from Baranovich, because they has no sooner canceled the decree, when they immediately decreed an expulsion of all residents, because it is not possible to prevent espionage from taking place at a location so close to the front. The residents of cities even further away, such as Haradzišča and Stalowičy were also expelled. The council personally assumed the entire weight of the effort required to get this decree annulled, however, it did not succeed in getting it

nullified, but did get it to be more limited in scope.

The council situation was grave indeed, for how was it to expel one resident, and adjudicate between one another. We held a special assembly of the municipal council, with the participation of the Rabbis, and a number of the dignitaries, and among them was Eliezer Bernstein (Head of 'Mizrahi'), Levi Ginsberg, Yekhiel Rabinovich, and Rogoznicky. It was a tragic meeting; many wept, and foretold dark things to come, because, in the end, the feeling was that they would expel all of us, because – the order of the High Command said: 'Clean out all the residents from the city,' just as they had done in other cities, even further from the front than Baranovich, such as Pinsk, from which people were expelled with great cruelty and sent to forced labor, including hundreds of young girls, who did not even know to where they were being expelled.

We decided to arrange a public open meeting, and to communicate the situation to the public in its full severity, and to ask those, without and connection to the city for their livelihood – to voluntarily agree to move to cities more distant from the front.

Many, even before this, had sought permission to leave the city, and intended to go further away from the front. From our side, we assumed responsibility for helping them, and also asked for help from the Germans – to place at our disposal those transportation vehicles needed to move everyone that so wanted. We set a deadline for recording those who agreed to leave – and to our happiness, many responded. However, the Germans demanded a much larger number, but in the end, they agreed to what we had. They set the date of departure, and provided train cars and also foodstuffs, everything as had been discussed; but in the final days – many of those, that originally agreed to leave had regrets, and they did not want to leave the city. The council did not want to resort to force, and the Germans stood their ground, and demanded with great vehemence, that we implement the expulsion, with the assistance of our police, in accordance with the list of the volunteers, which the council had turned over into the hands of the commandant. We decided to hold another assembly, with the same composition, that is to say, with the participation of the Rabbis and city dignitaries, and we put the following three questions on the agenda of the day:

1. The dissolution of the council
2. Our reply to the commandant
3. Assistance to those who had agreed to leave, and had no regrets – or that had taken their regrets back.

The discussions continued until dawn. There were those who could not finish what they were saying because of the tears that caused their throats to choke up. Pinchas Kaplan opposed the dissolution of the council, because this would undoubtedly cause the expulsion of all the residents of the city. In the end, it was decided that the council sees its responsibility to continue its work, and therefore will not dissolve itself. It is for the council to exercise all means to have the decree nullified, or –at the very least – to minimize it, especially in avoiding the expulsion of family breadwinners; support was given to the view of the council, that it is not required to implement the expulsion forcibly; it is up to it to deal with those that did not regret their decision, and those that took back their regrets, and to extend the maximum amount of help to them, that is possible. Several views were also set down to bring to the commandant for justifying the inability to carry out his command.

We carried out these decisions precisely, and the commandant ordered his soldiers to forcibly extract the people, in accordance with the list they had in their hand. This expulsion left a painful mark on the community and the council. In fact, a significant number of those on the list actually remained behind,

because at the last minute, we found a way to get them off of the train cars, to transfer them to hideouts, where they would be out of the sight of the watch. After this became known to the Germans, they organized a second expulsion... our plight was very difficult; the residents survived mainly because of their work; the reserves declined, clothing wore out, and the appearance of the city was – one of poverty and want. The number of residents, which at the time of the occupation had amounted to about 5000 souls, had fallen by 50%. And my situation, as head of the city, only worsened.

The head of the police was changed: the first appointee – Lejzor Limon – had to resign in the wake of unsubstantiated accusations. In his place, we selected Singalowsky (the brother of the leader of ORT); after a while, he too resigned, and then we selected Bazblutzky. Even I stood ready to resign my position, and I demanded new elections.

In general, the behavior of the Germans was very cruel, even if they spoke in a refined way. During my tenure as head of the city, they organized a search of my factory, dug up the yard to a depth of two meters (that covering an area of about 10 dunams); they searched for arms, and the head of the inspection, who in peacetime was the owner of a factory in Lodz, and enjoyed good relationships with the Jews in Lodz – let drop in my ear, with great finesse that 'it is better to kill ten innocent people, rather than let one spy live, meaning that in instances of doubt, we rule it to be a certainty.'

In 1917, news reached us about the Balfour Declaration, but the Germans hid this news from us, and we were denied the privilege of a public celebration. All we were told about was the revolution inside Russia, at the time that they had met the Russian for the talks in Brisk, in 1918. The results were: The Russians ceased their war against the Germans, and at that point the Germans began to advance inside Russia. I received a travel permit to places that had previously been on the other side of the border, and to my astonishment, I found a completely different world there. I saw stores filled with all manner of good things, while we had suffered for two years, from great want.

By my own effort, I managed to avoid the regimen of confiscation that was the custom of the German army, and the Germans agreed to buy available goods from a cooperative, whose members were Eliezer Bernstein, Israel Moshe Stolovicky, Leib'eh Yosselewicz and others. A very substantial commerce developed this way, because the cooperative encompassed many merchants in the district, reaching as far as Bobruisk. The senior command was afterwards in Bobruisk, whose environs stood out for their large fruit orchards, and during peacetime, they would supply apples to the centers in Russia, though during the war years, the fruit just rotted. Most of the orchards were in the hands of Jews, that is to say, they would buy the fruit, post their own guards, facilitate the picking, packing and transportation to the big cities; and when they found out about the possibility of selling to the Germans – they turned to our cooperative, which assumed the task of provisioning apples and additional items – and this business also developed, and reached substantial proportions.

It is also worth recollecting the liquor cooperative business that we established in 1916 (Myself and my partners: Yosselewicz, Stolovicky, Bernstein, Savitzky and Kapilovich). At the time of their retreat, the Russian spilled out all the liquor from the distilleries, especially from the large ones, that were to be found in our city. It became clear that the earth absorbed a percentage of the alcohol, but 8-10% remained.

After negotiations with the army authorities, we were given permission to set up a manufacturing facility for the preparation of liquor, on condition that they would get 50% of the product – and the rest would remain for us to sell without constraint. We set the facility up in the 'oil' factory of Shimshelewicz. We opened up wells in the place where the liquor had been dumped. We set up a ladling operation, and we drew off the top

liquid in barrels, and brought this liquid to the factory in wagons, and the still was large enough. When the borders to Russia were opened – we set up factories in three additional locations. We sold 50% of the spirits to local residents by way of agents, one of these being the local resident Mr. Trobowitz (the owner of the '*Yitzhar*' factory in Israel).

After the Germans entered Minsk – they proposed that I open additional factories in other places – and all of the spirits will be concentrated in Minsk for safekeeping. We counseled, and decided that we have no right to touch Russian assets without their permission. We proposed to the Germans, to engage the Russian authorities in discussion, and to secure their consent. The essential agreement of the Russians was granted with specific conditions.

On 11.11.18, the Germans retreated from the entire front. When this became known, may who were from Baranovich decided to leave the place, and I was among them, and I went over to Bialystok – and from there, to Warsaw.

In the meantime, the Poles captured Baranovich, but a struggle ensued between the Russians and the Poles over this territory, and the places passed bach and forth from hand to hand. There was a time when Baranovich went over to Russian hands. And all of the Poles there, including Graf Rozwadowski – left it. When he reached Warsaw, he was in straitened circumstances. The Poles had no system for dealing with refugees, and he turned to me with the proposal to sell the city of Baranovich (because all of the parcels on which the houses of the city were built, belonged to him). I replied to him, that I was not prepared to buy this from him, out of the pressure associated with a time of confiscation, but I am prepared to give him a loan for his needs, and I gave him the amount that he required. In the meantime, Pilsudski's army captured Baranovich, and drew close to Kiev. The Russians harried the Poles, and reached as far as the gates of Warsaw – and there, they were turned back. At that time, Baranovich was again captured by the Poles, and the border was set 68 km from the city, that is to say, the place where the border was between the Russian and German areas of conquest.

The Graf returned to his place, and notified me that it was his desire to pay me back handsomely, but not with money, rather with the equivalent of money. I replied that I did not want any ordinary compensation, but it was my desire to buy several houses from him for the benefit of the city of Baranovich. We arrived at an agreement, and I received the houses as my property, and turned them over to the Baranovich community – one large house, and two houses for the 'Wasserman Yeshiva.'

With this, my chapter about Baranovich comes to an end.

Between Both World Wars 1919-39

By Moshe Mukasey

Community and Economic Activity

Foreword

The Jewish history of Baranovich, in the period 1919-1939, is organically fused with the activity of the Jewish community, which in the span of a couple of decades, took over the central place in the life of the local Jewish societal activity.

The image of the near past still lives in our memory – near, and yet so far – like an incomprehensible dream about a large Jewish community, which was destroyed. Even a cemetery does not remain.

The history of Baranovich was short, barely 70 years approximately, and its character was very specific. It did not have a tradition that spanned generations; everything had to be started from scratch. It was not for nothing that our city was called 'the New America.' Baranovich was the natural heiress of many surrounding settlements. The new residents built their new lives with the ardor of pioneers, and community work was done with love and devotion, even though there was no lack of obstacles.

A burgeoning community, active on all fronts of independent self-direction: on the national, religious, cultural, social and economic fronts.

By the end of the First World War, the Jewish settlements were dominated by a sense of awakening and refreshment. All manner of institutions sprung up in each and every city and town, parties, and organizations; the settlements and communities that were destroyed during the war began to be built up again. And this also hold – and especially so – for Baranovich.

The Reds Come

On Saturday, January 4, 1919, the Germans evacuated Baranovich, and on the morrow, Sunday, it was taken over by the Bolsheviks.

The city, like the entire country, lived in the unstable atmosphere of civil war, and in the fever of the revolution.

Waves of the Red Army military streamed through which at that time had the character of a partisan movement made up of peasants and workers, ruled by an unbridled sense of freedom that comes from chains that have been ripped off.

The first sign of the new authority was the grandstand set up in the marketplace, and the numerous mass-meetings and speeches, day in and day out.

All manner of 'red institutions' were established, and unions. The majority of the Jewish populace was not carried off with the psychosis, and developed an attitude of circumspection and reservation.

The entirety of Jewish community activity came to a halt; it was like living in chaos.

The Nightmare Legion

In March 1919, the Polish Legion tore into the city. Their path was sown with Jewish victims. Already, by the first night, they had butchered an entire Jewish family. Several days later, a Jew that had been killed was found in the field (a *Met-Mitzvah*).

They rampaged through Baranovich for a week's time, and in those days, the Jews literally lived in a pogrom nightmare, locked up and sequestered.

The Bolsheviks come back again; but there reign also does not last long. A few weeks later, during the days of Passover, they leave us, and the city is occupied by the regular Polish Army.

Under Polish Rule

The Polish Army ruled in Baranovich for about a year's time. A little at a time, conditions began to stabilize. A civilian authority was created. Jewish community life, once again, bestirred itself and its institutions began to function.

By means of an understanding, with all parts of the Jewish populace, (apart from the *Bund*, which at that time did not recognize the Jewish community), a community was established. Businesses opened again, and factories; small scale business developed, from a wartime character, with all the characteristics that accompany such, such as illegal borders, smuggling merchandise, etc. The Jewish community had been completely ruined during the war, and was almost at the point of not being able to help itself. It was then that the '*Joint*' appeared, and with its help, Jewish life was again built up. Institutions were created, synagogues, community kitchens, and orphanages. A clothing distribution process was organized; social and medical services institutions were established, etc.

Later, after the war, when the situation had stabilized a bit, the 'Joint' in parallel with its philanthropic activity, also began to dedicate itself to the constructive work.

Here, we must also remark about the help we received from the various Jewish *landsmanschaften* in America.

Community Activity

The Jewish community was the central organ that directed all of this support work – dividing up the products, disbursing monetary subsidies, and controlling the activities of all the institutions and organizations. It also dealt with the political activity, since, it was the *de facto* representative of the Jewish populace.

Since the community ordinance from Congress Poland was not yet in force, on the *Kressen*, the community was recognized by both sides, both by the Jews, and by the authorities, as the official representation of the entire local Jewish population. However, the community did not want to satisfy itself with just this, and strove to be elected by way of democratic elections. And as soon as circumstances quieted down somewhat, it stepped up to organizing an election and to carry them out in accordance with voting regulations that had been worked out.

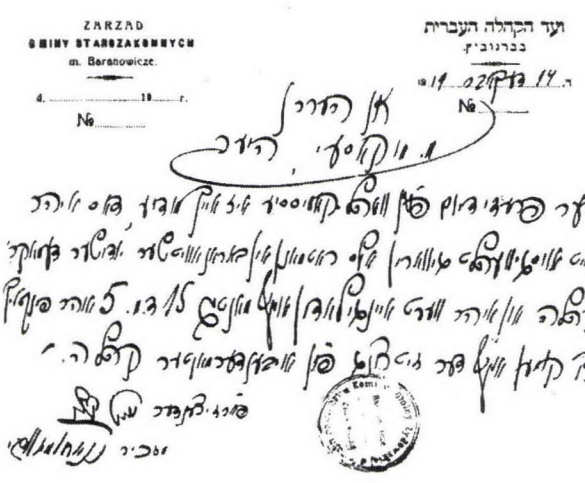
The first democratic elections to the community took place in December, 1919. In these elections, were representatives of parties and movements (except for the *Bund*, which at that time boycotted the communities).

At that time, many Jewish residents of Baranovich began to return home, who had been expelled by the German occupation authorities, deep into Poland.

The Struggle for Survival

With the offensive of the Polish Army, in the Spring of 1920, and its advance as far as Kiev, the center of general Jewish community activity went over to Minsk.

Overall, a national a national awakening and resuscitation reigned. All about, communities were starting to be established, and social institutions. At the beginning of 1920 a get-together occurred in Minsk of the Jewish communities in White Russia, and a national council was created.



איינלאַדונג צו דער ערשטער קהילה־זיצונג

Page 114: An Invitation to the First Community Meeting

Regrettably, this period of resuscitation did not last long. In July 1920, the counter-offensive of the Red Army began. The Polish front collapsed, and, in great panic, the military withdrew to Warsaw. On their way to retreat, the Poles sowed destruction; many cities and towns were burned down, and Jewish wealth was wiped out.

Baranovich was also threatened by the same fate. The Jewish community intervened, and sent delegations to the decision-making military circles. Its representations were smashed, however, like running into a stone wall of unfriendly relationships. One of the principal accusations against us was that the Jewish populace is sabotaging the Polish Army, refuses to take part in any cooperation, and does not even want to provide bread to the hungry soldiers on its way back.

In order to weaken this accusation, the community opened a special bakery, and told the military authorities about the establishment of a number of assistance points for the distribution of bread to hungry soldiers. Apart from this, other measures were also taken, which entailed substantial outlays of money. All of these measures resulted in the fact that when the city was abandoned, we were left with only a few solitary burned houses on the marketplace.

According to accurate information, that we received in those days, the Poles had worked out a plan to set the whole city on fire; flammable material was even made ready for the task. The alarmed community unveiled an intensive counter plan. Under the influence of this activity, the local Polish field command issued a



Page 115/116:The 1920 Minsk Get-Together of the Jewish Communities of White Russia (M. Mukasey (Below, first from the right); N. Perlov (Top, third from the left)

warning to the soldiers, that for every act of violence, such as robbery, murder, etc., a severe punishment will be meted out, up to and including a death sentence. The following activists distinguished themselves in this rescue effort: R' Pinia Kaplan, Rabbi R' Joseph Foymer from Sluck (then in Baranovich), R' Israel Kapilovich, Moshe Gubar, and others.

Also, in that time, when we hovered between life and death, we did not abandon our concern for the future. I remind myself, among other things, in a very noteworthy experience:

It was the beginning of the summer of 1920. The front had crashed, and we were on the eve of a complete breakdown in civil order. All of our financial resources had been tapped out, and a danger lurked, that the entirety of the community's activity will come to a complete halt. Along with the elderly *Hasidic* activist, R' Hanan Leib Feigman ז"ל, I was sent to the '*Joint*' Central office in Minsk to ask them to provide our community with a larger money fund.

Railroad communication, at that time, was reserved exclusively for the use of the military, and it was a danger to life and limb to travel on the roads, especially at night. For a week's time, we dragged ourselves along in a wagon, under difficult circumstances, and under fear of death. In the end, we reached our goal, and obtained a substantial sum of money. On the way back our concerned was twice as great: for our lives, and the value we had on our person.

The entrusted money was turned over to the responsibility of three people: R' Israel Kapilovich, Moshe Gubar, and the writer of these lines. In the anxious atmosphere of the terror of war, we could not, at that time, sleep peacefully. (Later, when the Poles again re-took the city, Baranovich was one of the first communities which renewed its community activities, with the help of these hidden monies).

In the second occupation, the Soviets already communicated danger. One could sense the heavy hand of the authorities. The merchandise in larger businesses and camps, were requisitioned, and taken out of the city. The stores were locked up. Part of the Jewish young people were engaged as government employees – almost the single and only means of deriving any income for existence at that time. Zionist activity went underground, where it was intensively pursued. So, for example, the *'Tze'irei Tzion'* daringly carried on, under the nose of the authorities, a circle conference in the Zionist synagogue.

There was a shortage of everything – apart from meetings. Mass assemblies, propaganda literature, searches, judgements and executions.

Once again, Jewish community life came to a grinding halt.

Peace and Reconstruction

In March 1921, the Peace Treaty of Riga was signed between Russia and Poland.

From that time, a new epoch begins in the life of Polish Jewry, in all respects. Also, the work of the '*Joint*' branched out widely. A HIAS Society was established, whose objective was to anticipate the emigration needs of refugees, relatives, etc., and to organize material assistance for families that has experienced ruin in the 'Old Country.' A branch of HIAS was also established in Baranovich, which carried on a skillful agenda of work, and its earnings were substantial.

Help for Refugees



Page 117/118: ***The Baranovich 'Hilfs-Komitet' After The First World War***

Sitting (From the Right): *J. Jasinowsky, Y. Kopeliovich, Sh. Wertheit, M. Limon, Y. Turetsky*
Standing (From the Right): *A. Darasinsky, A. Garfinkel, Kh. Yudelman, M. Mukasey*

Baranovich, as a central railroad crossing not far from the Russian-Polish border, was the first receiving place for the mass flood of refugees, from the other side of the border.

The larger part of them were in need of material and legal assistance. Most of the refugees had no local documents; there freedom and security were therefore at risk, and even their very existence – was threatened. Almost all of them strove to emigrate further on. It was the fate, of the Jews of Baranovich, to have the burden of helping all the Jewish refugees, fall on them, and they threw themselves into this sacred work with their entire ardor and commitment; yes, commitment!... And all of this, they had to do by themselves, by their own hand, without any help from the outside. It is important to know that there were only two such assembly camps (quarantines) along the entire Russian-Polish border. Only then, is it possible to assess the responsibility and hard work involved, that Baranovich Jewry bore in that period.

Somewhat later, the temporary Jewish National Council of Poland was founded, when then opened a legal branch in our community, and delegated a special representative who carried on all the work of a legal advisor, and intermediary with the authorities. At that time, the Polish authorities demanded documents from the refugees, to verify that they were either born in, or were permanent residents in Polish territory.

Fortunately, all of the citizen registration ledgers in most cities and towns had been completely destroyed in the war. The Jewish community in Baranovich then developed a wide-ranging assistance activity on to address this problem, and provided the Jewish refugees with certification as residents of the city and its environs. On the basis of this, the authorities permitted their continued presence in the country, and their emigration outwards.

This was a modern example of '*Pidyon Shvuyim*,' and this was a very complicated work, also involving danger for those who initiated it, carried it out, or were otherwise involved...



Page 119/120:A Group of Halutzim with Activists from the Zionist Movement Near the 'Bet-HaHalutzim' (The Zionist Synagogue) in 1921.

Second Row (Sitting, from the Left): Eliezer Berenstein, Y. Katzav, Milkonowitzky, M. M. Ginsberg, N. Nokhumolsky, unknown, Zhenya Twersky-Ginsberg (Today in Tzirat HaKnesset, Israel)
Third Row (From the Left): Tictinsky(between Berenstein and Katzav), Dr. Nakhumowsky (between Katzav and Milkonowitzky), Dr. Berman, unknown, M. Mukasey, M. Lipshovicky, 2 unknowns, Rivka Yosselewicz.
Top:Yehoshua Weinger (third from the left).

The *Braykha*[55], or *Aliyah Bet*

It is worth recalling, that in those times, when the terms '*Braykha*' and '*aliyah Bet*' had not yet been created, Baranovich was already an important link in the 'underground railroad' to the Land of Israel.

On dark nights, *Halutzim* from Russia were smuggled across the border into Poland. Baranovich was the base for all of these 'illegal' operations. It was from here that the border smugglers would depart, and it was to here that groups of the smuggled *Halutzim* would come. They would stop over with us, and be provided with documents and material means to make the further journey to the Land of Israel. The Zionist synagogue, at that time, was transformed into a home for the *Halutzim*.

Hundreds of important Zionist and pioneering forces, were saved, and reached their goal in this manner, and through this 'home.'



Page 121 (Top): A Conference of the Neighboring Communities in Baranovich (in the year 1923), with the participation of L. Jaffa, Yakir Warszawsky, and other guests.

Political and Community Work

In the Fall of 1922, the first elections to the Polish Sejm took place. It was, at that time, that the bloc of the minorities was created. The Jewish populace manifested great interest in the politics of the country, took an active part in the elections, and demonstrated its independent national character and solidarity with other minorities.

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55 From the Hebrew, meaning 'The Flight.'

Along with this, a very broadly-based municipal activity developed. The first municipal council in Baranovich was created in 1922, in accordance with a parity agreement (fifty-fifty) between the Jews and Christians.

During those halcyon days of national liberation and the formation of states, the Poles among us, who were in the minority, made an effort to win the trust, cooperation and sympathy of the Jewish populace.

With the initiative of the local powers, and the financial help of the '*Joint*' funds, schools of various types were opened: religious and secular – Yiddish and Hebrew, and mixed. Apart from the '*Joint*,' the municipal council also subsidized the schools: they grew and developed, and their existence became more or less stabilized.



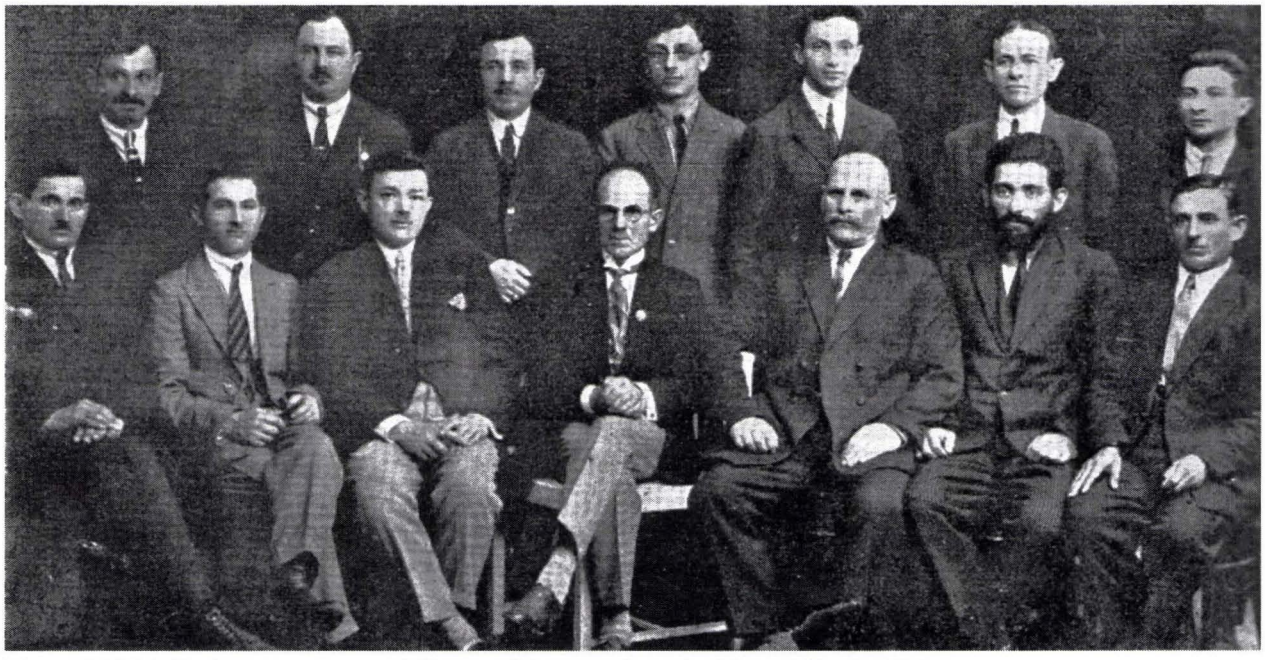
Page 121 (Bottom): ***The Volksschule of 'Tze'irei Tzion' (1922)***

Sitting (from the Right): *Dr. Yaakov Kagan, B. Glazer, S. Kaplan, Rivka Goldberg, Gitt'l Wertheit*
Standing (from the Right): *M. Mukasey, David Katznelson, Kushnirowsky, Rayewsky, Weinger*

Professional Work Unions and Banking Presence

After The First World War, Baranovich was left in a state of need and poverty; and the economic ruin became total, in the overwhelming year (1919), when sovereignty kept changing hands often. It was only in the second half of 1919 that Baranovich started to come around.

Under Polish hegemony, the economic structure of our city did not, in general, change. In a certain sense, only the relationships and the opportunities changed. New businesses and undertakings opened up; and the entirety of commerce swung around towards Poland. Economic organizations began to be created, as subsidiaries to the central offices in Warsaw and Vilna. Professional workers unions were called into life, and craft guilds; a manual trades union was established, and a general merchants union.



Page 125/126 (Top): *A Group of Activists from the Manual Trades Union*

Sitting (From the Right): *Kh. Portnow, Kh. Reznick, Szwiransky, Kh. Weltman, P. Kroshinsky, M. Korolitzky, M. J. Yankelewicz.*

Standing (From the Right): *Unknown, Uryonowsky, Kh. Minkowicz, Z. Krawczuk, N. Medresh, Meir Korolitzky, J. Lejzorowicz*



Page 125/126 (Bottom): ***Council, Management and Personnel of the Volksbank***

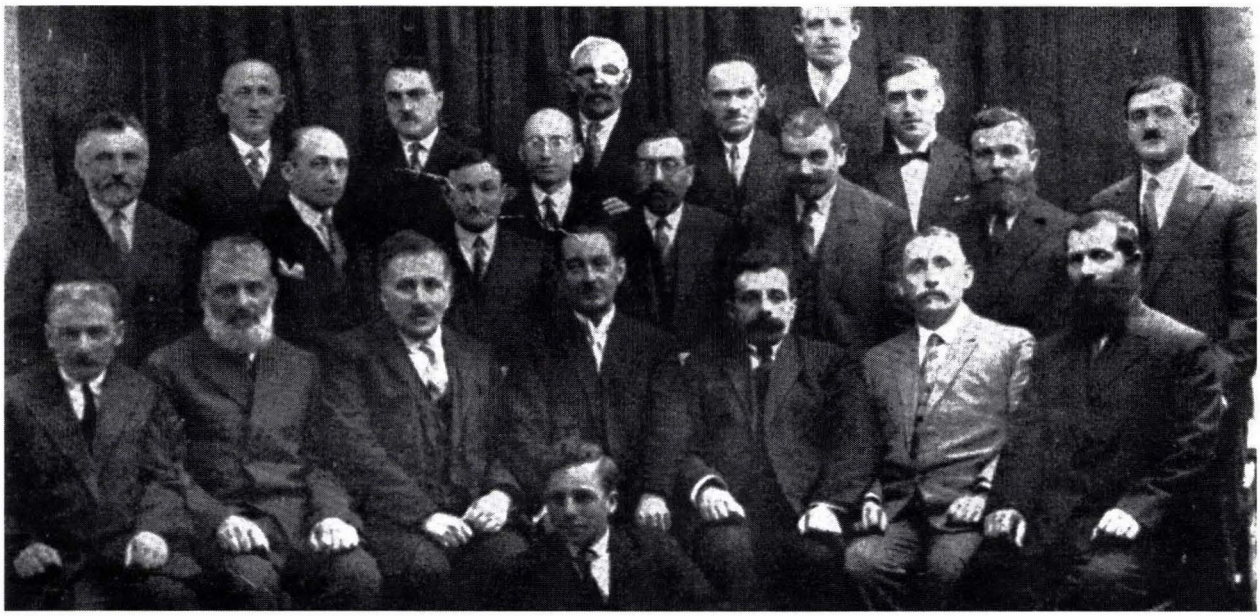
Sitting (From the Right): *Wolf Mukasey, A. Katzav, Kh. Weltman, M. Mukasey, Itzkowitz, Polonsky, Litvak.*

Standing (From the Right): *Perepliocyzk, Kleinman, Cyrynsky, Jesiersky, Garfinkel, Szwiransky, N. Medresh, Poliatczuk, Lidowsky, Zelcowsky.*

It is not possible to say that all these unions distinguished themselves with great unity. The persistent curse, of Jewish community splintering, manifested itself here as well.

It is certainly regrettable that the manual trades union, which held, under its wings, the broadest class of the Jewish populace – was precisely that union that suffered the most, from incessant disputes, being constantly on the verge of splitting apart.

For a long time, there existed two manual trades unions in Baranovich, who fought with each other so sharply, that a position of fighting, just for the sake of fighting, had become intrinsic to their being. One, so-to-speak, represented the better off manual laborer, and the other – the poorer ones. The '*Judenstadt*' Party founded its own Manual Trades Organization, *'Gush HaAvodah.'* For a short time, a union called 'The Craftsmen' also figured in our city.
The Jewish manual worker, in those trying times, spent the last bit of his energy to assure his existence; he



Page 127/128: ***Council and Management of the Merchant's Bank***

Below: *J. Fuchson*
Sitting (From the Right): Sh. Wertheim, J. Mishkin, Y. Katzav, I. Z. Heilperin, B-Tz. Segalovich, Bogin, M. Goldin.
Standing(From the Right): Kh. Weinstein, Foxman, Shimshelewicz, Polonsky, Itzkowitz (behind Polonsky, Szenicky, Minkowicz, Wolopiansky, Mavshovich (behind Wolopiansky), J. Zhukhowicky, M. Heilperin, A. Izikson, Gorelick, Cyrynsky.

was in need of a strong boss that would take him under its protection, and stand guard on behalf of his day-to-day interests, so that he is not ground up between the ponderous millstones of the economic-industrial crisis. Nevertheless, it would not be correct to insinuate that the Jewish manual laborer sat around idle, and had no like representation. The Baranovich Manual Trades Union, was the biggest and strongest in the entire ambit. It had representatives in the Novogrudok Manual Trades Chamber and in the Appellate Commission (Commissar Odwolowcze), and was represented in the community in the municipal council, and in all commissions, that had to do with a variety of position related to the Tax Commission; it conducted a widely-branched activity on all fronts for the benefit of the manual worker. Legal and medical help was organized,

and there was a concern for raising the cultural level of its membership through frequent lectures, and discussions about actual and general questions; it founded its own drama circle, and opened a reading room at the union. Efforts were expended for a whole array of activities: attacking the competition between manual laborers, lowering the prices of accessories and work tools, finding work for manual laborers derived from government offices, creating access to credit, etc.

The Manual Trades Union had no small influence on the course of community life in our city. The Jewish craftsman, in time saw his numbers and visibility grow.

The same held true for the general merchants union. It, too, needed to fulfill important goals in the economic life of the city. It was founded immediately after The First World War, and in the beginning of its activities, it was occupied with distributing '*tzenikehs*' (price lists) for the storekeepers; At that time, Poland did not have a stable currency exchange system, and it was often necessary to change prices. At the beginning, the union concentrated within its ranks, the merchants and storekeepers of all circles – large wealthy operators and poor people.

The Messrs. Israel Zalman Heilperin, Ben-Zion Segalovich, Yaakov Levinbook, and others stood at the head of the union for a period of time. The Head-Secretary Wolochwiansky ran it for a longer time, who later transferred to the '*Bank Kupiecki*' as a '*Practikant*,' and his place was taken by Secretary Zeitlin. In later times, among others, the union was led by the Messrs. Yehoshua Izikson, and Kh. Trachtenberg.

The General Merchant's Union was unable to satisfy the needs of the storekeepers and jobbers with limited means, who had very special interests, and it came to a parting of ways. Parallel to the Merchant's Union, a second union named the 'Small Business Union was created. There were times when the relationship

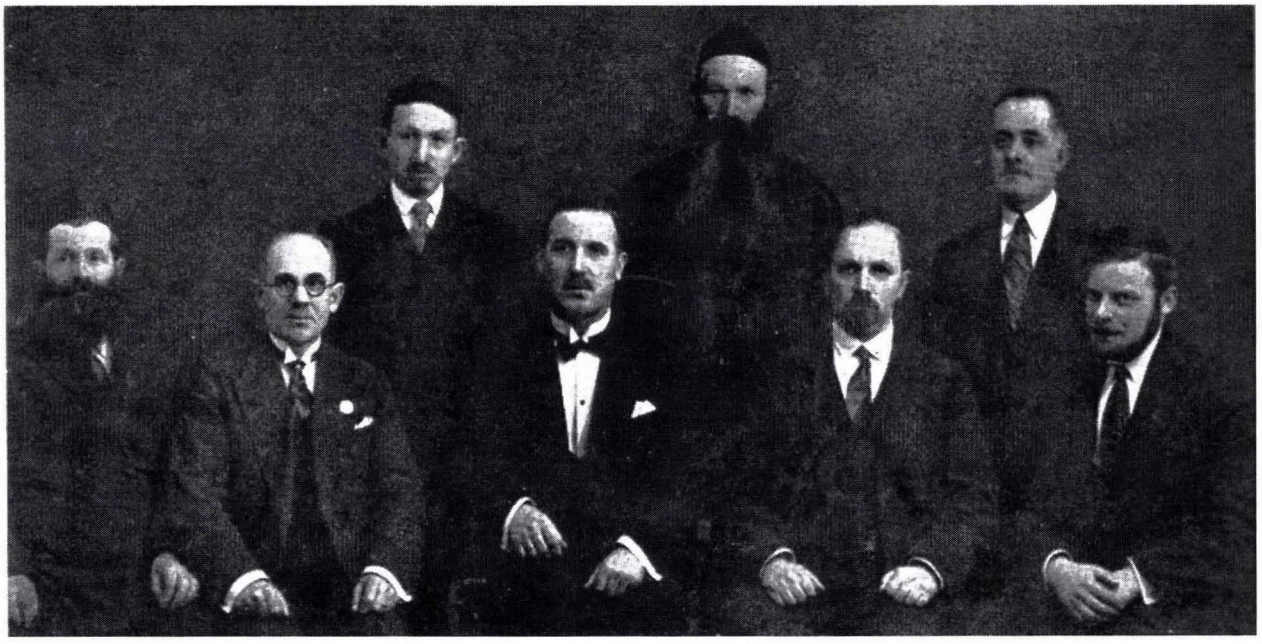


Page 129/130 (Bottom): ***Our City Fathers – Councilmen of the Magistrate in the Year 1933***

Sitting (From the Right): 1. Lawyer Izikman, 2. Litvak, 3. Weltman, 4. Mukasey, 6. Ing. Winikov.
(2nd Row, from the Right): 2. Zukerman, 3. Bregman, 9. Bloshinsky
(3rd Row, from the Right): 1. Minkowicz, 2. Tunkel, 3. Zhukhowicky, 4. Worobiowsky, 5. Wolokhwiansky, 6. Rabinovich.

between the two unions was strained enough. Nevertheless, both demonstrated a very lively activity in all aspects of economic life; they had their representatives in the community and in the municipal council, and in all bodies that were concerned with economic matters, and commissions. After the last community elections, in 1939, the chairman of the Small Business Union, Mr. Krutocowsky (now in Israel) was elected as the Vice-Chairman of the community leadership.

It is understandable, that the economic-industrial life in Baranovich could not have developed without the concurrent unions in credit institutions. A few years went by before they were established, and in the year 1922/23, the *Volksbank* (*Bank Ludowy*), which in keeping with its character, served all segments of the Jewish populace, was for many years, the only Jewish credit institution.



Page 129/130 (Top): ***Leadership of the Jewish Community in the Year 1932***
Sitting (From the Right): *N. Perlov, Ing. A. Winikov, Dr. M. Jasinowsky (President), Kh. Weltman (Vice-President), Sh. Wertheim*
Standing (From the Right): *Ts. Keslin, G. Glembowsky, M. Bitensky.*

Despite this, the merchants were not satisfied with it, and a while later they created their 'Merchants Bank' (*Bank Kupiecki*). Both bank existed on cooperative foundations, and were members of 'The Union of Jewish Cooperative Societies in Poland.'

Later on, several other banks were established: the Manual Trades Bank (*Bank Ziemieszniczy*), the 'Bank for Commerce and Industry' (*Bank Handlowo-Przemyslowy*), and the 'General Bank' of the *Agudah* (*Bank Powsczechnie*).

Apart from this since 1926, a *Gemilut Hasadim* Bank was already in existence with us.

The public did not derive much benefit from all of these banks. They began to develop not badly, and in a specific period of time, brought a great deal of utility to the Jewish populace, but they had no long-term continuity, and after much effort and strain, one after another was liquidated, during the course of the first

half of the thirties, because of industrial and administrative reasons. An exception was the 'General Bank' and the '*Gemilut Hesed*' who functioned, without any break, until the last days of Polish hegemony.

Together with their organizational activity, and day-to-day work, the economic unions stood in a difficult and bitter struggle against the economic anti-Semitism and economic decrees from the Polish authorities. The struggle for existence became more and more difficult. However, thanks to the unified strength, the mutual assistance, and the strong solidarity, it was possible to outlast the unpredictable struggle.

Philanthropic Institutions

In the years 1919-1939, philanthropic and social institutions were founded in Baranovich; each had a group of committed activists, who voluntarily dedicated their best years and energies to this community endeavor. It is difficult to enumerated all of those beloved friends, men and women alike, who gave so much of their own free time for those in need, and the unfortunate in our 'Old Country Home.' All of them sensed the sacred duty with their entire ardor and commitment. Let all of this be recorded for the benefit of those that are, today, no longer with us, and let our full recognition be set down, for all of those that are today sown and flung to all corners of the world.

The 'TOZ' Society deserves a chapter unto itself, in which all walks and circles in the Jewish populace were represented.

In general, the philanthropic institutions in our city, externally looked identical to those in other Jewish settlements, although internally, they were strongly influenced by the specific character, mentality, and spiritual physiognomy of Baranovich Jewry.

The Orphanage

Approximately in the year 1919, two central bodies were formed through the *'Joint':* for medical help, and for care of orphans, in which, apart from the official representatives of the '*Joint*', there was also participation from the local Jewish community. At that time an 'Orphanage' was created. The founder was Mrs. Fiedler, and the first director – Mr. Israelite. Seeing that the institution was unable to absorb the hundreds of orphans in the city, this problem was resolved through 'Providing for Orphans' which looked after the material support of the orphans, in place of their families, for their education, and most importantly – for their vocational training. Agreements were concluded with various craftsmen, and it was in this way, that many orphans were raised to become independent productive people.



Page 133: *The Brothers, Gedalia and Yaakov Stolovicky.*

The 'Orphanage' itself, with the support activity from '*JeKoPo*' and the local populace, developed into a very important and essential community institution, which existed continuously got over two decades, until the Germans ימ"ש drove all of the Jews into the ghetto. During the course of its existence, it survived many times and changes, until it was able to attain ownership of its own functional stone building, whom the prominent brothers, Gedalyahu and Yaakov Stolovicky build at their own cost, on their own parcel on the

Graf's *Gasse*, and donated it to the Orphanage Society, in memory of their beloved mother Chaya (who had passed away on *Rosh Hodesh* Elul 5674) and their father Moshe ז"ל (who passed away 25 Tishri 5680). The Orphanage was managed by a leadership that was elected every year at an annual general meeting.



Page133/134: *The Young Orphans with the Founder, Mrs. Fiedler (in the middle) and the Director, Mr. Israelite (1919).*

The entire Jewish community, and the local TOZ institution, the Drama Circle, and the pedagogical councils of the Jewish schools, warmly supported this institution, and always stood ready to be of service with substantive help and resources, in the areas of education and health.

In time, a sort of 'Children's Day Home' was created at the Orphanage, which for a specific fee, would take in the children from such homes, where the parents were constantly occupied in making a living, and could not keep watch over their children. These children would spend an entire day here, with everything available to them – food, rest, and education. A special committee stood at the head of the 'Children's Home,' which directed all of the work. Finally, it organized and implemented a 'Half-Colony' for children from the age of 3 to 7 years of age.

To the extent possible, the Society of the Orphanage enlarged and branched out its activities, and its premises became too crowded for it to carry out it complicated missions.

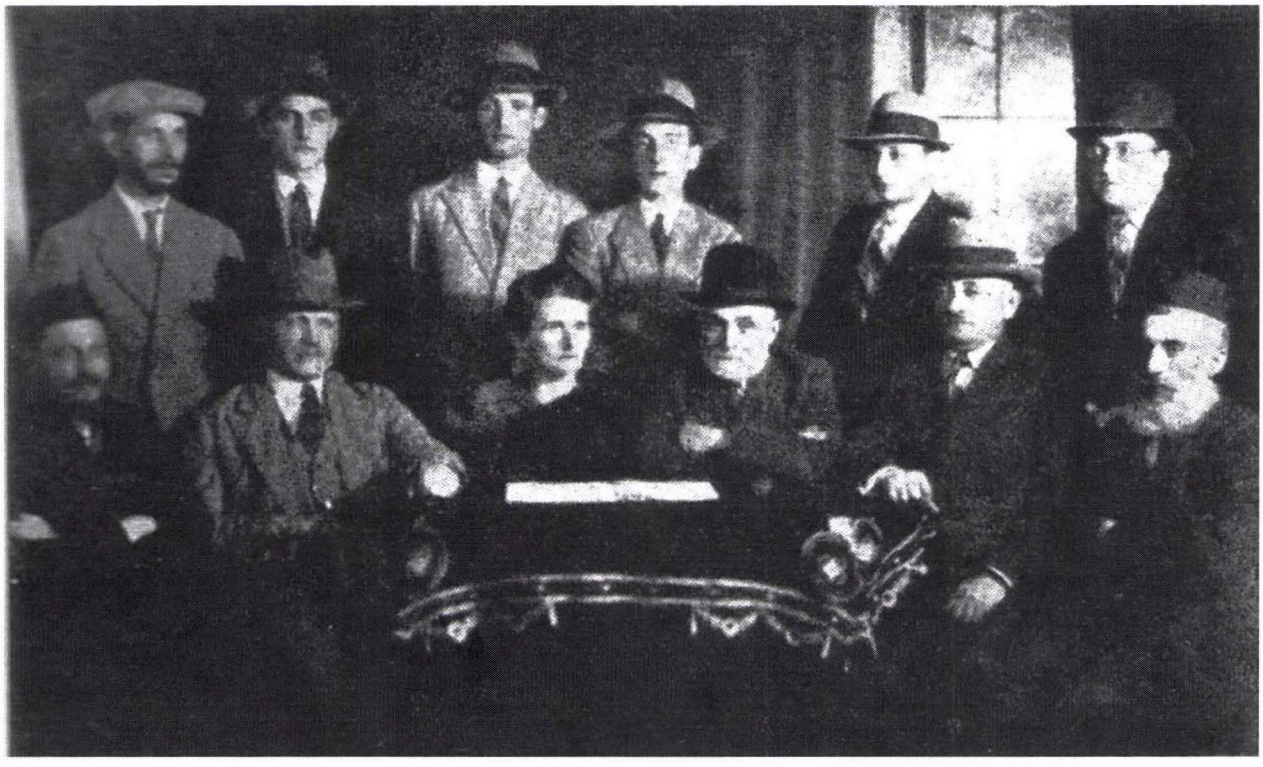
This development found expression at its annual general meeting, on May 27, 1937, with the report of Mr. Shalit, as the delegated representative of the regional '*JeKoPo*' committee in Vilna, in which the name of the institution, which up till now had been called 'The Orphanage,' was changed to 'The Jewish Children's Society of Baranovich,' in recognition of the very visible expansion of its works program.

Linat HaTzedek

Linat HaTzedek in Baranovich can lay claim to a tradition of social activity that goes back many years.

Thanks to the initiative of a number of ladies, as early as the first half of the nineties, of the previous century, a *'Bikur Kholim'* Society was created, which with the passage of time, was transformed into a *Linat Tzedek* (See – Baranovich Under the Russian Czarist Regime).

It activity never seemed to stop. Even in the difficult years of the German occupation, during The First World War, Baranovich never remained helpless in this area of endeavor. There were always young people to be found, mostly women, who, despite the difficult circumstances, exerted themselves, to ease the suffering of those confined to their homes, by the means of keeping watch at the bedside of a sick person.



Page 135/136 (Top): ***The Leadership of 'Linat Tzedek' (1930)***

Sitting (From the Right): Sh. Mandel, Maczanow, Chairman Yosselewicz, Sh. Feldenkreis (Chairlady), Y. Kaplan, A, Miransky.
Standing (from the Right) Y. Lev, A. Beckerman, F. Zelcowsky, A. Szamuszkowicz, Y. Polonsky, Friedman

The war left us a crushing burden of need and poverty, which led to the spread of dangerous epidemics, among the starved and abused populace. There was not yet a hospital in Baranovich. The founding of a *Linat Tzedek* literally became a matter of life and death.

In the cold days of Shevat 1920, a group of activists gathered together and laid down the cornerstone for the renewed '*Linat Tzedek*' institution, which during two decades stood guard over the sick among the poor, and faithfully served them with all needs, even with a well equipped dental office.



Page 135/136 (Bottom): ***The Sanitary-Medical Circle 'Red Mogen David' of the 'Linat Tzedek'***

Sitting (from the right): *Leah Kagan, Joseph Foxman, Rachel Gertzikowicz, Pesach Zelcowsky, Rygrodsgy, Shapiro, Abraham Miransky.*

2nd Row (from the Right): *E. Balotzky, Zeldowicz, Unknown, Kopeliovich, Brawda, Unknown. Sonia Miransky, Kushnir, Ruzhansky, Portnow, Kh. Shereshevsky.*

Top (From the Right): *Rabaynovich, Unknown, M. Lancevitzky, Bitensky, N. Lancevitzky, Rachel Grebla, 4 Unknowns.*

[The name Rabaynovich may be a typo for Rabinovich. – Ed]

'Linat Tzedek' with us, was more than just an institution: it was an organization of hundreds of volunteers and youth from all circles, and levels of society, which took an active role in the many-branched day-to-day activities of *Linat Tzedek*, through the gathering of products and money, as well as providing the sick with medicines, and other sorts of medical help. Most importantly, it was through personal help to those who were ill.

The work was carried out with great dedication. In general, the members ended up standing watch during the night, in the most impoverished homes, to lodge in the most suffocating and crowded of houses, with the chronically ill. Despite this, there were always volunteers for this work, and there were almost no instances of anyone being refused. The institution also concerned itself with the distribution of products among the sick and the weak, in accordance with the requests of the doctors.

The *'Linat Tzedek'* was traditional in its form, yet modern and constructive in its substance. Within it, it united the elements of the old, traditional forms of charity, with the modern concept of mutual aid. Because of this, its form of assistance was genuinely Jewish, humane, and even friendly, without the sharp difference between the donor and the recipient.

The central figure in the entire *'Linat Tzedek'* endeavor, was Mrs. Feldenkreis, until she went to the Land of Israel (Today in Israel). In her person, she exemplified the genuine ideal of community activism, and with ardor and energy – a dynamic driving force; she served as a role model for other tens and hundreds of active participants of this important institution that rendered aid.

Beit Lekhem

'Beit Lekhem' was a Jewish institution that occupied an important place in the social life of our community.

This was an institution, which in the most literal sense of the word, fought against the hunger of the poor masses. Many times, in this book, it is recognized that Baranovich had not only substantial merchants and rich *balebatim*, but also a substantial number of poor families, who literally suffered from hunger. There were also tens of Jews, from the middle class, who, on the outside, led a way of life like the *balebatim*, but in times of severe crisis, they would suffer hunger in silence. They would hide this from the eyes of strangers, and were unwilling and unable to stretch out their hand [sic: to take charity].

True, we did not lack for righteous women, who would find out about such families in need, and secretly provide for them, with food, and often with money for purchases of food. But there was much that they could not do, with the circumscribed means, that they used to gather up goods from certain houses, where they were well-known, and always received with great respect. They would often be seen traversing the streets with the very typically tied kerchiefs – and with a look of concern on their faces.

It was these obligations that *'Beit Lekhem'* took upon itself – this self-effacing institution, which, without clamor, and without tumult, in the worst of times, and under the most difficult circumstances, fulfilled his obligation with the greatest sense of generosity and correctness. It already knew the way, how to support people in their need, in a dignified way, and under strict discretion. Indeed, the work of '*Beit Lekhem'* circle, was a reflection of the older '*Matan BaSeyser*.'

Approximately 700 needy Jewish souls obtained succor from its aid. And all of them, it required giving assistance in the form of bread, products, and wood for the entire winter, with *Challah*, meat, and other foods for the Sabbath, and Festivals. And were it not for this institution of '*Beit Lekhem*,', God Forbid, they would drop from cold and hunger.

The needed means had to be gathered from a 'weekly donation' and other opportunities among the Jewish populace. It was not always easy, or simple or easy. There were times when the institution struggled to survive.

From time-to-time, a certain amount of money would fall into our hands from *landsleit* across the ocean. In hindsight, we would have to say that our scions in South Africa were outstanding in this respect, who deemed it necessary to found a special committee for the benefit of '*Beit Lekhem'* in Baranovich.

In the 'Baranovich Courier' of May 20, and in the 'Baranovich Week' of September 16, 1938, we find two published essays about the Baranovich *landsleit* in Johannesburg (Africa). The leadership of 'Beit Lekhem' quotes two financial expenditures which had been received from the address of the member of the management, Yaakov-Dov Neufeld, and it expresses its great recognition and gratitude to the brothers and sisters in Africa, for their good heart, and their commitment to the 'Old Country.' It is signed by: Abraham

Shmuel Galay, who was the president, and the living spirit of '*Beit Lekhem*' and worked year-round, day and night, with all his body and soul.

Old Age Home

The Old Age Home in Baranovich was built after The First World War, by Mr. Israel Zalman Heilperin and his wife, Sarah Lieb'eh ל"ז.

It was set up in a fine, large, stone building. People knew to relate that this prominent donor invested about $10-12M.

Elderly men and women alike, were accepted by the Old Age Home, who had been left alone in old age – without children, without money, and without assets. The elderly there, felt very comfortable, in the company of contemporaries with whom they could converse, and they lacked for nothing. They even had their own small *Bet HaMedrash*, where daily prayer and study took place.

Mr. Israel Zalman Heilperin formally and legally transferred the Old Age Home to the Jewish community. He led the management, which had to look after its existence and order. Expenses were covered by a 'weekly levy,' and spending was subsidized by the community and municipal council.

According to descriptions by local Jews, Israel Zalman Heilperin was moved to his action in a moment of deep human feeling.

During the time of The First World War, he wandered and aimlessly traveled all over Russia as a refugee, and saw a great deal of want and abandonment, and himself tasted what it meant to be without resources, and decided deep in his heart, that if he would live long enough to return to Baranovich, he would construct an Old Age Home for his own account.

He fulfilled his decision, and created a home for tens of the elderly, lonely, and abandoned Jews.

Maot Khittim

If Baranovich Jewry was dynamic. and lively in all aspects of community life, with regard to *Maot Khittim,* it was practically unique and the role model for all of Poland.

The work of *Maot Khittim*, can be cited as a tangible symbol of Jewish community awareness in our city – as an example of a specific 'system of charity' that was implemented by us.

In all Jewish communities, there was a standing custom, that every year, between *Purim* and *Pesach*, the Rabbi, together with several of the *balebatim*, step out with the 'red kerchief' going from house-to-house to gather *Maot Khittim.*

In Baranovich, we did not have such a custom.

A community assessment committee would sit, and set the level of the '*Maot Khittim*' tax for each member of the community separately, and there were enough of several notices published in the local Jewish press, or personal reminders by letter, so that everyone would voluntarily pay in their tax.

There were negotiations and clarifications about the size of the voluntary tax, but in the course of all these years there were no instances of anyone refusing to participate.

The Ladies Union



Page 142: Henya Bussel, Founder and Chairlady of the Ladies Union

The 'Ladies Union' occupied a distinguished place among the various philanthropic institutions in Baranovich. This was a broadly-branched organization of hundreds of women, from all walks of life, who voluntarily placed themselves at the disposal of their Union and dedicated time and energy to the sacred work to make provision for the needy.

The activity of the Union was far-ranging. As disparate as the nature of the need was, so was its activity variegated. Even an institution as richly influential and important as '*Linat Tzedek*,' often had to have recourse to the Ladies Union, when the matter pertained to someone seriously ill, who needed to be quickly transported to Vilna or Warsaw, because there was no large hospital in our city.

If a poor girl lacked the necessary resources, required to cover the expenses associated with a wedding, the Ladies Union then looked after this, to assure that the bride-elect gets to stand under the wedding canopy. The crown of its activities, that the Union saw, was the provision of help to poor pregnant women who delivered their babies, and lay in confinement.

Their very breadth of activity defined the Ladies Union, and the help they rendered to the poorer populace was very important. Income was derived from monthly membership dues. A variety of undertakings [sic: fund-raisers], and most importantly – from gatherings among the rich women.

The Union was created in the year 1932, through the initiative of these women: Henya Bussel, Rachel Zhukhowicky, Hasia Sadowsky, etc. Its activity continued up to the Holocaust. These women were committed to their Union with body and soul. At their head, stood Mrs. Henya Bussel. Notwithstanding her age, with her entire ardor, and exceptional dedication, she bore the burden of its existence as well as a sizeable share of the day-to-day work. The most intense frost, or the greatest snow, did not represent a barrier in her fulfilling one or another mission. The sorrow of the family was great, when one day, she was found sitting in the yard groaning, and covered in snow. She overstayed her time at a meeting, and in rushing home in such a state, she lost her breath. She wanted to come around a bit, not wanting to enter her home in an unusual condition. She did not want to upset her family.

May her name be blessed and the memory of all those who worked along side her!

'Gemilut Hesed'

By Shlomo Foxman ה"יד

Foreword

The *Pinkas* of the *'Gemilut Hesed'* Society in Baranovich, Tenth Anniversary Edition 1926-1936, compiled and edited by Shlomo Foxman – is one of the few documents that has remained to us, about our city.



Page 142: Frontispiece of the Pinkas of the Gemilut Hasadim of Baranovich, Tenth Anniversary Edition 1926-1936.

The *Gemilut Hasadim* Bank was founded in 1926 by a number of community activists, driven by an inner idealism, with the help of the great assistance societies: *'Joint' – 'JeKoPo' – 'Tzekaba.'*

Already in the foreword, the editor, Shlomo Foxman complains that, at the time he stepped up to the work of the *Pinkas*, he ran into the great dearth of material, and the absence of a Jewish municipal archive. He notes, thereby, that there is a need for a substantial *Pinkas*, as an historical monograph of Baranovich.

In the chapters dedicated to '*Gemilut Hesed,*' written by Rabbis and local activists, Rabbi R' Nissan Scheinberg pauses to describe the atmosphere, in which this institution was established: in the *Hevra Shas*, while discussing Jewish tribulations – and he remarks that 'the battle for daily existence takes on confusing forms.'

The member Rabbi, Rabbi Y. Landman (ה"יד) offers a portrait of the prevailing sorrow: 'the ambit of economic and commercial activity for the Jewish populace in Poland, continues to shrink; the sources of livelihood are being shut off to Jewish access, we feel powerless against the boycott tidal wave, which continuously is taking on more and more threatening forms. In an overview of this great danger, approaching us with greater speed, the harsh days analogous to the theme of Pshitik and Minsk (Mazowiecki – Ed.), we have to more tightly integrate our own ranks, and configure our industry in such a way, that in each and every instance of a Jewish family being driven out of its economic position, it should be met with a strong resistance from a collective force.'

Dr. Nakhumowsky pauses at the meaning of 'Gemilut Hesed' which is one of the most beautiful initiatives among Jews. 'In the years before the War, rich Jews could be found in almost every city and town, who would – because of religious or philanthropic reasons – make available interest-free loans. Or better said: *'Gemilut Hasadim*;' Nowadays, this is among the rarer occurrences.'

Pinchas Eisenberg (President of the Revisions commission) notes 'the largest support work performed by the institution, which has a founding capital of 20,000 zlotys, is distributed with a volume of 170,000 gulden a year.' He further notes also, 'that '*Gemilut Hesed*' did not suffer from any internal upheavals during the many years of its existence. People from all walks of life, with opposing points of view, satisfactorily and harmoniously worked together.'

(Editor)

The Establishment of *'Gemilut Hesed'* and its Development



Page 147/148: ***Membership of the Management and audit Committee of the 'Gemilut Hesed' (1931)***

Sitting (From the Right): *Y. Ts. Yosselewicz, L. Y. Rutkowicz (Vice-President), M. Goldberg (President), Y. Judkowsky (Vice-President), Y. Rubinow (Treasurer), A. Galay*

Standing (From the Right): *A. M. Częstochowsky, Y. Kozlowicky, P. Eisenberg (Secretary), F. D. Mikhailowsky, Sh. Judzhelewsky, A. Szwiransky, F. Zelcowsky*

The concept of founding a community '*Gemilut Hesed*' bank, arose in the year 1926, in the circle that grouped itself around the *Hevra Shas*. This Hevra, which was founded and directed by Rabbi R' Yekhiel Mikhl Rabinovich.[56] It's seat was in the '*Bet HaMedrash d'Poalei Tzedek*' (The Craftsmen's Study House), on the Minsk *Gass*e, and a increased number of learned *balebatim* grouped themselves around it. In time, the *Hevra Shas* became a center for communal activities.

The extent to which th founding of the '*Gemilut Hesed*' bank, and its work, were intimately bound up with the *Hevra Shas* of the *Bet HaMedrash d'Poalei Tzedek*, can be seen in the fact that the accounts and resolutions of the '*Gemilut Hesed*' were, for a specific time, recorded in the account books of the previously mentioned *Bet HaMedrash*, where its meetings and gatherings used to take place.

As previously mentioned, the initiator of the 'Gemilut Hesed' was Rabbi R' Yekhiel Mikhl Rabinovich, and the founders and builders of the institution – the members of the Hevra Shas, who first of all, placed a levy on themselves, and in September 1926, opened a city-wide collection initiative, in order to create a larger fund of money, which should serve as seed capital for the interest-free loan bank.

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[56] From the Scucyn Yizkor Book:

In 5686 [1926], Rabbi Leib Khasman received an offer from the leadership of the Slobodka Yeshiva in Hebron, to serve as the spiritual leader of this great and distinguished Yeshiva in the Holy Land. In accordance with his wishes, the rabbinical chair in Scucyn was turned over to the *Gaon,* Rabbi Yekhiel-Mikhl Rabinovich from Baranovich, the author of '*Afikei Yam.*'

The first elected management consisted of the Messrs: Mendl Goldberg (Chairman), Yaakov Judkowsky (Vice-Chairman), Yitzhak Rubinow (Secretary), Reuven Itzkowitz, Abraham Aryeh Orlansky, Meir Menachem Chernikhov, and Chaim Weltman.

Immediately after its establishment, the '*Gemilut Hesed*' immediately addressed itself frontally to the poorest segment of the marketplace merchants and allocated small loans to them, on almost every eve of a market day. But the other segments were not overlooked. In the first list of loans, all ranks of the working and selling occupations appear, especially from the building trades, because of the cessation of the building movement in the city, which had previously been conducted at a very vigorous tempo. The other occupations, such as shoemaking and tailoring, found themselves fallen on hard times. In the report of the representative of district commission of '*JeKoPo*' Sholom Cohen, who visited Baranovich at the end of 1928, it states: 'The shoemakers here are under extreme economic pressure, as well as part of the tailors, because it is possible to buy ready-made shoes and clothing in the stores, which are brought in from the outside.' (*Pinkas 'JeKoPo'* 1930, p. 458).

The credit of the '*Gemilut Hesed*' made it possible for many businessmen and craftsmen to keep existing.

In 1927, the '*Gemilut Hesed*' became legalized by the authorities. Its activities, such as accounting, minute taking, decisions, etc. were carried out with punctual regularity, and under strict control.

The first sources of income from '*Gemilut Hesed*' were from the one-time larger donations and from collections with a special 'collection box' for '*Gemilut Hesed,*' which for a time were used to collect membership contributions, and general gifts of charity, through the volunteer work of Rabbi R' Yaakov Zalman Levitt (a man with a phenomenal memory; he knew all of *Shas* by heart). After this, the weekly contribution was introduced, meaning, that almost all of the Jews residents contributed a weekly sum.

In that same year, the '*Gemilut Hesed*' joined up with '*JeKoPo*' which had centralized the '*Gemilut-Hesed*' movement in the vicinities of Vilna and Novogrudok, and obtained from it a number of loans in the general sum of 8,000 gulden.

The activity of the '*Gemilut Hesed*' continued to widen, and earned the sympathy of the local Jewish populace, and the trust of the central credit institutions.

The first general meeting took place at the end of 1927, attended by a substantial number of the bank membership. A new management was elected, derived from the old management with the addition of a few new ones: Sholom Dereczin, Moshe Rayak, Yekhiel Rabinovich, and Abraham Galay. M. M. Chernikhov was elected as Secretary, and as Treasurer – Yitzhak Rubinow. At the end of 1927, the '*Gemilut Hesed*' had 1186 members.

From time-to-time, meetings were held for purposes of clarification, and public gatherings were announced. The '*Gemilut Hesed*' collected its outstanding pledges with great energy, and in this manner, paid back 800 zlotys, as part of its obligations. which it personally owed to '*JeKoPo*' for the credit it had obtained.

At the end of 1928, the membership of the '*Gemilut Hesed*' stood at 1312.

At a general meeting on March 24, 1929, the old management is re-elected with small changes. The new member of the Board, Levik Rutkowicz, is elected to the position of Secretary, as well as Zim'l Kushnir, and Israel Kapilovich.

The entire work of the '*Gemilut Hesed*' was, at that time, being performed voluntarily. The practice of taking membership dues from borrowers was stopped, in order to remain free of the 'taint' of charging interest. These expenses were precisely accounted for, and only loan repayments were taken from borrowers.

At that time, a campaign was executed throughout the Jewish community in the city, to obtain interest-free deposits. A special contributions campaign was proclaimed, tied to emoluments for ritual honors in all the study houses and prayer quorums. At the same time, steps were undertaken to have the bank subsidized by and obtain credit from the municipal government. In that expectation, approaches were made to the Office of the *Starosta*, and the Magistrate.

The activity of the bank was expanded to include larger shorter-term loans.

In the year 1929, the number of members reached 1398. Many improvements were made from year-to-year, new fund-raising activities were initiated, and the range of the bank's activity itself, was broadened.

In 1930, a stable voluntary payment to the *'Gemilut Hesed*' was instituted; the city was divided into 36 quarters. The levies were, for the largest part placed against those who, themselves, did not enjoy the benefit of the bank. This campaign produced good results.

In March 1930, an audit was performed by the delegate from the Vilna district committee of '*JeKoPo*,' who confirmed, with satisfaction, the activity of the management, in the area of implementing its own methods, interest-free deposits, etc. In this audit report, the contributions of the dedicated volunteer activists were stressed: Vice-Chairman Yaakov Judkowsky, Treasurer Yitzhak Rubinow, Secretary Levik Rutkowicz, as well as the dedicated work of F. D. Mikhailowsky, and others. In that same month of March, the general annual meeting took place. A number of new members were elected to the management, such as: Pinchas Eisenberg (Secretary), Chaim Kozlowicky (Yitzhak Gonitzer), Shlomo Judzhelewsky, F. D. Mikhailowsky, and A. M. Częstochowsky; Levik Rutkowicz was nominated as Second Vice-Chairman.

The first step of the new management was a well-organized 'grass-roots campaign.' It rejuvenated the fund-raising that took place at *Simchas*, as well as the campaign for '*Hanukkah Gelt*.'

Thanks to its profuse activity, and its punctiliousness, the institution also won the trust of the central leadership of the '*Gemilut Hesed*' movement. Almost after each audit, they would allocate a loan to the bank of several thousand zlotys.

In 1930, the ceiling of an ordinary loan was set at 100 zlotys (at the beginning it was 40 and afterwards 60 gulden). This demanded more financial reserves. The number of members in that year reached 1473.

As the [economic] crisis intensified, it became increasingly more difficult to collect the obligations that were owed. In the '*JeKoPo*' reports which directed the control over all the '*Gemilut Hesed*' banks in the eastern areas, the following is noted about the Baranovich bank:'We recognize that the management is on watch, not to allow any loans to become delinquent.'

At the general meeting of April 12, 1931, it was decided to entrust the management of the bank to the old management. By contrast, an audit committee was newly elected, with the following members: A. Galay, A. Szwiransky, and F. Zelcowsky.

At a second general meeting on April 3, 1932, the system was first implemented to re-elect only 1/3 of the

management, selected by lottery. Those designated members, nevertheless, were re-elected, the management changing only in regard to the resignation of Secretary P. Eisenberg. His place was taken by the first candidate, Y. Ts. Yosselewicz, and F. D. Mikhailovich was elected as Secretary.

In 1933, a propaganda month was proclaimed for the '*Gemilut Hesed*,' with participation from the entire Jewish community. At the annual meeting of June 11, R' Yaakov Judkowsky was elected President, who was the single most active person in '*Gemilut Hesed*' since his involvement, and as the Vice-Presidents: Y. Ts. Yosselewicz, and M. Goldberg, Treasurer – R' Yitzhak Rubinow, Secretary, F. D. Mikhailowsky. The audit committee became independently active in that year, whose President was Pinchas Eisenberg. Mr. Moshe Shalit (Vilna) who as an emissary of '*JeKoPo*' audited the '*Gemilut Hesed*' that year on December 6, found that the entire activity, bookkeeping, and the bank itself were in the best order, and he praised the audit committee.

The intake of interest-free deposits in 1934 was three times higher than the previous year. Individuals were found who were prepared to grant substantial sums of credit to the '*Gemilut Hesed.*' A certain donor, who chose to remain anonymous, under the name '*Ploni Almoni*[57]' deposited a sum of 4 thousand zlotys, and a second even sent along a donation of 800 gulden. The management of the outstanding loans was also well conducted.

At the annual meeting of June 24, with the participation of a substantial number of members, among other things, the report of the audit committee was read out loud, which established firmly, that the '*Gemilut Hesed*' had achieved the highest sympathy and trust, thanks to its solidity, realism, and proceeds to lay out an expression of its thanks and gratitude to the management, especially the President, Yaakov Judkowsky, Secretary F. D. Mikhailowsky, and the Bookkeeper [Ms.] Lipsko

The activity of the '*Gemilut Hesed*' in the year 1935, stood under the sign of people's campaign of '*Tzekobo*,' to create a fund of one million zlotys for independent assistance and development purposes for Polish Jewry. The local '*Gemilut Hesed*' organized this campaign, and carried it out with great success. The funds were to be conveyed by the committee for the use of the city itself, and not sent to the center. The local populace responded warmly.

At the general meeting of the year 1935, the same management was installed, with the exception of Y. Ts. Yosselewicz who was picked by lottery, and replaced by Y. London.

'Kleinkredit'

'Kleinkredit' was a daughter institution to *'Gemilut Hesed.'* It was founded at the beginning of 1934 by the well-known '*Gemilut Hesed*' activist, Sholom Dereczin.

'Kleinkredit' attempted to confront and be helpful to the severe struggle for sustenance among the most deprived members of the community, to whom even the credit of the '*Gemilut Hesed*' was not available. It concerned itself with that element that could not sign a note, and was not in any position to pay the membership dues of the '*Gemilut Hesed*,' and in general, had no assurance of being able to repay the credit that was extended. In this circumstance, '*Kleinkredit*' stood on the position of constructive help, and attempted to supply credit to that individual that could then be put to productive use.

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57 The Hebrew equivalent to 'John Doe.'

If the larger credit of the '*Gemilut Hesed*' financially strengthened the straitened merchants and manual laborers, then '*Kleinkredit'* served a double purpose: It sustained people who were on the verge of going under, literally at their last – and gave them the possibility of some sort of business activity, thereby rescuing them from a truly frightening state of need.

What were the sources of funds for '*Kleinkredit*?'

– R' Sholom Dereczin, the person who founded this important institution, worked energetically all year long to enable its growth, and development, and found the necessary means to do so. Bulletins were distributed throughout the local larger firms, with the motto: 'Special Help for Failed Merchants.' All the firms, in settling accounts with their merchants, acted in a way, to influence the latter, to make substantial contributions to this endeavor.

R' Getz'l Getzowicz responded in the warmest manner to this initiative, who never let an opportunity go by that involved doing something constructive for '*Kleinkredit*.' He brought in a sum in excess of 700 gulden to the '*Kleinkredit*' treasury. With almost all of the firms, with whom he had a business relationship, he installed a stable, annual contribution for the institution.

In this 'settlement initiative' other local Jewish merchants also participated. In general, the collection brought in more than 1200 zlotys. '*Kleinkredit*' however, had a greater capital base: it had interest-free deposits.

Thanks to the loans made by this institution, hundreds of Jewish families in our city were saved from ruin, and going under.

The Public Health Situation

By Dr. Sholom Press

The large area of Eastern Poland, the so-called '*Kressen*,' geographically belonged to Polesia. The southern part of this area lay within the bounds of the well-known Polesia swamps. However, further to the north, an area spread out that was covered with large, thickly wooded forests, a sandy land and dry, and a climate not so damp and potentially unhealthy.

The majority of the population in Baranovich consisted of small businessmen, workers, and craftsmen, who lived in want and poverty, crowded together with their numerous children, in crowded, and inadequate dwellings, without proper sanitary oversight, without the most elementary provisions for sanitation and hygiene.

The town itself, had the appearance, for a long time, of a large village, with all wooden cottages, and unpaved streets, flooded with water, and full of mud in fall and spring. But because of this, Baranovich, in those times, had a large forest of pine trees. With time, new streets and quarters grew into place; the older wooden shacks were torn down, and modern houses were constructed; the streets are paved, and sidewalks are put down; the puddles and mud vanish. Baranovich discards it village-like rural character.



Page 151/152: ***A Pan-Polish Conference of 'TOZ' in Warsaw***

First Row (From the Right): 1. Dr. Szyper, 4. Dr. Gershon Levin (Founder and Chairman of 'TOZ' in Poland), 8. Professor Szur.

Second Row (From the Right): 5. Moshe Mukasey (From Baranovich)

The Polish authorities carry out the implementation of a number of compulsory regulations, whose purpose is to raise the level of the health of the public. It mandates the paving of streets, and plants trees, houses must be whitewashed, and the streets and yards must be kept clean; A strict sanitary oversight is implemented for food establishments, bakeries, etc. These measures, however, were not enough. Baranovich had no river, and a system of piping for water supply was, for all practical purposes, a rarity, not to mention modern appliances such as bathtubs, and interior commodes. It was necessary to conduct a very broadly-based hygiene communication effort among the masses, and to introduce a culture of hygiene into every corner, and every house; and this was not easy work.

A network of social-philanthropic institutions took this mission upon themselves. In hindsight, without question, first place was occupied by the popular and beloved institution, '*TOZ*' (***T****owarzystwo* ***O****chrony* ***Z****drowia Ludności Żydowskiej w Polsce*),[58] founded in Poland at the beginning of the Twenties. At its head, stood the Warsaw Doctor, Gershon Levin.

At that time, there was a wide field for the activity of '*TOZ*' in the area of protecting the health of the Jews.

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58 The Society for the Oversight of Health



Page 153/154; ***The 'TOZ' Leadership in Baranovich***

Sitting (From the Right): Dr. Bussel, Dr. Jasinowsky, Dr. Skwersky, Bracha Mukasey, Dr. Nakhumowsky, M. Mukasey, Mrs. Winikov, Dr. Fiedler, Dr. Betty Izikson.

Standing (From the Right): Mrs. Gorelick, an Unknown, Mrs. Abramowsky, Mrs. Jasinowsky, Magister Abramowsky, Mrs. Farber, Mrs. Yellin, Zelcowsky, Mrs. Nakhumowsky, Dr. Press, Mrs. Feldenkreis, Winograd, Mrs. Kaplan, Izikson (behind Mrs. Kaplan), Mrs. Maczanow.

During the years of the war and its aftermath, the health situation among the Jews was seriously degraded. At that time, the Society developed a very extensively-branched program throughout all of Poland, by means of the appropriate raising of children who were nursing, oversight of school children, fighting the infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis, trachoma, Polish plait[59], etc., the founding of a sanatorium, summer colonies for the children, as well as through a substantial communications program among the masses. The Baranovich branch of 'TOZ' assumed responsibility for all of these objectives, which was carried out with the best of the ability of the local Jewish Society.

It is not possible to write about '*TOZ*' and not recall the revered personality of Dr. Leib Nakhumowsky הי"ד, who was its initiator and chairman; the true prototype of a Jewish folk-doctor. In my many meetings with him, and conversations with him, he would always intone the solution, 'Go to the People,' over and over

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59 The Polish plait usually results from deficient hair care. Uncombed hair becomes irreversibly entangled, forming a matted, malodorous and encrusted or sticky moist mass. It may be caused by or accompanied with lice infestation (pediculosis) and lead to inflammation of the scalp. The Polish plait is typically a (sometimes large) head of hair, made of a hard impenetrable mass of keratin fibers permanently cemented together with dried pus, blood, old lice egg-casings and dirt. The disease may be easily prevented by standard hygienic practices, such as washing and combing of the hair. Treatment involves cutting the affected hair.

again, to awaken, and remind everyone, who stood in close contact with him. about the sacred duty to care for the interests of the broader masses of the people.

He, personally came from a family of *balebatim*; he went through all the stages of Jewish and secular education, beginning with *Heder*, and Yeshiva, and ending with the title of Doctor of General Medicine. Immediately after finishing his advanced training, he worked for a specified period as a government doctor (Земский Врач) deep inside Russia, and from there, he moved to Baranovich, in the year 1919, where he won over the sympathy of the Jewish populace, and becomes one of the most beloved and popular doctors in the city and its environs. He is, for practical purposes, expert in all aspects of medicine, even surgery. He is the director of the municipal hospital, and even manages to run his own clinic.



Page 155/156 (Top): ***The 'TOZ' Summer Colony in Navael'nja***

In Front (From the Right): 5 Unknowns, Dr. Fiedler, Mrs. Avinowicky, Dr. Nakhumowsky, Rivka Limon, Dr. Jasinowsky, Unknown, M. Mukasey, Dr. Betty Izikson, Mrs. Abramowsky (behind Dr. Izikson), Lehrman, Dr. Skwersky.

But not only as a professional, but also as a true man of the people, Dr. Nakhumowsky stood committed, and loyally in service, of the Jewish populace, in all aspects of social activity. While personally not a politically affiliated party person, in the strict sense of that designation, he stands at the head of '*Keren HaYesod*,' takes an active role in the work of '*Keren Kayemet*' in the community, and on the school and education scene. Dr. Nakhumowsky not only fulfilled his obligation, but also aroused, and energized, and first and foremost, served as a role model for others.

However, the crown of his social work was the '*TOZ*' Society. He concentrated many of his best friends around it, and a large number of capable and loyal participants. We should recall the following here: Dr. Fiedler (a long-time treasurer of the Society), Dr. Skwersky (Vice-Chairman), the ladies Dr. Izikson and Dr. Skwersky (in the advisory capacity for nursing children), Dr. Yaakov Kagan, and Dr. Bussel (a member of the leadership) Mr. Winograd (Secretary), and the nurses of '*Tropfen Milch*' etc.

The 'TOZ' Society was established in Baranovich in the middle twenties. At first, the so-called *'Tropfen Milch*' was established, – a consulting service for mothers on how to raise their child in the first two years of its life. This important area, was directed by the local Jewish pediatricians. Every mother received the appropriate guidance, and all the necessary instruction, as well as a variety of foodstuffs, all prepared in a special kitchen.

There was no child that did not benefit from the wide assistance of '*Tropfen Milch*.' The results of this were not long in coming. Those specific childhood diseases, especially those that were gastro-intestinal, dropped off substantially, and the mortality rate among newborn children was substantially reduced.



Page 155/156 (Bottom): ***The 'TOZ' Half-Colony in Baranovich***

In the Middle (From the Right): Worobiowsky, Dr. Fiedler, Garfinkel, Dr. Nakhumowsky, Zelcowsky, Dr. Betty Izikson, M. Mukasey, Unknown, Winograd, Mrs. Feldenkreis, Unknown, Dr. Skwersky.

The Remaining 3 from the right: Wolokhwiansky, Magister Wigorczyk, Unknown.

Also the older neglected children of the poor classes, especially those with chronic health problems, demanded a special oversight. the '*TOZ*' Society created the first summer colony for older children, in the dryer pine forest of Navael'nja. Approximately 150 children find a refuge for the summer in several nice and roomy houses, under the supervision of personally selected teachers, nurses and caretakers, and receive a warm home, good nourishment, and the best education.

The pressure on the summer colony is very high; it is not possible to satisfy the numerous children, who haven't been given their place in the colony. For them, '*TOZ*' organized a 'half-colony' at Grapska 34, in the municipal park. The little Jewish children enjoy a half day in the fresh air, under the oversight of schooled kindergarten teachers, and get practically the same treatment modeled after the colony in Navael'nja.

Both institutions were of the greatest meaning to the weak, run-down children. With all this, the fruitful activity of '*TOZ*' in Baranovich was not yet completely exhausted. Two ambulatoria are opened: one for diseases of the eye, with a special emphasis on trachoma, under the direction of Dr. Bussel; the second – for infectious skin diseases, and combating favus[60], under the direction of Dr. Szenicky.

Great emphasis is placed on the Sanitary-Hygiene Condition of the Yeshivas, Talmud Torah, and orphanage, schools, and other educational institutions. A special committee of ladies implements a complete array of initiatives for the benefit of children coming from homes without means. Clothing drives are organized, distribution of cod liver oil in the winter, milk, and other forms of nourishment throughout the year, among school children. It was also a fact that renovation and whitewashing of the poorer Jewish homes was conducted before Passover.

The communications initiative of '*TOZ*' was of no small significance. A variety of questions regarding matters of heath were, from time-to-time, addressed at special public meetings, lectures, and in the local Jewish press; Brochures and popular pamphlets are distributed that deal with issues of public health.

The necessary financial resources are brought together from a monthly membership contribution, subsidized by the central '*TOZ*' Committee, from the Jewish community, and the Municipal council, as well as a variety of other initiatives and collections.

As we see, the '*TOZ*' Society in Baranovich stood at an appropriately high level.

The income of the traditional Jewish institution, '*Linat Tzedek*' was also substantial, in connection with the support of the ailing poor (see – 'Special Philanthropic Institutions in Baranovich').

For the longest time, there were no medical institutions in Baranovich. The city especially suffered from the lack of a hospital. The very sick needed to be kept in their homes, or, with great difficulty, and under great danger to their lives, be transported to hospitals in Minsk, Vilna, or Warsaw. It was first, after The First World War, a hospital was established in Baranovich, that consisted of 10-12 beds. The direction of the hospital was taken over by Dr. Nakhumowsky, who does so for the entire time, also when it is expanded to 50-60 beds and is transformed into a modern hospital with all of the medical departments. It services the entire Baranovich population.

With the growth of the city, a second hospital is founded, the so called '*Powiatowy*' under the direction of the Christian doctor Dr. Abramowicz; it mostly serves the Christian populace for the surrounding villages and small towns.

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60 *Tinea favosa*, or ***favus,*** is a contagious vegetable-parasitic disease of the skin, characterized by pin-head to pea-sized, friable, umbilicated, cup-shaped yellow crusts, each usually perforated by a hair. It is usually met with upon the scalp, but it may occur upon any part of the integument. Occasionally the nails are invaded. It is seen at all ages, but is much more common in children.

Many of the local, private doctors work as assistants and consultants in both hospitals. The lady, Dr. Izikson works in the municipal hospital, and from time-to-time, the following specialists are called upon: Dr. Bussel (Eyes), Dr. Szeps (ENT), Dr. Szenicky (Skin). In the '*Powiatowy*' hospital, the following are invited: Dr. Feller (Gynecology), Dr. Press (Pediatrics), Dr. Malkevich (Internal Medicine), etc.

The number of all private doctors in the city continues to grow, both Christian and Jewish. At the beginning of 1930, Baranovich already had approximately 30 doctors, among them many good professionals. The ambit of their influence encompasses the wider province as well.

In the year 1926, a local Medical Society is established of all the doctors, Christian and Jewish. In the Society, the highest form of collegially-correct relationship dominated: as the Chairman – [there was] the Christian Dr. Abramowicz, a liberal person, intensely loved by the entire populace; the Vice-Chairman – Dr. Nakhumowsky, Secretary – the writer of these lines. Apart from the ususal organizational work, the Society developed a broad scientific activity in the form of lectures, audits, and demonstrations involving the sick in the hospitals, as well as regional conferences of doctors from the entire area, with the participation of professors and assistants from Warsaw and Vilna.

In the year 1926-1927, a government health insurance plan was instituted in Baranovich, which, in time, developed nicely. The ordinary person, the worker, and employee, got the required help there. The Jewish doctors formed the majority here.

Two modern private clinics were established for that part of the populace that had means, by Dr. Feller, and Dr. Nakhumowsky; both stood at an appropriate medical level.

Two X-Ray installations are made – one by Dr. Szenicky, the second, '*Sanitas*' – a sort of cooperative under the direction of Dr. Kagan. Apart from this, many of the doctors already had their own X-Ray machines.

Of the five large pharmacies, which Baranovich had till the end, we should mention here the pharmacy of the Provisor Tetz, the oldest in the city, and of Provisor Abramowsky.

The gallery of Jewish doctors in our city starts with the arrival of the first Jewish doctor, Dr. Margolin, in the nineties of the past century. Immediately after him, Dr. Shapiro takes up residence in Baranovich, who is active for over 30 years, both as a doctor, and also as the '*Kozionii Ravin*[61]' as appointed by the Russian authorities. Somewhat after this, the well-known doctor, Kaplan, arrives.

Here, we must also underscore the name of the talented Christian doctor, Dr. Sierprzinski; a phenomenal medical force. He was also one of the doctors who treated the author *Sholom Aleichem* in his severe illness, at the time of his visit to Baranovich. He came here from Haradziščа in the year 1904-5.

The following belonged to the doctors of the older generation: Dr. Feller, Dr. Skwersky and his wife, Dr. Wolfson, (Mrs.) Dr. Izikson, Dr. Szenicky, Dr. Kagan, Dr. Bussel, Dr. Szeps, Dr. Weill, the dentists – Fiedler, Jasinowsky and Berman.

The number of doctors continues to rise; a new generation of medical talent arrives, to which belong the doctors: Aharon Goldin, the younger Shapiro, Yankl Oszerowsky, Joseph Mirsky, Reuven Salutsky, Bezalel

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61 Elsewhere called '*Kozioner Rabbiner*' for the officially appointed Rabbi of the area. This appointment was not always taken with the advice and consent of the local Jewish community.

Rabinovich, etc.

We run into many of these enumerated names in this book, in a variety of places. Many of them stood at the head of political parties, societies and institutions. All were well-educated specialists, and conveyed their help to the needy sick with great love; all of them, as genuine Jewish intellectuals, carried the banner of the Jewish renaissance high along the Jewish street. Not one of them stinted in their energy and time for the good of the needs of the broader Jewish masses.

The Fire-Fighters Society

(Under the Polish Régime)

B. Avinowicky

The Baranovich volunteer Fire-Fighters Society was founded by the following Jewish citizens: Messrs. Shilayner, Izikson, Szymansky, Zilberberg, the lawyer Gurwicz, Turetsky, Judkowsky, Winikowsky, Dobkowsky, Chai'kl Epstein, and others. With the support of the Jewish populace, the Society developed very quickly.

The commanders, as well as the representatives in the leadership were by-and-large Christians, paying no attention to the fact that the adjutants and officers were almost exclusively only Jewish. In the last period, B. Avinowicky stood at the head of the Society, as the commander, and Dr. Fiedler as the Chairman. (For details, see – 'Baranovich in the years 1900 - 1915).

The Fire-Fighters played a substantial role in the community life of the city. They had a strong influence on



Page 161/162 (Top): ***A Group of Fire-Fighters (1930)***

Sitting (From the Right): Poliak, Unknown, Tunkel, Nikczetny, Kaplan, Sh. Judkowsky, A. Turetsky.
Standing (From the Right): Y. Savitzky, L. Kaplan, Stoliar, Unknown, Winikowsky, Notkowicz, Y. Bitensky, M. Szkilar, Borowsky
The Children: The Brothers Yankl and Moshe Tunkel

the outcome of the elections to the municipal council, and to [the leadership of] the community. With its substantial assets and innovations (an encampment, orchestra, cinema, theater hall, etc.) The Society came to the assistance of other institutions, in the arrangement of a variety of events for community and charitable purposes.

In the task of containing fires, the Baranovich Fire-Fighters can be noted to have achieved great success. Baranovich never had to go through the experience and tragedy of a mass fire, despite the fact that the majority of its houses were made of wood.

In the year 1933, the equipment of the Fire-Fighters was sufficiently primitive (horse-drawn vehicles, small wooden pails, etc.). Since that time, a systematic motorization was initiated which was completed by 1937. In 1933, a large concrete garage was constructed (*remiza*), and a few other buildings. In the same year, the professional certification of fire fighters, officers and junior officers, was implemented.

The lack of water in Baranovich was acutely felt during instances of need. At the initiative of the fire fighters, an array of underground water reservoirs, with substantial capacity, were constructed, which were also protected from freezing.

The budget of the Fire-Fighters Society reached 30,000 zlotys, with a yearly subsidy from the municipal council in the amount of 6,000 zlotys.

The personnel force of the Society consisted of 200 active members (counting the women who were in the



Page 161/162 (Bottom: ***A Group of Fire Fighters (1935)***

Bottom (From the Right): 2. Goldbaum, 3. Bitensky, 12. Stoliar
Second Row (From the Right): 4. Rimmer, 6. Sh. Judkowsky, 8. Kuszczinsky
Third Row (From the Right): 2. A. Turetsky, 3. Jesiersky, 4. B. Izikson,5. Kaplan, 6. W. Bitensky (Support Commander), 7. B. Avinowicky (Commander), 8. Dr. Fiedler (President), 9. Miss Szwiransky, 10. Kaltin, 11. Sukharewsky, 12. Barsuk (Behind Tunkel), 13. A. Tunkel, 14. Schuster.
Fourth Row (From the Right): 2. Sokolowsky, 3. Nikczetny, 4. Norinowsky, 5. Jasinowsky (Adjutant), 7. Shmuelowicz, 9. Stoliar, 10. Mukasey, 11. L. Kagan (behind Mukasey), 14. B. Winikowsky, 15. Poliak, 16. Lidowsky, 17. Stoliar.
Fifth Row (From the Right): 3. Fuchs, 7. Zvi Stoliar, 12. Gamm.
Top (From the Right): 2. Kh. Rabinovich, 9. Sukharewsky, 12. Yosselewicz.

[Good] Samaritan division), and approximately 1,000 supporters. During service, the fire fighters were dressed in appropriate uniforms and helmets. The cost of all this, including the mobile and stationary resources, cost a million zlotys in the years 1935-1939.

The mobile inventory consisted of: Two autos completely equipped; Three autos with motor-driven pumps and barrels, with a capacity of 8,000 liters of water; one hygiene auto with a completely outfitted first-aid facility; two buses for transporting the personnel; a reserve manual transportation, four motorized pumps, and a 100 meter long set of hoses; complete equipment for six divisions of protection against gas and air attacks; a large number of masks, rubber boots, and so forth.

Thanks to the rich inventory, and high level of training in the pertinent skills, of its instructors and officers, the Baranovich base (depot) was a center for the extinguishing of fires for the entire Novogrudok Voievode. It also had its own manufacturing facilities, and a professional staff of 12 men (the Baranovich fire fighters also served the surrounding areas).

The Jewish community took pride in its fire fighters, and supported them in their undertakings. During the years of strong anti-Semitism in Poland, many factions attempted to tear away this institution from Jewish hands, but they did not succeed. There was a time when a planned assault by anti-Semitic hooligans was anticipated against the Jewish populace in Baranovich. At the direction of the Vice-Burgomaster, Eng. Winikov, the fire fighters stood watch for several days and nights, and no unrest took place. This watch encompassed a perimeter of 25 km.

In the year 1939, beginning in March 23 at two o'clock in the morning, the Baranovich fire fighters found themselves in a permanent state of high readiness. All the other fire-fighting societies, such as the local military garrison, the railroad, New-Baranovich, and from the surrounding towns. were placed under the oversight of the senior commander in Baranovich. The fire-fighting watch was militarized, and was re-organized into five independent divisions (platoons), spread out over the various parts of the city, and connected to the staff by a special telephone network. Two sanitary patrols were attached to each platoon, from the women's division and two armed guards.

The first platoon: The base was in the fire fighter's depot, led by A. Turetsky;

The second platoon: At the Rosenhaus home on *Shaseina [Gasse]*, led by A. Izikson;

The third platoon: At the Neidus home on Narutowicz [*Gasse*], led by M. Jesiersky;

The fourth platoon: At the Bukowsky home on *Shaseina [Gasse]*, led by Gorinowsky;

The fifth platoon: As a reserve in the fire-fighter's depot under the direction of G. Muravin and Nikczetny.

The following were appointed as members of the [sic: central] staff: B. Avinowicky – Chief of fire security, A. Jasinowsky and N. Bitensky – deputies to the Chief, Z. Szwiranska – the commander of the women's division, telephone operator, motorcyclist, and armed guard.

The first German bomb fell on Trauguta *Gasse*; it burned up the Pogzhelsky house. The fire-fighters worked under a hail of bombs. Two fire-fighters were wounded, 1 soldier, and 1 youth were killed. With a very strenuous effort, the fire was contained. After the second bombing, the civilian population began to flee en masse. Many of the *balebatim* left the keys to their homes, at the fire station, requesting their oversight and protection.

During the course of the bombardment, 23 residences were burned down, and an additional 70 were damaged. The authorities expressed their recognition and thanks, over the radio, for the heroic efforts of the fire fighters, and for their energetic work and dedication. The area around the radio station was bombed the heaviest. It was there that the rescue operations were located, under very heavy machine gun fire.

In the ensuing chaos, robbery and plundering broke out in the city. The self-defense force went into action. The fire-fighters were officially armed, and in the course of several days, they ,maintained order in the city. During 19 days in September 1939, not one of the fire fighters left their post. The continuous extinguishing of fires, in various parts of the city, sapped them both physically and emotionally. All the other organizations, such as, for example, the 'Polish Red Cross' 'LOP, Stzhelets, etc. disintegrated and dispersed after the first bombardment. The only one that remained in place, were the fire fighters, who, apart from putting out fires, also carried and tended the wounded, and even fulfilled the duties of the *Hevra Kadisha.*

During the time of the Soviet occupation, the volunteer organization was transformed into a trade organization, under the direction of a political commissar. The majority of the volunteers adjusted to the new situation, and provided their service as professional fire-fighters. The writer of these lines remained in his position as the commander up to March 1, 1940, when he was arrested.

As related by a number of refugees, the last time a part of the Baranovich fire-fighters was seen was in the Minsk vicinity, during the German offensive in the year 1941.

This is how the long, and event-filled history of the Baranovich Volunteer Fire-Fighters Society came to an end.

Honor the memory of those beloved and unforgettable comrades, good-tempered Jews and good-hearted men of the people – heroes of unbounded commitment and dedication.

The Yiddish Drama Club

By Shmuel Epstein

The Establishment of the Yiddish Drama Club

With the occupation of our city, by the Germans, on *Sukkot* September 24, 1915, community life suddenly came to a complete halt. Baranovich lay close to the front, and found itself in a perpetual state of being besieged. The actual masters of the city were the military commandants, and the military gendarmerie. A substantial part of the Jewish population was exiled deep into Poland, and the rest (including women) – were driven to forced labor. AT the beginning of the evening the city looked like it was dead.

A change took place in 1917. The military began to seek contact with the civilian population.

Learning that there were people in the city with a specific connection to the theater arts, a few of the senior



Page 167/168: ***Programs from Presentations in the Years 1917 - 1921***

officers approached Mrs. Walkina with a proposal to start, organizing anew, the activities of the one-time theater circle. Mrs. Walkina called together a consultation meeting of her theater friends, at which time it was decided to accept the proposal with the intent of being able to somewhat revive and breathe some life into the oppressed spirits of the Jewish populace. It was in this fashion, that the foundation was laid for the 'Yiddish Drama Club in Baranovich.'

The presentations were held in the large building of the military church, which stood in the bread factory, and was adopted by the military for this purpose and transformed into a normal theater.

New manpower was attracted to this endeavor, that demonstrated a talent for theater: Aharon Jasinowsky, Zelikovich, Rayewsky, Rudnitzky, Kroshinsky, Rivka Wolansky, Manya Tsafakh, Sima Kaplan, Sonya Rutkowicz, Dvora Friedman, the writer of these lines, etc.

The activity of the club began with '*Die Kishuf-Macherin*[62]' and '*A Mensch Zoll Men Zayn.*[63]' Immediately after this, we went over to '*Hasia the Orphan*,' '*Kreutzer Sonata*,' '*Gott, Mensch, un Tyvel*,' and so forth.

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62 An early farce by Abraham Goldfadn

63 A play by Shalom Perlmutter

Performance was given in a 'Germanized' Yiddish. It was often painful, and like drilling in the ears, to hear our performers acting in a language which was more akin to a broken Yiddish than to bad German.

The military guest enjoyed themselves very much, because for them, it was a pleasant way to make the time pass. The Jewish populace was also pleased, for the first time in the course of two years, an opportunity was made available to come out of the shelters, and take part in an event.

It was first, in the year 1918, when the front suddenly made a move more deeply into Russia, that the city began to shake off the nightmare of the wartime tribulations, and the siege mentality, a bit – and the influence of the renewed activity of the Yiddish Theater (through the Drama Club that had been created) received its proper place and recognition of value.

The performances were moved from the bread factory to the 'Apollo' cinema on Pocztowa 8.

A broad field of support activity manifested itself for the Drama Club, which was carried on uninterruptedly for an entire two decades and elicited substantial recognition and gratitude from all walks of the community. The Drama Club became the 'pet' of the broadest cut of the masses in Baranovich.

In the summer of 1918, the Drama Club was invited to Slonim for two performances, whose income was dedicated to the local Jewish worker's kitchen. The morale success was also a great one. The Jewish community in Slonim remembered the appearance of the Baranovich acting troupe for a long time, and they were subsequently invited back for several performances.

In the Fall of 1918 a serious effort was made to produce '*Doff's Jung*' by Leon Kobrin under the direction of the then talented and famous Baranovich artists Austin and Jedwab. The attempt was carried off successfully.

The performance of such a piece, for the members of the Club, was an important educational experience. The Club then entered into a broad field of serious artistic activity.

At the end of 1918, it was already clear that the days of the German occupation were numbered. The Drama Club broke off all of its contact with the occupiers and with their language. The programs and placards began being printed in Yiddish. One no longer encountered German in the performances, and only characters in Yiddish.

In the city, a peculiar anxiety was being felt, and a mood of tension from the uncertainty and nervousness. The Germans were preparing to leave the city. With the performance of the 'Kreutzer Sonata,' on December 13, 1918, the activity of the Drama Club came to an end in the period of the German occupation in The First World War. The arrival of the Soviet military was a question of weeks or days.

During the Time of the Soviet-Polish War
(1919 - 1920)

During the short intervals of the Soviet occupation, a few attempts were made by the Soviet authorities to re-organize the Club, and to integrate it with an itinerant Yiddish troupe from Minsk.

Several one-act plays in Russian were performed, with a communist theme. However, these performances

were not well received, [since] it did not express the needs of the Jewish public – because the performers were only able to provide effective artistic expression in the context of Jewish pieces. In an artistic sense, we lived from hand-to-mouth, and needed to content ourselves with operettas that had no [sic: meaningful] content, etc.

In the interim period, a year went by under Polish rule. The Club used the temporary stability and was able to return, yet again, to a higher level of artistic performance.

The Shining Period of the Club Under the Direction of Chaim Ostrowsky (1920 - 1925)

Shortly before the final ratification, of the Treaty of Riga between Poland and the Soviet Union (end of 1920), a very important resource in drama expertise came to Baranovich, on the crest of the huge wave of emigration – Chaim Ostrowsky (today in America), who was retained as director and co-performer.

In the year 1922, the Club officially became legalized by the Polish authorities, and excelled in its activities.

Under these free conditions, the Club developed into an important cultural-artistic center. This period (1920-25) can be counted as a period of growth, development and rising, the Club is able to record important literary-artistic achievements in conducting an array of classic repertoire, as for example, the pieces of *Sholom Aleichem*, Peretz Hirschbein, Sholom Asch, Leon Kobrin, Mark Arenstein, as well as offerings by Tolstoy, Chekhov, etc.

The Club had no party affiliation and was apolitical. In a moral sense, it was the servant of pure art, and in a material sense, it stood to serve the Jewish community and to address the needs and requirements of its institutions of support.

The Christian philanthropic institutions of the city also approached the Jewish Drama Club from time-to-time, and they too, were satisfied withing the measure of its means.

In a short time, the reputation of the Club, and its successes, transcended the boundaries of our city by a great distance. In the years 1921-1925, it was invited for an array of productions in the neighboring cities – Slonim, Pruzhany and Lida. Everywhere, there was a doubled success: in morale and in material income – for the local aid institutions.

The influence of the Club on the youth [of the city] was very great. New forces were awakened and a number of Youth Drama Clubs came into being – one at the 'Bund' under the direction of Rayewsky, and the second was independent and ambitious; It imported the well-known artist Jacques Levy from Warsaw, and 'made a living for itself.' In the short time of its existence, he appeared several times in one-act plays and several times in more serious pieces, which included *'Green Fields'* by Peretz Hirschbein, and *'Shver tzu Zayn a Yid'* by *Sholom Aleichem*.

After the departure of Chaim Ostrowsky, there was something of a hiatus in the Club's activity. It's performances became more infrequent, the artistic ambition, weaker, and accordingly so its spirit. We contented ourselves with guarding the tradition that had been attained through such hard work, and maintaining the artistic plane.

The Drama Studio and its Union with the Club
(1930 - 1932)

During the years 1925-1927 I was in the Land of Israel in order to study and to graduate from the studio of Menachem Genesin, and took part in the then-existing '*Teatron Emunati*' under the direction of J. M. Daniel.

Upon returning to Baranovich, I founded the Dramatic Studio in 1930, at the Culture and Education Society, in the 'Maccabi' Hall, ion Oszerowsky's house on the Szeptycka *Gasse*.

The fundamental idea behind the studio was to train young talent and develop their dramatic skills, as representatives and followers of the Drama Club.



Page 171/172: ***The Drama Studio Together With The Drama Club***

Bottom (From the Right): *A. Levitt, Miss Z. Oronczyk, Ch. Stoliar*
Sitting (From the Right): *Quintman, Miss N. Kuntzevitzky, Miss Gova, A, Turetsky, B. Berenstein, Sh. Epstein, M. Mansky, J. Bussel, J. Mukasey, Miss Walkin, Sh. Zelikovich, A. Rayak, Malka Miskin, A. Nikczetny, Mrs. Lancevitzky Borowsky.*
Standing (From the Right): *Sh. Kroshinsky, Ch. Neufeld, A. Bitensky, Miss Ch. Fingerut (behind Berenstein), Miss R. Albling (Behind Bussel), Joseph Turetsky (Behind Mukasey), Miss Ts. Friedman (Behind Mrs. Walkin).*
Top (From the Right): *Miss Schneidleder, N. Cirulnik, Zelewiansky (Behind Miss Lioss), Miss B. Lioss, A. Farfel, Sh. Greenwald, Miss Kh. Korolitzky, Kh. Kagan, Yaakov Walkin, Sarah Kuntzevitzky, Malakhowsky.*

It became abundantly clear, that apart from skill, the theater demands a great deal of learning and knowledge, work and practice. The greatest attention was dedicated to education and intensive work.

The visit of Ch. Zvi from the Israel-based Worker's Theater, '*Ohel*' infused a great deal of life. He dedicated his time to the studio for almost the entire time of his visit in Baranovich, and suffused it with the atmosphere

of a pioneering spirit.

The visit of the famous artist Dr. Paul Borotow, and his appearances, was also very instructive.

The studio benefitted from the moral support of the local social and intellectual resources such as Dr. Avigdor Greenspan, who gave literary-scientific lectures and an approach to the material with which the studio was, at that time, dealing, as well as Mr. Lehrman (the Headmaster of the '*Tarbut*' School), Dr. Szenicky, Yitzhak Jasinowsky, the Lawyer Kertzner, Yaakov Abramowsky, Baruch Bernstein, and others.

During the first phase of its development, the studio appeared as literary-artistic evenings, which were enthusiastically received.

On Sukkot 1930, the Studio appeared in the premiere of '*Dem Tzaddik's Nesiyeh*' by H. Seckler. and in Passover 1931, it performed '*The Miser*' by Moliere. In the winter of 1932, the Studio integrated itself into the Drama Club, and with like resources, appeared in '*Oytser*' by *Sholom Aleichem*.

The Drama Club in 1932-1939

With the influx of new, young blood, the Dram Club was strengthened, and energetically presented its artistic activities, up to the outbreak of the war.

During this flowering period, the Drama Club served as a source of help for the ever-increasing need of the Jewish populace and as a center for spiritual refreshment.

The German-Polish War broke out on September 1, 1939, and on September 17, the Red Army entered Baranovich.

The Drama Club had one last opportunity to present '*Dos Grayseh Gevinns*' by *Sholom Aleichem*, in the winter of 1940. This was the swan-song of the Dram Club – and with this, the very rich history of 40 years of Yiddish literary-artistic activity in Baranovich, came to an end.

Personalities of the "Drama Family": Joseph Goldschmid

Joseph Goldschmid was the long-time President of the Drama Club.

A wise Jewish man, a scholar, with a very deep culture and education. His tall and lean build elicited deference and respect. His deep brown eyes expressed light and human warmth. An intimate atmosphere developed about his persona. His spiritual influence was great.



Page 173/174: ***Yiddish Drama Club (1922)***

Bottom (From the Right): *Sima Kaplan, Malka Miskin, Nehemiah Kroshinsky, Mrs. Leventhal, Manya Rodkevich, Aharon Jasinowsky, Sholom Kroshinsky*

Sitting (From the Right): *Shmuel Epstein, Moshe Mukasey, Yud'l Bussel, Joseph Goldschmid, Hinde Walkin, Chaim Ostrowsky, Schaja Zelikovich*

Top (From the Right): *Sarah Berenstein, Avrem'l Kroshinsky, Bulansky, Chaya Feinstein, Yehoshua Weinger, Chaya Israel, Joseph Raywesky, Dvora Friedman, Hirsch Walkin, Miss Ravitz.*

He would carefully study each piece, and as a person who understood human character, he was authoritative in allocating the roles. He participated in all of the birth pangs of a new production, and lived with all of the anxieties of its final appearance.

The tireless driving force was great, that this, not-so-young already, always calm, physically weak man, showed, at the rehearsals on the stage. He would awaken, energize the young players, with his fire and enthusiasm.

There was no bounds to his joy when it became possible to put on a play, in which the players were seen to invest life and the correct emphasis. This, for him, was his personal success.

He, personally, seemed to be born for character types, which he had created and lived through. He especially excelled in the roles of '*The Jewish King Lear*,' (By Gordin), Hirsch Baer in '*Doff's Jung'* (By L. Kobrin), Shema'leh Soroker in '*Dos Groyse Gevins*,' (By *Sholom Aleichem*), '*Rav Abba'* (By Anochi) and others.

He totally neglected his precarious condition of health, and the care of his totally committed wife, who

looked after him like the apple of her eye, and with her fill life and heart, played in full self-forgetfulness. And no one knew what suffering and exertion he had to endure to successfully carry out his role.

Acting was for him a sacred work, his entire life. He was always good-humored and full of heart, suffused with a love of humanity and Jewry. A quiet and happy man, a man of many favors, with an unusual purity of soul and a natural tendency to help.

Yud'l Bussel

Yud'l Bussel was one of the oldest of the members of the Club, and one of the first that laid the foundation stones of the one-time Amateur-Circle.

Lanky and big-boned, always burbling with life, conservative, with a religious feel, he drew on the treasures of living Jewish folklore with a full hand – and it was from this that his healthy, inspiring and sharp sense of humor, was derived.

He was humor personified, and for us – a natural vehicle for the '*Menachem Mendl*' of *Sholom Aleichem* and other parts. He was by character a comic. Merely his appearance on the stage, would elicit an increase in alertness and liveliness.

He was very good at, and appropriate to carry out the role of folk-types, especially from rough-cut, coarse personalities for example, such as Nachum'cheh in '*Doff's Jung*', the wagon driver in '*Vilner Baal Habayisl*' etc.

I am reminded of an incident that took place during the time of the German occupation. At that time, we genuinely suffered from hunger. A piece of bread made from bran and a oat pancake were items of luxury. One time, I was in the street, and I see a group of Jews standing in the center of the city, convulsed in laughter. Yud'l Bussel was standing in their midst, stamping with his feet and making neighing noises like a horse.

-- What happened, Yud'l? – I asked overwhelmed and frightened.

-- Simple – He answered in a naive and simple manner – If one is to eat hay, and one is bound in leggings, one turns into a horse…

Such 'appearances' were almost a daily affair. A circle of Jews are standing in the street, and are holding their sides from laughter – a certain sign that Yud'l Bussel is here….

Mrs. Hinde Walkin[64]

Mrs. Walkin was the 'star' of the dramatic troupe and its pride.

[She was] a natural and multi-faceted dramatic talent. Her appearances on stage were graceful and accurate, and her voice rang with lyrical emotion. Her dramatic characters were enchanting, full of life and temperament. Her folk-types and maternal roles touched the heart.

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[64] Rendered with the Polish feminine ending, as 'Walkina.'

She was beautiful, tranquil and solid in her day-to-day life, but stormy and roiling in her roles on the stage. She inspired and brought along her fellow players, and mesmerized the public.

Her musical sense was very sharply developed. All she needed to do was hear a tune once, and she then was able to sing it with the most punctilious accuracy.

She was the mother of the Jewish 'Drama Family' in Baranovich.

She was a person of rare good character. [She was] aristocratic in her bearing, and yet so simple and homey in social contact with her fellow players. Her beautiful appearance, helpfulness, and friendliness awoke respect.

In person, and in commitment, a lot carried over to the artistic-cultural standing of the Drama Club. She dedicated all of her time to teaching new talent, and to awaken the feeling and interest and love for the stage.

For many years, the Baranovich theater society recalled her appearances in the dramatic roles of '*Hasia the Orphan*,' Esther'keh in '*Der Shekhita'*, Etti in '*Kreutzer Sonata*,' Natasha in '*Doff's Jung*,' as well as her performances in the folk personas of Sarah Shapiro in '*Blutikn Shpas'* Etimeny in '*Dos Groyse Gevins*' by *Sholom Aleichem*, and so forth....etc.

'Walkin-House' – The Home of the Drama Family

With the magic of her personality, and her spiritual force, Mrs. Walkin created a home in her house for the 'Drama Family' in our city, -- a home, with its specifically artistic atmosphere, which cemented the Club and held its members together during the most difficult times.

The breadth, and generosity of '*Haus-Walkin,'* appeared as if to harmonize with the good disposition and big-heartedness of its residents.

The Drama Club, which was – apart from its spiritual mission – the constant provider of nourishment for all institutions and organizations, the 'rich uncle' who dedicated his entire income to the needs of the city – did not even have its own location. Apart from this, there was no one, for any sum of money, who would agree to transform their home into a noisy station, where tens of people work in a tumult, day and night.

'Haus-Walkin' always stood at our disposal, from before dawn, until the middle of the night. Everyone who entered became not only a guest, but a member of the family. And all of us lived together in this house, which was not only a place for rehearsals and meetings, but literally a home. It was also a cultural melting pot of artistic concepts, thoughts, feelings and experiences. If one of us had read a book, or picked up a tune, found material for recitation or declamation – that person immediately ran 'home' and shared his impressions with the entire 'family.'

The 'House' on Szeptycka 43 was also open to artists of the wider world, who were close to us spiritually.

'*Haus Walkin*,' in the course of tens of years contributed a great deal to the sustenance of the 'Drama Family.'

Shaleshudes[65], Purim & Hanukkah Evenings of the 'Drama Family.'

Shaleshudes in '*Haus Walkin*' has a special literary-artistic content. The most important factor was the moment of improvisation. Every member could express his feelings freely and informally, in accordance with his mood and emotional impulse. The songs and melodies created a full-hearted and soulful mood. The heat and the debilitation of the hot summer afternoons were forgotten, and we sang and talked until late into the night.

On Purim nights, the humor of an entire year was united with the traditional folklore of generations. It was something of a distorted mirror of everything and everyone, and were exceptional in their keenness of humor.

The culmination point in the life of the 'Drama Family' took place during the Hanukkah evenings. The members waited a long time for these evenings, and they were talked about for a long time afterwards. Or 'Home' assumed a [festive] appearance like the Sabbath, decorated and spiffed up. All 'family' members would come dressed in their finest clothing. An elevated mood reigned. Yud'l Bussel lit the Hanukkah candles and Sonia Rutkowicz would sing, '*O, ir klayneh lichtelach!*' After this festive introduction, we seated ourselves to a 'Seder' at pre-set tables. It was a sort of annual artistic overview. The members, in a chain form, would recite parts of performances, declaim monologues, sketches, parodies, and sing folk songs. Each according to the uninhibited desire of every participant.

Epilogue

Activity in drama began by us in parallel with the building and development of Baranovich.

Material difficulties did not permit the import of expert instructors and spiritually rich directors from the theater world, or the possibility of sending our members to study theater arts in the larger Yiddish theater centers. This want, completed the enthusiasm and the idealism of the members. With savings from a variety of volunteer funds, a rich library collection was created at the Drama Club, consisting of several hundred books, in Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian and Polish, covering a variety of branches of dramatic art.

During the course of its active existence, the Drama Club brought life and joy into the Jewish community, and broadened its spiritual horizon.

For its repertoire, the Club mined the treasures of folk culture. The struggle of ideas in the Jewish street obtained a very meaningful reflection in the presentations of the Club.

Editorial Supplement

This picture will not be complete, if we do not pause at this opportunity, regarding the person of Mr. Shmuel Epstein (now in Israel) and for his log years of activity as an actor and director of the Drama Club.

He was the central figure of the Club and one of its spiritual pillars.

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65 The Yiddish elision of the Hebrew, '*Shalosh Seudot*' referring to the late afternoon Sabbath meal.

As a man of cultural and artistic ambition, he continuously was learning and developing himself, and he demanded the same of his co-workers and students. He fought against being a dilettante, opposing it with the ideal devotee with is perpetual spiritual thirst for education and fulfillment.

With his natural humor, big-heartedness and deep understanding of people, he inspired the members in their work, and in the manner of a good brother, he elicited the best from his students that they were able to give.

As a performer, in his long years of artistic activity, he appeared in a rich gallery of complex dramatic personalities and in leading roles, beginning with the genuine folk-type, going over to the Jewish sage, and ending with the revolutionary-assimilated intellectual. He also performed the role of ordinary people in romantic forms in a fine and emotionally rich way.

The Educational Institutions in Baranovich

By Ze'ev Livna (Lehrman)

It was at the beginning of the twenties of the century. Baranovich became renown as a young city, a border city, that extends help in a generous fashion to the stream of Jews that were returning from the far reaches of Russia after The First World War.

In admiration, it was told that the city did not stint on resources to open educational institutions, and was prepared to establish a Hebrew gymnasium as well, following the example of the cities of: Bialystok, Brisk, Pinsk, Grodno, and others.



Page 179/180: The Teachers and Students of the 'Bais Yaakov' School

In Poland at the time, the institutions of '*Tarbut*' and '*TzYShO*' (***Tz**entrale **Y**iddishe **Sh**ul-**O**rganizatsye*) were active, and which opened a widely-branched network of educational institutions. Despite their desire for uniform standardization, the Poles saw in these institutions for Hebrew and Yiddish education, a barrier against the influence of Russian culture in those cities of learning where the Jews were seen in their eyes as its disseminators and supporters.

The issue of the education of the young generation obtained a position of respect in the city. A multi-colored rainbow of schools arose, from all walks of life and levels, as Baranovich developed.

Baranovich became famous for the 'Yeshiva' institutions that were beautifully built, and which concentrated hundreds of young men about them for the purpose of the study of Torah, and opposite them were the higher institutions of learning of the government, in the language of the country, and those of '*Tarbut*' in Hebrew. The girls gymnasium of Szulicki, was mostly populated by Jewish girls, and a small number of non-Jews. And this was the rule in the Polish school. A specific percent of the Jewish boys studied at the government gymnasium for boys, and part of them learned Jewish subjects in an informal manner from teachers.

Kindergartens

There were many kindergartens in the city, and most of them – Jewish.

Also, alongside the '*Tarbut*' institution, and the school established under the name of *Maslawsky*, Jewish kindergartens existed, and even under the auspices of the '*Bais Yaakov'* school of *Agudat Israel* a girls' kindergarten existed.

For a few years, a kindergarten in Yiddish existed, under the direction of Malka Lisser-Szklarsky and Baylah Winikov (both in Israel). Mrs. P. Starnin conducted a kindergarten in Polish for a few years.



Page 181/182: ***The Teachers and Students in 'Yavneh' Who Excelled in Their Studies (1921)***

Bottom (From the Right): M. Neidus, M. Mukasey, Singalowsky, L. Turetsky, Sh. Cyrynsky
Sitting in the Middle (From the Right): Alter Gitlin, S. Kaplan, Benjamin Kaplan, Unknown, Moshe Yudlowitz.
Top (From the Right): Yosselewicz, Wankhadla, Cyrynsky, Fudlishevsky, Yosselewicz, Unknown, Unknown, Rosenhaus, A. Yudlowitz.

Elementary Schools

Apart from the '*Tarbut*' school, there were other elementary schools, and the traditional '*Heder*' institutions.

The children received a religious education in the religious Zionist school '*Chinuch*' named for L. Maslawsky, who was its founder and first teacher. In the fullness of time, the school passed over into the hands of the brothers Dov and Ephraim, and their sister, all of whom were committed pedagogues. Apart from religious studies, the school garnered for itself, a respected reputation in secular studies; this school was



Page 183/184 (Top): ***The Students of the TzYShO General Public School with the Teachers***

Sitting (From the Right): Lapczinsky, Leah Rachel Astrinsky, Rosa Zabludowsky, Chaim Zeitman (Principal).
Standing (From the Right): Doncelsky, Taib'l Yatom, Ita Szlimowicz.
Top: An orphan (first on the right), Abramowicz (first on the left).

especially favored by the ranks of the parents that had established the '*Mizrahi*.' Even parents who were not particularly observant, sent their children to school here.

'*Agudat Yisrael'* did not remain satisfied with only the *Heder* system, and it created the institutions of '*Yosdei Torah'* – for boys, and '*Bais Yaakov*' for girls. In the boys school, they mostly studied sacred subjects, and after eight years of study, they received a diploma of six grades in the general elementary school. In *'Bais Yaakov*' the girls studies for seven years, as was the case in all elementary schools. The teachers, Gitlin, Sima and Benjamin Kaplan, and Moshe Yudlowitz established the religious school, '*Yavneh*.'

The *Heders* of the teachers Drabsky, Mavshovich, and Shmyewsky merged into one school under the name '*Takhkemoni*' in which there were two mixed elementary classes and three classes for boys.

As a foundation for the '*Tarbut*' school that was put up in 5683 (1923), it is important to take note of the '*Progymnasia*' founded by Aharon Bergman (his son Zvi Bergman, was one of the leaders of '*Betar*[66]' in Baranovich, and achieved renown in Tel-Aviv as an expert in printing, and as a pioneer in the manufacture of letters made from wood. He died at a young age in Tel-Aviv). The teachers Kushnirowsky and Zakin taught in this school (his sons are members of a kibbutz, and his daughter is a teacher in Israel).

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[66] The right-wing youth organization of the Zionist Revisionists, named "**B**rit **Y**osef **Tr**umpeldor." Joseph Trumpeldor was a Jewish fighter who fell defending Tel Hai from an armed band of Arab marauders. Mortally wounded, he coined the phrase: "Never mind, it is good to die for our [own] country. The name is also an allusion to the last Jewish fortress to fall during the *Bar-Kochba* rebellion, *Betar*.)

The government opened a public school for Jewish children – '*Szabtukwo*' – the school was closed on the Sabbath, and hence its name. All subjects were taught in Polish, with little space given for the teaching of Jewish subjects. The children were excused from tuition, and also received books and writing materials at a minimal cost, and with it all, this institution did not push the national schools aside. The parents, in general, girded themselves, and carried the yoke of the tuition and other expenses, to assure that their children (especially their sons) will receive a parochial education.

Other segments of the populace created institutions for Yiddish education: The *TzYShO* School, and the *Shul-Kult* School. Before this, the *TzYShO* School was the only secular Jewish school in Baranovich. According to the words of Mr. Tsitman (the principal of that school in the years 1929-1933, who emigrated to Brazil, and from there made aliyah to Israel), the school was founded by '*Tze'irei Tzion.*' In the year 1922 it was headed by Yaakov Cohen (at that time, a medical student) representing of the labor movement in Israel, and Nahum Bitensky representing the '*Bund.*' The school was named for *Mendele Mocher Sforim.*

With the encouragement of the teachers of the institution, a public committee was established for the school, composed of officers from the organizations and individuals in the city who were leaders in the concepts of teaching in the spoken language. The Board of Governors for this school was very active, and many of its members exhibited a great deal of dedication. Its members were: (Alphabetically in Hebrew): The bacteriologist Dr. Chaya Bugin, Nahum Bitensky, Fyvel Guber, Aharon Garfinkel, Chaim Weltman, the sisters, Galia and Milia Zilberberg, Tunkel, Yudlowitz, Eliyahu Yankelewicz (Jannai), The dentist Moshe Jasinowsky, Eliyahu Lidowsky, Moshe Limon, Moshe Mukasey, The lawyer, Mansky, Dr. L. Nakhumowsky, Szwiransky, Mikhl Shabatz, and others.

There were discussions among the officers of the various groups about the Hebrew studies: how much space



Page 183/184 (Bottom): ***Zhitlowsky in Baranovich in the Year 1925***

Sitting (From the Right): L. R. Astrinsky, I. Szlimowicz, Magister Bugin, Kh. Weltman, M. Limon, Zhitlowitzky, M. Mukasey, Dr. Nakhumowsky, Garfinkel.
Standing (From the Right): Zabludowsky, Szwiransky, Tunkel, N. Bitensky, Kamerman, D. Gubar, Kh. Astrinsky, Kaltin, Nakhumowsky, Doncelsky.

should be allocated to them in the curriculum of study, until Dr. Chaim Zhitlowitzky arrived, and tipped the scale in favor of those who demanded a respectable place for Hebrew, to the point of teaching Hebrew in the First Grade.

The collective of the teachers in the Yiddish schools was composed of people for whom pedagogy was not an end in itself, but rather a prescription of life. Many of them dedicated their entire lives to teaching, and they had no other goal, such as the noble-spirited teachers Rosa Zabludowsky, from Bialystok, and R. Liss from Kremenets. The teacher Zabludowsky worked at this institution during all the years of its existence, and provided oversight from her boundless idealistic spirit and commitment. Among the teachers were: J. Doncelsky – a teacher of Hebrew subjects, a man of above average intelligence, who excelled as a writer in the local newspapers, and as a facilitator in literary matters, L. Worobiowsky – an important community activist from the '*Bund.*' He worked as a supervisor of *TzYShO*, and during the thirties, settled in Baranovich as the principal of the school, and was active also as a member of the community. Yatom – An art teacher, a person of refined spirit, and an expert in his field, his wife, Yona Yatom-Filik – a teacher of Polish [language], and active in left wing causes, Kamerman, Liftczinsky, J. Rabinovich, Zeitchik, S. Kaplan, Kuperny and others.

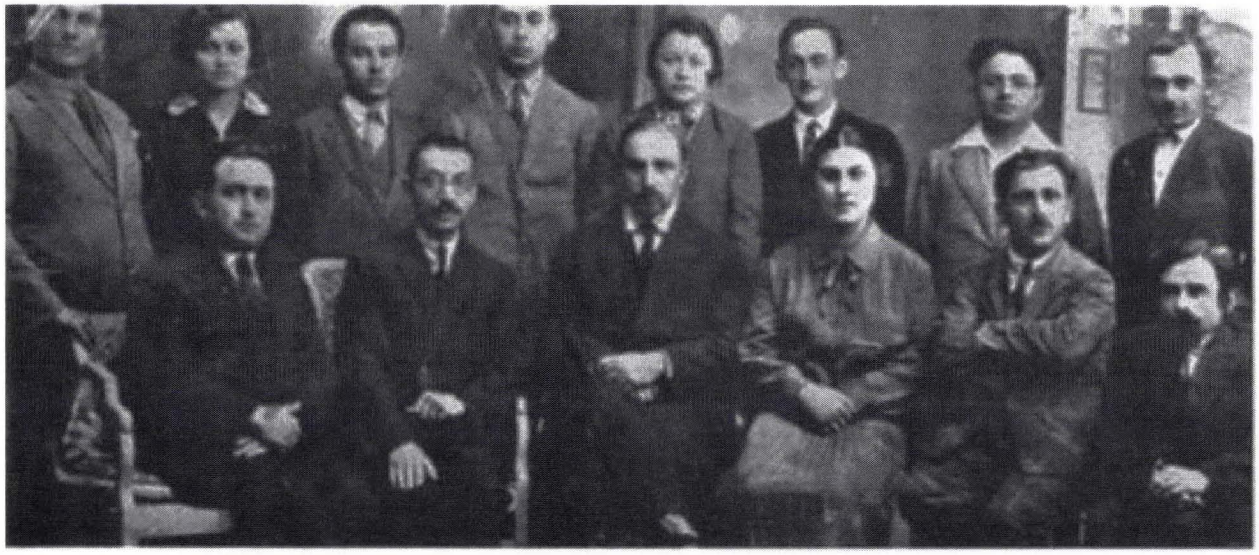
Ita Yanait occupied a respected place in the Teachers organization, who excelled in her pedagogical skill, and her activities in the '*Freiheit*' and *Poalei Tzion* organizations (now in Israel). Baylah Moshkowitz, who for a short time was the de facto principal of the institution, and a teacher of Polish, also worked at the *'Tarbut'* school (Now at *Giveat Brenner*), Chana Wertheit worked for a short time as a teacher before she made *Aliyah* to Israel (Now in Yagur), Chaim Ostrowsky worked as the leader in Drama groups in the schools of: '*Tarbut'* and *TzYShO,* and afterwards made aliyah to Israel, and from there – to the United States. The member, Klikin (Now an army officer in Israel) served as a teacher of Hebrew subjects in the '*Shul-Kult.*'

The *Tarbut* Institutions

At the beginning of the school year 5684 (1924-5), this writer and the engineer A. Winikov were invited to work in the '*Tarbut*' school in Baranovich. Winikov – as the principal of the institution, and I – as a teacher there.

In a very real sense, the '*Tarbut*' school was a general school, but in the city, it was called the '*Tarbut Gymnasium.'* The new principal was to be concerned with getting the proper license as a gymnasium. The school was called '*Morasha Tarbut'* and was, at that time located in the new house of Mr. Kushnir on the Highway Street.
The teachers in the local institutions were all well-received and respected people in the community, among them, R' David Katznelson, who was a donor and fund raiser for national funds and for many years stood at the head of the activities for *Keren Kayemet L'Israel*. There was not any significant Hebrew book with which he was not thoroughly familiar.

The local young teachers were the brothers, Yaakov and Aharon Cohen. Both were students in Germany, and they would rotate their duties between themselves at school: One year, one would work, and would earn the monies he needed to pay for his studies abroad, and in the following year, the other brother would do this. Both brothers were active in the Israel Labor Movement, and their home – was a focal point for all activities



Page 185/186: ***The Teachers' Organization of the 'Tarbut' Gymnasium in the Year 1926***

Sitting (From the Right): Z. Lehrman, Leib'l Sarlota, The Engineer, A. Winikov (Principal), D. Katznelson, Dr. Press.
Standing (From the Right): Palkhowsky, Y. Levin, M. Gavza, Miriam Zaltzberg, A. Cohen, Dr. Ancar, Jocheved Kashtan, Abramowicz.

of the movement. The young Moshe Gavza served as the Secretary of the institution, who also stood at the head of the local '*HaShomer Ha'Tza'ir*', and his impact on the local youth was substantial. Dvora Fians (now Kustrinsky in Rehovot) from Bialystok, came in the place of her sister, Sarah Fians, who went abroad to finish her studies (Today a supervisor of kindergartens, Dr. Sarah Fians-Glick). About a year later, the teacher, Gedalia Szaklirsky arrived from Brisk, one of the teachers renown as an accomplished pedagogue. He was in Baranovich for only a few years, and afterwards went to the Land of Israel (His wife, the well-known kindergarten teacher of good reputation – Malka Lisser – established a Yiddish kindergarten that existed for ten years). The teacher Juta Lehrman-Levinsky (Now in Tel Aviv) worked for about a year at the institution. Mrs. Naomi Riback from Milwa was invited as a teacher of Polish, who had previously worked at the Hebrew Gymnasium in Pinsk.

The principal, the engineer A. Winikov – a Zionist activist from Brisk – was a man of secular and Hebrew culture. He did a great deal to obtain the permission from the government to transform the school into a gymnasium. There were many difficulties. Both the small one-floor wooden building (the ground floor), in which the institution was housed, and the absence of any possibility to do natural and physical exercises, all served as excuses for the disapproval of the authorities. Nevertheless, in the end, his efforts were crowned with success.

R' Mendl Ginsberg stood at the head of the '*Tarbut*' committee in Baranovich, which centralized all of the Zionist work in the city and vicinity. His influence over the institution was great, as was his stamp on all the

activities of the school. After the gymnasium was established firmly, he made *aliyah* to the Land of Israel, and his place as head of the branch was taken by Dr. Chaim Szenicky.

Among the teachers at the institution, I remember Dr. Israel Ancar, an English teacher, who settled in Baranovich, and married a woman from there, Dr. Lazar – a biology teacher, Mrs. Greenberg – History. Dr. Chaim Szenicky excelled in his strong will to do things on behalf of national Hebrew education. He visited the Holy Land, and participated in the ceremony of the opening of the university, and upon his return, he dedicated his entirety to the dream of the liberation of the [Jewish] people. The Hebrew school was his pet project, and his wife, Batya, of much energy, was his ever-present assistant at his side.



Page 187: ***The 'Tarbut' Gymnasium Orchestra (1926)***

Bottom (From the Right): Kaslin, Shmuel Berman, Berkowicz, Eliezer Mishkin, Lifschitz.
Top (From the Right): Wolochwiansky (Standing), Rachel Portnow, Kaplan, Unknown, Wolochwiansky, Rosa Rabinovich, Engineer A. Winikov (Principal of the Gymnasium), Palkhowsky (The Conductor), Shifra Wolansky, Dina Gavza, Bat-Sheva Polonsky, Masha Zhokowitzky, Luba Iskin, Kaplan.



Page 189/190 The Strikers, during the battle over the fate of the 'Tarbut' Gymnasium in the year 1929, opposite the effort to change the institution to one where the language of instruction would be Polish.

In the Top Row (From the Right): David Kudewicky, Moshe Epstein, Avra'shkeh Kaslin, Itka Scheinberg, Freyd'l Winograd, Sarah Heilperin, Alta Kukis, Rivka Yankelewicz, Rivka Kukis.

Second Row (From the Right): Elya Abramowicz, Yitzhak Levinbook, Aharon Weinger, Sarah Kaplan, Malka Feldenkreis, Faygl Neufeld, Aharon Katzav, Shimon Mansky (behind Katzav), Yankl Winograd, Unknown, Moshe Gordon (An officer of 'Tarbut' central), Zalman Breslau, Aharon Goldschmid (Behind Breslau and Einstein), Einstein ('Tarbut' Headmaster), Elya Gelman (An officer of the Teachers Organization), Abraham Ravitzky, Moshe Szklar, Yekhiel Domoszwicky, Dina Gavza, Kaplan, Tzip'keh Wolochwiansky (behind Kaplan), Luba Iskin, Gideon Katznelson, Ziss'l Huberman, Shmuel Berman, David Mukasey.

Third Row (from the Right): Sarah Wolfowitz, Taib'l Gottlieb, Pua Winograd, Meir David Greenberg, Mottik Mukasey, Yaakov Greenspan, Unknown, Reuven Farber, Sholom Wolochwiansky, Leib'l Fakar, Joseph Angelovitz, Yekhiel Neidus, Joseph Fuczinsky, Abraham Epstein (behind Fuczinsky), Shayndl Yosselewicz, Aharon Bussel (behind Yosselewicz), Olwitzky, Fruma Miskin, Chaya Miskin.

Fourth Row Standing (From the Right): Eliezer Katzav, Ita Berman-Bolotzky, Sonia Gavza; Sitting: Mir'eh Epstein, Unknown, Rachel Garbowsky, Rosa Shilowsky, Rosa Rabinovich, Bat Sheva Polonsky, Shifra Wolansky, Yehudit Bolotzky, Tzila Levinbook, Leah Epstein, Genya Wolkowysky, Baylah Fein, Masha Zhukhowicky, Esther Korolitzky, Zelda Rozowsky, Isser Iskin.
Bottom (From the Right): Dobkowsky, Unknown, Abraham Ratzkewicz, Tema Gavza, Rudman Levinbook, David Malovitzky, Zunlevitzky, Lusik Farber.

Apart from the committee of the '*Tarbut*' branch, there was also a Parents' committee. The parents were much concerned about the well-being of their children, and they were concerned that not only would they receive a national [sic: Jewish] education, but that it also have practical value, insofar that by receiving a diploma, the graduate would become eligible for higher education and completion in the future. They were happy about any undertaking fort the benefit of the institution, and looked after providing a cordial reception to those teachers who came from outside the city, and helped them get settled.

The pharmacist, Moshe Rosenhaus, was the head of the Parents' committee. One could find several of the members of the committee in his store, and the owner of the store would turn away from all of his other duties, and deals in earnest with the concerns of the school. Among the members of the committee were: R' Chaim Portnow, Mrs. Shoshana Farber, Mr. Polonsky, Mr. Lifschitz, Mr. Wolochwiansky, Mr. Berkowicz, Mr. Fyvel Kroshinsky, Mrs. Svjacicky, and the bookseller, Mr. Goldschmid (the son-in-law of the deputy head of the town), and in his place, the engineer Aharon Starnin came from Vilna. A modest and straightforward man, he was a capable pedagogue. He dedicated himself to the work in the institution and to his lessons in mathematics, but distanced himself from community affairs (however, he was compelled to participate in those municipal committees as representing the interests of the institution versus the government).

The '*Tarbut*' Gymnasium opened the seventh grade, and the question of practicality was raised in all its intensity. All the endeavors to obtain a license were in vain. The government increased its demands regarding the certification of the institution. But their intent was clear. The parents were taken with the idea that they are not enamored of the models followed by Lodz, Warsaw, and many others, who set up Polish Gymnasia for Jewish children, with the addition of Jewish studies and Hebrew. They contacted the headmasters of Polish-Jewish Gymnasium in Vilna, Dr. Epstein, and without the knowledge of the
[*Tarbut*] branch committee, they instigated a 'revolution' and changed the Gymnasium from '*Tarbut*' to a 'Jewish Gymnasium' in which the language of instruction would be Polish, and the Hebrew studies – an addendum.

The parents did a deed, but their children did not participate in this, and a student strike broke out. A tempest ensued in the city. Without forces, the central 'Tarbut' office and the Teachers' Organization in Warsaw (Messrs. Einstein and Gelman) were called for, and came to Baranovich. A sharp discussion spread among the factions of parents who were loyal to Hebrew, and those of the parents interested in a 'practical' education. The national press in Warsaw published articles of encouragement addressed to the strikers. The matter of the strike caused waves throughout Poland and in the Land of Israel. The Zionist youth movement worked to strengthen the hand of the strikers. Words of encouragement and praise were also heard from the platform of the Zionist Congress, on behalf of the strikers – but all the endeavors failed. With the support of the government, those who advocated a 'Jewish' Gymnasium prevailed, which immediately received certification from the authorities.

At the end of the incident, those who were active in the strike, transferred to the '*Tarbut*' Gymnasium in Bialystok – and most of the students gave in.

In the expanded role of the '*Tarbut*' Gymnasium, Dr. Epstein from Vilna was in charge. The blue-white insignia was taken down, and in its place a new sign was put up: 'Jewish' Gymnasium. This was the 'Gymnasium of Epstein.' Beside it were the public classes of the 'Jewish' school. The language of instruction was Polish, and R' David Katznelson taught the Jewish subjects. Now, the minimal amount of Hebrew studies served solely as an addendum to the secular studies, and the relationship of the students to both the subject and the teacher, were changed.

The same teacher, D. Katznelson, who occupied such a respected place in the 'Tarbut' Gymnasium, and was so adored by his students, suffered greatly in the Polish-Jewish Gymnasium. The students took a derisory attitude towards the subject and to this teacher, so dedicated to Hebrew and Jewish studies, and he suffered a great deal in a class where most of the students were rebellious.

The 'Tarbut' Elementary School

The storm that arose over the 'transformation' and the strike dissipated little by little. However, the branch committee of 'Tarbut' did not reconcile itself to this effort, and decided to return the diadem to its old place, and to establish a new '*Tarbut*' School. Many activists rallied around the chairman, Dr. Chaim Szenicky, and in their ardor, they succeeded to realize this ambition. Among the most active of the committee members we can count: Vice-Chairman R' Baruch Galay, an enlightened man, and a partner in the establishment of local newspapers, a doer, with influence in the city; the pharmacist Moshe Vigdorczyk, the son-in-law of the Zionist Elder in the city, R' Yitzhak Jasinowsky, was the treasurer, and dealt with the issues of the school with great affection and dedication. Mrs. Kertzner (the wife of the lawyer), Batya Szenicky and Rivka Limon, who had just then returned from the Holy Land, having done the preparations and investigations to prepare for a pending *aliyah* of her family. The remaining members of the committee were: Messrs. Itzkowitz, Borishansky, Goldin, the engineer Chaim Tanenbaum, Trachtenberg, Polonsky, Portnow and Y. Katzav.

The secretary of the committee, Moshe Gavza centralized the work. The youth movement supported the branch activities, and thus the members of '*HaShomer Ha'Tza'ir*, and '*Betar*' united and partnered in the effort. In 1931, the '*Tarbut*' Elementary School was established.

Realistically, even the Zionists did not rush to take their children from the elementary grades of '*Yehudiya*' and move them over to '*Tarbut.*' Many of them, who had gotten excited about the idea of '*Tarbut*' could not confront to test, and they let their children remain in '*Yehudiya.*'

The ladies Limon, Kertzner and Szenicky spared no effort and went from house-to-house, to sign up children for the new school. Most of the members of the committee of the *'Tarbut*' branch were now not only activists, concerned about the education of other children, but now also parents, who were prepared for all sacrifices, in order to give their children a Hebrew, Zionist education.



Page 191: ***The Teachers Committee and Organization of the 'Tarbut' Elementary School (1931)***

Sitting from the Right: Ze'ev Lehrman (School Principal), Batya Szenicky, Dr. Chaim Szenicky (Chairman of the Committee), Rivka Limon, M. Goldin (A Committee Member).
Second Row from the Right: Chaim Portnow, Moshe Vigdorczyk, Polonsky, Baruch Galay, (All Committee Members); Yaakov Agit, Ahuva Mordkowsky, Hinde Stolarsky,(All Teachers), Itzkowitz (A Committee Member).
Above from the Right: Rachel Savirnowsky (Kindergarten), Baruch Zablodsky, Baylah Fein, Chaim Schwartz, Joseph Levin, (All Teachers).

As principal, the writer of these lines was invited, who remained in continuous contact with the branch committee that displayed interest in every single detail in the life of the school. This was a true people's school, in which children came to study from all sections of the city. The wealthy paid a high tuition, in order to make it possible for the children of the poor to learn free of charge, or at considerably reduced rates. About 25% were tuition free, 50% without discount, and 25% paid the full high rate – among them, members of the branch committee, that served as an example to others. Following the proposal of Mrs. Rivka Limon, they began to teach Hebrew in the '*Tarbut*' school in the Sephardic accent. In the '*Tarbut*' Gymnasium it was taught in the Ashkenazic accent.

Among the teachers of the '*Tarbut*' Elementary School we counted: Jocheved Kashtan, who after a year of work, made aliyah to Israel, Ahuva Mordkowsky (now in Australia), Hinde Stolarsky, Chaim Schwartz, Yaakov Agit (before him, his wife, Zusya Shuar worked), Joseph Levin, Baylah Fein (also served as secretary), Baruch Zablodsky, Abramowicz, Jonah Yatom, Tsiz'l Bitensky. Rivka Goldberg-Gavza, Rachel Wolochwiansky, (*Hevrat Eilon*), Rachel Savirnowsky (all in Israel), and Leah Ziv, all worked in the '*Tarbut*' kindergarten. The following served as secretary: Baylah Weinger (now in Holon), Grunya Golivitzky, And Todros Khumosky (He was a member of

'*Mesilot*'). The school continued the tradition of the '*Tarbut*' Gymnasium, and shined its influence upon a broad swath of the people. The school developed a strong tie to the Land of Israel. Changes in the staff, at the institution, were largely a result of ongoing *aliyah* of the current employees. Those making *aliyah*, and among them were students, stayed in contact with the school through letter correspondence. The letters from Israel were read in the classes and would arouse a tremendous amount of spirit. The emissaries that came from the Land, to the kibbutz '*Shakhariya*' and to engage in activities in the city, visited the school, and told about life in the Land. (Miriam Szlimowicz, N. Benari, David Canaani, and others).

Bialik in Baranovich

The visit of Ch. N. Bialik in 1933 left an indelible impression on the students. On that same winter day, a throng mobbed the hotel in their desire to gaze, with their own eyes, upon one of the great men in Jewish poetry. (The police chief demanded a fee for his many efforts in enabling Bialik to negotiate his way through the huge crowd that anticipated his arrival, with such excitement). From the hotel, the poet came to the school, and told the children about Tel Aviv and the children in the Holy Land. Their friend, Hadassah, the daughter of Yaakov Gavza (the brother-in-law of Joseph Bussel) earned both fame and honor at that time. To the poet's question of who among them was preparing to make *aliyah* soon to the Holy Land, Hadassah stood up and related the preparations being made by her aunt Khayuta for herself and her family, to make *aliyah*. The poet hugged the little girl, and promised her to convey regards to her aunt, and blessed the children that they should be worthy to make *aliyah* to the Holy Land and become one of its citizens. The son of the dentist Berman, little Abraham, blessed the guest in a beautiful Hebrew, and recited one of his poems. The poet hugged the loveable child, and conveyed to him his joy over seeing the results of a Hebrew education in the Diaspora. He also visited the kindergarten, and focused his gaze on the children singing in Hebrew. Before his departure, he penned a few words, as a memento, on his sense of the worth of Hebrew education in the Diaspora. The image of the poet was etched into the hearts of the students. In their notebooks, they expressed this great experience of an encounter with the poet of the ultimate redemption, during his visit. Even the head of the Polish Zionists, Yitzhak Greenbaum, visited the school, and was impressed by the attainment of the students. Also, Ze'ev Jabotinsky[67] visited and wrote the following lines at the time of his departure: It is our obligation to educate our children to strike, strike, strike... (I recall the phraseology exactly).

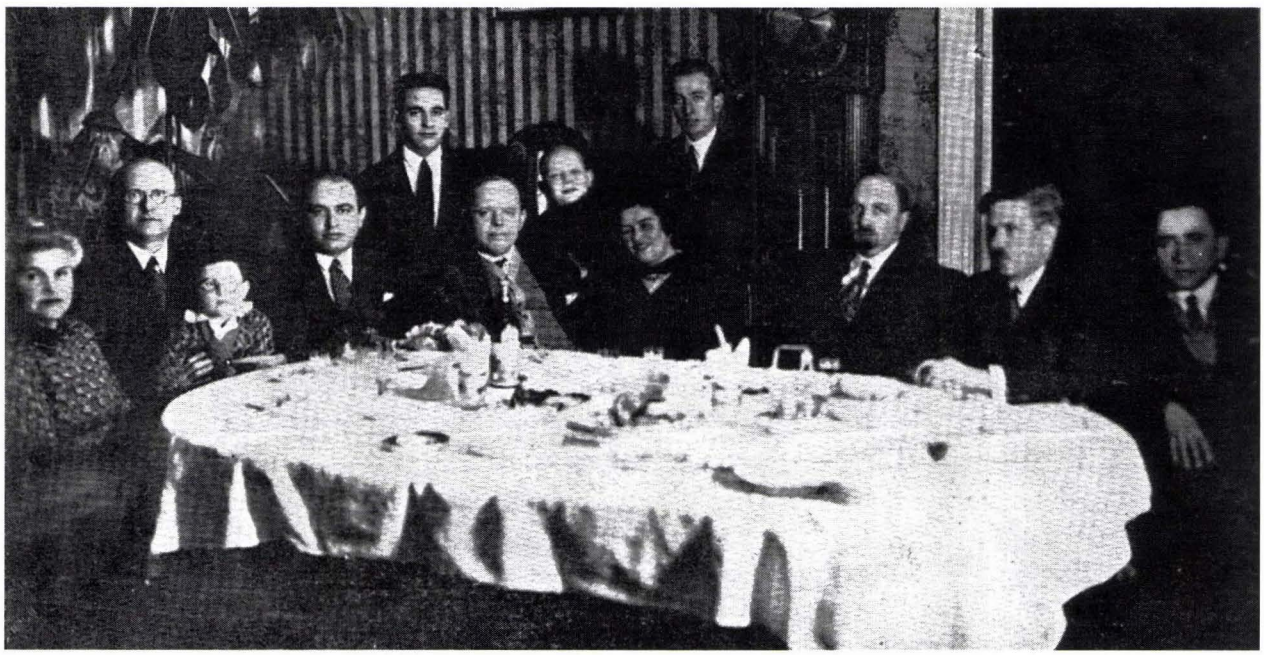
The members of the training camp '*Shakhariya*' in Baranovich were, as you can understand, permanent guests at the school. The teachers taught them Hebrew. The students also visited their location, and saw, with their own eyes, what tribulations the Jewish pioneering youth has to go through in preparing himself for a life of labor. When the 'Drama Club' was created, composed of

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67 Ze'ev Jabotinsky, born Vladimir Yevgenyevich Zhabotinsky on October 18, 1880, died August 4, 1940) was a Revisionist Zionist leader, author, orator, soldier, and founder of the Jewish Self-Defense Organization in Odessa. He also helped form the Jewish Legion of the British army in World War I, and was a founder and early leader of the militant Zionist underground organization, Irgun.

members of the '*Shakhariya*' kibbutz. Its first presentations were at the school stage. The first appearances of the actress 'The Broom" Brun'keh Zaltzman, also took place at the school.

The school was suffused with the atmosphere of the Holy Land. The work of the children in workshop for carpentry under the direction of the teacher Y. Levin, and their lessons for work, were dedicated to *Keren Kayemet.* The stamps of KK"L were pasted in albums, and attached them to a map of Israel, or to collections of plants or animals from the Holy Land. Every Friday, parties to welcome the Sabbath were arranged. The violinist Reznick would entertain the assembly with Hebrew melodies, and the teachers and students would read chapters of literature, and join in communal song. The chorus, under the direction of Y/ Levin, sang '*Shabbat Shalom*,' and in a spiritually elevated state, the children would finish out their week's work.
The joy was great during holiday and festival season. The members of the branch committee and the parents would dedicate entire evenings to preparations in advance of the holidays. During the



Page 193/194: ***Ch. N. Bialik in Baranovich in the Year 1932***
A Party at the home of Dr. Szenicky (The Chairman of the 'Tarbut' School Committee).

Sitting (From the Right): Unknown, Dr. Greenspan, Engineer Winikov, Mrs. Szenicky, Ch. N. Bialik, Engineer Tanenbaum, Dr. Szenicky, Unknown.

Hanukkah and Purim celebrations, almost all of the parents participated. On *Tu B'Shevat*, the time when cold reigns, and the snow is piled up in the streets, the children came to savor the vegetables that they ate together, and would symbolically plant trees in the KK"L forest in special donations. On *Shavuot*, they would enter the blooming garden, and read appropriate chapters of literature, and on *Lag B'Omer*, they would organize hikes and tours of the city and its environs.

The institution grew and expanded, and it became necessary to rent an additional, larger premises. The higher grades were moved to a house on the corner of Mickiewicz Street and the Highway Street, and the lower grades, together with the kindergarten, remained in the home of Mr.

Yudelewicz. In the branch committee, the decision to erect a large building for the institution was taking shape. Urgent consultations were beginning to take place at the home of Dr. Szenicky. A large sum of money was needed to acquire a parcel of land of suitable size. The members of the branch donated appropriate sums, and began to raise funds, in the city, and the search for a suitable parcel of land. The Teachers Organization also donated, and each donated out of their salary. As the principal of the school, I managed to reserve a sum of a thousand gulden from the institution's budget for the purchase of the parcel. This sum, which I turned over to the building committee before I made *aliyah*, was, understandably, insufficient. Many large sums were required. And from where would this money come? Without any support from the government, and none from the city, the burden fell on the shoulders of the committee. And the members of the 'Tarbut' committee were neither silent, nor idle. They were the first donors, and served as the models for others. And, the efforts of these devoted workers, was crowned with success. The building was erected in splendor. But the building served as the '*Tarbut*' School for only two years; in 1939, it was closed by the Russian regime, and in 1941 it went up in flames with all the other buildings in the city...

In Shevat of 5796, I parted from the students and their parents before my *aliyah* (the venerable teacher Rabinovich from Vilna took my place). I continue to treasure the albums with pictures of the students that were given to me on that day. Each student affixed their picture and added their good wishes. All of these blessings had one theme: the hope to meet again in the Land of Israel, and to make *aliyah* and participate in building it...

My heart seizes up with sorrow and pain when I look at these lovely and precious images, of that youth which was cut off, and could not realize that goal...

I can still hear the clear voice of Mott'leh Helfand, who declaimed Bialik's '*After My Death*' with the proper emotion and feeling. And little Chana'leh, who declaimed '*The Airplane*' with grace and beauty as she had heard it recited by Bron'keh Zaltzman... and Gershon Trobovich who emerged from the darkness into the light (according to his words in his long parting letter that he gave to me) in leaving the '*Szabtowka*' and transferred to the Hebrew School plunging in, for those deficient in language skills, and his dreamy eyes cast towards the Land of his dreams... and Reznick brothers who attempted with all their powers to write poems full of emotion... where are they?

The fountain has been stopped up. Everything has been destroyed.

Note: Because of the lack of appropriate sources, to my sadness, I was not able to mention all of the institutions and personalities associated with them. If I have not mentioned some name that is precious and sacred, I did so out of my own ignorance.

The Newspapers in Baranovich

By Aryeh Szamuszkowicz

Were the Jewish newspapers in the outer cities of Poland only a capricious fancy? And for those young people with a pretension to literature and journalism, who could not find any other home for themselves, who in comparison to their predecessors longed for a '*Shiur*' or '*Zogekhts*' before their group in the *Bet HaMedrash*?



Page 197/198: ***The Baranovich Papers***

For sure, this was not the only objective of the one who gave birth to this journalism. Not one weekly alone was established by the endeavor of such an individual, who was disappointed in finding an outlet, because he could get visibility in the newspapers of the larger cities, nor by the endeavor of some local activist that saw himself attacked by a write up in a specific periodical. An activist of that nature would have to be inclined to get back against someone on a tit-for-tat basis: whatever those who are in control in their own redoubt, can cause anything to be penned, rendering someone innocent or guilty, he would have to be of that same nature.

And we can add the following fact. The lack of work in the Jewish printing shops also contributed to the appearance of no small number of newspapers. The owners of the print shops, in no small way, encouraged the appearance of the newspapers, either as partners in the publication, or as printers for a minimal fee, in order to keep the print shop going.

Despite this, it is appropriate to see the appearance of the weekly Jewish press in Poland as the product of lovers of literature, who needed these vehicles, and served as a stable base for it establishment and preservation.

If these vehicles are needed, what are they, and what are their characteristics? It is useful to note that this took place in the stormiest period of Jewish life in Poland. "What to do?" – this was the question of the day. How does one save, and how to be rescued – this quandary overwhelmed all generalities and detail. Conceptual and social differentiation continued to grow, and in its wake – the tensions between the blocs and groups sharpened: to accommodate one's self to the situation, to make peace with the local police, who, despite its intense hatred for the Jew – seeks its voice at the ballot box (B. B.), or to oppose it; to embrace the forces of revolution, or to devise some national solution; If it is to be Zionist – which is the best? How shall Zion be rebuilt: With blood and fire, or with blood and exhausting work?

Yet, questions such as these, by their nature, are general ones, and the central press dealt with them. However, just as the facial appearance of people are different, that is how different the reaction of different places and their resident populace are. There is a need to align the direction of the work, and the communication to the conditions of the place, and its circumstances. There is a need to be critical and a need to offer praise. What is better at this than a newspaper? And what reaction is stronger than that to something that appears in the press?



Page 200: ***The Editorial Staff of 'Baranovicher Leben' (1928)***
Sitting (From the Right): Bergman, Dr. Press, Kaplinsky, Mansky, Goldin
Standing (From the Right): Bugin, Kuriniec.

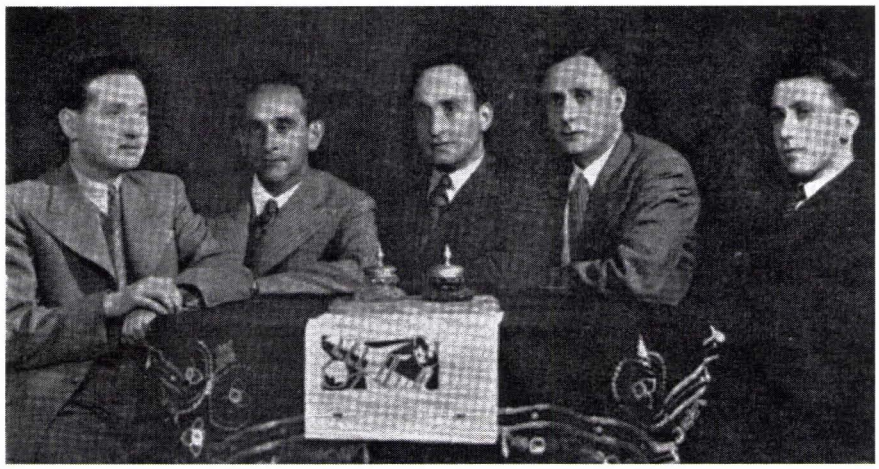
And more than the larger [daily] press, the periodical press in various places, provided an accurate perspective to the great restiveness among Polish Jewry – including the periodical press in Baranovich.

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This writer was not residing in Baranovich in 1938, and does not know if, and how, the tenth anniversary of the Yiddish press was marked in the city, which fell during that year. It is possible, that in the maelstrom of those days, this milestone was completely forgotten. Nevertheless, in 1938, it was 10 years since '*Baranovicher Leben*' began to appear. During the period of this decade, six weeklies appeared, among them that ran for a number of years, and some that didn't. Most of them

identified themselves by a movement, all manifesting – some overtly, and some in a less obvious way – the outlooks and endeavors of a specific bloc. There structure – similar, their external appearance – almost the same: First page – news of good events or obituaries; the last page – a calendar; the two inside pages – articles, feuilletons, lists and occasionally, even a short story. The first page was the core entry point of the newspaper, and the paper's editor was happier the larger he could take of this page, pushing other content inside. Even the readers tended to enjoy this part of the paper the most. So-and-so was married to such-and-such, Reuven offers blessings to Shimon on some occasion. In time, it became an ambition to appear on this page to be congratulated, and the more congratulations – this would raise the individual's sense of self-importance, and in the eyes of others…

Among the early progenitors of this movement, in the field of newspaper journalism, a permanent place is forever reserved for Marek Mansky, the founder and editor of the first weekly, '*Baranovicher Leben*,' that began to appear in 1928.



Page 202: ***The Editorial Staff of 'Blau-Weiss'***

From Right to Left: Yitzhak Rosenhaus, Joseph Foxman, Kuriniec, Zvi Bergman, Israel Goldin.

It was Mansky who focused on the concept of the newspaper, he was the one who made the effort, working, and urging others to work, and his principal cadre of helpers – especially in the first period – were: Shabtai Goldin – several of whose poems appeared in '*Welt Spiegel*,' the national paper that was distributed, and Abraham Kaplinsky, who divided his time between his cosmetics store on the market square, and the study of literature and writing about world events.

'*Baranovicher Leben*' settled on a non-partisan position as an equilibrium,, and the editorial staff of the paper settled on this line of approach without varying from it, except in the twilight days of the paper, when a number of members of the editorial staff fell ill. The reaction of the paper -- patient and even-handed, and the integrity of the information even though reported in a general fashion, showed no evidence of having been compromised. At a party, to celebrate the 25th edition of the newspaper, that took place at the home of Mr. A. Bergman in the winter of 5689, the ideas on the direction of the newspaper had already diverged. There were those who justified its current posture and demanded its continuation, and there were those who were critical and demanded a clearer position. In the first camp – attracted the officers of the economic groups. While the political officers had other ideas. Both edited the newspaper, but the newspaper failed to attract loyal adherents. And so, it was in all the years of its existence, which numbered four. Only for one short period, this being the final period of its existence, the newspaper attracted a bloc of loyal supporters. This took place during the elections to the Sejm, in 1932, in which the newspaper placed itself at the

disposal of the B. B. However, in taking this step, more than drawing those close to it, it repelled many, who went over to the side of the '*Baranovicher Vokh,*' who in the election, stood on the side of the national slate. Despite the attacks of the 'regime,' it was this stand by '*Baranovicher Leben*' in this election, that determined its fate. With a fall in the number of readers, the advertisements fell, and it was forced to discontinue publication.

The second of the weeklies – the only one that lasted for close to ten years, if only for a change in orientation – this is the '*Baranovicher Vokh*,' that began to appear in July 1930.

It was a daring experience to attempt publishing a second weekly, because the survival of the first was not any sure thing yet. Had its founders concerned themselves with the practical side – it is possible that they would not have initiated the endeavor. But they were young, restive, with a fire in their belly. One fine summer day, they went in under the shade of the forest trees, and committed themselves to publish the paper – and let the chips fall where they may. They took the money for salaries and printing costs from their parents, and it is understood, with an enthusiastic promise that it will be repaid soon. The bulk of the financial burden fell on the shoulders of Aharon Salutsky/ This short, folksy young man, with a broad command of rhyme, who in the fullness of time was its sole publisher.

The editing of the paper, until December 1933, was in the hands of this writer, who housed the editorial office in his home. His constant assistant was Isser Markowsky, this man, with his extensive genius and knowledge, who had filled his being with literature, and most of the languages of Europe, and Esperanto. When the writer of these lines was uprooted to go from Baranovich to Warsaw, the Editorship of the paper passed to Isser Markowsky, and he continued with it until April 1937, at the time he left the paper, because of a difference of opinion with the ownership over the orientation of the paper, and began to edit a new paper – this was the '*Baranovicher Vokhnblatt*.'

'*Baranovicher Vokh*', was a newspaper that was unaffiliated, and did not connect with any bloc or group, despite the fact that it openly expressed its Zionist stand, and it was recognized that it aligned itself with the progressive and pioneering elements. The paper attacked the anti-Semitic regime, and supported those who contested them, and were in conflict with the government, whether it was because of a fear of the government, or from wanting to settle a score, and it zeroed in on the non-Zionist parties, who in a certain period raised their heads, and actually controlled the community committee in its economic organizations. The reaction of the paper was sharp and fierce, the information – clear. There was not only one time when there were differences of opinion between the editorial staff and the owners, however, the editorial staff always succeeded in proving that its suggested line would resonate with the readership.

The hand of the regime fell heavily on the newspaper. The editor was invited more than one to the provincial government offices, to hear words of opprobrium, and when this didn't work – the regime utilized passages in various laws, and in it s interpretations to circumscribe the newspaper, with the help of the censor. There were also assaults upon the members of the editorial staff, and twice, they were even brought to court. One charge was dismissed on the basis of an amnesty appeal at the national level, and in the second trial, the editorial staff was found innocent before a Jewish judge (perhaps the only one in the entire country at that time), who did not find in a simple description of

an attack by the students of the public school against their Jewish classmates any incitement against the general population…

As previously mentioned, the members of the editorial staff fell ill, and in the final stage of its existence, the paper obtained a different orientation.

The third weekly in this number was '*Blau-Weiss*' was affiliated with the revisionist camp for whom our city was one of its bastions. The living spirit of the paper was the *Magister* Joseph Kuriniec, from the people of the city involved in many affairs.

On May 20, 1934, in the assembly hall of the '*Strastwo*' (the provincial head) the first committee of writers and newspaper publishers took place in the Novogrudok province. This committee raised many issues in those groups of our city concerned with literature and journalism.

In the summer of that year, '*Dos Fryeh Vort*' began to appear (a weekly for Baranovich and vicinity), under the editorship of Shmuel Azriel, who came into his first contact with journalism when he was serving as a translator for the local censor. The content of the paper aligned itself with the revisionist bloc. It goes without saying that the orientation of the paper was acceptable to this party.

As we have already mentioned, Isser Markowsky resigned from the editorship of '*Branovicher Vokh*' in April 1937, and went over to the new paper, '*Baranovicher Vokhnblatt*' (An unaffiliated weekly for Baranovich and its vicinity) – the last of the weekly newspapers in our city.

We are not going to attempt recollecting all who participated in the newspapers, on the chance that our memory may fail us, and that we may inadvertently leave out a scholar among them, improperly eulogized. Let us, however, mention a few of them: Yehuda Helman – Helman'chik writer of rhymes, who succeeded to create light and pleasant rhymes; the clever and settled Baruch Galay, who practically stood alone in opposition to Itcheh'leh Juzhson; Pesach Zlocowsky – that marvelous personality who was an activist and worker, who rushed and sped to do every good deed, easy as well as difficult; Zvi Bergman, full of Zionist ardor, capable at everything. And let us recall the memory of Abraham Szwiransky, the red-headed printer, the son of red-haired Eliyahu Krasnoyar. The printing house of Szwiransky served the newspapers loyally from their inception to the last day. Not only one of these remained untested by trouble and conflict over its taste, and was often received with anger and criticism rather than pleasure, and not because of the indolence of the hands of its workers, at the head of whom was red-headed Leib Kagan, who was the son of Mota the Smith.

'*Maccabi*' in Baranovich

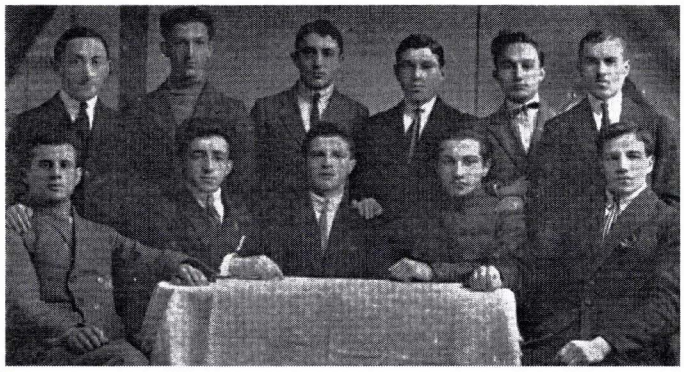
By Dr. N. K.

'*Maccabi*' was one of the most active organizations of the Jewish street in our city.

As far back as the year 1914, the thought arose among the youth of the city, to establish a national sports organization. The concept was not realized because of the refusal of the Russian authorities to give permission to form such an organization. Despite these difficulties, the young strivers

succeeded in founding a soccer team, that largely partook in practices. The empty land parcel, that ran out from the side of the Christian cemetery, served as the playing field.

With the outbreak of The First World War, and the German occupation, even these sporting activities ceased. Baranovich was on the front line – and every able young man was impressed into forced labor.



Page 203 (Top): ***The Leadership of the 'Maccabi' Sport Organization in Baranovich (1922)***

Sitting (From the Right): David Epstein, B. Kaplan, Aharon Goldin, Michael Kushnir, Yankl Oszerowsky,
Standing (From the Right): Alter Bitensky, Zvi Medresh, Sholom Kroshinsky, M. Latriczyk, Joseph Turetsky, Pesach Gavza.

After the Treaty of Brisk, between Germany and Russia in 1918, community life became revived. The front moved off into the heartland of Russia, and a yearning for renewed activity arose among the youth.

The group of Jewish national young people came in at that time, and established a Zionist youth group called '*HeHaver*,' whose purpose was the accelerate the physical and national education of young people. Evening classes were established, in Jewish history, under the direction of B. Milkonowitzky and N. Nakhumowsky, and in a like fashion, sport exercises were conducted under the direction and work of B. Kaplan.



Page 203 (Bottom): ***The First 'Maccabi' Soccer Team in the Year 1928***

Bottom (From the Right): Joseph Turetsky, Itcheh Turetsky, Szwiransky
Standing (From the Right): M. Yakimowitzky, Sh. Kroshinsky, M. Sadowsky, B. Szwiransky, Yaakov Walkin, Y. Baran, Kh. Kagan, Mintz, Schiff, A. Kuszcik.

In 1919, with the appearance of political parties, a crisis befell '*HeHaver*' that led to its dissolution. The leadership, that were not content with the limited agenda of the organization, left it, and joined the organizations of the various Zionist groups, or set up their own sport clubs; the rest of the member, loyal to the group, decided to establish an independent sports organization under the name of 'The Independent Maccabi Sport Organization of Baranovich.'

In 1920, the first interim committee of this organization was elected, and consisted of: Aharon Goldin – Chairman, David Epstein – Secretary, Benjamin Kaplan, Yaakov Oszerowsky, Sholom Kroshinsky, M. Latriczyk, Zvi Medresh, Alter Bitensky, Michael Kushnir, Joseph Turetsky, and Pesach Gavza – committee members.

The first years of the activity of 'Maccabi' were peppered with discussions and meetings. Because of the illegal character of the organization, none of the Zionist leaders wanted to be seen to support it. However, with the first appearances of the field-players, 'Maccabi' captured the affection of the Jewish masses, as a result of its spectacular victories and its fierce competitiveness – and was selected by the 78th Army Group for soccer that was based in Baranovich. It was an exhilarating sight to see the young Jewish men competing against the adults in the Polish army. It was with a feeling of joy and pride that the Jewish spectators would follow the talented player Yaakov Walkin, who was crafty in fooling the opposition goalkeeper, scoring between 3-4 goals and penetrate their defense, to the loud clarion call of the masses and to the playing of the waltz by the army orchestra....



Page 206: ***A Lag B'Omer Procession by 'Maccabi'***

Sh. Kroshinsky (in front of the flag), Yitzhak Miskin (carrying the flag), Kalman Sadowsky (beside Miskin), Szamuszkowicz (behind the flag), Aryeh Walkin (behind Sadowsky), Nahum Mishkin (on the bicycle), Joseph Sanowsky (last on a bicycle).

In 1922, '*Maccabi*' received its proper permissions from the Polish government, and from that time forward, its activities went public.

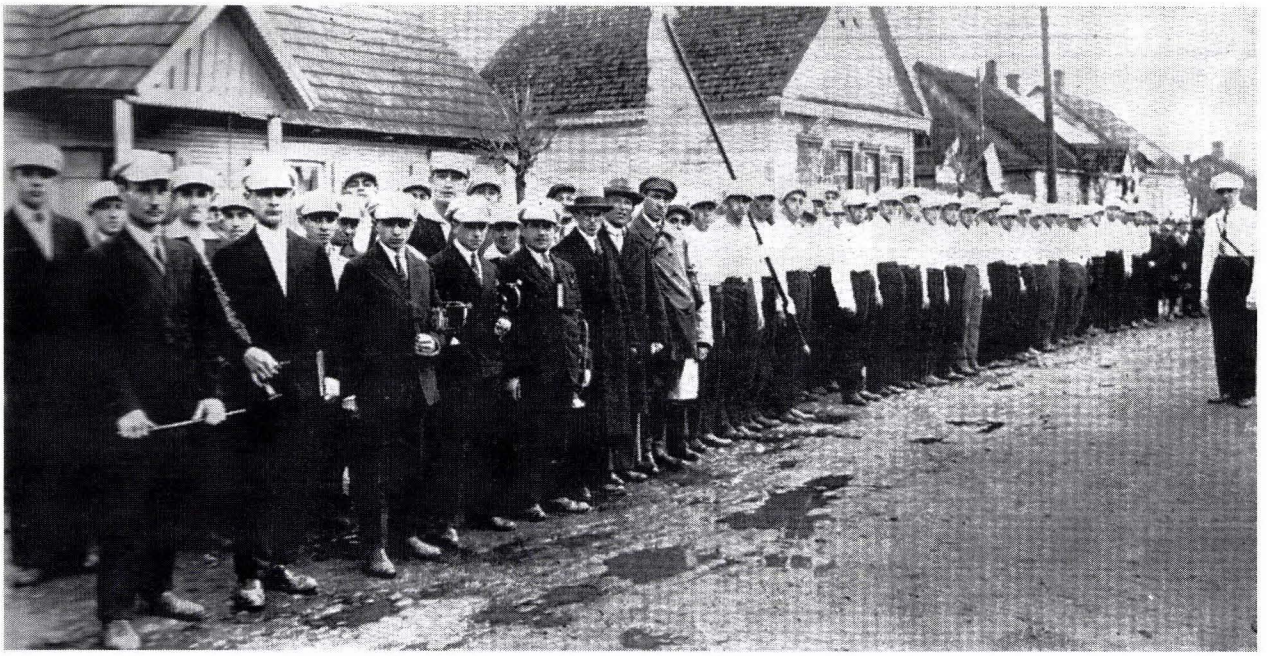
A new committee was elected, and from the ranks of the Zionist leaders, the following were selected: First – Dr. Press, afterwards, engineer Winikov, Dr. Kertzner, and Dr. Skabirsky, Year after year, annual general meetings were held to select a new committee.

'*Maccabi*' opened its activities with 100 members, in cramped quarters in the home of Mr. Molczadsky on the main road (*Shaseina*).

With the growth of the organization, and the enlargement of its membership to about 500, the situation was no longer viable, and with the endeavors of the 'Local Club' it moved to its new premises at the house of Oszerowsky at Szeptycka Gasse 51. In the more spacious conditions of its new location, an intensive activity developed that encompassed just about every branch of modern sporting activity. '*Maccabi*' attained full development when, after a great deal of effort, 'Maccabi' succeeded to take possession of a playing field at the main road [number] 76, behind the houses of the Messrs. Alter Yudelewicz and Zim'l Mintz.

The dedication of the soccer field was a festive occasion for the youth of our city, and for all those who were friends of, and supported Jewish sport. Those who participated in the festivities were themselves members of '*Maccabi*' and were literally the fortunate ones.

The first '*Maccabi*' soccer team was one of the strongest in the city, and occupied an important place among the teams selected (Jewish and Christian) in the vicinity. It was entered into the 'A' League in the listing of the Vilna District. In this capacity, 'Maccabi' competed against the choicest teams in the area.



Page 207/208: ***A Mustering of the 'Maccabi.'***

It is important to note, that it was not only in soccer, but also in the other sections, and areas of athletic endeavor, it also achieved a high standing, and revealed good praise. Accordingly, the other branches of sport were not neglected, such as: cycling, skiing, boxing, discus, and others. 'Maccabi' also had classes for purposes of getting preparation in national culture, a Drama Club, and an orchestra that participated in all national and secular celebrations.

Apart from its independent activities, '*Maccabi*' stood to support the other institutions and activities of the community.

In 1931, a gathering of '*Maccabi*' organizations, from all of the Novogrudok vicinity, took place in Baranovich, and a district committee was established which was seated in Baranovich. Among other things, this committee handled the setting up of inter-city sporting in the district, joint summer camps, parties, tours, outings, etc.

The district committee immediately affiliated with the central '*Maccabi*' office of Poland, and the Novogrudok district committee was graciously acknowledged and recognized by the national committee of '*Maccabi*' in Warsaw, in 1931. As a sign of recognition for his committed and intense efforts, Dr. Press, an officer of 'Maccabi' in Baranovich, was selected to be the Chairman of the [district] committee,

In the world congress of 'Maccabi' that took place during the 17th Zionist Congress in Prague, Dr. Press was designated as the delegate form Poland, and was elected to the presidency.

This flowering range of activity demanded, as understood, a considerable amount of effort, organizations, and funding. Apart from the traditional support coming from the Zionist *Histadrut*, and from sports fans, '*Maccabi*' did not benefit from any other sources of revenue. It raised the

required funds through its own efforts, by sponsoring events, sporting meets, and other things. Notices of the annual traditional '*Maccabi*' party were publicized throughout the city and vicinity.

The range of the activities of '*Maccabi*' were especially broad. It was always available to the Zionist Histadrut, and vigorously participated on behalf of funds, and others. It's contributions to national celebrations were important. And it was so, for example, that it succeeded in arranging a celebration in honor of the Balfour Declaration in 1922, as a large festival for the entire Jewish community of Baranovich (the celebration was described by Dr. M. Jasinowsky in '*Neuer Heint*' Number 187, 1922).

Similarly, '*Maccabi*' participated in the festivities and parade of *Lag B'Omer*, accompanied by its orchestra, and in their promenades of the vicinity.

Baranovich '*Maccabi*' was affiliated with the worldwide '*Maccabi*' and was represented in the first '*Maccabiah*' of 1932, by its Chairman, Dr. Kertzner. and at the time of the second '*Maccabiah*' (1935), quite a number of members and friends attended, who stayed on in the Land.

In 1936/37 '*Maccabi*' went through a crisis that weakened it, and caused a contraction in its activity. Regarding this issue, '*Baranovicher Courier*' writes as follows, on April 30, 1937:

> 'It is a year already that there is not something right in the tumultuous world of sport of ours: – To be more specific – from the time of the establishment of the '*Jordan*' sports club.'

'*Maccabi*' as is known, was the oldest sports organization in our city (this year we will celebrate its 15th anniversary). In its time, sporting activity developed in our city, and reached a high level. '*Maccabi*' also enjoyed its 'seven good years.' The enthusiasm and alertness of the fans was great. Jewish sport became a point of pride and splendor to the local Jewish community. An extreme change came about in a day. The activities became constrained, and the community no longer shows much interest in sports. To this stagnant situation, were added the bickering between '*Maccabi*' and the second sport club in the city, '*Jordan*.'

As is the case in most disputes, the essential thing is the victim – sport itself. This situation led all the sports fans to plead: all of you unite into one strong Jewish sports organization, which will be active in all branches of sport. With a bit of effort, some nerve, and good will, and Jewish sport in our city will be renewed as it was of old.

It was under this circumstance that the 15th anniversary of '*Maccabi*' was celebrated with great pomp and splendor, and served as a catalyst to change the facts regarding the budding and endowed sporting activity of Jewish youth in our city. All the local Jewish community participated in this celebration, and nearby sports organizations from the Novogrudok district also sent representatives.

Not a single person could image that this would be the swan song of '*Maccabi*' in Baranovich – its last big celebration.

Baranovich Under Soviet Rule

By Rivka Kovensky

September 1, 1939. At seven o'clock in the morning, a fright seized everyone upon hearing the news on the radio, that the Germans had crossed the Polish borders and were bombing the principal cities. This state had not yet reached Baranovich, even though the situation had been made public. Day-by-day, we heard about the bombings of the large cities, and the advance of the German Army eastward. A panic erupted in the city; many ran to cross the Soviet border. A week and a half had not passed, approximately, and we could begin to hear the sounds of sirens several times a day: enemy airplanes appeared in the skies above the city, but did not drop bombs, and nobody knew the reason for this.

On the morning of September 16, the city was bombed for the first time – and the panic intensified. Those who remained in the city, awaited the arrival of the Germans with a sense of resignation.

However, on the following morning everything was changed, from end to end. With the morning, airplanes arrived, and everyone, as usual, fled to the shelters, but what astonishment there was when, in place of bombs, leaflets were dropped that said the following: 'The Polish government has abandoned you, and given you up – wait for us, we are coming to liberate you.' Everyone emerged from the shelters, and followed up on this in the wake of the airplanes. And lo, close to the noon hour, in the distance, could be heard the humming of tanks and the footfall of horses hooves. The Soviet Army appeared before us. The tanks rode at their head, followed by mounted cavalry, and infantry, each in their units.

To our good fortune, there was no end, and we did not know how to react. The people kissed the dusty boots of the soldiers. The children ran to the gardens, picked the autumn flowers, and dropped them on the soldiers. The soldiers themselves, were much moved by this heartfelt reception, and there were those among them who wept along with the people. In a minute, red flags were found, and the entire city was decorated in red; the gates were decorated in green, as symbols of praise to the liberators. All were fortunate that they had been redeemed from a certain death, and carried a genuine gratitude to the Red Army.

But the reality of the situation was quite different, for with the passage of several days, we began to feel the strong pressure on our souls, because of our identity as Jews, and especially as Zionists.

The large merchants were oppressed, and lived with the constant fear of exile to Siberia. In a state of panic, they ran from one office to the other, exercising whatever means they could to justify themselves under their new state of citizenship. They try to fulfill a variety of requirements, suffering a variety of abuses. Israel Katzav, who was rich, seeing the imminent danger of exile to Siberia, came to the interim commander of the city and said, that he is prepared to turn over all his assets, requesting only a residence for himself and his wife, and quarters for his children. His request was fulfilled, after all of his assets were confiscated. He received a residence in a town beside Baranovich, and his children got quarters in the city itself. What his fate would be in the future was not knowable, but it is a fact that he was not sent to Siberia until 1941.

The more religious segments of the population had given up entirely. In meeting with Rabbi Scheinberg, I happily asked him: 'What is your thought about our liberation from death?' He answered me in the following way: ' This is true, but we have been condemned to eternal imprisonment.' Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman – the Headmaster of the Yeshiva, expressed himself by saying that this was no liberation at all, that while Hitler destroys the body, the time will come when Stalin will destroy the soul.

The Jewish intelligentsia, also did not find its place, even though most of them were gathered into a variety of columns. The doctors, for example, found an outlet for themselves in the hospitals, and became very important, however, they were compelled to work by the rules of the higher authorities. The well-known Dr. Nakhumowsky was completely placed under pressure, and because he was a Zionist, he was not permitted to do any responsible work, despite the fact that he was a well-known and experienced physician. His assets were confiscated, and his general hospital went over into government hands, and he was sent to work in an entirely different location, and even there, his circumstances were untenable, as if he were a candidate for exile to Siberia.

The situation of the teachers was different. The religious teachers, and the teachers from the Hebrew schools, watched in pain, as they saw the tearing down of the network of Hebrew education, but they took comfort in the fact that in the Hebrew schools, they will at least learn Yiddish.

The teachers were transferred to different schools, with hardly anyone remaining in a former position. In the Hebrew school, there was a transition to teaching in the Russian language (the '*Tarbut*' School was changed to a regular Russian school, the Misilowsky school was changed to an elementary school – covering the first four grades). The Hebrew School for boys, '*Yosdei HaTorah*' and the religious school for girls, '*Bais Yaakov*' were put together into a Jewish high school named for *Sholom Aleichem*, in the new '*Yosdei HaTorah*' building. The stubborn children of the religious schools conducted clandestine warfare to preserve their religious school. On arrival at school, they would quietly whistle beside the eastern wall of the building, and with tears brimming in their eyes, would whisper the words of the [morning] prayer '*Modeh Ani Lefanekha..*'[68] When they exited, they would furtively look about them, and whisper prayers excerpts silently. However, in the end, the children were ardent patriots of their new mother country, and their talents and energy were harnessed by the Soviet youth movement.

Most of the teachers needed to disguise their true feelings. The regime hounded those among them who fell under suspicion. I worked in one school, with the former principal of the previous '*Tarbut*' school – Rabinovich. Of all the teachers, he was the only one not able to accommodate himself to the new order of things. Each day made him more broken and oppressed. By contrast, the former principal of the *'Gymnasium Epstein'* – Stranin, adapted externally quite nicely to the new situation, and even had praiseworthy things to say about them, but despite all of this, he was no longer a principal, but a physics teacher, with the ever-watchful eyes of the regime on him.

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68 The first prayer of the day, recited on awakening, in which God is thanked for restoring the soul to its owner.

Teachers came to us from Eastern White Russia, who stood on an adequately high level relative to us. In the first teachers conference in Minsk, the supervision of education in White Russia was sadly taken away from Orlowa, because the teachers of the district preferred a superior pedagogy, and more desired by the Soviet teachers, who wanted it used an a model. It turned to the teachers of the west, with the request to teach Soviet-style pedagogy, the history of the Community Party, and Stalin's Constitution. To accomplish this end, special courses were opened, and an intensive training began for all of the teachers in our city, for renewed work in the Soviet school. All of us knew this was only temporary, since the war did not cease to be a threat, even during the temporary peace between Russia and Germany.

The intermediate status of the Jew was variegated in nature. Part of them worked loyally for the U.S.S.R. and part looked for a variety of ways to get to the Holy Land, and there were those who fled to Vilna, which at that time, belonged to Lithuania. Naturally, many Jews from Soviet Russia came to our city – many of them assimilated. However, in coming in contact with the Jews of Baranovich, their Jewish feelings were aroused. Many of them indicated, with great sadness, that their children know nothing about their own people.

Also, Jewish refugees came in an unending stream from western Poland, and Russia opened it gates to them, in a wide fashion. Those among the refugees that had come here before, looked for ways to return to their homes, even knowing that the Nazis ruled there. This fact incurred the wrath of the Soviet authorities, and all those who had registered to return to Poland, were sent to Siberia. Even though the Jewish community did not sanction the acts of the refugees, the prospect, of being sent to a land of exile, made a frightening impression on all of us. In the days to come, it became clear that these were the only Jews who remained alive; 75% of them, today, are found in the Land of Israel.

At 6:00AM on June 22, 1941, the city was alerted by siren of an imminent attack by air. The city was bombed . BY 11 o'clock, a mob had congregated about the loudspeakers in all corners of the city, and heard the report from Molotov, that the enemy had burst through the borders of the country, and is bombing cities and towns. 'We do not want war' – Molotov said – 'But if they attacked us, all of us will rise as one, and we will fight for our right.'

The pandemonium was great. People ran around in all directions.

The larger majority remained in the city, having no means to escape. Only the very few fled – and I and my 7 ½ daughter were among those who fled, and from that day on, my connection with Baranovich was terminated.

Scholastic and *Hasidic* Baranovich

לערנען תורה און חסידות אין באראנאוויטש

ברנוביץ התורנית והחסידית

A Center of Torah and *Hasidism*

By Matityahu Berezovsky

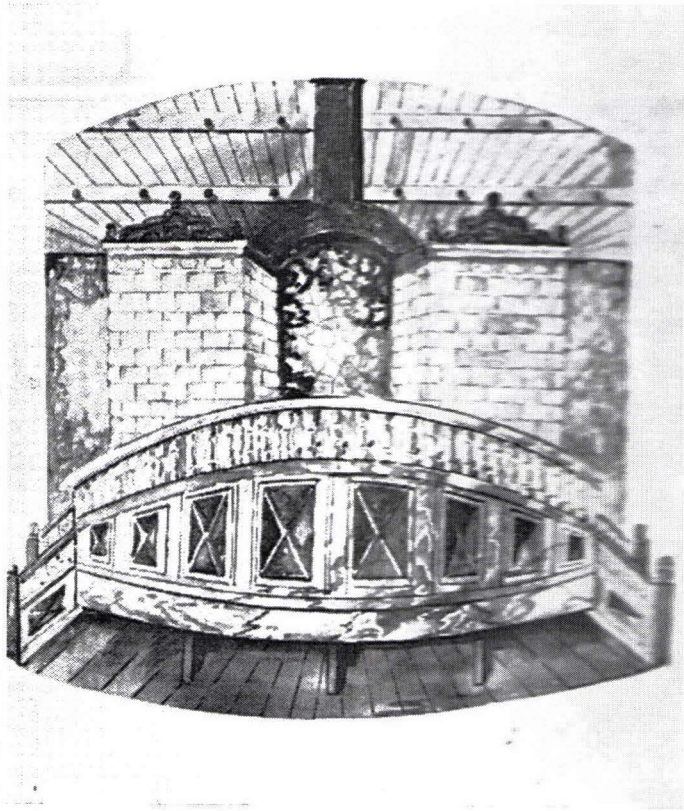
(Excerpts of Writings and Memories)

A Mountain of Ruins & Heaps Upon Heaps of Memories

There are times in the night, when your soul hovers and flies over seas and lands, and returns to the place of your birth that is as desolate as the desert, a vibrant Jewish settlement with life and creativity, that was eradicated in the extermination of the Holocaust, and only a mountain of ruins, and heaps upon heaps of memories, are all that remains of it. The stones of this ruin cry out to us, and the voice of the blood of our brethren, splits open the blood-soaked earth, and rises [heavenward].

Roots

The new community did not simply arise from the dust of man, nor did its scions come to it like fallen leaves blown by the wind. It was a sprig that emerged from an ancient root of olden times. The mentor and bulwark for Baranovich, is the nearby town of Mys, the keeper of a splendid legacy of Rabbis and great Torah scholars, and Righteous Men of the world, and a deeply-rooted Jewish community. The remnants, *Hasidic* Elders, and adherents of the *Mitnagdim,* appear to us like mountains of boulders and ancient oak trees. They were men of truth and faith, people of conscience, steeped in the tradition of generations, Torah, wisdom, *mitzvot*, and the doing of good deeds.



Page 217: ***The Bima of the Great Synagogue of Mys***

Many stories and legends have been woven about the personality of the *Gaon* and *Tzaddik* Rabbi Yekhiel of Mys, who was a master of the *Kabbalah* and a miracle worker. Generation after generation, would come to prostrate themselves on his grave, and offer a prayer on the day after the anniversary of his death, which fell on the Tenth of Tevet, this becoming a day to pause and pay tribute to memory for *Hasidim*.

In a sacred quivering, the elders would recall the memory of the *Rabbi Gaon* and Tzaddik R' Yaakov Moshe Chafetz זצ"ל, and they would wax in singing his praises, his greatness, and holiness. From him, they would go on to the shining personality of his son-in-law, the *Rabbi Gaon* R' Yitzhak Yaakov Woronowsky זצ"ל, who continued in the rabbinate at Mys after him, preserving the tradition of Torah and greatness, righteousness and the doing of good deeds.

And also, the persona of the Rabbi *Gaon* Rabbi Eliezer Yehuda Epstein זצ"ל, was etched into the hearts of the people of the community, and much has been told of his great Torah scholarship, his wisdom, perceptiveness and acuity. His stalwart appearance, along with his zeal for truth and faith, cemented a place for him as an enchanting leader of great influence, and his name is recalled with the reverence of respect, and with great honor.

From time to time, as you are drawn to the old, ancient cemetery at Mys, to that forest of headstones, with the mausoleums of the Tzaddikim that have been scattered about the forest, and covered by the growth around them, and you are enveloped by their mysterious experiences: the writing on the stones bear witness to the passing of generations, and the appearance of worlds, the world of the living and the dead, the past and the present. A world deeply rooted in the earth of Mys, whose tendrils reached the earth of Baranovich, and nourished the new settlement.

The *Tzaddik* Rabbi Yekhiel of Mys

He had the appearance of a truly ethereal person. A holy man, a great scholar of Torah and *Hasidim*, and Esoterica, this was the *Tzaddik*, R' Yekhiel of Mys, when he appeared as a redeeming angel, to the members of his community. It was with awe of respect and in a trembling before his holiness, that the elders would tell of his intellectual prowess and miracles. But also with love and respect, as the master of tradition and a faithful shepherd to his flock, he was thoroughly suffused with a love of Israel. He carried the message of Hasidism, its lore, and its mission with the ardor of an intense fire, in our area.



Page 220: ***The Headstone of the Tzaddik Rabbi Yekhiel in the Old Cemetery at Mys***

It was on wintry nights, when the falling snow howled about outside, and it seemed as if all the forces of nature had united to destroy the world, returning it to the state where it was void and without form, we, the children in the *Heder*, were crowded around like sheep at the foot of the shepherd, our teacher, R' Abraham Pinchas ז"ל, who, by a flickering and dying flame, would tells us of the tribulations of the Jewish people, the darkness of the bitter Diaspora existence, and the sorrow of the Holy Spirit. A deep silence pervaded the *Heder*. Transfixed, we absorbed these things.

The Rebbe would sigh, reinvigorate himself, and say: It is a great miracle, that from heaven, they send an elevated soul to us, that will illuminate the darkness and show the way to a humanity made of clay. From this point on, he would extol the virtues of the Tzaddik, Rabbi Yekhiel, who was sanctified from the time of his mother's womb, and even as a child, was revealed to have advanced talents. And even if he was sunken in those elevated worlds, he would delve deeply in his research, and show many facets to the Torah, to the point that the Rabbis in the vicinity would tremble before him, when they would come in contact with him, in negotiations involving Halakha, and in questions and responses. He did not turn a blind eye to the plight of the living, and was even quick to deal even with the sorrows of the dumb animals.

While still a little boy, he spared no effort to take not of the thirst of chickens, who pecked on the surface of the ice that covered the puddles of water in the winter, and he would run ahead of them, breaking open the ice.

A poor Jewish family lived in his neighborhood, a wagon driver, with many children. On one occasion, the horse from which they derived their sustenance fell sick, and all of the efforts to save its life did not succeed. and he began to die. The poor family gathered around it, and wept over the loss of their source of income, but to no avail. When the young lads saw the distress of the family, he stood up on his feet, and prayed for the entire night with treble tears, and did not move or step away from the place, until his prayer was accepted in heaven, and mercy was shown. With the coming of the dawn, the horse began to recuperate from the crisis it had gone through – and stood on its legs.

Loyal to the principle that no incident is random, Rabbi Yekhiel would always attempt to uncover the traces of hidden implications in any occurrence, and its meaning. On once occasion, he went out into the Mys marketplace, and he said to the merchants and storekeepers: 'Beware of the following types of merchandise!' Afterwards, the troops of the local authorities came and searched for this specific merchandise, which the government needed, in order to confiscate it. Since they didn't find it, they went back the way they came. Towards evening, the people of the town came together at the Bet HaMedrash, and when Rabbi Yekhiel detected their emotions, he nodded to them and said: You undoubtedly think that this is a matter of the Holy Spirit. God forbid! Not in the least, or in any way! Simply, at night, I had a dream about the goods, and in the morning, my thoughts of this hounded me, as I was learning, and afterwards, they continued to stay with me during my prayers. In my heart I said: I am no merchant, and I do not buy and sell – if that is the case, what is this all about? There must be something to this... so I seized on the hint, that I was to act in this area somehow, for the good of my community, and I did so.

He exhibited a paternal concern in all times when he looked after the welfare of his community. With concern, he would escort the Jews who went out to their business, along perilous roads, and would encourage them to come and take leave of him. On time, a group of Jews, pressed for time, did not stop by to take their leave of Rabbi Yekhiel. On their way, they fell into difficulties and dangers, and in their extreme circumstances, prayed that the virtue of Rabbi Yekhiel serve to shield them and stand as a bulwark against all evil. After they returned, the Tzaddik reproved them, and said: Fools that you are, what difference does it make for you to spare a minute to approach me, and I would bless you, and pray for you all the time.

He never stood apart from nature, and never dismissed even the smallest detail from his thoughts. One time, during the Days of Awe, a time when the community was seized with a fear and trembling in anticipation of Divine Judgement, and Rabbi Yekhiel would be thinking thoughts, unite that which is separate, and plead for the members of his community, he was suddenly taken aback – when reaching the blowing of the shofar – when he spied, through the window of the synagogue, that a pig was rooting in the vegetable garden. Before his eyes, the image formed of the battle between good and evil, between the pig -- the symbol of gross uncleanliness – and the growing vegetables growing by the help of heavenly dew and the labor of man – the symbol of purity. He immediately stopped and said: I cannot begin the order of the blowing of the ram's horn unless the pig is removed from the garden. And the Hasidim who understood him only in a literal sense though that the Rabbi was not able to stand the fact that he would cause even a cent's worth of damage to anyone, because of the focus of the community on its prayers, and for this reason, he stopped in the middle in order to avoid such damage.

From time to time, in the *shtibl* of the Kaidanov *Hasidim,* there sat a wondrous old man behind the stove, about one hundred years old, named R' Leibusz'keh the Scribe. It was said, that he reached this remarkable old age because of the blessing of the *Tzaddik*, Rabbi Yekhiel, and when the youngsters would coax the old

man to tell them what the *Tzaddik* said to him, he would rise, pick up his hands and tell them how – as a boy who had reached Bar Mitzvah age, he grew a tuft of wild hair, and when Rabbi Yekhiel saw this uncontrolled growth, it asked for it to be cut off. The boy fulfilled this request, and after taking a haircut, presented himself and said: '*Rebbe,* I did as you requested...!' The mind of the *Tzaddik* was put at ease, and he said: 'Because of this, that you shortened your hair, God will lengthen your years." Upon telling his story, the old man would sigh, and say: 'I was just a boy, and I did not understand how hard life can be, and it never occurred to me to ask him to bless me with good years.' Years went by, wars, plagues, and tribulations – and the old man held on, and his son, Yekhiel Moshe the wagon driver would say: 'My father has nothing to worry about, nothing bad will ever happen to him, even a bullet will not wound him. The blessing of the *Tzaddik* stands by him.'

And so the stories and legends about the person of Rabbi Yekhiel grew, which the remnants of the Hasidim and the elders would weave out of their memories. The acme of enthusiasm would be achieved in the telling of the meeting during the holiday of Shavuot, in Mys, between two great men: The Rabbi R' Moshe of Kobrin, the father of Slonim *Hasidism*, and the *Tzaddik*, Rabbi Yekhiel. 'What can be said – they would call out in the high intensity of enthusiasm – we had the feeling as if we had been privileged, once again, to be present at the Giving of the Law at Sinai, with thunder and lightning. It was as if the ground under us was shaking, and burning under our feet, an a fire was rolling about without' – they would exclaim and sigh, with eyes shut, as if they were guarding the very flame of holiness with their lives.

Rabbi Yekhiel died on the Fast Day of the Tenth of Tevet 5612 (1860), and the anniversary of his passing is a special day of observance to the *Hasidim*, who made a pilgrimage to his grave, year in and year out – up until the Holocaust.

Addenda

The elderly Rabbi Yitzhak (Izzie) Szklar from Mys – currently in the United States – tells: "Rabbi Yekhiel was a Man of God, and the stories of his miraculous deeds abound. Among the rest, there remained in our area a story of a dybbuk that possessed a woman from Stalovičy, and he exorcized it. R' Shlomo Israel's, who was 14 years old then, was present at the event. I heard this story from his son, a Jew of about seventy years of age, who heard it from his father, telling it with loyalty and complete faith as a truth that cannot be challenged or treated skeptically.'

The elderly R' Pesach Zabludowsky from Stalovičy (an octogenarian, today in the United States) adds details that he heard from his grandfather. The son of the grain miller in Stalovičy pursued the daughter of a rich man in the town. The father of the girl dis not look upon this with a favorable eye, but he did not have the nerve to oppose this, since he was fearful of the miller, about whom it was bruited about that he was a 'sorcerer' and that he had dealings with devils and spirits.

In time, the miller was killed during the course of his work; he was ground up between the millstones, and even this incident was interpreted as some sort of revenge taken by the spirits. The man was given an ignominious burial, outside of the normal boundary of the local cemetery. After this incident, the father forbade his daughter to see the young man. As a reaction to this, the spirit of the dead man entered the daughter, oppressing her and disturbing her tranquility.

The despondent father called out to the Rabbi of Mys, Rabbi Yekhiel, who came to the place, and sent a minyan of Jews to the cemetery to invite the spirit of the dead man to a *Din Torah*.[69] In the courtroom, a linen separating curtain was set up under the direction of the Rabbi. The elders told that on that day, during the Din Torah, a storm erupted, the likes of which had never occurred before, and despite this, the presence of the deceased could be sensed, and they heard the whisperings from the other side of the partition, and how Rabbi Yekhiel charges the dybbuk to leave the girl and return to his rest. And because of this, he did leave her, and her condition eased. They tell that before the publication of his famous play, [sic: Sholom] Ansky researched the vision of a dybbuk from all of the sources, and even took an interest in the excerpt from this 'awesome event' which was documented in the *Pinkas* of the Sacred Congregation of Stalovičy.

The elderly R' Yitzhak Szklar continues and tells: On one occasion, there was a need for repair in the Mys synagogue, and to this end, several gentile and one Jewish wagon drivers were hired, for hauling of sand to fill in the floor. It was Friday. R' Yekhiel was about to go to the baths, when he noticed the Jewish wagon driver, whose name was Chaim, and called to him, to come and enter his house, and wait there until her returned. In about an hour, R' Yekhiel returned from the mikva and said: Now you can go, Chaim! This matter raised the ire of the poor Jew, and he was angry because he had missed out on earning two gulden, but he held his temper – and kept silent. When he reached the sand pile on the Slonim *Gasse,* beside the windmill, he saw, in wonderment how a plug of earth had been pulled out of the pile, and buried his working companion, the gentile wagon driver – and it was then that Chaim grasped the meaning of the strange order given to him by the *Tzaddik*.

From the Sources

It is written about Rabbi Yekhiel, the *Bet-Din* Senior of Mys, in the book '*The Light of the Righteous*' (author: Moshe Chaim Kleinman from Brisk in Lithuania, one of the outstanding of the Slonim *Hasidim*) in the following way: 'The renowned *Gaon*, a shining light, a treasure of Torah and fear of God, having double the amount of spirit, known for his Torah knowledge and study among all Judah. There is no measure of his holiness, and no bound to his greatness. He was renown to all of his people as a man of holy spirit and a miracle worker. There was a great deal of wondrous things to tell about him while he was yet alive; they multiplied and grew without number. He conducted himself with sanctity for his whole life, while abstaining from divisiveness, and all of this was done with modesty and discreetly.'

The Holy Rabbi, lover of Israel, Our Teacher, the Rabbi *Gaon* R' Moshe of Kobrin נ"ע accorded him great respect, because every year, he would come from his city, to the place of the residence of his tabernacle, to celebrate the *Shavuot* festival, the time of the giving of The Law, to be with him in the same place, and said: If there only were another nine like him in the world – then the Messiah would come: were he one of the *Hasidim* of Ljahavičy (the renown pupil of the holy grandfather Rabbi Mordechai) he would shake up the whole world with his scholarship and genius, by all of his matters were kept in secret. He would pray, and recite Kiddush, and say: '*Asher Yatzar*' – all from the prayer book, word by word, in a whisper, line a sinful man, revealing no movement, and was a man of holy spirit.

He guided his community in the city of Mys with wisdom and an understanding of all aspects of the Torah and its observance, and everything large and small was not done without his cognizance, rather everything

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[69] A religious rabbinical court.

by posing a question to him, like to the *Urim*[70], and everything uttered from his holy mouth – that was the way it was done. Everyone feared his utterances as if they were fiery coals. He served as the Sitting Rabbi in Mys for about forty years, and during this entire time there was no outbreak of cholera, and there was no conflagration in the town. He died and was gathered to his ancestors as an old man, full in his years, at the age of eighty-two, on the Tenth of Tevet 5612 (1860), 'In the secrecy of the Holy and ??" Up until here, these are the words of the previously mentioned book 'Light of the Righteous.'

Rabbi Moshe Zinowicz says: Regarding the greatness of R' Yekhiel, the Bet-Din Senior of Novy Mys, we find, in the book '*Wings of the Dawn*' (Piotrkow 5695) to his relative Rabbi Dov Ber Eisenstadt, the Bet-Din Senior of Lisokovo, Knyszyn, Mosty' Goniondz[71], and at the end of his days in Ljahaviči, the following sentence: 'to the memory of my sainted and pure uncle, the Rabbi Gaon, of renown, acute of mind and thoroughly accomplished in study, a mover and shaker, a Tzaddik and Hasid, modesty being his hallmark, a godly man, with the entirety of the people responding to him from one holy thing to the next, an effacing man with the modesty of Hillel, a great Torah scholar and doer of good deeds, Out Teacher and Rabbi R' Yekhiel זצוק"ל.
May he rest in the hidden places on high, the *Bet-Din* Senior of Novy Mys for more than forty years, earing the just reward of an esoteric lawgiver. And he did not leave any issue, but he left behind many innovative interpretations of the Torah.'

The author of this book, who was himself a Rabbi and scholar of repute, bears witness to this in his composition '*Wings of the Dawn*,' referenced above, that contains his own responsa, and innovations in Torah interpretation, introducing some of the innovative interpretations of the lore of R' Yekhiel (symbol 12) regarding the tractate of Shabbat – 25, regarding the matter of 'Satin in Fringes.'

And possibly, R' Yekhiel, the *Bet-Din* Senior of Novy Mys was related to the renown Eisenstadt family, like his relative the previously mentioned R' David Ber, who affiliates himself with this great tree, of the Gaon Rabbi Meir ben R' Yitzhak, the Bet-Din Senior Eisenstadt, the author of '*Shining Visages*.'

The Rabbi R' Yaakov Moshe Chafetz of Mys, and His Descendants – Successors

The Rabbi and *Tzaddik* Rabbi Moshe Chafetz זצ"ל was born in 5579 (1819) and had previously been the *Bet-Din* Senior of Staloviči, and afterwards in Novy Mys. A great Torah scholar, trained in the *Kabbalah*, and thought to be a miracle worker. We find his responsa in '*The Brook of Yitzhak*' to the *Gaon* R' Isaac Elchanan [Spector], the *Bet-Din* Senior of Kovno. His innovations in Torah study are found in his two books: '*The House of David*,' and '*David's Legacy*,' written by the *Gaon* Rabbi David Tebele[72], the Rabbi of Minsk, who had a high regard for his opinion on Torah matters.

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70 Reference to the *Urim* and *Thummim*, the breastplate of the High Priest, used to consult with the Divine Presence.

71 Goniądz, in Polish

72 Rabbi David ben Moshe Tebele (d. 1861)

He passed away in the year 5639 (1879) and in '*HaTzefira*' (1879, No. 16) it was said of him: 'The Rabbi *Gaon*, and Miracle Worker.' The writer notes that two Rabbis eulogized him, [one] from Palonka (most certainly referring to the Rabbi R' Pinchas Rozowsky, afterwards the *Bet-Din* Senior of Švenčionys[73], and the Rabbi of Ljahaviči – for is that not Rabbi Dov Ber Eisenstadt, the author of 'The Wings of Dawn' – Piotrkow 5695), close by to Novy Mys.

In 5620 (1860), his son was born, Israel Yehonatan, who heard the Torah from his mouth, during his childhood in Novy Mys. As a young man, he studied at Yeshivas in Israel, and even in the renown Yeshiva at Volozhin. As a wife, he took the daughter of the Gaon, Rabbi Yaakov David [Wilovsky], the *Bet-Din* Senior of Sluck (The Ridba"z). In 5652 (1892) he was accepted as the *Bet-Din* Senior of Orlowa, and in 5665 (1905) to Igumen[74]. He was not only a great scholar, but also a respected scribe, and had quite a reputation among the sages of Jewry.

In '*The People*' (Moscow), from 1917 (Page 24, 3 Menachem Av 5677) we read: 19 Elul 5677, R' Israel Yehonatan passed away, the *Bet-Din* Senior of Igumen. He was 57 years of age. Apart from his greatness in Torah, and his fluency with the Talmud and the *Rishonim*, and *Akharonim* – he was a man of good temperament and an outstanding philanthropist, knowledgeable in both ancient and modern literature, knowing Russian, Polish and German very well. His essays, '*Torah from Zion*,' and '*The Vineyard*' are renown, in connection with the Babylonian [Talmud] (See '*HaYerushalmi*' and the essay '*Halakhic Research*' under his signature of '*A Man of Jerusalem*' in the volume previously mentioned). He was an important student of the Headmaster of Volozhin. He was sick for the last ten years of his life. He was the Rabbi of Igumen for 15 years. A rabbinical letter was sent to his son-in-law R' Chaim Garber who was however in Vilna, and we are awaiting his arrival.

A son-in-law of R' Israel Yehonatan was Rabbi Yekhezkiel Avramsky, the *Bet-Din* Senior of Shmulewicz and Sluck, and the Rabbi and *Bet-Din* Senior for the London community. The author of '*Yekhezkiel's Vision*' regarding the *Tosefta* (his son was the well known author Yaakov David Avramsky, a citizen of Jerusalem and one of the old-time Zionists) today in Jerusalem. (R' Moshe Tzinowicz).

Rabbi R' Yitzhak Yaakov Woronowsky, *Bet-Din* Senior of Novy Mys

On the evening of 23 Tevet 5664 (1904), the young Rabbi and Bet-Din Senior of Novy Mys passed away, the Rabbi Gaon R' Yitzhak Yaakov Woronowsky זצ"ל during the 61st year of his life. About five thousand people followed after his bier. The rabbis of the surrounding towns eulogized him, who came to pay their final respects.

The deceased was a legacy of an older generation and stood out in his advanced virtues. Apart from his considerable Torah scholarship, he was a righteous Tzaddik. His heart was ever alert to every possible act of charity and good will. His heart was – a warm heart, full of feeling, loving and empathizing. We mourn the island adrift without a land!

('*HaTzofeh*', February 1904, Page 328)

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73 In Lithuania, 75 km NE of Vilna

74 A town 61 km ESE of Minsk, whose name was changed to Cherven' (Czerwien) in 1920.

R' Natan Neta Cantor, & Ritual Slaughterer of Mys

R' Natan Neta was known in Mys as a great scholar, and enlightened man, perceptive and a generous donor.

The elderly R' Yitzhak Szklar tells: The wife of R' Natan Neta served her husband faithfully, in order to permit her husband to focus on the study of Torah and its service, without worry. She especially was diligent in the preparations for Sabbath eve, when he would return from the synagogue in the morning, having Sabbath delicacies, which he would then sequester, and turn over to Leib'eh the Water Carrier.

Once, his wife caught him 'up to his tricks' and threatened not to prepare his Sabbath meals anymore. R' Neta heard out her complaints, and said that he wanted to conduct a Din Torah and that she, his wife, should judge who should receive the piece of Challah and the slice of meat, and if it was to him, her husband, on the hour when he comes home, he is due his evening meal, a lit room, in order, a made bed, etc. – things that Leib'eh the Water Carrier does not have, while he freezes all day long, dragging around his pails of water, slogging through the mud and slop in his torn shoes, his house a mess, and his meal, spoiled bread.

In hearing his explanations, the complaints of the woman were halted, and she accepted his ruling with love.

In the 'HaTzefira' of 9 Nissan 5656 (1896, Page 60), we read: 'From the city of Novy Mys, R' Yitzhak Yaakov Lev writes: On Saturday night, on the 2nd of Adar, the Cantor and Ritual Slaughterer R' Joseph Natan Neta passed away, and was gathered unto his ancestors, the son of the *Gaon* of Novogrudok, and author of the book, 'Shema Yaakov' at the age of 73.

The deceased served in his capacity for about forty years. Respected and beloved by everyone: for his fear of God, and his important deeds, and his noble traits, his knowledge of Torah, his enlightenment, and above all these – his untrammeled love for all men. All of his work and effort was to improve their lot, his house being open to its widest for every poor person, and a person in difficulty, feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked.

On the following day, the entire community assembled, children and women, and escorted his remains from the Great *Bet HaMedrash* to his final resting place, and the Rabbi *Gaon* Of Stalovičy gave a heartfelt, bitter, eulogy at which the entire assembly shed tears copiously. The city was also sensitive to the hearts of his only daughter and sone, who survived the Tzaddik, and after he was escorted to his final rest, all of the *balebatim* paid their last respects. and committed themselves to award the position of Cantor and Ritual Slaughterer to a n unmarried young man, so that he could extend his aegis to protect the daughter of the deceased זצ"ל, may his virtue guard them, and may God reward them in accordance with their righteousness, and guide their hands to do the right thing by the deceased and the living together.'

From the Remnants of the Last of the Mys Elders

The images of the remnants of the Mys elders rise in my memory like shadows.

Here is the tragic figure of Rabbi R' Abraham Miskin ז"ל who died as a young man. The last Rabbi of the town, and the Headmaster of the Yeshiva '*Torah Hesed*' in Baranovich. A scholar of good heart, warm spirit, grace and humor. It was a pleasant experience for the students of the Yeshiva on Saturday nights, at the hour in which he would test them on their weekly Talmud lessons. Because of his enchanting personality, even this difficult examination became a lesson of Torah study with great affection and warmth. His joy and the vitality of life would leave him at the time that he would have to arrange for a divorce. As is known,

Baranovich had no river, and all divorces were performed in Mys. Influenced by the saying of the Ancient Sages: 'Everyone who divorces his wife, even has the altar shed tears on him,' he would exert himself with all of his might to reconcile the separated couple, and in the event that he did not succeed, he would don a somber appearance – and the day of the divorce was a day of reckoning to him.

The elder R' Abraham Foxman was the pillar of conciliation, a wondrous scholar, a man of strong personality, perceptive and wondrous in his command of Torah and *Hasidism*, an expert in *Kabbalah*, and revered by all of the *Hasidic* men, and his opinion was the deciding one.

In the nicety of the Sabbath, before my eyes, appears the image of Rabbi Yekhiel Moshe Hadavad (Kottler). It is difficult to describe this noble and refined Jewish man, who possessed the attributes of a Tzaddik, overcoming the skills of this writer. He was constantly rehearsing his learning, even while he was working, reciting Psalms and the *Mishna*. When the Hasid R' Abraham Pinchas arrived at the home of R' Yekhiel Moshe, as a son-in-law, the Rabbi of Slonim ז"ל said to him: You know how to learn, but he is a scholar, and you have a great deal to learn from him.'

The '*Baal Tefilah*,' R' Yaakov Moshe led prayer in a very pleasant fashion, who was much beloved by the congregation for the grace with which he led services. Every one of his words were thirstily absorbed, and they would respond to him with great emotion. Under his influence, fountains of the soul were opened up and well springs of tears. In old age, his eyesight failed, and he would lead services by heart, and those that stood near him would, from time-to-time, hear interstitial prayers of his own in Yiddish:

> 'Master of the Universe! Not in honor of the large congregation, not in honor of the Rabbi, and not in honor of the many distinguished guests, but only in Your Honor, do I pray. Help me serve you in truth and faith.'

The elder Rabbi Abraham Yaakov Kushnir would comport himself, with the smile of a skeptic, among the *Hasidim*, and offer acute opinions and sharp sayings. But when it came to prayer, he would shed all of his critical demeanor, and everything he said was suffused with loyalty and ardor. And it was a wonder, from whence such an ardor was derived, in such and elderly and senescent person like him.

Here and there, there were many types of personality, but the common denominator among them was: a dedication to truth, and severe self-criticism, a strong faith, and a straight heart, modesty and self-effacement, dedication to prayer, ands doing good deeds, as clandestine men of righteousness.

The House of My Grandfather

Out of the dark clouds of my childhood memories, the figure of my straight and humble grandfather rises before me, R' Yitzhak the *Gabbai* from Mys. His old house, the first built in the heart of the forest, before there was a settlement there, and his stories about those first days, the time the howling of the wolves rent the night air – added color to the air of isolation. The soul of a child trembles from the threat of danger. In time, I learned to distinguish between my grandfather's luck, who was one of the pioneers of the new Jewish settlement, who confidently built his house and felt himself at ease among the animals of the forest, and the the misfortune of parents, who were fodder to the beasts who prey upon men....

A God-fearing *Hasid*, a man of energy and much activity – that was my grandfather. In his time, physical strength, and spiritual temerity, was required of a Jew, who was the *Gabbai* and living spirit of the *Hasidic* place of worship in Mys, to go out on his own, and build his house in the thick of the forest, far from Jews, and alone among gentiles, The strong sense of self support, the appearance of a newborn, and the fear of the

flagging economic circumstances of Mys at that time, and the hidden, but good prospects of a new place – these were the things that counted for him.

My grandfather passed away while I was still a very young child. Despite this, I managed to learn from him a little, and listen to him a lot. I will repeat one story. Once, during the formative days of the settlement, when a minyan of the spread out Jews had assembled on the broad area for Sabbath Eve prayers, My grandfather looked after a neighboring Jew who was under emotional distress. He immediately took an interest in his unique situation, and became aware, that he had lost all his money in his business affairs, and remained with his family, bare, and without anything.

My grandfather could not sleep that entire night. The fate of this man, and his distress, and the desire to help, all drove away his peace of mind. With the coming of dawn, an idea sparked in his mind: at the nearby inn, closed for the Sabbath, on his way, he knew a forest products merchant who was a Jew: perhaps it might be worth visiting him, and having a talk? No sooner said than done. He speedily dressed in his Sabbath finery, and headed for the inn. My grandfather knew the forest products merchant to be a miserly sort, and if he approached him directly with the issue, he might suspect that he had some interest in the 'favor' being asked of him, and the reply will be negative. Accordingly, he approached the issue indirectly. The merchant was pleased that a person knowledgeable in business had decided to visit, thoroughly familiar with the local conditions, and invited him to take a walk in the woods. During the walk, my grandfather presented him with all manner of business propositions. The merchant agreed to all of my grandfather's proposals, but what? He is concerned that he does not know anyone in the area on whom he can depend. 'This is not a deterrent – my grandfather elucidated – I have the capacity to provide an appropriate individual on whom you can depend.' 'Very Good! The merchant called out – I agree, send him to me after the Sabbath, and we will immediately begin the business.'

The success was 'in accordance with the plan,' and the matter came out for the best, even if the 'commercial' discussion caused my grandfather aggravation. He, for whom all of his Sabbaths were dedicated to prayer, felt like he had violated the tenets of the day. Upon his return, he calmed down, and prayed in inspiration, and felt the essence of the Sabbath as he had never felt it before.

Afterwards, when he came to the *Rebbe* in Slonim, and told him about this, the *Rebbe* said: You have touched the center of sacrifice. Generally speaking, when one speaks of dedication, one thinks of physical dedication only. In fact, the intent is for both as one, body and spirit, especially in those things that impinge on the soul, and even to the essence of a man's soul, in which there are times when they need to be sacrificed for a higher purpose entirely. It is all the more so, seeing that this matter entails the survival of an individual, if not an entire family among Jewry. We have learned this from Our Teachers זי"ל, in which to do a 'good deed' for a Jew, it is necessary to even go up to the neck in muck...

My grandfather was a man who walked a straight line. Once, he was walking somewhere, in the dead of night, by way of the fields. He attempted to smoke a cigarette, and when he lit the match, he turned against the wind, and unwittingly continued to walk in a different direction; and instead of coming to his house, he ended up in a strange village, and at a far distance.

This detail – guided his whole life. At every circumstantial turn, in the course of a person's life, it is possible for an error to occur, leading to a change in direction and goal.

My Father's House

My father's house was suffused with Torah and *Hasidim*, the wisdom of life, and a love of Israel. My Father and Teacher, R' Moshe Abraham Berezovsky ז"ל, was a fundamental person. From his youth onwards, he stood out with his many intellectual skills and in his focus, his perceptiveness and extreme honesty. He was active in community life, and worked faithfully for the good of the community. For many years, he was elected as the officer of the Committee of the Jewish Community, and for a specific period, he served as its Chairman. As an expert in forestry, he conducted various businesses throughout the breadth of Russia and Poland, and gained much life experience and knowledge of the world. He excelled as an arbitrator and an expert conciliator – from disputes between international groups of forest merchants to the installation of peace between one man and another, and a man and his wife.



Page 227: ***R' Moshe Abraham Berezovsky***

But all of this is beside the point, the essential point was: his desire to unite and enter himself about Torah and Hasidim, dedication to God's work in all ways and deeds. In his many travels and wandering, he accumulated hundreds of valuable books, and he would delve into them constantly. In his dealings with, and conduct towards, other people, he always tried to get into the essence of the issues, and to the spirit of the deeds, and those doing them. He raised generations with his spirit, however, because of the fragmentation of the issues, and the lack of conditions, he wasted his talents. In a very large measure, he distributed his bread to the hungry, from his heart to the suffering, and from his knowledge to the perplexed, and constantly stood vigilant to assure that every penny of profit not be contaminated with deception, or anything else inappropriate.

In my father's house, I learned, among other things, to recognize the aristocratic personality of the forest merchants of that time. These Jews were scholars, and enlightened men, community activists, and Lovers of Zion. they brought the scent of the forest to their people, from wide fields and valleys, a broadening of knowledge, and a charitable heart and spirit.

To His Memory

The everyday conversations of my father were replete with humor, insights, and fundamental concepts. He was a veritable treasure chest of life's wisdom, and the understanding of the human condition was to be found in his words.

I asked him once about a specific individual, why was he so quarrelsome?

'Because he is not a man of learning – were he to delve into a book, and learn to apprehend ideas more sophisticated than his own, he would realize the limitations of his own worth, which is not the case, since he goes about the marketplace encountering people like himself, or less than himself, and he consequently thinks of himself as an advanced person.'

'This person gives the impression that he is very diligent' – I once remarked about some individual.

'Fundamentally, he is indolent by nature –my father enlightened me – he does not suffer the yoke of work, and the burden of responsibility, and makes every effort to slough them off. That is why there is never any peace in his undertakings.'

Hasidim & Mitnagdim

By my time, the disputations between *Hasidim* and *Mitnagdim* had subsided, but the struggle for dominance and control, and its influence continued, and the difference in approach and personality remained standing. The Mitnagdim made their peace with the presence of the Hasidim, and related to them as a fact of life that was not going to be uprooted. These relationships served as a basis for confrontation, a subject for discussions, and material for folklore. And there were times, when in the middle of a conversation, a *Hasid* of strong opinion might emotionally call out: 'I am unable to explain to you, and you are not capable of understanding anyway!' And to this, the more cerebral *Mitnaged* would reply: '[You have] no concept – no understanding'...

The *Hasid* was a romantic type, by nature, and always lived in a state of readiness and hope. He would be particularly enchanted by hope and striving for a goal, which were an end unto themselves, while the *Mitnaged*, ever the realist, was inclined to accept things as they were out of a sense of contact with reality.

These differences in temperament aroused confrontation and heated friction. I once heard, from an elderly *Hasid,* a discussion of how a *Hasid* and a *Mitnaged* come to the Next World.

– What did you do during your life? – the Hasid is asked.

– Stumbling over his words, he answers, I, for all the days of my life, dedicated myself and set myself apart, to do God's work, preparing myself in the antechamber in order to enter the hall, but to the point that, because of so much preparation, I did not manage to do anything.

– to Torah, prayer, good deeds – these are the points of diligence for a Hasid – to fulfill his commitment to Hasidism during his life.

– And what did you do during your lifetime? – the *Mitnaged* is asked.

I, – he answers – I knew that the Torah was longer than the length of the land, and wider than the sea, and its mitzvot profuse in number, like the sand at the seashore, and that life is short, like a dream, and because of this, I rushed to fulfill the maxim 'grab what you can, and consume it' and so I sped to the study of Torah, to prayer and good deeds, such that I was unable to attend to the most basic of human needs.

– It is also incumbent upon you to complete that which you missed in life, and attend to your human needs... this is how they rule in the heavenly court.

Regarding Judaism in Baranovich

One of the characteristic aspects of Jewish community life in Baranovich, was the zealously cooperative endeavor between the observant and the non-observant in the community, in all of the community institutions. This undertaking was suffused with the spirit of commitment to the common good, being concerned for its needs, and its fate. In general, relations in community affairs were characterized by tolerance, understanding, and mutual help (an apt example: the 'Talmud Torah' of Baranovich was not given a license to operate for a specific period by the Polish regime, because it could not conform to its requirements, such as: the establishment of a secular curriculum, big classrooms, and others – and all the other schools, religious or secular, contributed part of their government budget allocations to keep it going).

This lesson, is rooted in the broad grasp of the concepts of 'love of Israel' and the 'unity of Israel' – the fruits of the influence of the Rabbis and religious leaders in Baranovich. The Talmudic maxim: 'Israel, even if it has sinned, is nevertheless, Israel,' served as the stabilizing point, and *Hasidism* taught them to value every sacred spark in the human soul.

It is worth recollecting these word at this time:

It is a tale of the Rabbi *Tzaddik* R' Aharon Ferlaub זצ"ל, the Chief Rabbi of Kaidanov, who had come once to Baranovich during its early days, and visited with a group of his Hasidim in the city. During his walks, he stopped beside the synagogue of the Zionists (*Chitalniya*) that had been built at that time; he took note of the modern architecture of the building, at the decorated ceiling, and was wonderstruck by the quality of the building and its worshipers.

– Judaism (Observance) of three days a year (*Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur*) – the city has one *Hasid.*

– It would appear that every prayer of theirs goes on high dearly – the city (in irony), a different *Hasid.*

The *Rebbe* was sunk in his thoughts, and afterwards aroused himself and reacted:

– It is not possible to say this. It is said 'He responds to those who call to Him on the Day of Judgement.' The Holy One, Blessed Be He does not disparage the prayers of Israel, and will respond even to the entreaties of a single person that calls to Him, once a year, on the Day of Judgement.

A similar reaction came from R' Moshe Midner in the matter of those congregations that are separated (see 'R' Moshe Midner').

It was in this spirit that the activists among the Hasidim, and their officers, worked in our city. They strove to achieve a positive unity. The worked hard, and found it.

Craftsmen – Lofty Folk

In the community life of Baranovich, as a city of building and art, the seasoned craftsmen occupied an important position. They were an active driving force in the community. From their ranks, came the hard workers and activists who founded institutions and programs, and from them the members of the various *Shas* study groups, the study of *Mishna* and *Eyn Yaakov*, the men who would read the Torah, lead prayer, and other things. It is not by chance that their *Bet HaMedrash*, '*Poalei Tzedek*' was central to the study of Torah and community work in our city.

The craftsmen occupied a special place among the *Hasidim.*

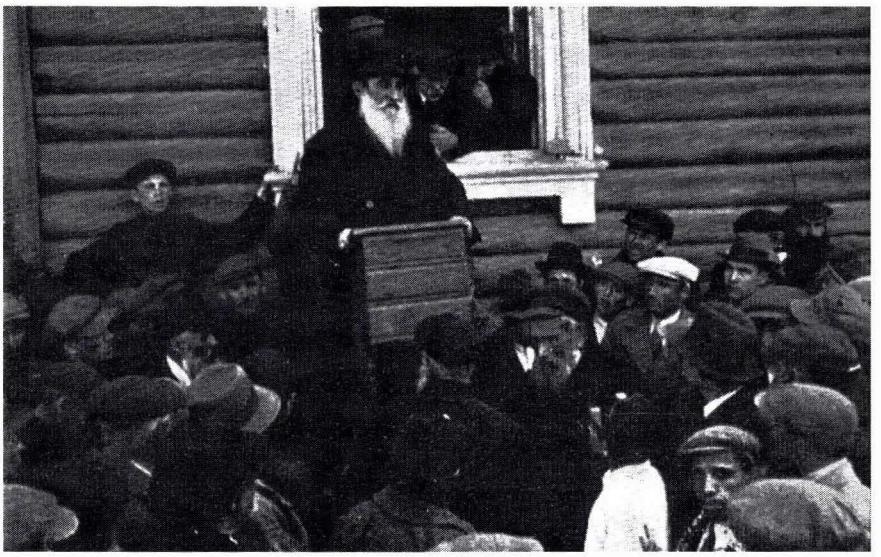


Page 231/232: ***The 'Shtibl' of the Slonim Hasidim in Baranovich***

The elderly Chief Rabbi of Slonim, R' Shmuel זצ"ל, saw, in work, a foundation for the economic basis , the spiritual and traditional basis, for the human being. He excelled in productivity, and even dreamt of founding schools and Yeshivas combining Torah study with the trades. This concept was more than revolutionary in that time, and he did not have the temerity to try and implement it. However, he did influence many of his Hasidim tp study a trade, and acquire a professional skill. A result of this was that almost all of the boiler makers, and most of the locksmiths, and a large part of the accountants, bookkeepers, and independent trades – were *Hasidim*.

And there were lofty folk among them, for example, R' Abraham the Baker, a very sharp scholar, and one who gave a lesson in *Talmud* study in the *shtibl* of the Slonim *Hasidim*, a person profound in Hasidim, and an advanced thinker – an autodidact in higher mathematics (See: R' Abraham the Baker in this book).

Another example is R' Moshe Aharon the Smith (*Moshe Aharon der Schmid*), who concerned himself with assuring that his sons learn Torah and a trade: His son R' Yitzhak הי"ד stood out among the young cohort of *Hasidim*, a lovely man, and very much accepted by Rabbi Moshe Midner זצ"ל and to the Chief Rabbi R' Abraham זצ"ל. And, separated for long life, the son, R' Abraham Yehoshua (A boiler maker by trade – now in Israel), a sterling scholar, and the son R' Yaakov (he also is now in Israel), a locksmith by trade, who for a period of time served as a Rabbi and the Headmaster of a Yeshiva.



Page 229/230: ***The East Wall of the Great Bet HaMedrash in Baranovich, with the Rabbi, R' David Weitzel Giving a Eulogy***

And there are many examples of the compatibility of Torah study and work.

The Study Houses in Baranovich

The study houses in Baranovich were built to conform to the development of the city, from the north and west, to the north and east in length, and also in line with its spread to the south and east in breadth.

The first *Bet HaMedrash*, that was built by the innkeeper Shy'keh Baranovicher, had the name 'Shy'keh's *Bet HaMedrash*,' and was a center to the new Jewish settlement that lived around the railroad station, and the inn that served the Jews in the forest, that settled on the other side of the railroad tracks, and to itinerant travelers passing through.

With the growth of the Jewish community in the forest, on the other side of the railroad tracks, the 'Old *Bet HaMedrash*' was built. The original Gabbaim were originally R' Yitzhak Berezovsky, and afterwards R'

Hirsch Cyryner. The worshipers at the *Bet HaMedrash*, both *Hasidim* and *Mitnagdim*, were gathered together, but were not forcibly held in place, and with the passage of time, a serious dispute arose over the style of prayer: shall it follow the Ashkenazic or Sephardic tradition? A committee of Rabbis, that was called to arbitrate and rule on this matter – 'after many deliberations' ruled in favor of the Ashkenazic style, and set a monetary fine to be levied against anyone conducting prayer, in the Sephardic style, in front of the Holy Ark. Many years later, when the ties between the worshipers, and their ardor for the *Bet HaMedrash* had waned, the elders among the Mitnagdim concerned themselves more wit the social content that will attract people, and introduced Hasidic aspects into the prayer, such as the festive *Shaleshudes* repast on Saturday afternoon, and congregational singing.

And again, a quarrel broke out between the *Hasidim* and the *Mitnagdim*, but this time it was the *Hasidim* among the *Mitnagdim* that emerged victorious.

With the advance of the new settlement, a *minyan* was established (at the beginning of the nineties) at the home of R' Abraham Shmuel Zablocky, one of the elders of the Slonim *Hasidim*. who lived on the Marianska *Gasse*. This minyan, that has all the character of a regular house of prayer, in which both *Hasidim* and *Mitnagdim* participated, continued to function until the *Bet HaMedrash* of the Slonim *Hasidim* was constructed.

At the beginning of 5654 (1894) the foundation of the Great *Bet HaMedrash* was laid, whose construction lasted for a long time, interrupted because of a difference of opinion, and was completed in 5656 - 5658 (1896-1897).

In the meantime, the craftsmen arose, headed by R' Yaakov Judkowsky, the *Gabbai* of the '*Hevra Kadisha*' and they built their own *Bet HaMedrash*, under the name of '*Poalei Tzedek*.' In the Hebrew newspaper of 5657, the sum of the collection taken, in the platters set out for the Eve of Yom Kippur, was cited and quoted for this *Bet HaMedrash*.

And, in this way, two Houses of study stood like this, one opposite the other. The large one was the center for public gatherings, sermons, speeches, and special occasions, and the smaller one – more intimate, for the study of Torah and the gathering of small groups.

In 5760 (1900), the *Bet HaMedrash* of the Slonim Hasidim was built (it was burned down in The First World War by the Germans, and built from scratch immediately after the war).

There were three houses of study: The 'Great' one, '*Poalei Tzedek*' and '*Hasidei Slonim*' in the same general area, on a street called the 'Street of the Houses of Study,' (*Szkolna*).

In 5659 (1899) a 'Zionist Reading Room' (*Chitalniya*) was established in the yard of Mr. Limon, that also served as a house of prayer during festivals and the Sabbath. With the increase in the membership of the Zionist organization, the reading room was transferred to the house of Mr. Koplowitz, the owner of the beer brewery, at the corner of Alexandrovna-Sosnowa. The Gabbai was the community activist R' Eliezer Ze'ev Zhukhowitzky, the treasurer of the '*Agudat HaTzionim*' and the Gabbai of the charitable institution, '*Linat Tzedek.*'

In 5662-3 (1902-1903) the '*New Bet HaMedrash*' was built on the Piotrokowska *Gasse* (Ulanska). The impetus to have it built came from the Narkonsky family, after they had established a *minyan* in the house of the late R' Hannan Narkonsky. Among the worshipers at this *Bet HaMedrash* was the *Dayan* Mashtowicz, זצ"ל.

In 5665-6 (1905-`906, approximately, the *Bet HaMedrash* of the Zionists was built on Elizabetskaya (*Pilsudski*).

In 5668-9 (1908-1909), approximately, the *Bet HaMedrash* on the street of the fire-fighters (*Pozharna*) was built, and in the years 5670-5671 (1910-1911) a Bet HaMedrash was built on the Post Office street (*Pocztowa*), and in the year 5673 (1913) the Bet HaMedrash of the Kaidanov Hasidim was built, after in the year 5670, the house of the *Gabbai* Zhukhowicky was burned on the Alexandrovna *Gasse* where their minyan used to meet.

After the First World War, with the development and expansion of the city, to the south and eat, the residents of the new streets, Howera, Sadowa, and others – a large and very pleasing *Bet HaMedrash*, on the corner of Wilenska-Sadowa streets and called it the '*Bet HaMedrash d'Vilna*.' (Sadowa or Khuma)

Apart from these Houses of Study, there also were a variety of *minyanim* that were in existence, for Sabbaths and Festivals, like the minyan of New-Baranovich, the *minyan* of the craftsmen (*Handwerker Verein*), a *minyan* in the public house named for Jabotinsky, and others.

The institution of the *Bet HaMedrash* was, for many years, dedicated to prayer and Torah study, a center of community life and culture and a place where the fundamental Jewish spirit could be revived and nourished.

The Houses of Study in Baranovich, mostly open to everyone, and a few limited to certain groups (like Hasidim, Zionists, craftsmen and the like), almost all served as a temporary home for Torah study (Talmud Torah, schools and Yeshivas, until they constructed their own facilities), a refuge for refugees, a shield to protect the poor, and a basis for each and every community effort and undertaking.

The Jews of Baranovich were mainly Jews of the *Bet HaMedrash*.

Baranovich – A Place of Torah and *Hasidism*

The development of Baranovich as a place for Torah and Hasidism began at the beginning of the [sic: twentieth] century, and reached its zenith between the two world wars. It was this way, because of an accepted phenomenon, unique in its own right, that the subversion of the conserving forces provided by people, in a new settlement – are the cause of a loosening of constraints, of culture and tradition. And, here, especially in Baranovich – a new city, without any traditions or pedigree – that was secular and rather unobservant in its way of life, was privileged to undergo a spiritual renaissance, and became a center for Torah and a bastion of *Hasidim* – and this, during a period of religious senescence, and the sunset of *Hasidism.*

A combination of causes came together that laid the foundation for Torah study and *Hasidim* in Baranovich.

As previously said, the people who came from Mys were the initial seed for Baranovich, and in time, people from other venues acclimatized themselves, and together with them, established institutions, houses of study, and the new community of its multi-branched communal life. The *Hasidim* (and especially the *Hasidim* of Slonim) lived as an organized community, in a circumscribed enclave, and the new young *Hasidic* generation, which did not find an outlook that was satisfactory to its taste, in the confines of the older Mys, here found horizons open to it that were wide, and more aligned with its ambitions. On the strength of its activity, Hasidim were attracted to it from the neighboring settlements, both near and far, and even

Mitnagdim joined it, who had a certain religious freshness to them. This community – the one that built the large study house of the Slonim *Hasidim*, founded the Yeshiva of '*Torat Hesed*,' and erected splendid educational facilities, such as '*Yesodei HaTorah*,' and '*Bais Yaakov*,' and was very active in the community life of the city.

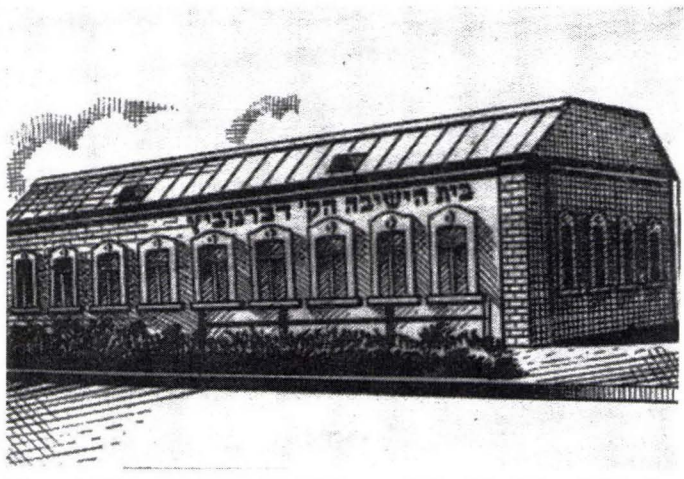
It is no wonder that among the great names of *Hasidism* in Slonim, such as the Rabbi *Gaon* R' Ze'ev Meir Scheinberg זצ"ל, The *Gaon Tzaddik* Rabbi Moshe Midner זצ"ל, and the Chief Rabbi R' Abraham זצ"ל, of Slonim, looked with favor on Baranovich as a place in which to live, and a center for their endeavors. As to the latter, he had yet another reason for an interest in Baranovich: after the passing of the Chief Rabbi R' Shmuel זצ"ל from Slonim, an internal difference of opinion arose: the majority was drawn to follow the young son, the Chief Rabbi R' Abraham, and the minority – after the eldest son, the Chief Rabbi R' Issachar Leib זצ"ל, who had remained to live in the Slonim 'Courtyard.'

At the beginning of his pulpit service, R' Abraham took up residence in Bialystok, that was more centrally located in the country. however, after that, he moved to Baranovich, the central core of the movement. He was a stormy and dynamic personality, motivating his people and doing his own work basis on his spirit. During the years in which he lived in Baranovich, he was alert to everything that went on in it, and took a proactive stance in its community life. His accomplishments were many, and his influence in the city was substantial.

After The First World War, Rabbis and great Torah sages were exiled to Baranovich from the interior of Russia, such as Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman, Rabbi Shlomo Poriczer, R' David Rapoport – the author of '*Tzemakh David*' and '*Mikdash David*,' Rabbi Hirsch Gutman, and other sages. These personalities, who suffered from pogroms, revolutions and civil wars, who witnessed with their own eyes, the destruction of Judaism and the Torah in Russia, saw in their own salvation, a form of designation, by a Heavenly Divine Presence, to guard the ember of the light of Torah, and not permit it to be extinguished. With the fervor of a missionary, and with the zeal of warriors, they threw themselves into the task of spreading Torah and Judaism – and in Baranovich, they found a broad base for their work.

The Yeshiva '*Ohel Torah*'

The Yeshiva '*Ohel Torah*' was founded in Baranovich (approximately 5766-8 [190x-y]) by the Rabbi *Gaon* and Tzaddik R' Joseph Yud'l Hurwitz זצ"ל from Novardok, one of the fathers of the *Mussar* movement, and the creator of the type 'Novardok Yeshivas.' The orientation of his soul was to disseminate Torah and *Mussar*, but in addition to this spiritual spark there was also a family spark. He had married the daughter of R' Israel Yaakov Lubczansky, the son of the old Rabbi of Baranovich, and wanted to make the place where his sons lives, a place for Torah.



Page 235: ***The Building of the Yeshiva 'Ohel Torah' in Baranovich***

In his first steps, R' Joseph Yud'l was helped by outside resources, when he brought, as the Yeshiva Headmaster, and an Overseer from

Vilna. The following taught at the Yeshiva: The Rabbi R' Joseph Shlomo Hurwitz שליט"א (now in Jerusalem), The Rabbi R' Nachman Hurwitz ז"ל from Baranovich, and the Rabbi R' Chaim Zvi Lieder ז"ל from Krynki. The institution developed by levels, and served as a locus for Torah study to the children of Baranovich and its vicinity. The living spirit of the Yeshiva and its mainstay, was R' Chai'kl the Scribe, who looked after the quartering of students from outside the city, their acceptance as guests, and their sustenance, doing this on one hand, by the collection of donations, and on the other hand by getting places for the poor students to eat 'days' and 'Sabbaths' among the *balebatim.*

The First World War threatened the existence of the Yeshiva, sapped its human resources, and it sustained itself only with great difficulty.

Breathing space and salvation came to the Yeshiva with the appearance of the Rabbi Gaon, Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman זצ"ל, who in his wanderings from Russia, was delayed in Baranovich, and was inclined to accept the position of Headmaster at the Yeshiva. Apart from his distinction in Torah scholarship, Rabbi Elchanan conducted a daily Talmud class (*Daf Yomi*) and was, in addition, a man of energy and action. In approaching the job of reviving the Yeshiva, he surrounded himself and held onto people of spirit, great Torah scholars, and men of wisdom, every one of which brought an important element of spiritual personality, such as the Rabbi *Gaon* R' Shlomo Hyman from Parec – a man of penetrating acuity, with a thorough grounding and related understanding in world experience, the Rabbi *Gaon* David Rapoport from Minsk, who provided access to his considerable creative and flowering skills through his research books, '*Tzemakh David*' and '*Mikdash David*' – capturing an important place in the world of Torah scholarship, and in a similar fashion, the following great Torah scholars also taught at the Yeshiva: Rabbi Leib Gavia from Brisk, Rabbi R' Israel Gursky from Slonim, Rabbi R' Joseph Dov Zeldes from Sluck, and others.

The spiritual overseer of the Yeshiva was the Rabbi and Tzaddik R' Israel Yaakov Lubczansky זצ"ל; full of a love of Israel, and a noble soul, a good heart, and comparable temperament. He was beloved by his students and stood high in everyone's affections.

The director of economic and financial affairs of the Yeshiva was Rabbi *Gaon* Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Gutman, a Rabbi of great Torah scholarship. understanding and perceptive in worldly matters. a man of energy and action, of pleasant disposition, and honest and straightforward in character. He led the institution wisely, and financed it intelligently. He was one of the pillars of conciliation of the institution, and together with it, was laid low and fell.

The Yeshiva grew and developed, and quickly became a center for Torah. Students by the hundreds streamed to it, from all parts of Jewry, even from lands across the sea. A generation of sages was educated within its walls.

'*Ohel Torah*' was a typical Lithuanian Yeshiva, totally centered on the study of the Talmud, even as the leaders of the Yeshiva did not turn a blind eye to practicality, and held discussions with the students about issues concerning the Jewish individual. in the lore of good deeds, and in the ways of the workings of The Creator – discussions that were based on the philosophy the psychology, and the depth and acuity of Talmudic discourse.

Among the products of the Yeshiva, it is worth noting the publication, '*Ohel Torah*' edited by Rabbi *Gaon* R' Mikhl Rabinovich ז"ל – A monthly comprised of superior Torah scholarship, which appeared in print over the course of years, in general, and in particular their talks about the teaching of Rabbi Elchanan and the other Yeshiva Heads, and their approach to *Mussar* and Judaism.

For many years, the Yeshiva moved around between the houses of study, until, because of the exertions of the Rabbi *Gaon* R' Elchanan Wasserman, the Rabbi *Gaon* R' Mikhl Rabinovich (a merchant who was a great Torah scholar, and subsequently served as the Rabbi of Scucyn), R' Yekhiel Rabinovich, and other *balebatim* – approached the task of building a [sic: permanent] home for the Yeshiva. With considerable effort, the building was put up, in splendor (on the Howera *Gasse*).

This new home was an important factor in the development of the Yeshiva, and opened widened possibilities for it: the number of students who sought to come here increased, and the premises became crowded in the face of all those who came to knock on its portals of Torah study, until R' Mordechai Sadowsky, ז"ל aroused himself (the father of our scion, Professor Dr. Sadowsky – a Director of Medicine at the University in Jerusalem), and at his own expense, built a large concrete building for the Yeshiva, and within it, a wondrous building for the students, and a much larger auditorium for assemblies. May his name be for a blessing!

From that time on, the Yeshiva entered a period of stability and continuity, until the ascent of the *Abrogator* and the Holocaust.

Hasidim & Hasidism

The *Hasidic* movement did not spread widely in Lithuania, and did not enfold the masses, and because of this, its roots went deep, and became a bastion that reached the heights. Apart from his mental acuity, the skepticism and wariness of the Lithuanian Jew, did not make for fertile ground in which Hasidism would stick. Rather, in opposition – stood the influence of the great sages of the Torah who waged war upon it. And if at the outset, a revolutionary temerity was needed to rebel against the rule of scholars and *balebatim*, then with the decline of the influence of Torah and religion and the spread of secular movements, and the streams of modernism, and their emerging control of the Jewish street – powerful spiritual forces were demanded to maintain a stand in the war for its own existence, and its influence on the soul of the people.

Baranovich was a bastion of the Slonim style of *Hasidism*, which neither promoted exclusivity, or factional segregation. but rather it fought for its ongoing existence, and its influence on the way of life. Many *Hasidim* concentrated themselves about the house of the *Hasidim*: to the personality of Rabbi Moshe Midner זצ"ל, and the courtyard of the *Rebbe* of Slonim, who lived in Baranovich. Hundreds of young men studies at the large *Hasidic Yeshiva, 'Torat* Hesed' (The Slonim *Hasidim* of Baranovich), and hundreds of children and young people were educated in the *Heders*, and the schools, '*Yosdei HaTorah*,' and '*Bais Yaakov*.'

As previously noted, the *Hasidim* were mostly working people, craftsmen, and in independent professions, and a minority – were storekeepers and merchants. Torah, the worship of God, and the doing of good deeds was unified within them, and on the evenings and on the Sabbaths, the people would cast off their worldly secular activities, and a spirit of simplicity and community reigned among them. It was a sort of group, that on principle, an individual was rated according to his learning, his acts, and good deeds, and the essence, of this personal example, in *Hasidism*, set its influence on the individual's surroundings.

The Yeshiva '*Torat Hesed*,' aligned within itself the foundations for Torah study (Talmud, Commentaries, etc.), in the style of the Lithuanian Yeshivas, with worship following the *Hasidic* tradition.

The '*Yosdei Torah*' school, was based on Torah study –*Hasidic*, combined with a secular curriculum of a general public school.

In summary: the weight of the Hasidic center in Baranovich increased in substance, and its influence was as expressed by the Rabbi *Gaon* R' Chaim Ozer [Grodzhensky] זצ"ל of Vilna: 'If I had the type of community support like that of the *Hasidim* of Baranovich – I could accomplish a great deal on behalf of Torah study in Vilna!'

Baranovich was a great center for the *Hasidim* who were people of tradition and action, who embodied a deep faith, a powerful commitment to tradition, and a fundamental *Hasidism*. There were unique personalities among them, each of which represented a little world of its own, or a book of his own; they were self-effacing and modest people, cut from the cloth of the Thirty-Six Hidden Righteous Ones.

Fundamental to the character of the *Hasid* was carrying the word of *Hasidim*. For the Hasid, who was totally immersed in worship of God, saw the matters of the world passing before his eyes like a fleeting shadow. This same Hasid was learned, and a scholar, possessing critical and analytical skills of the intellect. On one hand, the merchant Hasid, or a member of the balebatim, at ease with his environment, and alert to the community, and the daily secular life, nevertheless, lived in a world of thought and *Hasidic* action, and this is how he acted, being an independent professional man, grasping the spirit of the times, and alert to all of its issues, and yet with it all, trying to find a harmony and a synthesis for himself in the *Hasidic* spirit. In the end: A working man, who accepts *Hasidism* wholly and in its simplicity, and finds fulfillment in *Hasidism* and faith.

The Legacy of the Flickering Ember...

It is a tradition in the hands of the Slonim *Hasidim* from their Rabbis, that the ember of *Hasidism* will continue to flicker until the coming of The Redeemer. Therefore, the solitary remnants, and the smoking embers rescued from the fire, endeavor to stand guard over this flickering, burning coal. It does this, for example in the Yeshiva 'Bet Abraham,' the Hasidic houses in Tiberias and in Jerusalem, and similarly in the 'minyan' of Tel-Aviv and B'nai Brak.

Images

As I think of them, images arise in my memory. Here is the image of Rabbi Abraham זצ"ל from Slonim, that radiates entirely with the fire of faith, and is driven by the fever of action. He was like a wellspring of Torah and Hasidism that grew ever stronger, and he inflamed and aroused the hearts, especially of the youth, until he was literally consumed in the fire of his own soul, and died as a young man, before his time. His era was a glorious one, of the flowering of the Hasidism of Slonim. And who, at that time, would have thought that this renaissance would be a swan song. And here is the image of his young son, Rabbi Shlomo הי"ד, whose congregation of *Hasidim* and admirers achieved a greatness exceeding his, and together they went up on the sacrificial altar of the Holocaust.

Hasidim and Activists

The Hasidic community was ever ready to make whatever sacrifice was required for the preservation of its way of life, and the carrying out of the good deeds associated with its daily way of life, from those at peace in their lives, and those – who fought with themselves all of their lives.

I am reminded of an incident involving one particular Hasid. R' Yehuda Lipa, from Mys, who lived by the labor of his hands, and had saved some of his earnings for old age. In time, it arose that one of his grandsons went to take a wife and establish himself to earn a living. The second wife of the Hasid, who was a step-

grandmother, did not allow him to contribute the necessary funds for this purpose. When this became known to the Rebbe, he was called, and he said to him: The Days of Awe are imminently approaching, and I am to lead the prayers and to pray before the Master of the Universe, to show us the mercy 'as a father would show mercy to his sons' – and how will I be able to open my mouth, when you betray this commandment, and you treat your progeny so harshly? Upon hearing these words, the Hasid ran to his house, seized the packet of money, to bring it to the Rabbi, and when his wife opposed this, calling out tearfully: ' What will we have for our old age?' – he answered her and said: ' Look, I am seventy years of age, and I have all the teeth in my mouth, and if this Jew were to order me to extract them all, to the last one – I would obey his wish without hesitation.'

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One time, I encountered a new face in the house of the *Hasidim*. This was a Jewish man named R' Abraham Levin, who had moved his residence to Baranovich. He was an innkeeper in his town, and made a good living. In time, he came to complain to the Rabbi, on the absence of a suitable local institution, for the education of his children.

– And what are you doing about this issue? – the *Rebbe* asked.

– I am trying to convince people – the *Hasid* replied – but it isn't working.

– The Torah says 'Continue to reprove' and our Sages of Blessed Memory, said 'to the point of administering blows;' Have you done anything to prove your words and ideas? – The *Rebbe* asked again.

These words made an impression on the heart of the Hasid, who was a modest man, inclined to keep to himself. From that time on, he gave no surcease to the residents of the city, and would delay the reading of the Torah on each and every Sabbath, until the anger of the congregation overpowered them, and brought them to beat him for his tardiness. This incident aroused the conscience of many of the congregation, causing them to address the issue, but the Hasid himself left his living, and his residence, and uprooted himself and his family to go to a place of Torah study – to Baranovich.

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In Baranovich, there was an extensively branched community of butchers, such as Yitzhak and Joseph Bitensky, and others. The family patriarch, Reuven (Ruv'keh) the butcher, was an ardent disciple of the elder *Rebbe* of Slonim זצ"ל. At one time, he heard a melody from the Rebbe on the night of the Sabbath, '*Tehorim Yirshuha*,[75]' and from that time on, this sentence was transformed into the theme of his life, and he would always come back and repeat: The *Rebbe* זי"ל said – '*Tehorim Yirshuha*,' and he would sanctify and purify himself for all of his days. He would transact money with others, to the point where he would turn over the sum of the purchase price and sale to the buyer, and take back the money in percentage instalments. At one time, a 'bargain' was offered to him in the morning: animals hides at a cheap price, and he did not withstand the temptation and didn't give the correct price. Afterwards, when he came to pray – the prayer was stuck in his mouth; in vain, he sought to get it out and to move, until he began to torture himself in a loud voice: 'Ruv'keh, how do you have the nerve to come and pray before the Master of Worlds, with a lie in your mouth and deception on your lips?!'

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[75] The Pure Shall Be Its Inheritors

...Perhaps I should go and purify myself by immersion in the *mikva*,' he thought to himself...

–'Ruv'keh, you immerse yourself, and there is an unclean creature in your hand!' He called out in a loud voice.

... And perhaps I should remit the profit to charity? He thought again to himself...

'Ruv'keh, you are wrapping the uncleanliness in piety!' He rebuked himself out loud: And his thought did not subside until he called to himself: 'Ruv'keh, you are a thief!' He threw off his prayer shawl and phylacteries and went to do a proper settlement with the man that he had deceived.

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Among those in Baranovich, who did not stand out in Torah and *Hasidism*, we count Abraham Goldberg, who was gifted with a unique faculty: to sense a person's distress, and to rush to his assistance in the hour of his greatest need. A man of modest bearing, he would conceal his good deeds, and disparage their worth. 'Only one privilege – he said – awaits me.'During the days of The First World War, he served in the Russian Army, and he was the best mortar operator in his unit. One time, he heard that the gentiles were planning a pogrom against the Jews, in a village near the place where his unit was stationed; he immediately grabbed his rifle, ran to that place, and dispersed the gathering of the perpetrators and plunderers.

I once learned that they were preparing to arrest a Jew, who had the burden of a [sic: substantial] family, who had become ensnared by too much debt; he immediately ran to the place, and managed to get there before the Polish official came to arrest the man, locked the door, and called out to the official: 'I will not permit you to cut down the life of a man, and to destroy the existence of an entire family!' Upon hearing these words, the official boiled over in rage, drew his revolver, and shouted out: ' You are using force against me, and according to the law, I am permitted to kill you in self-defense.'

–'And I am prepared to sacrifice my life, in order to save an entire family from devastation' – Abraham Goldberg answered him with resoluteness.

The gentile official was struck dumb, was silent for a couple of minutes, and afterwards shot back: 'Go to Hell!" I am a seasoned legionnaire, who participated in war and battles, and I have seen displays of heroism, but I have yet to see in my life, an instance of self-sacrifice like this. 'You have won, Jew! – I am leaving him...' and he went off.

❁

R' Zaydl Shatzkes was a folksy presence in the city. A Hasidic Jew, possessed of a good heart, and a stormy spirit who could not make peace with the plight of the community of the wrongs they suffered. He seemed to always be driven by some inner force. Here, there is a sick child, and there – a family without sustenance. Here there are Yeshiva students hungry fro a bit of bread, impoverished and naked in the winter, and there, the Sabbath is being desecrated in the railroad station, and all of this is within the ambit of the cognizance of R' Zaydl, and the prime concern – the Yeshiva, as you can understand.

The owner of a tine store, and burdened with the care of a family full of small children, he was always busy and occupied over his head. He loved the students of the Yeshiva '*Torat Hesed*' like a father, and he looked after them like a mother. He passed through all of the Jewish homes in the city like a wind, communicating his own zeal, and arousing them to make donations and do good deeds. With the warmth of his soul, his sense of humor, he knew how to influence even the flinty-hearted.

He had a good sense of nature in what he did. He knew how to assess a place, the person, and the right moment. Here, he would be able to get a donation when 'she' wasn't paying attention, and over there, when 'he' was busy with work distracted. He would immediately rush to offer relief to those under duress, supporting them, and offering them encouragement. and despite the fact that he was himself something of an 'institution' requiring helpers, and would transform himself into an 'office for the recruitment of volunteers,' the work of 'recruitment' were more difficult and complex than the work of gathering donations.

On an ordinary weekday, in the middle of the crowded marketplace, Zaydl would 'grab' assorted people, and 'draft' them into all manner of community activity, and there was never any lack of trouble or issues. All appeals to common sense were to no avail (You're crazy! We are to stop work, or leave the store, in the middle of the day at work?'), to the sense of compassion (You thief! I have to support a wife and children, and I have no more strength for you!'). However, it was Zaydl's example that always prevailed.

Zaydl never rested, and he did not let others rest, and despite this, everyone loved him, and held his work to be in the name of heaven.

And this was the way R' Zaydl manned his post, and in every instance, he would propose 'saving a soul' in his own way: a sum of bread loaves for the Yeshiva. It was not only one time that Rabbi Moshe Midner זצ"ל was in his room sunk in study, and Zaydl would burst in and notify him, that such-and-such was in trouble, and he in need of heaven's mercy, and that he should pray for him. And in a similar fashion, he would corral the Yeshiva students into the recitation of Psalms.

Strange stories circulated about Zaydl's deeds during his time. They tell of the instance, when the mother of a district commander of the Polish police took sick (Tadeusz Holowka) and the sick person was bedridden in Baranovich, and her condition was dire, and a variety of doctors all became alarmed. Despite the fear that Jews had, of a gentile police commander, Zaydl presented himself to him, and offered him his help in return for the donation of a large loaf of bread to the Yeshiva. The donation was given, and Zaydl gathered Rabbi Moshe Midner and the Yeshiva students to prayer, and the conclusion of the matter was a good one: the sick patient got better. And this was a triple victory: of the ear against death, over the gentiles and Jews, who were angry at Zaydl for having the nerve to go into the lion's den, and to get involved in a dangerous mission.

In the Second World War, during the time of the Soviet occupation, he continued in clandestine Torah study, until he was seized, and by a miracle, he escaped jail, and exile to Siberia.

He was killed during a bombing run by Nazi airplanes, at the time of the capture of Baranovich. May the Almighty Avenge his Spilled Blood, and may his memory be for a blessing.

Teachers

Pedagogy was an occupation that suffered from discrimination and being taken advantage of, and did not benefit from a suitable assessment by the community (as the Yiddish saying goes: 'you are never late to either die or work yourself to death'); and it is therefore not a source of wonder that there were found teachers that poured out the bitterness of their souls on the heads of their teachers, but despite this, it was they who were the ones who raised and consolidated the human foundation of Torah and *Hasidic* Baranovich.

Most of the teachers I knew were good and understanding Jews, Hasidic people and activists, and among them, also great scholars. There were those among them that turned to pedagogy out of a spiritual spark to give direction and education, and there were those who wanted greater proximity to the Torah and God's

work, and there were some who were sent by the command of their Rabbis, the heads of the Slonim movement, who ordered them to do so, as emissaries of a kind.

Regarding the appearance, it is all encapsulated in the hoar of R' Moshe Bezalel Lev ז"ל. His point of origin was from the 'Ljahavičy of the Heavens' of the early righteous *Hasidim*. He was an enlightened, thinking man. He was a man of the book, and informed about both wisdom and knowledge, a man inclined to be giving, and one who did good deeds. He knew the soul of his students, and his influence over them was through the force of his personal example.

The teaching tradition in his family was continued by his son-in-law, R' Yaakov David Briskin ז"ל. A Torah scholar and Hasid, self-effacing and of a refined soul. I recall one incident: at one time, he was without an income, and an individual who perceived his plight stood by him in this hour of need, and loaned him an amount of money for a period of time, not specified. In time, R' Yaakov David managed to get revived from his difficult situation, was able to get additional pupils, and even acquired a nanny goat, whose milk he would divide into two parts – half for his children, and half to pay off his debt. During that same winter, R' Yaakov David would travers the streets, carrying the container of milk to the house of the 'lender.' The latter entreated him to stop this, and even said he would cancel the debt, however, to no avail. R' Yaakov David argued that he wanted to live by the work of his own hands, and not because of other people's largesse, and he has no alternative but to repay the debt.

Another personality was R' Noah Pripstein (*Noah der Melamed*) one of the elders among the Slonim *Hasidim*. He was a big-boned, healthy Jewish man, possessed of a strong and dominating personality, a strong hand. and iron discipline. He despised idleness and untruth, and strove to tear that out of his students, and direct their character towards order and discipline, towards diligence and precision, towards righteousness and appropriateness. He understood the child's soul, and he knew how to decipher childish antics, to the point that it was difficult to put anything over on him. Not once, when he would see a student with a coin, he would ask him: 'How did you get this? And when the latter would respond,: I found it! – R' Noah would review with him: 'Thou shalt not steal!' It is forbidden 'to find.' He did not rest and did not remain silent, until such time as these 'antics' and 'findings' among his students ceased.

R' Noah was like this during the severity of the weekdays. During the Sabbath and Festivals, his face lit up, and he was bathed in a great grace. He would gather his students about him, pray, sing and dance with them together. He was especially joyous on the festival holidays, and the zenith was reached during the days of Purim, *Simchat Beit HaShoeva*, and *Simchat Torah*. The students would be drawn into a circle with him, and he was then their beloved *Rebbe*, and in recognition of these dances, the Mitnagdim gave him the added nickname of '*Noah Hop*.' (One student mentioned to me, that he will never forget the sweetness and pleasure of learning *'The Song of Songs'* from R' Noah).

R' Abraham Pinchas Shereshevsky ז"ל, was a Hasid that did not waste a minute, putting his entire effort into Torah and God's work, with great commitment, and a strong faith. His students could sense that this was no ordinary man. Despite this, they felt the closeness of his soul, and especially during those moments of rest, between the study of subjects, and after school at the Yeshiva '*Torat Hesed.*' It would be a time when he would relate to them, stories about the *Hasidim* and their legends.

The image of R' Yitzhak Miskin (R' Itcheh) ז"ל is etched into the memory of his students at the Yeshiva *'Torat Hesed,'* as the one who led prayer services. A Jewish man of some height, and ramrod straight, a long fully-grown beard, with a pleasant appearance. His delivery was clear, and his style pure and orderly, and his explanations – good. His voice was like that of a lion during the time that he led services before the ark during the High Holy Days, and during the Days of Awe in the *Bet HaMedrash* of the Slonim *Hasidim*. His

students bestowed honor and respect upon him, and practically never punished any of them for their various infractions.



Page 241: ***R' Fyt'l Isser***

'A Sabbath-type Jew' (*A Shabbesdiker Yid*) was R' Yaakov Hillel Weinberg ז"ל. He would give a lesson [sic: in Talmud] at the Yeshiva '*Torat Hesed.*' All the days of the week, he bore the burden of Torah and the concerns of life, but on the Sabbath a completely different spirit possessed him, as if some other soul within him had been lit by the Sabbath light. His face grew colored and his eyes sparkled, and he would pray and sing with dedication and ardor, his entire being fluttering and striving with emotion. This frail Jew vanished, tired of life, oppressed by the ordinary weekdays.

The Rabbi *Gaon* Joseph Mordkowsky זצ"ל (*R' Yoshe Moucadzer*) was the head of the first *Mesivta* of the Yeshiva '*Torat Hesed,*' was the lion among the cadre of teachers. He was a wondrous scholar, and a great sage, a *Tzaddik* and Holy Man, modest, self-effacing, and a doer of notable deeds. He lived in a very strong spiritual milieu, amidst the delving into the depths of the Torah, and with a great affinity for the human soul. For the students under his tutelage, he was like a fountain of the wisdom of the Torah, and an understanding of humanity, of the lore of fundamental *Hasidism*, and of the testing of the explanation of the law in everyday life. He died as a young man, having suffered a great deal. (The Chief Rabbi R' Shmuel זצ"ל of Slonim said of him that he was as much a *Gaon* in *Hasidism* as he was a *Gaon* in Torah).
The honor roll of the teachers is not yet complete. There was R' Shlomo Huleh (*Shlomo der Hinkediker*[76]), R' Yehuda Leib Litowsky (among the elders of the teachers who reached old age), there was R' Raphael ז"ל ben R' Moshe Yeshaya Isser's (a perceptive and well-honed young man, a beautiful interpreter and explicator of the Talmud), there was R' Abraham Miransky ז"ל (a diligent community activist, possessed of both nerve and energy), there were R' Yekhiel Miskin ז"ל, and R' Noah Kantorovich ז"ל – accomplished young men, scholars, that served as educators and directors in the Yeshiva '*Torat Hesed.*'

There were R' Abraham Orlansky, R' Shaul (*Shaul der Melamed*), R' Yehuda Blakher and *'Der Minsker'* from the '*Talmud Torah,*' Eliezer Moshe Shimonowicz (The *Melamed* from Jeremicze), and other, to my sorrow, that I either did not know, or have not remembered.

A whole separate chapter is needed for R' Fyt'l Isser ז"ל the old, and respected, Mohel, the first one to lay a foundation for the elementary school Yeshiva in our city, and growing boys would learn Torah from him, and received guidance and training from him to be able to study the Talmud on their own.

May their memory be for a blessing.

Concepts and Assessments

There is an additional characteristic line added to this brand of *Hasidim* – restraining one's self from stories of miracles and wondrous acts that would spread about among the *Hasidic* masses in Polish Wolhynia. The relationship to stories of this kind, was a sort of faithful prayer, a form of magic or sorcery, and when the Slonim *Hasidim* would be asked: 'Does your *Rebbe* perform miracles?' they would answer: 'Signs and

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[76] Walked with a limp.

miracles, truly for the Sons of Ham,' meaning: this was a real perception, of one kind or another. There were those who perceived the stories on the raising of the dead by *Tzaddikim* in a realistic way – literally as it says, meaning: a dead body was returned to life; but others saw it as a metaphor pertaining to the soul of a sinning man, that was frozen and stony from the vantage point of 'the wicked during their life are called dead.' And the *Tzaddik* returns them to life, restoring the soul to him (as one Hasid expressed himself in a conversation with his friend: 'The *Rebbe* has the capacity to return the dead to life,' the meaning being – to raise a corpse or a living person back on his feet, or as in my case, the sense is – to revitalize a dead soul).

The concept of connection to the *Tzaddik* – its root was in the recognition that a person whose soul is bound up completely in the amalgamation of Torah and doing God's work, with faithfully, and his temperament is forged and purified, from the impurities of materialism and ego, his sense is closer to the sense of Torah, which is a more lofty conception, and his will – is bent to the Torah's, which is the will of the Divine.

The faith in the power of the Tzaddik comes from the force of the community tied to him, and depends on hum, as the Hasidic saying says: 'And you will be able to prophesy from the people.' that the vision – its source and strength come from the people themselves, the pull to worship, love of friends and nurturing of the 'group,' and the yearning for a special soul – this created the ambience and sanctification towards the Sabbath and the unification as a source of the outlook in which all the light of the world is included: from the esoteric light of the six days of creation, the light of the Torah, all the way to the light of the Messiah, who ennobles his light that reflects back to the six days of creation. And so, the *Hasidim* were activists, who stood straight, and whose faces shone from the strength of their emotion and their entire being spilled over with ardor on the Sabbath, at which time they put off one face and donned another.

The Rabbi *Gaon* R' Ze'ev Meir Scheinberg זצ"ל

The first Rabbi of the Slonim Hasidim in Baranovich was the Rabbi *Gaon* R' Ze'ev Meir Scheinberg זצ"ל. A great man in Torah scholarship and in *Hasidism*, who by his enchanting personality, the acuity of his intellect, his perceptiveness and deep understanding of the human soul, and his erect and noble bearing, was a natural leader with much influence. A '*kibbutz*' of young men collected about him, which was the seed for the Great Yeshiva of the Slonim *Hasidim*, that was going to be founded because of the efforts of the elder Rabbi, Rabbi Shmuel of Slonim. However, at the height of The First World War, both died, and made the community of Hasidim inconsolable.

The Founding of the Yeshiva of the Slonim *Hasidim*

After The First World War, the Slonim *Hasidim* aroused themselves, and approached the fulfilment of the concept of a higher Yeshiva, that developed into a spiritual center for Torah and *Hasidism*, and hundreds of students streamed to it from all ends of the country. These students became the emissaries for the Slonim variety of *Hasidism*, and the carriers of its word throughout the breadth of the country.

Like a Ship in the Heart of the Sea

When the Rabbi, R' Moshe Blau זצ"ל, the leader of the '*Agudat Israel*' the old settlement in the Land of Israel, returned from his European junket before the Second World War, he said: I was very, very impressed by one place that I visited. Baranovich made a unique impression like 'a ship in the heart of the sea,' in its capacity as a tower and fortified bastion of Torah, *Hasidism* and *Mussar*. I attribute this to the influence of the *Rebbe*

of Slonim זצ"ל, and the *Gaon* Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman זצ"ל (Note: He did not mention Rabbi Moshe Midner זצ"ל).

Dipping an Oar into the City of Silhouettes

To the expanse of the eye, it seems like the entire community as gathered at a time of trouble. It is the time of the pogroms in the Land of Israel of Av of 5689 (1939),[77] and the entire Jewish settlement is aroused and gathered in the courtyard of the Great *Bet HaMedrash*, with thousands of hands raised, taking the oath: 'If I forget thee, O. Jerusalem...' and the emotional recitation of the prayers of the Psalms of this gathering of thousands.

I stop for a moment in the foyer of the Great *Bet HaMedrash*. How many sermons, speeches and excerpts of ardor by great Torah sages and leaders of the Jewish people have the walls of this *Bet HaMedrash* absorbed, and how many discussions, stormy and emotional by the various movements, parties and their streams, have been ingested by them.

And from there – to the *Bet HaMedrash* of the craftsmen '*Poalei Tzedek*.' Between Mincha and Maariv, many prayer quorums can be found here, made up of Jewish merchants, storekeepers, and craftsmen, who listen in on a Talmud lesson from R' Michael Rabinovich, the author of '*Afikei Yam*' – a lumber merchant who was a great sage, and expert in explanation and clarification [of Holy Writ].

From there, you return and enter the *Bet HaMedrash* of the Slonim *Hasidim*, and one does not simply flee this place, but rather sits and tarry over words of Torah and *Hasidim*, as well as everyday conversation, until after midnight. The hall was large, and even if they were filled beyond capacity on the Sabbaths and Festivals, no one complained of feeling crowded.

In a corner, R' Abraham Slonimsky (*Avrem'eh der Hoikher*[78]) is giving a lesson in *Gemara*. You take cognizance of his stately appearance and his high forehead. An aspect of his work, is that with the force of his capability he learned everything, from research into the Talmud and *Hasidim* to involved and complex questions.

And in yet another corner, working Jewish men are listening to a lesson in '*Eyn Yaakov*,' and enjoying the legends being told about our Sages of Blessed Memory, and about Hasidim. In another fruitful corner, groups of *Hasidim* (such as R' Joseph Moucadzer, Abraham Pinchas, Fishl, and others) are sunken deeply into a discussion about things that stand at the top of the world, and here, the young *Dayan*, Rabbi Nissan Scheinberg, stands and leads a discussion with a group of youths over issues in Judaism. A person of 'rising power' his intellect roils within him, his emotion transports him, and his entire being is an outpouring of energy and capacity for action. In the confines of the ghetto, he was revealed for all his greatness of spirit.

Several balebatim are having a conversation beside the *Bima* (such as R' Israel Kapilovich, R' Hannan Leib Feigman, R' Baruch Yehoshua Turetsky, and others), about world affairs, community matters, and concerns about making a living.

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77 The Hebron Massacres

78 The 'Tall One'

R' Yitzhak Gunicer is sitting behind the *Bima*, peering into a book, humming a tune. He was an enlightened man, a doer of good deeds, who was the focal point of the issues in the union of the wagon drivers, and with every free moment – turned to learning, and on Friday evenings at his home there was always a night study group for Torah. On Sabbaths and Festivals, he would sing songs, which served as to spread warmth and radiance, and he would capture hearts with the magic of his melodies.

In the Streets Among the People

You go out into the street, and run into a passing person beside you who is tired; and is this not our acquaintance, the head of the community, R' Pinchas *HaKohen* Kaplan ז"ל the very image of the exceptional worker and activist on behalf of the community. His life is dedicated to the good of the community. Regardless of whatever trouble materialized, they would 'run' to 'Pinia Kaplan,' and then he would 'run' immediately to interdict the worst of the problem. He stood at the head of the community for decades, and found the means by which to reach the hearts of the high and mighty, to influence the setting aside of harsh decrees and troubles – by appeal to the Lords who offer solutions.

You continue to pass through the streets of the city, and pass by the synagogues and houses of study, and schools, institutions, activities, organizations and groups; the home of the Yeshiva '*Torat Hesed*' – the gift of R' Yehoshua Galay, the orphanage named for Stolovicky, the home of the Yeshiva '*Ohel Torah*' named for Sadowsky, the Old Age Home named for Israel Zalman Galperin (which was 'free' and the elderly said that in the World to Come, they will stand guard and not permit him to be taken to Hell), and the big sawmills of Kushnir and Yosselewicz, that served as training grounds of groups of *Halutzim,* those going up to Zion, to build it, etc. The institutions of '*Bet Lekhem*,' and '*Linat HaTzedek*' The schools, like '*Talmud Torah*' '*Bais Yaakov*,' '*Tarbut*' and others. The '*Kibbutz*' of '*Shakharia*,' '*Bet Brenner*,' '*Bet Am*' named for Z. Jabotinsky, and others.

Along your way, you will encounter a variety of people and personalities, who can count and enumerate them? Is each not a story unto themself, and together they represent a world that has been destroyed.

Those Ascending the Scaffold Seek the Welfare of Zion and Jerusalem

They fell as good Jews and proud people, with the name of Zion and Jerusalem on their lips. They had the faith that the entirety of the Jewish people would not be exterminated. And whoever was privileged to have one of their progeny make aliyah, would add with satisfaction: 'They will not exterminate me!'

A partisan says to me: I will not forget the heroic stand of the Zionist activist Israel Katzav, who called over to the Nazi Germans: 'I despise you!' (We will outlive you), and a stream of bullets riddled his body; or the last dance of the Dayan R' Nissan הי"ד, who went up onto the scaffold and all those exposed to personal martyrdom, who disappeared together with their husbands – who married them. ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

From The Impressions of Teacher[79] in Baranovich

By Esther Berman-Kaplowitz

I arrived in Baranovich by rail one pleasant autumn day. Before me, there were wide, straight streets, with wooden houses on hills. In less than an hour, I reached the hotel – and from there, I headed for '*Bais Yaakov*' on the Senatorska *Gasse*. There was a modest structure in the courtyard. I opened the door – and I am surrounded by little girls, in threadbare, modest dress, their faces pale, but those eyes.... a lightning bolt of perception and understanding in them, but also dumb with sorrow.

The overcrowding in the rooms was great, and the teacher's room – were 4 by 4. In my memory, the pleasant buildings of the government schools rise up, the gymnasium and seminary in which I studied, and I feel so sorry for these girls.

On the following day, I started work, and in time, I learned to respect the institution that looked so impoverished on the outside, but whose qualities were limitless. I spent a year in this school, and more than what I taught – I learned. I will remember your generosity, Baranovich!

In 5687 (1927), a collection of Jews decided to establish a school for girls named '*Bais Yaakov*.' The language of instruction was Polish, and the curriculum was that of an elementary school, including an hour of Hebrew and a special portion of religious studies.

The parents paid according to their means – but these means were severely limited. For this reason, the members of the [sic: school] committee worked very hard, with an ear cocked to the imperiled budget. At times when they ran short, and could not pay, they tried to soothe the teachers with words, and persuaded them to continue their work.

I remember one time that the town of Baranovich went bankrupt, and even the fierce support it gave in the form of notes – did not pay. The situation became very dire. The chairman of the committee, the *Dayan* R' Nissan Scheinberg, did not lose his senses. He invited a number of the notables of the city to come to him, and when they arrived, he closed the door behind him and said: 'My friends, the situation at the school is bad, and I am not letting you out of here until such time as you co-sign these notes. Tomorrow, God willing, I will redeem them at the bank, and we will have money with which to pay the teachers, rent, and '*Bais Yaakov*' will stand on its place, and the Holy One, Blessed Be He will pay you your reward!' A silence pervaded the room. The amounts were rather substantial. They tried to resist, but it was in vain. One by one, they signed, – and '*Bais Yaakov*' was saved.

If '*Bais Yaakov*' was a burden, and caused hard work from a financial point of view, sorrow and a lot of suffering, everyone was more than satisfied in an emotional and spiritual sense.

And here are R' Mendl Goldberg and R' Abraham Goldberg, people consumed by their need to earn a living. However, when they come to '*Bais Yaakov*,' one sees in them only the spark of good fortune. And the exceptional scholar, R' M. of the Slonim Yeshiva, at the time of walking from the synagogue after morning

[79] The gender of these teachers is female, as was fitting for a girl's school that is being described.

prayers, with his *Tallit* bag under his armpit, enters '*Bais Yaakov*,' immediately going to the classroom, and begins to test the girls in Torah. The pointed questions – and the answers come flying back. There is a good-hearted smile and pleasure that appears on his face.

And here is the *Dayan*, R' Niss'eh. He is included, and will not pass. Once, or twice during the week, he meets with the senior class in a lesson of *Mussar*, and even if a little like a stutterer, he stands and lectures: the sayings of the Sages of Blessed Memory, an explication, or the telling of a legend, as if he were standing before an audience of scholars. And the class is very attentive.

The girls begin to ask, a flood of questions, puzzling and clever. He walks out of the class – and his face beams with a sense of victory!

❁

It was my good fortune to be the teacher of the senior class, in an atmosphere of learning and a thirst for knowledge. The special magic of the girls – was their desire to excel.

I remember the Torah lessons, and the high level of the lesson. The girls argued and debated, and gained a deep Jewish and Torah cognizance.

❁

On Friday night, after lighting the candles, we would gather to offer our welcoming prayers to the Sabbath. Washed, with my prayer book in hand, I slowly walked in the Minska *Gasse*, on which one threadbare wooden house stretched after another, with low windows into which I would peer.

Here, Jewish Baranovich showed itself. Here is where Jewish families overloaded with children, lived. During the week, they would scurry about, feeling the work week pressure. But on Friday night, the house shed its regular appearance, and took on the appearance of a holiday.

By the time I reached the courtyard of the school, I had shaken off the secular feel of the week, and something of the holy spirit descended on me as well. The table stood, with the white tablecloth, and the girls around it, all bathed and combed in honor of the Sabbath. We recited 'Song of Songs' with feeling and ardor. Afterwards, we welcomed the Sabbath, accompanied by song and *Hasidic* melodies. A dance, or two – and an elevating mood spread among us.

After the evening meal, back to the school. Now come the '*Bnot Agudat Yisrael*' and an organization of religious women, '*Yehudit*.' Together, we study the portion of the week.

I sat beside the table, on which an oil-lit candelabra stood. Large shadows danced on the walls. The older girls and the women sat on both sides of the room. We opened with the portion of the week.

Before me, sat women with eyes shut. Among them were those dozing from exhaustion. I spoke in a whisper to those who were awake, not to waken the sleepers. Slowly, slowly, their eyes opened. They finally managed to get back some energy. My voice grows louder. They listen. Their eyes grow clear. A spark is lit in them.

I finish. We begin to sing. And so, the song spreads about. One tune after another. The young girls and the ladies sing together, forgetting the suffering and hard work of the regular week. The ardor grows more intense. Hand-in-had, they join in dance, and in the far corners of the room, the words echo: *'v'Taheyr Libaynu leAvdekha b'Emet...*

The dance lasts for a long hour. The tiredness has been sloughed off. We are able to stand up straight. The faces exude joy and good fortune. The 'other soul' reigns here.

And the women get tired, and sit down one by one. The young girls keep going, and suddenly burst out into a fervent song: '*Zoll shoyn zyn di geuleh.. Moshiach zoll shoyn kummen...*[80]' The circle grows smaller, and continues, but the dance remains lively and intense. I leave the circle, sit in a corner and think to myself: Master of the Universe, for whose sake will you finally bring us the Redemption, if not for the sake of these??? I did not then know that perhaps it would be for their sake, but that they in fact would not see it...



On Sabbath in the afternoon, the '*Batya*' groups would gather (the younger level of the *'Bnot Agudat Yisrael*'). The members of the *Bnot Agudat Yisrael* lead these groups. Each group leader is in her classroom with her cohort. In one classroom, a leader is leading the study of the portion of the week, in the second, the tale of a *Tzaddik* is being told... over there, the sound of song and dance erupts. And look, the day has gone – and once again, the dreary work week awaits me...

I shuffle through the streets, and my legs stand beside the house of the *Dayan*, R' Niss'eh. I go inside, the residence is small and threadbare. Poverty emanates from every corner, The house is not in order. Their only son is in his bed, in order that he not catch a cold. The mother, who looks more like the boy's grandmother, tends him nearby.

The *Dayan* washes his hands for the *Shaleshudes* meal. He breaks off a piece of *Challah*, and takes a taste of the tail of a salted herring. He waves at me to also wash my hands, and it is difficult to refuse him.

Under the corner of my garment, I find a bunch of grapes and some sweets, pushing it into the hands of the *Rebbetzin*, and say: 'Take this for your son, give it to the little one.' She hesitates for a minute, takes it, and gives it the pale and weak child.

Whenever my world seems to be closing around me, I goto R' Niss'eh to hear what he has to say. What a dear Jewish man. Personally he lives in want, lacking everything. But he is ever ready to help ease the situation of the community. He involves himself in the matters of the community with faithfulness and dedication. And I look at him, and listen to what he has to say – pearls.

The shadows have multiplied in the room, and the tears are running down, and the question hovers on my lips: How long? How long, Master of the Universe ???



This is the way you were, Baranovich – You were this way, but you are no longer....

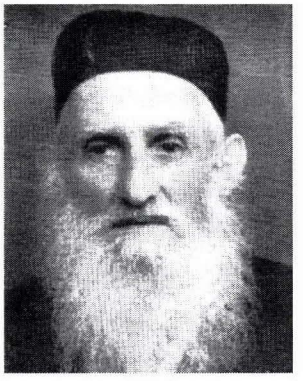
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80 'Let the Final Redemption come already....let the Messiah come....'

The 'Court Houses' of Baranovich

'The Court of the Rabbi' in Baranovich

By Hinde Weitzel



Page 247: ***The Rabbi, R' David Weitzel***

Along with commemorating the sacred community of Baranovich – let us also remember 'The Rabbi's House.' This was a 'House' in the full sense of the idea. It was a house in which the full pulse of an active Jewish life pulsed. Transient Jewish visitors, 'burdened with their own 'packages' of troubles and worries, found a respite within, a meal and lodging, and those who needed it, a donation of money.

The guests at the Rabbi's house were varied: there were *balebatim* whose standing had been upset, scholars who were in need of dowry money, and the like.

In this large wooden house, on Minska (Szkolna) 27, there dwelt the Rabbi *Gaon* R' David Weitzel, the Rabbi of Baranovich, and the members of his family. The Rabbi himself, was privileged to make *aliyah* to the Holy Land. The exile to Siberia was what saved his life, and the lives of a small part of his family (two small grandchildren – the children of his daughter and son) from the Nazi slaughter. Another son of his, the son-in-law of Rabbi R' Sholom Yitzhak Segal, has resided in Tel-Aviv since 1935, and serves as the Rabbi in the Brenner section. The remainder of his family was exterminated in the Holocaust.

Rabbi R' David Weitzel was the son-in-law of the Rabbi *Gaon* and *Tzaddik* R' Chaim Yehuda Leib Lubczansky, זצ"ל, who came to Baranovich at the rime the city was founded.

Rabbi Chaim Leib married a woman from Mys, and studied Torah at the *Kollel* '*Tomkhei Torah*' in Minsk. She was a woman of noble spirit, and a person who did good deeds.

Sons and daughters were born to the couple, and two of them continued in the tradition of the rabbinate, and we will focus our remarks on them.

One was Rabbi R' Israel Yaakov Lubczansky הי"ד, one of the headmasters of the Yeshiva '*Ohel Torah*' in Baranovich, along with the *Gaon* Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman זצ"ל and Rabbi R' Zvi Gutman הי"ד. The Rabbi, R' Israel Yaakov was the son-in-law of the Rabbi and Tzaddik R' Joseph (Yoizl), the father of the *Mussar* movement, whose legacy were the 'Novardok Yeshivas' and was renown for his righteousness and lofty deeds.

The second one who continued the rabbinic tradition was the oldest daughter, Yehudit Dvora, the wife of R' David Weitzel שליט"א, who after the death of his father-in-law, in the year 5666 (1906) served as the Rabbi of Baranovich for about 35 years until he was exiled to Siberia in 1941. His wife, the Rebbetzin, fell in the Baranovich ghetto, together with her daughters Sarah Yenta, and Esther Miriam, ending her life and that of her children.

The oldest of the daughters, Sarah Yenta was the wife of a student at the Yeshiva of Mir, Rabbi R' Asher Boyarsky הי"ד, who was the Rabbi in the ghetto of Baranovich until he was murdered by the Nazis.

The younger daughter, Esther Miriam was a teacher ion the '*Bais Yaakov*' school.

Another son of R' David Weitzel, Yerucham, a student at the Yeshiva of Mir, was exterminated, along with 30 other young men studying at the Yeshiva, who left for Japan with the outbreak of the war between Japan and America; they were lost, and all traces of them vanished.

The house of the Rabbi constantly hummed with people. one large room – among the seven in the house – that served erstwhile as a court room, and a place for meetings, arbitrations, discussions, conciliations, and all manner of community issues that were entertained there.

A second room serves as an office for registering births, weddings , deaths and the like; from the year 1932 onwards, Rabbi Weitzel also served as the official Rabbi from the standpoint of the government.

There was a large library in a third room – an archive of books.

As already said, there were a variety of guests. The burden of accommodating guests fell largely on the Rebbetzin Yehudit Dvora, her entire life's experience – self-sacrifice for the common good. Good deeds give me joy as if I had come into a large booty.

I remember the time she collected money for a new dress for her daughter – for her wedding – and at the end of the matter, she made do with an old dress, and she turned over the money to the Yeshiva '*Bet Joseph*' in Bialystok. Her charity was always anonymous and discreet.

The Yeshiva students would always be at the side of her table, especially on market days when the other homemakers were otherwise occupied. At times, there were not enough beds, and every table and door was turned into a bed. On the basis of this generous reception of guests, a legend arose about the visit of Elijah the Prophet to the house. The story was as follows: one time, an anonymous guest had stopped off at the hose to seek lodging, and on the following morning, when the members of the household awakened, he had disappeared, and the doors were shut and the shutters locked from the inside, and not a single on of the household sensed that the guest had departed. This was a puzzlement, and a disappearance that had no explanation – until someone offered the thought that the anonymous guest was Elijah the Prophet, and this thought was accepted as credible, and took on a life of its own...

It was in this house that I learned that a man's greatness is revealed actually in how small he is, that being small – that is true greatness.

The House of the Rabbi *Tzaddik* Rabbi Nehemiah Ferlaub, The Chief Rabbi of the Kaidanov *Hasidim* in Baranovich

By M. B.

Introduction: The First *Hasidim* in Baranovich

The first pioneers of Baranovich, as is known, were the two *Hasidic* elders R' Yeshayahu Baranovitzky (*Shy'keh Baranovicher*) of the Kaidanov Hasidim, and R' Yitzhak Berezovsky, the *Gabbai* of the Slonim *Hasidim* of Mys. They were among the founders of the new settlement, and paved the way for a stream of settlers that afterwards came in wave upon wave from all the settlements in the area, and especially form Mys. While individuals and families came from other settlements, whose move to Baranovich did not have much influence on the construction of the composition of the population from the standpoint of origins, the immigration from Mys, because it was an ancient settlement, had both a pedigree and tradition that made a

mark on the new settlement. On the face of it, the older residents of Baranovich were, mostly, not called by their family names, but rather by the name of the place they came from. The exception to this were those who came from Mys, who were not called by their place of origin, because of there were many of them, and because the people of the two settlements were generally well aligned. It was in this fashion, that the *Hasidic* center arose in Baranovich.



Page 249: ***The Chief Rabbi R' Nehemi' Ferlaub***

The first to come were the Slonim *Hasidim* from Mys. As an organized community, more or less, the Kaidanov *Hasidim* came after them, from the nearby towns. They were joined by the *Hasidim* of Ljahavičy, and Stolin-Karlin, who were close to them in both style and tradition. At first, they established a '*minyan*,' and in time, they built their own places of worship, which was a sort of 'book point' on the map of the Kaidanov *Hasidim*, although in time, its circumstances changes.

In 5681 (1921) the Rabbi *Gaon* R' Nehemiah Ferlaub, זצ"ל, the Chief Rabbi of Kaidanov Hasidim, returned with the refugees from Russia, along with his family, to Baranovich. They were replete with suffering and disappointment, after most of the houses of worship of the Kaidanov *Kollel* in White Russia and the Ukraine had been uprooted on the other side of the Iron Curtain. The appearance of one of the elders among the Chief Rabbis of the generation, and the majesty of his appearance and the glory of his years, made a big impression in our city. He was a man of great virtue, and a great scholar, rich in Torah and Hasidism. He spent his entire life pursuing Torah study and doing God's work – his grandfather was the *Tzaddik* R' Shlomo Chaim זצ"ל, and his father – R' Aharon זצ"ל of Kaidanov, who was renown as a *Tzaddik* and a *Gaon* in all matters, both revealed and esoteric.



Page 250 (Top): ***The Chief Rabbi R' Sholom Alter Ferlaub,*** הי"ד

The Rabbi *Tzaddik*, R' Nehemiah did not bend under the weight of the tribulations that were heaped upon him, and the people of his circle, and energetically approached the challenge of raising his *Kollel.* In fact, he showed a great deal of vitality and freshness. He moved about between the widespread settlements, and every place that he came to, he brought with him, the message of living *Hasidim*, and its living tradition, simple in his conduct, natural in his ways, folksy in his relationship to people, and thereby captured the hearts of the people who came in contact with him During the time of his tenure, his house of *Hasidim* became a sort of '*Yavneh*' of the Kaidanov Hasidim, who moved to live in Baranovich (such as R' Moshe Rubinstein from Minsk, R' Ber from Ljahavičy, and others).

The Rabbi *Tzaddik* R' Nehemiah passed away at an old age, after a short illness on 21 Tammuz 5687 (1927).

The mantle of the Chief Rabbinate was continued after him by his son, the Rabbi *Tzaddik* Alter Ferlaub הי"ד. A young scholar, a man of spirit, possessed of a beautiful spirit and a performer of lofty deeds. Within him,

he embodied the grace and nobility of generations of the righteous, and two worlds were united in him, the world of Torah (he was an outstanding student of the *Gaon* Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman זצ"ל) and the world of *Hasidism*, which he got from his parents and teachers. During his brief tenure, he earned a place of respect among the Hasidim who were drawn to him, with affection and praise.

He was murdered in Vilna during the Holocaust הי"ד.



Page 250 (Bottom): ***The Rabbi R' Israel Landman***, הי"ד

The Rabbi *Gaon* R' Israel Landman הי"ד, the son-in-law of the Rabbi *Tzaddik* Nehemiah Ferlaub זצ"ל, occupied an important place as a partner in the local rabbinate, and the community of our city, by virtue of his skillful intellect, and for the spark of genius within him. He was a well-honed scholar, thoroughly familiar with Torah and worldly matters, and he stood out in personality and deed. In the Torah lessons that he gave, he was revealed to be a very effective communicator, and was good in his appearances in public – as an accomplished activist, a capable facilitator and a successful orator. He engaged in community work faithfully, especially in the field of the dissemination of Torah, and bolstering the faith, the inculcation of tradition, and the education of the younger generation. A fundamental spiritual force was lost with his death in the Holocaust, both productive and creative. הי"ד.

The rest of the members of the family of the Chief Rabbi, the Rabbi and *Tzaddik* R' Nehemiah Ferlaub זצ"ל, were also very active with all the ardor in their souls and all of their might, in the Jewish community in our city. His son, R' Naphtali Ferlaub (now in Israel) was a pillar of conciliation and the living spirit of 'Mizrahi' in our city – as its representative in the community municipal committee, as its representative to the Zionist Congress, and applied his energies to many institutions. Until he arrived in our city, Jews, religious Zionists, were alone, dispersed among all the houses of study. He corralled these Jews, and formed a community body out of them, whose foundation was a treble love: love of Jewry, love of the Land of Israel, and love of Torah, and from this faith, he was able to create a successful foundation and avoided both controversy and self-aggrandizement. He was an intermediator between the religious and free-thinking, between *Hasidim* and *Mitnagdim.* He would arbitrate between factions, and contributed a great deal to the good feeling that pervaded the community work in our city. He took an aggressive and fundamental stand on all maters of faith and in issues regarding the Holy Land. He served the public and his ideal with devotion and faith.

His daughter, Chana Ferlaub (now in the United States), was, for many years the secretary of the community, and also secretary of the office of the *Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael* in our city. She was very skilled, and diligent, she stood out for being good-hearted, in her refined relationship and concerned interaction with the public, and in her orientation to be of help to the public. Her work in social assistance was especially to be noted. She was careful to guard the reputation of her father's house, and the family tradition, and it could be seen in the way she carried herself.

Of the Great Torah Scholars and the Spirit in Baranovich

The Rabbi, Rabbi Chaim Leib Lubczansky

By Dr. Avigdor Greenspan

I knew this outstanding person. I was privileged to eat at his table, in the company of other invited guests – among them preachers, lecturers, rabbinic emissaries, and righteous teachers – every Tuesday of the week. I observed his way of life, in his relationship to his guests, in his conduct towards the ordinary Jews, and I will attempt to describe, to the extent possible, his lofty persona.

As the Rabbi of the city, Rabbi Chaim Leib excelled in those aspects of thought and deed that, to my way of thinking, serve as a model to the Rabbis of our generation, who in their intelligence and erudition perhaps even exceed him. The entire Jewish population esteemed its Rabbi, who did not pursue fame or honor, but was beloved by the masses, for the way he drew close to the masses: the craftsmen, laborers, small storekeepers, teachers, butchers – it was a pure relationship, free of currying favor, of the desire to win over their hearts in order to consolidate his position as the Rabbi of the city. This closeness emanates from deep spiritual contact with the masses: a feeling of love, compassion and caring was constantly alive within him – participation in the sorrow of the suffering, those without, and those not having a living, w3ith a great impetus to speed help to them, and to alleviate their plight.

He had a folksy *Hasidic* manner about him, a love of Jewry, that brings to mind that renown lover of the Jewish people – R' Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev. As the Rabbi of the city, he would be among those who ruled more leniently with regard to religious law, and in matters of arbitration and disputes between one Jew and another. He was mindful of the both the finances and the suffering of the Jews, and wherever he could, he would always rule permissively in matters of *treyfah*, rottenness of food. etc. It was only, in rare instances, that he would declare a scrawny cow, or bird, to be *Trayf*, when he could not find any recourse among the *Poskim, Rishonim* or *Akharonim*, to rule less severely.... as to the *Makhmirim* – he would opine that – they were slightly dishonest... It was not enough to rely on the *Turei Zahav*[81], the *Ba"Kh*[82], and '*Magen Abraham*,' – 'It is the duty of the *Makhmirim* delve into, and carefully read several 'rulings on the *Halakha*, by the *Akharonim* – and maybe they will find something there to be able to rule less severely...'

As a human being, the Rabbi, R' Chaim Leib excelled in matters of doing good deeds and generosity – in the noblest sense of these words. Those steeped in Mussar, and the thinkers of various generations tried,

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81 Authoritative Halakhic references on the *Shulkhan Arukh*. The ***T**urei **Z**ahav* ("Rows of Gold"), written by R' David HaLevi Segal (c. 1586 - 20 February 1667), is an indispensable commentary on *Shulkhan Arukh* (*Orakh Chaim*), and was published by Shabtai Bass in Dyhernfurth in 1692, together with the *Magen Abraham* by Abraham Abele Gumbiner. Both commentaries (*T"Z* and *Magen Abraham*), together with the main text, the *Shulkhan Arukh*, were republished frequently with several other commentaries, and still hold first rank among Halakhic authorities.

82 Rabbi Joel Sirkes (1561-1640), better known by the acronym BA"Kh, was one of the foremost Talmudic scholars and Halakhists of Poland. He authored over 250 responsa as well as one of the premier commentaries upon the *Arba Turim* of Rabbi Jacob ben Asher.

many times, to find a single way to explain this, however, in respect of the good works of Rabbi Chaim Leib Lubczansky, it is suitable to use the lines employed by the Gaon R' Israel Salanter זצ"ל, who described this as possessing the virtue of being 'good.' 'Good – says Rabbi Israel – is that man who is inclined to forgive someone who has insulted him, and the feelings of vengeance are no source of satisfaction to him as a way of sating himself. B) 'Good' is when it is easier for a man to breathe in an atmosphere of love, fellowship, peace and truth, rather dwell in the ambit of hate, jealousy, enmity and dissension..' C) 'Good' is the man who is able to bear his tribulations and distress without complaining about his lot in life...' These three measures could be found in the first of the Baranovich Rabbis. He was a pauper, without means, for his entire life – and not only did he not complain about his luck, but he would also give of his money and bread to the many needy...

Love 'the common folk' and 'the people of the land' because in them you will find unassuming simplicity, modesty, that doesn't impose itself on you, and he was in the habit of explaining the sayings of Rabbi Akiva: 'Would that I could be made a man of the people, and I will bite him like a snake.' What the great *Tana*, who stood out for his love of the common man, was trying to say, he would 'bite' the common man, with words to capture him, leading and directing him in righteous ways, and earn for himself good will... Rabbi Chaim Leib loved the elementary school teachers, and the rest of the cohorts of teachers – and he had a special relationship to the teacher Yitzhak Malakhowsky. This was a taciturn teacher, tranquil in relation to people in general, and his students. He was a man without bitterness... in the Great Synagogue, he stood out for his discharge of many duties. He was an excellent Torah reader, a reciter of the Psalms before a large audience of listeners, and lovers of the Psalms. He also excelled in leading services. He was among those who would come to the Rabbi's house. The latter would say, that for the sake of Yitzhak Malakhowsky, those who observe the Law continue to exist in Baranovich.

The Rabbi R' Israel Yaakov Lubczansky

By Dr. A. G.

A one-of-a-kind personality, wondrous, that only the old Byelorussian-Lithuanian Judaism – was capable of producing. This scholar had many virtues. They are all enumerated in Pirkei Avot, and he embodied them all. as enumerated by our Sages of Blessed Memory – possessed in truth by a man of the Jews – and to him were the greatest of the great, and in connection with Rabbi Israel Yaakov, it is appropriate to use a different measure, as each generation has its own great men. The assessment of the *Tana* in Pirkei Avot takes the form of hyperbole and uniqueness – this is the maximum of the spiritual attributes that can be found in the heart of a great Jew, the unique member of his time, but there is also an average and a minimum – there is the middle ground of the founder of the *Tanya,* which even it, despite its mediocrity, circumscribes a person with greatness and even genius. The author of the *Tanya* himself likens his own spirituality as average – to be consistent with his own level of *Hasidism* and learning. However, in the case of Rabbi Lubczansky, it is proper to assign an assessment slightly different from the others, with which one is wont to engage in critical assessment of acts , each in their category, of the generational great men. From this standpoint, Rabbi Israel Yaakov, according to his erudition and stature in all areas of Torah study, was not among the greats of his



Page 253: ***The Rabbi R' Israel Yaakov Lubczansky,*** הי"ד

time. However, he could be called a 'good Jew' based on all of his attributes. 'A good Jew' not in the *Hasidic* sense, or in the sense of a Chief Rabbi, but rather in the measure of his soul, whose virtues and attributes were outstanding. 'A good Jew' in the sense of being alert to every thing requiring charity, participating in the sorrow of the community, effusive with great compassion, eager to do the generous thing to everyone of embittered soul, or in a distressed time, and an unbounded commitment to the study of Torah for its own sake – and all of this with a genuine sense of modesty, that was practically childlike...

He was thought of as one of the Heads of the Greater Yeshiva in Baranovich, but the truth of the matter is that he only stood 'at the head of the Yeshiva' in the sense of the 'tradition' leader, and its spiritual guide. He did not offer lessons. Conducting lessons was the province of the Rabbi *Gaon* Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman. Rabbi Lubczansky embodied within himself all of the important attributes of a spiritual guide for Jewish youth, who had decided to dedicate their days to the study of the Torah for its own sake: he had a boundless commitment to his pupils, concerning himself for their sustenance, and providing for those things that they lacked. He had a fear for their future fate, when they left the Yeshiva at the end of their term of study. Who among the Jews of Baranovich, faithful to the tradition, didn't know that at the house of Rabbi Israel Yaakov, tens of young men would find shelter and daily sustenance? And this was support that was unending, as is known, which he covered on his own account, and not on the account of the Yeshiva budget..! But it was not only the Yeshiva students that supped at his table, treating the ordinary young boy in poverty equally along with a Yeshiva student. He was a man who walked a straight line, and studied the Torah. I knew a young man who was a student at the Slonim *Kloyz*, who looked like a beggar, abandoned and wretched, dressed in rags, and always on the edge of hunger. I saw him once, exhausted, walking beside the house of Rabbi Lubczansky, with his tear-filled eyes gazing into the street: 'Where is the residence of Rabbi Israel Yaakov?" – he asked me in a weak voice. I showed him. He went inside, and I followed him – and before my eyes, a scene unfolded that elevated the soul. About fifteen young boys sat around the table. The 'wretch' stood shamefacedly in a corner. He did not have the nerve to even flutter an eyelid. Suddenly, Rabbi Lubczansky walked over to him, and gave him a cup of water: 'Go wash yourself' – he curtly says to him. The young lad did as the Rabbi asked, who sat this hungry one at the head of the table beside the brilliant scholar, Moshe'leh HaMeiri... the 'wretch' sated his hunger with a sumptuous meal.... these were daily occurrences.

Rabbi Israel Yaakov embodied the character of a Hasid and a Mitnaged all in one. In his temperament, he melded together the Hasidic ecstasy, the pure faith, refined, that does not require deep probing into the miraculous or esoteric, the genuine, spontaneous joy all together. He would dance for hours on end at *Siyyum* celebrations like one of the Slonim *Hasidim* or elders from Kotzk. From time to time, he would hear the lore of the *Rebbe* of Slonim – Rabbi Abraham Weinberg, זצ"ל. A *Hasidic* beauty would reveal itself from within him, but not often. His many responsibilities, at the Yeshiva, prevented him from coming together in the company of the *Hasidim* who would be milling about in the courtyard of the *Rebbe*, but he made no secret of the fact, both in his behavior and in what he had to say, that he is an adherent of *Hasidism* and its ways, with an intense love.

But Rabbi Israel Yaakov did not confine himself to just *Hasidism* proper: he was also a *Mitnaged* – with respect to all the 'nuances' that this implies: a scholar, setting time aside for Torah study, probing the obvious and the esoteric, distancing himself from matters that were worthless, from pointless merriment, and from exaggerated tales about *Tzaddikim* and Chief Rabbis. He was one of the students of Rabbi Israel Salanter, and one of the stalwarts of his teaching – according to the interpretation of his well-known father-in-law R' Yekhiel of Novogrudok. Generally speaking, even here, Rabbi Lubczansky stuck to fundamentals. It was not only that he was *Mussar*-oriented – he was an embodiment of *Mussar*: my will is to say that the lore of *Mussar* of the *Gaon* Rabbi Israel Salanter so pervaded his being until it became the essence of his very life... But this *Mussar* system, into which the disciples of Rabbi Israel Salanter put so much of

themselves, and its substantive alignment with the needs of the times, did not strike deep roots in the heart of Rabbi Lubczansky. He received the lore of Rabbi Israel Salanter in its refined, pure form, that is expressed in good deeds, and in idealistic behavior, and a fear of heaven that is far from the feigning of false piety, and makes a mockery of what 'Mussar' really stands for. Torah and the deed came first and foremost in his life and conduct – in one package. Even in his lectures to the Yeshiva students on Sabbath days – in the hours between afternoon and evening prayers – he would emphasize, the essence of Salanter's *Mussar* was comportment according to *Mussar*, that is founded on the basis of day-to-day just behavior. Tears and expressions of regret, however, do help to cleanse the soul, but the weeping and feelings of regret are only means to an end – and that end is – good deeds. A love for doing the right thing for the common good, a love of Torah that is expressed in time formally set aside for study, a study for its own sake, and the teaching of the Torah to others – not for the purpose of receiving some reward... — – – Rabbi Israel, as is know, was killed in the concentration camp at Troki in the Vilna province – it was the place to which he had moved his renown Yeshiva from Baranovich: May the memory of this *Tzaddik* and Martyr be for a Blessing.

The Rabbi, Rabbi Ze'ev Meir Scheinberg, and His Successor Sons

By M. B.

The Rabbi *Gaon* and *Tzaddik*, Rabbi Ze'ev Meir Scheinberg זצ"ל, was the first Rabbi of the *Hasidim* of Baranovich. There is also a symbolic aspect to this precedence, because he was the first man to everything. From my memories of childhood years, his figure appears, suffused with enchanting dignity, and in the radiance of respect and legend. He was like a star in the firmament, flashing like lightning, and was awesome with the force of his personality.



Page 255: ***The Rabbi, R' Ze'ev Meir Scheinberg***

Fortune was against him, and his tragic death brought his creative life to an abrupt end at an early age, at a time when it appeared that his spiritual force had reached a zenith (he died on 25 Av 5676 [August 24, 1916]).

But it was not the calamity of his death that spread the shadow of legend across his life. His personality was replete with miracles, and in their revelation, they sprung from the confines of the Kabbalist. In him, genius, righteousness, generosity and the wisdom of life, all came together. What was miraculous in this – the immense concentration of spiritual powers, intelligence, a willingness to give, and so many ideas in all matters of learning and knowledge, with it all: – the total focus of the forces of his soul. And what qualities of spirit. It was on the foundation of the colorless landscape of Mys that he grew, and became a mighty oak with deep roots, strong it its foundation, and in full glory.

He was a wondrous child, a genius, who left his teachers and instructors befuddled with his acuity. At an early age, he moved to Vilna, and studied Torah, and knowledge for many years, and dwelt in the shadow of the Torah greats, and the sages of that generation. It was there that his character was formed , his personality tempered – and he became the great man that he was.

With the founding of the new Jewish settlement in Baranovich, he was appointed the Rabbi of the Hasidim – and it was here that he was revealed for all his force and intellect. As one of those, who laid the foundation of the new settlement, and one of its builders, he put his imprint on it. With the magic of his personality, he served as a role model of education, and with his appearance, he aroused respect for the Torah and faith in the Sages. Even in our eyes, the children of those times, he seemed akin to a sprout from the stock of the prophets, the fighters for truth and justice, or a legacy of the early kings, his powerful and noble appearance, his venerable presence, and the glory of the person that he was. 'The *Dayan*' (which was his nickname) was the very symbol of a Rabbi, ruling on matters of law truthfully and with justice.

In his relationship with people, and in his judgements, he probed deeply into the souls of men, in the paths he took, and the reasons behind he actions, his reaction, and deeds. The eyes of his spirit were like rays that penetrated to the depths and inner recesses, seeking out the mystery of a person's soul, its complexity and form, and with the power of his wisdom, he was able to influence all those who came in contact with him.

Also, he thorough knowledge of world matters was wondrous. It was not only once, that a Jewish merchant would be surprised, who had come to him for a ruling on complex matters, for the speed with which he grasped the issue. his sharp focus, and the facility of his analysis, especially in his skill at finding a middle ground, and a solution to difficult and seemingly intractable situations.

At the center of the community life, and the spirit of the *Hasidim*, were his interesting lessons in the Talmud. Any single issue would arouse his ordinary day conversation, which were outstanding for their well-honed bolts of thought, that were perceptive and sharp.

His language was rich, substantive, full of fresh humor, and his words were connected to the wisdom of life, refined and clear.

The stories about his greatness were legion. The sparks that flew out from under his hammer, lit up eyes, and illuminated the hearts of his students along their life's journey. The description of his students, and those close to him, appeared fell short of expressing the degree of respect that they accorded him, and there were times when their relationship to him stopped with silent admiration.

One of them said to me once: 'There are those, and others.... there are scholars, teachers and enlightened people, people who have learned, obtained knowledge and grew wise, – but despite this, their lore creates the impression of reflected light, an empty vessel, from one source to the next. The lore of our Rabbi was a fountain, as if his very soul was the source of light and wisdom.'

The remnants of his writings were lost in the Holocaust. ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.



After the sudden death of the Rabbi *Gaon* R' Ze'ev Meir Scheinberg זצ"ל, his widow, the *Rebbetzin* ז"ל remained burdened with a large family of small children. The rabbinical seat remained vacant for many years until his son, R' Nissan ז"ל grew up, and took his fathers seat and continued the rabbinic tradition.

R' Nissan was an intellectual who was also great in spirit. From his youth onwards, he dug deeply to the roots of truth, and the foundations of the faith. He was a man of strong adherence to faith, and possessed great ardor for *Hasidism.* His heart was open to the issues of the time, and his heart was alert to the tribulations of people and their suffering. He shared the yoke of the community, like a father sharing pain,

and was aggravated by the absence of the Divine Spirit. He was a man of energy and action, living a life of fevered creativity, amid an imperative of personal dedication and self-sacrifice.

He had [sic: the proverbial] 'clean hands and an unblemished soul, despising falsehood and hypocrisy, honor and material gain, with his entire soul. His heart was completely suffused with love: – the love of God, the love of Man, the love of the Jewish people, and the love of friends. He was self-effacing and modest in his bearing. As much as he used to shake the world about the suffering of an individual, or the straitened circumstances of some community institution, he would conceal his own troubles, and the specific difficulties of his own family, even from those who were closest to him.

There was no limit to his impulse to rush to provide help for the common good. The central pride of his life – education, to which he dedicated all his spiritual resources and time, and in it, saw a blessing in the raising of a young generation that continues the legacy of Torah, and the faith, anew, and the tradition of dedication to God, the dedication of the Jewish man, and the dedication of one's life.

In his last days, in the ghetto of Baranovich, all the greatness of his soul was revealed, until he died a martyr's death, when he ascended a scaffold, with the same ardor that he exhibited throughout his life. ת.נ.צ.ב.ה, הי"ד.

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His younger brother, R' Yehuda Scheinberg הי"ד was a great student of Torah and wise, understanding and perceptive, comfortable in his views, venerable in appearance, organized in his affairs, and pleasant in his relationship with others. He was an eager learner, focused and centered on his study.

He studied Torah for many years at the Yeshiva of the '*Chafetz Chaim*' זצ"ל in Radun, excelling in his studies, and he did great things with the Torah. With energy and in a fundamental way, he prepared himself for the future, absorbing all that was good and beautiful from the great Yeshivas of Lithuania.

The first step in his life, was s the Rabbi on the suburb of New-Baranovich.

He was never silent, and did not vegetate in his post. He was always in a state of continuous development. A bright future was predicted for him in the Rabbinic world, and in the field of public service.

His young, and fresh life was cut short in the Holocaust. הי"ד.

The Rabbi *Gaon* Elchanan Wasserman

By Dr. A. G.

R' Elchanan Wasserman was both throughly versed and analytical, all embodied in one person. He was one who believed in simple explanation, not seeking to bend the true, simple meaning of a concept by means of casuistry, he was sharp of mind, knowing how to hew a straight line of reasoning by way of logic, to resolve contrary opinions, contradictions, and quandaries in a Talmudic discourse.

The *Gaon*, Rabbi Israel Salanter – writes his student Rabbi Yitzhak Blazer, in his book '*Ner Yisrael*' – was often heard to say, that those who engage in casuistry, the greater majority, 'know the truth, but conspire to rebel against it'... because using casuistry, it is possible to 'render an unclean animal to be fit to be eaten, in

150 different ways.' – a characteristic that was unique to the *Tana* Rabbi Meir – and he did not make use of it for the sake of truth... the straightforward interpreters, the ones who engaged in direct explanation – they seek the truth, that had temporarily disappeared to them, and when they find it – it is not only that they do not rebel against it, but quite the opposite, they commit themselves to it with their entire soul... this was the way Rabbi Elchanan conducted study.

When he was giving a lesson to his students, he would fold over the *'K'tzot'* and '*Pnei Yehoshua*,' *'Shita Mekubetzet*,' and '*Urim v'Tummim*' together: these books differ in their temperament, but as someone looking for the simple meaning, and willing to delve deeply, Rabbi Elchanan knew how to find the 'common thread' withing them, that makes them part of a single whole – in the research of *Halakha*. He was one of the pupils of the '*Chafetz Chaim*' who never ceased to praise him, all the days of his life – despite the fact that the student surpassed his teacher in depth, and in the force of his reasoning...he taught that planting good deeds and a genuine fear [of God] in the hearts of those who learn Torah, and the Yeshiva youth – was a pre-requisite to completing one's adoption of *Mussar*. And for this reason – Rabbi Elchanan set aside hours, in his Yeshiva, for the study of the '*Mishna Berurah*' of the '*Chafetz Chaim*,' – and here we come to an essential component of his life: this is Rabbi Elchanan, as the Headmaster of the Yeshiva, and as a spiritual leader.



Page 257: ***The Rabbi, R' Elchanan Wasserman*** הי"ד

To be the Headmaster and leader of a Yeshiva, in which about four hundred students studied, is not an easy task. Many of them preferred speed, and focus, whose purpose was the increase knowledge and Torah lore. Among these are the ones who avoid of 'plumbing the depths of a matter' and do not value thoroughness of understanding that comes from a 'focused' approach. Many subscribe to the clear explanations 'That opens the eyes,' such as the style of the *NTzi"V* of Volozhin, the point-blank explanations of Rabbi Chaim Leib Tiktin – the Headmaster of the Mir Yeshiva, sixty years ago, who was a *Gaon* in 'Teaching from the Source,' and others. Understandably, a Yeshiva student would related to his Headmaster, based on his own personal inclination... if he were one in favor of literal, simple explanation – he would praise the Headmaster who taught this way, and not the analyst. If the student were gifted with an analytical mind, he would prefer the'Head' that engaged in casuistry, grinding one concept against another. This was the situation at the Yeshiva of Volozhin, where, for many years, two Rabbis served in the capacity of Headmaster: the *NTzi"V*, who was the simple explicator, and R' Joseph Dov – the analyst. Many of the Volozhin students – who preferred the simple explication, leaned to the side of the *NTzi"V*, and hardly ever attended the lessons given by Rabbi Joseph Dov. And yet, many of them, quite the opposite, being inclined to deep probing, followed Rabbi Joseph Dov, and were rather distant from the *NTzi"V*... but this was not the relationship to Rabbi Elchanan – in Minsk, Shmuelwicz, and in Baranovich, all the students, without exception, loved him. All of them – the simple explicators and those who delve deeply – took in his lessons eagerly and happily: his style of teaching, as said above, was a unifying synthesis between analysis and thoroughness. As a leader, he also excelled in his honesty. He loved all the Yeshiva students equally: he related to them like a father, even to the laggards. From time-to-time he would travel outside the country, for the sake of fund-raising for the Yeshiva. He spent many months in London, and New York, living there under meager circumstances. In the years 5680-81 (1920-1) – the years of economic crisis in Poland – the state of the Yeshiva was very run down. The students were literally hungry for bread. At that time, Rabbi Elchanan led a very spare and circumscribed existence in his own home. He would have a slice of bread , and pickled cabbage for his meal. To the question of the

perceptive Rabbi Hirsch: 'Why does the Rabbi afflict his body with these meager foods?' – he answered: 'My students have no bread – am I suppose to satisfy myself with meat and soup?

I once asked Abraham the Baker: 'What is the difference between your *Rebbe* – Rabbi Abraham of Slonim, and the Rabbi of the Yeshiva students, Rabbi Elchanan?' – and I got an unvarnished, direct response from him: Your *Rebbe*, Rabbi Elchanan, is a perfect *Tzaddik,* but he is only to himself, and our *Rebbe*, is a *Tzaddik* to himself and others, and his desire is that the sons of Baranovich also be righteous people who walk the straight and narrow.' Despite this, Rabbi Elchanan was zealous in faith, to the Torah, and mitzvot, and also to general ideas and opinions. By and large, the zealous 'righteousness that is aimed at exculpating the majority and earning them a place in the World to Come, was not in him. Several times, the *Gabbaim* asked him to come and lecture in the *Great Bet HaMedrash*, on issues pertaining to '*Mussar*, and How to Conduct One's Self" and he put them off with the answer that: for this purpose there are lecturers and sermon givers, and I am not among them. Within the ambit of the Yeshiva, he was zealous to a great extent: he forbade his students to read newspapers other than '*Das Vort*,' of the *Agudah*, and stringently forbade them from participating in the '*Oneg Shabbat*' that took place in the synagogue of the Zionists, sensing apostasy and a lack of supervision by the leader of the *'Oneg Shabbat*', and other things. However, all of these decrees were only with respect to his students. He was not so stringent with himself... few in Baranovich knew, that Rabbi Elchanan was a man of ideas, delving deeply into concepts and thought, reading books on philosophy with relish.. he was fluent in German, because of his roots in Riga , and he had a significant philosophy library. He was decidedly unsympathetic to Zionism. He thought of the 'Easterners' as going off in the wrong direction, because they fold together 'nationalism and religion'... but as a righteous man, he was very careful to respect human dignity. He never upbraided the leaders of secular outlooks. And it is sufficient to read the polemical words, that he occasionally published in the *Agudah* press, in order to see how careful he was in his choice of language. There was only one mitzvah that he guarded more zealously that all others: On every Friday, before candles were lit, he would be in the habit of going from one store to the next, and quietly announce: Close the store: It is the Holy Sabbath!' And the storekeepers, as you might understand, complied with his 'order.'

Rabbi Elchanan was in the habit of saying to his admirers, who wanted once to organize a public debate with the atheists: those who are among the ranks of the atheists it is not possible to return to good standing, to make them contrite. To whom will they return? To God – they don't believe in Him – and to prove His existence to them, that of the Holy One, Blessed Be He, is impossible. A Jew needs to apprehend this from his inner being,' and they are simply not equipped for this, and since they are spiritually defective in this way, there is no medicine to affect a cure...'

About Rabbi Elchanan's Persona

By M. B.

The grandeur of Baranovich was upon him. he was one of the last of the greats in the chain of renown Torah scholars in Lithuania.

With his arrival in Baranovich, after the First World War, the Yeshiva 'Ohel Torah' rose from a minor Yeshiva to a Great Yeshiva, enjoying worldwide fame and reputation, and many students streamed to it, from many lands. A large group of Rabbis, renown for Torah scholarship, congregated about him, who were also distinguished in Mussar, and good deeds, such as Rabbi Shlomo Faritzer (Poritzer?), Rabbi David, the author of '*Tzemakh David*,' Rabbi Israel Yaakov, Rabbi Hirsch Gutman, R' Leib Brisker, and others; additionally, there were learned *balebatim* such as R' Ze'ev Wigodsky, R' Sholom Dereczin, R' Mendl Goldberg, R' Yekhiel Rabinovich, and others.

Apart from his great stature in Torah scholarship, the Rabbi *Gaon* R' Elchanan זצ"ל was wise in the ways of the world, fluent in languages, a student of fundamental ideas, and one would researches deeply, engaging in community activity, and occupying a central place among the great Torah sages of the country and the world. After the death of the Gaon Tzaddik Rabbi Israel Meir *HaKohen* זצ"ל, of Radun, the author of *'Chafetz Chaim'* and others – he was thought (by many) as the successor as the spiritual leader of religious Jewry in Lithuania and Poland.

He possessed a strong personality, was straight and traditional. He lived with a critical spiritual soul. He enforced an iron discipline on himself, and did not waste a minute of his time. He was straight, focused, and had personality.

He did not arrive at this greatness and to creative deeds by lightly skipping over the road, but rather because of his considerable diligence and the force of his intellect. His teaching dug deep, and his analysis was conducted with the scalpel of refined conceptual thought, and he did not relent from the issue and didn't involve himself in tangential complexities; when he needed to act, he did not permit confusion or delays to take control of him.

Not once, when the Yeshiva came to a point of crisis – and the Jews who sacrificed their energies for the Yeshiva, such as R' Chai'kl the Scribe, R' Zim'l Kushnir and others, didn't succeed in stemming the outbreaks, would come to Rabbi Elchanan and told him that the food for the students had run out; he would immediately stopped his study, and approached one of the *balebatim*, such as R' Ze'ev Wigodsky, R' Yekhiel Rabinovich, and say to him: Listen, this is the situation: I have shut down my activity, perhaps you can shut down yours, and we will both go out and collect money?! – It goes without saying that no man refused him, and after an hour had passed, he returned to his study of the Mishna, with alacrity and dedication, as if nothing had happened.

As great as he was, so was his simplicity and modesty. He did not pursue fame, and did not run from it, but simply, he didn't pay attention to it, and didn't think about it. I am reminded of one detail. In the twilight of *Shaleshudes* or at the time of the lighting of Hanukkah candles in the house of the Hasidim, his large frame could occasionally be seen when he would stand at the side, and listen in on a Torah discussion led by the Rabbi of Slonim. The *Hasidim* held him in great esteem, despite knowing that he did not want to have his way of life disturbed, they did not disturb him with matters of honoring him. He simply stood to the side – and listened....

Apart from his novel insights, that were published in the monthly '*Ohel Torah*' before the Holocaust he managed to publish Talmudic research called '*Kovetz Hearot*' about the tractate '*Yevamot*.' Being modest, as usual, but characteristic of the author, who was a master of focusing in on the essential idea; as one Yeshiva Headmaster said to me once: the insight of Rabbi Elchanan זצ"ל plowed a deep furrow and opens broad vistas, it would open up the thinking of the student, engage his thought processes, and hone his talent for fundamental research.

To His Memory

They tell, at the onset of the Holocaust, when it was proposed to Rabbi Elchanan that he flee – he pushed the proposal aside and said: and this, the flock, what will happen to them? If parents have sent their sons to the Baranovich Yeshiva, this was out of a sense they could depend on me, and that they had faith in me... and then, how could I leave the students – I put my life up for them, as it is written: I will stand in his place, it is from my hands that you will come to demand him.'

From His Tales



Page 260: ***The Rabbi R' Yehoshua Medvetzky***

I heard two stories from him about Rabbi Israel Salanter זצ"ל. Once, Rabbi Israel Salanter was asked: A buy man, who does not even have a half an hour of free time during the day, what is incumbent upon him to study – *Tanakh*, Talmud, *Halakha*, or *Aggadah*?

– It is incumbent upon him to learn Mussar, until it becomes evident to him that everything is a 'vanity of vanities.' Then, he will make some additional hours available during the day, to study the other offshoots of the Torah....

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A student once asked his teacher, R' Israel Salanter, for permission to undertake a community activity, for the common good. The Rabbi imposed three conditions: that he should not tire himself out, that he should not get angry, and that he should not put anything off, but to finish off an item before it is due, and before it's time for completion arrives.

The Rabbi R' Yehoshua Medvetzky – 'The *Dayan* from Sztowicz [83]

By Yitzhak Yudelewicz

The noble persona of our Rabbi, the Rabbi R' Yehoshua Medvetzky זצ"ל – was totally of pure bliss, and an aura of holiness.

Who among the worshipers of the '*New Bet HaMedrash*' on the Ulanska *Gasse*, does not remember the '*Dayan* from Sztowicz'? (His nickname).

It is the night of *Kol Nidre*. Everyone is wrapped in their prayer shawl and *kittl*, and the Dayan stands beside the lectern, the Holy Ark is open, and the dignitaries of the congregation are holding the Torah scrolls in their hands, and there is a tiny, still voice... in a dulcet tone, the *Dayan* begins the recitation of '*Kol Nidre*' and after that, he ascends the *Bima,* and in a voice, choked with tears, he begins to offer a sermon on matters of the day...

Who cannot remember his sweet prayer during those Days of Awe, accompanied by the congregation? He was a quiet, modest man; it was not his nature to enter into a quarrel or disagreement, He lived a pauper's life – and was contented with his lot.

During the time he was in Baranovich, from the year 5662 (1902) to 5692 (1932), approximately thirty years – he served as the *Dayan* of Baranovich.

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83 A seeming misprint for either Stalovičy of Stoubcy.

In 5692, he made aliyah to Jerusalem, and he passed away on the first day of *Selichot* of 5695 (1935). WE note, that separated for long life, are his grandsons, who were saved from the clutches of the Nazis, and today are to be found in the United Stares; two of his granddaughters are in Jerusalem.

The Rabbi, R' Yekhiel Mikhl Rabinovich

By M. B.

The Rabbi *Gaon* R' Yekhiel Mikhl Rabinovich ז"ל was a central figure over a period of many years in Jewish religious life in Baranovich.

He was a forest merchant, who was a wondrous scholar, and a great Torah scholar. In his time, he published a book, '*Afikei Yam*,' and his interest – researches in Talmud and *Halakha*, which went on to earn much praise, and earned him a name in the scholarly world.

He had the blessed temperament of a man of Torah and practical life, a man of energy and creativity, when it came to community life.

He was one of the builders of the Yeshiva '*Ohel Torah*' and one of the founders of the '*Gemilut Hesed*,' and the head of '*Agudat Yisrael*' and its leader for those years that he was in our city.

The crowning achievement of his creation – the *Shas* study group that drew the best of the students around it, and the more important *balebatim* of the city, and served as a center for cultural work, and constructive community efforts (its location was in the craftsmen's *Bet HaMedrash*, '*Poalei Tzedek*'). Here he was revealed to be an expert in clarifying and communication. His lessons attracted many. His style of presentation was captivating and even spellbinding: he analyzed an idea, explained the basis and foundations for the subject, until the matter became clear and evident.

He also concerned himself with the education of the common folk, and the lessons he gave on Sabbath nights on the portion of the week (in the Great *Bet HaMedrash*) drew hundreds of people. These lessons emanated from the confines of 'lessons' and became a discussion for purposes of explanation. He would explain a variety of these portions, and raise a host of ideas from the world of *Halakha* and *Aggadah*.

With his great scholarship, he was not absent from secular life. He concerned himself with those issues that worried the community, taking interest in the essential detail. In 5686 (1926), when the 'Gemilut Hesed' organizations were founded in Poland, he was the first to arouse the energies to establish a 'Gemilut Hasadim' organization in our City, calling for gatherings and meetings, organizing fund-raising, and explained the concept behind *Gemilut Hesed*' to many groups, got in contact with the central organizations in the country, and solicited their contributions and loans, until he accomplished his goal.

His son, Rabbi Yitzhak Rabinovich was talented and successful, a faithful heir to the inclinations and talents of his father, with the additional experience and modern enlightenment. For many years, he was the spiritual leader of the *'Tze'irei Agudat Yisrael'* in our city.

In the last years, before the Second World War, the Rabbi Gaon R' Yekhiel Rabinovich ז"ל was appointed as the Rabbi of Scucyn, however, in a community sense, he never really left Baranovich. He put the imprint of his signature on community life in the city, and his impact on religious Jewish life there was especially recognized, the city with which he remained in active contact until the Holocaust.

The Exponents of Slonim *Hasidism*, and its Leaders in Baranovich

The Rabbi *Tzaddik* Rabbi Moshe Midner

The central figure, and the living spirit of the group of *Hasidim* in the Yeshiva, was Rabbi Moshe Midner, זצ"ל.

He was a genius, for whom great things were anticipated, from he early youth. Trained in the *Kabbalah*, a *Tzaddik* enveloped in mystery, surrounded by an air of the fear of heaven, and trepidation of the holy, by the few who were close to him, and the many who held him in esteem.

He was self-effacing in the extreme, and modest in his step, refusing to be called '*Rebbe*' or to pray beside the Eastern Wall in the synagogue, and he would rebuke those who rose before him.

For his entire life, he secluded himself, sunken in the Torah, *Hasidism*, and *Kabbalah,* miracles and their origins.

His modesty limited his fame and the degree of his influence. During his lifetime, he never published anything of his own, and after his death, whatever he left behind, vanished in the destruction of Polish Jewry; he was a deputy at the home of the Chief Rabbi זצ"ל of Slonim in Baranovich, and was destroyed with his house. Only shards remain, fragments of things that he said, that were recorded by his students.



Page 261: ***The Rabbi, R' Moshe Midner***

A composition of his called, '*Abjure Evil and Do Good*' is a great book in Torah and *Hasidim*, and was ready to go to press, and in the introduction, he noted that he was the author, in order that his name and memory not be erased from Israel.

In his last years. he stood at the head of the leadership of the Yeshiva of the *Hasidim*, and through the power of his office, he was given the opportunity on occasion to come in contact with the 'outside world.' And it was in this fashion that he met with the great Torah scholars of Lithuania, Yeshiva Headmasters, and community activists. Also, the doors of his house were open to the 'ordinary Jew' that turned to him when they were distressed.

He also came into general contact with the *Hasidic* community during the Sabbath and Festival days. On Sabbath nights, he would sit together with them, and join the world of song. Here as well, he hewed a narrow line in the refined and pure expression of the *Hasidic* soul in the expression of its yearnings. He was in the habit of analyzing every melody, attempting to apprehend how it was created, its intent and expression, and severely criticize every counterfeit theme and expression of an alien influence on the folksy melody. His song and prayer was like a restrained fire.

Those close to him, would come to visit him on Saturday night, after the Sabbath, the few that were so privileged, and the his normally closed heart would be opened with tales of the Hasidim that he was reading in the Oral Law, which would held the listeners in thrall. Both the teller and the listener were transformed, as if by some single mysterious experience.

The image of Rabbi Moshe Midner זצ"ל is etched into my memory from the time I saw him on one winter evening, as he stood, bent over his books, between two wax candles that were lit, sunk in contemplation. This was the way he studied all of his life, all night long, dozing off for a couple of hours during the day, during the early morning hours, and before nightfall. Amid the darkness of the room full of books, he appeared – with his high and vaulted forehead, his black flaming eyes – the wraith of a man of spirit, delving deeply to uncover the workings of life.

As a man of great intellect and great heart, the acuity of Kotzk and the ardor of Slonim were blended in him. Accordingly, there was a great resemblance between his manner, and the descriptions and stories about R' Mendl, the first *Rebbe* of Kotzk. And it is not by chance, that he was the source of inspiration for an actor from a Vilna troupe, in acting out the role of the *Tzaddik*, in '*The Dybbuk*.'

He spent a certain part of his life in Brisk, and would come in contact with the *Gaon* Rabbi Chaim [Soloveitchik] of Brisk, who knew him and respected him. People who were witnesses said that once R' Chaim said to him – a new insight into the Torah, once he sensed that R' Moshe did not accept its validity, caused him to turn to his student – and reminded him to take out that section from his writings. R' Moshe was upset by this, but R' Chaim returned the observation that: If this Jewish man doesn't accept this new way of looking at the question – it is a sign that something is not in order.

The learning style of R' Moshe followed the method of the concordance; he would open an issue from the *Tanakh*, review it in the *Talmud*, then the *Poskim* and Responsa, *Rishonim* and *Akharonim*, examine and weigh, decompose and analyze, spread apart and examine, listen and concur – and then reach his conclusions.

In his studying, he sought truth, but only the truth, without any tangential distraction. Once, in a conversation about Torah with a Yeshiva Headmaster, the latter offered him a thought about the laws pertaining to women.

–Do you permit an *Agunah*[84], on the basis of this idea? – R' Moshe attempted to enlighten him.

– No! – his conversation partner replied.

– Well if that is the case, why did you say it? – R' Moshe asked.

– For the sake of it! – the man replied.

– With me, there is no 'for the sake of it' – R' Moshe called out.

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84 A Halakhic term used for a woman who is "chained" to her marriage. It is also often used nowadays for a woman whose husband refuses or is unable to grant her an official, religious bill of divorce, known as a *get*. It also is used in cases of a woman who has a husband whose fate is unknown (dead, missing, etc.), where there is not a formal permission for her to be able to re-marry, should she so desire.

He tended to keep to himself, but did not segregate himself from others. He was gifted with a unique sense of grasping the situation, and he would react to what was going on, in his own fashion.

I remember one time, when an item appeared in the *Haredi* press of Poland, with regard to the question of the congregations that were different (for example in Germany), he was shaken, and exclaimed: 'Who is this, that has the nerve to determine who is a Jew, and who is not a Jew! And what soul is from the core of Jewry, and its quarry, and which is not!... Or when the troublesome news of the hostilities of 5689 (1929) in Israel [sic: the Hebron massacres] reached him, he was first struck dumb, but recovered his composure and said: 'I do not know if the world has gone dark, or is it my eyes – they have gone blind; I can see nothing!'

R' Moshe developed into a legend during his lifetime. Those close to him did not dare to speak praises of him, even in his absence, because they know of his extreme modesty, and were loathe to suffer the upbraiding of his fiery reproof. Nevertheless, there was whispering about all manner of miraculous and bizarre revelations.

I recall, that while still during his life, it was told about a poor, wandering Jew, that entered the house of R' Moshe, during the month of Elul, to ask for a charitable donation: R' Moshe gave it to him, and asked him: 'Where are you from, my Jewish man? Will you be traveling home for the coming High Holy Days?' He replied, 'I am far from my home, and my circumstances are dire.' R' Moshe called to him: 'It is your obligation to travel for the High Holy Days back to your home!' And when he left, he [R' Moshe] turned and repeated himself: 'It is your obligation to travel for the High Holy Days back to your home!' he Jewish man then went into the home of R' Noah, the father-in-law of the *Dayan* of Sztowicz, who at that time, was a neighbor. He told him the story, and asked him to share his thoughts. R' Noah said to him: 'If that man tells you something – don't delay, travel!' In days, it became clear that an incident had occurred to the poor man, and there was also a matter of an inheritance that improved his situation.

The *Hasid*, R' Zaydl Shatzkes, one of the people close to R' Moshe once asked him in a conversation, according to his recollection, did he remember the incident of the poor Jew whom he had told to travel home for the High Holy Days? R' Moshe replied: 'It is nothing!' I had a hunch that some severe decree was hanging over this man, and I said, it is better that he be home for the High Holy Days with his family.

In a like manner, those close to him tell that it was as if his in his stars, he foresaw that his departure was imminent, and arriving. In his last year, the Hanukkah lights were not lit by him, in accordance with the Halakha, he sighed, and said to a number of young boys that stood beside him: 'The Hanukkah candles were not lit at the home of R' Yekhiel of Mys during the last year of his life.'

He was in the habit of exchanging books on loan with Rabbi Elchanan. One time Rabbi Elchanan sent a student of his to get a book back. When the student arrived and conveyed the request of his Rabbi, R' Moshe said to him: 'Right now, I am in need of this book, in a short while, I will no longer have need of it.' A couple of weeks went by, and R' Moshe died, and at that time, Rabbi Elchanan said, that the reply he gave to his messenger seemed very strange in his eyes.

R' Moshe died in the seventieth year of his life, before the Holocaust. At his funeral, no eulogies were given, in accordance with his wishes. His coffin was taken into the house of the Hasidim, and placed beside the Holy Ark, and the Rabbi R' Abraham זצ"ל, from Slonim read the *Slikha* prayer, 'People of Faith Have Been Lost' that was like a threnody in his mouth – and the immense congregation cried out in tears.

Through the exertions of R' Zaydl Shatzkes, from those close to him, who was committed to him, heart and soul, a headstone was erected on his grave. In the month of Elul, and the High Holy Days, or in any time of

trouble, people would go to his grave – and from that time forward, the New Baranovich cemetery gained a reputation. [The older people stopped repeating the decree, 'The end of a man is to die (to go to Mys)']

[85]

'Between Two Mountains'

The meetings between the two great men: Rabbi Elchanan and Rabbi Moshe Midner, remind one of the air of 'between two mountains.' These were the officials of two worlds, that knew how to accord respect and appreciate the worth of one's fellow man, even if one stands firmly on his own opinion. When there were serious issues that urgently required compromise, they would always consult with each other.

– Do you have the Holy Spirit (Prophecy)? – Rabbi Elchanan once inquired ironically of Rabbi Moshe Midner, during a particularly difficult conversation going on between them.

– In any case, the old Holy Spirit! – Rabbi Moshe Midner replied – and in ever thought and deed, it is necessary to examine and apprehend what is the cause and effect in the matter, whether there is a Holy Spirit in a person, or the opposite.

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They were once talking about a specific character, and Rabbi Elchanan wrinkled his nose, to which R' Moshe Midner said to him: 'And is it permissible to malign someone with the nose,' that is to say, if it is forbidden to utter calumny with the mouth, is it then proper to do so by wrinkling one's nose. After all, it is written, *'For in their anger, they have killed men.'*[86]

❁

One time, Rabbi Elchanan said to Rabbi Moshe Midner: In essence, what did *Hasidism* accomplish?

– It reversed the role of the walls, because previously there was the East Wall and its worshipers – the people of pedigree, and now, the wall has become the West one, and those who pray there are the one's with a pedigree.

R' Moshe replied by saying: It was not only a subversion of walls that took place here, but a subversion of order and of hearts.

The Rabbi *Tzaddik* Rabbi Abraham Weinberg The Chief Rabbi of the Slonim *Hasidim* of Baranovich

By M. B.

His life was forty-nine years, and fourteen years – his tenure of service, during which time, he was revealed in his entire stature as a leader. He was one of the stabilizing pillars of *Hasidism*, and one of the personalities that is central to the conclave of great Torah scholars in Poland.

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85 A play on Hebrew pronunciation.

86 The reference is to Jacob's deathbed blessing, Genesis 49:6, where he excoriates Simeon and Levi for their behavior. The play is on the word 'anger' which comes from the same Semitic root as the word for 'nose.'

He was not one who continued tradition in the ordinarily understood sense. The core of his experience lay in the resistance to the senescence of faith, the falling of spirit, the dissipation of the tradition, and degeneration of *Hasidism*. A challenge to the power of a creative force in *Hasidism.*



Page 265: ***The Chief Rabbi, R' Abraham Weinberg***

A person of stormy disposition and one that stood out, reaching great heights and plumbing profound depths. A man of research, and ideas, of song and story, a fire stemming from a hunger for knowledge. A thirst for action and a craving for spiritual elevation. He looked for new paths in *Hasidism*, and yearned for the rectification of man and the world. He has a stormy temperament, and yet ascetic and absorbing in his persona, he cut himself off for years and devoted himself exclusively to study. While he kept to himself, he did not segregate himself from the community.

After the passing of his father, the Rabbi R' Shmuel זצ"ל of Slonim, most of the seniors in the *Kollel* were drawn to follow him, both the elders and the youth. They saw someone who could lead the way, and an elevated symbol who struggled with himself and his environment.

Hasidism was, for him, the lesson of life, the way to guide action, in 'all the ways that you go.'

During his tenure, between the two world wars, troubles multiplies and the quandaries grew sharper. He lived his life in a state of high spiritual condition. As a courageous fighter, he did not accept retreat, and showed interest in everything. He was faithful to his teaching, and would examine each idea, investigate every deed, as to what each contained of the refined truth, and how free they were from the dross of ego and consternation. For himself, his students, and those who were close to him, he hewed a line of severe self-criticism. And during his time, he never turned a person away, and those that turned to him, always found understanding, encouragement, and help from him. In matters of dealing with the individual, he abided by the spirit of the *Hasidic* saying: 'The world was created for me,' that ever person has his own place in the world.
From the specific to the general.

Hasidism was the lore of his life, the way to conduct one's self, 'in all your ways' in the group, the host and its *Kollel.* He left the issues of the *Kollel* to the Rabbinate and the community activists. With the waning of faith, a change took place in this connection as well – *Hasidism* sensed the need to take responsibility for the public, and was elevated by the assuming the yoke of public service.

His alertness, and interest in community affairs, and the times, opened up broad horizons to him for action. He grasped the need for reform and change, and he led forays in the shaking up of organizations, particularly in the economic sphere.

As I think about him, before my eyes, the image of the years of his life rise up, the days of the Festivals and Sabbaths, especially the Days of Awe. Hasidim came streaming to him for all over the country. There were waves of loyalty and religious ardor around him. The Hasidim would stand spellbound in his compassion and pity, for days and nights, listening to his prayers, his lore and his song.

His praying was stormy and emotional. and there were times when it subsided int the [sic: traditional] 'thin reedy voice,' His voice was sweet and full of heart, he was a sparkling conversationalist, a man of intellect and one that stimulated thought.

His teachings were partly transcribed by his student, the Rabbi R' Sholom, Berezovsky, and excerpts of them were published in folios and publications of the Yeshiva 'Bet Abraham' in Jerusalem.

There was a unique magic to his melodies. His song was saturated with longing and yearning that could make the soul expire. It was a sort of praying without words.

His influence on the *Hasidim* in general, and in all details, was strong.

If he was like this on ordinary days, he was all the more so on Sabbaths and Festival Holidays. On those days, the *Hasidim* would come to him to relieve themselves of reality, and find solace for the yearning in their souls in fervent prayer, in emotional song, and stormy dance.

With a powerful love, and a burning loyalty, he would speak the praises of the Land of Israel and of its sacredness. In 5689 (1929) he visited the Land, and when he returned, he was even more marvelous in its praise. He was very careful about maligning the Land, and abstained from all criticism of the new settlement there. His words encouraged the new *aliyah* of the *Hasidim*, whose experience it was to found the synagogue and the Yeshiva 'Bet Abraham,' in Jerusalem, and the '*minyan*' of the Slonim *Hasidim* in Tel-Aviv and B'nai Brak.

All the days of his short life, the man fought, until he was consumed by his own fire. His death was a trauma to the Slonim *Hasidim* that came before the Holocaust.

He passed away on the Second Day of *Rosh Hodesh* Iyyar 5699 (April 20, 1939). Several weeks before he died, he made his last visit to the Land, and while he was in Jerusalem, he gathered together a number of his Hasidim, and told them to establish a '*minyan,*' and to preserve it at all cost. With his own hands, he laid the cornerstone for the building, and said that it was his will that this be a place of torah and prayer. His final wish in the Land was a sort of last will, and was realized.

It was on this spot that the synagogue and the Yeshiva 'Bet Abraham' rose, bearing his name.

To His Memory

The Slonim *Rebbe* once inquired of one of his *Hasidim*, if he sets aside time to study Torah, or participated in *Hasidic* festivities? The *Hasid* sighed and said: What is the purpose of such a thing, if I am exhausted and fall asleep all the time? Nevertheless – the *Rebbe* encouraged him – it is not a 'sleep in vain' (a play on words of the expression to 'hate in vain [87]').

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87 In Hebrew, there is a word play going on here between the sound of '*shaynat*' (sleep) and '*sin'at*' (hate).

The Rabbi, Rabbi Shlomo, The Last of the Slonim Chief Rabbis

By M. B.

The Slonim Chief Rabbi, R' Shlomo זצ"ל, was murdered by the Nazis ימ"ש on 6 Heshvan 5704 (November 4, 1943) and found his final resting place in a mass grave in a labor camp beside Baranovich. –



Page 267: ***The Chief Rabbi R' Shlomo*** הי"ד

The Holy Chief Rabbi was the fourth generation in his family to be the Chief Rabbi of Slonim. The progenitor of the line was the Rabbi Abraham זצ"ל from Slonim, known as the '*Yesod-HaAvoda*,' the author of the books, '*Hesed-L'Abraham*,' '*Yesod-HaAvoda*,' '*Be'er-Abraham*,' and others. Following him, this sacred seat was occupied by his grandson, the Rabbi R' Shmuel זצ"ל, and after his death – his son, the Rabbi R' Abraham זצ"ל. When this *Tzaddik* passed away, his place was taken by his only son, the Holy Chief Rabbi R' Shlomo הי"ד.

The wellspring, from which Slonim *Hasidism* drew its lore and direction, was a well that was dug by the first of the patriarchs, and teachers of The Way, the Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin, of who was called by the name, 'The Holy One of Karlin,' and his outstanding student, the Rabbi R' Mordechai of Ljahavičy, called by the name, 'The Elder of Ljahavičy' and after him, his son, R' Noah of Ljahavičy and his renown student the Rabbi R' Moshe of Kobrin.

Slonim was faithful to the elements of the foundation of its original patriarchs and rabbis from Kobrin, Ljahavičy, and Karlin, for whom truth, faith and a modest spirit, were a lamp unto their feet. The name, 'The Holy One of Karlin' had become accepted among them, because [he would say]: 'In order to do something good for a fellow Jew, one must be prepared to go into the muck up to one's throat.' And this from the Tzaddik of Kobrin, that 'A day in which something good for another Jew is not done, is not counted as a day in his life.' This lore bore the imprint of the Chief Rabbis of Slonim, and it is from this that their personal simplicity, and closeness of heart emanated to all who demanded it.

Their homes and souls were always open to those of bitter soul, or heavy heart. The *Rebbe* was a father to his *Hasidim*, and Jews continuously mustered themselves at the door to his room, to talk out the worries they carried in their hearts, and the things that troubled their soul; young men and bachelors, trying to find their way in the service of God; Jews burdened with families, with the worries of making a living riding on them; a father, whose son stands to be drafted into the military, or the troubles of growing daughters on his mind; people treated harshly by fate, suffering, and more, much more. Everyone would emerge with a gleam of relief on their face, as if he had been released a bit from the burden of suffering and spiritual agony.

It is told, of one of the Chief Rabbis of Slonim, that he approached one of those close to him, at a time when he was seated in study, and said to him: I envy you, that you are sitting and studying. When the latter wondered about this, as if to say: who would disturb him also to sit and study, the *Rebbe* would sigh and say: How can I sequester myself in my room, to pore over the Torah and Holy Work, at a time when I know that

Jews are standing and waiting to pour out the grief in their hearts and the bitterness in their soul, thinking that in doing so, I will be able to lighten their heavy burden of suffering. Nevertheless, he did take care to set aside time to study Torah, and was very punctilious in his lessons, at those times that he was able to steal from the few hours that were left for him to sleep.--

It was a custom of the Chief Rabbis of Slonim, to travel to the cities and towns in the Land of Israel, to 'do the souls' for Hasidism, to gather funds for the support of the Old Settlement in the Land of Israel, by the name of 'Kollel Reisen,' founded by the Rabbi R' Menachem Mendl of Vitebsk, the author of '*Pri HaEtz*,' זצ"ל. On the Sabbaths and Festivals, they personally would lead the prayer services before the Ark, with adherence and fervor, setting tables out before the Lord, and deliver remarks on the Torah. Some of what they said about the Torah has been written down, but that did not get the opportunity to be published.

In 5693 (1933), the Rabbi R' Abraham זצ"ל suddenly died, after returning from a visit to the Holy Land, and his only son, R' Shlomo was named to take his place, Because of his youth (about 20 years of age), he refused to accept the appointment, and deferred it to a later time. He married the daughter of the Holy Chief Rabbi from Alexander הי"ד, and lived there for about two years, studying Torah and God's Work. Even then, in those intermediate years, *Hasidim* streamed to him for the Sabbaths and Festivals, and a strong spiritual bond grew between himself and his father-in-law.

Afterwards, he returned to Baranovich, and assumed the leadership of the Great Yeshiva '*Torat Hesed*' among hundreds of its students, great Rabbis, knowledgeable in Torah and piety, Hasidim and people of action.

Until the outbreak of the war, and the establishment of the ghetto, serving The Creator was his principal concern, that he represent him in his dress, and carry out his customs, and people turned to him for advice and assistance from all walks of life.

Wit the liquidation of the ghetto, Tevet 5703 (1943), he was taken to the labor camp adjacent to Baranovich. The *Scourges*[88] went out of their way to oppress him, and abused him at every opportunity. Even in this purgatory, he guarded the image of God that was within him, such that when time to time, when the *Scourges* would order him to beat or deride a Jew, he would refuse, and take double the blows himself. Those trapped in the ghetto attempted to help him with Sabbath observance, and even the Jewish doctor would provide him with medical releases for illness on the Sabbath and Festivals.

The 6th of Heshvan 5704 was that ultimately bitter day, on which the Nazis murdered him, along with eighty other Jews, and buried them in a mass grave. These were the last martyrs. The remainder of the Jews fled to the forests and joined the partisan movement.

To His Memory

By Israel Schwartzman ('*HaDerekh*')

It is told of the young Rabbi, Rabbi Shlomo זצ"ל of Slonim, that all of the arrangements and organization had already been made for him to flee, however on the last Saturday eve, as he led prayer at the lectern, he burst

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88 One, of many, pejorative metaphors for the Nazis.

into tears, and the entire congregation wept with him. He stayed, because he was unable to leave his *Hasidim* at a time of trial, and fulfilled the dictum 'those that are beloved and pleasant to you in their life, will not be separated at the time of their death.'

It is told that, R' Moshe of Kobrin once came through Trisk, and paid a call to the *Maggid* of Trisk זצ"ל. During their conversation, the Maggid asked him: Do any books remain from your forebears" Yes – R' Moshe replied. Have these books already been printed, or are they still in handwritten form – the *Maggid* continued to ask – They remain in Jewish hearts – Rabbi Moshe replied.

The lore of our Rabbi זצוק"ל remained in Jewish hearts. May his spilled blood be avenged by the Lord.

The Yeshiva '*Bet Abraham*' in Jerusalem

By A. Baranovitza'i

(A unique Memorial to the 'Lore of Baranovich,' and a Continuation of Yeshiva '*Torat Hesed*' of Baranovich)

Baranovich – A Place for Torah

The relatively new city of Baranovich was privileged to become a Torah center and a bastion of *Hasidism*, a center for the style of prayer, an original coloration and character all its own. It arrived at this position because of the two great, and renown Yeshivas: the Yeshiva '*Torat Hesed*' under the leadership of the Chief Rabbi of Slonim זצ"ל, and '*Ohel Torah*' under the leadership of the *Gaon*, Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman זצ"ל. Accordingly, our city was a pleasing place for the Torah to reside.

A person, no less than the Gaon and author of the '*Chafetz Chaim*' once explained this concept in an introduction to '*Pirkei Avot*' about R' Yossi ben Kasma, who was harmed by a certain individual, who then wanted to give him thousands upon thousands of gold dinars, in order that he live in his place. R' Yossi said to him, even if you give me all the silver and gold in the world, I do not live anywhere, except in a place of Torah. On first glance, this matter seems dismaying: would not all this money permit a place of Torah study to be established, Yeshivas to be built, and Torah scholars brought? However, the Torah requires a place that is suitable for it, a special piece of land and climate.

This is because a Yeshiva is not a place in which one studies Torah only, it is a spiritual home. It is like the home of parents, in that it reflects the spiritual character of education, realizing its concepts and outlooks, until the words of the Torah are absorbed into his blood and soul. The type of Torah student was formed with the diligent study of the Torah, under the influence of leaders and educators, and especially by the atmosphere of the Yeshiva. The place, its surroundings, and all of the people who contributed their share to the creation of that atmosphere. This is the secret to the rise of the Baranovich Yeshivas, that grew and succeeded, and matured into genius and splendor in the midst of Jewry, for indeed, Baranovich was such a place for Torah.

The Unique Place of Yeshiva '*Torat Hesed*' in Baranovich

This Yeshiva was a new creation in the world of Yeshivas, and in a special way, also unique of its kind. Many joined in at the beginning of its existence, to complete this new task, and doted on its way to success.

Its purpose was – an orientation to the toward the new style of learning that had been introduced into the Great Yeshivas of Lithuania, and that was guided by the *Gaonim* of the generation – this is the style of delving deeply into the inner depths of the Torah, together with the Hasidic approach, in the midst of the wringing out the light and the spiritual ardor that is in it. to achieve this end, the founders selected as the Headmaster, the Rabbi *Gaon* R' Abraham Shmuel Hirszowicz זצ"ל (who was renown in his youth as 'The Genius from Tolczyn'), the grandson of the *Gaon* R' Eliezer of Telz זצ"ל. This alignment succeeded more than expected. A typical Lithuanian Yeshiva was created, to which the spirit of *Hasidim* was attached, and reigned. These two lines of thought complemented one another, and was a source of blessing. The Great Yeshiva developed and thrived, and many students streamed to it from the entire country of Poland. Its reputation went before it, into all countries, as a wondrous place to get an education in Torah, *Hasidism*, and as a place that truly turned out students who were 'Torah Masters.'

During the time of existence of the Yeshiva, between the two world wars, approximately thirty years, it was privileged to raise a young generation of Rabbis, Yeshiva Headmasters, and 'just plain Jews' who were scholars, *Hasidim*, and men of action. There was not a place, where a student of the Yeshiva ended up, that he did not become a spiritual influence in his milieu. With the Holocaust, the Yeshiva went into exile in Lithuania in Tverik[89], and even there, its students continued to study, under the hand of the enemy, diligently, and with the total commitment of their souls, but they did not last long there.

May their memory be for an Eternal Blessing.

The Yeshiva '*Bet Abraham*' Jerusalem – The Continuation of Yeshiva '*Torat Hesed*'

The sun had not yet set on the Yeshiva '*Torat Hesed*' of Baranovich, when the sun shined on the Yeshiva of Baranovich in Jerusalem. This was during that time when the world grew dark for us. At that very hour, towards the end of 5701 (1941), a group of us friends, and Torah students from Baranovich, gathered together in which each and every one of us had lost everything that was sacred and dear to them, and agreed: If the means to save the bodies and souls of our beloved ones is not within our hands, let us fight against the strategy of this *Evil One* ימ"ש, whose desire goes beyond wanting to destroy the body of the Jewish people, but also wished to destroy the spirit of the Nation of Israel.' In that very hour, the concept of fighting a war of rescue crystallized, to save the powerful spirit of the Sacred Congregation of Baranovich, and its spiritual center – the Yeshiva.

At that same meeting, it was decided to found the Yeshiva of '*Bet Abraham*' in honor of the Yeshiva of Baranovich, which will serve to guard the spiritual legacy and the spirit that reigned between its walls, and that it will continue in its unique ways, in the study of Torah and *Hasidim*.

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89 Called Tabariskes, in Lithuanian.

The keeper of this concept, the driving force, and the first Headmaster and Principal of the Yeshiva, was one of the original founders of the Baranovich Yeshiva, the Rabbi Gaon R' Sholom Noah Berezovsky שליט"א, who was the sone of the important community activist, and one of the heads and much beloved of the Baranovich community, and the Rabbi Gaon Moshe Abraham Berezovsky, who stood at the head of the Baranovich community for many years. He left a very high equivalent position in one of Yeshivas in Israel, and with great energy, he approached the building of the Baranovich Yeshiva from anew.



Page 271 (Top): ***The Yeshiva 'Bet Abraham' in Jerusalem***

The first seeds of Yeshiva students were from Holocaust survivors of the Baranovich Yeshiva, and children of the Slonim *Hasidim* of Baranovich, living in the Land of Israel.

At the head of the committee for the Yeshiva, were two of the trustees of the Baranovich community, The Rabbi and *Hasid* R' Israel Zalman Shilovitzky ז"ל (a representative of the town of Moucadz' in the regional advisory council of the community) and the Rabbi *Hasid*, R' Israel Kapilovich ז"ל. an activist and an Elder.

With absolutely no means, they approached the establishment of the Yeshiva, but with a focused determination and a powerful will. Step after step, the Yeshiva grew and developed (and many scions of Baranovich in the Land of Israel and the Diaspora, rallied around its banner), until such time that it became one of the largest and most important of the Yeshivas – in substance and size – in Jerusalem.

Today, excellent students from all the cities and settlements in the Land of Israel study in it, émigrés from Lithuanian Poland, returning to their nest. as well as the children of other groups, who find here a place that suits them very well, for Torah and spiritual maturation.

In its connection to the Baranovich Yeshiva, it serves as a symbol of honor to our city, and eternally preserves its memory in this most appropriate of all ways.

Yeshiva '*Bet Abraham*' in its Development

Eleven years have gone by since the establishment of the Yeshiva in the Land of Israel – a period of building, creativity and continuing growth. The style that occupied the central place and the success of Baranovich, proved its vitality in Jerusalem, and an enabling factor for spiritual growth and maturity. The witnesses to this, are the spirit of the Yeshiva, and the students educated there who spread the light of the Torah and Judaism.

From this small group of students, who were present at the laying of the cornerstone in 5702 (1942) the Yeshiva today includes: a Talmud Torah, a preparatory school, a Higher Yeshiva for young men, a *Kollel* for the young married men, completing their study after being married, in which the Yeshiva supports them during their education phase, a fully furnished dormitory for the students, coming from outside of Jerusalem. Beside the Yeshiva , there is an office of '*Gemilut Hesed*' called '*Hasidei Shlomo*' (named after the last martyr of the Baranovich Yeshiva, the Chief Rabbi, the Rabbi *Tzaddik* R' Shlomo David Yehoshua הי"ד, זצ"ל from Slonim Baranovich), that assists the students of the Yeshiva during times of crisis, and especially helps to get them set up for a constructive arrangement in life.

The growth of the Yeshiva and its development also manifest themselves in its budget. From a modest beginning of a budget of less than 300 IL in the year it was founded, in 5702, with God's help, we have attained a budget of about 40M IL in the year 5712.

In summary: God is in this place, and the spirit of the Yeshiva of Baranovich lives.

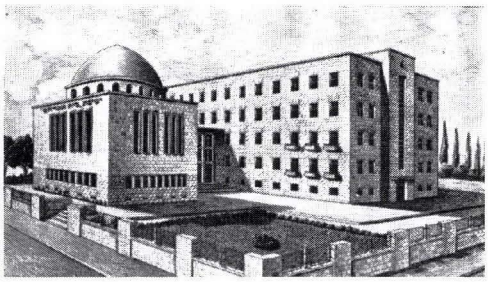
To the Construction of a New Building for the Yeshiva '*Bet Abraham*'

With the help of the friends of the Yeshiva in the United States, a parcel in the middle of Jerusalem was acquired for the Yeshiva in honor of its tenth anniversary. In the plans for the building – a large building that will be able to contain the Yeshiva within it, the preparatory school, the Talmud Torah and the dormitory.

It is only then, that the Yeshiva will be able to have the means by which it can open its doors to all that is demanded of it; and no man will be able to say that there is a lack of space for me in Jerusalem and in the Yeshiva.

We do not yet have the sums required to implement this great project. However, we are approaching the realization of this plane with a sacred trembling, good will and faith.

This building will be the eternal marker to our community, the community of Baranovich, an eternal memorial to the splendor of our sacred city. Because the heads of the Yeshiva and its activists have decided – with the success of the building plan – to dedicate a special study hall, as a memorial to the Baranovich community, in which they will engrave the names of the Baranovich martyrs on marble tablets.



Page 271 (Bottom): ***The Plan for the New Building of the Yeshiva 'Bet Abraham' in Jerusalem.***

Political Parties

מפלגות – פּארטייען

The Zionist Movement

By Dr. Sholom Press

Jewish Baranovich excelled in having a multi-branched community activity – and Zionism drew it together. The Zionist movement penetrated deeply into all sections of the Jewish population: the intelligentsia, the merchants, craftsmen, and workers, young and old. It was an outstanding movement 'of the people.'

With the development of the movement, its activities branched out into actual work and communication, and the mastery of the Hebrew language and its culture, and the support of the national institutions; a concern for the improvement of the physical health of its young people, through the means of organized sports such as 'Maccabi' and '*HaPoel*,' and others; the inculcation of pioneering disciplines for young people at various training locations; the education of women preparing them for community life, and community effort, such as '*VeYatzu*' and others. Because of this, Zionism in our city became the grindstone against which all manner of community activities were honed, even outside its nominal ambit of interest, however its influence and what it accomplished was a function of the creative spirit of the activists, and their blessed energy.



Page 277/278: ***The United Committee for Issues of the KK"L of Baranovich with the authorized Israeli delegate Naaman (1926)***

Bottom (From the Right): Greenwald, Wertheit, Itta Szlimowicz, Stoliar, Unknown
Sitting (From the Right): Gavza, Kushnirowsky, Goldin, Naaman, M. Mukasey, M. Ginsberg, Chana Ferlaub.
Standing (From the Right): Zhukhowitzky, Ogulnick, Unknown, Bitensky, Golombucky, Kushnir, Lidowsky, Gavza

The spirit of Zionism followed Jewish Baranovich from the time of its establishment. Even before the place had changed from being a simple settlement to a permanent location, the first sparks [sic: of Zionism] had already been ignited. In the Hebrew newspapers from the year 1897, there are already records of fund-raising activities for the Land of Israel in the houses of study and at weddings. The first fund raiser took place at the wedding of the faithful and venerable Zionist activist, Yitzhak Jasinowsky ז"ל in 1897. The small group of loyal Zionist workers grew and progressed from year to year. Groups and committees were created. An activity was organized, that in time, came to have oversight in all aspects of community endeavor.

By 1904, there already was an '*Agudat Tziyonim*' in Baranovich, organized properly, with R' Zim'l Mintz ז"ל at its head, the deputy chairman – Dr. Chernikhov, Secretary – Menachem Mendl Chernikhov. Among the members elected to the board, were the Messrs: M. M. Ginsberg, Yitzhak Jasinowsky, and others (see the chapter called – 'Origin of Zionism in Baranovich').

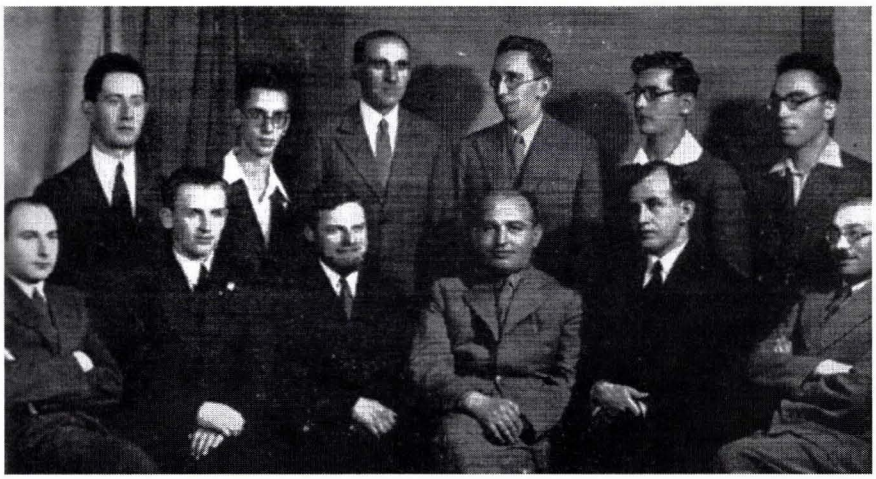


Page 279: ***The Activities Committee of KK"L in Baranovich (1933-1934)***

Sitting (From the Right): D. Katznelson, Dr. Press, M. Mukasey, Mrs. Svjacicky.
Standing (From the Right): Sh. Berman, Itta Bolocky (Berman), Kh. Rosen, B. Ts. Polonsky.

After the Russo-Japanese War (1905), after Zim'l Mintz left Baranovich, R' Menachem Mendl Ginsberg took the position of heads of the Zionist *Histadrut*, and all of the Zionist activity in our city. The period between the Russo-Japanese War (1905) to The First World War (1914) was, for the movement, a period of flowering and prosperity, growth and strengthening.

Wit the outbreak of The First World War, community life was subsided, and with it, the Zionist activity also was halted.



Page 280: ***The Members of the Israeli Office in Baranovich (1934)***

Sitting (From the Right): Katznelson, Mukasey, Engineer Tanenbaum, Ferlaub, Orlansky, Dr. Cannon
Standing (From the Right): Polonsky, M. Brimberg, Dr. Bussel, Kh. Rosen, Goldschmid, Furman.

At the beginning of the Twenties, with the endo fo The War, the movement already takes the central place in the Jewish community of our city, and its influence grew, and increased, until it became the very center of Zionist activity for all the Jewish settlements in the vicinity, near and far. Here, intensive activity was conducted for all of the Funds, and in this respect, Baranovich occupied an especially important place, in it relationship to them.

A multi-branched endeavor was begum in the field of the mastery of the Hebrew language and its culture. Kindergartens were established, schools,

evening lessons for young people and adults. Hebrew newspapers and books enjoyed considerable interest by a broad swath of groups.

In the area of sport and exercise, '*Maccabi*' and '*HaPoel*' functioned, which encompassed scores of young people and grownups – a movement among all the people to engage in physical culture – grounded on international foundations of the Hebrew culture and the Land of Israel.

With the establishment of '*HeHalutz*' and the arousal of the concept of making *aliyah* to the Land of Israel – Baranovich becomes transformed into a center for training and *aliyah*. Training camps were established and hundreds of young people were trained in them for a new life in the Land of Israel. Jewish youth embraced and absorbed, work and skills, that a Jewish hand had not laid hands on for generations.

There was not a single corner of community life that was ignored by Zionism, and there was not a Zionist body in the place that did not manifest an alertness to community needs.

An important position in the field of activity, communication and Zionist initiatives, was occupied by the Women's Histadrut, '*VaYetzav*,' that counted its members in the hundreds, among them tens who were from the community activity in the fields of social work and education. '*VaYetzav*' stood out especially in the organization of sales on behalf of *Keren Kayemet L'Israel*.

At the head of the Women's Histadrut stood: Leah Winikov, Mrs. Svjacicky, Rivka Yosselewicz and others. Continuous, diligent and quick-moving initiatives were led by the various branches of the Zionist movement, with '*Poalei* Tzion' at their head. Hordes of Jews and young people rallied around '*Brit HaTzahar*[90]' and '*Betar*.'

Zionist activists were the representatives and active members in all of the community institutions, in community, municipal, club and other organized activities.

The local Jewish intelligentsia was mostly Zionist, and was very active in community life. We should remember for good, those activists that dedicated all their might and lives to the realization of the Zionist dream, committing their souls and served that national ideal with dedication and faith, with adherence and zeal: Yitzhak Jasinowsky, Menachem Mendl Ginsberg, M. M. Chernikhov, Zim'l Mintz, The Lawyer Adler, Yaakov Berman, The Teacher, David Katznelson, The Engineer Winikov, Dr. Nakhumowsky, Dr. Szenicky, Dr. Moshe Jasinowsky, Dr. Moshe Berman, Dr. Yaakov Cohen, Schraga Kroshinsky, Dr. Bussel, The Lawyer Kertzner, Eliezer Bernstein, Zvi Khofi (Berman) and others.

Shoulder-to shoulder, a whole row of young activists worked side by side with them – who themselves were not privileged to ever see the Land of their Hope. ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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90 From the Hebrew acronym ***HaTz****ionim* ***HaR****evizionistim*, meaning Zionist Revisionists, as established by Vlzdimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky, in 1925.

The Parties

By Eliezer Lidowsky

'*Poalei Tzion*' (The Left)

In the summer of 1918, a confidential meeting took place, of an intimate group wanting to initiate an activity, at which a '*Poalei Tzion*' committee was founded. Member of this committee included the esteemed members, Michael Kaplan, Bash'keh Eisenstadt, the Lwowicz brothers, etc.

The first concern was how to acquire the means to get into closer contact with Jewish youth, and to carry out a communications program, at a time when each and every political and social activity was strictly forbidden. It was only with great exertion, that it was possible to extract permission from the local German authorities to open a reading room. At the same time, it served as the office for the 'Poalei Tzion,' where the young men and women, of all walks of life, would come together during their free time, especially on Saturdays, to read a paper, and a Yiddish pamphlet, play a game of chess, or generally carry on a variety of conversations.

After the German Revolution in the Fall of 1918, the party came out in the open, with its de facto headquarters at [the house of] M. D. Shereshevsky, in his concrete house, where the 'Eden' cinema had once been.

The Germans were getting ready to abandon the city, and every day, the arrival of the Soviets was anticipated. '*Poalei Tzion*' took on the extreme left platform. The first half of 1919 went by under the aura of the Russian-Polish War. A large part of the 'Poalei Tzion' members, together with their leaders, went off to Russia, and the party itself, gradually disintegrated a little at a time. From time to time, efforts were made to revive it, but without success.

'*Tze'irei Tzion*'

Towards the end of 1918, a Zionist Labor Party was organized, at the head of which stood: Velvel Kovensky, Yehoshua Winger, Shlomo Ravitzky, and others. Part of the working class intelligentsia rallied to them, which did not find its place in the ranks of the left-wing '*Poalei Tzion*.'

This newly-established circle first appeared in public without a set agenda and even without a name. Under the influence and leadership of the Messrs. 'Nioma Nakhumowsky, and Moshe Mukasey, who, at that time, had returned from Russia as active doers for the '*Tze'irei Tzion*' the local '*Tze'irei Tzion*' in Baranovich, eventually emerged and was established from this circle.



Page 283: ***The 'Tze'irei Tzion' Committee in 1921***
Sitting (From the Right): Nehemiah Kroshinsky, M. Mukasey, N. Nakhumowsky, Sh. Zelikovich, Kushnirowsky
Standing (From the Right): Bracha Glazer (Mukasey), Sh. Epstein, Brook, Y. Weinger, Rivka Yosselewicz, Sh. Ravitzky, Zelikovich, Max Ljahovicky.

For the time being, this was the only Zionist Labor Party on the Jewish street, which took a large part in the building up of Jewish community life in the city, in the years that came after The First World War. It participated in the elections of the first community and pushed through its representatives into the presidency and the leadership committee. Through its initiative, a Yiddish *Volksschule* was established, as well as a library. New sympathetic energies were attracted in support. An intimate contact was created with the provincial office of '*Tze'irei Tzion*' and with the People's Section of the '*Tze'irei Tzion*' in Warsaw. Work was carried out intensively and energetically. It did not even cease when the city found itself, for a specific period of time, under the rule of the Soviets during their push to Warsaw in the summer of 1920. Literally, behind their backs, a get-together took place at that time, in the Zionist synagogue, in which the members from the surrounding towns participated – it was a sort of group conclave.

The first open conclave-conference of the Zionist-Socialist Party '*Tze'irei Tzion*,' in the Baranovich area, took place on November 18, 1921. At that time, questions regarding *aliyah*, work for '*Keren HaYesod*,' and '*Bank Hapoalim*' were entertained, among others. Also, decisions from the World Conference were communicated. A regional committee was elected.

We find a writeup of the activity of '*Tze'irei Tzion*' in Baranovich in the '*Bafreiung*' of June 22, 1920 (the central organ of the People's Section of '*Tze'irei Tzion*' in Poland):

'Some time ago, this local group of '*Tze'irei Tzion*' began to carry out a broadly based front



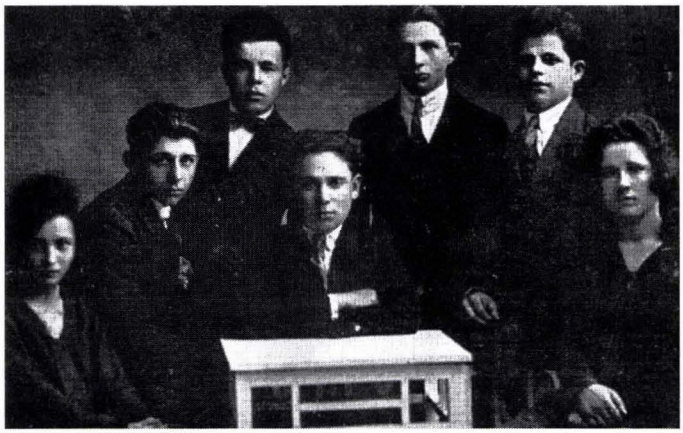
of activity. All institutions, economic and cultural, are led almost entirely by its members. In the elections, under our ticket, we got six of our representatives elected out of the total count of twenty-four. Our organization has a leadership and a President (Vice-Chairman), in the community committee (two places) as well as [leadership of] all committees. It is without a workers' organization, and stands for the Zionist-Socialist platform. Our activities attract new energies and sympathy for all we do. Apart from the general meetings, for the benefit of the National Fund, our organization has levied a tax on each of its members with a monthly payment for '*Keren HaAvodah*.' Not long ago, we founded the '*Halutzei Tze'irei Tzion*' which

already numbers several tens of members. Registration is continuing with evidence of success. Next week, we expect a visit from a group of member-workers.'

'*Tze'irei Tzion*' - Youth

After The First World War, and the Polish-Russian War, the youth of Baranovich was in a state of demoralization, without any education or upbringing. The young people would congregate in the various meeting places: cafés, the movies, the fire fighters – and on the Sabbat in the various houses of study.

In that time, a Yiddish Volksschule was opened in the house of El'chik *Baleboss*, and simultaneously, a group of members from '*Tze'irei Tzion*' stepped forward – Yehoshua Weinger, Benjamin Nakhumowsky, Yaakov Cohen, Moshe Mukasey, Shlomo Ravitzky, Aharon Cohen, etc. – to organize evening courses for the older youth. This undertaking met with success, and from among those who partook in these courses, human resources crystallized from the youth organization '*Tze'irei Tzion*.' At the founding meeting, the member Yehoshua Weinger explained to the young participants, the necessity for a '*Tze'irei Tzion*' Youth Organization. which will dedicate itself to Zionist-Socialist activity. The young people responded to this call,



Page 286: ***The Committee for 'Tze'irei Tzion' Youth (1923)***

Sitting (From the Right): Faygl Szeftz, Yaakov Feibuszewicz, Unknown, Reizl Cirulnik
Standing (From the Right): Israel Dobkowsky, Mordkowsky, Lejzor Lidowsky.

In the first committee of '*Tze'irei Tzion*' Youth in Baranovich, the following members were present: Itta Szlimowicz, Fyvel Bitensky, Yaakov Feibuszewicz, Reizl Cirulnik, Dobkowsky, Faygl Szeftz, the writer of these lines, and others. Our first objective was to face off against the neglected youth and get it organized. This effort was crowned with success, and in a short amount of time, we were able to draw hundreds of the working-class young people into our ranks, children of the poor, and get them activated. Later on, those attending gymnasium joined our ranks, among them Yitzhak Baranchik. Abba Zakin, Chana Wolansky, Sarah Mordkowsky, etc.....

The previously mentioned members of '*Tze'irei Tzion*' (the founder of the courses) dedicated themselves with the entire fire of their soul to the education of the young – especially in culture work. The young people were divided up into teaching circles, in which a variety of problems were systematically addressed in the course of weeks, on a daily basis, in the evening. Apart from this, a stable seminary was established for social work, where cadres of activists were given the requisite schooling.

In the course of a short amount of time, the '*Tze'irei Tzion*' young people became an important social force in the city. The local offices and the institutions of the '*Tze'irei Tzion*' were always overflowing with young people. We were able to attract the largest part of the intelligentsia into our ranks for this purpose, that came from the working-class ranks. In the beginning of 1922, the youth actively took part in the propaganda work for the ticket of '*Tze'irei Tzion*' running for the first municipal council.

The central point of our endeavor was training and preparation [for *aliyah*]. Already, in 1923, the first group of young *Halutzim* went off to the Land of Israel.

With the founding of *HeHalutz* in Baranovich, the young people played a leading role. The initial foundations in the education of '*Tze'irei Tzion*'-Youth were: training and preparation, *aliyah*, and self-reliance. The participation of our young people in the fund-raising activities of the National Funds was strong. Also, the '*Tze'irei Tzion*'-Youth was represented in every one of the community institutions, that had any connection to youth activities, and the '*Tze'irei Tzion*'-Youth had a more than controlling majority in the youth-sections of the professional unions.

In 1923 we founded the first sport groups among the working-class youth (later to become '*HaPoel*').

In 1924, the first countrywide conference of *HeHalutz* in Poland, took place in Brisk. All three delegates from Baranovich to the conference, were representatives of '*Tze'irei Tzion*' - Youth.

In 1923, we had already established a number of *kibbutzim* for training in agriculture, around Baranovich. The largest part of those [sic: original] *Halutzim* are today in Israel.

On the cultural front, the young people were constantly busy with collecting money for the Jewish schools.

The young people especially distinguished themselves in its work for the large municipal 'Brenner Library' which stood under the influence of '*Tze'irei Tzion*.' Its thousands of books were a fountain of learning and knowledge for the young people.

In 1926, after the merger of '*Tze'irei Tzion*' and '*Poalei Tzion*' (Ts. S.), and the creation of a single '*Freiheit*' Youth, the community work of the young people gained strength and branched out. Circle conferences constantly took place for the Baranovich-Slonim region, and gatherings of the '*Freiheit*' Youth. All of these events, were transformed into large demonstrations for labor in the Land of Israel, and their visibility and influence in the city was great.



Page 288: ***'Freiheit' Committee***
From the Right: Bagatin, Unknown, Noah Dworetzky, L. Lidowsky, Khien'keh Litowsky.

In the course of years, the party changed its headquarters, parallel to its growth and development. From a modest local in the house of Mr. Kroshinsky, on the *Shasei Gasse*, to the large local in the house of Lieber Rabinovich, on *Rog Ulanska-Szeptycka*.

The local occupied the entire second floor and had six rooms and a large assembly hall, that contained several hundred seats.

From 1922 to 1939, approximately 800 members passed through our youth organization. The majority of them made *aliyah* to the Land of Israel.

The contact between the party and the young people was an intimate one. There were opposing representatives in the leadership, and an opposing responsibility in the work.

The level of morale of the young people was high. It was strictly forbidden to smoke, drink alcoholic beverages, play cards, use cosmetics, etc. As a pipeline into *'Freiheit*' there was the so-called. scouting organization '*Tzofim*' the natural reservoir of young people for the organization.

In its activities, '*Freiheit*' Youth bore a great burden of responsibility, but it also benefitted from full autonomy. From time to time, it would organize inter-party discussion evenings, on its own account, with young people from other movements. The composition of '*Freiheit*' Youth was turned over rapidly. There was a continuous stream of aliyah to the Land of Israel. However, new blood was constantly entering the ranks, apart from certain specific activists, who remained behind, at the direction of the central party office, 'welded' to their place.

'*Poalei Tzion*' (Ts. S.) (1922-1939)

Among all of the Zionist parties in the city, '*Poalei Tzion*' stood out with its strong organization, its large membership, and a good approval from the common people. Masses of workers, the working intelligentsia and manual trades found their place in its ranks.

The activity of the party was especially concentrated on work for the Land of Israel, as for example, '*Keren Kayemet,*' '*Keren HaYesod,*' '*Eretz Yisrael Amt*,' 'The League for Workers in Israel' '*HeHalutz*' preparation and training, *aliyah*, etc. The cultural endeavors, that encompassed schools, the library, evening courses, circles, open communication endeavors through debates and speeches; professional activity, political activity, the municipal council, the community, general elections in the national bodies; community activity in Jewish institutions such as '*ORT*,' '*TOZ*,' banking, manual trades unions, etc.



Page 289/290: ***The 'Poalei Tzion' Party in Baranovich (1934).***

The party was headed by a committee of seven members, elected an annual general membership meeting. The active members were represented in this committee. Most of these were sympathetically elected from year-to year (these were: Messrs. Moshe Mukasey, until his *aliyah* to the Land of Israel, Dr. Yaakov Cohen, Abba Zakin, Shlomo Ravitzky הי"ד and the writer of these lines). The following were also active in the committees, Messrs. Israel Dobkowsky, Aharon Zhukhowitzky, Eliyahu Yankelewicz (Yannai), Yaakov Fish, and others. Each member of the committee directed the activities of a different division or area of endeavor for which he was responsible.

About 500 members passed through the ranks of the party in the years from 1922 to 1939. The 'League for Labor in Israel' has a standing membership of 700 members. The financial outlays of the party were great, almost the largest, in comparison to all other parties, the sources of money were the volunteer activities and gatherings of the members. A heavy burden of expenses and loans pressed down upon the committee members, who were always worried about how to pay bills and meet obligations, whether to the local party institutions, or with regard to the central organization.

In connection with activities on behalf of the Land of Israel, the '*Poalei Tzion*' members carried on the work of '*Keren Kayemet*' and '*Keren HaYesod*' funds for labor in the Land of Israel, etc. Bitter struggles took place at the local 'Land of Israel Office' over each and every certificate.



Page 291/292: ***The Committee for the Organization of Workers in Israel (1934)***

Sitting (Frm the Right): *L. Lidowsky, Faygl Szefiz, Yosselewicz, I. Szlimowicz, A. Yankelewicz, Dr. Bussel, M. Mukasey, Dr. Kagan, Bracha Mukasey, A. Kagan, Sawikowsky, Mer'eh Fish.*

Standing (From the Right): *Two Unknowns, Neufeld, Two Unknowns, Kh. Gedanken, Miriam Szlimowicz, Unknown, (behind Szlimowicz). Abraham Lidowsky, Unknown, M. Czemelinsky, Molczadsky, Kh. Stoliar, Israel Dobkowsky, Yaakov Fish, Unknown.*

At the Top (From the Right): *Fingerut, Unknown, Polonsky, Greenberg, Zakin's wife, A. Zakin, M. Gavza, Noah Mandel, Three Unknowns.*

Kibbutz '*Shakharia*'

An important chapter in the history of '*Poalei Tzion*' by us, was the founding of the *kibbutz* for preparation and training, '*Shakharia*' in Baranovich. Much energy and money were put into the founding of this *kibbutz,* by the local members of '*Poalei Tzion.*' Hundreds of *Halutzim* obtained their 'basic training' here. The majority of them, to this day, remain as the most active members in the various *kibbutzim* in Israel, and occupy important positions in the Jewish Settlement there.

Cultural Initiatives

'*Poalei Tzion*' can chalk up important achievement on the cultural front, such as, for example, the founding of the Yiddish *Volksschule* of the 'TzYShO" type, and later — the Yiddish *Volksschule* of the '*Schul-Kut*' type, which the party supported for the entire time, and through which hundreds of Jewish children passed through and received a Zionist-Socialist education in Yiddish, and Hebrew; the large 'Brenner Library' etc. The party also published a weekly newspaper, '*Dos Vort*' which appeared for a number of years under the direction of Dr. Yaakov Cohen as editor.



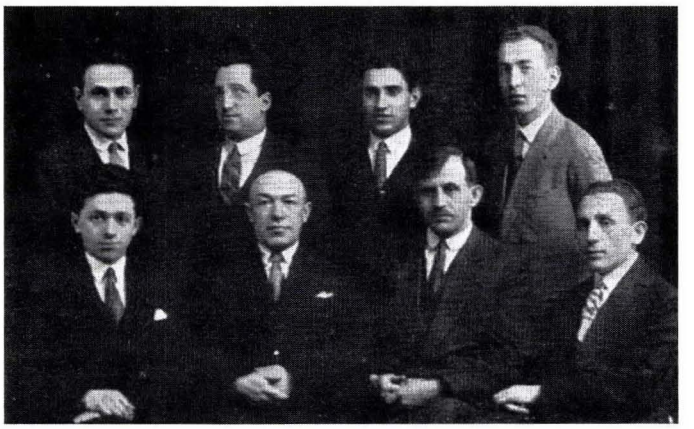
Page 293/294 (Top): ***A Group of Halutzim at Kibbutz 'Shakharia' at work on the Yosselewicz Sawmill. (At the right – Mr. Yosselewicz)***

Hundreds of presentations about literary, political and cultural themes were organized and were an important educational factor in the community life of the city. The literary assessments elicited a special interest, which would draw masses of participants.

Professional Activities

Professional activity in our location, as it did in the rest of the country, suffered from the party splits among workers, and from the traditionally anti-Zionist posture of the leadership in the professional unions.

Despite this, '*Poalei Tzion*' managed to penetrate into almost all of the professional unions, even into the bastion of the '*Bund*' – the needle trades union, which had hundreds of members, and was the most strongly organized, we, nevertheless, has a great influence. By contrast, the other larger unions, such as the small business, and transport workers, stood entirely under the influence of '*Poalei Tzion.*' The small business union was the largest in number (500-600 members) and our members under the leadership of Mr. Abba Zakin, led difficult struggles with the *balebatim* for better working conditions and for social security.



Page 295: ***The Union of the Small Businessmen (Leadership)***

Sitting (From the Right): Zhukhowitzky, Mukasey, Szyewicz, Niebewsky

Standing (From the Right): Zelcowsky, 3 Unknowns

A chapter unto itself was the transport union. made of wagon drivers, porters, etc. The human capital there was a bit off the beaten path from everyone else. The members of 'Poalei Tzion' succeeded in freeing them from the influence of the underworld, raise their level of standing in the community, and inculcate them with

a sense of social responsibility. Among these transport activists, it is appropriate to recall the members, Moshe Mass, Notkowicz ה"יד and Yud'l Bitensky (today in Israel).

Activity Among the Manual Trades

'*Poalei Tzion*' took an active part in community activities in all union institutions. So, for example, there was a constructive social force in the manual trades union – a productive element for the Land of Israel, and we invested a great deal of effort in the large local manual trades union, which covered about 660 work locations. After the sad schisms that took place in the union, we strained all of our strength in order to create unification again among the manual workers. As an emissary of '*Poalei Tzion*,' this writer served as secretary in the manual trades union until the outbreak of The Second World War.



Page 293/294 (Middle): ***The 'HaOved' Committee With the First Group of Olim***

Sitting (From the Right): Sawikowsky, Unknown, Lidowsky, B. Rabinovich, Yosselewicz, Kh. Gedanken
Standing (From the Right): Unknown, Fingerut, Abba Zakin, M. Gavza

Thanks to our efforts, we were successful in attracting many manual workers into '*HaOved*,' and tens of them later made *aliyah* to the Land of Israel.

Activity in Social & Economic Institutions

In the 'ORT' Society, we saw a large productive force in the Diaspora, and especially in the Land of Israel. '*Poalei Tzion*' dedicated its best efforts to this very society.

In 'TOZ,' we were an important factor in providing for the health of the Jewish population, especially for school children and the young, and we gave 'TOZ' all of our help. At this opportunity, let us recall our members in 'TOZ,' Dr. Nakhumowsky (Chairman) and others.

A separate constructive assistance factor, for the Jewish masses in their struggle for existence, we saw in the cooperative-bank arena, and we assisted in the establishment of the cooperative movement and its development. Our member, Moshe Mukasey, was one of the founders of the Jewish *Volksbank* and one of its most active doers.

Political Activity

'*Poalei Tzion*' had a very difficult fight to in which to engage, on the political front. Here, we were attacked on two sides – from the right and from the left. From '*Agudat Israel*,' '*Mizrahi*,' just plain Zionists and especially Revisionists, on one side – all the way to the '*Bund*' and Communists on the other side. It was not only once that the Christian organizations from the right and left, were drawn into the battle with us. The sharpest manifestation of this conflict would be at election time for the community, the municipal council and the Sejm. Almost always, we stood alone. The only ones standing with us were the '*Hitakhdut*' and



Page 297/298: ***The Sanitary-Hygiene Course of the Health Division at the Halutz Center in Baranovich.***

Second Row (Sitting from the Right): Gracha Mukasey, Dr. Press, Dr. Nakhumowsky, Dr. Tcherniavsky (delegated from the central HeHalutz), Unknown, Dr. Kagan, Dr. Bussel.

'*HaShomer Ha 'Tza'ir*.' An exception to this was the last election to the municipal council in 1938, when a united 'Labor Front Ticket' appeared encompassing the P.P. S., '*Bund*' '*Poalei Tzion*,' and the Communists.

'*Poalei Tzion*' had its representatives in every municipal council in Baranovich, and all year long, until he made *aliyah* to the Land of Israel, our member, Moshe Mukasey filled the position of Councilman in the Magistrate – and stood in service for the entire Jewish community.

At the open meetings of the municipal council, the battle for Jewish rights was carried out by our representatives, and for our national demands. However, the essential of the struggle was being carried out in day-to-day work.

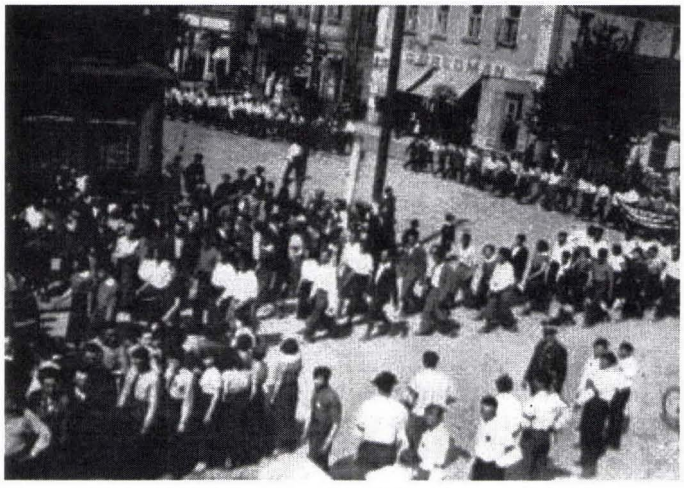
Also, in the Jewish community itself, we had a meaningful representation, and a great deal of influence.

'*Poalei Tzion*' took an important part in general actions on a national scale, as for example, the fight against the outlawing of Jewish [sic: kosher] slaughter, the ID law, anti-Semitic rallies and outbreaks, etc.

Celebrations of the First of May

A particularly difficult struggle that the '*Poalei Tzion*' had to endure took place at May First celebrations and demonstrations. The '*Bund'* and the Communists never wanted to let any opportunity go by, for the May First celebration to carry signs and display propaganda for the workers in the Land of Israel. We, however, would not stand by idly in this regard. As a result, most of the time, we held an independent demonstration on behalf of the workers in the Land of Israel.

The '*Bund*' held itself to be the 'sole representative' of the Jewish working class in Poland, and simply the appearance of '*Poalei Tzion*' as a workers' party gave the lie to this monopolistic assumption. A consequence of this, was [the '*Bund*'s'] attempt to isolate us. The left-leaning P. P. S. with us, under the leadership of Kh. Makai was psychologically closer to the '*Bund*' and either went along with the '*Bund*' or followed its own path.



Page 299/300: ***The First of May [parade] of 'Poalei Tzion'***

On the other side, we had troubles to deal with from the government institutions. Every time, on the eve of May First, the organizers of the demonstrations would be invited to the Starosta in a security review, and we would be warned about the eventual consequences and they would make an effort to assure that the demonstrations took place under the aegis of the police. We would categorically refuse, rejecting this, and take the entire responsibility on ourselves.

The local Jewish citizenry would look with skeptical cynicism at the appearance of the '*Poalei Tzion*' as a Zionist-Socialist workers' party. We would organize strike patrols in order to take off workers who had been terrorized by the *balebatim*, under the protection of the police.

In time, the First of May demonstrations by the '*Poalei Tzion*' became something that was understood to happen, and the members and their families would participate in them, wives and children. In both placards and words, on the First of May, there was an open demonstration of the power of labor in the Land of Israel, in our city. Both the young and adult members of '*HaShomer Ha'Tza'ir*' participated in all of our demonstrations. In the years 1936-38, our demonstration was the largest in the city, and numbered close to a thousand people.

Up to the outbreak of The Second World War, '*Poalei Tzion*' was one of the most influential forces in general Jewish community life in the city.

'*Poalei Tzion*' created an atmosphere of the Land of Israel in our city, and with the personal example of sending hundreds of Halutzim to the Land of Israel, it awakened the desire, and pulled along many others to make *aliyah.*

Finally, let us recall the most active of the '*Poalei Tzion*' members, who stood, to the last day, in battle for the ideals of the workers in the Land of Israel, and later fell at the hands of the Nazis in service to the Jewish people, those members: Dr. Yaakov Cohen, Abba Zakin, Shlomo Ravitzky, Israel Dobkowsky, and others....

Honor their memory.

'Mizrahi'

By M. B.

In Baranovich, as in other places, the religious institutions occupied an important place in the Zionist endeavor, however, as an organized body, they appeared in the community with the establishment of the '*Mizrahi*' branch approximately in 5679 (1919).

Among the founders, the following are numbered: R' Eliezer Bernstein, R' Shlomo Judzhelewsky, Mr. Alter Gitlin, Mr. Moshe Yudelewicz, and others. The first task of the '*Mizrahi*' branch in the field of national-religious education in the years 5680-5681 (1920-1) was the establishment of the '*Yavneh*' school under the direction of the Messrs. Alter Gitlin and Moshe Yudelewicz. In 5680 (1920) a national committee was organized in Warsaw of 'Faithful Men' of the '*Mizrahi*,' in which the foundation was laid for the *Histadrut* of '*Tze'irei Mizrahi*.' In 1921,Mr. Naphtali Ferlaub, in the course of his wanderings back from Russia, came to Baranovich, a member of the central '*Mizrahi*' organization of White Russia in Minsk. With his arrival, the breath of life was inspired into the ranks of the religious nationalists in the place. It is he, who represented '*Mizrahi*' for many years in the community, in the municipal institutions, and at Zionist congresses. Under his influence, the '*Mizrahi*' branch developed a multi-branched endeavor in Zionist-community endeavors. Under its budding guidance, those who stood out from the rest were Moshe Portnow, Pinchas Futterman, Yitzhak Luczansky, and others.

Apart from the 'Yavneh' school which developed beautifully, the school of Mr. Maslawsky and his sons, occupied an important place in the Jewish education of our city. The education and lessons given there, were in accordance with the '*Mizrahi*' curriculum, and in the year it was established, it earned a great deal of regard, and much attachment from the community, and in the wake of its elevated standing, it educated a whole generation of religious, nationally aware youth.



Page 301/302 (Top): ***The 'HaShomer HaDati' Branch in Baranovich (1934)***

With the *aliyah* of a number of the active members to the Land of Israel in the twenties, the endeavors of the branch flagged. However, in the year 5687 (1927) a new cadre of young energies was aroused, to breathe life into the branch of '*HeHalutz HaMizrahi*' and to renew its activity. Among those who worked in this cadre were the Messrs: Zvi Mironi, Shmuel Yudelewicz, Shmuel Salutsky, Zippora Kapilowicz (Salutsky), Yekhiel Roitman, Gitt'l Matliss, and others. In this way, the location of '*HeHalutz HaMizrahi*' was set up in its new quarters on the *Shasei Gasse*, in the school of Mr. Mavshovich ז"ל. Even the old-timers reactivated themselves. '*Tze'irei 'HaMizrahi*' aligned themselves with '*HeHalutz HaMizrahi*' – and at the head of the united branch stood Pinchas Futterman.

In the year 5691 (1931), the Messrs. Zvi Mironi, the brothers, Shmuel and Yitzhak Yudelewicz, Aryeh Bitensky, Rachel Kapilovich, Michael Menaker, and Yekhiel Gutensky, founded '*HaShomer HaDati*.' Many young people, ages 10-17 were drawn to its headquarters. and they were the pipeline to fill the ranks of the maturing '*HeHalutz HaMizrahi*.' This group of youth took up an active role in the national work such as: KK"L, *Keren HaYesod*, and others. In a like manner, it faithfully carried the responsibility of the cultural work of the '*Torah v'Avodah*' movement.

Members came out of the Baranovich branch to found branches in neighboring settlements such as Ljahavičy, Haradzišča, Slonim and others.

Many of those educated by '*Torah v'Avodah*' are today to be found in Israel, in the religious settlements, working in the institutions of the movement and the country.



Page 301/302 (Bottom): ***HeHalutz HaMizrahi in Baranovich (1932)***

At the Bottom (From the Right): *Unknown, Batya Soloveitchik, Kapilovich, Feder, Sonia Gutensky, Unknowns*

Sitting (From the Right): *Unknown, Kapilovich, Futterman, Yudelewicz, Pinchas Futterman, Miransky, Moszkowsky, Unknown*

Third Row (From the Right): *Unknown, Unknown, Jaffa Olenick, Yudelewicz, Wolokhwiansky, Unknown, Sarah Rabinovich, Leah Arkin, Mash'keh Arkin, Esther Zablodsky, Bash'keh Shy'eh-Isser's*

Above (From the Right): *Sluczak, Unknown, Yudelewicz, Daniewicz, Riback, Unknown, Zvi Futterman, Unknowns.*

'Agudat Israel'

By M. Sh. Aguda'i

The '*Agudat Israel*' branch in Baranovich was established after The First Worlds War. In the Jewish street, at that time, an intense war of ideas raged over the nature of Jewish life. The organized parties, who were mostly freethinking in their outlook, established secular schools and institutions. But also, religious Jewry, in its fight for survival, was also compelled to organize itself, and to accommodate itself to the new conditions.

Among those who founded the '*Agudah*' in our city, and its activists, were the Rabbi *Gaon* R' Mikhl Rabinovich, R' Zim'l Kushnir, R' Israel Kapilovich, Rabbi Mendl Goldberg, and others. These were spiritual men, who sought to resolve all of life's many issues in the spirit of the Torah.

The active force and the implementation arm of the '*Agudah*' were '*Tze'irei Agudat Israel.*' These were young people alert to what was going on around them, identified with the issues of life – and it had an influence on the posture and attitude of '*Agudat Israel*' to the Land of Israel.



Page 303: ***The Committee of 'Tze 'irei Israel' in Baranovich in the Year 5693 (1933)***

Sitting (From the Right): Abraham Sha'ar, Yekhiel Kapilovich, Zusha Dubelman, Shlomo Foxman
Standing (From the Right): Abraham Weinstein, Zvi Yosselewicz, Yehuda Nirenberg, Menachem Altvarg, Joseph Ruzhansky.

The *Histadrut* of the *'Poalei Agudat Israel'* was a major influence among the ranks of the religious activists in our city, which counted among its founders Abraham and Pinchas Eisenberg, Yaakov Berezovsky, Abraham Lev, Shlomo Foxman, and others.
If the foundation of the love of Homeland in religious education was the basis for the aliyah and pioneering zeal among the '*Agudah*' youth, then the foundations of the justice of the Torah, the lessons of the Prophets were the natural basis for zealous socialism, grounded in a faith in humanity and freedom of choice.

Workers from all professions could be counted among the *'Poalei Agudat Israel*,' especially those from management, the workers in houses of commerce, and the 'fee' professions. Its influence was recognized in the organization of workers as well.

As previously said, the '*Agudah*' in our city had the character of a movement of the common people. It encompassed a wide swath of activity, and its influence among religious Jews was substantial. It put spine into the backs of the religious Jew. The '*Agudah*' was active in the city in all fields, and even established a bank (the general one – *Powszecna*), that developed and took a central place in the economic life of the Jews of the place.

Among the 'Agudah' activities in our city, it is worth mentioning especially, the 'Yesodei HaTorah' School, that integrated religious and traditional education with practical Enlightenment, and raised students who were people of force, and of spiritual standing, well-prepared to address and cope with the difficult battle for existence.

A bright chapter was the '*Bais Yaakov*' School that represented a revolution in the religious education of women. Religious Judaism was challenged to recognize that it was not sufficient to educate boys to be fathers that provide continuity, but that it was compulsory to educate the girls as well.

The girls that attended '*Bais Yaakov*' in our city, in every aspect of their way of life, manifested God's holiness, and a living testament to religious-national identity. '*Bais Yaakov*' – this was the core creation of '*Agudat Israel*.'

The '*HaShomer Ha'Tza'ir*' Branch in Baranovich

By Abraham Zakai (Zhukhowicky)

I arrived in Baranovich in 1924. The reactionary Polish régime reacted with suspicion to all national minorities in general, and to the Jews in particular. Every youth group came under suspicion. The motive behind this was one: fear of Bolshevism...For this reason, the active group of *'HaShomer Ha'Tza'ir'* temporarily functioned underground. It was only after searching for nearly a year, was I able to make contact with members of the group. The senior among them was Moshe Gavza ז"ל. In my survey of the history of *'HaShomer Ha'Tza'ir'* in Baranovich, I cannot skip over the personality of our comrade Moshe, a part of whose life was given over unconditionally. The Gavza family immigrated to Baranovich from Russia, after wandering and tribulations during the civil war. A refined Hasidic family, guarding tradition, and with this, thoroughly infused with the spirit of Zionism. Moshe stood out among all the children of the family. He was a youth who did not make peace with the idea of Jews in the Diaspora. His stormy soul pulled towards freedom. The nature of his spirit did not take him along the normal, cold path. He looked for the way to liberate the people and character. And it is not an accident that he clung to *'HaShomer Ha'Tza'ir'* with his entire heart and soul. He was the first to understand why it is that *'HaShomer Ha'Tza'ir'* could not just be a forward-looking national group – because many of the Zionist groups in our city advocated this. In full recognition, as was his nature, he assumed the lore of fulfilling the role of a Halutz, and crystallized for himself an outlook of a socialist world – that would be in the Land of Israel. Cruel fate took a toll of him, and he was struck with a weakening in his body. Despite this, he worked in the *'HaShomer Ha'Tza'ir'* branch and, without exaggeration, he served as its spiritual leader during its first days. To the best of my knowledge, he was the first one to adopt the notion that this was not the time for public demonstrations, but rather to work out of the limelight, and to prepare and train a number of the young people to assume leadership



Page 306: ***The Local Leadership of 'HaShomer Ha'Tza'ir' with Yaakov Chazan During His Visit to Baranovich (In the Year 1927)***

Bottom (From the Right): Abraham Zhukhowicky (Zakai), Miriam Braslau, Reuven Gavza.
Second Row (From the Right): Rosa Wolkowysky, Yaakov Chazan, Rivka Goldberg,
Top (From the Right): Rachel Wolokhwiansky, Menucha Shereshevsky, Moshe Gavza, Yekhiel Domoszevitzky, Moshe Zhukhowicky.

and organize the branch in the future. From that time onwards, we worked together as two adult members.

After a half year of such low-key work, withing the confines of a small group, we succeeded in being able to train a number of young people to be heads of groups. With these resources, we went out to 'arouse' the young people who were the students in the schools. Two groups were established in the form of a group of '*Tzofim*' and '*Bogrim.*'

Our first initiative was to teach the Hebrew language. The *'HaShomer Ha'Tza'ir'* location was the sole place in Baranovich where the lit of spoken Hebrew were heard, together with song, and the games of children. The Hebrew language burst the bounds of *'HaShomer Ha'Tza'ir'* into the Jewish street, and to the broader masses of the young.

With the organization of these first groups, the work we were conducting underground grew difficult for us to manage, and we sought ways to get our activity legalized.

At the same time, in Baranovich, the *'Tarbut'* Gymnasium was founded. With the help of its principal, Dr. Winikov, a real sport club was opened up alongside the gymnasium, which in reality was nothing more than a *'HaShomer Ha'Tza'ir'* branch. It is worth noting the great help that was given to us by the important Zionist personalities in our city, and even if they did not involve themselves in the way we were being



Page 307/308: ***In Camp***

Bottom (From the Right): A. Zhukhowicky, A. Ravitzky, Gedalia Domoszevitzky.

Second Row (From the Right): *Bash'keh Loss, Rosa Wolkowysky, Menucha Shereshevsky, Unknown, Unknown, Chaya Bitensky, Dina Salutsky, Unknown.*

Third Row (From the Right): *Unknown, Sonia Astrakhan, Unknown, Unknown, Miriam Braslau, Unknown, Unknown, Unknown, Moshe Gavza, Leib'keh Medresh, Unknown, Joseph Zakheim, Unknown, Itta Szklar, Shy'keh Greib*

Fourth Row (From the Right) *Unknown, Unknown, Unknown, Unknown, Moshe'l Zhukhowicky, Aharon Farfel (Abrahami), Unknown, Noah Neidus, Unknown, Moshe Szklar, Shayndl Szamuszkowicz, Shlomo Reznick, Khonya Narkonsky, Shifra Kuszczitz, Unknown, Dov Belkher.*

educated, nevertheless, they stood at our side, and lent us assistance in the establishment of this branch in our city.

From this point forward, the work of the branch proceeded normally. Each and every evening, the groups would enter, learn, read, or hear lectures on various subjects, and clarified real questions in discussion with other members. Most often, the evening concluded with the singing of Zionist and pioneering songs. We broke out of the confines of the city itself, and ranged into the broadness of the fields and the mysteries of the thick forests that surrounded us. These contacts with the life in the fields and the magic of the forest had very great educational value to us. It was the panorama that drew us to this green meadow, to sports activities, to swimming in the river, etc. It taught us how to set up a scout camp in the heart of the forest, and how to sit together in a comradely group around a bonfire, and to dream of our potential future in the Land of Israel. An unforgettable experience was the very first *'HaShomer Ha'Tza'ir'* camp we conducted in partnership with the members of the Slonim branch that was close by, a branch that had been in existence there from the time *'HaShomer Ha'Tza'ir'* was founded, and excelled in the basic scouting education of its members. As a relatively new branch, we did not have the means to organize an independent, stand-alone camp. We joined the Slonim camp, who accepted us as brethren.

Our work agenda also included our activities on behalf of the Zionist cause in the city. All of us stood at the disposal of the funds operating in the city. The job of emptying the KK"L boxes was done exclusively by our members.

The branch broadened and grew, and the number of its members grew, and its activity in all areas broadened and put down roots. The connections between all of the branches in the area grew stronger, to the point that a summer camp was organized jointly, in Domokhoščyna under the direction of the top leadership of A. Ravitzky, today a member of *Ein-HaKhoresh*. In 1927, the Baranovich *Galil* was established, which took in the branches of: Baranovich, Slonim, Njasviz, Hancevicy, Novogrudok, Moučadz', Stalovičy, and Mir. The *Galil* numbered about a thousand members.

It is worth noting the memories of Shimon Mansky, currently a member of Kibbutz Elon, on the development of the branch in the ensuing years:

> 'One of the bright chapters in the history of the branch – was its battle against assimilation in connection with the practical considerations of parents. This battle arrived at an expression in the form of the famous strike against the '*Tarbut*' School that was entirely organized by the *'HaShomer Ha'Tza'ir'* who were students there. The parents' committee of the gymnasium, in its desire to foster 'practicality' for its sons and daughters, had decided to change this school, in which the language of instruction was Hebrew, into a school where the language of instruction would be Polish, and thereby, also obtain a license from the government authorities. To oppose this initiative, the *'HaShomer Ha'Tza'ir'* branch organized a strike of all 200 students. Guards stood at the corners of all streets leading to the school, and not a single student had the temerity to break the strike. The strikers were called out by the branch in groups for tours of duty. The solidarity of the strikers and the students continued for many months. The newspapers publicized this with articles of support and cognizance, Hundreds of telegrams arrived from all over Poland.
>
> The vision of The Land being built was a distant enchantment. Aliyah to The Land was by means of a certificate, and under dangerous circumstances. One of us, impatient to wait for the years it would take to attain this desirable goal, decided to hasten the end. This was Yaakov Greenspan ז"ל who on his own volition, secretly – decided to reach, whatever

the consequences, that enchanted Land. To this day, it is not clear how this youth succeeded in getting out of Poland, to cross countries, and in days, reach the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. For many months we had no news of him. When he reached the shores of the Land, he was not permitted to disembark, and at a great distance from the shore, he decided to jump from the ship and reach the shore by swimming. His strength did not sustain him – and in the end, he drowned in the waves of the sea, at the threshold of realizing his enchanted goal.

With the passage of years, the branch prospered and branched out. Tens of its 'graduates' went off for training and preparation in Slonim, Grodno and other places – and most of them today, are found in a variety of *Kibbutzim* in Israel. In Mesillot, Tel-Amal, Elon, Dan, and others – you will find today, those, who in the dawn of their youth dreamed the dream of the restoration of the Land, and foremost, prepared themselves to realize their desires, and dedicated their entire ardor and energy to this end. Today, they proudly recall those times that they spent between the walls of the branch in the city of their birth. This vision, which at the time appeared to them to be a distant fairy tale – became a reality.'

The *Tzahar* and *Betar* Organizations

By Alter Wilensky, Mordechai Bitensky

Baranovich was a bastion of the *Tzahar* movement in the areas of Eastern Poland. All the arms of the movement: *Betar, Keren Tel-Chai, Brit HaKhayal, Brit Jeshurun, G'dud Hakhshara, 'Kadima,'* the revisionist Ladies Auxiliary, *'Vorf,'* the revisionist club '*Menorah*' the Sports Club '*Nardia*' the revisionist academic club, and others, opened up, and conducted an alert community program that embraced the city and its environs.

The vanguard of *Tzahar* were the men of *Betar*. In the summer of 5689 (1929) before the XVI Zionist Congress, an advisory meeting] was called as a result of the effort of the Messrs: A. Wilensky, Bitensky, Y. Stoliar, M. Moszkowsky, M. Garbala, and Sh. Gittin, with the participation of 15 members, among them Chaim Birger and others. At this advisory meeting, the foundation for the organization of *Betar* was laid, for Baranovich and its environs, and a plan was developed for acquiring members and adherents.

After a short while, a formal organizational meeting was arranged, with the participation of 35-40 members and adherents, among them, the students Zvi Wernikowsky, and Telekhansky (then members of the revisionist cooperative '*Yardenia*' in Vilna) and the first leadership was elected consisting of M. Bitensky, Wilensky, M. Moszkowsky, M. Garbala, and Sh. Stoliar.

The leadership immediately went to work, and rented a hall on the highway, that served as a meeting place, for discussions, lectures, projects, and so forth. It was in this way that the work of communication took place between the youth that was leaning, and especially the youth that was already organized into other groups. The



Page 310: ***The Betar Officers in the Year 1930***
Sitting (From the Right): Bergman, Ashkenazi (from Vilna), Kalmanowicz.
Standing (From the Right):Kapolsky, Schwartz, Krawczuk, Poloczuk, Bitensky.

Betar people participated with vigor and energy on behalf of the funds, and the remainder of the Zionist fund-raising activities. In time, a new leadership was elected that consisted of: I. Goldin – Leader, M. Kalmanowicz – Deputy Leader, M. Bitensky – Secretary, Sh. Tunkel – Treasurer, A. Wilensky and Miriam Paczapavsky – members of the leadership, B. Schwartz – Premises Manager. A little later, due to the effort of the Messrs. Zvi Bergman, Israel Goldin, Mordechai Kalmanowicz, and withe the help of the *Betar* leadership, a branch of *Tzahar* was established in Baranovich. Zvi Bergman was elected as its Chairman.



Page 311/312: ***[Vladimir(Ze'ev)] Jabotinsky in Baranovich in the Year 1931***
Bottom (From the Right): Freund, Jakimowitzky
Sitting (From the Right): Dr. Press, Engineer A. Winikov, Dr. Moshe Berman, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, MGR Abramowsky, Dr. Shapiro, Mordechai Kalmanowicz.
Standing (From the Right): Ephraim Maslawsky, Futterman, Baruch Schwartz, Dr. Kruk, Zvi Bergman, Chaim Moshe Rosen, Yerucham Kaplan.

The first public meeting of Tzahar took place in connection with the Hebron Riots of 5689 (1929) in the Holy Land, with the participation of representatives from the central organization.

The *Tzahar* and *Betar* movements grew from day-to-day. Respected Zionists and activists joined it such as: *Magister* Abramowsky, Schraga Kroshinsky, and others. In October 1929, the branch already numbered about one hundred members of both genders. The membership was divided into three levels and classes. At the head of Level A (age 18 and above) , Shlomo Gittin was appointed, at the head of Level B (age 15-18), Mordechai Bussel, and Level C (up to age 15) -- Miriam Paczapavsky. As heads of classes, the following were appointed: Baruch Zakin, Kapolsky, Janowicz, Meir Galay, Miriam Paczapavsky, and others. With the growth of Betar, it moved to a larger hall, on Wilenska *Gasse.* At the end of 1929, the first of the *Betar* members were sent for preparation and training at Nadworna[91].

The leadership, at frequent intervals, would arrange discussions, evenings of questions and answers, and games. Day in and day out, discussion groups were organized, and from time-to-time – general assemblies

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[91] In the Ukraine

of the different levels. In the groups, Jewish history was learned, the origins of Zionism, awareness of the Holy Land, project work, and other things.

In order to be able to make the lore of *Betar* available to the membership inexpensively, the leadership established a cooperative under the direction of our member, Sh. Shilovitzky.

At the beginning of 1930, the senior leadership of *Betar* decided to establish a preparation and training camp at Ivjanec, at a location where there already was such a preparation camp run by '*HeHalutz*'. The implementation was delegated to the *Betar* branch in Baranovich. For this purpose, a group of members was sent to the location, under the leadership of Tuvia Cyrynsky and Sh. Shilovitzky. Despite interruptions, this first training and preparation point of *Betar*, in the Baranovich area, was established.



Page 314: ***The 'Kadima' Preparation & Training Division of Betar, in Baranovich***

The *Tzahar* branch also conducted a very alert program. An important indication of the maturity of the branch was the joining of the respected Zionist activists, among them, Engineer Aharon Winikov (the deputy head of the city). At a general assembly of *Tzahar*, a new leadership committee was elected, consisting of: Dr. M. Berman – Chairman, Engineer Winikov – Vice-Chairman, Zvi Bergman – Secretary, *Magister* Abramowsky, Sh. Kroshinsky, Goldin, Kalmanowicz, Rosen, Borishansky – members of the committee. Also, Dr. M. Berman was elected as the representative to the worldwide office of *Tzahar* in Prague.

Thanks to the effort of the *Tzahar* committee, and the leadership of *Betar*, the Vice-President of the movement, Meir Grossman, visited our city. His visit created a great a great arousal among us. The activity of the group grew stronger; new branches were established in the vicinity, and the number of members of Betar reached 200 in our city. Tens of *Betar* members had already completed their preparation and training, and in the summer of 1930, a group of *Betar* members were fortunate to be the members of our first *aliyah.* For this aliyah, and subsequent ones, there substantial reverberations that echoed through the ranks of the young people in our city. After each *aliyah*, there were tens of additional new candidates who would come forward and join *Betar* for preparation and training.

Apart from the ususal community and cultural undertakings, the Betar branch organized a variety of courses, and carried out military training exercises. The branch stood in second place in the city regarding its effort on behalf of KK"L.

At the end of the summer of 1930, the leadership of Betar was organized anew. Appointed to the leadership were: Head, Zvi Bergman, Deputy Head – Kalmanowicz, Secretary - M. Bitensky, Military Training – Joseph Turetsky, Premises Manager – B. Schwartz, with Chaim Mintz – as a member.

A national conclave of all Betar in Poland was arranged during the summer; Fifty members from the Baranovich branch participated.

With the elections to the XVII Zionist Congress (in 1931), the activity of *Betar* in our city grew stronger. The local branch distributed 1300 *shkalim*, and organized a number of large public assemblies with the participation of the central office.

About a week before the elections, the President of the movement, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, visited our city, and gave a speech to an assembly of the people. In the elections, the Tzahar ballot attracted 1000 voices, and took second place after the 'League for Labor in the Land of Israel' (In the elections for the XVI Congress, Betar attracted only 4 such voices).

The pressure of the *Tzahar* activities cause a strengthening in the ferment of community activity among the remaining Zionist groups. Three times as much money was distributed in connection with XVII Zionist Congress than had been distributed for the XVI Congress. The number of meetings increased, the revenues of the funds grew, and the distribution of the Zionist newspapers went up. Almost all of the heads of various groups, and their leaders, visited our city.

Because of the initiative of the leadership of *Betar* and the *Tzahar* committee, the Betar preparation and training group, called '*Kadima*' was established in Baranovich, under the direction of Meir Galay. The Halutzim worked in the sawmills of the Messrs. Kushnir and Yosselewicz, and in a variety of other work places in the city.

On the basis of political pressure, and the political opposition of Kibbutz *'Shakharia'* (*'HeHalutz'*), the oldest such facility in this location, conflict broke out between the left wing *Halutzim* and the *Halutzim* of *Betar*. In one of these outbreaks of violence, the *Betar* member Koczar was severely wounded. This incident shook the awareness of the entire community in Poland.

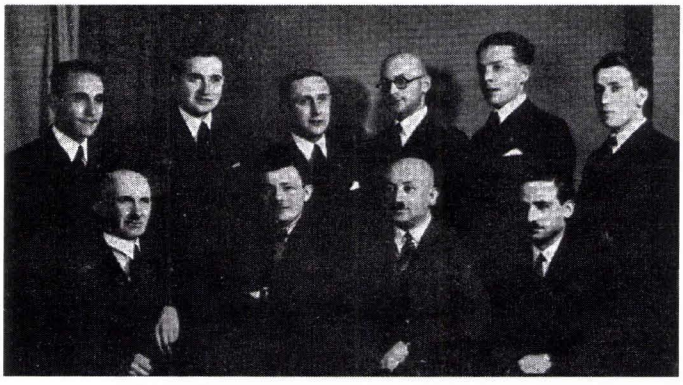
Despite interruptions, the *Tzahar* movement developed in our city, and new offshoots arose from it: *'Brit HaKhayal'* – under the leadership of the officer Moshe Solomiansky, the revisionist Ladies Auxiliary *'Vorf'* – under the direction of Mrs. Svjacicky, and *'Brit Jeshurun,'* headed by the Messrs. Sadowsky, and Ephraim Maslawsky.

In the world conference of *Tzahar* in 1932 in Vienna, Dr. M. Berman and Zvi Bergman from Baranovich participated as delegates.

On July 16, 1933, before the elections for XVIII Zionist Congress, Jabotinsky again visited Baranovich. An honor guard from *Betar* met him at the train station.

The guest lodged at the Europa Hotel, and from a balcony of the hotel, he accepted the salute of a march of great feeling conducted by the men of *Betar* and *Brit HaKhayal* together.

The assassination of Arlozorov cast its pall on the arrangements for the elections to the congress. The left wing organizations conducted a strong demonstration against Tzahar, and as a result of that, our Tzahar slate lost many voices to the



Page 315: ***The Committee of Brit HaTzahar in Baranovich (1934)***

Sitting (From the Right): D. Sadowsky, MGR' Abramowsky, Sh. Kroshinsky, Singalowsky.
Standing (From the Right): Y. Rosenhaus, M. Mukasey, Maslawsky, Foxman, Goldin, Bergman

XVIII Congress, in comparison to the number of voices that were given to it at the elections of the prior XVI Congress.

In those days, a crisis erupted in the *Tzahar* movement. The extremists, headed by Uri Zvi Greenberg, Abba Akhimeir, and others, rallied around a secession from the Zionist Histadrut, by setting up a new Zionist *Histadrut,* despite the fact that incumbents like Meir Grossman and Robert Shtricker, and others, were in favor of loyalty to the original Zionist *Histadrut*. In 1933, at the advisory council of Tzahar that took place in Baranovich, a new operating committee was elected, but it was disbanded by Jabotinsky.

The *Tzahar* organization was in a state of being divided. Most of the members of Tzahar and *Betar* remained loyal to Jabotinsky, with a minority declaring their loyalty to the operating committee that was disbanded. This schism fell on all the countries and local branches.

After the break, those loyal to Jabotinsky elected a new committee for the local branch, composed of: *Magister* Abramowsky – Chairman, Yaakov Singalowsky – Vice Chairman, Joseph Foxman – Secretary, Sadowsky – Treasurer, Schragai Kroshinsky, Zvi Bergman, Yitzhak Rosenhaus, Israel Goldin, and Ephraim Maslawsky – members of the committee. It was decided to publish a weekly '*Blau-Weiss*.' The members of the editorial staff were: Z. Bergman, I. Goldin, J. Foxman, Y. Rosenhaus, and *Magister* Kuriniec. This weekly appeared for a number of years.

During *Hol HaMoed Sukkot* of 5694 (October 7, 1934), a 'People's House' named for Jabotinsky was opened on the principal street Szeptycka 24 (the house of Mordechai Bergman). All of the work of the Tzahar movement and its emissaries was centered in this 'People's House.' '*Oneg Shabbat*' parties were organized there, which garnered a reputation in the community, and for a number of years, it was the only local platform of the citizenry in the city, that also took up questions of the community and culture. '*Brit Jeshurun*' established a synagogue in this 'People's House' for the Sabbaths and Festivals, and for the High Holy Days, they would retain renowned cantors. From time to time, the Rabbi *Gaon* Elchanan Wasserman זצ"ל would come to visit, and he would arouse the worshipers to strengthening of the Torah and the faith.



Page 316: ***The Committee of all the Tzahar Organizations in Baranovich in 1934***

Sitting (From the Right): *Karpovsky, Moshe Solomiansky, A. Maslawsky, Israel Goldin, David Sadowsky, Z. Bergman, Schraga Kroshinsky, The Lawyer Zlata Szwiransky, Wernikowsky, Yaakov Rabinovich.*

Second Row (From the Right): *Mandel, Chazanowicz, Simcha Tunkel, Esther Yosselewicz, Mottik Gurwicz, Hadassah Bergman, Shmuel Yisre'el, Braslau, The Lawyer Zvi Wernikowsky.*

Top (From the Right): *Unknown, Joseph Foxman, Yitzhak Rosenhaus, The Lawyer Kuriniec, The Lawyer Liukhter, The Lawyer Shlomo Epstein.*

At the sixth national conference, in Warsaw at the beginning of 1934, the Tzahar branch of Baranovich was represented by eight members. Our delegates participated actively in all the committees, Sh. Kroshinsky was elected as the president of the conference.

On March 11, 1935, the initiative of the 'Petition' was announced in Baranovich – a complaint to the national offices, and containing the demand to provide for unrestricted *aliyah.*

During the week, several mass meetings were called. At the end of the campaign, a large public demonstration was arranged involving many people.

Under the leadership of the officer M. Solomiansky, the march of people moved to the seat of the provincial government. The deputy provincial governor received a delegation, which conveyed a memorandum regarding the complaint of the Jews. The march then returned to the Great Bet HaMedrash, where a large assembly took place.

On November 11, 1934, there was a conference in Warsaw of the regional leadership of *Betar* in Poland. Baranovich was represented by Baruch Zakin, Joseph Kaplinsky, and Joseph Winograd.

On the Saturday of November 10, 1934, a meeting was called at the 'People's House' for purposes of establishing and organizing a place for the youth of Tzahar, called '*Menorah*' alongside Tzahar itself. *Magister* Kuriniec gave an ideological speech on the objectives of '*Menorah*,' and its responsibilities, and outlined a broad area of activity, especially in the field of culture. A temporary committee was selected consisting of: Sh. Tunkel, L. Zhukhowicky, Dzantzlaska, and others.

On November 23-25, 1934, a second *Tzahar* conference was held in the Baranovich district, with the participation of 75 representatives from 30 points of activity, with the central organization represented.

In connection with the crisis in the movement, and the question of setting up a new Zionist Histadrut, on May 23, 1935, an extraordinary conference was held of the movement representatives of the Novogrudok province, with the participation of the central office representatives, Dr. Schechtman, and D. Wodwinsky.

A few months afterwards, in July 1935, during the year of the elections for XIX Congress, Ze'ev Jabotinsky visited our city once again.

At the seventh national conference of Tzahar, at the end of December 1935, in Warsaw, a substantial delegation from the Baranovich branch participated.

On April 25, 1936, a huge assembly was called at the 'People's House' with the outbreak of violence of 5696 in the Holy Land. Dr. A. Goldin, A. Maslawsky, and B. Zakin spoke.

The Revisionist Youth Organization, '*Menorah*' developed and succeeded in employing many members. This group stood at the center of *Tzahar* activity in this location.

On May 9, 1936, there was a general meeting of '*Brit HaKhayal*' during which a discussion took place on future directions of activity, and the demand was proposed to introduce military training to '*Brit HaKhayal*' (for purposes of self-defense) and to organize the youth of Tzahar within the ambit of '*Brit HaKhayal*.' The newly selected leadership was: Z. Zablodsky – Leader, Zvi Reznick – Deputy, Joseph Besevitz – Secretary, Kharlowsky – Director of Cultural Activities, Chaim Foxman – Military Training, Mordechai Bussel – Treasurer.

The *Judenstadt* Party in Baranovich

After the schism in the *Tzahar* movement in 1933, we had an assembly of those loyal to the concept of a national homeland – 'The Zionist National Party (ZNP)' (*Die Judenstadt*) that was then founded. A committee was elected consisting of: Dr. Berman – Chairman, Engineer Winikov – Vice Chairman, M. Bitensky – Secretary, Y. Kibilowitz – Treasurer, Wilensky, Rosen, Borishansky, committee members.

A group of members, headed by the leader Dukhanowicz, separated from the *Betar* group in Baranovich, and joined the ZNP. With the effort of the ZNP committee, a branch was established by us of a youth group of the group – '*Barak*' (The Order of the Zealous). It's committee consisted of: Kalmanowicz, Wilensky, M. Bitensky, Baruch Neufeld, Dukhanowicz, and Lifschitz. '*Barak*' was configured like '*Betar*. The branch was divided into levels and classes. Discussions and assemblies took place, as well as sports activities and project work. From time to time there were also lectures. (The headquarters of the '*Barak*' and the ZNP were on the Pilsudski *Gasse.*) Alongside this group, a group called '*HeHalutz HaMedini*' was established, that had several tens of members. In the committee of '*HeHalutz HaMedini*' were: Quintman, F. Kibilowicz, Greenhaus, Zeldowicz, Medresh, Wilensky and Bitensky.

A number of members from the '*Kadima*' unit also separated themselves from the movement. Beside Baranovich, a '*Barak*' *Kibbutz* was established, named for Meir Grossman. The leaders of the *Kibbutz* were the Messrs. Kurt and Abelewsky. In time, a few other such preparation and training camps were established of the 'ZNP' type, accommodating members from all over the country.

The group took part in the XIX Congress elections (1935), the XX Congress (1937) and attracted several hundred voices in our city.

After XX Congress, the intensity of the work of all the Zionist parties in our area weakened. There was a great deal of pressure on our spirit. An illegal aliyah began (Aliyah Bet), and the ZNP committee succeeded to smuggle some members and adherents in this way. Six ZNP members left on foot to reach the Holy Land, and after all manner of tribulations, and wanderings, they reached it.

It was under these circumstances that the XXI Congress elections took place.

The single assembly that did take place, was that of the ZNP, with the participation of Meir Grossman. The Chairman was Dr. Aharon Goldin, a *Betar* official who had gone over to join ZNP. This was the last Zionist assembly in Baranovich.

A few weeks after this, on September 1, 1939, the war broke out.

The '*Bund*'

By Hirsch Dobkowsky

Foreword

At the beginning of the twentieth century, there was no organized labor in Baranovich. By contrast, the quick growth of the city attracted many craftsmen, workers, and apprentices. Working conditions were very hard – and the pay was derisory. During the summer, people worked from before dawn until nighttime, and during winter, late into the night. As to social services or insurance, this was not even dreamed of. The general revolutionary wave, which engulfed the entire country, also did not miss Baranovich.

Founding of the '*Bund*'

In the years 1903-4, a branch of the '*Bund*' was established in Baranovich. The founders were Messrs. Moshe the 'Ironmonger' (from the iron works, where he worked for Sarah Liebeh, Israel Galperin's wife, in the business), Alter the Turner, Ber'l Mott'eh the Sofer's son, Malka Levinson (the midwife), Trop the Teacher,

Abraham'l Arkawicz, Rachel Weisstein (later Arkawicz), Abraham'l and Lejzor Zatorinsky, Shlom'keh and Rivka Turetsky, Itcheh Judkowsky, Aharon'cheh, the tailor's son, The Nytorin sisters, and others. The founding meeting took place in the Graf's forest.

The initiators of the organization were a few Jewish recruits from the local railroad battalions. an especially active member was one from Odessa.

At the founding meeting, the right line for work was established for the future. Because of its conspiratorial character, the organization was divided up by crafts, and into smaller groups of ten and five. In the first period, they concentrated on quite but intensive organizational and propaganda efforts. A bit later, larger meetings were called, where emissaries would appear – speakers from the larger centers, such as Minsk, Vilna, Bialystok, and so forth. The organization expended a tremendous effort to disseminate communications literature.

In the winter of 1904, the question of a clandestine local materialized in the city. This was no light matter. Those who had history in previous generations were afraid to take the risk. Under the influence of his brother, Joseph Moshe, an active *Bundist*, my father Zelig Dobkowsky (the carpenter) agreed to permitting such a local to be in our house. No general meetings could take place under those circumstances. The only thing that happened were [sic: small] group gatherings. Local calls for gatherings began to appear, printed on a primitive shapirograph.[92] Announcements were made for the first public appearance.

The clandestine existence of the '*Bund*' elicited wonder and unease in the Jewish populace. Rumors began to spread that the 'brothers and sisters' are organizing, atheists and '*Bundists*.'

The first open manifestation of the Bundist sentiments occurred by the interruption of the prayer, '*HaNoteyn Teshuah*' by raising a tumult in the 'New' *Bet HaMedrash*. It was suspected that this was 'them....'

After this, a row of skirmishes broke out in the Matzo-'Factories' where a very harsh exploitative régime reigned. Simultaneously, a wave of fighting broke out in all of the workplaces. They were fighting for a 'normal' work day, for a raise in pay, and most importantly, for decent working conditions and a proper attitude towards the workers.

The 'Bund' in Baranovich prepared itself for its first public appearance. The first objective – to dye the flag – was delegated to the member, Mott'keh Mishkin (the artist).

Conflict with the Underworld

Immediately with the establishment of the 'bund' the members came into conflict with an ominous factor, which, from that time on, cast its dark shadow across Jewish life. The underworld in Baranovich found this new center of trade and communication to be a broad field for its 'activity.' It was not satisfied only with is criminal 'activity,' and began to intrude into community life. For this reason, not only once, were there certain employers who retained underworld thugs to terrorize striking workers and active '*Bundists*.'

It was known that conflict with the underworld was unavoidable –but despite this, it was put off until a more opportune time arose. The organization was young, and the underworld was powerful, and had connections to the authorities.

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92 A precursor to what we know as a mimeograph machine/

An instance of need brought that opportunity.

The secretary of the organization, our member Ber'l Sofer, was preparing to get married. The members helped to provide for the newlyweds with a wedding trousseau. And it was here that a misfortune occurred. At the first *Seder* of Passover, the exhausted people fell asleep, and they were robbed. This elicited an enormous embitterment and upset among the members. All appeals for help to the authorities were fruitless. On the contrary, the authorities were interested in fomenting a confrontation between both sides, hoping that the sufficiently strong underworld will physically break the '*Bund*' and liquidate it politically through informing. However, they erred. Immediately after the first day of Passover, all of the members organized themselves into groups, dragged together a few tens of the underworld crowd in the workers' *Bet HaMedrash*, and on the spot passed judgement on them, and issued a warning thereby, that if the stolen property were not returned, there will be consequences. On the following day, the stolen goods were found in the 'New' *Bet HaMedrash* in a tied up package.

This incident served as a warning call to all those who made use of this underworld force against workers.

Self-Defense

At those times, an ominous threat hung over the young Jewish settlement. The atmosphere was suffused with a feral animus of provocation against Jews. The members of the '*Bund*' were organized to resist this. A regional conference of the entire vicinity was called, and it was decided to acquire weapons, both cold and hot, and to organize a self-defense force. We immediately approached the acquisition of ammunition, and a cache was created for the ammunition in the cellar of the organization.

At that time, the '*Bund*' was the only force on the Jewish street ready to provide self-defense, and resistance. All the elements that were physically healthy and emotionally capable of offering resistance came to its call, such as, for example, the fire-fighters (the largest part who were the common folk and workers), wagon drivers, butchers, craftsmen, and so forth. In this way, days and nights passed, weeks and months, in a tense atmosphere of readiness to offer resistance. Fortunately, all attempts to launch a pogrom in Baranovich fell through. This, however, did not cause the alertness and watchfulness of the group be diminished.

Reorganization - 1911

After the failure of the 1905 revolution, the activity of the local '*Bund*' came practically to a standstill. A wave of persecution and revenge spread over the country. The local '*Bund*' chapter was literally thrashed apart. Some of the members, especially the most active, were arrested, or exiled to Siberia (in this way, for example, Moshe the Ironmonger was sent away for life imprisonment, and a couple of years later – died in prison). Others fled the country. The remainder stayed in the shadows.

In 1911 a new cadre of members stepped up to do a reorganization of the '*Bund.*' In this group were the Messrs: Yosh'keh Borowsky, Loew'eh Mangel, Alter Dobkowsky, Moshe Dworetzky, Itcheh Gamm (the carpenter), Shlomo Kadish Ulkowicz, Meir Kroshinsky, Yankl Litvak, Malka Levinson, and others. There was no local office then. On Saturdays, they would meet at the green bridge, or in the woods. Most of these meetings took place among groups of tens. The so-called '*Birzheh*' near the '*Lizon*' (cinema) served as a meeting place between the organizational committee and the leadership of the illegally created labor unions, at which place, instructions were given and taken with regard to orders for activities. A representative of the committee was always to be found at that location.

The activity was immediately felt. A wave of strikes spread throughout the city, especially in the needle trades (this was the largest union and the best organized).

The owners reacted with reprisals, using the help of 'the guys' from the underworld, and especially, with the help of the authorities. The strike battles were bitter ones, and stretched on for weeks at a time. In some locations, there were drastic clashes. A certain employer even went so far as to complain to the authorities about two strike picketers. A legal action was taken against them, and they were threatened with severe punishment. Under the threat of sharp warning, the employer dropped the charges, and accepted the terms of the strike-committee, and apologized in the illegal press and also spent a large sum of money on its behalf.

Incidents such as these, and in kind, were not a rarity. Analogous strikes took place in the metalworking and carpentry shops.

On the eve of May [1,] 1913, preparations were being made for a First of May celebration. A series of clandestine meetings took place. Also, the authorities did not sit idly by. The representative of the Magistrate, and other police officials, changed into civilian clothing, and went looking for victims. The pursuit had begun.

On Wilenska near *Shaseina*, they detained two members in the house of the carpenter Peretz: Alter Dobkowsky and Abraham Zelig Yudelewicz. In another place, the members, Loew'eh Mangel and Yosh'keh Borowsky were detained. A sharp incident took place in the constabulary. When the Magistrate dressed down those arrested, Yosh'keh Borowsky spit in his face. As punishment he was denied food for that day. After three weeks of arrest, a colonel of the gendarmerie came especially to sit in judgement from Bobruisk. At the investigations that took place during the trial, two tailors, one tinsmith and one carpenter appeared as accusing witnesses on behalf of the employers, against the '*Bund.*'

The members, Yosh'keh, Loew'eh, and Alter, were sentenced to two years of exile in Siberia, where they received their punishment.

Awakening - 1918

In 1918, a group of members again bestirred themselves, with the member Nahum Bitensky at their head, and approached the task of regenerating the '*Bund.*' In this group were the members: Malka Levinson, Belsky the Bookkeeper, Wolf from Lodz, Yekhiel Tilewicz, Woloch from Haradzišča, and others. We immediately began the work. A premises for the local was opened, a library, and the professional unions were organized anew, etc. In quasi-legal circumstances, a diverse set of activities developed. A mass meeting was then called in the local cinema, at which representatives of the soldiers' council and the '*Bund*' appeared.

The German occupation authorities was preparing to leave the city. In the city, a secret emissary appeared from the Soviet Union, a certain Gamzan, a Jew from Minsk. In a conference with him, he indicated that the self-defense forces should not show any political character, and the initiative to his plan should come from the citizen's committee, with an active participation by labor. The self-defense force was created, and at its head stood the members, Yaakov Stolovicky, Tshem'eh Galperin, and Nehemiah Arkin. In the course of its short time of existence, the self-defense force developed a widespread range of activity. All of its posts were intensely watched, under armed guard.

The party prepared itself to greet the Red Army, and lived in a stat of anticipation of the new régime. When the avant garde of the Red Army appeared, it took over the guard stations of the self-defense group, and especially the arsenals of arms and munitions. On the following day, January 5, 1919, a train of the '*Bund*'

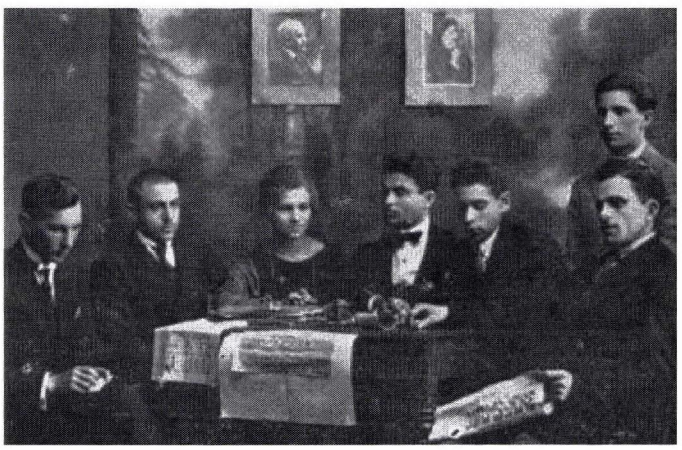
was formed, who marched with banners and transport vehicles to the gathering point on the marketplace. The '*Poalei Tzion*' party also concentrated themselves there, the communists, and the fire fighters. A general train of people was formed, that marched in the direction of New-Baranovich, to meet the Red Army.

Under the rule of the Soviet authorities, and in legal circumstances, a very wide field of endeavor opened itself up for the '*Bund.*' The civil administration, to a large extent, supported the socialist labor movement, and used its active resources. The number of communists was very small. All the trades became organized, and professional unions were again created. The unions sent their delegates into the government institutions, such as, for example, the courts, '*Revkom*,' and such positions.

This upsurge did not last very long. In the course of a few months, the city changed hands several times – until, finally, during the days of Passover 1919, was occupied by the Polish régime for over a year. The active part of the 'Bund' at that time, evacuated itself together with the Red Army, to Minsk.

Under Polish Rule (1921-1939)

In 1921, after the Russian-Polish War, at the initiative off a group of friends, local, and those who returned from Russia (for example, Nahum Bitensky, Reuven Cooperman, Alter Sokolowsky, San'eh Pripstein, Mot'eh Hausenblosen[93], Riva Ravitz, David Kolbowsky, the writer of these lines) the '*Bund*' was reorganized in Baranovich. A new library was founded, a branch of '*Unsere Kinder*,' a cultural institution for both the young, and the grown [sic: children], and a Drama Club was also established under the direction of Kh. Rayewsky, etc.



Page 323: ***Leadership of the 'Unsere Kinder' Society in 1923***

Sitting (From the Right): Kh. Dobkowsky, S. Pripstein, Nahum Bitensky, Riva Ravitz, R. Cooperman, Alter Sokolowsky. Standing: David Kolbowsky

At the same time, the first steps were taken to establish a youth organization and professional unions. The first professional union was for the construction workers. Cooperative groups were created. The union of the needle trades was legalized (up to then illegal), and the union of foodstuffs workers. With the broadening of activity, the real question of a labor center arose, and premises were rented for this purpose. The library grew, and it was legalized under the name of the construction workers union. With the joining of construction workers union to the central office in Warsaw, all the provincial branches were simultaneously integrated into the union as well, with the library under its name. A woodworking union was immediately created, which took over all of the activities of the construction workers union. When the authorities were approached with this proposal, that the old union is turning the library over to the new union, – the *Starosta* reacted with a characteristic Russian joke, similar to the Yiddish expression: 'The same *yenta,* but differently dressed.' Despite this, the library was legalized. The union of mercantile employees was also

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93 Also shown as Gausenblosen, because of the interchangeability of the 'g' and 'h' in Russian orthography.

established, and after all of the unions were legalized, an advisory council of the professional unions was established, as well as a cultural position.

The party developed a large professional, political and cultural set of activities. Many meetings and gatherings were arranged and held.

Informing, Arrests and Provocations

When the normal and officially legalized activity was presented, and reached its full tempo, we were confronted with a flurry of arrests. In this manner, our member, Kh. Galay from Slonim was once arrested after a debate at a member assembly at our location. At another time, two youths were arrested after a gathering of '*Zukunft*' by invitation, in Warsaw (the Messrs. Kiwa Szeftz, and Shimon Winikowsky, a third, Michael Szeftz had hidden himself). It became clear, that there was a provocateur in our midst. After extensive investigation, we succeeded in unmasking the provocateur, a certain Yankl Egergarn (a carpenter by trade), someone who had immigrated to Poland. He had married in Baranovich, and was known to be a man of little means, and suddenly he began living a prosperous life, and was getting ready to build a house.



Page 325/326: ***The Active [Leadership] of the 'Bund' in 1928***

Sitting (Below): Raphael Tserkov, Mott'l Ljahovicky, Rachel Pinchuk, Sapozhnik, David Kudewicky, Polonsky.

Sitting (From the Right): San'eh Priptstein, Ezra Ljahovicky, Gershon Galay, Abraham Zelik Yudelewicz, Liova Worobiowsky, Joseph Lifschitz Reuven Cooperman, Shimon Winikowsky, Mott'eh Gausenblosen, Hirsch Dobkowsky,

Standing (From the Right): Moshe Krawchuk, David Winikowsky, Ber'l Winikowsky, M. Sapozhnik, Itcheh Gamm, Chaim Gausenblosen, Chaim Zucker, Liota Rabinovich.

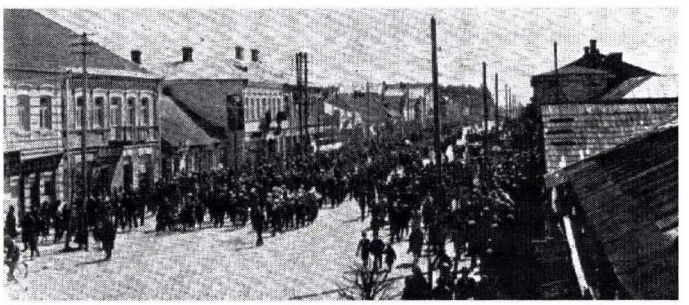
In pursuing him, we discovered that he was in contact with the political secret police.

The informer, seeing that his cards were uncovered, sought by a variety of means, to provoke the members, in order to shut down the professional unions in Baranovich. The situation was tense. The members were warned to expect provocation.

A clash came to pass on *Rosh Hashana* in the Great *Bet HaMedrash*. A number of the members approached the informer and asked him, if he had come to pray to God for additional victims. The informer reacted physically. A fight broke out, and he brought a Polish policeman into the Bet HaMedrash (Number 569). On the spot, Messrs. Joseph Lifschitz and Israel Dobkowsky (right-wing *Poalei-Tzion*) were arrested. Hirsch Dobkowsky was stopped in the street, and Reuven Cooperman was arrested in his home. The ones arrested were detained for two days in Baranovich, and then they were transferred to Novogrudok. According to the charges, they stood threatened with fifteen years in prison (for assaulting a secret agent of the régime, for disturbing prayer, for resisting the authorities, etc.). Fortunately, the informer was compromised in an array of crimes, and in openly taking a bribe from the father-in-law of our member, Joseph Lifschitz, and as soon as this matter became public knowledge, in the central country press (such as '*Robotnik*' of the P. P. S. and '*Volkszeitung*') and took on a scandalous character – the régime distanced itself from him, liquidated the issue, and released the detainees after four weeks of arrest. With this, almost all of the prior charges were dropped, along with litigation, apart from the Galina instance.

First of May Celebrations

Many incidents were experienced in connection with the initial May First celebration at our location, from the secret underground meetings in the forests, to the large, fiery demonstration parades.



Page 327/328: ***The 'Bund' [Parade] on May First***

On the evening before May 1, 1925, a general advisory meeting was called for the representatives of the '*Bund,*' 'P. P. S.,' and the professional unions. The question of an open demonstration on the First of May was entertained. A number of the P. P. S. representatives related that they had been warned by the local anti-Semites, that they would not permit any demonstration. Because these warnings were considered serious, they held that the demonstrations should be canceled, and that we should be content with internally organized celebrations, as has been done up till now. Our feeling was that we should not let ourselves be intimidated. Also, the leader of the P. P. S. in Baranovich, Mr. Makai was of the opinion that we cannot permit ourselves to be terrorized. As a result of this, it was decided to carry out the demonstration. On the part of the *Starosta,* attempts were made to dissuade us from having the demonstration, on the basis that it is a threat to the tranquility and security of the populace. After seeing that we were prepared to stand up for our rights, he proposed that the demonstration take place under a strengthened police security guard. We refused this as well, saying that we had enough of our own able-bodied security militia men, which will be able to deal on its own with the hooligans.

That year, and in following years, the demonstration took place, and all of the anti-Semitic hooligans that were bold enough to assault individual Jews – did not even bestir themselves ,to attack the organized strength of the labor movement.

Workers and peasants from the vicinity participated in these demonstrations in substantial numbers. The gathering point would always be changed in accordance with the requests of the authorities.

The members did not want to satisfy themselves with only the political character of the demonstration, but also wanted to give it a festive air. To this purpose, they approached the members of the fire-fighters society, with a request that they should lend their musical instruments from its orchestra (the players were also

members of the professional unions). The response was negative, that the orchestra stood in service of only the fire-fighters society, and not for any other bodies.

This refusal elicited embitterment from the membership, and their feelings were expressed at their first opportunity to do so.

For the upcoming *Lag B'Omer* the assistant head of the fire-fighters, Nehemiah Bitensky, arranged for a joint celebration by '*Maccabi*' and the fire-fighters in Mys. After the ceremonies, the train of people fell into line to march to Baranovich. When the orchestra leader, Baksht, gave the signal to play, the musicians demurred, saying that the orchestra is exclusively available only at the disposition of the fire-fighters – and under no circumstances for any other body, and as long as '*Maccabi*' was in the ranks of the procession – they will not play. A sharp conflict broke out, which in the end, brought to the dissolution of the fire-fighters orchestra. As a result of this, an independent workers orchestra was created by the '*Bund*' (after that, an orchestra was created by '*Maccabi*').

From that time on, the '*Bund*' orchestra was the crown of every labor celebration, and it made an especially important impression when it stood at the head of the parade of the First of May procession.

The Fund for the Ill

At the beginning of the twenties, organized labor in Baranovich did not yet have social security. In the instance when a worker became sick, he could go to the '*TOZ*' for medical help, or to the municipal 'social care.' Because of the meager resources of both of these philanthropic institutions, their help was insufficient and brought about the lowering of morale of organized labor. The construction workers union even once attempted to create its own fund for the ill, with the support of the local Jewish doctors. This attempt, however, was not sustainable because of financial difficulties, and after a year of activity, this fund for the ill was liquidated.

It was first, in the summer of 1926, that a general meeting was called of the representatives of the 'Bund' and the P.P.S. and the professional unions, with the objective of creating a branch of the general Fund for the Ill in Baranovich. A commission was elected of three persons to found this institution.

At the outset, a location was rented on the *Shaseina Gasse* in the house of Yudelewicz, and the services of the local doctors were arranged for. This institution encompassed almost the entire labor force of the city and its vicinity. It existed for years, and was a source of considerable help for the broad mass of the people.

The Appeals Court

According to the law of the Polish régime, an Appeals Court existed, whose purpose was to determine the eligibility of the unemployed for receiving funds from the government unemployment fund.

Up to 1928, a worker in Baranovich had to make such an appeal in Vilna, and had to endure difficulties and abuses, as a Jew and as a human being.

In 1928, the professional unions approached the government with a request to create a branch of the Appeal Court in Baranovich.

In order to properly deal with this request, a representative of the Vilna Appeals Court was sent to Baranovich to establish such a branch by us.

In the process of setting this up, the government representative expressed the view that it was desired that in the aggregate staffing of this court, there should be as few Jews as possible.

After a whole series of consultations, the Appeals Court was created with the inclusion of the Messrs: Makai (P.P.S.) H. Dobkowsky ('*Bund*'), Yehoshua Izikson and Trachtenberg (Employers) and the Lawyer Mikhnik as a neutral arbitrator, in total, four Jews and one Gentile. Accordingly, this 'fervent desire' on the part of the government representative was not fulfilled. This proved to be a great easement for the Jewish worker. He could even use his own language freely. Also, the single Christian on the court, Mr. Makai (from the P.P.S.) understood Yiddish, and not once only, he encouraged a Jewish worker to express himself in '*Mameloshn*.'

'The Workers' Home'

The organizational work of the '*Bund*' and the professional unions was constantly being hampered because of the lack of an appropriate premises, and financial difficulties. The thought occurred to the members to build their own 'home.' A group to move this initiative was organized, to raise the money funds, and to carry out the construction work of this house at Orla [*Gasse]* 96.

The work was carried out under very difficult conditions, and in the larger part, thanks to the personal volunteer work of the members themselves, who donated their free time to the construction project. In the course of a year, the 'Home' was ready. It was here, that the party concentrated all of its institutions, and the professional unions.

Cultural Activity

Every professional union had a culture committee, whose purpose was to look after the cultural work among its members. Speeches, debates, discussion evenings, etc., were arranged.

A special cognizance was taken of the issues relating to the health and hygiene of the people. With the initiative of the culture committee, and with assistance from 'TOZ' the local doctors were systematically rotated in giving lectures, with the participation of Dr. Press, Dr. Nakhumowsky, Dr. Szenicky, Dr. Kaplan, etc. Drama presentations and parties were also undertaken, etc.

The '*Bund*' was also active in the local social institutions such as ORT, TOZ, etc., and had representatives in the municipal council and the community.

The 'Morgenstern' orchestra contributed a great deal to the musical education of the youth.

With the appearance of the labor sports society 'Morgenstern' in the area , a branch was also formed in Baranovich. In our location, 'Morgenstern' developed an intensive level of activity. In the course of a brief time, it numbered 200-250 members, divided up into a variety of sections, such as light athletics, football, etc. 'Morgenstern' held many open appearances. The sports activities were led by the Messrs. Ber'l Winikowsky, Eliyahu Stolovicky, and Moshe Kagan, under the direction of a professional instructor.

The Yiddish *Volksschule*

With the joint effort of the 'Bund' and 'Poalei Tzion' (right wing) a Yiddish Volksschule, of the *TzYShO* type, was established in Baranovich. The school existed for years, and hundreds of the children of workers found their home there, and got their education and instruction in their mother tongue.

The Furniture Makers Cooperative

A cooperative of furniture makers was established in 1933 by a group of workers.

As a driving force to its creation, was the circumstance in which the furniture makers found themselves. On the one side, there were no larger scale businesses that could keep them continuously employed, and on the other side, as independent individual producers, they were compelled to accept the dictates of the furniture sales merchants.

Among the members of the cooperative, were Messrs. Yud'l Adler, Abraham Zelig Yudelewicz, Hirsch Lidowsky, Eliyahu Stolovicky, Avigdor Fein, Shimon Lubchik, Shlom'keh Mordukhowicz, Ber'l Dworetzky, Simcha Feigenbaum, and others.



Page 332: ***The Furniture Makers' Cooperative***
In the Middle: *Ber'l Dworetzky (wearing a white short), Nahum Tsukorny (near Dworetzky), Abraham Zelik Yudelewicz (sitting in riding position).*
Against the wall (from the Right): *Avigdor Fein (holding a saw), Shlom'keh Mordukhowicz, Israel'ik Kaplan, Hirsch'; Lidowsky, Meir Makaszewsky, Eli'eh Stolovicky, Yud'l Adler, Simcha Feigenbaum, Shimon Lubchik.*

The cooperative developed finely, mechanized itself, later on, and worked at its same location, and not being mindful that they needed to withstand difficulties and chicanery on the part of the authorities, it existed up to the war (September 1939).

Professional Activities

During the thirties, the labor parties lived in the midst of a nightmare of stormy political conflict. The so-called 'solution of a 'Vols-Front' was thrown into the area in 1935. To this end, we also called an advisory meeting of the representatives of all the labor parties, and a joint committee was elected of five members, which approached the task of reorganizing the professional unions and to activate them. The unions developed a widely branched activity on all fronts: organizational, economic, and cultural. A house was rented for the professional unions. The advisory council, in which there were representatives of all the labor parties, led this activity.

This work stood under the sharp delineation of a sharpened class conflict. There was yet a separate struggle that was waged against the municipal leadership. It was ordered to create open access to work. Very severe clashes took place with the municipal authorities to obtain better pay, and for the official recognition of the representation of the professional unions.

In that time (1935/36), the country was shaken up by a reactionary wave of terrorism, with pogroms in Pszityk, Minsk, Mazowiecki, Brisk and other places. At that time, the law against Jewish *Shekhita* was proclaimed. and 'ghettoes' were instituted for Jews in the universities.

We were called apart to contest these decrees by the national council of the professional unions. Open protest demonstrations were organized, without official permission. At one of these demonstrations, several members were arrested, among them Israel Dobkowsky of '*Poalei Tzion*,' and the *Halutzim* from the nearby training and preparation *kibbutz*.

Organized labor became like a thorn in the eye of the authorities, and it wielded a set of repressions against it.



Page 333: ***The Leadership of the Clothing Union***
Sitting (from the right): *A. Gamm, Szeftz, David Burstein, Mer'eh Stolowicky, Meir Parecky.*
Standing (from the right)*: Lipa Dworecky, Wolfowitz, Kh' Mondzheh*

On a certain day in March 1936, the house of the professional unions was surrounded by the police, and they arrested the Messrs. Eliyahu Stolovicky (now in Argentina), Reuven Cooperman (drowned in the Vistula during the Red Army attack on Warsaw in 1944), and a few Christian workers.

The authorities, however, had made a mistake. The repressions did not suffocate the activity, but to the contrary – it strengthened it. A whole rash of strikes broke out among the so-called 'open' places of work. In one such strike, on the *Pocztowa Gasse*, the workers spread out straw and slept at night on the pavement, in order not to let strike-breakers get through. The professional unions looked after providing food to the strikers.

The Security Service in Novogrudok sent a representative to us, who issued a warning that in case the strikes would not be stopped, the representatives of the professional unions will be sent to the (notorious) concentration camp Kartuz-Bereza.

These warnings too, did not cause these activities to halt. On June 27, 1936, the Messrs. Makai, representative of the council of professional unions, and his deputy, H. Dobkowsky, the chairman of the construction workers union, were arrested. Both were sent to Kartuz-Bereza. But this also had no effect, and under these difficult and pressured circumstances, the work was pushed forward until the outbreak of the war on September 1, 1939.

Remember!

Finally, let us also recall, among all those martyrs who fell at the hands of the Nazi régime, those active members of the 'Bund' who risked their skin and lives in the service of local Jewish labor: Itcheh Gamm (both the carpenter and the tailor), L. Worobiowsky, San'eh Pripstein, the brothers Mordechai and Chaim Hausenblosen, Alter Sokolowsky, the brothers Ber'l Shimon, and David Winikowsky, Yankl and Fyvel Abulansky, the lady members, Badan'eh Levinson, Menucha'keh Sapozhnik, Riva Ravitz, and Raphael Tserkov, and Mott'l Ljahavicky.

Honor their Memory!



Page 335/336: ***A Corner of the Cemetery***

Memories and Folklore

זכרונות און פאלקלאר

זכרונות ופרקי הווי

Memories

Impressions of Baranovich

By Meir Grossman

When I would visit Warsaw in connection with party-political issues, I would constantly hear from the members: 'This time you must visit Baranovich.' And to my wondering inquiry: 'Why Baranovich in particular?' the answer came back 'Baranovich has the most loyal branches, and you will take great pleasure from your contact with the local Jews.'

After my first visit to Baranovich, I concluded that my friends in Warsaw were correct.

I felt at home here from the first moment on. The straightforwardness, the simplicity, and the high measure of intelligence – was both warming, and drew me closer. One concluded that the people were serious when they addressed Jewish problems. Partisan politics was very well developed, and people took their party responsibilities seriously. And the Jewish Baranovich settlement had one other praiseworthy attribute: it paid attention to its guests; it wanted to know the truth, sought to understand the arguments and differences of opinion.

I, especially, felt this, because I had visited Baranovich after the split in the Revisionist Party, and had, as opponents, both the members from yesteryear, as well as the opponents of revisionism. And even though my debate presentation was disrupted, I was able to develop contact with the listeners, who were often complete strangers.

Externally, life in Baranovich was tranquil and dreamy. There were long, quiet streets. Courtyards, in which several families lived. The main thoroughfare evoked the image of similar streets in the smaller Russian cities. One heard more Russian than Yiddish or Polish. But this provincial bucolic appearance was just the outer garment. In their homes, people read a great deal, carried on discussions, and dreamt of the larger world and of the Land of Israel. I felt a special kinship to Baranovich and its people, at whose core there was hospitality to their guests, a good heart, and a genuine sense of loyalty to Jewish national ideals. You knew that you could depend on your Baranovich friends. Their word was solid.

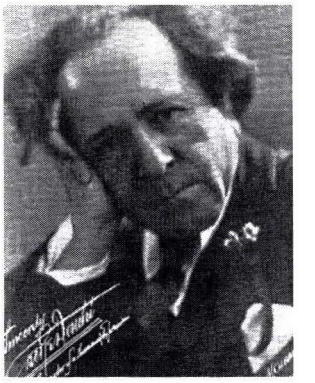
In my life, I have visited hundreds of cities and spoken from hundreds of platforms. I could always immediately sense if the audience was aware or was just accepting. The Baranovich audience belonged to the first category. It was not necessary to translate for them. They grasped even the most subtle of inferences. They were ensconced in political issues. They were also honest with themselves and with the speaker.

My heart goes out to those among them, who were exterminated, or vanished in the Bloody Deluge. Here and there, I encounter people, who remember that beautiful time – beautiful in its simplicity and straightforwardness. For them, Baranovich is a beautiful chapter in their lives. They want that picture of Baranovich to be preserved in the annals of Jewish history.

And there is a desire to lay a small, modest wreath of flowers on the gravestone of that Jewish city, that lived Jewishly, that made sacrifices for Jewish development, and dreamt of doing great deeds. It is good that we do not let a Jewish grave become overgrown with grass out of negligence.

Baranovich in 1890

By Aiz'l Wilkomirsky
(New York)



Page 343:
A. Wilkomirsky (George Dalliny)

In October 1890. in the village of Dzieraŭnaja, not far from Mys, gentiles gathered – men, women and children – and with bug eyes looked at how the peasant Holub, and his sons, carried out all of our belongings that we owned, beds, tables, stools, benches, a crock and a commode, blankets and pillows, small cushions, pots, pans, a funnel, a samovar and dishes (both for Passover and regular use), candelabras, lamps with and without a bowl, framed pictures (Moses Montefiore, R' Isaac Elchanan), a tub, trough, a hook, pokers and shovels, a broom and a hearth brush, an axe, a hammer and saw, a sail cloth, books and pamphlets, and so forth, etc. Our little daughter Taib'eh held two flower pots in her hands, a sewn raven doll with her Sabbath clothing and wearing a hat. My mother had given 'orders,' and her assistant Frayd'keh did the deeds; and when two gentiles carried out a carton full of linen, she gave them a hand... She entrusted the wall clock with the pendulum to my older brother, Pinia. Clothing with ruffles and crinolines, were wrapped in white sheets, and hung from my mother's left arm. We, three young boys, carries our wardrobes on our backs. Finally, two large copper vessels were carried out. My grandfather was holding Avrom'keh in his arms. The gentiles packed the first wagon with furniture, cartons, bedding, and all the household furnishings; the second wagon was designated for us, the living inventory.

Radziewski, an older gentile, went up to our mother, and engaged her in a conversation:

– Пани *Lejzorowa*! What do you lack here among us? We love you... for your good heart, for your wise counsel; you have lived among us for ten years. You have cured us and our children, whether it was from a cold or a stomach ache. We have always prayed to God for you, Пани *Lejzorowa*! Do not move to Baranovich, a muddy little village, even smaller than our village; what are your bartering for –' Шило на мыло![94],

This good gentile patted me on the head with his big hand, and I grabbed a hold of my mother's apron.

–Будьте здоровы[95]! – the gentile said, taking off his sheepskin hat, and went off with a bowed head...

Our father Lejzor (the furniture maker) Wilkomirsky then worked in a forest near Pinsk, and our frail mother had to do everything by herself; the only one who helped her was Frayd'keh.

Holub had already carried out the large pot on which mother would salt and kosher meat. At that moment, Mikolaj Lucki walked over, a gentile of some worth of some forty-five years of age. He was a tall, strongly built peasant, with long black hair, and big eyes. He was an Orthodox Christian, and hated Catholics very much (Radziewski was a Pole).

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94 It is a typical Russian saying: Шило на мыло rhymes. The meaning is that you bartering nothing for nothing.

95 Go in good health!

–Так вы нас оставляете, пани Lejzorowa[96], – he said sunken in thought.

– We have to – my mother replied – the children are growing up, and they must get an education. An education is the only thing that has remained with us Jews. We have no fields which can sustain us... and if we can read and write, we will not die of hunger.

– And were we to have a bit of land, would it suffice? – Mikolaj said quietly with a sigh – we have corn and potatoes until the new year, and the little calf and horse also need to eat; and after the new year, we have to mortgage our souls to the nobleman for a sack of potatoes, *act*! – he let loose a quiet, deep sigh –Ни церкви, ни школы?[97]! You have it better, because you can go to wherever you want; we are chained to this wretched bit of sandy soil that the 'Добрый царь батюшка[98]' has thrown to us, like one throws bones to a dog... жалы,жаль[99] that you are moving away – he mourned; but if you indeed must go, do me a favor and take the Catholics with you. They are a disgrace to our village; they kill, steal, and make pogroms, and inform on 'Samuel' for selling liquor without a license; such a poor man, with so many children, it is a pity! Прощайте, не поминайте лихом[100]!...

– Пани *Lejzorowa*! – Holub called out – the house is empty, everything is on the wagon.

The first one up was our grandfather on the baggage. We, the two young boys, crawled up onto the wagon by ourselves, and after us, Taib'eh with the flower pots. Frayd'keh held Avrom'keh in her arms, and the little youngster complained, not wanting to travel. My mother said her goodbyes to the neighbors, and also ascended the wagon. Holub took the feedbags with the grain off the horses, took the reins between his fingers, and gave the horses a whack.

Oh, woe is me! I almost forgot...'Почкай Пан *Holub*!.[101]..

Tfrooo! – Holub shouted, and pulled on the reins.

With an impetus, my mother jumped off the wagon, and ran into the house. She was banging and working on something in there. A while later, she came out, stopped for a moment, and caught her breath. She was weak, and looked pale, her black eyes burning, her pretty black hair disheveled, her lean figure with her flat nose in the air. She had a smile on her pretty lips.

–I have it! – she repeated several times, in a triumphant voice, just as if she had almost forgotten to take her jewelry. In her white hand she held.... the *mezuzah* – – –

For a long while, with the wheels scraping, we slogged through the small woods from Dzieraŭnaja to Mys.

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96 So, you are leaving us, Madame Lejzorowa.

97 We have no church, and no school!

98 Good Czar, our father. (*batyushka* - a diminutive from father).

99 Pity, pity

100 Goodbye to you, but don't have bad memories!

101 Hold it, Mr. Holub!

A fright befell us when Pinia told us about the wolves, which he had seen while traveling in the summer with our father through these woods – and how our mother and Frayd'keh in this past winter, rode between two wolves; they made so much noise, that the horse fled speedily, and saved them from the hungry wolves.

Our cow, Krasulya, mooed a couple of times, and the remaining distance, was tethered, chewing her cud, following our wagon, tied up with a rope.

We rode into the Mys swamp that was over the axles of our wagons. People ran out from their houses to look at this baggage train and entourage, who are dragging themselves in this awful weather to Baranovich. Men and women slogged through the mud, their overcoats and dresses torn.

We rode through the marketplace, and stopped at the wooden bridge, which spanned the little river. Holub and his son jumped down from the wagons, and took our mother, Taib'eh and Frayd'keh, beckoning them to alight as well (we smaller children and our grandfather were permitted to remain seated). After several cracks of the whip, and shouting, the horses barely got the wagons across the little bridge. Avrom'keh got frightened and began to scream. Then, the rest of the party went back to sitting in their prior places, and we continued to travel on.

A *viorst* before reaching Baranovich, we rode by Zay'chik's house. A whistle, and heavy smoke, frightened our mare, and she began to run. '*Czuhanka*!' cried Holub, and signaled to the right with his whip, when a a locomotive rode through with a great deal of noise.

And here, finally, we rode by the first house in old-Baranovich.

– this is Israel the Robber's house – my mother said quietly.

The second house, large and beautifully built, belonged to Graf Rozwadowski; the local inspector (or justice) lived in it. In the third, a smaller building, the post office could be found. The fourth house belonged to Itcheh Turetsky; he had a guest-house there, and also liveried the horsed for the post office. In the fifth building was Shy'keh's saloon, with is *Hasidic shtibl* in the yard. In the sixth house, was Berman's guest-house. Beyond it, stood Kaminsky's guest-house, and on a small side street, Szkolnik's grocery store. The ninth was Zablodsky's guest-house. The tenth, and last, house, belonged to Bendit; in the second half, with iron bars on the four windows, was the concentration point for arrested people. Two houses stood at the intersection; the Liss family lived in one, This was the end of old-Baranovich.

Overall, there was a lot of mud, especially opposite the train station. Riding up to the intersection, the barriers came down, and we remained standing. A locomotive ran by like a bolt of lightning, with a whistle and tumult. Our little hearts were pounding out of fear, and Avrom'keh, who kept screaming this whole time, quieted down out of fear.

We crossed the tracks, and went by Berman's house, Noah Epstein's guest-house, Galperin's ironmongery, Itcheh Golda's Moshe the *Shokhet*, Zhema the Baker's little house, Chaim Jelniker's house. Right, by the lines, between the trees, opposite Noah Epstein's stood the houses of the Pole, Celinski; The lawyer, Adler, lived in one of these. Close to Chaim Jelniker, in a little house, the seamstress, Min'keh Turetsky, and her sister, had their tailor shop.

Later on the road, we rode past Moshe the Baker, and went into a big puddle up to and over the axles. The tired horses were able to pull both wagons out, only with great difficulty. After Shaul Baruch the Shoemaker, we finally rode into Chay'keleh's courtyard. A new mud hole!

Стой[102]! Holub shouted, and his mare stood still.

'Ну и болото хуже нашего!'[103]' – Holub shook and twisted his head, and the horse sneezed – Вот и правду сказал!'..[104]

A half-blind woman greeted us. A dog crawled out of the puddle, shook himself dry, and sprayed Chay'keleh and our mother.

Пани Лейзорова, поедем обратно в деревню! For this I will not take any money from you; Там у нас чище.[105]

' – Holub asked. But mother had paid for an entire year in advance, and hired the Rabbi of Stalovičy for us boys. Our cow, it appears, as a protest decided to moo, and the dog barked, and Taib'eh shed a tear.

'Shlomo! Mordechai! Avrem'l! 'Woe unto you'– Chay'keleh shouted out with a grating screech – 'help us take the things off the wagon.' The three young sons with the house worker Prokop, set upon the contents of the wagon, immediately unloading it, and set everything out on its place.

Under Frayd'keh's supervision, a fire immediately flickered in the oven. Pots stood ready, and all of the utensils were in their proper place. A white tablecloth covered the large table, and a boiling samovar stood on it already. Our handsome grandfather sat like a patriarch at the head, holding Avrom'keh on his lap. Mother invite everyone to the table for a glass of tea with *kichel,* not forgetting Holub and his two sons.

'Have mercy and do a mitzvah! Give me a small pot of tea for a sick child, with a bit of sugar' – a voice sounded from a middle-aged poor woman, who remained standing at the door, holding the small fashioned clay pot in her hand.

My mother asked her to the table: 'sit, drink a glass of tea and taste out *kichel.*'

This was Khi'sheh the bath attendant, the wife of the first Baranovich *Shammes*, a sickly and weak man.

'That's a pretty fore hanging' – Khi'sheh wrung her hands – ;and who sewed the doormat at the entrance?'

'Taib'eh. my older girl, – my mother answered.

'She has golden hands, and she should only be well; she should certainly be able to earn 10 gulden a week, the noblewomen will delight in it.'

Mother filled her pot with tea, and gave Khi'sheh a bit of sugar and a *kichel.*

'If you would have another *kichel*, you would save my sick husband,' – Khi'sheh said, with a sigh.

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102 Halt!

103 This dirt is worse than ours!

104 What I said is true! (According to a superstition, if you say something, and someone sneezes (a horse here), it confirms the truthfulness of what was said.)

105 *Panie* Lejzorowa, let us return to the village! We have it much cleaner there!

Mother gave her two more pieces of *kichel.*

'May God bless you, such a dear soul,' – Khi'sheh said by way of thanks, as she walked to the door, switching the hot pot from one hand to the other. She turned and asked: 'On Saturday night, after *Havdalah*, will you again drink tea?'

'We drink tea every day' – my mother answered with a smile.

'That is good to know' – Khi'sheh said, as if to herself, and left the house. – – – – – – – –

The first of the Baranovich *balebatim* was Shai'keh Baranovitzky, a Kaidanov *Hasid.* Tall and handsome, a solidly built man, with black burning eyes, a long beard, and a big belly; he ran a saloon and hotel, which stood in old-Baranovich, across from the train station.

The second guest-house belonged to Israel, one of Shy'keh's competitors. He was an expert at attracting passengers to himself, and would personally meet every train, day and night. Apart from his inn, Israel also dealt in dried mushrooms and eggs. He was also a bit of a broker, and to the barbers in Mys, he was a big-time 'Pan Brat' with the police constabulary and nobles, with whom he could engage easily on their own language. In Baranovich and its vicinity, they knew to tell a horrible story about him, because of which he was crowned with the name, 'Israel the Robber'... ----------

In the seventies of the past century [sic: the nineteenth century], when Poliakov was building the Moscow-to-Brisk railroad line, the Pidliansky brothers from Petersburg worked for this substantial contractor. When the land was surveyed, and the excavation begun, the Pidlianskys designated Baranovich as their headquarters, and built a lot of small houses for themselves and their employees. Later on, they also put through the Polesia rail line and finally – the Baranovich-Bialystok branch. When the three lines were completed, they gave away the houses to their foremen, part of them without cost, as a present, and part for a low price.

The first of the balebatim of Baranovich came from the surrounding vicinity, mostly from Mys; an exception was Yaakov Tilewicz, who immigrated in with his family from Mohilev {also Mogilev].

On the street that came to be called '*Shaseina*' and where Noah Epstein's and Berman's houses stood, Chaim Leib Shereshevsky and Motya Rabinovich lived on the other side, ands on the government land, a peasant named Buhai. Past Rabinovich, there stood the dilapidated structure of Shmuel the Smith, and his smithy.

Crossing the tracks at the railroad station, the first house beside the forest, belonged to Kransnopiurka, who walked with a limp. It was at his residence that the card-playing club of the town could be found; Christians and Jews played cards here, and he made a living from this... he had a 'privilege' to be seated near the Rabbi, because he had donated the first lumber to build the Old *Bet HaMedrash.* His next-door neighbor was Ahar'keh Miskin (Ahar'keh Znoyer), who had a large piece of property, with lumber for housing construction. Past him was Shlomo Turetsky; in the second half of his house, lived Feinberg (from Haradzeja) – a handsome, tall brown-haired man, with a black barbered small beard, who owned a hansom cab, and a good-looking horse with bells. At that time, he was still living off of his wedding dowry. Yaakov Leib Zeitchik and his family lived in Shlomo Turetsky's courtyard. Going past Shlomo, one could find: the house of Mr. Tilewicz (who provided lumber for the trains in the excavation of the Baranovich-Vilna line). The shack of Binia the Shoemaker, and the house of Itcheh the *Gabbai* (Yitzhak Berezovsky). Moshe the Baker ended the street. Behind it, in the forest, stood the first *Bet HaMedrash*, and by contrast with it – the old bath house. Zusha Savitzky, a short Jewish man with a thick beard – and his wife, Liebeh, were the first managers of the bath house.

Between Moshe the Baker and Shaul Baruch the Shoemaker there was a permanent pool that would freeze over only in the winter.

It was from here that the first long, and wide street began, which Graf Rozwadowski – on whose property the city was constructed – called Elizabetinskaya, named for his daughter (which later became Pilsudski).

The second house on the street belonged to Chai'kl Brawda; this was our first residence. Opposite us, there stood an old shack, in which Moshe the Shoemaker lived, with his 'old lady' and a goat; this was our *Heder*. the second half was occupied by a telegrapher, Jeremilianov and his mother, a Russian from the Smolensk *Guberniya.* They were very good people. Our mother taught Madame Jeremilianov the local gentile language, which was practically incomprehensible to the Russian lady.

Woe unto the way that language looked when it came from the mouths of the Jewish women of that time...

'Иди к пьяным богам! [106]' – a Jewish lady once called out to a bunch of gentile boys in a canteen.

'А чьи боги пьяные?[107] – the gentile boys shrugged their shoulders and shook their heads in bewilderment.

Word by word, and then one of them gave the Jewish lady a push, and she fell in her little store. A tumult ensued. Her three sons came running, with about 7-8 other Jewish men; the gentile boys were thrashed, and why?...

The gentile boys in sheepskin coats, went inside on a hot summer day, and asked for some seltzer water for a groschen. The lady storekeeper was asking a kopeck for a glass, and was not willing to sell a half glass. The gentile boys however persisted, and indicated that all they had was a groschen, and need to go on foot in this heat to Kolpenica. The Jewish lady, half-blind, squeezed the siphon rather weakly and slowly in the dark.

'Дай еще каплю! [108]' The gentile boys ask of her.

'Дай еще грош![109]' The Jewish lady replied.

The gentile boys grabbed the glass from her hands, and she grabbed it back, holding it and yelling: 'Иди к пьяным богам!'

The glass, with the soda water, fell to the floor and shattered. At that point, the gentile boys pushed the Jewish lady; she fell and made a racket. And that is how the fight started.

I was standing nearby. This image became etched in my memory; she seems to be standing even now in front of my eyes. The poverty in villages and small towns among gentiles and Jews alike was so great in Czarist Russia, that for a groschen, it was deemed normal to unintentionally kill someone...

On Sunday, the gentiles from the surrounding villages would come into Baranovich with a wagon load of wood, potatoes, onions, beans, peas, beets, corn, wheat or barley; they would either sell it, or barter it for soap, herring, etc. And of course, you understand, have a little nip or two. At that time, there was not yet a church in Baranovich. – – –

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106 Go to your drunken Gods!

107 And whose Gods are drunken?

108 Give here another drop of (soda water)!

109 Give me another groschen!

Near Moshe the old Shoemaker, was Khi'cheh's 'Palace' (her husband was the *Shammes* who 'had prayed already'), and on the offshoot, Avrem'l the Smith lived with his female cousin in the garden.

A goodly distance from here, by the forest, was the house of the *Melamed* from Gorodeyev. Across the way was a shambles, in which Chaim-Etch'eh (of the *Hevra Kadisha*) lived. Baranovich had already worked its way up to having a cemetery.

Several years back, two Yeshiva students had gone, on a hot summer's day, to bathe in the standing lake of Svetilovnitz, and they drowned. It was these two young men that initiated the cemetery...

We now return back to the beginning of the Elizabetinskaya *Gasse.*

Past Chai'kl Brawda, there lived a tailor (Sztatzky), the rear half being occupied by the show room. Yaakov Judkowsky had his business operation at the location of Chaim Jelniker. Past Jelniker lived: Tarczitsky the Shoemaker, and Moshe Olenick the Ladies' Tailor. Across the way, at the location of Leib'l Joch'eh's (a son of Jelniker), lived the first Rabbi, R' Chaim Leib Lubczansky. Joch'eh and her husband rented a store from Shmuel the Butcher; they sold finished clothing.

Pikelny, the first *Starosta*, had a flour store between Joch'eh and Aharon-David the Wagon Driver. It was Shmuel the Butcher who ended this quarter.

El'yeh Antonover's house stood on a small side street between Velvel Wolokhwiansky and Chaim Leib Shereshevsky. At the location of Velvel Wolokhwier (who had a flour store) Shilayner the Carpenter lived, with his wife and three sons: Shmul'keh, Gedalia, and My'keh (later to become Dr. Max Shilayner).

Moshiach the Butcher (where the 'Angel' lived), Nissan the Carpenter, and his neighbor Abraham Metropolitansky, Pesach the Bath Attendant, Herzl Razlivshchik and Helfand, occupied the third quarter. Abraham Brawda's saloon occupied the entire center of the fourth quarter. Leib'eh Jasinowsky's house stood on the fifth quarter (Leib'eh Ljahovicher) and Shimon Moshe Wolansky's hotel; The Jeweler, Ber'l Szymansky lived there, and had his craft shop.

Gantfig, the Rail Station Manager, lived in his own house near the station. A few versts further on, on the way to Palonka, there were three large houses that stood, which also belonged to him; railroad employees lived there.

And this was Baranovich in the year 1890. —

Hospitality

By Moshe Yudelewicz
Santiago – Chile

(A meeting between R' Yosh'eh Ber Brisker, and R' Ahar'eleh Koiranover at the Saloon of Shy'keh Baranovicher).

Forty years have passed since I heard that which I am about to retell here, Despite this, it remains fresh in memory, as if it had happened just yesterday.

R' Yehuda Graiever, a handsome and well-appointed Jewish man – he stands before me in his resplendent Bershad *Tallit*,[110] at his reading stand, in the Kaidanov *shtibl* in Haradzeja. On a winter morning, that was nonetheless a nice day, mild rays of a Kislev sun penetrated the half-frozen window panes, and gaily fell into the warmly heated Hasidic *shtibl*. It is after services were concluded.

And when R' Yehuda would wrap up his lengthy prayers, and was getting ready to rewind his *Rabbeinu Tam* phylacteries, he would, at such a time, love to relate stories; stories of years gone by, of good Jews from the past, and he would do this with very broad familiarity – in a deliberate fashion, and not hurried. And we, the children of the house of worship. would stand among our parents and hear, hear with open mouths, literally swallowing his words. – – – – – –

– In response to what you say: Baranovich has become a large town.. how the years fly by! How long ago was it that Baranovich had only one Jew in it, a single, solitary Jew... and who does not remember Shy'keh Baranovicher, and his old saloon? He probably held it in lease from the old Graf: an old building worn by time, with a high straw roof... and Shy'keh himself? An ardent *Hasid*, who would go to Kaidanov for the High Holy Days. And most importantly, – he was a great one for extending hospitality. Yes! That first Jew of Baranovich was a beautiful person. However, – and here R' Yehuda would stop, with a smile laden with local lore, and would say: extending hospitality involves many trials and has many levels. Is there then a limit to it? Shy'keh Baranovicher was someone who extended hospitality with great generosity; poor *Hasidim* would spent weeks on end with him, without paying so much as a groschen. But for this trait, Shy'keh had no one else to thank but the Rabbi of Brisk, R' Yosh'eh Bern זצ"ל. The Brisk *Gaon* was the one who made Shy'keh so big-hearted, and there is a story in it. It is worth it for you to hear it.

This happened – R' Yehuda tells – on a winter's evening. The young R' Ahar'eleh זצ"ל was expected to arrive in Kaidanov. Hasidim from the area, from Mys, Haradzeja, Ljahavičy, Moucadz' and other small towns, – awaited the arrival of the *Rebbe* at Shy'keh's tavern.

As luck would have it, on that very same evening, R' Yosh'keh Ber Brisker arrived; he needed to spend the night in Baranovich. And the custom of the Gaon of Brisk was to travel alone, without attendants or *Shamashim*...

And so, the Brisk *Gaon* saunters into the tavern, goes up to Shy'keh, and asks for a room to lodge for the night. Shy'keh, who was busy with the *Hasidic* guests, and the pending arrival of the *Rebbe*, did not quite grasp with whom he was dealing. He did not personally know the *Rebbe* of Brisk; he thought he was dealing with just an ordinary Jewish man – go figure, that here, standing before him, is R' Yosh'keh Brisker. Accordingly, Shy'keh says: 'here, my land is before you – please excuse me, my fellow Jew, but could you be so kind as to squeeze yourself somewhere into the saloon; I have no rooms left. The *Rebbe* is arriving imminently, and everything is occupied, He refused him, and went off.

And what do you think that R' Yosh'eh Ber did? Did he go look for another tavern? There was no other such facility in Baranovich at that time. So, having no alternative, he sat himself on a bench, in the saloon, among the uncircumcised, pulled out a candle from his pack, took out a book, and began to quietly immerse himself in reading.

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110 Bershad is a small city in the Vinnytsia Oblast of western Ukraine. It is the administrative center of the *Bershadsky Raion* (district).

Bershad was famous in the middle of the nineteenth century for its Jewish weavers of the *Tallit* (shawls used by the Jews during prayer). But at the end of the century the demand decreased, and the industry declined, leading many of the weavers to emigrate to America.

Suddenly, a great disturbance sweeps through the tavern: 'The *Rebbe* is coming! The *Rebbe* is coming!" *Hasidim* are running hither and thither, people are standing at the doors, there is noise, scuffling and pushing, as is the custom among *Hasidim*. And the Rabbi of Brisk – it is as if nothing was happening, continues to look into his book, deeply sunken in his thoughts; he was indeed a *Gaon*, but nevertheless, a *Mitnaged*....

When the Rebbe, R' Ahar'eleh entered the tavern, and accepted the greeting from the assembled crowd, something suddenly changed with Yosh'eh Ber... something had happened to his temperament; should he simply be curious, or should he indeed greet this Torah scholar? He picked himself up, and pushed his way through the *Hasidim*, and also offered the *Rebbe* his greetings.

And what do you think happened? I do not know, whether it was the eye of a Torah scholar, or...there are those who say that, as a youth, R' Ahar'eleh study Torah with R' Yosh'eh Ber,,,, and he simply knew who he was. Regardless, the Rebbe immediately knew with whom he was dealing, and as told by several Hasidim who were standing nearby, R' Ahar'eleh was greatly moved, seeing who this guest was, and he called out: '*Shalom Aleichem* Brisker *Gaon*!' 'How are you?' He forcefully drew him close, took him under the arm, and did not let him go; he directed Shy'keh to set up an other bed for the guest.

Upon entering the especially prepared dining room, both Rabbis began to argue over who should enter first: each wanted to accord this honor to the other.

– You come first, because you are the one who was awaited ... – Yosh'eh Ber called out. At the table, a second sitting place was provided for the Rabbi of Brisk.

So you want to know how did our Shy'keh feel after such an encounter? He was really not to be envied. As soon as he found out that this fellow Jew, whom he had treated so summarily was the *Gaon* of Brisk, and seeing the extent of respect being offered to him by the *Rebbe* of Kaidanov, he was seized by a great fear. And wen both Rabbis sat down at the table, he approached Yosh'eh Ber with tears in his eyes, broken, and began to beseech him for forgiveness: 'Holy Rabbi!' – Shy'keh blubbered out – 'I have demeaned the Torah, I did not properly carry out the commandment of extending hospitality; decree what you will on me, but I beg for your forgiveness.'

Hasidim, who were eye witnesses, tell that R' Yosh'eh Ber replied to Shy'keh in this manner:

– The virtue of extending hospitality to guests is a very beautiful virtue. The *Gemara* says: the virtue of extending hospitality to guests is greater than receiving the Holy Divine Spirit. And at this time, a difficult question has been answered for me, – we need to learn the performance of this deed from our Father Abraham, and not from Lot. The first one to perform this mitzvah was our Father Abraham. The Torah tells us that he did not pay attention to the fact that this was the third day after circumcision,[111] and that he was ill, he, upon seeing ordinary people in the distance, 'and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them...[112]' – he ran towards these guests, made himself available to them, and invited them into his house, giving them food and drink.

So the world asks the question: Lot also fulfilled this mitzvah of extending hospitality to guests. When the angels came to destroy Sodom, Lot ran before them, asked them into his house, and even 'insisted so strongly so at last they did go with him...'[113] So far did his sense of hospitality extend, that even when the people of

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111 When the pain of the procedure is said to reach its worst.

112 Genesis 18:2

113 Genesis 19:3

Sodom '...called to Lot, 'Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them.'[114] Lot did as follows: 'Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him. ...and said, I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof.'[115]

So Lot put his own life in danger, and sacrificed the honor of his daughters, – so why is this mitzvah ascribed to our Father Abraham? The answer is: Our Father Abraham made no distinction; the gates of his house were always open to every guest; by contrast, Lot looked only for angels. Someone who extends hospitality does not only receive angels... but rather is the one who attends to the needs of ordinary people.

And, indeed, since that time, – R' Yehuda ended – Shy'keh Baranovicher became a real extender of hospitality to guests.

Schools and the First Library

By Moshe Limon

Heders of Yore

From age 5-6, young boys began to attend *Heder.* These *Heders* belonged to the teachers themselves, who, for this purpose, maintained a room at their residence, or rented such a room from another party. An average *Heder* consisted of 15-20 children.

In the room, stood a large table, with two long benches on both sides. The Rebbe occupied the head of the table, and he had his own style of instruction.

The basic alphabet was learned in one [standard] manner. I remember the first day, when I began to attend *Heder*, and an 'angel' had tossed me some small coins, I think it was about 3 kopecks.

It did not take long, and all the children had mastered the alphabet 'as if it were water,' and in this initial semester, we were already learning Hebrew from the *Siddur*, though we did not yet understand the Hebrew words or interpreted them. It was only in the second semester, when we began to learn from the Pentateuch, that we began to understand the meaning of the words in Yiddish.

For the first couple of semesters, a great deal of time was taken up by prayers in the *Heder*, in order to enable the *Rebbe* to hear everyone's Hebrew, and to audit the reading to see that no mistakes were being made while reading from the *Siddur*. By the third, or fourth semester, more time was already being allocated to studying the Pentateuch itself. There was special emphasis on the portion of the week. The more progressive teachers, by that time, had begun to teach the children grammar. By and large, this [sic: Hebrew] was the language of instruction, and study of the Hebrew language. Among other things, a Hebrew song was learned by heart.

After the study of the Pentateuch, two different paths opened up. One group would take to deepening its study of the Pentateuch, Rashi, grammar, the former and later Prophets. Sufficient time was devoted to the study of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Twelve Minor Prophets. The Holy Scriptures (*Ketubim*) were only

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114 Genesis 19:5

115 Genesis 19: 6-8

minimally studied, excepting The Song of Songs, The Book of Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and the *Megillah* of Esther, which we happened to learn, because of their connection to Festival Holidays. And the Psalms speak for themselves... The modern teachers introduced history, poetry, the sayings of the Sages, and Hebrew dictation.

The writing of Yiddish was not taught; it appears that Bialik was right: Yiddish writes itself...

The more traditional teachers, immediately after a short period of teaching the Pentateuch, without any acquaintance with the remainder of the *Tanakh*, began to teach the *Gemara.* In general, there were different teachers to teach Gemara. In this manner, a young boy of 9 had already been exposed to *Baba Kama*, and often *Ketubot, Gittin, Kedushin*, etc.

Secular studies were not taught in the traditional *Heders.* In the reformed *Heders,* mathematics, Russian, history geography, etc. were taught.

Private teachers and private schools began to appear on the scene, where the worldly studies were taught in a larger proportion. The first pioneer was the teacher Szlimowicz. Among the first of the Hebrew teachers, let us recollect: Yekhiel Mavshovich, Razwilowsky, Mordechai Bitensky, M. M. Chernikhov, Kh. A. Kaplan, Gordon, Rogoznicky, and others. Later on, additional teachers arrived. The classrooms of the progressive teachers had a cleaner and more spacious appearance, the studies – more systematic, and the school dat was shorter.

With traditional teachers, we learned from 8 in the morning until 8 in the evening. During the winter, we would come to Heder with a lantern and a bottle of kerosine; we took along a bit of bread to have something to eat.

There was also a Talmud Torah, where the poor children received instruction. The order of study there was along more traditional Orthodox lines.

Many of the Talmud Torah boys, as well as Yeshiva students 'ate days' at the homes of the *balebatim*, where they were received in a very friendly manner. The food was the same as eaten by the *balebatim* themselves. As you might expect, in a more affluent home, the fare was better, but one never left hungry, even when leaving a home of more modest means.

I spoke with the Yeshiva students, and they would tell me about their 'days.'

On the Sabbath, for the most part, we ate at the homes of the wealthier *balebatim*. It was not bad to eat at the home of a butcher; there one would get generous portions of meat and a fat *kugel*. and in general, they saw to it that the Yeshiva boy should be satisfied by his meal, because during the week, as it was said, you had whatever God provided.

One Yeshiva boy told me one time, about a Friday night at the home of a well-built wagon driver, literally, a strongman. The boy was spar, weak, and could not eat a great deal. He was served a big plate of noodles, he eats a little bit, and leaves more than half of his portion. The wagon driver is a man of good heart, looks at the little Yeshiva boy, and shakes his head: A pity! We give him meat – he eats a bit, and leaves a substantial portion behind. The wagon driver takes note of this, but remains still. A plate of *tsimmes* is put in front of him – the same thing. In this case, the wagon driver approached the little lad with the following words:

– What do you learn there in the Yeshiva?

– The Tractate of *Shabbat* – the little boy replies.

- Pshaw – you don't know that stuff! – the wagon driver shouts...

– Well, you can test me, if you like - the trembling young lad says.

– I don't have to test you! I only know that if my chestnut horse doesn't eat, he won't be able to pull the wagon, and if there is no eating, then there is no learning!

That young lad no longer ate there, and had to find a different place.

The First Library

In the middle nineties, there was no municipal or private library in Baranovich. It was possible to obtain a Russian book from Dr. Chernikhov, who together with his wife (Khavkina, a midwife), had been arrested several years ago, and held somewhere or another for a longer period of time. It was also possible to get a Russian book from Tetz the Pharmacist. or someone who knew the Russian intelligentsia, such as the Judge's son, the son of the priest, etc., from a professional circle, to which the Jews had only limited access.

Here and there, slowly, books by [Abraham] Mapu, [Peretz] Smolenskin, Mendele [*Mocher Sforim*] and *Sholom Aleichem*, began to appear. At that time, *Akhiasaf* and *Tushia* had already begun to publish their popular creations. My group still belonged to the cohort of Heder boys, and we saw in '*HaTzefira*' which came to the city in one or two issues, that these previously mentioned publishing houses, published pamphlets for youth, such as 'Heroes of the Nation,' 'The Prince and the Pauper,' etc. These were books that had titles attractive to children. The circle to which I then belonged was too young, and I was able to select only a very few, such as Ben-Zion Shimshelewicz (today a doctor in Russia), Ber'l Epstein and his sister, Ar'chik Yosselewicz (today in *Ben-Shemen)* and one person named Jedidowicz. Every one of them wanted to obtain a specific payment from these newly-published pamphlets, which were rather inexpensive – 2,3 and 5 kopecks a book.

Shimshelewicz and I were among the better off boys. All of a sudden, Ben-Zion sunk himself into prayer, and would stand for a long time, swaying, and reciting the *Shmona Esrei* prayer. I was already well acquainted with the Pentateuch and *Tanakh*, and was curious to at least have a look in such a pamphlet.

One time, on a winter's day, my grandfather and uncle Mavshovich came from a somewhat more distant trip – from Moscow – where, along with other partners, they had purchased a forest (Chernikhova) for a large sum of money, – more than one hundred thousand rubles – at that time, a colossal undertaking. It happened that it was Hanukkah time, and the guests, with royal generosity, after such a major event, began to distribute Hanukkah *gelt* to the children. At that time, I had already saved up about 2 rubles, and dreamt of buying the first of the '*Tushia*' pamphlets, to the point of having made curtains with locks, to a tea carton, that I had obtained from a storekeeper, and had held onto, for my future library.

When it came to my turn to get Hanukkah gelt, I said to my uncle Yitzhak, who spoke Hebrew well (as for my grandfather, I was too scared to speak to him), that I already had a little money for Hebrew books, but not enough. 'How much do you believe you require to make this initial purchase?' he asked me. I replied: 'With 5 rubles I could have a nice collection from '*Akhiasaf*' and '*Tushia.*' My uncle smiled, and in a couple of minutes my capital consisted of a full five-note, and a bit of silver and copper coins. That very same

evening, I wrote up two postcards to Warsaw, requesting that they send me the catalogues for '*Akhiasaf*' and '*Tushia*,' and when I received them, I sent off the 5 rubles with a list of books. In several days, the postman brought several packets and a short report, indicating that there was a package waiting for me at the post office. I got enough of a run-around, until the *Starosta*, Yaakov Moshe Pikelny established that I am the correct recipient of the package.

It did not take long, and Ber'l Benya and others of our group came to open the packages, and to see the fresh new pamphlets with their own eyes, which allowed themselves to be read with such ease.

These books for young people created the first impetus for a library, which later became transformed into the one Yiddish library in our city.

I do not remember the details, but an 'evening' was organized and we took in several tens of rubles. With the help of Dr. Chernikhov, Chai'kl Epstein, Mansky, Yoss'l Arkin, Gedalia Or'keh's Yitzhak Jasinowsky, Aharon Shatzkes and others, a library committee was created, and a larger number of books were acquires, exclusively in Hebrew.

We obtained a room at the '*Chitalniya*' which was to be found in our yard, an armoire with shelves, we made up a catalogue, pasted numbers on the book spines, and instituted a 'de jour' process every day, when everyone could get access to a book. In order to generate income for binding and repairing books, we later instituted a charge of 5 kopecks a month for those who wished to make use of the library.

In time, we acquired several hundred books, all classics, and also acquired Yiddish and Russian books. Circles formed around the library, where simultaneously, difficult books such as 'At the Crossroads' was read, along with Hebrew and Russian critics. The '*Dor Dor v'Dorshav*' made an impression; when it appeared in Ben-Avigdor's '*Sifrei HaAgora*,' it was snapped up like water for making matzo...

A Glimpse into the Distant Past

By Dr. Nehemiah Kroshinsky

We do not know what sort of appearance Baranovich had now, after the Holocaust. Who knows if there is any trace left of our homes. Many of us are already beginning to forget a little bit at a time. what the last years before the Holocaust looked like. Everything now, is as if enshrouded by fog...

It is possible that this is because the city itself has by now lost all its sense and worth to us; because it has been emptied of all its former content – of the people, who were so close to us, so dear. The people are no more, and consequently, everything that we were so intimately connected to, is also already dead.

It is interesting how memory and the power of imagination, of the past years, fade so rapidly, as if they do not want to touch the fresh wounds, and not awake that deep pain.

Rather, they draw you away to the more distant past, where they feel better and more comfortable. The further away from the Holocaust the better... and you begin to dream about those times of yore, and everything is so clear and stands out, as if it was not so long ago, as if it was today, and yesterday.

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Like a moving ribbon, childhood years go by, youth, and everything connected to it.

Here, is the one-time little shtetl of Baranovich... and it looks completely different, and the people look like other people, and all of life is completely different, – more homey, more folksy, closer to nature; ringed by gardens, thick forests, and broad fields. And everything is brimming and bubbling with young life, and creativity.

Here is the Graf's forest, with its tall thick trees, which shielded us from the great heat and the tumult of the day-to-day life. There it stands, like a memorial to the genesis of Baranovich, like a silent witness. which always accompanied us during the stormy years of our youth...

The second forest, the '*Kozioner*,' as it was called, was not so well liked by us, despite the fact that it stood in the very center of the city. It is possible that this was so, because right at its entrance, lay the gentile cemetery, spread out, which did not harmonize particularly well with the usual panorama of the ambience.

We, the children, were minimally frightened by the gentile graves and their crosses; and also not of the church with its tall towers and the bells, which would clang against each other, and when that happened, everyone immediately knew that a gentile funeral was approaching, with its chants and music...

We had more respect and fear of the high pile of earth which was pushed off to the side. This was a hillock of sorts, under which there was a large store of gunpowder, – a great deal of gunpowder; and a Russian soldier always patrolled around it, carrying a large gun, whether it was day, or night. God forbid, we never had the desire to get close to it; we observed it from a distance... our childhood imagination would then begin to play with us. Under no circumstances could we grasp why such a thing had been permitted, so close to the houses? It could explode on one fine day, and destroy the entire city, and kill all the people?!

So go ask questions, at a time when there were many things we didn't understand then.

Why, for example, was the Jewish cemetery so far from the city, looks so sorrowful, and instills such a black fear? Why are the streets so muddy and slippery, – and the city would expire for a bit of water that is not available for putting out fires? And there is no body of flowing water? Why do they keep telling us that Baranovich is a young city, – and yet so many of the houses are old and decrepit, as if they had been standing for who knows how many generations? This, and other such questions would always gnaw away in our childlike minds. To this day, many things have remained unexplained and incomprehensible.

It was for this reason that large fires would break out in the surrounding towns, and entire streets would be consumed in flames. True, this issue was not so frightening in our case; only one house would burn down, or one barn. A watch was kept to assure there would be no fires or theft. About 10-15 of the *balebatim* would hire and elderly gentile man, and he would circulate for the entire night through the yards, and he would rap with a wooden implement, presumably to let any possible thief know there was someone about, and thereby frighten him off.

We could not understand why he would bang so forcefully with his implement (a '*kolokotka*'[116]). First of all, it wasn't possible to fall asleep with such a racket going on; secondly, this give a potential thief the best

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[116] Russian, for a little bell.

possible indication of where the night watchman is located, and he can then carry out his mischief without fear of disruption in a completely different yard?

Our fathers and grandfathers would explain to us, that it was not necessary to fear the gunpowder; if it is not ignited, it cannot explode. It is not permitted to light a match when walking past the hillock, because the soldier standing guard could, God forbid, shoot us...

The final words would hit us like a thunderbolt, and a shudder would ripple through our little frames, and it was for this reason that the 'Kozioner' forest lost so much of its attractiveness to us, and later on, we would always avoid passing the mound of gunpowder, just like we would avoid a drunken gentile.

As to a river, our elders would always signify with a finger in the direction of Mys. Our city – they would say – draws its roots from Mys. In general, Baranovich at one time was a suburb of Mys (called 'Baranovich near Mys'). And there, indeed, there is a small river, and we have a stake in it. As to the mud and puddles of water in the streets, do they not come from Mys?

They would say something similar about the Jewish cemetery which was far from the city. Who, at one time, needed a cemetery in Baranovich? Did Baranovich once have its own dead [sic: to bury]? And if someone passed away, was he from Baranovich? The deceased was from wherever you wanted him to be, but not from Baranovich. Mostly, they were originally from Mys, and the residents of Mys received their dead with great respect, and the deceased could feel that he was truly at home there.

As to the old houses, this was quite simple: our grandparents, the first pioneers in this new settlement, brought them, from the surrounding villages and settlements, at that time Baranovich already had, about 60-70 years ago, mastered the work of transporting complete houses from one location to another.

And that old gentile who spent the entire night banging with is implement, and didn't let anyone fall asleep – it appears that this actually made a great deal of sense; even the 'wise men' of Chelm couldn't devise such a clever scheme... this wonderful contrivance, all of the banging with the '*kolokotka*,'was devised by the *balebatim*, not so much against the possible thieves, but against the watchman himself. The continuous banging gave a certain sign that the watchman hadn't dozed off somewhere...

And the '*kolokotka*' resounded and the houses burned!... And our fathers would say, that a house doesn't burn just of its own accord – except when one makes the *Havdalah* blessing 'kindle the fire...'
Separately, we would get up in arms, and we would get very angry, when someone might blurt out that one or another city was nicer and bigger than Baranovich. How could this possibly be?! Is there such a thing in the world that Baranovich does not possess? – trains, railroad stations, soldiers and a конка, (a tramway drawn by horses); theaters, our own actors, and a 'Fire-Fighting Brigade' with its own orchestra; A Jewish man who proclaims: 'Come to synagogue!' and a tax and....

In a word, – a complete administration with all its trappings. It even had its own currency (from *Keren Kayemet*'), and its own colonies (colonial actions), and what did it not have?

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And the city itself?! At that time, Baranovich was a pastiche of many mixtures. You could find everything there.

Did you want to be in a village, or enjoy the benefits of village ambience? – here, you have it. Around each house, there was a wooden fence of boards or planks. The yards were thickly built up with barns, stables and sheds; planted with cucumbers, onions, radishes, and other vegetables. Around the fences, trees grow, left to their own, wild and prickly thorns, and a sort of plant whose leaves sear and burn when you touch them. Behind the barns, there are scattered piles of manure and waste from the homes, from which a bad odor emanates. Here and there, an outhouse peeks out, for human bodily needs. Further on there are long gardens, planted with potatoes; trees and orchards of a variety of fruits. Chickens, cats and dogs wander about without constraint in the streets. A few young gentile boys are driving a rather formidably large flock of sheep, coming from the fields, and through the streets. In empty parcels, overgrown with grass, goats are being pastured, a horse and a young colt with manacled feet. Ducks and geese are wallowing in the perpetually filthy waters, and they quack and cry with great pleasure.

Do you wish to see what Baranovich looked like from a city-town point of view? You don't have to look far, – here it is: this very same place, and you don't even have to change the decorations. In the middle of the city, a large four-sided marketplace lays spread out, partly overgrown with wild grass. Long, wide streets with many places of business, stores, small stores, and places of work for craftsmen. Apart from a small number of buildings, all the houses are made of wood, and have one storey; the roofs are covered in shingles and gabled on high. On the *Pozharna Gasse* a large proud, but ruined tower stands, belonging to the volunteer 'Fire-fighters Brigade,' and right next to it – a long wooden building, which is known by the proud name of 'Пожарна Серай.' Wagon drivers, arrayed in a parade formation, sit in a very stylish way on the elevated seats of their practical carriages, and convey passengers from one railroad station to the other. Not far from Marinska [*Gasse*], long freight trains maneuver slowly, barely able to move themselves, and the locomotives strain with difficulty and in rhythm. From time-to-time, the stillness is interrupted by the monotonous signal-whistle of a passenger train, which is passing through at breakneck speed. Soldiers, in their colored uniforms, loiter about empty-handed in the Jewish streets. Storekeepers, lost in thought with serious looks on their faces, stand by with folded arms in front of the door to their stores. Here and there, not often on the same street, one can see the old-fashioned half-ruined creek. And here he is, our familiar water carrier; he slogs through the mud with his heavy load through the yards of the respectable homes. Twisted up, and bent over, with his rounded and bent back, with crooked shoulders – one higher and one lower – as if they had been created to begin with to haul water in pails...

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Baranovich was an extension of the surrounding forests. Almost all of the streets led right back into the forest.

This was a highly favored recreational place in the summer. Where else could you while away the time so pleasantly as in that lusty city of Baranovich, with its dynamic youth, and its generous sense of hospitality? And there was no lack of romance here either – whether in nature or in the hearts and souls of its people.

Who from among those one-time Baranovich residents, did not squirrel away a corner of memories from his stormy youth? And reminds one's self, with joy, of those bubbling summer evenings in the park, where under the reverberations emanating from heartfelt Russian novels, and melancholy Yiddish folk songs, not only one heart was broken, and not only one heart was fortified...

And who among us does not recall the joyous Friday evenings, and those carefree Festival evenings, the hearty laughter emanating from young throats, the faces of dear friends that reflected a good mood, the shining eyes of beloved girl friends – every living stream of people that wound its way, like a snake, on the western side of the one-time Marinska [*Gasse*]?

And why, specifically, on the western side, and not on the side of Shlomo Kaupenicer? – To this day we don't know the answer to this. It was the same each and evert Sabbath and on Festival Holidays after noon. The entire city would then march off into the forest. Everyone carried something: boys and girls – with a Russian pamphlet in hand, with a shawl thrown over the shoulders; women and children – with packages of food, and other necessities. At the location of Tziklik the tinsmith, we would stop and grab a drink of cold water. We spent the entire day in the forest, in the fresh air.

Did it possible to get a bit of rest in the tumult and the brouhaha? On the contrary, on the Sabbath we would endure even more, the Sabbath was literally a comedown.

We didn't go into the forest to get rest. Very simply, the city looked like a wasteland and dead, emptied of its big and small. A peculiar unease engulfed it. The older folks would take to their beds and have a sweet dreamy nap, after eating the rich *cholent* and *kugel*. And the young people sought out social contact and company; it loved the street, the forest, nature; it wanted to play, to sing, laugh, – it wanted to live.... the streets were bare, and the forest was so near. And the forest bustled and bubbled with life. Nobody sat still in one place. The swings and the pamphlets were taken along solely for appearance sake. And if one person did happen to peer into a pamphlet, he was considered something of a bookworm, nothing short of a budding philosopher, a poet... people continued to walk: to Halinka and to the cemetery; we would get so far as even reaching the central railroad station. Others toiled very hard, until they found a stand of berries, or several mushrooms; others busied themselves solely with finding people they knew; others simply wandered about with no particular goal in mind, and for no particular purpose. The forest was big, and each forest has the capacity to draw a person deeper and deeper into it. Thirst caused acute suffering. The sun was already down, when tired, fainting, the people would barely be able to drag themselves home.

In the winter, the city looked quite different. And the Sabbaths and Festivals took on a completely different character. During the intense cold, and the fierce snowstorms, we would gather in the houses; something would be read from a pamphlet, and we would engage in all manner of games, dancing and singing, or just pass the time together; each group according to its own tastes. If the day was a nice one, we would go out for a stroll in the streets, go to the railroad station in the evening – to see someone off, meet a relative, and just to simply look at the trains, that come from Vilna, Minsk and Warsaw.

The city did not look so happy in autumn and the beginning of spring. The streets were not paves; in the intense rains, and with the melting of the snows – we literally drowned in the water. And there were no sidewalks, only a few rotting boards that had been nailed together, which kept on swaying back and forth. Modern street lighting – most certainly did not exists, only a kerosine lamp with smoked glass, which was used to illuminate the cramped houses. On the main street, Marinska, or 'God's *Gasse*' which is what it was then called, several kerosine lanterns stood, which the smallest breeze overwhelmed them...

In certain respected, life in Baranovich was also provincial. It had the same kind of *Hevra Kadisha*, as in other towns, the same study houses, the perpetual gatherings, disputes and holding up of the Torah reading on the Sabbaths, and Festivals...

There were many Jews here who were not called by their family names, but rather with special names and nicknames, mostly describing their origin, occupation and appearance. I recollect a few that happened to have stuck in my memory: Leib'eh Ljahovicher, the Melamed from Moucadz', Mikhl the *Klezmer* [sic: Musician], Itcheh the Deaf One, The Deaf Shoemaker, the Limping Melamed, etc.

Baranovich was never a [sic: religiously] fanatic *shtetl*. People would go so far as to say that it was pretty 'open,' at the very least – liberal. Despite this, on the Sabbath, it definitely looked like the Sabbath. We have

to admit that those who were freethinkers conducted themselves with respect to the observant. Nobody thought to smoke a cigarette on the Sabbath in public; people did not even use a cane to assist them in walking to synagogue on the Sabbath. All of this, apart from showing respect for parents, was done not to injure the feelings of the observant Jews.

It was on this location that the two great yeshivas grew up, which in the course of the last few decades before the Holocaust, became the pride and the crown of Baranovich.

The Germans, those foul murderers, murdered our Baranovich. Jewish Baranovich was destroyed and laid waste... it ceased to exist; and it will no longer be restored, – all that will remain are two large mass graves,,,, and the cemetery.

From The 'Old Country'

By Carla Israelite (Judkowsky)
New York

A School Class for the Poor

The year is 1906. I was still a young girl, – healthy, fresh, and unemployed.... in those years, the daughters of balebatim didn't work; it was indeed a shame and embarrassment to work. Despite this, my friends and I could not simply sit around empty-handed, simply dreaming and waiting for our 'intended' to materialize.

Poverty around us was great. And so, we talked among ourselves, and founded a 'class' for poor children, and working girls. The word 'class' doesn't sound quite right – in today's world, we probably would have found a better, more modern name, – but that is what it was called at the time.

In this initiative group were Jonah Yosselewicz (Jonah Berezovker's) two daughters, Levinson's two girls, Levik Rutkowicz's older daughter, and others, whom I no longer can recall.

On our own, we got together a little bit of money, rented a room at the location of Nissan Zebrak the Carpenter, bought the required teaching and writing materials, and conducted the lectures ourselves, during the day for children, and in the evenings for the older girls. A number of us taught them arithmetic, others – reading and writing Yiddish.

Reorganization of '*Linat Tzedek*'

At that time, we had no hospitals [in our city]; and if the plight of the poor was difficult in day-to-day life, their fate was especially tragic if someone in the family fell sick.

It is true that in prior years, a 'Linat Tzedek' had already been in existence, which would concern itself with such sick people, but it was not continuously active. Our group approached the reorganization of 'Linat Tzedek,' bringing in some fresh blood, and took up the burden of caring for the sick among the indigent, who would receive medicines at no cost, hot water bottles, thermometers, *bonkes*[117], etc., and most importantly, the personal service to the sick during the day, and especially at night.

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117 Cups used in an old-world procedure to try and 'suck out' the 'evil humors' from the body.

Lodging at the home of the sick was organized by a systematic roster, with the help of volunteer young people. Despite this, I was called upon to lodge in this fashion quite outside of the regular schedule. If something was not in order, or a volunteer could not make the time of the appointment, – it was us, the most active, the responsible ones (today referred to as the 'leadership') had to fulfill this role by ourselves.

It was not only once that we were afforded the opportunity, on cold winter nights, to visit the houses of the indigent sick, and discovering that there was nothing available with which to heat the house, or no food to eat, we would immediately set out for the neighboring homes, and gather up a bit of wood and something to eat.

This activity had its influence on my fate in life. The *Rebbetzin*, R' Shlomo's wife, was a frail woman; on one occasion, when she became ill, it fell to me to care for her. She was very satisfied with me, and she brokered a match with my late husband, who was a distant relative of hers. Later, she danced at my wedding (the *Rebbetzin* today is in Israel). The mothers of the poor children escorted me with their heartfelt blessings and best wished for good luck.

Community Contractors

A separate chapter, all its own, is reserved for the community contractors who baked matzos between Purim and Passover.

Along with this, a very generous and multi-pronged program of assistance was carried out on behalf of poor families. First, it was necessary to gather money (*Maot Khittim*) and after that, we would have to get young boys and girls together, who would commit hours, and often whole days and evenings of their free time, in order to help these contractors to provision the poor families with matzos for Passover.

I believe that, in general, I never sat idly by; I was always involved with such matters, and derived great satisfaction, taking no notice of the fact, that not only once, when I would return home after spending the night with a seriously ill person, I would often hear specific comments from my father ע"ה, which caused me a heavy head.

'May you enjoy good health!' – my father would remark – 'Please have mercy! You will drag in all sorts of trouble into the house!'

I had to store my 'pharmaceutical inventory' with all of its paraphernalia such as hot water bottles, *bonkes*, thermometers, etc., in the barn, in a special place, and after every visit to a sick person, I needed to wash and clean them, etc.

Homey...

In the First World War, during the German occupation, the situation at home became difficult. Literally, there was no way to make a living in a household with 13 souls. So we opened a tea-house; but despite this, there was nothing to be had to eat.

My mother, ע"ה would cook a big pot of groats, almost without any salt (salt was a very expensive commodity) – and the family would gorge itself on this all day. My mother would also plan in advance on

having an unexpected guest; and everyone that was hungry, who would come into us, was graced with a small bowl of soup, in order to keep life and limb together.

The frequent visitors, who would drop in on us, who knew my mother, and her kind-hearted generosity, did not know how to thank her, – and often, wanting to show her some special respect, they would call her 'Rabbi Malka.'

She was especially energetic in her charitable work on Thursdays and Fridays. When she would purchase fish at the store, meat, and other products for the Sabbath and Festivals, or after taking out the *Challahs* from the oven, she never forgot her steady 'customers' – the needy; and we, her children, were always the bearers of these 'holiday gifts.'

My mother was also someone who was concerned with true purpose, meaning, how to marry off girls from poor families. And when it finally came to 'receiving the bride,' she would co-opt my father into this sacred duty; he would, pitiably, have to co-sign several promissory notes, and afterwards pay them off...

Establishment of the Orphanage

In 1919, when The War was approaching its end, helps started to arrive from America. Free kitchens for the poor were opened, through the auspices of the 'Joint,' and Mrs. Fiedler was nominated to direct this activity. When the activity branched out, Mrs. Fiedler invited my husband, Mr. Israelite, as the manager of the kitchen.

The selection fell on him because as a former contractor to the army, he was expert in the purchase of goods; and especially, because he was recognized as a great idealist and reliable person.

In the course of 18 months, he demonstrated his capacity to care well for the children, distributing help and produce to many poor families, and in the process, to manage saving up a full 3000 marks.

The idea ripened in my husband's mind to establish an orphanage with the money that was saved up.

He related this idea to Mrs. Fiedler, and she seized on the idea as well. They both approached the challenge of making this plan into a reality. A house was rented, and all of the abandoned orphans in our city were gathered into it. approximately forty children.

Under the direction of Mrs. Fiedler, and my husband, the orphanage developed into an exemplary institution – a home and an institution for rearing [children].

I can recollect how the children used to call my husband: 'Father!' He derived great satisfaction from this, and in it he found his good fortune and happiness.

In 1920, we (I, my husband, and our 3 children) emigrated to America.

He Doesn't Get Involved in Disputes...

During the First World War, the Germans sent all the grown men to forced labor. One time (in the year 1916, several weeks before the High Holy Days) my husband, along with a group of Jews (about 500 men) were

sent off to work in the village of Krypaczy near Baranovich. They worked on the construction of a mini-rail to the front.

Beside my husband, stood a *Hasid*, who for the entire time, did not lift a finger to do any work, and kept on telling stories.

When my husband made him aware that others were having to do work on his behalf, he answered:

– 'Mr. Israelite! You understand the matter: Czar Nicholas has a dispute with Kaiser Wilhelm; one wants that the mini-rail be built, and the other does not want the mini-rail to be built – and I, you can understand, do not wish to get involved in their dispute!'

The Forest and the City

By Moshe Brawda
New York

Only one small corner of the city was privileged to keep a bit of recollection of that thick forest, which covers the entire area on which Baranovich lay spread out. This was the place, where the small 'Old *Bet HaMedrash*' stood – not far from the old [sic: railroad] station.

It was possible to see the trees from the many windows. They would stand there, with tall, lanky trunks, those trees, with green foliage, pointed heads, towering over the old *Bet HaMedrash*, and over the little Jewish children, who would play amongst the, on Saturdays and Festivals. Also, a few of the elderly worshipers would snatch a few minutes of respite to take in the air in their shadows. Man and tree would then integrate and nod in the rhythm of prayer...

Today, it becomes evident to me, that they would repeat a line from the Torah: 'For Man is the tree of the fields,' meaning: Dear Jews, One Creator had fashioned both of us, Man and the tree in the field — let us each enjoy one another, because if a murderer, a tyrant, were to appear, he will raise an axe over our heads, and this can, God forbid, happen to you as well...!

And, indeed, this is how it transpired. As soon as the Germans ימ"ש took control of Baranovich in the First World War, they forbade the residents from going into the forest, and sentenced it to be removed. With aching hearts, we would look out from attic windows, at the endless rows of the white-topped stumps of the trunks that were cut sown, which had stretched on for miles of distance...

No small thing – the forest! Nobody could conceive of Baranovich without this forest. I remember, while still only a child, how I sat with my mother under the last of the pine trees near our house. All around us could be heard the sound of hammers, and the living expression of the workers, who were building our new house. The air was redolent with fragrant odors. From not far away, one heard the long monotonous whistle of the new railroad train, leaving its echo behind among the trees. It was as if the whistle was telling the forest, through which its rails cut through, into the endless distance: 'people are beginning to come!' – 'you will have to make room for them!'

And so the forest receded from the city, – and the city grew nearer to the forest; you could not tell them apart. In the winter we warmed ourselves with its wood. and in the summer – cooled ourselves in its shade. The

forest belonged to a Polish nobleman. But who gave any mind to the nobleman – it is our forest! We [felt] we had a stake in it.

For us, the children, everything was literally like a Garden of Eden. With the arrival of summer, we would become intoxicated by its smells, gather berries in it, and it became our playground in nature. We did not know how long or wide the forest was, but we believed that it ran from one end of the world to the other. We would not go too deeply into it, because there was a danger from gentile hooligans. Our imaginations would run loose boundlessly under the branches of the trees. If the report of an axe being wielded rang through the forest, it was a sign that the stores about hidden treasures were not merely legendary... one time, on a quiet holiday night, a theft really did occur at our house. And so, in the morning, a whole band of us ran into the forest to look for the goods that were taken. We were at the point of giving up looking, and thought to return home with nothing; suddenly, my brother Aryeh spied my father's prayer shawl among the bushes. With trembling and care, we picked it up, and also found our father's papers, which were apparently worthless to the thieves.

When the holiday of *Shavuot* would come, we would bring the forest into the house, to decorate the walls with green, fragrant branches from young pine trees, and Berzover trees. At the time of *Sukkot,* the smell of the *skhakh* would bring us the smell of the gardens and field of the holy Land...

We got older, and the forest also came of age with us. A murderer then came, and distanced the forest from the city, and destroyed it. We felt like orphans fro a long time. The hand of the stern occupier fell hard both on the people and on the trees; but not forever – the murderer vanished, even if the wounds remained. The first spring after the liberation from the German yoke, we, a group of young people, went out to inspect the damaged forest. Like mourners, we went about among the chopped down trees, which looked like an endless row of gravestones. Suddenly, our attention fell on a tall thin young pine, which bloomed among the stumps of the felled trees. The setting sun bestowed caressing rays on its small branches. An emotional feeling swept us. My brother, Kalman, the artist, immediately captured that wonderful image on paper. Enchanted, all of us stared at the picture, and a new hope was born within us. In it, we saw a symbol of our times: among the ruins of the old generation, a new generation is beginning to sprout, with its head to the heavens: the natural impulse to live cannot be suppressed...

And then, the Second World War came: the Forest and the Jew – lived together, and were brought down together: a common fate overtook them.

And if a young tree continues to grow somewhere in Baranovich, or a sprig of grass around the graves of our martyrs – I am certain that in bending under the winds – it cried out in pain: Lord, you will avenge their spilled blood!

Yom Kippur Eve

By Ephraim Woloch

The Mys community had already eaten the heavy *cholent*, and the rich *kugel,* heard the *Shabbat Shuva* sermon from the Rabbi, had finished eating *Shaleshudes* with great gusto, and went off to the old *Bet HaMedrash*, and the other houses of worship, to greet the holy Sabbath.

The *Bet HaMedrash* is half dark. Merchants talk among themselves about the bad times, business stinks, the tailors pour out their hearts in front of one another, that the public has gone poor, and no clothing is being

tailored. Shoemakers – the same story about their affairs, etc. Shlomo Israel Ahar'keh's an upright and very religious man, stands behind the *Bima* and recites *Tehilim* by heart.

It gets even darker, and Moshe Lakiz shouts out: '*Ashrei Temimei Derekh*'[118] – and the assembled throng follows his lead, with broken spirit, reciting *Tehilim* (which all know by heart, since they do it all year long, especially on *Shabbat Shuva*).

The young folk are out in the foyer, doing their thing in the dark, laughing out loud, clapping their hands and turning worlds upside down.

Suddenly – there is a bang from the *Bima.* Chaim, The Appointed One (In Mys, the *Shammes* is called The Appointed One) calls out in a melancholy, and fear-laden voice: '*Ve'Hu Rakhum.*[119]' Everyone falls into a terribly awed state of mind, as the *Maariv* prayer is recited with deep conviction. The Appointed One recites *Havdalah*; each turns to the other, greeting themselves with '*Gut Vokh,*[120]' and the gathering dwindles as each goes his way...

The Jewish 'street' is alive. Women are running about to buy the '*kaparot*' offering[121], meat, fish, fruits, and snacks for the next day, Yom Kippur Eve. They stay up late that night, preparing *kreplach*[122], and braiding the ladders (in Mys, the *Challah* for Yom Kippur Eve is configured to be baked in the form of a ladder, perhaps in order to give the prayers something on which to ascend into heaven). The '*kaparot'* offerings are bound; The person who has a white [sic: bird] as a *kaparah* offering, considers himself fortunate. The sleeping children are awakened, to be up to observe the act of transferring one's sins to the bird.[123] The birds are spun over the head, and the '*B'nai Adam*' prayer is recited...

The *Hazzan,* R' Nathan Neta, a scholarly Jew, a sage, a man with a golden heart, stands by, in his own yard, with his slaughtering knife at the ready, and slaughters the *kaparot* (in Mys, the *Hazzan* must additionally, also be a qualified *Shokhet*). The bass-voiced singer from Stalovičy, who accompanies the Mys *Hazzan*, stands nearby, and throatily intones the lower notes of the liturgy. The Slonim *Gasse* is a bit more quiet, but even so, the air is laden with a sense of imminence, anticipating the coming Day of Judgement.

It is Sunday morning. The synagogues are packed. After prayers, the ritual of the cancellation of vows is performed.[124] The *Hazzan*, and his bass-voiced accompanist from Stalovičy, go to the cemetery to offer memorial prayers for the deceased.

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118 The opening verse of Psalms 119, recited as a prayer.

119 The opening verse of the Evening Prayer *(Maariv)*.

120 The greeting of 'A Good Week' traditionally exchanged after the end of the Sabbath.

121 In this time and place, this meant the use of a live rooster.

122 A Jewish meat-filled dumpling, not unlike a won-ton in Chinese cooking.

123 Called in Yiddish, '*shlogn kapores*.'

124 This is '*Hatarat Nedarim*,' not to be confused with *Kol Nidre*, which is recited towards nightfall.

The warm meal for the holiday is consumed: A *motzi* is made with honey, *kreplach*, fowl, a carrot-based *tsimmes,*[125] and whatever God has provided; the meal is blessed in a God-fearing manner, and preparations are made for the coming fast on the morrow. After the noon hour, one goes off to the bath, sweating one's self out thoroughly, immersing in the mikva, running off to the various synagogues, reciting the afternoon Mincha prayer of the regular weekday, with an added portion of '*Al Kheyt*'; then, prostrating one's self on the ground, and permitting one's self to be ritually flogged[126] by the *Shamashim*. Then one ran home to prepare for the fast, consuming the [sic: *Challah*] ladders along with noodles and the flesh of the *kaparot*, and then tearfully reciting the blessing after the meal, while the women shed a river of tears at the lighting of the candles. And then – immediately off to the synagogues. Along the way, charity is dispensed to the poor. It is still light outside, there is time to recite *Tehilim*, to one's heart's content, crying one's self out, in the recitation of the Purification Prayer, for those sins that we had not encountered...

Inside the synagogue, one is enveloped by a stuffiness from the wax and fat-based candles (not everyone can afford to have stearin candles) that are stuck into boxes full of sand. Nevertheless, the gathering remains calm; the *Kol Nidre* is recited, the *Ya'aleh* prayer is recited, and one strikes one's self over the heart, while reciting *Al Kheyt*. The younger people go home to sleep, while the older people stay behind, to spend the entire night in the synagogues, reciting the *Shirat-Yikhud*, and the entire *Tehilim*.

The entire day of Yom Kippur is spent in prayer. The weeping and wailing reach the very heavens; and the Jews of Mys have something to cry about. *Oy,* making a living, the oppression, and the involuntary transgressions between one's self and his fellow man!

For the Jews of Mys, the need to fast for a twenty-four hour cycle is among the minor things. One stands in stockinged feet for a night and a day, on straw or hay; the children wander about under one's feet, rolling around in the dried out grass, but they also sense the taste of *Yiddishkeit*, because, pitiably, they really have no other form of pleasurable diversion.

Thank God, it is finally after *Ne'ilah*; we shouted out, 'Next Year in Jerusalem!' We have recited the *Maariv* service. The more observant don't rush to go home. What then, to gorge one's self? To engage in a behavior fit for Esau[127]? They have to do the blessing of the new moon, and take their time in going home, driving in a stake for their *sukkah*, that they are going to construct; only after all this, do they partake in a cold meal, cold [sic: leftover] *kaparot* and some bread.

And when one considers the luxury, that we enjoy today, and the enormous poverty of our one-time home, we can ask ourselves: whose conscience, whose soul is clearer – ours, or those from the old country home?

In my view, that in the '*alte haym*,' especially in Mys, the city where I was born, a Jew truthfully had few benefits from life, but that life was decent and honest.

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125 A traditional Jewish confection, which is a sweet fruit and vegetable compote, severed at festival meals as a side dish. It may, or may not contain meat, and possible even *kugel.*

126 Called '*malkot*' in Hebrew, it is a form of corporal punishment, which in this case is a prelude to asking forgiveness for one's sins.

127 An allusion to Esau's ravenous consumption of the mess of pottage, provided by his younger brother Jacob, in which he thoughtlessly gave up his birthright. See Genesis 25: 29-34.

My Little *Shtetl* Mys

By Fraydl Stein (Cirulnik)
Buenos Aires

My little *shtetl* Mys, and its few streets, stand before my eyes as if shrouded in a fog of memory; the Jewish street with the large *Bet HaMedrash*, the *Hasidic shtibl*, the Tailors' Synagogue, the Talmud Torah and Yeshiva; the marketplace with its two rows of stores, and two churches, as well as the Slonim *Gasse*. This was densely populated by Jews; the gentiles lived in the smaller side streets...

Already at entering the *shtetl*, a pretty artistic scene unfolded. The entire *shtetl* was suffused with the redolence of lilac trees and fruit orchards. The Myšanka River flowed quietly by, and it coursed in tranquility not far from the houses over the surrounding fields. The small woods stood by idealistically and romantically.

The streets stretched up the hill, and down the hill. Here and there, among the tiny low huts, with their minimal windows, and white curtains, a large and regal house, with big windows, would poke its presence out, with well kept gardens, and flower pots.

In its entirety, this consisted of several hundred families, including a few wealthy people, a bit of a middle class – and many poor; there was a thin strand of contractors, grain and forest merchants, as well as brokers, agents who worked on a percentage basis, and just plain idlers, etc. Mys had all sorts of stores, large and small, and even a number of wholesale businesses. The principal source of income came from the surrounding villages. There were market days every week, and every couple of months – smaller and larger market fairs. The Jewish contractors provided products for the large military encampment in the vicinity. There were also craftsmen in many trades. The production and grinding of ?? groats (in a primitive manner) – was one of the ways people in Mys made a living.

The shtetl underwent a transformation when the snow and ice began to melt towards the onset of Passover. Water would stream down the hills. The Myšanka River would overflow its banks and flood the entire vicinity and cut off Mickavičy from Mys. We, the children, would go and look at how huge pieces of ice would float in the water, and we could not recognize the quiet little river of our shtetl, which was always so tranquil and had been satisfied (according to local legend) – with only one human victim in the year...

The youth from Baranovich would come here to bath in the crystal clear waters of our little river. If parents of a couple wanted to make a quiet, discreet wedding, or if a couple needed to divorce, – they came to Mys. The older folks in Baranovich strived to find their final resting place in the Mys cemetery...

Apart from the *Heders*, especially for boys, Mys also had a number of modern schools: the most important of them was the school of Yaakov Israelite, where he inculcated Yiddish, Hebrew, Pentateuch and the Prophets, into his students. To teach Russian, he brought in a special teacher. The room for the Russian lessons was called 'class.' There was another school run by Mr. Lubowsky, on Kreineh-Rachel's side street (this small street ran downhill, and in the wintertime on a slippery day, one could slip and slide right into the school...).

There was also the *Heder* of Shmuel Yaakov, which differentiated itself from the other schools in that boys and girls were taught in mixed classes together. It is also worth mentioning the *Heder* of Abraham Aryeh, for older boys. There was a Russian school, but few Jewish children went there for education.

On our social and cultural area, Mys set down an impressive page of history. But we cannot talk about social community life in the period between the two world wars, without mentioning our comrade, Joseph Belsky, or [as he was called] Joseph, Cha'sheh Esther's. He was the initiator and the living spirit of almost all community undertakings; Nothing took place without him, or his cognizance.

Approximately in the year 1919, the first literary circle was created in Mys. The reader at that time was Mr. Dziencelsky, a teacher in a neighboring village. A little at a time, something of a library began to take shape. Anyone who had some sort of a pamphlet, would bring it to Joseph. Cultural evenings were stages, with open, free discussions of actual questions [of the day].

After the First World War, and the Russian-Polish War, help started to arrive from American Jewry, to rebuild their ancestral home. A variety of delegations came to visit us from America, among them was a certain Dr. Fein. We had the opportunity to approach him, that in the area of school education, in our shtetl, a specific sum should be dedicated to the founding and upkeep of a modern urbane school. A very bitter cultural dispute spread out between the religious faction and those who were more worldly. Meetings and gatherings took place, until the Mys-Baranovich *Landsleit Verein* butted in, and issued a ruling: fifty-fifty!

Along with the enthusiasm for development, a question nagged at the heart: how will we be able to support such a school, its teachers, etc.? Joseph's mother came to our assistance, who always was there to energize us. She was *de facto*, the matriarch of our youth group, and everything was created in the confines of her little house. She lived together with Joseph in a small modest hut, consisting of one room, with a large oven, and with a small table, with a bed and a sleeping bench against the wall.

Let us take this opportunity to say a few words about Cha'sheh Leah, Joseph's mother[128]. From birth, she seemed to be severely punished by nature. Despite this, she was never embittered. Joseph's friends were also her friends. A glass of tea and a piece of bread (sometimes with a piece of herring) was always brought to the table. She was always prepared to be of assistance. assuming the burden of a variety of tasks, and carried out all manner of tasks. She reminded us strongly of Gorky's 'mother.' The work, for her, was a sacred duty.

Under the influence of her inspiration, we approached the challenge of opening the school. To our amazement, the success exceeded all of our expectations. We immediately received children from two walks of life. The local '*Ezrat-Nashim*' of the Great *Bet HaMedrash* served as the Auxiliary, and as the first teachers – 'Hudis Menakhowsky, and 'Tzal'keh Menowicky. In those days, one had to watch Joseph, as he literally ran with his bundle under his arm, to oversee the instruction taking place in the school. His eyes burned with such a fire, that looked like they could ignite the entire world...

And it was from that impetus that the work took its force. Also the pitiful library was vivified and enriched. I can recall how we would sit in Joseph's house, and 'bust our heads' over financial issues. We wanted to purchase the very best of Yiddish literature. And books would arrive from Warsaw, and with what a devoted trembling the young element would examine them, literally stroking them, and treasuring them.

With the success of the school, and the library, a dramatic section was also created, which despite its meager resources, assumed the burden of producing the more major pieces such as '*Der Batlan*,' '*Der Yeshiva Bokhur*' 'King Lear in Yiddish,' etc. As was the custom in smaller towns, the headquarters of the Fire-Fighters' Brigade served as the auditorium, which needed to be transformed from a barn into a theater hall.

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128 There appears to be an inconsistency in names here: We also see him as the son of Cha'sheh Esther.

We would have to post guards, so that the benches would not be carried off, along with the stage and the doors together. We were compelled to approach the youth of the streets for help. A number of them were subsequently attracted to join our endeavor. The income from this was dedicated to the school, or library. We also organized 'flower days.'

A great part of the youth in Mys worked in Baranovich, some as employees in trade, and others as salaried workers. They would live the entire week in Baranovich, and first on early Friday evening, they would travel, or better said, walked home. The *shtetl* would come alive on the Sabbath. We would circulate around the marketplace, and between the churches – taking a promenade, carrying on discussions, engaging in fantasies... and forgetting about the larger world. The young people were the central nerve of the Jewish life in Mys. There was no community undertaking, or work that was undertaken where the young people were not involved. Despite the fact that a variety of political parties existed, the inter-party disputes were not so bitter. The strongest and most active group, which carried most of the burden of community work, was the left-wing circle of '*Poalei-Tzion*.'

This was the shining epoch of Mys, in the period between the two world wars. It lasted for about 3-4 years, approximately. After wards, the silent decline set in, which stretched out for a long time, leading up to the Holocaust. People began to leave the *shtetl*. the youth went off into the world: some to America, and others to the Land of Israel.

The largest part of the Mys residents were swallowed by the nearby city of Baranovich. Many of them assumed an important place in community, cultural, and political life. Also, Joseph also went off to Baranovich, married there, and worked at his trade as a hatmaker. To his misfortune, he died at an early age, and to his good fortune – by natural means, before the Holocaust.

And the Holocaust exterminated and uprooted everything...

May the little that I have related here engender recollection of much that I have not told about; and may the sacred memory of our dear '*alte haym*' of Mys, be carried in the hearts of its scions throughout the world...

An Israel-like City

By Khayuta Bussel

The name, 'Baranovich,' is etched into my heart from the dawn of my childhood. About half the distance from the train station in Baranovich, could be found the town of Ljahavičy, where I was born, raised, and from which I made *aliyah* to Israel. While I was still a girl, I heard about the new city of Baranovich, and because of this, I visited it once or twice before I made *aliyah* in 1908.

Among the memories of those days that remain with me – my meeting with the engineer, Berman, who also had the privilege of making *aliyah*, but did not spend much time in the Holy Land. He was the scion of a well-branched family, a Zionist family, most of whose members made *aliyah* to the Holy Land. One of them was a pharmacist and nurse in Sajrah going back to the Second *Aliyah*; afterwards, she married a younger man, an agricultural *Halutz* in Yavniel – Nissenbaum, and went over with him to develop an agricultural farm in the lower Galilee.

Among the friendships that I established, I became connected to this man, Berman. I told him of my decision to make *aliyah,* and the strong opposition that I encountered from my parents, especially from my mother.

He assumed the responsibility to come to my town, and attempt to persuade my mother to give me permission to realize my desire.

And he did come, and engaged in an exchange of words with my mother, and conveyed a lesson to her, that she is not properly assessing my desire to go to the Land of Israel rather than to America. My mother listened to what he had to say, and when he finished his remarks she said: 'Now permit me the chance to say something... and after she had expounded on the suffering and troubles that had befallen her, Berman said to me: ' You must be stronger than steel, to have overcome all of this, and to leave your mother on her own.' Because I had remained as the only daughter after my sister, as a bride, had been killed in a thunderstorm one day in Tammuz. From this visit, I have a photo, we took together, that remains with me.

In Baranovich, I was engaged in a youth group, and I helped to found a Zionist organization. However, it proved difficult for us to arrive at a consensus over the name of this organization. As an educator of *'Poalei Tzion*,' he wanted us to immediately name the group with this name, and I argued to defer the matter until the young people themselves build and organize the entity, and they, by themselves, would decide what name to choose: '*Poalei Tzion*,' or '*Tekhiya*,' the latter being the one I belonged to.

After The First World War, I visited my brother and his family (today in Israel), and I found them packed, on their belongings, and awaiting a sign to make *aliyah*. For the first time, I encountered hewers of wood and drawers of water, among the *Halutzim* who had taken up residence in Baranovich. An invigorating spirit, and one of encouragement, emanated from the homes of these *Halutzim*, going through training in Baranovich. There were times when I forgot that I was in the Diaspora, because my soul was an Israeli one. As to my stories about the Holy Land, and what was being done there, they drank in thirstily. Every step I took was photographed by a variety of groups, and remain with me to this day.

To this day, I am not completely satisfied as to how I can explain to myself what magic was it, that seemed to capture a person who visited Baranovich? Was it because of the breeze of freedom that blew through it, and yet Rabbis and *Rebbes* also lived there, along with the members of their families, and even young men who were Yeshiva students, and those who studied Torah were not in short supply. Was it because of its intelligentsia? And yet there were no advanced institutions of learning there – only gymnasiums were established there, and for higher enlightenment, it was necessary to go looking in other cities of Poland, or outside the country. There was no fabulous wealth, but also no recognizable poverty. A person, arriving by train, while still standing at the railroad station, already saw, and felt, that ever-present Jew, looking for a way to make a living... yes, it was these images that accompanied me in al my journeys in the Holy Land. The number of Jews, in straitened circumstances, grew large in Baranovich, after The First World War. The young people were left hanging in mid-air, without any ground under their feet, The good ones found a way to the international movement that gave them a realization of sorts. Many camps for training purposes were set up, and attracted hosts of participants. Despite the difficult conditions, there was a happy air about these places. Baranovich was not only Zionist, but also Israel-like. The Hebrew language rang from the mouths of children, youth and adults. I felt that hearts were always open, to hearing news from the Holy Land. And I was not the only one who could not bear the surfeit of kindness shown to me by intimates and friends alike. A tremendous sense of compassion was awakened in me, by parents, mothers and father, that were extremely concerned about the fate of their children, and begged me to do everything I could for them, and help them to make *aliyah*. Just *aliyah*. All they needed was official permission to make aliyah, and the rest they would do for themselves, with their own energy, and their intense will to join in with those who were the builders [of the Land].

Among those who were lost in the *Days of Ire* – there are many that I will not forget ever. I will not enumerate them by name, they are sealed in my heart. Among them are family who were scions of Ljahavičy,

leaders of the movement, directors of groups, members and leaders of the labor movement, all committed and loyal. When the gates finally opened, they were no longer alive. Let future generations not forget those that lived, yearned and strived.

And let this Book, that is being written, also serve as a memorial to our monumental loss.

I will not be able to finish, without a few words about Yaakov Cohen. Who did not know this Yaakov Cohen? Many in the Holy Land awaited his arrival with eager anticipation. How great was the spiritual fortune of the movement that was in his capacity to bestow upon us, and to the pain in our heart, he was not privileged, and as a result, we were not privileged to have him. May his soul be bound up in the bond of our lives, here in The Homeland.

From the Press

The Last of the Mohicans

By M. Mintz
(An excerpt from his article[129])

R' Yaakov Yitzhak felt lonely, very lonely, when he came to live with his children in Baranovich.

Baranovich is a new shtetl, just thrown together. People came here from all manner of faraway places, since the time that the railroads were built here. Making a living in Baranovich is higher and better than in the surrounding cities and towns. However, faith and fear of God is quite strong here, strong from the back. The Hasidic *Rebbe* of Mys, R' Lejzor Yud'l, when he would come by Yeshay'keh's inn[130] at the entrance to the city, would descend from the wagon, turn his head in all directions and deeply inhale. 'The air" – he would say – 'Even the air is different here than it is by us, full of disorder"...

R' Yitzhak Yaakov also felt that everything here was different: the people, the way they carried on, their lives: young people often come together at the home of his children, male and female. To begin with this struck him as 'forward.' What sort of a city is this? And on top of this, the women carry themselves so freely; they speak out loud, laugh out loud just as if there were no men in the room, and look you right in the face. Woe! He cried – he groaned– what has happened to the modesty, the shyness, that would endow the Jewish daughter with such a special grace!

One time, he became curious as to what they could possibly be talking about with such ardor, with such intensity; they are talking, it seems, in plain Yiddish, but so incomprehensible to him, as if these were esoteric issues from the Torah; He understands each word on its own, apart from some solitary expressions, that are recognizably not Yiddish at all, but he can't tie them together and extract meaning from them. What peculiar people!

Soon after arriving in Baranovich from his tiny *shtetl* of Eishyshok, he went, as was his usual custom, to the *Bet HaMedrash*. Oh, what a profound, still, suffocating melancholy seems to be resting on everything! The *Bet HaMedrash* is large, but empty. The lecterns stand there gloomily, as if sunk in thought, like the headstones at a cemetery. During the week, a minyan can barely be assembled, and immediately after prayer, even before '*Aleinu*' is recited, everyone runs off. And, once again, it falls silent, with a terrifying stillness, and the sounds of his footsteps echo so distinctly. How his heart longs for that beloved and decent image of a graying Jew, wrapped in his *Tallit* and wearing *Tefillin*, learning with a half stifled melody emanating hoarsely from under his nose...

The first Festival Holiday arrived, the first Festival he would spend here. What sort of ordinary day faces: young people in their full force; ruddy, healthy, having no Jewish troubles, shaved chins... '*Gevalt!*' His heart cried out to him – 'Where are you, the pale faces, the high furrowed foreheads, and long, white as the first snow, beards, the side locks curled like serpents, shining ornamented prayer shawls?'

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129 Editor's Footnote: From '*Der Yiddisher Kämpfer*' 1907, Number 20.

130 Probably a reference to the establishment of Shy'keh Baranovicher.

And his despair would grow even more deep, and his unease and longing would grow, for something that is far, far, when he would remind himself that even at home, in Eishyshok, a perpetual place of Torah study, a city of sages and Torah scribes, that even there, it was no longer what it used to be. The voice, voice of Jacob becomes weaker and more still, the 'growing and nursing ones' for whom the lore of the world stands, are, at a young age, given over to the schools, and the 'flower of the young men' go off, living [on their own] and are lost... 'Not good,' R' Yitzhak Yaakov would shake his white-haired head to himself – 'Not good! It has become a bad world, and worst of all –a world of alienation, where you do not understand the next person, and the other person does not understand you.' And furthermore, he began to feel more and more strongly, that he is here, in this world, a stranger to everyone, and everything is alien to him. And the further he distanced himself from the world, the closer he drew to the World to Come. And the more repulsive life became to him, the more acceptable the idea of 'death' became to him.

2.

In that time, he encountered Moshe Asher. The latter had also come to [live with] his children, who had grown rich in Baranovich.

Even a few years earlier, such a meeting would have been an impossibility. R' Yitzhak Yaakov was socially distant from Moshe Asher, as a *Dayan*, a scholar might be, from a village tailor, who knows no more than '*Menorat HaMaor*' in translation from Hebrew, and other such 'books for women[131];' or as a spot near the holy ark is distant from some location behind the oven – but now, they formed a fast friendship, and we constantly see them coming home from the synagogue after the first minyan, with their outsized *Tallit* bags under the arm. They take their time walking, taking step by step with a rather special earnestness...

Moshe Asher also felt that he was sort of 'in the way,' in this day and age, and he was not native to the area. He was also extremely dissatisfied with the new 'order of things' in the modern world in general, and from his young tailors and plain old other tradesmen in specific. This dissatisfaction, the feeling that they are here in a strange place, and both of them are obstacles along the 'way,' a long road – drew them very close to one another. For them, the world and all of its developments, had ceased to have any value in general, and for them, in particular. Not more that so far, as far as developments can help more quickly and easily bring them across that final 'finish line,' as Moshe Asher would say, and what can hasten this and has any connection to the new 'world,' to which they were going...and together they would go out looking to do a mitzvah and good deeds in general. 'This will come in handy,' Moshe Asher would say, with a satisfying smile and the intonation of a practical person.

On a day when nothing was taking place, such as a 'Mitzvah Feast' or 'Escorting the Dead to Burial' they felt a peculiar emptiness. 'A day has passed in doing nothing,' they would say to one another. On such an 'empty day,' if it was warm, they would go out for a stroll to the cemetery, and tell each other stories and anecdotes about the World to Come, about the *Ominous Angel*,[132] and other 'dark characters' with whom the great *Tzaddikim* would engage in all manner of levity. Moshe Asher was especially profuse in the extent of what he had to say. He had read about them all in '*Kav HaYashar*' and '*Menorat HaMaor*' on those long winter nights, by the light of a candle in a holder, in the small, deteriorating village huts, where he would spend the entire week. And when he would tell about the heroic act of some martyr, or a particularly nasty

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131 This reference is to the Yiddish translation of the Pentateuch, called in Hebrew '*Tzena u'Re'ena*' that was the central source of study for most Jewish women of that period.

132 An allusion to the Angel of Death

excerpt utters by 'those people,' he would tell it with such relish and satisfaction, as if he himself were the 'hero,' from whom the 'miscreant' had snatched the goods. Moshe Asher's satisfaction would have an impact on Yitzhak Yaakov, and both of their wrinkled faces would become even more wrinkled, and the trees in the forest would hear the toothless laughter of old men. R' Yitzhak Yaakov would derive even greater satisfaction when Moshe Asher would inject a 'secular word' in an appropriate place. especially from police lingo; An example: the *Ominous Angel* had come to take him to an interrogation. He knocked on the grave – 'Who's there?' the deceased, who was a very great God-fearing individual, and one who shunned sin, was only slightly perturbed, recited the answering phrase, and that's that. 'Good show, young man' – the *Ominous Angel* said, slapping him on the back, and went off. And R' Yitzhak Yaakov would quote the aphorism of the Sages: The rules of Heaven are like the rules on Earth.'

The Festival of *Shavuot* was a double holiday for Baranovich residents. Everyone, old and young alike, went off to the 'New Railroad Station' to see the Czar travel through. And R' Yitzhak Yaakov and Moshe Asher also went to bestow a blessing appropriate to the sovereign of the land. When dos such an opportunity arise? The day in question was exceptionally nice. The sun shone down generously on the earth with light and warmth. The earth emitted a delicious odor of fresh green grass, and young sprigs of plant growth. 'The sun has emerged from its hiding place' R' Yitzhak Yaakov said, lowering his large eyebrows. They went by the 'General's House.' It was a well-appointed building, enveloped in a variety of redolent and variegated flowers, and surrounded by tall many-branched trees. The trees moved in a manner that seemed to beckon the passers-by to stop and rest a bit in their shade. A variety of birds gaily and festively sang. From a distance, one could hear the refrain of music that was approaching. And the golden epaulettes of senior officers, and the entire 'parade formation' blinded the eye, as they went forth in a joyful mood, to greet their sovereign.

'So how is it 'There' today?' R' Yitzhak Yaakov said in a soft but moving voice. 'T-h-e-r-e?' Moshe Asher replied with a question, drawing out the word considerably. And immediately, he began to tell, what he had at one time read in a book, I think '*Mikdash Mal'ach*' it is called, about that great 'parade' that takes place on each *Shavuot* there. 'Very, very early, the departed souls begin to gather in an immeasurably large place near the Garden of Eden. Fiery trees ring the entire place, and among the trees, the 'River emanating from Eden' winds like a serpent. From all sides, the *Gaonim*, the Great Sages, and their disciples are drawn in, and the *Tanaim* and *Amoraim* of the great 'Yeshivas of Heaven' also come, and all place themselves on their respective locations: after this, the 'martyrs' come, who were murdered in the name of the Torah, and were set fire and burned along with its parchment, and they situate themselves in their own special places. The come the Holy Patriarchs with the Prophets from their 'palaces.' The last, enveloped in 'clouds of glory' comes the Holy Spirit' as it were, alone, escorted by the entire host of Heaven, with Moses, and in his hands are the 'Tablets.' And here, we see Aaron the High Priest approaching the lectern, assisted by the sons of Korah, all the singers, and Levites from both of the Temples; and as Aaron and his holy singers begin their song, everything around them joins in song: the tens of thousands of cherubs and seraphs sing, who by themselves are seated in the trees, the indigo of the river and the entire void sings along, and the song is a genuine song from the very core of the world of song...

Moshe Asher falls silent. Tears well up in the eyes of both of them, tears of inspiration, and half laughing, and half-crying out of great joy, in which R' Yitzhak Yaakov intones 'Blessed is the eye that has seen all this.' How insignificant is everything around them, in comparison of what it is that transpires 'There!'

And around the, life is bruiting and roiling. The air is full of young, vibrant laughter. Both couples and individuals speedily go by, but all are satisfied and lucky. R' Yitzhak Yaakov's heart becomes full of sympathy for these 'unfortunate' souls, who are simply 'forfeiting the world.' It means, he thinks, they are

prepared to forfeit such a world, a beautiful world. Is this a trivial loss, 'The World to Come,' 'The Garden of Eden,' and for what? *Gevalt*, for what?!...

3.

It is already several days that R' Yitzhak Yaakov is not well. He does not even go to attend prayers. Moshe Asher does not step away from the side of his bed. Specifically, R' Yitzhak Yaakov is not sick, just weak, very weak. He has no control over any of his limbs. R' Yitzhak Yaakov understands only too well what this means. That this is a 'summons' – as Moshe Asher says: You are being called to 'There.' And a peculiar feeling reigns over him, a feeling of happiness and sadness together. Just a little further, and he is in the 'home' and the unfamiliar hope frightens him, and especially the journey to get there, before the 'border,' as Moshe Asher would express it. He reminds himself of the 'descent to the grave' that almost all suffer through, and a fright courses through his skin. And in a low voice, full of envy and begrudging those who have gone before, they talk about those fortunate ones, who were fortunate enough to sidestep that fear, and 'inherit the World to Come in one act.' Naturally they do not mean, nor do they suggest to liken themselves to such that did not die at the hand of the Angel of Death, but rather from a Divine Kiss, from the Blessed Lord Himself. How can they compare themselves to such people, they can only envy them – and God should not count that as any form of sin against them – those who died at an auspicious time, for example on the night after Yom Kippur or in the month of Nissan. Even the martyrs envy them. And what is this? Would they then not be willing to be killed in The Sanctification of the Name? With all their hearts! But, it would appear that they were not worthy. And the last thought upsets them very much. They are themselves unworthy. If they haven't committed any sort of sin, who knows how they will be received 'There?'

And standing, this way, at the threshold of the New World, they begin to recall, and leaf through the pages of their entire lives. 'I think there is nothing to be afraid of,' is the remaining thought that stays with them. R' Yitzhak Yaakov begins to tell about his life, a life that is replete with a variety of *Batei Medrashim*, Yeshivas and books, studying in a Yeshiva while a youth, after his wedding as an ascetic, and in his older years, learning as a *Dayan* and a Rabbi. And he did not study alone, employing all the means at his disposal, he saw to it that others should learn, giving a lesson, supporting poor young men with money.

I don't have such 'heavy baggage,' says Moshe Asher in a melancholy voice, taking a strong smell of snuff. I did not study, because I could not, because I had no parents who could impart study to me. The little that I was able to achieve, came to me through great tribulation: learning prayers, reciting Psalms, and to be able to look into those books translated from Hebrew into Yiddish. A poor tailor, I was a village tailor for my entire life. How is it said there: "I live among the nations.' The only thing I did was guard and obey the 613 mitzvot, never, God forbid, rendering myself unclean by partaking in their foodstuffs, never missing a call to prayer, and following that with an excerpt from the Psalms. His bag that held his prayer shawl and phylacteries was his constant companion.

As for self-study, he could not do this, and so he came to admire the studying of those who could learn this way: for hours at a time, he would love to sit on an early Friday evening – the only night that he was home – with mouth and ears open, and listening to the words that he, himself, could not understand, and the sweet-melancholy sing-song of those studying. To this day, he continues to cherish those wintery early Friday evenings, sleeping in the *Bet HaMedrash*, under the melody of the Torah. From childhood on, he would accord the studiers respect, and serve them. Since he became a craftsman, he would always be repairing the clothing of those who study, 'a pitiful baggage' – Moshe Asher signals with a wave of his hand, and takes a second smell of snuff...

R' Yitzhak Yaakov grew weaker by the hour. He permitted his 'new clothes[133]' to be completed, and on his pale face, with their deeply sunken eyes, was etched the sense of anticipation of something important and great.

That which was anticipated, arrived. Long in coming, quietly, as if on fingertips, 'death' came and closed the eyes that were already half-closed. The lips were sealed, and the scrawny legs were straightened out...

R' Yitzhak Yaakov died in Moshe Asher's arms. With a head hung low, Moshe Asher accompanied his one friend into the Eternal World, looked into the grave, and up to the heavens, taking stock of where he was now, and what was going on with him. It is certain that the time of his 'cross-examination' has long past, Moshe Asher thinks, going back aimlessly, taking small steps, all the time turning back his head in the direction of the cemetery. Without motivation, Moshe Asher turned back toward the city that seemed so alien to him, to these unfamiliar people. However, with the hope that soon, soon he will also be 'There' where his only and best friend already can be found...

Baranovich

By M. R.[134]

A small strip of forest stretches along the entire length of the wide railroad street. Tall pine trees, and above them, soar hordes of crows that continuously crow, they crow and curse the Germans with vile imprecations, for transforming this wide expanse of Baranovich forest into paper for the wartime German newspapers of theirs.

Caw, Caw, Ba-ra-novich.

The crows still remember their forest. But every elderly merchant in Baranovich will proudly tell you, that with no more than forty years ago, all there was in this location was only forest, and there was only one inn that stood on the main road, until the blue-iron blades of the rail lines cut the forest up.

The city grows. It is in the full bloom of its youth. This is why the stranger feels so comfortable in it.

In often traversing a well-used moving boulevard, from Lodz or Warsaw, one is tempted to have a look at a city of a century ago. Here it is: Like Baranovich today, this is what Lodz looked like several decades ago. And at that time, it too, had the same kind of feeling.

For the time being, however, Baranovich is just a town of ten thousand people, with wide streets, wooden houses, with stagnant waters throughout its wide and long principal streets. A sort of Venice, but without gondolas...

For the time being, it is homey and provincial and simultaneously like a big city, but more importantly, it is Jewish.

A bit outside of the city (where exactly the middle of the city was, I never could understand. the entire city seems to be a bit outside of the city) is our wooden Jewish public school with is large classrooms, with its

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133 An allusion to burial shrouds.

134 Editor's Footnote: A report from 'Literary Pages' of 1924, Number 11

scent of newly cut pine wood. In such schools, a healthy generation will grow up – the scent of pine in its soul, what can be more beautiful than that!

No far in the vicinity is a Yeshiva, its windows open, the Principal in his yarmulke and his hat, sitting and perspiring at his lectern. With each sway, as he bends to the right, he casts a furtive glance at me. I stand beside the window – and yet another pair of eyes stare at me, the shining eyes of a Yeshiva student, who is secretly reading Yiddish pamphlets, exchanging discourse frequently with his study partner B... which follows me.

Such an individual – my friend B. tells me -- not too long ago took his own life in the local cemetery. And I look into those shining eyes, and a fiery longing burns in my heart – What a pity for our second friend Levik! Perhaps he too, at one time, looked at a passing person from the wider world.

Meanwhile, the Yeshiva is putting up a new concrete building, and we are satisfied and fortunate that we have a provincial style, small wooden house for our school.

And this, thanks in large part to the unflagging energy of the lady bacteriologist Miss B. who loves the school, loves Yiddish, and loves the work. Just mention the school at any opportunity, and the Yiddish School is made secure. This lady Yiddishist understands very well that, the entire intelligentsia and bourgeoisie, in Baranovich, must be made to take an interest in the Yiddish school. And the Chairman of the school committee is simultaneously the Chairman of *Keren-HaYesod*...

However, in Baranovich, only one passport is acceptable: Yiddish? Well, that's good! So it must live! And there also is one operative principle concerning our school: first of all, it must survive!
In it this except: to your love of Yiddish, with deepest respect.

The entire cadre of Jewish doctors and the Jewish ranks are all sympathetic Yiddishists. In general, the intelligentsia of the surrounding towns is Yiddishist. The influence of Russian has been broken, and the influence of Polish is still a long way off – but we have nothing to apologize for in a culture of our own. And so the thought occurred: Indeed, perhaps it is only Yiddish? And so, for the time being, it remained Yiddish. For this reason, it is possible to transact in the same homespun ambience among doctors in a big city Jewish pharmacy, exactly as one would among simple working people in a professional union.

At night we go to the amateur theater. The play, '*The Living Corpse*' is being put on – and this is a shortcoming. An amateur troupe needs to perform original pieces. The effort involved is only half as great for the same full quality mood that is achieved. And despite the fact that the amateur groups do have talented resources within them, I, regrettably, was not privileged to see it, and what they can do, is evident. but also, as amateurs, that which they cannot do.

The light of day was discernable by the time we went home.

During the curse of two days, I stood at the lectern four times. And all of this was for culture and literature. What this means, is that literature is not yet such a thoroughly mined theme, as we forlorn literary types would like to think...

And if a number of my friends spent an hour or so with me before I departed to my lady friend L., there was among them, a very inspiring 17 year-old blonde-header young man, who kept still the entire time. So I thought to myself: perhaps you are the only poet in all of Baranovich, because I am getting ready to leave, and where is the poet?

But on taking leave, he said: Please sent my regards to Peretz Markish!

– And where are your poems? – I inquired insensitively.

–I don't write. For me, it suffices if I just read – he proudly replies.

And on the train, I happily thought: Yiddish literature is our land, our home throughout the wide world – and Baranovich is an unconquerable fortress.

My God – How Does One Survive These Fund-Raisers?

By Sholom Wolokhwiansky

(A Monologue from a Baranovich 'Philanthropist')[135]

Have you heard? They don't even let you live! It is impossible to bear this! Until one manages to eke out the 40-50 zlotys in a days earnings, and the effort expended is like that of a slaving gentile, it immediately flits out of your hands: you immediately have to pay out twice that amount... what, you are laughing? You say that this is unjust?! Then you don't know what you are talking about! Because these locusts don't prey on you quite as frequently, they only are familiar with my street, and my door!

It become literally a scandal when you are seen with a Jew! You wonder to yourself – what? Well, I'm here to tell you that you have no need to wonder, my friend; you have a little time, – Huh? Well, just for argument's sake, take a pen in hand, and do a calculation, write everything down separately!

You know that they are building a '*Tarbut* [School]?' Aha – you know! So ask who requested this of them – out of my enemies' heads and they addled senses – the blood-suckers! What do they want from me? Have I at any time been educated by their '*Tarbut*?' Do my children get an education from them? And in general, have I ever been a disciple of '*Tarbut*?' And you needed to see how they descended on me with full force, just as if I had asked them to build up a '*Tarbut*!'

Panie Lebn, we want 200 zlotys from you for 'culture!'

Did you catch that – a modest demand – so go, and given them something not different from the entire 200 zlotys; someone else might think that 100 zlotys is already set aside for them, and they only want two hundred. No, they haven't found the right place! I know, – if it was a matter of only a ten-spot, I might have given the matter a thought... but when they start in on me in Turkish, I gave them a curt reply: Most respected gentlemen, your efforts and words are for naught – it will not help! You may even take serious offense, nobody here has set aside any such sums!

And so you think I am now off the hook? The following morning, a new delegation came to me about a new initiative: 'Make a pledge for '*Gemilut Hesed*!'

They opened a new little store, God's myrmidons! Did I invite them?! And without their precious *'Gemilut Hesed*, did Baranovich fail, God forbid, to survive?! What – you say, that Jews cannot survive without a

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[135] Editor's Footnote: '*Baranovicher Vokh*,' May 12, 1937

Gemilut Hesed; they come to beseech you, practically tearing at your extremities, that you should save them, give a loan! Well, certainly, but it is no wonder: – that you are drumming up and creating a tumult in the city for your *Gemilut Hesed* – and so you come to ask for money, well, go in good health! We have for whom to give, we have preferred things...

The mind continues to be agitated from all this talk, and – and as soon as you meet with a person – there is, once again, a new thing; a trade school! There training will be given in carpentry and needle trades – and I am given to understand that this is a very necessary thing: we must save our youth, that has nothing to do; they begin trying to convince me, that I must give a larger amount for this... they think that they have really found deep pockets here! So I say to them, you must have made a terrible mistake, – I place no stock in such foolishness! There is no lack of carpenters and tailors in Baranovich; with thanks to God, one is able to find someone who can either tailor an outfit or build a table, – but just give money; What – I don't need any newly-minted people to tailor linens! Much less open schools for them!

You had best let this go, because here comes a demand from *Keren Kayemet*, – the '*Mif'al HaGalil*.' And this too, you may believe me is another market fair in the sky! A cupola on Mars! Again, land is being bought in the Land of Israel, and I have to give money for this! But this time, I did not encounter them, in this case, I tell them the unvarnished truth: – first and foremost, I am no kind of Zionist, and I have no need to lay out the living on top of the dead. Should I desire some Carmel wine, or a good orange from the Land of Israel, I can get this too – it just takes money.

Well, then, it is better to support a local endeavor: '*Beyt Lekhem*,' for example. Well, here too there is trouble with demands!... her is a fund-raiser for wood, for bread, – as if they were on the brink of dying from hunger.

I have not seen that anyone has been dying of hunger. Only the community gadflies raise a tumult, and go about shaking down the people, extracting money from them. So I say to them: don't be so high and mighty, I am not in a position to help you. Here in Baranovich there is an Orphanage, and it needs to be supported, – how sad, that there are unfortunate orphans! Here, for example, they ran a fund-raiser for clothing, a fund-raiser for a 'Day-Home.' This is a very important institution. So they approached me – you do understand, I am not exactly overlooked – what do you think, that I am naive, or something, that I grab and dispense money just like that?! Not so fast. Money is money – not just refuse!

It really is unseemly, because I am something of an associate over there... but still, one can't just go about tossing money around; it isn't so hard, it is possible to come up with an excuse – my servant says, that the master of the house is not home.

And I recline on my sofa like some sort of nobleman and hear... Why are they any better than the Old Age Home for the elderly who have no home. They don't do any fund-raising. True, they bother you with weekly regular contributions, which I pay every month; it is as if I had made a contract with them, and I have to get distracted by instalments; it is enough that I give to him when he grabs a hold of me.

Yes, do you know with whom I am severely upset! With 'TOZ!' They claw away for their colonies, semi-colonies, making milk available – and they say, that they are salvation to the poor! And, again, I am beseeched: 'Give Money!' So I must tell you, were I being asked by ordinary, simple *balebatim*. I would accommodate them. If they would only spare me the ordeal of trying to fill my head with their nonsense. But go try and deal with doctors. so I say differently to them: My very respected doctors, you have become beggars, is it your desire to send every idler to a *dacha* in Navael'nja?! What are they? – poor Yeshiva boys,

that you are taking away from their studies,,, stop being community gadflies, and stop trying to tear away the bit of nourishment out of our mouths!

And while I'm at it, I might as well say to you that it is impossible to put up with these cranky bench-warmers. Who asked them to sit there and study! Let them go and learn a trade, to be a tailor, a carpenter, and not to sit their glued to their benches.

It is just as I say to you, they don't let you live; all they keep doing is taking from you, as for example, our lovely community. They levied a request on me for 150 zlotys; no doubt, they think that here and now, I am going to send it in. Who needs these community position grabbers! Have we not managed to survive all this time without them. and the world did not go down the tubes. They want positions – be my guest! But they need to leave me alone; I have enough of all this fund-raising...

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Well, be daring, and suggest that he is not a philanthropist!

My 'Declaration'

By Aleichem-Sholom

(Ruminations of a Baranovich Merchant[136])

So I sit for entire days, and continuously calculate. I do not let the pen out of my hand. I calculate here, calculate there, calculate once, twice, twenty times. – and the more I calculate, the more I sum and combine, the more the calculation becomes corrupted, the more complicated, and completely twisted the calculation becomes. In no way am I able to break out of the morass.

Well, here, finally, I get the last total and here, it seems I am about to slog my way out of it, and it looks like I will be rid of it at last.

Oof! Heavy drops of sweat run down my forehead, from the side locks, from the beard....

And what is the result of all this? Quiet, let us look a bit loser... What do my eyes perceive?

Minuses! Deficits!

And to find this chasm I had to spend so long doing calculations!

Finally! Finally I now know, finally I nailed it down! Finally, I know exactly by means of calculation, and by means of mathematics, how much it comes to – my annual income!

It amounts to 999 figs, with 999 holes in the pocket!

And for what purpose do I need to know this, you ask?

Well, I will answer you!

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136 Editor's Footnote:'*Baranovicher Vokh*' May 12, 1937

Now what does that mean – for what purpose? And you don't understand the reason yourself? I have to make such a 'declaration:' if not, I will have to pay a fine, since this is the last part of the [sic: fiscal, or tax] year!

What needs to be said, a 'declaration' based on income, having to do with a full year of income! Do you think this is trivial – you go figure out how much you make in a year!

There is no more difficult thing to do in the entire world. In today's times – A Jew making a living! Have you seen such a thing?...

But if it is required -- then you have to do it. And no sort of cleverness will be of any help here, it is necessary to submit some kind of an income statement.

Well, so I took myself, as you hear, sat down and began smithing on paper, and – calculated an exact deficit!

For, let us not deceive ourselves – what is the meaning of 'income?'

The meaning of income is that which remains in the pocket, and if it doesn't do so , it is not any sort of income, it is yesterday's pipe dream, the hole in a bagel, the shadow of a bird, a who-knows-what, a flight of fancy, an untruth, the empty banging on a teapot, a... fiction!

Well, good! Let us assume that in the course of a years I earn thus and so. The question then is posed: What about your outlays? The outlays at such a level, that the income becomes a legend of the past, a drunkard's dream, and exposé fo a community activist, a discourse by a modern-day lecturer, and similar fantasies!

I earn – let us say – so many zlotys in a year. Well, I think, I believe, 'My Wife' also, may she be well, and 'My Wife' makes do properly with a tidy amount of stuff... oh, does she make it properly!

And are my little sons dogs? *Oy*, they are already pretty far from dogs – they are worse than dogs!

Now go and compose such a 'declaration' about income...

Do you see, that a 'declaration' about the outlays – with it, I would turn you into a heretic!

Ach, Baranovich Doctors!...

By. B. Willner [137]

If the Good Lord wishes to provide doctors with a living, no one can be against this. Not only is this not good for those who have to become patients; what is even worse, one must personally become sick, sitting for hours on end in the waiting room, leafing through all of the old and stale periodicals, which can only be from the days when the doctor himself was a student...and finally, if one waits in the queue, and the visit is finally concluded – one leaves with a bandaged and covered eye (the visit was with an eye doctor). Several gulden are now gone from one's purse, and it is for this reason one obtained an education in the use of a few Latin words, that doctors use to designate a malady.

From the doctor, there is a well-worn path to the pharmacy. There, one also learns some more Latin, naturally for money: apart from this, you also get another bonus: little jars and bottles, pills and powders.

And at home, the task begins, of looking at the clock, taking the powders, that have such a taste, that if the doctor or the pharmacist would have to taste it, they would have abandoned this means of making a living, a long time ago....

So you can see, that if the illness persists, it is ver bitter. Apart from the day-in-day out visits by the doctor, that produces no income, it happens on top of this, that it comes to switching around the medications; and cures are the sort of a commodity that when it costs, it costs the full amount, but to sell it off, it isn't worth even a *groschen*....

Having gone to the doctor for a couple of weeks, I meet an acquaintance:

–'Look, what is this.... your eye?'

- '[Yes], an eye.'

– '*Nu,* so what are you doing for it?'

– I'm attempting to have it healed, I go to the doctor.'

–'*Act*, Baranovich doctors!'... he gestures with his hand.

And so a second person runs into me:

– 'So you have an eye problem?'

–'As you can see.'

–'*Nu*, are you not doing anything about it?'

–'What do you mean nothing, I am trying to get it to heal; I am using salves, drops, and...'

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[137] Editor's Footnote: '*Baranovicher Vokhnblatt*,' May 7, 1937

–'*Echhh*. enough with the Baranovich doctors!... Take a short trip, say to Vilna or Warsaw, and,,, get it taken care of.

In addition to this, a third one stops me:

–'I see, you are still having a problem with the eye?

– 'Yes, still with the eye.'

– 'And you are not thinking of doing anything about it?'

–'The doctor is treating me.'

–'*Echhh*, give it up with your Baranovich doctors... if you take my advice, – take a trip to Warsaw.

And apart from these encounters in the street, there are also good friends and acquaintances, who do not stint on paying you a visit, and every one of them knows about your condition, and every one of them is ready with advice, not to think about it, but to immediately make a trip.

Well, whether one wants to, or doesn't want to, eventually it becomes compulsory to make a trip, and you do understand that it is to Warsaw, and naturally to a professor.

Thank God, you finally arrive in Warsaw; immediately in the morning, I go the professor (wanting to be among the very first). First of all, what professor, where is the professor... there is a gentile woman circulating, requiring an up front pre-payment of 20 gulden – the Warsaw *goniff,* there is no trust – so you get a small metal tag and instructions to return the following morning. Returning the next morning, showing the number, I am led into the waiting room. Again, we have the old, stale, torn periodicals on the table. And the room is pact with exclusive rows of Jewish patients on the benches...

My turn finally arrives, and here, I am – sitting in front of the professor. He has the same instruments, the same machines, that are to be found at our local doctor's office; even the questions are of the same sort, that start off with: is this the first time this has happened to you? And end with the sorts of question that it would be embarrassing to repeat...

With the minimal examination completed, the practical part begins, which consists of: Examining the eyes, and reading an eye chart with letters and numbers of graduated size. After this, we sit down beside an 'apparatus' with two little apertures, one opposite the other: the professor looks into one of the apertures. What he sees there, I don't know – perhaps he sees patients from whom twenty-zloty notes fall; in the second aperture, I look, and I can see what one sees in an empty purse...

At the end, after this looking, squeezing, palpating, and examining, it becomes evident that the professor learned what he knows in the same school as does a doctor, and even from the same book, because he designated the name of my ailment with the same Latin words. as did my doctor in Baranovich... so I take out the prescriptions that I had brought along, and I show them to him: Here, take a look, and be at least a bit embarrassed! Not a hair is disturbed on him, and he says:

– Yes, that is it: that is the malady, and this is the cure, – your doctor is treating you properly. Go home, you have nothing to do here in Warsaw.

So I say to him: '*Panie Professozheh*. Should I, perhaps consult a second professor, someone more senior?...

He utters not a word, furrows his brow, draws his eyebrows together and hollers at the gentile woman: 'Next!'

The patients encircle me in the corridor: 'Nu, what, what did he say?'

–The same thing that our Doctor Bussel said; it was not worth making the trip...

–What, you are equating your doctor to the professor – a diminutive Jewish man says – yours must certainly take about three gulden a visit and the professor gets twenty, some equivalence....

A Story Concerning a Minister

By. B. Willner [138]

This is a story that took place years ago.

A minister, at that time, had come to Baranovich for a short visit. As soon as this became known, the three most prominent. of the *balebatim* of the city, got together – one was a craftsman, the second a merchant, and the third, who sold eyeglasses – they put on their Sabbath finery, and went off to have a conversation with the minister.

In their hurry, they forgot to confer among themselves, as to who among them would speak to the minister, and what would be discussed.

At that time, the minister directed that the delegation be admitted to his presence, and he granted them eight minutes to speak their piece.

After the initial 'how do you do' the minister asked:

'*Panowie*, how did you learn that a minister would be coming to you?'

– One of them responds, – 'By the Holy Spirit!'

The minister is not convinced.

– So a second one adds – 'When a minister comes on a trip, the birds in the trees discuss it!'

The minister shakes his head – a sign that he is still not convinced.

– So the third one butts in (quietly) – 'By radio!'...

So the minister then asks: 'For what purpose have you come here, and who sent you?'

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[138] Editor's Footnote: '*Baranovicher Vokhnblatt*,' May 7, 1937
The attribution by this author is not given explicitly, but appears to be implied.

At this point, all three start looking at each other, looking for some way to get started, just as if something had got their tongues... but it didn't take very long, and each of them had conjured up a lengthy speech (and, thanks be to God, there is plenty to talk about...) And all present themselves and raise a hand (a sign that there is a desire to speak...).

The minister stands up, looks at the clock and says curtly: *Panowie,* the eight minutes have elapsed, our conversation is over!'

From the Folklore Back Home

By Matityahu Berezovsky

R' Yekhiel Hirsch Yosselewicz

(Typical of His Sort)

R' Yekhiel Hirsch'l, son of R' Yehuda Lipa of Mys, was like an old oak.

Already in his seventies, he did not want to admit his age. He kept himself very well. His movements were palpable, and his heavy boots resounded as they should – sharply, firmly and decisively. He was a clever Jew, possessed of sound logic, strong character, and a rich life's experience, a very fundamental integrity and a good humor.

Already deep into old age, he nevertheless got around, and helped his son, Ephraim, in his grain businesses on the marketplace, with the gentiles.

To the question of perhaps it was time to let up and rest a little? – he would answer: What do I know? To equip myself with a kerchief and a plug of snuff, and to seat myself in the *shtibl* behind the oven to recite Psalms, study *Eyn Yaakov*, and the *Mishna*, tell stories, become a genteel sort of Jew, and wait for the Angel of Death? No! This is no proposition for me, I have no patience for this. When I receive a 'summons' to go to the Other World, I am ready to go. I only ask that it not be a protracted 'delivery time'...

For many years, Yekhiel Hirsch'l lived among gentiles in the village; he was everything there" the 'learned Jew' (Russian Учорний Еврей), an advisor, a judge, and also someone who prepared legal documents.

Himself, an amicable person, he held that to have integrity demanded strength. When Jews in straitened circumstances would sometimes come to him, to bemoan their plight – one who has [sic: is married to] a 'witch,' a 'bitch,' or a just plain 'harridan,' – Yekhiel Hirsch'l would say with no small irony: there never is such a thing as a bad oven or a bad wife. In the case of a bad oven, one simply puts in a chunk of wood, and it becomes good, and the same is true of a bad wife, – another chunk of wood, and she becomes good...

In this respect, he never, God forbid, made use of his 'theory,' but in order to support it, – he added an insight from the Torah: in Genesis, regarding the matter of Adam and Eve, it says: 'And the woman *gave him from the tree,* and he ate it.' The *Baal HaTurim* offers an interpretation – according to the literal meaning, *she smote me with the wood* until I listened to what she said.'

'So you see' Yekhiel Hirsch'l would call out in triumph – the whole trouble there was, that it was Eve who was the first one to grab for the stick; were the opposite true, that Adam would have been the first to resort to 'force' – the story would have turned out to be a different story, and the world – another world.'

One time, on a winter's night, I overheard a discussion taking place behind the oven in the shtibl. A young Hasidic man was complaining to Yekhiel Hirsch'l about his wife. After hearing out his complaints, Yekhiel Hirsch'l said the following:

– A marriage match is like a bog, in that the more you struggle to get out, the further in you fall.

– Was I then so particular? – the young man responded.

–On the contrary, No! I mean that she, your wife, was too picky – Yekhiel Hirsch'l replied.

He was critical to the point of cynicism. He would tell everyone the unvarnished truth right to their face, even the *Hasidic Rebbe*, and was not afraid even of death itself.

Once, at a funeral, he remarked: R' Moshe Yankl should forgive me, but he was like a kosher and observant calf – kosher and observant, but a calf nonetheless; simply not evidencing any particular sense.

Quiet, quiet! Show some respect for the deceased! – several of the Jews sternly said to him.

– And what do you suppose, that once you die you get wider? – Yekhiel Hirsch'l replied – 'What you haven't learned during your lifetime you certainly aren't going to learn after you die – he added.

On another occasion, at the funeral of a prominent *Hasid*, Yekhiel Hirsch'l was really upset: 'What sort of justice is there in this legacy' – he complained – 'Here, such a Jew passes away, with a heart and a mind, and on top of this, a hernia and a hunchback, and there are several sons, – so he bequeaths one of them the hernia, the humped back to a second, and the mind and the heart he takes along with him to the grave, how does that figure?

Fate dealt with R' Yekhiel Hirsch'l bitterly. In his lifetime, two wives died on him, children and grandchildren – and it is possible that from this he derived his sympathy for other people's suffering. Not once, when a Jew came into the shtibl, down on his luck, who needed a few Gulden to get himself back on his feed to earn a living, or to cure a sick wife or child, to marry off a daughter, – Yekhiel Hirsch'l would give him encouragement and help him 'make' money.

Once, at the funeral of an old friend, Yekhiel Hirsch'l related: 'He was an orphan from the time of his childhood. On her death bead, his mother left him a last will and testament of three words – 'Suffering, Silence, and Avoiding,' and with this, he went through a life of seventy years.

'I can't do this' – Yekhiel Hirsch'l remarked.

He was right about a third of it – he could not keep quiet, and especially hold his tongue. In this sense, he was likened to that *Hasid* from Mys, who during a fire in that *shtetl*, heard how a little old Jewish lady said: ' God is just, and his decree is just,' and retorted: ' And so this way, half the *shtetl* has burned down, and if you give him the justification, the entire *shtetl* will burn down!'

As a man of integrity, he refrained, even in the most difficult times, from seeking some side income by arranging marriages. He knew that many unfortunate marriages were the product of overly greedy marriage brokers, whom he would refer to as 'dealers in men and women.' He once gave a lesson to his own son, Ephraim: 'From whence did you get the heart to sell off such a dear young man for a few 'bushels!'

Advancing age gained the upper hand over Yekhiel Hirsch'l, and he had to yield and enter an Old Age Home.

He would speak with gratitude to those that founded the Old Age Home, Mr. Israel Zalman Galperin, and when the elderly Hasidim would observe: 'He is, though, a freethinker!' Yekhiel Hirsch'l would reply: 'Don't be concerned! Relax! In the Other World, I will organize a guard detail of my Old Age Home compatriots, and under no circumstances will we permit him to be taken off to Hell...'

The Village Idiot

As was the case with other Jewish cities and towns, young, budding Baranovich at one time had its community billy goat, and its village idiot, as well as other sorts of riff-raff from the community.

The truth be told, they were already a bit out of date for the new settlement. Everything about was being built and was in movement, everything was young and new, and there simply was no need of them...

Despite this, the town billy goat had his moment in the sun before The First World War, when he once attacked the honor guard, that stood to receive Czar Nicholas II in our city. Also, he once demonstrated his strength, when he once disrupted the Hakafot in the Hasidic shtibl, and a panic broke out among the women and children. It was a miracle that old man Feigman grabbed him by the horns, hoisted himself on his back riding – and the goat, a sorry sight, toiled under the burden of his heavy body...

But look, a billy goat is nothing more than a billy goat. By contrast, a village idiot, is something else. He doesn't allow himself to be driven from the arena so easily. Regarding the title of 'village idiot,' there was a serious competition among a variety of personages. One, Cha'sheh Leah, fought the 'monopoly' of men in the matter of craziness, and demonstrated that women too, can be off their rocker...

Before the First World War, it was Mendl *der Meshugginer* who was so recognized.

Already, the time of his arrival in Baranovich, was tied up in a story. He was asked, from where do you come? He replied: 'I am a native! Whoever comes here, immediately becomes a native.'

One time, he dropped into the *Great Bet HaMedrash* – Friday, late in the afternoon, – and it is told [he said]: I really did it to the worshipers of the *Old Bet HaMedrash*. In fact, I had thought to spend the Sabbath there, but as soon as I entered, the *balebatim* said: 'Mazel Tov! We will have an amusing Sabbath – Mendl is here!' So I replied to them: – You will not have an amusing Sabbath from me, – Mendl is gone!' and I skedaddled.... On another occasion, he went into the craftsmen's synagogue, opened the *Gemara Khulin*, and began to learn: 'Everyone who performs ritual slaughter, their act is kosher, except that of one who is deaf, simple or a child'- [which he then interpreted to mean]: It is a *bona fide* mitzvah to kill off everyone, except the deaf, simple and child....'

He distinctly hated herring, and when the war broke out, he argued, that as long as they do not station the Slutsk Cossacks in the streets with barrels of herring, and they are not forced to eat from them, – then it really isn't a war yet...

Mendl, himself, was killed during The First World War by the Germans, but his name lived on after him.

Every new village idiot, that arrived in the city, was knighted by the hoi polloi with the moniker 'Mendl.' Their logic was simple: if there can be a Nicholas the First and then Second, why can there not be a Mendl the First , Second, and even Third.

One such Mendl was a Jew who had the capacity to learn. After The First World War, there was a period when help was sent from America, and the word went around that many of the packages were lost. Once, when he was going around, lost in thought and seemingly worried, a Jewish man went up to him and said: 'Don't worry R' Mendl, The One Above will be sending you assistance!'

– 'Yes, God, indeed, does send help, but I have hears, that along the way, it is stolen- – Mendl replied...

Moshe ben Sarah

Moshe ben Sarah, a young *Hasidic* man, was tall, blond, with a thundering voice. A 'seeker of truth' and one who demanded justice.

There is a saying 'for the truth you get beaten' – and indeed, he was once beaten by those who didn't care to hear the truth.

The gentiles even said, that in his outward appearance, he strongly resembled their 'Enforcer....' but he also got beaten by them as well.

Despite this, he did not compromise his sense of truth. He read many periodicals, and was interested in everything, discussed everything substantively, and had a sharp reaction to everything.

I recollect a few episodes. Once, a Polish policeman hung up a sign in the municipal park: 'It is forbidden to abuse the trees!' Moshe ben Sarah immediately went up to him and asked: 'Why is it that it is not allowed to abuse trees, but it is permissible to abuse Jews?'

On another occasion, at a meeting of the community council, a proposal was made to enter Professor Einstein in the Golden Book of the *Keren Kayemet*.

–'Why? For what good deeds?' – Moshe ben Sarah offered a reaction from the gallery.

–'How do I know? It is said that he discovered a star, a planet' – a Jewish man sought to explain to him.

–'So what is the big deal here?' –

The voice of Moshe ben Sarah thundered again – ' I can understand, when a place is discovered where Jews could live in freedom, and pursue their means in peace, – that would be a real accomplishment! A star, that cannot even be reached, that is no accomplishment...'

Who Can Be Forgiven, and Whom Not...

Nahum Shatzkeh could not control his first children, and he went to get advice from the old Slonim *Rebbe:* what he should do?

The *Rebbe* said: 'Think a bit, have you, on an occasion, sinned, and you need to repent?

And so, Nahum Shatzkeh thought, ruminated and reminded himself, that once – when he was still a young lad – he was being propositioned into a wedding, and he visited with a young, pretty girl. She pleased him very much, and he agreed to the match.

At the signing of the wedding contract, he saw that they had slipped him her sister – someone older and not particularly attractive. in his state of confusion, he quietly stole out of the house, and fled far and away, wherever his feet took him.

– You shamed a Jewish daughter, and you must beg her forgiveness, and in reward for this, The Blessed God will show you compassion – the *Rebbe* replied.

And if the *Rebbe* orders it, there is no choice. so Nahum traveled to where the woman could be found, and upon learning that she was in Byten, near Slonim, he went there.

As luck would have it, he bumped into her husband, who was working in the yard, and he told him the whole story. Afterwards, he went into the house, and conveyed the *Rebbe's* request to the wife, that she should show compassion towards him and any future children, and forgive him.

On leaving the house, Nahum again encountered her husband.

–'*Nu*, what's going on?' – the husband asked.

–'She forgave me!' – Nahum glowed from his success with great joy.

–'So, she forgave you?! But I will never forgive you, for your timely disappearance, and for leaving me with this bag of goods' – her husband retorted...

Where the *Haggadah* Begins

Once, on the First Day of Passover, when the *Hasidim* were talking about the *Seder* of the previous night, Noah the *Melamed* came in, and told that the *Seder* in his home had nearly been ruined. As the devil would have it, he got into an argument with his Missus and stomped out of the house.

Walking around like this, outside, he encountered the lawyer Moszkowsky who asked:'R' Noah, what is the matter with you?'

In his distress, R' Noah poured out the contents of his bitter heart, and told him the whole story.

The lawyer, Moszkowsky, reproved him as follows: 'Does this mean, R' Noah, that Jews travel from faraway places to celebrate the *Seder* at their own place, in their own home, and you are actually leaving the house, wife and children....'

His words had an impact. R' Noah reconciled with his wife, and conducted a *Seder* in accordance with the ritual protocol.

– And what is the essence of lawyer Moszkowsky's *Seder*? What was he then doing out of doors? – a curious *Hasid* asked.
–' He must have certainly ended his *Seder* earlier– R' Abraham Shmuel Zablodsky retorted, a serious Jewish man, not given to joking, – His *Haggadah* does not begin with '*Ha Lakhma*' but rather with '*Davar Akher*'....

What is More Expensive: Something Whole, or Broken?

One time, R' Israel the Butcher built an oven, and stored a wagon full of glassware with a porter, a young *Hasidic* fellow, named David.

When the latter brought him the 'goods' and quoted him the price, the butcher complained that it is too expensive.

–Does this mean that jars that are whole cost that much less!? – he added.

– Have you just now taken note of the fact that broken things are more expensive? Really, it is about time you knew this! You have a pair of legs, one is healthy and the other is broken – say it yourself, which costs you more money? – the young man noted.

'Communism,' God Help Us...

On a winter night, David the Porter was sitting in the *shtibl* beside the oven, among the elderly Jews, who were trying to teach him a lesson, as to why a Jewish man, encumbered as he was with children, doesn't seek any extra work, and sits [idly] beside the oven.

–'My good friends, understand this – he explained – in this world there are about two billion people, and in a just and proper allocation of labor, this works out to two hours of work for every adult individual. I work 8 hours a day, and I am not obligated to work for those who are idlers...

An elderly Jew said: '–I cannot even begin to understand this. What he is talking about?

–'And I understand only too well what he is saying – another elderly Jew offered – this is 'Communism,' God Help Us...

Reuv'keh Turetsky Addresses an Issue

On the eve of Passover, there was a market fair in the *shtetl*. The Rabbis and the *Dayanim* were flooded with issues to resolve.

Once – Reuv'keh Turetsky tells – he came to the Rabbi of Mys, who happened to be busy with a rather serious issue – Fishl the manual worker had come with a vexing question: his wife had permitted a fowl to be slaughtered , and the inspection showed that there were no guts.

–'Pardon me, *Rebbe*, –Reuv'keh said – 'for the answer to such a question, it is not necessary to go look in '*Yoreh Deyah*,' but to make a thousandfold distinction, in the garbage dump.

And, indeed, that was done, and they found it... the little old Jewish lady was a bit distracted, with this being the eve of a Festival and all, and she had completely forgotten that she had already thrown out the guts...

A Visa to the World to Come...

During difficult times, many Jews from Mys emigrated to America, leaving behind their wives and children in the 'old country,' as ersatz widows and orphans, who waited for years, until their husbands and fathers could arrange to have them brought to America as well.

During the High Holy Days, one time, Shlomo the Shammes went to the cemetery. Along the way, a real widow intercepted him, and asked of him to remember her favorably to her [late] husband.

Returning from the cemetery, when he again passed by the dwelling of the widow, she asked him:

– *Nu*, R' Shlomo, what's new?'

–'Don't worry Sarah Pesha – he replied to her – the initial period is a bit difficult. Be at peace, as soon as he gets himself settled, he will, with God's help, send papers to have you come there too...

Intuition

One time, when the *Hasidic Dayan*, R' Nissan was going through the street towards evening, he was stopped by a group of young boys and girls, who were having a discussion among themselves about a certain issue, and one of them asked of him"

–'You are a *Hasid*, so you must certainly have a *Rebbe*?' How can you be so sure of the correctness of your chosen path, and of your *Rebbe*?'

– 'No doubt, you believe in love?' – R' Nissan replied to him – and in what way are you certain that the one you chose is the right one? Is it not that your intuition tells you that she is the one meant for you, and you for her. She is the best and most beautiful. The same is true of the Hasid, his intuition dictates him to view the *Rebbe* as his spiritual leader, and in Hasidism – the way to the truth.'O ne has only to be faithful to one's own sense' – the *Dayan* added.

Rebbe, You Got Me

The elderly R' Hirsch Feigman once had a *Din Torah* at the [court of the] *Dayan*, the Rabbi, R' Ze'ev Meir Scheinberg ל"ז.

–'Rebbe, you got me!'– the elderly Feigman called out with impulsive ambition, and when the elderly Feigman was at the peak of his intensity in prayer, he went over to him and said:

– 'R' Hirsch, if you are demanding money, then it is coming to you, because it is yours. But if it is your purpose to 'extract' it from someone else, you are then committing a grave injustice to an impoverished Jew, and that is simply not done.

– *Rebbe*, you got me!' – the elderly Feigman responded after finishing his prayers. And the judgement was set aside.

'Aleinu l'Shabeyakh'

On one occasion in the Great *Bet HaMedrash*, the reading of the Torah was held up over community affairs, and a major dispute erupted.

In order to clam the inflamed crowd down, one of the wise *balebatim* went up to the *Bima* and said:

Friends! Now I understand why we recite the '*Aleinu*' prayer, [thanking God for]... 'not making us like the other nations of the earth.'

The gentiles fight with each other all week long in the saloon and on the marketplace, and when it comes to Sunday morning, they peacefully and calmly go to their church. And it is quiet there.

With us Jews, it is exactly the opposite. All week long we transact and work peacefully and in a tranquil manner, and when the Sabbath comes, in the *Bet HaMedrash*, all of a sudden we become intoxicated with

community affairs, who is to be the *Gabbai,* Torah honors, and other considerations of this kind, and we argue with one another, and we fight with one another in a sacred place, just the way 'they' do in the marketplace and in the saloon, no offense intended.'

A Wife, A Home, and *Kadokhes*

A newly arrived Mys Jew in Paris, met up with a *landsman* of his, who had become modernized. The latter invited him to have a coffee, and they began to talk.

–'Do you have a wife?' – the man from Mys asked.

–'I have a lady!' – the *landsman* says, correcting him.

–'Do you have a home?' – The man from Mys inquires further.

–' A house!' – his acquaintance corrects him yet again.

The waiter puts fish in front of them, and the modernized *landsman* refuses to eat the fish.

–'Why do you not want to eat any fish? Do you have '*kadokhes*?' – the 'Greenie' from Mys asks.

–'Fever!' That's what we say – his companion replied in an agitated manner.

'What are you trying to confuse me with?! Lady, house, fever!... the fellow from Mys retorted – now I can see where you are and what's going on with you: You have a wife, you have a home, and altogether, you have '*kadokhes*'...

'*Kishke Gelt*

'*Kishke Gelt*' was the name given to 'rainy day money' that a Jew extracted from his daily bread in order to save. Life in the Old Country was hard, especially in Mys. Poverty was extensive, and the want was – bitter. And here, fires and all manner of decrees arrive. Disease and onsets of weakness also come. And old age inexorably draws near. Daughters that need to be married off grow to maturity and in general, times come along when you can't make a living. there was no recourse, it was necessary to set money aside for 'whatever contingency that might not even arise' (regardless of what happens).

From this arose the classic miserliness: we would split a match into quarters, take a 'drag' from someone else's cigarette, or, at the very least, try to inhale his expelled smoke. Fresh bread was a 'rarity' ('you can swallow it') and if once in a while, you would treat yourself to a bit of sugar in the tea, you couldn't hold it 'against the stream' but only in the side of the mouth, so it doesn't dissolve too quickly...

In Old Mys, we were not even aware that there were Scots, but their skill at being miserly we knew better than they did. We had our own Jewish ways and systems.

There was a story of a Jewish man, who was on his deathbed, and called to his son: How can I leave this world, and leave you alone. You have no idea of how to live; you can't even properly take care of a garment. Don't you see that you are standing beside the head of your dying father, and you will shortly have to rend your garment – so why are you wearing such a good jacket?...

And this scrimping began thus: If a Jew managed to scrape together 90 kopecks, he would borrow an extra 10, and 'make' a ruble out of it.

The 'conservative' (old-fashioned) miser would save a ruble, stick it into a sack, and hide it under the floorboard. The 'modern' saver would deposit it in the bank, and the 'risk taker' would lend it to a merchant at interest.

The pain was very great, when it was necessary to reclaim a ruble that had been saved, take it out, and exchange it for smaller denominations, but the tragedy was frightening when a merchant, a 'man of means' would go broke. It would ruin many families. The inheritance of widows would be 'burned up,' the dowries of single girls, and the 'kishke gelt' of older business people and workers.

If the groschen earned by the simple Jew was earned with difficulty, and it was soaked in blood and sweat, literally – it was on this abnormal economic base that a class of loan sharks arose.

Such a loan shark would get a career started by being a professional lender at interest, with cancellation provisions. Later, when he obtained more money, he became a relentless usurer, who ratchets up the interest rates. Finally, such an individual became a 'man-eater' and like a big fish that would swallow up all the smaller fish in his way.

It was in this way, that a certain G. became a very wealthy man, from once having been a pauper, and afterwards, when he was faced with a crisis from all sides, he complained: I am no longer a person, I have become a zero; every defaulted ruble makes a hole in my heart, and I am completely riddled through and through....

Folk humor exacted a sarcastic revenge from the loan sharks, and said that they, themselves, will not be among those who will arise from the dead at the Final Redemption. Everyone else will be summoned back to their former occupation in life, and to the loan sharks will be said: Lie there, lie there, the interest rate is growing!'

Defaults, Bankruptcies and Regulations

In time, with the development of economic life, there was great progress on this front as well. The ordinary folks were not declared in default as much as business people were bankrupted, as well as banks. After this, the so-called 'regulations' were created. Debts were placed under control, and the buyer had to pay an extra percent on every item of merchandise, to cover bankruptcy and regulation. Jews, manufacturing merchants, who lived from one bankruptcy to the next, joked and said, that manufacturing is sufficient for everything: to live a luxurious life, to send children to get educated out of the country, and for themselves, to travel to foreign places for cures, except... for paying off debts and notes.

And they would add – well, there is only one thing that you can cover up.

Rebbe, Tell Me the Honest Truth:

Can my wife make a *kugel* or not?

The old *Rebbe* from Slonim was in Mys for a Sabbath. On the following Sunday morning, a *Hasid* came to him, who brought a *kugel* to the Rebbe's table, and said:

Rebbe, I am aware that in order to keep the peace between a man and his wife, it is even permissible to tell a lie, but despite this, I beg you, to tell me the honest truth: 'Can my wife can make a *kugel* or not!'

Blood Libel

Up to the time of the Nazi occupation, there were no pogroms in Baranovich. The sullen abettors of anti-Semitism would, from time-to-time, nevertheless propagate a variety of incitements and rumors, and before Passover, they would also remind themselves of the old false canard of the 'blood libel.'

Once, on the Eve of Passover, a gentile entered the business of a Jew that he knew, and asked him:

– Is this matter about blood true or not?

–' And what do you imagine? What is your opinion? – the Jew asked of him.

–'How should I know? Possibly yes, but also possibly no?!' – the gentile replied.

– 'I know you Ivan[139]!' the Jew noted – you sense the timeliness of the very thing that we need; on the eve of Sukkot, you are here with the *skhakh*, and a few days later – with the willow branches [for *Hoshana Rabbah*]. The same is true of Passover – with the fresh brooms. If you had the slightest suspicion that we were in need of Christian blood, you would butcher your own parents and proposed their blood for a price well spiced up with black pepper[140]...

Protagonists

The Rabbi of Mys, R' Eliezer Yehuda ל"ז, was a wise Jewish man. Once, after a Din Torah, he characterized the two protagonists.

The first one, a big man, tall, opens his mouth in order to swallow his opponent.

The other, a diminutive sort of fellow, permits himself, as it were, to be so swallowed; but he quietly bores into the body of his opponent, and consumes his heart stealthily.

Equivalence

Once, at a Din Torah at the residence of R' Eliezer Yehuda, one side got very upset, and his opponent smiled.

–'Why are you smiling?' – the Rabbi asked.

– Rebbe, it is written that 'he who gets angry, it is as if he engages in idol worship.' – the opponent remarked.

–'Yes, however, whoever is the cause of the anger is himself held equivalent to that very idol worship – the Rabbi replied.

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139 The equivalent of 'John Doe' to the Eastern European Jew, in referring to the Slavic gentile.

140 A highly desired condiment of that era.

Reincarnation

On one occasion, Moshe ben Sarah encountered one of the balebatim who was rather satisfied with himself, and when that individual began to recount what he did for the public good, Moshe began, as was his custom, to interest himself in whether this was being done with a true conviction, in God's name, or for his own personal aggrandizement?!

This 'interrogation' aroused the fury in this Jewish man, and in his anger, he exclaimed:

'Leave me alone! This does not interest me – and I am even ready to be reincarnated as a dog, if it will permit me to bite Moshe ben Sarah.'

'Abraham'

The old Slonim *Rebbe* was once attending a ritual circumcision at the residence of one of his followers in Baranovich. When he called out [the part of the blessing] '...and let his name in Israel be called...' the father of the child remained silent out of awe, and the *Rebbe* called out:

'Abraham!'

After the '*brit milah*' the *Hasidim* asked him, why specifically did you pick 'Abraham?'

–'It's rather simple, when the father stands there like Terakh, the son must be called 'Abraham' – the *Rebbe* answered!...

Foregoing a Day's Work

Abraham'eh the Mason was always hurried in his work of building and repairing ovens...

One day, he was asked –'And what will happen R' Abraham, when the day comes and you must die?

'Well,' – he said – 'I guess I will have to forego a day's work.'

The Messianic Era

In Mys, there was a constable who understood Yiddish. One time, he came into the hose of a Jew, and ordered him to clean up his yard.

–Oh, how are we to survive to see the Messiah?! – the Jewish woman of the house said.

– When the Messiah comes, and there will be a Jewish kingdom, you will be able to sink into the muck up to your throat. in the meantime, I am still the boss around here, and in my 'kingdom' there must be cleanliness and order – the constable replied.

A 'Wagon Full of Sins'

In the first days of Baranovich, we had a sort of 'folklore wandering.' We kept on gathering and re-gathering [sic: stories].

Once, a wagon driver was asked:

–'How is your business going?'

–'Not bad' – he replied – 'except for the sins which are killing me.'

–'What does that mean?!'

–'When there is a need to transport 'house finery,' one puts a back to it, and a pair of hands, and the work proceeds quickly. Afterwards, however, when the *balabusta* starts to moan and groan about every item: 'it is a sin to leave this behind, and a sin to overlook that' – the work oozes along like pitch, and until a wagon is finally laden with all these 'sins' the entire day goes by, and you haven't earned anything from the entire undertaking...

'Common Senses Demands It!'

During the Russo-Japanese War, in 1905, Jews in Mys were sitting in the Bet HaMedrash, behind the oven, and they engaged in analyzing the tragic situation. Their logic worked like a lock that had been turned over on both sides.

If the Russians had a victory, they would say: 'Common sense demands it!' '*Fonyeh Goniff*[141] gorges himself on pounds of bread and swine flesh, and that is why he is healthy and strong, and is able to defeat the Japanese there, who eat only rice.

If, on another occasion, the Japanese won, they would say: 'Common sense demands it! *Fonyeh Goniff* is a clumsy overfed pig, and it is no wonder that the more agile and nimble Japanese are able to defeat him.

This is the way 'common sense always demanded it.'

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141 One of the most common and prevalent epithets used by Eastern European Jews in characterizing the Russians (especially the notoriously anti-Semitic Czar Nicholas I). It literally means, 'Ivan the Thief.'

Personalities
דמויות - געשטאלטען

In Memory of the Vanished

R' Eliezer Bernstein

By Moshe Grossman

R' Eliezer Bernstein – one of the senior activists among the Zionists of Baranovich, who for many years served as the Chairman of the 'Mizrahi' organization there.



Page 413: ***R' Eliezer Bernstein***

He was born in 1870 in Slonim, married a woman in Brisk, and settled during the 1890's in Baranovich/

A man of faith, suffused with the best of the tradition of Judaism, loved the book, and set aside specific times for Torah study. He was a lover of the Hebrew language. From his youth onwards, he took on the burden of community work, and dedicated his energies to work on behalf of the Holy Land. Zionism was his primary joy, and at every Jewish wedding, he would take up collections for the various foundations.

His house was generously made open to all the people who did community work, and to those who endeavored on behalf of Zionism. During the time of The First World War, he found refuge in the home of the *Gaon*, R' Chaim Soloveitchik of Brisk, and when Ze'ev Jabotinsky would visit our city, he would lodge in the shelter of his household walls.

He raised a large family, six sons and one daughter, but only one of them Shimon, was privileged to make *aliyah* to the Land of Israel in 1936. He made his living operating a small factory that manufactured soap.

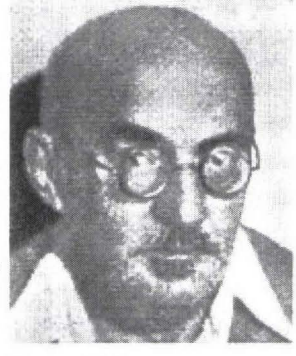
The dream of his life was the make aliyah to the Land, but his luck was interdicted because of difficulties and delays. Many, who emigrated from Baranovich, did so under his influence.

Eliezer Bernstein, his wife, five of his sons, his daughter, son-in-law, daughters-in-law and grandchildren, were all exterminated in the Holocaust.

R' Menachem Mendl Ginzburg

By Lz. Shazar

(From the book, "*Shem l'Abba*')



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R' Menachem Mendl Ginzburg

Mir, that was the town in which my uncle (M. M. Ginzburg ה"יז) was born, a progressive community in Hebrew, having earned a name and a place in the tradition and the history of Polish Jewry. It had formidable assets that earned it a global reputation: it had a splendid Yeshiva, this being the Yeshiva established by the disciples of the Vilna *Gaon*, in which the tradition of Volozhin reigned, and which served as a center for the education of the Rabbis of Poland up to The Second World War. Hundreds of young men from the most far-flung reaches of greater Russia, converged on it, and they gave a Torah-scholastic character to the town.

His grandfather, R' Shmuel ben Alexander Ginzburg, a scion of Kapust, was one

of the founders of *Hasidism* in Lithuania, being an emissary fo his teacher, R' Schneur Zalman [of Liadi] the author of the '*Tanya*.'
His father, R' Moshe Ginzburg, was one of the outstanding elders of *Chabad.* He was an exponent of Torah scholarship and Hasidism.

My uncle Mendl – he was already being carried on the new wave. He was the love of his grandfather's heart. But as great as his love was, so did his aggravation with him grow, because the paths that they traveled grew more and more apart.

My uncle inherited his integrity and his spiritual legacy from his father, but not his fortitude. On the contrary – he was soft, and everything about him was suffused with tranquility. From his mother he got his refined temperament, his goodness of heart, and his sensitivity to the difficulties of the day. He personally, was faithful to his life's trajectory and his talents, and was intent on directing his life according to his own will, and impose his own spiritual values on his environment, and also to make of his life what he wanted to make of it, to raise his sons in his values, to develop his own home according to his wishes, to bring his wife into his world, and in the end, to reach the center of his personal desire. Nevertheless, he did all of this without raising a warlike storm, and without ultimate pressure, without confrontation, without imposing his will arbitrarily, as if he did not want to be subverted by conflict, but that he would accomplish all of this by some sort of spiritual influence that emanates on its own. It was to pave a way to hearts gently, and with patience – not through bitterness – but rather from affection and respect.

As a child, his grandfather educated him in accordance with his own will. And because of his talents, he reaped substantial blessing from his education. He learned the *Gemara* with *Rashi* commentaries and *Tosafot* from the elder *melamdim* in Mir, and of *Hasidism* – he learned form his grandfather directly.

Afterwards, his grandfather sent him for further study to the Rabbi of Jeremicze – a town close to Mir. My uncle studied Torah with this Rabbi for a number of years, and he would tell us about his noble bearing with great praise. That Rabbi was somewhat young, but he was a formidable scholar, and projected a powerful spiritual influence – as well as secular knowledge. While still a young man, this beloved Rabbi died while his student was there. And it touched me right to the heart when my uncle revealed the loving relationship that he had with the orphaned daughters of the deceased Rabbi for many long years. He thought of them as if they were daughters of the family, and his concern for them did not end for them, and their families to the end of the days that he resided in the Diaspora.

And when my uncle returned from Jeremicze to his father's home in Mir – there was a different atmosphere among the youth of the town. Around the Yeshiva, the fire of the *Haskalah* spread about, and alongside it – the first signs of the Revolution grew nigh.

Among the books in our home, during my childhood, we took care of the volumes of 'Восход[142]' bound by year, with my uncle's initials on their spine, which, with the departure of my uncle from his town, came over to us. In these volumes of 'Восход,' there was a mark on those pages on which the letters of my uncle were printed, that my uncle had written about the war between 'Light and Darkness' that was being conducted in the environs of the Yeshiva, that, but this time was tied up with Rabbi Yitzhak Nissenbaum[143], the champion who had then begun to be the promulgator of work on behalf of Zionism in the area. It is from that – that his deep roots in Russian literature, lyric poetry, and the new Hebrew literature, can be traced.

In the meantime, the 'Great Fire' broke out in Mir, The well-branched family was dispersed. And the grandfather sent his young son to his son-in-law's family, that being my father – to Dubrowna.

At that time, my uncle was a guest from time-to-time in our home, that was in Stalovičy and he wove himself into the volume of life in our household. My mother concerned herself with him, and my father became bonded to him with the bonds of the love of souls. For me at that time – he was my enlightened big uncle, who involved himself in some measure in the direction of my education, and to my older sisters, he was also an uncle, someone who encouraged us, and almost a friend of the same age, not avoiding bad things either. And he was like the oldest of the children in the household. I have only a distant memory of my uncle's wedding. All the members of my family traveled to his wedding, and only I fell sick, and remained at home, together with my second sister who tended me at my sickbed. When they returned from the wedding, they could not stop talking about the beautiful woman that my uncle had married, of her considerable acuity, and of the well-to-do father-in-law – the uncle of Dr. Yekhiel Czlonow, the President of the Russian Zionists – and about his magnificent home, the house of a Polish noble family, that was in Svislowicz.

From the time that I began to take an interest in the written word, my father ז"ל, would give me my uncle's letters. in order that I learn from them how to write a beautiful Hebrew. And, as a result, from these letters – the first that I ever read – a full literary world, from the standpoint of their moving content, their beautiful style, their clear Hebrew expression, and the penmanship, which captivated my childish heart.

...In those years, the sun of the city of Baranovich began to rise, which stood at the intersection of the connection from Vilna–Bialystok–Brisk–Moscow. The potential for development was focused on that location. My uncle settled there, and opened up a banking business.

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142 Russian Jewish journal founded by Adolph Landau and published in Saint Petersburg between 1881 and 1906. *Voskhod* (Dawn) began as a monthly. After its first year of publication, a weekly entitled *Nedel''naia khronika Voskhoda* (Weekly Chronicle of *Voskhod*) was added. In practice the journal was edited inter alia by Shmuel Grusenberg, Simon Dubnow, and Yehuda Leib Gordon. In April 1899, Landau sold *Voskhod* to a "young men''s" group, which included Leon Bramson, the historian Saul Ginsburg, Matthew (Matityahu) Posner, Iulii (Julius) Brutskus, and others. In November 1899, both the weekly *Voskhod* and its monthly version changed their names to *Knizhki Voskhoda* (Voskhod Booklets). In 1901, the editorial board co-opted Maksim Vinaver and Leopold Sev (who from 1903 was for all practical purposes its editor in chief). The monthly journal ceased publication in March 1906, and its weekly supplement followed suit at the end of June of that year.

143 Rabbi Yitzhak Nissenbaum (1868-1942) was the central figure in the Religious Zionist movement in Poland between the two World Wars. He perished in the Warsaw Ghetto at the hands of the Nazis, during the Holocaust.

My uncle came to Baranovich in 1899, and my uncle's house was there until 1914 – the central Zionist home in the city, that grew and made progress. The appearance of my uncle on the Zionist stage began with the entrance of the Zionists into Minsk in the year 1902, and the ambit of his activities were first local, and then became national.

A new Zionist tradition began to take form in our family, and Zionism and the Hebrew language were intertwined. With involvement with Zionist foundations, and the inculcation of nationalism, ans with the conflicts withing the ranks of the Zionists – becoming rooted in the new Hebrew literature, and the drawing close to poetry, a new monthly Hebrew publication was started. To my uncle, the work of creating a library was tantamount to work in Zionism. And the founding of a library – this being the renown'*Chitalniya*' in Baranovich, – first for all the spiritual life in the city, and the founding of a meeting place for Zionism, was foremost in his awareness while he lived there.

And the repercussions that were felt emanating from Baranovich are also well remembered, about the Zionism that held sway there, and my uncle's home was the center of this reign. My uncle – was the heir of *Hovevei Tzion*. It was he would coalesced all the Jews of the city, who paid three rubles a month, each. And his '*Chitalniya*' also became a place of worship. And this synagogue – that was also a library – was a fountain of creativity to the Zionists of the city. There [you could find] the most recent newspaper, a Hebrew book, there, monies were gathered for the various Zionist funds, and there, new practices were introduced into the prayer protocol: Torah honors were no longer auctioned off, and no one was called to the Torah by name. All were comrades to one another, and all had access to a Torah honor, and in the allocation of the other honors during the service. And central to the synagogue was –Zionism itself. All of this was so new and bizarre, in the grounds of the conflict over Zionism in the synagogues of Lithuania of that time.

And it is because of my uncle and his endeavors that the Zionist cause rose in prominence in Baranovich and its environs. Officers travel to the Congress – and they are met in Baranovich by delegations at the railroad station. Avinowicky, who became renown as a great orator, was traveling to the Congress from Odessa. And so, a delegation, headed by my uncle, came to the railroad station, and demanded that he get off the train and speak. Avinowicky does not want to accept the invitation, he is tired, and the travel is burdensome to him – and so my uncle takes one hundred rubles out of his pocket at the station. He offers to donate it to Keren Kayemet if he gets off to speak in the city. And now: He dared Avinowicky to refuse the donation and not get off the train. Zionists travel to Helsingfors[144], and begin to set up agendas – officers are roped in, and brought to the '*Chitalnyia*' to brainstorm new ideas. So Mosensohn reaches Russia and brings with him a new 'Jar of the Refugees' in the form of a 'Jaffa Gymnasium' and he is immediately brought to Baranovich, gathers together donors and supporters, and leaves an indelible impression on the young children, beginning to form a dulcet ideal that includes 'Gymnasium' and also 'Jaffa' that promises creativity. Goldstein begins his travels, and Sheinkin appears from the Holy Land – Baranovich hosts them. And also, the big stars, the very big ones, that only the wealthy centers are privileged to have them appear, and their appearance is a holiday of fund-raising, and Baranovich is climbing and rising, and my uncle rises and brings it along with him, and it too becomes privileged to have such visits: Here, *Sholom Aleichem* comes to Baranovich, and it is my uncle who brought him here, and he radiates from the endeavor of his readings, and the joy of his presence is immense and he – and that whose central concern was the onset of his calamitous illness, and Baranovich suddenly becomes renown in the entire Jewish world as the city of the perilous illness of the people's darling. And here, the light of Jabotinsky shines. In the hinterlands, the tales of the nationalist fervor of his speeches spreads far and wide. Fortunate is the ear that was able to hear him personally. And my uncle brings him as well, and all Baranovich gathers, and Zionists stream in from all of the towns surrounding Baranovich, and he lectures at

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144 The Swedish name for the Finnish city of Helsinki

the theater, and gives additional literary and artistic talks afterwards, to the inner circle of intimates who withing the intimacy of my uncle's home, listen until the breaking of dawn – how fortunate was the ear that could listen.

And from the time that I went out into the greater world – – the distance to my uncle's house was something to round out the points of the house in those faraway places. I would rush there like a refugee who had escaped from prison. It was there that I seen my good friend to have his children educated, who were beginning to grow up, and it was to there that I brought my impressions of my first visit to the Land of Israel.

That was, until the arrival of The First World War. What happened to my uncle and his home from that time on, I will come to know only from retelling of others. The tranquility of this solid, prosperous house, was destroyed by the outbreak of the war. The business of the bank came to a halt, and the front drew closer. The son and daughters ceased their studies. The banker attempted to become a merchant, and the merchant was transformed into a refugee. As to the substantial capital that was invested in inventory that was left behind in Baranovich before the escape – was lost to the winds. The large house became a way station of the Red Cross. And the master of the house together with his wife and children, went off from Baranovich to Saratov, and from Saratov to Smolensk, and from Smolensk to Minsk. These wanderings went on for approximately four years. And even, on their return, after my uncle's family returned to its place in Baranovich, after the signing of the armistice, the bitter tribulations and changes did not stop. One régime left, and another took its place, and each of them brought their own chaos, and the community leaders were their first victims. For the time being, Baranovich remained without a government, and maintains order on the basis of self-rule. My uncle is selected to be the Head of the city. and so the army of yet another new régime arrives, and the first thing they do is throw out the existing powers. The Bolsheviks arrive, and the former banker and head of the Zionists in the city, becomes a target for their arrows. The Poznan [Poles] arrive, and the Larczyks, and they start their own style of predation. On one occasion, my uncle was taken to the forest, and threatened with being shot. Members of the family went out after them, to rescue him, and they too felt the 'beneficence' of the hand of the protectors of Poland.

And in this first year of the newly constituted Polish Republic – this was the year in which the Zionist work of my uncle and of his family, reached its high point.

At that time, Baranovich was close to the Russian border, a distance of about two hours from Stalovičy which was right on the border. In the Baranovich fields, a large encampment was erected, for soldiers, and for the refugees returning (YUR) to the newly independent Poland. And the camp was a Hell to its residents. And a double hell to its Jewish residents, emigrants from captivity in Russia, on whom was placed the additional burden of being suspected to be Bolsheviks. And it was through this Hell that hordes of the young *olim* passed, the first members of the Third *Aliyah*. It was under the most excruciating of tribulations that they would steal across the border from all the cities and towns in Russia, in order to somehow get rolled into this camp that was in Polish Baranovich. And all the tribulations of the refugee that my uncle and my uncle's family saw at this time, with their own eyes, they suffered themselves. And all of this devotion to this Zionist endeavor that had been imbedded in their heart over the course of years, together with my uncle's good name in the city, and the loyal relationship shown to him by the people in power towards him – all of this coalesced into a Zionist endeavor, and an aggressive effort and total commitment of heart and soul. And so, my uncle's house became the house that redeemed and saved, and the work of rescue and facilitation of *aliyah* to the Land of Israel, became his central and primary activity, that bound him with a deep emotional bond to the Third *Aliyah*, and the Halutz movement, that began to come alive, and the Land of Israel itself.

It was not only one among those who made the *aliyah* to Zion, to whom the writing of my uncle, given to them by the Zionist committee in Minsk – represented his entire legacy. Anyone designated by the Zionist

committee inside Russia with the sign: M. M. Ginzburg Baranovich – was already accepted as a Zionist pioneer, whose destination was the Land, and for whom the Zionists of Poland had to assume responsibility and offer their assistance. And there were many among those who simply had disappeared, that my uncle had to dig to find them among the throngs of refugees, to stand up for their interests, to bail them out, and to deal with all of their issues, until such time that they could make *aliyah*, and to speed up their *aliyah.* The Zionist endeavor at 'YUR' from the standpoint of the international council of Polish Jewry, before it got started, was a localized effort only, placed in the hands of my uncle. He was the Zionist leader in that place. He – was the *de facto* temporary office of the Land of Israel. He needed to weave together a large network of relationships with the régime and its officials, and he had to take on personal responsibility for each and every one of the *olim*, under his own signature, and it was necessary for him to thoroughly investigate that they not be compromised by people that did not belong to the *aliyah* movement; His eldest daughter, who had just then completed gymnasium, was sent into the camp, and there, she would seek out the loyal Zionists and *aliyah* candidates from among the refugees. May Israelis from the ranks of the Third Aliyah, to this day, carry the memory of her flamboyant appearance in the camp, as a harbinger of a surprising liberation. It was she who would collect and review the papers, and bring them to my uncle, and my uncle would review them and weigh the evidence and take responsibility, get them out, arrange and offer support. These saved souls numbered into the hundreds – and these *olim* – are today, the leaders of institutions, heads of agencies, and the heads of branches of a variety of Zionist divisions. All recall with the trembling of gratitude, and recognition, the evidence of Zionist faith and responsibility that my uncle revealed at that time – before there was *HeHalutz*, and properly organized offices, and emissaries from an international council. And when all these entities got started, and when the international council in Warsaw assumed the lead position. and when its emissaries began to do this work, organized in Baranovich – the way to my uncle and my uncle's house was already paved.

And when the Polish Zionist community entered the scene, onto this path, and Greenbaum had already stood at its head, and he surrounded himself with the Zionists of the Russian tradition – my uncle was one of his loyalists. In its various agendas and activities, my uncle saw himself as a standard bearer, and his deeply rooted heartfelt bonds to the *Halutz* and the Histadrut movement, were a wellspring of life to him and his Zionism.

It was then that the continuing yearning of my uncle to make *aliyah*, and take his family along, began to take on a more realistic character.

And this thought had gestated in his heart for some time. Going back to the days when I visited Baranovich in 1905, I recall a conversation – a subject that engrossed him considerably. the subject was his family, but it centered on *aliyah* and the Land of Israel.

With the visit of Mosensohn, the desire to send his children to the Land of Israel began to take shape, and not only for a few years to study at the Gymnasium. With his first trip – as if the Land drew nearer to him than Baranovich during the war years, and his wanderings as a refugee disconnected from the perimeter of his family. And with the uprooting of my uncle, and his loss of a roof over his head, and roots – his yearnings to make aliyah deepened, and his day-to-day involvement in arranging the Third *Aliyah*, and the release of the *olim* and the arrangement of their emigration fulfilling all of the detail of the Israeli office – transformed his presence on alien soil into something unbearable.

However, the possibility of realization, in the meantime, grew more distant. Those good days before the world war, did not ever return to the days of Poland. What little assets there were more of a burden – than making things easier. And there was no buyer to be found in those stormy days, and the girls finished their studies at the Gymnasium, and to move – proved difficult. A slow, stepwise *aliyah* began. First – the oldest daughter

and her young husband, who was a witness and partner to the work of rescuing toe refugee *olim* in Baranovich, on behalf of the international council; and after that – his only son, and his wife, and after that – his second daughter, who made *aliyah* and turned to agriculture, and afterwards the youngest of the daughters as well. Drop by drop, his dream turned into reality. And between one *aliyah* and the next – a year or two elapsed. This long, slow, drawn out *aliyah* stretched from 5683-86 [1922-25]. With each aliyah, it seemed like the Final Redemption was getting closer, and even if the sense of insult deepened with each *aliyah*, because it was especially him, the progenitor of this desire, and the one who gave birth to the idea – who was the one who remained alone in the Diaspora.

It was at that time that he lost all taste for business, and he found consolation in his Zionist undertakings.

Far away, Greenbaum obtained a victory over the leadership, and he, from Baranovich, responded to him loyally. There were elections, among various elections, and the trust of the city was given to my uncle. A Jewish community was created, and its adviser and guide, and the one responsible to look after it – was my uncle. The *Tze'irei Tzion* movement grew, which burst out in opposition to the Zionism of the balebatim that existed in the cities and in Baranovich, and the strands of allegiance, tolerance and courtesy were frayed, even between the *Tze'irei Tzion* and the Zionists of that generation. The '*Eyt Livnot*' movement bursts upon the scene, and begins to sow dissension against the *Histadrut* and *HeHalutz*, and my uncle places himself as a bulwark against all the ill winds. The '*HaShomer HaTza'ir* movement stands ready to come into being in the city – so he takes upon himself the role of appearing before the authorities as one of its founders. And it is self-explanatory that he is the one responsible for *Keren HaYesod*, and he is the one concerned with *Keren Kayemet*, and he is the activist involved in the gathering of contributions for the *Histadrut.*

But the crowning achievement of his activity in those years – was the establishment and creation of the '*Tarbut*' Gymnasium. It was first and foremost among his concerns. He was the one who selected the teachers, he was the one who looked after the budget, he is the one to inspire the parents, and it was to him that demands came regarding the deficits.

And despite all of this activity – it is the issues of the Homeland that take precedence, the Land that is already home to his children. Messengers are sent to every new doctor that moves into the city, and to every Jewish person who is rumored to have done financially well – perhaps they might be interested in buying the beautiful home of my uncle, and thereby liquidate his assets, and those liabilities, that are constraining his ability to make *aliyah*. At the end of 5687 [1926], a neighbor was located who bought the house at a reduced price. So my uncle and aunt got moving, paid off their debts, took whatever little was left – and made *aliyah.*

At the house of my uncle, there remain preserved, the precious certificates and evidence of appreciation, from a grateful community. that were given at the time of the departure of its faithful activist. On parchment scrolls, in the calligraphy of a scribe, the people, who worked for culture in the city, convey their heartfelt blessings, along with the teachers of the Hebrew Gymnasium, the offspring of his labor. And from 'HaShomer HaTza'ir' that he founded, and which called him 'brother' blessing him with '*Khazak VeEmatz*,' and on the walls of my uncle's home there remain, still hanging, the history of the *Keren Kayemet* Golden Book, in which the Zionists of the city memorialized their president, and the enchanting day on which he came, finally, to make his own *aliyah.*

And ensconced in the heart of the Land, in which his son and three daughters waited for him, the way was not clear for him at the outset. And my uncle was well-served by all his refinement, self-control, his noble pride, and his pure and distilled Zionism, so that no blemish would adhere to him from all of the bitterness that held sway in the hearts of older Zionists, a man of past accomplishment, and someone who is capable, that makes aliyah, and does not find on arrival either his normal type of role, and not his standing in the community that

he is used to. My uncle chose to overlook all of these personal conflicts. Afterwards, he joined his son's factory as a partner, and committed all of his heart and skill to it. And the community life of the Zionism in the settlement, now filled his spirit no less than the way it filled it during all the years that he was outside the Land. Yet, he found ways to exert influence indirectly – he contented himself with being an observer from the sidelines, and conveying his ideas among a coterie of his close friends. And his idea was always carefully weighed, profound, and in the pursuit of harmony.

And the Land provided for many consolations: with great satisfaction, and no less pride, he saw his wife fulfil his blessed decision that had not been realized, and was learning Hebrew like a younger person. And in a short amount of time, she masters the language, using it as a living language of discourse, and because of this, the house was easily transformed into a house where Hebrew was spoken. And what wee all of the communal compromises placed against the spiritual joy engendered by the presentation given by Ch. N. Bialik at an '*Oneg Shabbat*' in the '*Aggadah*?' He speaks of these things as if they are3 all known and recognized, but despite this, the heart fills with them to its full capacity. And, in the Land, there is a broad and well-branched Hebrew literature, and every new book comes readily to hand – ingested with criticism and analysis. And as Hebrew teachers go out and travel the country, my uncle joins them, and in the end, he sees the valley in this issue, and he travels from a settlement to a *kibbutz*, and from a small *kibbutz* to a large one, reaching Tiberias and Safed; with his own eyes, he sees that which he has dreamt of for his entire life, imbibes his impressions to satiety, and restores all the rewards of his person to his soul.

In the meantime, his children put down roots, and the *aliyah* of his family members led to the enlargement and branching out of his family. The *aliyah* of fellow *landsleit* also grew. And with every new arrival – there was the worry of a new process of assimilation. And my uncle's advice gives direction, it offers encouragement, and serves as support.

This continued until the end of the [proverbial] seven fat years, and the shadow of disease fell, which did not pass, nor give him an added seven years.

On Purim of 5694 [1933], in the seventh year after my uncle's *aliyah*, he turned sixty years of age. The family celebrated this anniversary, and with the end of the celebrations, the illness that he would not be able to shake, was diagnosed. Initially, he had only a mild heart attack, but it was as if the Angel [of Death] had passed over him, and put his mark on his face.

The first attack passed quickly, but the sickness did not pass. During the seven years of his illness, which came in fits and stars, he never lost his interest in the issues of world life, and especially not in the issues of Zionism and that of the *Yishuv*. He also never lost his attraction to a newly published Hebrew book, and his pleasure at analysis did not fall off for all of his days, and every prayer in his heart was: Not to lose it. And this prayer was entirely fulfilled. Up to the last minute, he had all of his faculties, it did not fade, nor did it abandon him.

R' Mendl Goldberg

By Dr. A. Greenspan



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M. Goldberg

He was an observant Jew to the point of fanaticism... one of the zealots of '*Agudat Israel*.' He considered Zionism to be a harmful movement, and as a result he was of the opinion that it was 'deferring the Final Redemption.' 'Let the pioneers of Zion observe the Sabbath in accordance with *Halakha*, and not eat unkosher food in their *kibbutzim*' – he would say at frequent intervals, to the speakers in the youth organizations in Baranovich – 'and then I will give them my blessing of peace!' He was a storekeeper and the owner of an establishment that sold strong drink. Despite this, a distinctly spiritual aura , and, idealism reigned within him.

He had a fondness for people in jail – political prisoners, criminals and lawbreakers, ne'er-do-wells, and the like. A lover of prisoners? – no – this description does not really convey the inner soulful feeling of this '*Agudahnik*!!' He was the great comforter of all those in jail. His great sense of compassion to the hapless criminals serving time in the Baranovich jail, pained his heart, and robbed him of his sleep at night!... Each and every day, he would bring the prisoners in the lockup food, drink, raise their spirits, arouse their hope. He would heap strands of compassion on their hearts.

Here is what he would say: 'Don't wonder, my friends, that I seize only upon this good deed – the mitzvah of redeeming the captured, that is the greatest among all the mitzvot. 'Agony begets sin' – so our Sages said, and it is the suffering, that the jail inflicts upon you, that causes all your sinning!!' He would also visit the jail at evening time, and sometimes at night: the police knew him well, and were amazed by his generosity, and permitted him access to the prisoners at whatever hour he chose. Even the prison warden, a virulent anti-Semite, treated Mendl with respect.

At one time, he was asked by the warden to provide hot meals to the regular inmates, and not to the communists, who do not believe in God, and they are generally the type to give up on... Mendl replied: 'My Dear Warden! Communists are human beings too; they are downtrodden people, and the bitter circumstances and the lessons of tribulation cause them to become bereft of their senses'... 'As to belief in God' – he continued – 'don't think, Good Sir, that their renunciation is genuine: this is a renunciation grounded in illusion.'

The saying says -- 'the end crowns the entire journey,' and the end of M. Goldberg is equivalent in glory and grace to his life's journey. On *Shushan Purim* of 5702 [1942], Goldberg was on a bus full of Jews being taken to the slaughter, under the order of the Hitlerists. Mendl stood in the open bus, wrapped in his *Tallit*, with his *Tefillin* on, and sang '*Shoshanat Yaakov*!' in a sweet voice. This short tune with his melody, that pierced the depths of the hearts of those condemned to death, gives evidence of the spiritual energy possessed by a Jew who spurns death, and strides with pride, and with the full commitment of his soul, to his end.

A Memorial to His Persona

By Ze'ev ben Hillel

While R' Mendl Goldberg was nominally a '*Mitnaged*,' in spirit, and in his behavior he was an ardent *Hasid*. His round face, festooned with a broad golden beard, with his blue eyes that emanated a heavenly spirit.

The '*Chafetz Chaim*,' the *Gaon* of Radun, was not only his Rabbi and teacher, but he would rush to him, to learn Torah directly from his mouth, and to find himself within his ambit and under his aura, for at least the duration of the High Holy Days.

'My God, Jews, drink coffee! Coffee! Coffee! [Drink] coffee to the Lord your God, and it will go well with you! – 'This is what the '*Chafetz Chaim*' commanded us!' 'Coffee and the Faith!' This was his motto.

In his eyes, he considered it God's own work to provide help to those who suffered or were oppressed. He saw in this a mission from God. Apart from his regular, and dedicated, work with those who were imprisoned, he was in the custom of bringing home 'guests' for a meal (, it is worth mentioning, that when Baranovich passed under the control of the Soviets, there were, among the new rulers, many who had been prisoners who benefitted from his efforts, and they granted him a boon for his deeds, in that he did not have his store expropriated, and he was also not exiled from the city...). the poor came to feast at his table on a daily basis, passing guests, and a variety of needy persons.

He would distribute a great deal of charity. But whatever was lacking in properly accommodating guests, his mother-in-law, the strictly pious, and good-hearted Chana Rabinovich, would discreetly make up. With her own funds, she would provide support by putting these funds into her daughter's hands, in order to be able to discharge this great mitzvah.

And who is to look after the Jewish soldiers on the nights of the *Seder*? Jewish soldiers abruptly displaced from their homes in unfamiliar places, were in need of a festive holiday ambience. R' Mendl had a 'franchise' to organize a *Seder* in the military barracks. Very late, he would return to his own home from there, and would, a second time, perform the Seder ritual for the members of his own household, and a coterie of other poor people, who had been invited as guests.
And at any hour. If a guest passed through, who had spent the last penny in his pocket, he would come to him to ask for funds to cover the remainder of his journey – money for travel tickets. R' Mendl would immediately leave his store, enter the *Bet HaMedrash*, which was across from his store, on the run, or hurry to the Szeptycka street corner to clusters of Jews. who would hang out there, and he would turn to them with a happy sing-song: 'Jews, give a few *groschen*, a penny, a half-penny, let everyone give a bit of a donation, and this will suffice to make up ticket money.'

'Mendl, get up and make aliyah to the Land!' – his relatives from the Land of Israel would call to him.

– The Messiah will lead us to the Land' – he would answer in sing-song, confidently.

The '*Chafetz Chaim*' respected and loved R' Mendl, and when he came to visit Baranovich, he would be a guest in his house. Who could, at that moment, be likened to R' Mendl? How fortunate he was to have the privilege of being honored by this Rabbi.

He was one of the tranquil and faithful of Israel, this man, with mastery over his spirit and soul.
After The First World War, when the '*Chafetz Chaim*' זצ"ל came our city to participate in the funeral of his pupil, R' Mendl Goldberg ז"ל, among other institutions, he visited the orphanage as well – Our Rabbi! Perhaps you might bless the children, the orphans, that they all might be little versions of the '*Chafetz Chaim!*' Mrs. Fiedler the principal called out.

–Rather that He make them all little versions of R' Mendl – the '*Chafetz Chaim*' replied.

R' Sholom Dereczin

By M. Berezovsky

He was one of the refugee scholars that came to Baranovich after The First World War. His personality was a pleasant admixture of the good and beautiful in the Judaism of Russia, Lithuania and Poland, of *Hasidism* and *Hitnagdut*, together. He was both a scholar and a man of action. He was a person who did good deeds, noble, and lofty.

He ran a store that sold paraphernalia, and he set aside periods for Torah study, but regardless, the concerns of the public and its plight did not give his soul any respite.

During the period of depression and the economic boycott against the Jews, in the period between the two wars, he was quick to come to the aid of everyone that was needy. He organized a comprehensive help effort. He worked in 'Gemilut Hesed' founded, organized and led '*Kleinkredit*' to hep out the poorest of the poor, and other things.

R' Sholom dedicated a special effort to the 'hidden distressed', those Jews, who would conceal the extent of their plight. He would find his way to them, give them encouragement and led them his money.

He was the very embodiment of a Jew of lofty values, in whom generations of Torah and Jewish tradition supported him.

R' Chaim Weltman

By Ze'ev Livna (Lehrman)

'This is Chaim Weltman speaking to you' – he would be in the habit of saying. And to whom did he not speak? There was not a community institution in which he did not take an active role; because he was a man suffused with good will, to work in every community undertaking.



Page 422:
R' Chaim Weltman

The beginning of his work – was in the organization of workers. He neglected his own trade. He could not sit withing the narrow confines of his laundry and work to support his household. His active spirit, that yearned for action, carried him from his home and he would run from one meeting to the next, one gathering to the next. He would not see all the conflicts between organizations. He was active in the *TzYShO* public school, and also was an ardent supporter of the '*Tarbut*' school, in which his daughter was a student; he was a Zionist who did not discriminate between the agendas of the left or right – 'the important thing is the Land of Israel, and may all be blessed who have oriented themselves for the sake of Heaven to bring it into being.' It is understood that he was active in donations for the various national funds, and did not hold back his hand even from the *Tel-Chai* Fund.

He appears on behave of the union of workers, and always emphasizes, that he is a representative of the working man. Yet, there are members among the workers who oppose Chaim Weltman, and there are also those who support him. He is a member of the leadership council of the community, and a member of the municipal council. He learns, even from his opponent, how to penetrate to the depths of an issue, and before these things grow stale and all their requirements – here he is speaking about it, and as if by speaking, be creates the essence of his thinking. There are those who deride him, and say that his will exceeds his capacity.

but even his opponents admit that he is a man of integrity, and he engages faithfully in discharging his obligations to the public.

He was scrupulous in his dress. He was perpetually suffused with urgency, and prepared to offer support and extend help; and when he invited himself to a labor union gathering, or a general assembly of the people, he saw himself as a leader and a teacher, pleasantly explaining the direction in which it would be necessary to proceed, and the means required to do so. He didn't exercise care in connection with essential matters: sometimes he would take one stand, and other times – a second stand, all according to the direction, and dictated by the mood...

As was his life, so was his bitter end. During the time of the Nazis, he served as the head of the Jewish police in the ghetto. After the First Slaughter, he received an order to send 10-12 policemen to bury the dead. Chaim Weltman thought to himself, is it a great *mitzvah* to give Jews a proper Jewish burial, and with an emotion-laden heart that ached, and with the ardor that was his nature, he called to the policemen: 'All of us will go together to fulfill this *mitzvah* of '*Hesed Shel Emet*' And he went – he went and did not return... he was murdered together with all the policemen of the ghetto, after they had buried their brothers.

Engineer Aharon Winikov

By Dr. Sh. Press

He was born in Brisk in 1890. He graduated with excellence there from the high school, and in 1916, he was awarded a diploma in Chemical Engineering from the University of Kiev. From early childhood on, he worked in the Zionist movement, and participated as an officer at the Zionist convention in Petrograd in 1917.



Page 423: ***Engineer Aharon Winikov***

He continued his Zionist work in Southern Russia, with other like-minded Zionist workers, such as Dr. Alexander Goldstein, and others. From there, he returned to Kiev, and participated in the organization of self-defense forces during the years 1918-1921, and in 1924, he came to Baranovich as the Principal of the '*Tarbut*' Gymnasium.

Many days did not pass, and Engineer Winikov earned for himself a reputation for his involvement and work on behalf of the community in the city. Gifted with a clear eye, and a good heart, comfortable among people, and outstanding in his attitudes.

In the year 1926, he was elected as the deputy head of the city on behalf of the Jewish populace, second to this honor after the Chairman, the Lawyer, Kertzner, who held this position for a short time.

The way for Winikov as the Jewish deputy head of the city, was impeded with thorns. He was engaged with difficult and bitter opposition, and with pride and dignity, stood guard for the interests of the Jewish populace, and opposed resistance – he was successful in forming a coalition and unity.

He was active in the community organizations and institutions. He committed his whole soul to the Zionist movement, donating his time and energy for the funds. In the last years, he joined *Tzahar*, and similarly was nominated as a member of 'TOZ' and other organizations.

With the outbreak of the war, he was exiled by the Soviets to Luniniec, his wife and daughter – to the far ends of Russia. No details are available about his final years of life, and especially in the ghetto under Nazi rule.

According to unsubstantiated reports, he was killed in either in Luniniec or Brisk, during the days of deportation and extermination.

R' Eliyahu Shmuel Zakheim

By M. B.

(The Turner)

A well-known figure in Baranovich and its environs, and its reputation even reached the larger expanses of the country of Poland. His rise up the ladder of his craft was rapid, surprising, to the point of being bizarre.

He was a modest craftsman, who was a leader among his kind, a man of work that became a man of action and a man of the people who was transformed into a community advocate, a man who would approach the ministry, and the 'upper reaches' of the Polish régime, places into which a Jew practically could not set foot. He had very firm ties to the leaders of the Polish people, and could reach as far as Jozef Pilsudski. And with regard to these connections, all manner of stories and legends circulated amongst us. The most widely known was the story that, during the days of the 1905 Polish Rebellion, approximately, Pilsudski was captured and exiled to Siberia. He escaped from there, and hid himself from his Russian pursuers. He did this within the aegis of the walls of R' Eliyahu Shmuel (a matter that, in those days, was surrounded with great danger). In this manner he [sic: Pilsudski] saved his life. This boon was remembered by the highest official of Poland for always, and he granted him unimpeded access at any time, and any hour.

Regardless of the type of trouble that might befall them, the Rabbis and emissaries of all community activists from various cities, would turn to R' Eliyahu Shmuel, asking he to make an effort on their behalf in approaching the Polish authorities, to avert the severity of any proposed decree, and he was quick to come to their assistance, helping and working, most often with success. It was not only once, on Sabbaths, or Festival holidays, that he would be called in to matters of life and death, and once sent on the night of the Seder, to plead on behalf of saving the lives fo four anonymous Jews in Poland, that were sentenced to death on a trumped up charge. Thanks to his connections to Pilsudski, he was able to defer the implementation of the sentence handed down by the court, until such time that the accusation was revealed to be false.



Page 424:
A. Sh. Zakheim

His pockets were always full of certificates and letters from very senior government people, and from his mouth – came stories of miracles and wonders that were a product of reality and imagination.

As it is said: 'No man is a prophet in his own city,' and as a result he had many nay sayers in Baranovich, and those who sharply opposed him, in his mode of carry out advocacy. Despite this, he was privileged to garner significant success among we, the Jewish people, throughout the length and breadth of Poland, and especially – among the gentiles. With his tall height, healthy physique, and his long beard, he made an external impression of a highly respected Jewish Rabbi. When he came before the authorities, most of the time he would appear wrapped in his *tallit* and wearing his *Tefillin*, and offer prayers for the well-being of the country. To the high-ranking among them, he would turn with words of reproof and warning, that the essence of the survival of Poland will be in danger if there is no justice and law, and to those of lesser rank – he would threaten them that they would 'take flight' if they show the temerity to contest his word. One time, he came to plead on behalf of a group of Jewish refugees from Russia, before a Polish minister, to permit them to remain in Poland. The officer said to him: 'Rabbi Zakheim, we have enough Jews already in Poland!' Against

this, R' Eliyahu Shmuel argued: 'My dear Minister! In our Torah it is written: 'The borders of nations will be set according to the numbers of the children of Israel.' If the numbers of Jews in Poland will increase, then the borders of Poland will expand and not – contract.' And his words were positively received.

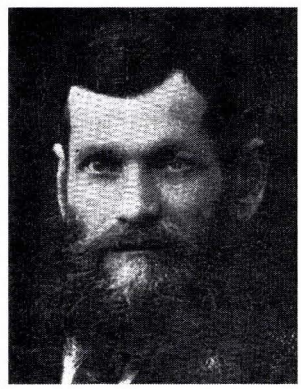
In the elections to the Polish legislature in the year 1928, he presented his candidacy as a representative to the Polish Sejm, on his own ticket, and there were several hundred Jews that voted for him, and wanted to see him as their representative. His number was ל"ו (36) and his motto was '*Hey, Hey, Juzik!*'[145]

He was a success in ordinary life as well. He raised a family of 18 souls, 11 sons and 7 daughters. The oldest of his sons – Rabbi Netanel was the Rabbi of Zaslawye. His wife, Taib'eh excelled in charity, doing mitzvot, good deeds, and was a faithful assistant earned the honor of a large funeral, in which many Rabbis and great Torah scholars eulogized him.

R' Zundl Weinger

By Dr. A. G.

A shoemaker, a simple, honest craftsman, and what great virtues he had – great spiritual virtues! He was modest and self-effacing, devoted to his work and craft – and yet everyone knew him, the short shoemaker, who sat bent over his work station, turning out useful shoes! The poor and distressed especially knew him well, being certain [of his help] if because of an illness, or physical setback, they were unable to continue with their own labors. The students of the Yeshiva knew him, and those of the 'Talmud Torah' who might be abandoned, and impoverished orphans, at whose right hand he stood, soliciting assistance for them, from every side.



Page 425:
R' Zundl Weinger

For Zundl, who has just returned from the morning prayers, and sat himself at his work station, an outlined shoe in his bosom – and suddenly there is a gentle knock at his door... his wife, Dvora, opens the door, and into this poor home, the lady *Gabbai* Zela enters, and whispers something in his ear.

He quickly leaves the house, and returns after five – or six hours; his pockets are full of coins, and over his shoulder is a basket ful of potatoes, eggs, butter, cheese, vegetables, and even slaughtered fowl... set aside for poor and downtrodden families.

He had not even had the time to rest, and here he is rushing off to the Headmaster of the Yeshiva, turning over the money that he had collected, and from there – to Dr. Nakhumowsky, with regard to the matter of the youths at the Yeshiva who are ill. During the evening hours – he rushed to the village of Grabowiec to persuade Nissan Grabowiecer to send two sacks of potatoes to the shoemaker, David Epstein, who has taken ill and is paralyzed, and his children hunger for bread...

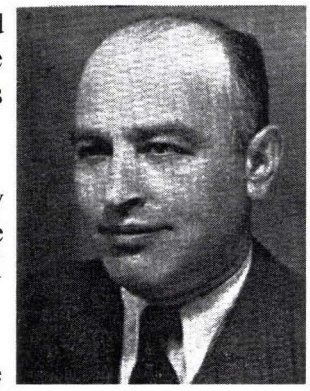
This is the way he behaved, and this was the way Zundl the Shoemaker lived.

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145 'We are a sure thing!'

Engineer Chaim Tanenbaum

By Dr. Sh. P.



Page 426: ***Engineer Chaim Tanenbaum***

He was born in 1892 in Tarnopol to his father R' Nehemiah, a scholar, *Hasid* and a merchant. He was educated with Torah study; he studied at a Yeshiva until the age of 18, and excelled both in his acuity, and breadth of knowledge, and was ordained as a Rabbi.

In time, he was swept up by the *Haskalah*, and got a high school equivalency diploma. In 1918, he was drafted into the Austrian army. At the end of the war, he completed a higher technical school, in Prague, and earned the title of Chemical Engineer, with distinction.

He turned to pedagogy, and served as a teacher of Hebrew, and history at the Epstein Gymnasium in Vilna, and then as a teacher of chemistry and physics at the Teacher's Seminary.

In 1928, he took, as his wife, Lula Rogoznicky, and settled in Baranovich, taking the position of the head of the flour mill and the factory for the production of milling stones, and milling accessories. Right alongside his many-branched activities, he dedicates a part of his time to community endeavors. Very quickly, he stands out in his undertakings, and is elected chairman of the Zionist *Histadrut* in Baranovich, and a member of the central committee of the Zionist movement in Poland. There, he serves as the member from the town of Baranovich.

He is a community activist of moderate height. He strongly and proudly acts as a defender of the interests of the Jewish residents. He performs on behalf of the national funds, and is active in all the community and social institutions.

At the beginning of 1939, he visited the Holy Land, and decided to discontinue his business affairs and settle there, but the [outbreak of] the war disrupted his intent, just as he was getting ready to make *aliyah*...

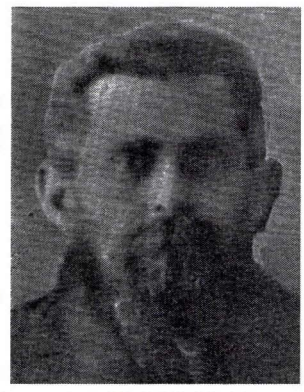
During the first days after the outbreak of the war, he was placed at the head of the regional defense. With the invasion of the Russians into Baranovich, he went over to Vilna, and joined his family that had gone there ahead of him. After a short while, he received permission to make *aliyah*, and by roundabout means, reached the Holy Land in 1941.

On 3 Shevat 5708[January 24, 1947] his life was suddenly cut short.

The personification of a dedicated activist of indefatigable spirit, thoroughly grounded in both the classical and modern Hebrew literature, oriented to do good charitable deeds, and assume the burden of multiple undertakings.

R' Yitzhak Turetsky

By M. B.



P. 426: ***R' Yitzhak Turetsky***

He stood at the head of the Jewish community in Baranovich for a number of years. He was the chairman of the community council, and the leader of the *Volksbank*. He was a Hasid, and a follower of the Enlightenment, alert, learned, a man with clean

hands, and of integrity. He served the community with commitment and faithfulness, and with great responsibility.

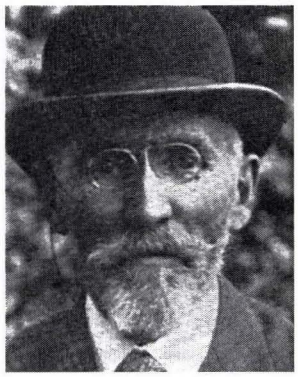
He was alone in the group, and was aloof from those about him. He was difficult on the outside, but good on the inside. He had suffered quite a bit, and had experienced travail, he found a refuge for his spirit in the world of the book, and the *Tanakh.* He conducted the affairs of the community with understanding and focus, and he carried out his work with diligence. He always strove for a consensus understanding, and a responsible execution in the interest of the public. In meetings where decisions needed to be taken, he was focused, and stayed on topic, and made an effort to discourage irrelevant discussion. His sharp retorts would bound the situation to his advantage, and his cutting jokes – accompanied by a cockeyed look, would forestall all the conflict and dispute in a situation. He was very much concerned about community matters, and especially about his funds. As the leader of the *Volksbank* he refrained from making commitments to issue loans. His replies were always carefully weighed, even being negative, so as not to permit the slightest possibility of misleading the person who came to him for assistance, and yet, afterwards, he would attempt to find ways to help the person who was distressed.

Even the very religious among the Hasidim were among those who voted for him. They knew, that community affairs demanded the attention of a man of discretion, cleverness and skill, a man of integrity that was responsible.

R' Yaakov Judkowsky

By M. B.

The image of the venerable activist R' Yaakov Judkowsky that is before my eyes, is one of constant movement, immersed in the concerns of the community.



Page 427: ***R' Yaakov Judkowsky***

He came to Baranovich at a young age – and proceeded to dedicate his life to it. For approximately fifty years, he stood at the center of community life and represented it: as the leader of the craftsmen, as a social and philanthropic individual who brought a sense of force into the various houses of study, and into the community council.

Gifted, and measured, he did not engage in conversation and casuistry. He was a reserved man, and a man of action.

In his time, when the building of the Great *Bet HaMedrash* was delayed by dispute, he bestirred himself and established the *Bet HaMedrash* of the craftsmen, '*Poalei Tzedek*.'

And when the elderly Rabbi passed away, leaving behind a large family without the four walls around them to support a roof, he was motivated to construct a large house for the Rabbi's family, a house that also was at the disposal of the community.

And when the cemetery became neglected – he looked after the surrounding fence, the planting of a row of trees, and the construction of a large stone building for use in the purification ritual for the bodies of the deceased.

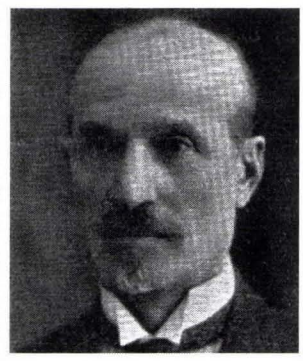
During the period of economic depression between the two world wars – he was one of the prime movers and founders of the '*Gemilut Hesed*' ('*Beyt Lekhem*' looked after the hungry).

In the '*Pinkas Gemilut Hesed*' of Baranovich (which appeared at the end of 1936 edited by S [hlomo] Foxman הי"ד), in the obituary at the time of his death 4 Heshvan 5696, October 20, 1936, among other things, it says:

> 'It is impossible to describe how great this loss is, for the many community institutions, in which R' Yaakov Judkowsky participated, especially the *Gemilut Hesed*. He was the 'Pillar of *Gemilut Hasadim*' the strongest column of *Gemilut Hesed*, and the living spirit of its entire activity. He was the single, most active member of *Gemilut Hesed*, from its establishment up to his death. He was one of the original founders, and honorary member, a member of the leadership committee for the entire 10 year fo the existence of *Gemilut Hesed*. Up to 1933, he was a Vice-President, and from then on, he was the President. At almost every general meeting, he was elected with the largest amount of votes, and in almost every audit inspection, whether it was from a JeKoPo delegation, or a local audit commission, thanks were expresses for what Judkowsky had accomplished. When we see the awesome accomplishments and support that is offered to the poor Jewish populace, in Baranovich, by *Gemilut Hesed*, we have to credit it all to his account, and to his initiative. That is because he was the initiator and the director of all activities and undertakings by the *Gemilut Hesed*; Nothing was done in *Gemilut Hesed* in which Judkowsky did not do his part. Whether fund raising, posting of bonds, actions to redeem delinquent loans, 'the propaganda month,' a people's campaign, he always stood at the forefront in all of these activities, and shepherded them to success. When delegations from the community and communal institutions had to go and get subsidies for the treasury, he was never missing from the delegation. He also represented *Gemilut Hesed* in a variety of social initiatives and committees, such as in 'The United Committee for the Issues of Jewish Workers,' where he was an executive member and treasurer. It is rare to encounter a public servant that was so dedicated with heart and soul, as was the case with Judkowsky. A day did not go bay that he didn't drop into the *Gemilut Hesed* office. Over the years, he would involve himself during the time when loans were being allocated, interesting himself in every detail. In addition, Judkowsky was active in other institutions such as *'Hesed shel Emet,'* and *'Beit Lekhem.'* His accomplishments, as the Head *Gabbai* of the '*Hevra Kadisha*' are well-known overall. Thanks to him, our local cemetery has a suitable fence around it, good looking pathways, and a large stone-built house for the purification of the remains of the deceased. In the last hears, he was also a Trustee of the community council, and even here, he did not forget *Gemilut Hesed*. At the forum of budget meetings, he would push through a position for the treasury. It is therefore understandable why so great a sorrow has been elicited by his passing from the entire Jewish populace in the city. An unusually large number of people participated in his funeral.'

R' Yitzhak Jasinowsky

By Dr. A. G.



Page 429:
Y. Jasinowsky

There are ordinary people to be found, who are not particularly bright in any way, and they don't carry themselves haughtily, and do not aspire to 'fame.' Despite this, among them are found those to whom a nobility is attached that makes them rise 'above the masses.' People of this sort are workers who are lauded for their unique dedication. Yitzhak Jasinowsky, who passed away in 5684 [1934] was such a man. He was an ordinary man, an ordinary Jew, and ordinary Zionist. He was a storekeeper whose business was selling knitted goods and outerwear coverings to the village peasantry. It was a work that was simple in its essence, and yet despite this, this man was great in his own unique area – in his limitless commitment to *Keren Kayemet L'Israel*, which was the core of his Zionist life, to support Hebrew

culture, and the *Halutz* movement. All of these activities, as important that they were individually, were not enough of a challenge to satisfy him – even without the work in the area of *Keren Kayemet L'Israel*. Here he is, during the time of haggling with the '*goyim*' over some piece of goods – and he suddenly pulls out his watch and turns to his son: please handle the customers of about an hour, I have a more pressing matter to attend to. And even while he is talking, he enters his 'drawing room,' in which four lads from the youth Histadrut were waiting, emptying out the full [charity] boxes – and Jasinowsky's eye flash with joy. 'The effort has succeeded' he whispers to himself – and he begins counting, one penny after another, one gold coin after another – he counts it once, twice, three times – 'yes, yes, – 87 Gulden, no evil eye intended...' Jasinowsky chats up the boys with a surfeit of affection, to prove to them, that the *mitzvah* of serving *Keren Kayemet*, 'outweighs all the others in the Zionist canon combined!'



Page 429: Picture (no caption)

He yearned to make *aliyah* and to work the land 'literally with his hands.' He had many run-ins with his family because of this – but he prevailed. He made *aliyah* to the Land, expended an immense amount of energy to get settled – and did not succeed... who paid attention to his legacy of *Keren Kayemet* endeavors in a tiny village?

Jasinowsky returned to Baranovich broken in body, and financially ruined, but undaunted in spirit. He made *aliyah* a number of times – without success – and remained a *Halutz* in his heart and soul. He did not complain, not about the difficult conditions, not about the leaders, those in power, and not about the land brokers, who in large measure sabotaged his undertakings....quite the opposite – with great fervor, that was truly exceptional, he would tell about the give-and-take, the pride in national work, about the *Halutzim*, Tel-Aviv, and of the Hebrew [language] that had been restored to life –- just not about his own misfortune... he would glide over that in complete silence. And from the time he returned to Baranovich – he didn't know how to rest! He was not satisfy with taking after all of the many pitfalls – and once again took hold of his personal 'holy grail' – the *Keren Kayemet L'Israel*, and did not leave it for a minute! Again he committed himself – with a second burst of energy – to fund raising, 'Flower Days' and to long conversations with the Histadrut leadership and youth, on the importance of the Fund.

He once put the burden on the coordinator G. To speak about Keren Kayemet L'Israel at the Great Synagogue in nearby Mys. This speech was a 'paid presentation,' and after returning to Baranovich, he asked for his money for the presentation... 'What?' – Jasinowsky called out angrily – 'You want to be paid for speaking on behalf of Keren Kayemet? I will give you twenty gulden from my own pocket – but you will not touch the funds of Keren Kayemet' – do not profane that which is sacred..!

Dr. Moshe Jasinowsky

Dr. Sh. P.

A doctor, and a community activist, he was born in 1887, into an observant family in Ljahavičy, which is near Baranovich. He was raised in an atmosphere of Torah, but even while he was still young, a desire to matriculate was aroused in him. He left the home of his family, and went to Slonim, attended an elementary school, and was facile in the study of the Russian language and its literature. From here, he went off to Warsaw, completing the curriculum for a high school equivalency diploma. Afterwards, he graduated as a Dentist.

During The First World War, he served as a dentist in the Russian army, was captured and taken to Germany. During the years he spent in Germany, he improved his knowledge of the German language, and its literature. In 1919, he returned to Poland, and settled in Baranovich.

The young Dr. Jasinowsky immediately earned a good name in our city, both as an outstanding dentist, and as a man of the community. As one of the better doctors in the area, he married Mikhla the daughter of Yaakov Szymszelewicz, one of the original builders of the city. It is from that time that the flowering of his medical work and community activity sprung.

In 1929, he was elected to the community council, and stood at its head until 1933. He earned much admiration and general recognition. He was perceptive enough to find the 'golden road' between different parties, and opposing opinions.

He was a man of the people who bestowed an abundance of affection on the average working Jewish man, and fought for their interests. He was an active member of the 'Manual Trades Union' and one of its heads. He was elected by them, in 1924-26 to the city council. He was a faithful representative of the community who excelled in his firm and dignified appearance.

Like his brother Yitzhak, he was also a Zionist in heart and soul, and dedicated part of both his energy and effort on behalf of the Zionist movement and its national funds. In 1937, he visited the Land, and facilitated the acquisition of land for his own aliyah, but did not accomplish this goal. The war tied him down in the middle of his preparations.

He continued both his dental and community work even in the Ghetto, and on that ultimately bitter day, on July 2, 1942, as a result of an 'aktion,' against all the Jewish doctors, he was taken outside the city, and there he met his death with an additional 12 colleagues who were doctors.

He was a high level person, dedicated, as a man of science and a man of the people. He was beloved, and in harmony with his fellow man, a man of many accomplishments, and committed to the resurrection of his people and his Land.

Dr. Yaakov Cohen

Dr. A. G.

He still stands before me, as if he were alive – with the pleasantness of his face, with the perpetual smile on his lips, and with the look of his eyes, that emanate broad knowledge and extraordinary understanding. I still can hear the ring of his pleasant remarks, as he explains to me, with an answer to a question that I had asked him, to tell me the difference between the outlook of Tolstoy, on private and public responsibility, and the conservative concepts of social justice of Dostoevsky. I listen to, and wonder, at the explanation of a youth of fourteen, and the reaction gladdens me and arouses in me [the thought]: 'What good fortune I have that I was privileged to educate a student like this!"



Yankl'eh Cohen left me. At the end of the year, he left the town, traveled to the

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Picture (no caption)

'Jerusalem of Lithuania'[146] and enrolled in the Jewish Gymnasium. Fate brought me to Vilna after a year and a half – to manage the trial of some young Zionists from Ljahavičy, who were seized by the régime for the 'infraction' of distributing bills and stamps of the *Keren Kayemet L'Israel*. Of course, I visited with my Yankl'eh. As it happened there was a general assembly of student at the Gymnasium at that time, and as if struck with awe, I listened to Yankl'eh's presentation – he was then fifteen years old – on the Return to Zion, on pioneering, and on the lofty mission that the people of Israel are charged with carrying out in the immediate year ahead, with the end of the World War!!

We took a stroll for about two hours in the thickly wooded forest of Zakret. His conversation now flowed with greater ease. He told me, in a flowing Russian tongue, about his studies at the Gymnasium. I learned that he had involved himself in the work of the 'Young Zionists.' He completed his studies in Judaism, and especially in the new, modern Hebrew literature. He learned, and he taught, was involved, and drew his comrades into the idea of Zionist endeavor.

With the move of the Kagan Gymnasium to Yekaterinoslav, Yankl'eh went there as well, after receiving a graduation diploma subsequent to passing the government examinations, and he settled in Kharkov, was accepted as a student in the university there, and with this, was registered as a student in the pedagogy curriculum of Kahanstam. He was an active worker in the dissemination of Hebrew [language] and its culture. He was very active in the '*Tze'irei Tzion*' movement. He participated as a delegate in its conclaves. In 1921, Yaakov Cohen came to Baranovich, and found a broad platform for work: He established a '*Tze'irei Tzion*' organization, Hebrew lessons for refugees, etc. At the beginning of 1922, he traveled to Berlin – in order to enter the faculty of medicine of the university there. It was here that he became cognizant of the poets Schneur and Tchernikhowsky, and the editors of '*Rezviat'* and published articles in it, on Tchernikhowsky, about Zionist issues affecting the masses, and other things. Tchernikhowsky praised him and, drew him near as much as possible. Yaakov's efforts to get accepted into the university came to naught because of anti-Semitism. In the meantime, he devoted himself to the Zionist endeavor, and would meet with the emissaries of the 'Zionist Committee, who worked in the German capitol and raised funds. In 1923, he went to Jena, and was accepted into the faculty of medicine there. and in 1928, he completed his course of study, and was awarded the title of Doctor of Medicine. From Jena, he traveled to Vilna, and successfully stood for his qualifying examination in 1929m and then went over to Baranovich, and began to practice medicine with great success, and even more as an activist in the field of Zionist socialism. His activity reached a pinnacle. He was the Chairman of *'Agudat Poalei Tzion.*' Twice a week, he would lecture in the auditorium of this organization, and on Friday evening, he would visit the house where the *Halutzim* resided, taking care of local issues having to do with income and expense. He participated in an exceptional manner, in the meetings of the council of the *Keren Kayemet L'Israel*, *Keren HaYesod*, and others. He would frequently lecture at the offices of the youth group 'Freiheit' and with pioneering zeal, he organized evening lessons of study for the '*HaKhayal HaOveyd*,' and even he, who guarded his energies, would frequently travel as an emissary, on behalf of the head office of the *Keren Kayemet L'Israel* to the more prominent cities. He never spoke disparagingly about the extremists in either the right or left wing. 'Even discussions on the purification of the sacred neither elevate nor denigrate' – he would say. It was not once that he would leave the sick that came to him, in order to deal with people in the waiting room, promising he would be back in 'under an hour'... and the doctor would then be found, after looking for him, in the '*HeHalutz'* auditorium, '*Freiheit*,' '*HaKhayal HaOveyd.*' He would return to the sick people waiting for him, asking for their pardon, that 'a critical matter had detained him for longer than anticipated!.. and in fact, most of the patients were dedicated Zionists themselves....

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[146] A metaphor applied to Vilna.

In 1935[147], he was selected as a representative to the contentious Congress in Prague. When he returned, he called for an intensification of the effort.[148] The work in the Youth organization expanded noticeably. In the summer of 1937, he made aliyah to the Land of Israel. I encountered him in the office of the working committee of *Histadrut*. He advised me that he had it in mind to settle down as a resident doctor in one of the *Kibbutzim*. He had been in The Land for three months, touring its length and breadth, but fate intended otherwise. From one of th letters sent by his family in Baranovich, he was notified that he needed to return to Poland and to settle his own personal affairs somewhat. Yaakov took leave of his brothers: Aharon, Chaim, David, Moshe, and his mother, with tears in his eyes, and with a festive assurance that 'I will come a second time, – — – and he resided in Baranovich for about another two years, working as a doctor, a Zionist and community activist, and with special intensity on matters of an idealistic inclination, until the second war of bloodletting broke out. With the capture of Baranovich by the Russians, his fate was cut off. He was sent by the régime to Zhetl as a 'primary provocateur' and they incarcerated him, his wife and infant, in a cramped room, and he was able to support himself only with great difficulty. It was here that the hand of the murdering Germans attached itself to the members of his family. After the Germans murdered his wife and infant child, among the larger general Jewish population in Zhetl, he was driven out with the remnant of the Jewish 'criminals' to the ghetto in Novogrudok. Here, he went through all of the tribulations and frightful experiences that befell all of those Jews. Many of them were taken out for execution, many died of hunger, cold, and the cruelty of the wicked enemy. Very few survived. Dr. Yaakov Cohen persuaded his comrades in the ghetto to dig an underground tunnel as a way to flee for their lives. His comrades listened to him; in the course of several weeks, a long tunnel was dug. Yaakov and his comrades successfully traversed the tunnel, but Yaakov was stopped on the way, upon exiting the tunnel, when he was hit by a bullet fired by the murderers, and he was killed.

R' Zim'l Mintz

By Amama Melitz



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His parents, Benjamin and Leah Mintz, had a large piece of property in the Minsk Province. They were wealthy, and known to be of a charitable disposition; on Sabbaths and Festival Holidays, they would gather in many of the poor to their property, entire families. And my grandmother would prepare Sabbath delicacies, and a large chamber for lodging. She would receive everyone with a radiant countenance.

My father was a talented man. He received a re3ligious and traditional education. He got married at the age of 19, and continued his studies. He took over a tenant farming franchise called Adukhovščina which he got from my grandfather. My

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147 History records the year of this event as 1933.

148 Eighteenth Congress – Prague, 1933. The Congress met under the impact of three major developments:

1. The advent of the Nazis to power in Germany;
2. An inflationary economy in Palestine, and finally:
3. The assassination of the Labor leader and head of the Jewish Agency Political Department, Chaim Arlozorov.

Mutual recriminations between the Labor movement——united in Palestine as Mapai in 1930——and the Revisionists reached new heights. A committee of inquiry was established to investigate the murder. This was the first Congress where the Labor movement outnumbered the supporters of General Zionism.

grandfather then went over to a franchise by the name of Szylowiec, not far form Adukhovščina. He schooled my father in this type of undertaking.

And lo, the ire of new decrees leapt up, and after many judgements, my grandfather lost his franchise. In 1892, we uprooted ourselves and went to Baranovich.

At that time, Baranovich was a new, out of the way town. My parents rented a residence from the Graf, and established a large business in writing materials. Their principal concern was the education of their children. They brought in Hebrew teachers, and also teachers of foreign languages, and a Russian language teacher and dancing every Friday.

My father was alert to all community issues. He organized the balebatim and built the 'Great Synagogue' and was the first *Gabbai.* As one of the first of the lovers of Zion, he helped to organize the Zionists, and with his help they established the reading room ('*Chitalniya*'), and he served as its head. In 1894, he was selected to be a representative to the Congress in Minsk. He was active in all manner of local things, and the *Talmud Torah.* He stood beside the craftsmen, and helped them construct their own synagogue, Despite the fact that he was an observant Jew, he was warmly disposed towards the conflict against the Czarist police.

My father was also involved in forest products, and lumber, and he had access to officials. He would travel considerably, and all ways were open to him.

My mother was a 'Woman of Valor,' who looked after the education of her sons, and conducted the affairs of her household wisely.

In 1904, the thought came to my father to leave Russia and emigrate to America. In 1906, our entire family went there.

After a short time in America, my father also found there a broad field for his endeavors. He joined the editor of '*B'nai Tzion*' and his hands were full of Zionist work, and also community affairs.

In November 1931, my parents decided to make aliyah. My father felt himself to be fortunate, as if the years of his youth had returned. He returned to the study of the Talmud, and did this diligently on a daily basis. To our great pain, his good fortune in this respect did not last very long: after three years, my mother passed away in 1934, (11 Tevet 5695) and after three months he contracted a lingering disease, and died in 15 Menachem Av 5696 (1936). Both were interred on the Mount of Olives that they had arranged for themselves while they were still alive.

Zim'l and Baylah Mintz left behind sons and daughters, and grandchildren in America, excepting Amama Melitz, who came to Israel in 1935, to settle there. The Oldest daughter, Esther Aberson, was among the founders of the 'Poalei Tzion' party in America, and for a fixed time was also a member of the central committee of this party; in addition to this, she is active to this day in the 'Pioneer Women' organization and participates frequently as a representative in its national conventions. She takes a large role in the works of the *Keren Kayemet L'Israel* and others. She is planning to come to Israel soon, to settle here.

R' Mordechai Mansky

By Sh. Mansky

Since the time that *The Abrogator* descended on the House of Israel in Poland, and on the city of my youth, Baranovich – the image of my father stands before me as if he were still alive, he who dedicated his entire life, amidst self-effacement and modesty, to the issues of the community and its residents. There was no area that was connected to community life, in which he was not active. I would be awestruck at this vibrant connection that he had with the public, which was not motivated by receiving any recognition, or any public encouragement. His relatives and friends not only on one occasion, would criticize him to his face, and advised him to find steady work, but he pushed away all such advice as this.

He would habitually say – I am not in pursuit of pleasures, and making a living will be with God's help.

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From my earliest days, I recollect my father in Baranovich and at its center – his bookcase, in which there were volumes of an encyclopedia, collections and ordinances about the laws of the land, being in correspondence, and the conduct of bookkeeping. In my memory, one particular bookcase is etched into my memory, which contained the archive: a municipal archive on a small scale. My father conserved every scrap of paper, picture, and volume. What was in this archive?

I remember the colorful notices of the municipal dramatic club, of which my father was one of the founders. Notices of the performance of Goldfadn's '*Mireleh Efros*,' '*Two Kuni Lemels* '*The Selling of Joseph*,' written in both Russian and Yiddish. Agendas, each to their own kind, tickets, invitations and pictures. My father would lovingly pore over each and every notice, incidentally, humming a folk tune by Goldfadn. Pictures of the players aroused a unique curiosity in me. Among the others, I remember Goldschmid (the owner of the bookstore on the Pilsudski and Szeptycki streets, his son is in Kibbutz Dan) who was one of the elders of the city stage in Baranovich.

However, the crown of the volumes stashed away in his archive, were those connected to the stay of the writer *Sholom Aleichem* in Baranovich. Especially guarded were the handwritten version of the *Sholom Aleichem* story '*Tsuzayt und Tsushprayt*,' that the writer worked over into a play, when he was in our city, for a premier performance of our drama club. There was a picture there, of *Sholom Aleichem* and his wife, and his family, and a picture of *Sholom Aleichem* that was sent to my father's address, as a memento from Nervi in Italy. close to the pictures, the cursive and pleasing handwritten letters of *Sholom Aleichem*, that he would send to my father's address after he left Baranovich.

The writer, Y. Y. Trunk, published a monograph in America about *Sholom Aleichem*, and in it there is instructive material on his sojourn in Baranovich. Most of this material was supplied by my father.

*

My father loved books. To this day, I can remember the order of the books and their indices. They were not only books of renown, but books of life to my father, for the entire length of the book. My father was no lawyer, and did not study law at any advanced schools, yet he was very facile with the civil laws of the land and their demands, in all their detail and specific points. Hundreds of Jews would literally march in step to my father's house. The 'Учорни Еврей,' (the learned Jew) and he would give advice, help, and adjudicate with a generous hand in questions that were difficult and complex.

These were the first years of [the newly created republic of] Poland. Polish citizenship was being granted, by law, solely on the basis of considering the lists of residents. During the years of the war, these lists, in general, were lost, and the right to citizenship was compromised ,for hundreds of thousands of Jews who had lived in the city and its environs for many generations. Hundreds of families would run among the government offices and those of lawyers, and were compelled to wait for years for the decision if the administrative high court. These formal arrangements, and the retention of lawyers all were connected with many outlays of money, and only the well-to-do among the populace could bear these costs. And what was a craftsman, a freshly started merchant, or a worker, who does not have these sorts of means at hand, to defray these many costs to achieve Polish citizenship, do?

Hundreds of Jews, residents of the city, were helped by my father's service. For a small price to those of modest means, and for free to those with no money at all – he would arrange the citizenship, a thing that seasoned lawyers put a great deal of effort into, mostly without success.

During the Czarist régime, my father served as the recording clerk in the administrative office of the census, in one of the towns near to Baranovich. Many real glimpses and impressions of that office remained with him. My father would certify every Jew that was in need of citizenship with a certificate that was signed in accordance with all specifications, from this Russian-Czarist office, testifying to whom it may concern, and entered into the list of those who were counted in the Polish town. This certificate, which was properly executed, my father would also yellow-age it, so it would look like it was older, and it also served as a central piece of legal evidence for receiving Polish citizenship.

Hundreds of the residents in the city and its environs got their citizenship in this manner. My father would certify all those in need, with a certificate of this sort, and did so generously, and not for profit – despite the great danger. He stopped only after the government had been inundated with many certificates of this sort, and suspected their authenticity, and launched an investigation to discover where they were coming from.

*

There were many who marched to my father's house in those years, seeing as how they were, especially in 1923, when he founded an office called 'The Office for Requests, Translations, and Typewritten Documents.'

I recall that office, located at the corners of the Szeptycki and Ulanska streets. there were two rooms, a number of typewriters, a shelf of books, and father – orchestrating the work. The shelf was the length of one wall in the first room. I hardly the contents of the books, but I remember their order: those with the cover of the practical laws from the day the Polish Republic was re-established, collections of verdicts and civil law, textbooks in correspondence and bookkeeping. The tax laws, in according to their category, newspapers, and other things.

I remember the Jewish people entering and leaving my father's office.

For the Jewish person, seeking his relatives in America, my father would prepare a letter, with suitable reference to the notices that appeared in daily newspapers in the United States. A second person might come with regards to obtaining a passport to travel outside of the country, a third, with regard to a birth certificate for his son, a fourth, a craftsman, the chairman of the carpenter's cooperative that had been established just recently, and wanted to hear from my father all of the details of the regulations pertaining to what is required of cooperatives in greater Poland.

Tens of Jewish people would stream to the doors of my father's office, and would pose all manner of issues with no end to the type of issues involved. Here is a storekeeper, who was detained, and his store was open on

Sunday (something forbidden according to law), and he is looking for a loophole in the law to see if he can get out of paying a fine; here is a worker in a factory, that did not pay him the stipend he was entitled to from the government medical plan, and he wants to submit his claim to the relevant institutions. And my father listens with his great patience, and pages through the massive law books, looking for the answer to the various questions.

But I do recollect that the core of the issues my father dealt with in his office, had to do with matters of taxation by the government. These were the days of the 'Grabski Era' named for the Polish Minister of Finance of those years, who was quick to levy taxes and charges on the Jewish populace. The computation of the amount of tax was in the hands of the government offices, and these diligently sought to block or undermine the fortune of the merchants. The clarification of each of these taxes, according to their category, he concluded with positive thoroughness.

My father, who was a seasoned and experienced accountant, delved immediately into the depths of the treasury regulations. Mounds of textbooks on accounting were piled up in his office, and he would slither his way through them, and find interpretations to lighten the impact of the law. And the merchants aw as their only remedy, to be able to prove, on the basis of the accounting books, and the balance sheet, that there is no practical accounting to be made. The presentation of the relevant arguments, in numerical form, and the generation of a balance sheet – this was the principal preoccupation of my father.

And always, even here – his principal aid was rendered to 'The simple Jewish people,' mostly the inexperienced merchants, because the wealthy would largely succeed in circumventing the rules by paying off the treasury officials.

To this day, the source of my father's success in this area of endeavor has not become clear to me. Did it consist of his thorough knowledge of the details of accounting, or the knowledge of the laws of the treasury in depth, or his command of the language of the country, or the ring of his family name that was so typically ordinary? Whether one way, or another, he was very well received by treasury officials, and the tenor of his considered advice was acceptable in the ears of those who were appointed to compute taxes, in each of their categories.

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The May 1926 change, breathed some happiness into the hearts of the Jews, who saw in the accession of Pilsudski, a sign of the cancellation of the reaction, and a bulwark against anti-Semitism.

In 1927, my father came up with the idea of publishing a regular newspaper in the city. The idea rapidly acquired meat on the skeleton. The sole printing house capable of assuming this burden, was the printing house of Shabrinsky, on the main road. May father did not have the slightest thought about its commercial potential, in approaching this matter, I can still remember the negotiation that took place between my father and the owner of the printing house, who wanted an assurance that the newspaper will be able to support itself. I also recall the difficulties in the assembly of the promissory notes to secure the costs associated with publishing the newspaper for its first several weeks.

My father raised the substantial resources on his own. After a short amount of preparatory work, the first edition appeared of the pioneering newspaper of Baranovich – '*Baranovicher Leben*:' A non-partisan weekly and in fact, it was my father who carried the work of the newspaper on his own shoulders. In the first months, he personally was the editor, the one who put it to bed, and the publisher, the business manager, the publicity and subscription department. It was only after several months, when the newspaper had settled into its groove, and the public was convinced of its utility, that others joined to work on the paper, among them Dr. Press,

Kaplinsky, Garfinkel and others. But the business and management side of the paper, was at first taken up with financial matters, and my father dealt with it, however unpleasant it was, first out of a sense of public obligation, and a 'passion for the thing' that was deeply sunk into his blood.

What was the form of the paper?

On the first page, there were announcements of engagements, wedding, births, and good wishes, obituaries, messages of condolence, commercial notices, and the notices of various organizations. The fees charged for this was done according to the limited capacity of this page, which determined the revenue of the paper, whose income was, as usual, from the charge for these entries, and not from sales and distribution.

On the second page – the inside – was the lead article on the issues of the day, discussions of municipal questions, and impressions of the life in the surrounding towns: Kryvošyn, Mys, Ljahaviči, Hancaviči, Stoubcy, Haradziščа, Kleck, Mir, etc. Under the line, there usually appeared a feuilleton by Kaplinsky, who was at variance with the 'city father,' and took a local view of the news happening around the world. On the third page, overviews of the meetings of the municipal council, the community, the unions of craftsmen, etc. The fourth page – the last one – a chronology taken from the life of the city, and its environs, and again, notices of good wishes, and others.

The newspaper would appear on Friday, and early in the morning, it was distributed around the city, and sent by mail to subscribers outside the city. In the fulness of time, it became an asset to the city, and it was hard to conceive of Baranovich without the '*Baranovicher Leben*.'

After my father's pioneering initiative, a second newspaper was established in the city, '*Baranovicher Vokh*.' My father has neither the capacity nor the desire to compete with this second paper. Seeing that there was not a base to support two newspapers in the city, he decided that his role as a pioneer had been completed – and he ceased publication of his newspaper.

From that time on, different newspapers appeared in Baranovich: '*Baranovicher Vort, Baranovicher Tog*,' etc.

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In addition to the regular work in which my father engaged year 'round, he had a special activity, which was the engagement with the rest of his energy, for which he had a special love, and this was – The Volunteer Fire-fighters Brigade' in Baranovich.

And so, from what time on did my father attach himself to this group – it is hard for me to establish this. According the photographs in the archive that remain, I would estimate that he was among its founders, still in the Czarist era, and he was a loyal member for his entire life. In the last years, he was a member of the group's steering committee, an instructor in some subject matters, active in the district committee etc.

What was it that tied my father to the Fire-Fighters group, to which he dedicated all his might and should, and all his spare time? I think, it was the sense of being a volunteer that pervaded this group, that brought together Jewish people from all walks of life, to confront the dangers of fire – this was the thing that captured his heart.

On the anniversary year of the Fire Fighters, a publication was produced at my father's expense, that contained the history of the group. The publication appeared in both Yiddish and Polish.

In the second half of the thirties, during the period when there was a rise in reaction and anti-Semitism – the volunteer firemen were replaced by salaried people, and the leadership was changed, and put in Christian hands. During this period, is when my father parted from the group.

*

In the pocket of most of the residents of the city, during the 30's, it was possible to find a small booklet, in a dusky cover – 'A Guide to the City of Baranovich' – in Polish. This was a municipal annual guide that my father published, and at his expense, during the course of three consecutive years.

What was in the guide?

At the beginning there were a Catholic then a Russian Orthodox and then a Jewish calendar. After that, there was a detailed listing of all the offices, organizations, addresses, and the hours of operation, etc. A second section had a list of all the secular institutions, schools, and professionals that were available, and after this an historical and statistical overview of the city, its status, population, means of making a living, boundaries, etc. In the middle of one of these annual publications, my father published a history of Baranovich (which subsequently appeared in a special publication at the 50th anniversary of the city). The low price of the guide (1 zloty) made it accessible to everyone. But in the eyes of the authorities, this endeavor of my father's was seen to be trouble, and in secret, a cabal was formed against him. This plot was deeply etched into my memory, because it was connected to an event that aroused terror in our family.

The story goes like this:

In concert with the publication of the guide, my father would hand out questionnaires to all government offices. similar questionnaires were also sent to the military units stationed in the city. And it was here, that whoever wanted to subvert the publication of the 'Guide' mixed in. In conjunction with the law of the land, that prohibited the disclosure of military secrets, the investigating judge in the city was transfixed the calumny, that the editor of the 'Guide' – my father – using this subterfuge, was revealing military secrets, to the enemy in the East. It is not necessary to say a great deal, about what happened, upon hearing accusations of this sort.

I still can recall that rushed Friday afternoon, when the regular and secret police surrounded our house, and broke into the interior. Under the direction of the inspecting judge, a very detailed and thorough search was conducted. There was not a piece of furniture that was not opened, no garment that wasn't opened up. My father, even though he reacted to all events of this type dispassionately, did not hide either his tears or his fear. The investigating judge, who knew my father for years, from the time he was active in the community, and as the editor of a local newspaper – suddenly 'forgot' everything... I remember when they were searching in the table drawers, notebooks of lists were found, and in them were summaries of speeches I gave ,as a teacher in the *Histadrut's 'HaShomer HaTza'ir'*

– What is this? The inspecting judge asked.

My father explained the contents of the lists. – So, as the father is active in public life, so is the son – interesting...' the inspecting judge elaborated mockingly...

The search, as you can imagine, did not reveal anything suspicious, and a number of weeks afterwards, a notice arrived that canceled and nullified the suspicions. My father was not deterred, and continued to publish the 'Guide' even in the year after this. He stopped only when he was appointed to be a certified accountant, because of the commercial and administrative work involving the government, and he went over to occupy himself in this profession.

*

I have provided a resume of isolated activities in which my father engaged in, who was entirely dedicated to the city and its needs. In all of these undertakings, as was said, it was not for any personal gain. out of a deep inner feeling to do what is needed for the public.

I left him at the end of 1938, and he was planning, in the future, to bring out a substantial collection about the city and its environs, on the basis of the substantial amount of material that had accumulated with him. While still under Soviet occupation, I continued to receive letters from him, and he was again, faithfully engaged in dealing with community needs. He was appointed by the Soviets as the 'Голобух' (Chief Accountant), and was preparing to travel to Moscow in connection with straightening out balance sheets, etc.

And who would have thought, that in a short while, *The Abrogator* would come down on him, together with all the other fellow Jews in Baranovich?

Dr. Aryeh Nakhumowsky

By Dr. A. G.



Page 438: ***Dr. Aryeh Nakhumowsky***

His father, who excelled in scholarship and piety, educated his talented son in the lap of a distilled Judaism, and provided him with outstanding *melamdim* and teachers. Even during the time of his education at the gymnasium, he did not neglect Hebrew literature: he was eager to focus on the writers of our period, having inherited an important Hebrew library, and would browse through it in his spare time. He was drawn to national Zionism from its inception. He was active in the movement and its funds, especially in '*Keren HaYesod.*' He abhorred those who assimilated. He expressed his allegiance to the labor movement, even if he was not an actual member.

As a physician, he revealed an interest in the establishment of those institutions that promoted good health, for those who were ill with tuberculosis. He was an active member of 'TOZ,' and because of his efforts the large sanatorium in Navael'nja was erected, for treatment of those suffering from tuberculosis.

Also, his involvement with 'ORT' was not small. He carried on an exchange of correspondence with its leadership and founders. He was a community activist of wonder. With the establishment in Baranovich of the fellowship, '*Oneg Shabbat*' – he lent his hand here as well. He would lecture here, periodically, on issues pertaining to sanitation. The writer of these columns was once surprised to hear his lecture on the extent of medical wisdom in the *Talmud.*

He would take no fee from teachers and *melamdim* who were sick, or from working people who had become impoverished, and others. Beside the house of the dentist Berman, there lived, in a spare, dark dwelling, the shoemaker from Ljahavičy – David Epstein, who was sick and harried. Nakhumowsky would visit him, and take care of him on a daily basis without pay. This was related at one of the community municipal meetings.

His life was not without its own set of tragic incidents: the premature death of his father, the illness of his outstanding brother – the barrenness of his wife. Even his adopted daughter, a young woman of eighteen, who was raised and nurtured in his tiny house – was ensnared in a martyr's death, like her stepfather, and she too, deflected the proposal of the German officer to let her (temporarily) live. There, before her eyes, stood the shining presence of her steadfast stepfather, preparing to give his life in *Sanctification of the Name*, along with the rest of her people...(see the chapter on 'The Health Situation').

R' Chaim Zukerman

By M. B.



Page 439: ***R' Chaim Zukerman***

[He] was one of the most active of the personalities in the Jewish community in Baranovich, in the period between the two world wars, his field of endeavor being as the active head of the community council, a member of the municipal leadership, and his role as a community activist was both wide and all-encompassing. He did not have a secular education because it was a deviation from tradition.

In his time, as the Enlightenment grew strong in the Pale of Settlement, his father, R' Matityahu Zukerman was ordered by the chief rabbi of Slonim, R' Shmuel זצ"ל, to prepare himself to become a teacher and principal of a girls' school, to be run in the

language of the land. This *Hasid* fulfilled the behest of his *Rebbe*, with a heavy heart, stood for the national examinations, and opened a girls' school conducted in Russian, in Kobrin. His son Chaim, continued along his father's path without the constraints of an obligation.

When he matured, and completed the course of study as a teacher, he married a woman, and lived for a number of years in Poland. During the days of The First World War, he wandered through Russia with his family. Afterwards, he settled down in Baranovich, and made a living as a director of accounting. It was here that he found his place.

As a community man, and one who was enlightened, as well as speaking several languages, the *Hasidim* selected him to serve as their representative in the city. When he succeeded in this capacity, he was selected by the religious Jewish leadership, to be a Vice-Chairman of the community council. As it turns out, he filled the position of community head, in substance, until the outbreak of The Second World War.

He was a diligent activist, a man of daring and energy. He was a faithful emissary of the community. He assumed the burden of concern for the many who turned to him for help. During his tenure in office, he attempted to continue in the splendid tradition of the Baranovich community, as a central community institution, and as a manifestation of its capacity for internal independent governance. He was heavily focused on organizing the work effectively, orderly collection of taxes, good community services, and especially – providing public oversight and awareness of those institutions who provided services to the populace from outside the community.

Burdened by a family, he was compelled to worry about supporting the members of his household, and he was compelled to complete his work as the head of accounting, by working many hours, late into the night.

He did not carry himself haughtily before those who had selected him. He accorded great respect to the Hasidic elders and treated – those among them who were learned and Sages, – with deference. When he would come to the Hasidic house of worship, between the afternoon and evening prayers, or during the late hours of the night, the storekeepers, and merchants would turn to him, who were bent under the burden of the heavy taxes laid on them, and he would help them with advice and direction, writing applications and explanations on their behalf. He would accompany many of them to the [administrative] offices, and even go so far as to personally make an effort on their behalf with the government.

He fell, together with his brethren, during the Holocaust.

Rabbi Pinchas Kaplan

By Dr. A. G.



Page 439: ***Rabbi Pinchas Kaplan***

As I bring up the name of Rabbi Pinchas Kaplan – a figure suffused with grace rises before my eyes, of an interlocutor-philanthropist of approximately fifty years ago – during the era of the cruel Czarist police. He raises the memory of those great interlocutors of generations past.

Who, in Baranovich, did not recognize the works of this lover of Jewry, who did not stint from giving of the work of his soul in order to save not only one Jewish life from hunger, from the danger of death, to have decrees of the Russian and Polish governments nullified, decrees that held within them, the capacity to stunt the ability to make a living, if not also termination of life itself... – I once lodged, during the

years of the German occupation during The First World War, in the room of his son, Michael – at his father's house. It was a sever winter night. The old man was peacefully sleeping after a the bustle of a buy day. Suddenly – there is a knock at the door, accompanied by a choked weeping and labored groans. Michael awoke, went to the door and opened it. Mrs. P. entered with a terrifying scream: the head of the secret police, and a number of his staff had burst into her house, arrested her husband, and took him off to an unknown destination... at the sound of the screaming, r' Pinchas also awoke. He asked her to calm herself. ''With tears and groans,' – he said – 'you will get nothing accomplished: something has to be done.' He hurried into his bedroom and got dressed – it was three o'clock in the morning, after midnight – and he asked that she stay at his house until the uproar had died down...and in the dead of the night, with piles of snow all about, trod off to the office of the commandant, which was also the headquarters of the German secret police. The commandant told the interlocutor that a complaint had been received concerning Mr. P., that he was conducting illicit trade with the German soldiers in medical instruments, medicines, and other things. And this Jewish man was vulnerable to being sentenced to years of imprisonment and hard labor...

Rabbi Pinchas swore before him the most intense manner, that Mr. P. was an honest man. 'I believe a Jew like you' – was the commandant's reply, and acted promptly th release Mr. P. from custody. Rabbi Pinchas hurried back to his house, joyful and happy, that he had succeeded in rescuing a Jewish life, took out the volume of '*Medrash Rabah*,' and read it for the entire night.

Even after the annexation of the vicinity around Baranovich to the Polish Republic, his work became enlarged. He knew all the Polish nobility very well – the *Szliachta* – who knew '*Pan* Kaplan,' as a substantial merchant in forest products, straight and honest, and they had a high regard for him accordingly. I was once going through a street, when a terrifying shriek reached my ears. In one yard, there were about ten Jewish youths were detained, tied up, and the Polish gendarmes were beating them with their rifle butts. Suddenly, Pinchas Kaplan appeared. He burst into the yard, went up to one of the gendarmes, embraced him in both of his arms, and with tears, he begged him to let the unfortunates go, 'They are Bolsheviks' – the gendarme exclaimed – 'they were seized at an illegal gathering, with placards in their hands...' 'No, my good sir,' – Rabbi Pinchas called out – I know them all: they are Yeshiva students, men of belief and faith' – and are not distant from me. – 'Well what is to be done, *Panie* Kaplan' – the gendarme replied – 'I am letting them go, but only under your responsibility... and if the district officer demands that I be held legally accountable, you will have to come and accept the consequences!' 'I agree, I agrees' – Rabbi Pinchas replied. And the young men were released.

He was not a scholar, and contented himself with reading two or three lines in '*Khovat HaLevavot*' or *'Mesilat Yesharim*.' His generosity and goodness were 'sculpted from the monolith of his heart.' He has a special affection for the mitzvah of extending hospitality to guests, an the extension of support to teachers – the primary level teachers, teachers of the *Gemara*, and others. At the Nerocovici property, he would stand for hours, in the middle of the road, and invite every passer-by to eat at his house, 'to his heart's content.' There was not a day, when five or six guests would take food at his table. After the High Holy Days – he regularly would sed wagons loaded with potatoes to Ljahavičy for the poor teachers, living in poverty... Zelig, his assistant, would go past and distribute this to the houses of 'Meir the Lame' Moshe ben R' Shmuel, Yaakov Moshe ben R' Nachman, and others and others – and after doing an accounting, he would turn over a report to the person who sent him, 'In such-and-such a house, the roof is missing, in such-and-such a house – there is a broken oven, in the home of Y. M. the 'Lesson Giver' there is no door, roof or oven... a scant few days went by, and all of these shortcomings were corrected... the craftsmen would be in the habit of saying to the teachers, in these circumstances, 'We have already been paid. We have, thank God, Pinia Kaplan, His emissary, that is concerned about each and every one in danger, or is deprived...'

R' Pinchas ben R' Abraham Yaakov Kaplan *HaKohen* נ"ע[149]

By Baruch Galay & Dr. Jasinowsky הי"ד

At the very advanced age of 86 years, on 20 Shevat 5696 (1 Feb 1937), one of our most splendid Jews and a noteworthy exemplar of the older generation, Mr. Pinchas HaKohen Kaplan, passed away.

He was born into a very wealthy orthodox home, to a substantially rich father, who besides this, was a rarely gifted scholar, and the deceased was raised in a very strict religious spirit. Before the First World War, he was also very rich on his own account. He lived a very variegated local life, in the tradition of the one-time wealthy Jews, of the better and more refined type. He had a house that was open to all without exception, and distributed charity with a generous hand. Added to this, he was a wise Jewish man, perceptive, with exceptionally sharp skills.

He was first drawn into Baranovich's community activities only as an older person, during the time of The First World War, when, during the time of the German occupation, he was selected to be the Burgomaster of Baranovich.

From that time onward, Pinia Kaplan came to occupy many honorary positions in our city. He was the deputy Burgomaster, and represented the Burgomaster in the first municipal council, a chairman of the community council, in the first provisional community, and then chairman of the community council in the first ever openly and properly elected Jewish community [organization].

To be truthful, he was not very active in these capacities, for which he had no particular inclination or drive, and his name served only as an honorary designation. But, because of this, he was exceptionally active on a different front, in being an interlocutor and an advocate. In this respect, he had no peer.

It was not only our city, our environs, our area, but all of Polish Jewry, have lost in him, the most faithful bulwarks of our people, one of the last of the disciples and heirs to the legacy of those great and passionate Jews, such as R' Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev, R' Israel Baal-Shem Tov, Nahum'keh of Grodno, may their memories be for a blessing, and others and others.

His ambit of influence was formidable: Rovno-Sarny, Baranovich-Vilna, and Stolpce-Brisk.

Having a substantial familiarity with all of the local authorities – from the lowest level employees up to the Starosta and leadership of the Voievode – with all of the nobility of our Eastern areas, h made use of all of this in order to intervene for hundreds and thousands of maligned Jews. There was not a single city or town, in our vicinity, that did not come to Pinia Kaplan during a time of trouble. And R' Pinia did his hard, often very distressing work, with such commitment, with such a dedication of his entire soul. that it was a source of wonder.

He was one of those Jews, in whom an Eternal Light burned, the genuine eternal Jewish flame, which, with its warmth and light, covers the tortured and oppressed. He exerted himself to help everyone, sparing no time ans effort, so long as he could extract someone from a misfortune. He helped the Yeshiva-educated person just

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[149] Excerpt from '*Baranovicher Vokh*' of 5Feb 1937, and '*Baranovicher Courier* of 12Feb 1937.

as he sis the simple, unlettered person, the pauper as well as the rich man. All found in him an ardent glowing heart, a pure and empathetic soul, a fatherly love.

And it was this fatherly love, that gave him the drive to knock on the doors of the high level employees, whether they were good or bad. For when it comes to rescuing a child from some danger, a father does not hold back. Not only once, did he wake up some high-level official in the middle of the night, from a deep sleep, and that person had to place a telephone call to order the release of some Jewish person from jail, or to save a Jew. when he was being threatened with death.

And do you know in what his power lay, that enabled R' Pinia to constantly make demands of the authorities? – His unique attribute lay in his great and ardent love for the downtrodden, and those being harried, in his boundless generosity, in his readiness to sacrifice himself on behalf of someone who was unjustly accused.

How many lives did this unique person rescue from suffering, from pain, and even from death!? To how many women did he return their husbands, and children to their fathers?! – And who among the Baranovich Jews, himself, or a friend, a relative, was not saved from some misfortune thanks to him?

If there was such a day, when there were no Jewish women who approached him with their troubles, he would be satisfied, but he sensed that something was missing.

R' Israel Koplowitz

By M. B.

A rare type of public activist, of noble spirit, and of refined soul, a man with a good eye and a generous heart, an alert mind, and diligent in his undertakings.

He stood at the head of community activity in Baranovich for a number of years, he was the Gabbai of the Slonim Hasidim, Chairman of 'Agudat Israel' and the representative of the religious Jewish community to the community council and in other community institutions. He was a member of a family with a distinguished pedigree in scholarship.

His heart was alert to, and his soul open to every public exigency, to the specific concerns of individuals, and to issues facing the community at large.

He demonstrated a unique diligence during the economically depressed times, in his tenure as the head of the assistance activities, and the rendering of support during the days of The First World War, and in those reconstruction activities afterwards. He delved into and analyzed each and every occurrence and happening. He supported and encouraged those pressed and in need of help, and looked after the municipal funds. He was quick to be at the scene of every place of potential danger. In 1905, he was active in the organization for protection [sic: self-defense]. He was the one who adjudicated during The First World War, when the needy were thrown into chaotic disorder, before abandoning the city, and he would run from place-to-place, and he would utilize bribes in one place, and in another place, emoluments for strong drink, and in yet a third place as an interlocutor with officials. And the same was true in 1920, with the disintegration of the Polish-Russian front, he was one of the few people who uncovered the fact that the Polish army was getting set to burn down the



Page 443: ***R' Israel Koplowitz***

city, and together with a number of other activists, pulled together his energies to save the city from this calamity (See M. Mukasey: 'Baranovich in the Period 1919-1939').

When he became a widower, during the years he served, he took care not to go by the homes of other Jews during the eves of the Sabbath, so as not to arouse any feeling of envy in seeing a family, with their homemaker, sitting around the table, taking their repast.

One of his grandsons was a war prisoner at one time, and the family was looking forward to having him home for Purim. On the eve of Purim, a group of returning prisoners arrived, but the place of the grandson had been taken. A terrible sadness descended on the entire family, until R' Israel shook it off and called out: 'What is this sadness? If it is for a member of our family that we are so sad, we are sad about this all the time, so what now? That other Jews have been set free, but not him !! This is a matter of envy, and it is expressly forbidden. And he was joyous in the Purim festivities, and his family also was, along with him.

In him was fulfilled the maxim: ' Among the venerable sages, so long as they continue to grow old, their knowledge stays with them.'

His spiritual alertness was preserved in him, and he spent much time in Torah study. He had a special love of history, and he manifested a great knowledge in this field and a profound understanding.

After the destruction of Baranovich, he committed himself to the establishment of the Yeshiva 'Bet Abraham' in Jerusalem, as a memorial and a remnant to the Baranovich of Torah and Hasidism,

He died at a ripe old age on Hanukkah, *Rosh Hodesh* of Kislev 5709 (December 2 or 3, 1948).

R' David Katznelson

By Z. L.



Page 443: ***R' David Katznelson***

Jews, from all walks of life, would come to meetings where he spoke, and listened to him with rapt attention. All he needed was the telling of an ancient legend, a Talmudic aphorism, connect4ed to the matter of the day, and a bridge of understanding and affection was built between him and his listeners. He has a very basic folksiness to him, and a sense of Jewish awareness about him. Upon hearing his words at a public gathering, after the [tragic] events of 5689,[150] seven thousand Jews raised their right hands and proclaimed: 'If I forget thee, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its cunning.' And when, by way of example, the fund drive 'Galila' was announced by the *Keren Kayemet L'Israel*, he finished his rousing speech in a manner so typical of him: 'Go at, my fellow Jews and see! Elijah the Prophet is. according to tradition, capable of anything: resuscitating the dead, and being able to ascend into heaven in a whirlwind. However, there is one thing that has been withheld from him, at his appointed hour, when he comes to visit us at home at the Passover Seder – It is us who are the ones who open the door for him. Remember this, my fellow Jews! Miracles may circulate among us one way or another, but the door to redemption, the door that is opened for Elijah the Prophet, the harbinger of The Messiah, has been placed in our very hands to be opened.'

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150 The 1929 Hebron Massacres

The wisdom of the common man, possessed by David Katznelson, that yearned to come in continuous contact with the masses, to show them the way, to teach them, and enlighten them – it was this [wisdom] that prepared him to assume the position of a man of action, given his advanced sense of the requirement.

He represented the Zionist *Histadrut* in the community council, and served as a long time as the director of *Keren Kayemet*, and after the schism between the Histadrut and the general Zionists, he served for 15 years as the chairman of the local committee of the '*Eyt Livnot*' group, and a member of its central committee. However, he saw the central point of his educational and other efforts to be in the Zionist synagogue, that was especially put up by the Zionist Histadrut in Baranovich, about which it was said that more than just being occupied in prayer, the study of Torah and matters to do with heaven, there was the ongoing dialogue of the secular discussions among the scholars, and the lore of Zion. It was here that he expounded his words, over and above his regularly-offered words of instruction each and every Festival at its appointed time, and at every opportunity for a Zionist event: and it was here that he also established the substantial library beside the synagogue – the crowning glory of his Zionist-Educational endeavors – and from the various gatherings for an 'Oneg Shabbat' that were conducted with his cognizance and under his leadership. It was not only listeners who would attend here, but also those who wanted to be heard, those with questions, and those wanting to convey their own ideas. And at the end of the various discussions, a song from the Land of Israel could be heard, as well as Jewish folk songs.

The emotional basis in his work was also given expression in his profession – pedagogy. And there was no one, with a knowledge of the Hebrew language, among the young people of Baranovich in that twenty years before the destruction of the [Jewish] community, whose Hebrew idiom didn't come to him from David Katznelson; but what is significant, is that while still a young boy, he took an oath of loyalty to the love of Zion and the Hebrew language. He was uncompromising in his loyalty to the language: from the time that they could begin to comprehend, he spoke exclusively in Hebrew to his children.

And even in his community work, and pedagogical endeavors, he was a man of the book, whose mouth did not fall silent from explanation for a single day. He was thoroughly family with all the aspects of literature. He suffered from heart disease from childhood on – and did not know what a moment's rest or sleep was, and when the importance of rest was brought to his attention, that in his case it was a pressing need, he would answer: Delving into a book is my rest. That is what I have gotten accustomed to, and this is the way I will end the days of my life.

The sun of Zion and the Enlightenment that shined on the young David Katznelson, while he still occupied the benches at the Yeshiva, brought him to the point that the constraints of the Yeshiva suddenly appeared to be too confining in his eyes. He went to Odessa, the location where Professor Chaim Czernowitz and Professor Joseph Klausner and others were establishing at that very time A School of Higher Learning in Jewish Studies, called the '*Yeshiva G'vohoh.*' It was in this institution, that D. Katznelson obtains his education, and establishes his mission in life – teaching of the Hebrew language, and work on behalf of Zionism. Having been awarded a diploma, with excellence, from the '*Yeshiva G'vohoh*,' and after a visit of a half-year in the Land of Israel. he took up residence in Baranovich in 1911, and it was here – after spending an interim seven years (1915-1922) in Gomel' in Russia – he opens up his blessed work in pedagogy, first with specific groups, and afterwards in high schools and devoted himself to [community] activity.

With the outbreak of The Second World War, in 1939, by a sheer miracle, he reached the Land of Israel. Here, he endured all of the tribulations associated with becoming certified as teacher, and the burdens of establishing credentials with the resident educational authorities, that was typical of teachers who made *aliyah*. But he did not complain a great deal. Residing in The Land, added pleasure to his life. In time, he engaged in agricultural work in one of the gymnasiums in Tel-Aviv, in which he taught *Tanakh* and *Talmud* to the upper grades, and

it was here, while performing his duties as a teacher, on 25 Shevat 5708 (1948), after two weeks of illness, he succumbed to a sudden heart attack.

He was a whole man in all of his virtues, faultlessly honest, and would distance himself from anything that remotely had the odor of a loose tongue about it, someone who conducted himself with ease, and a *scholar par excellence*.

R' Abraham The Baker

By Dr. A. G.

He was a modest man, spending day and night sunken in Torah study, and the books of those expert in the lore of *Hasidism*, himself being an ardent *Hasid* and pupil of Rabbi Shmuel ז"ל of Slonim, a genuine *Hasid*, but different in his tendency to strive for understanding and in concentration. He would spend hours on end, in the rear room of the house of his father, Pesach the *Melamed*, absorbed in his books. On one occasion, the book '*Ahavat Tzion*' came to his hands. The young lad began to read it, and he became enchanted by the quality of the language, and hurried to show this 'find' to his elderly *Hasidic* father. His father glanced at the book, shrugged his shoulders and grumbled with a sigh: 'There is some question about the matter; the names being mentioned are sacred ones: Hezekiah, the King of Judea, the Prophet Isaiah, but our venerable grandfather from Ljahavičy has already said, that an 'flowery' language will encumber us in the fullness of time, and [lead to] destruction...' And his son, *Rebbe* Noah, followed this way, and held as he did, when saying, that it is ordained that from such innovative interpretations of the language, we might stray, God forbid ... 'but,' – he added – 'let us go, if God is willing, to Slonim tomorrow, and let us ask the *Rebbe* personally...' And on the following day, they both went to Slonim by foot, approximately forty kilometers, and posed the important question to *Rebbe* Shmulkeh: Is it permissible to read Mapu's book, '*Ahavat Tzion*?' The ruling of the *Rebbe* was 'Negative!.. The unclean book is to be embargoed, or burned!' Reb Pesach and his son returned to Moucadz', both driven by the ruling of the Chief Rabbi, that saved them from the realm of fire in hell... and from that time on, they spent no time with the books of the lesser of the youth, that were seduced into straying... Abraham'eh returned to his *Talmud,* and his *Hasidism*, and to sequestering himself in the back room of his father's house, to delve deeply into his books with an intense concentration.

In the year 1919, Abraham'eh settled with his family in Baranovich. Like his father, he aspired to be a teacher of *Gemara*, but the hour was not auspicious for him, and after many false starts, he decided to become a baker... as to the question of many of his customers, as to why his bread is so sweet to the taste, he would jokingly reply: ' I bake it with mathematics...' and it is here where I reach the central element of his character: He, Abraham the *Hasid*, was a very accomplished mathematician, and would resolve complex issues in the tractate of *Eruvin*, in the chapter of '*Beit Kor*' in the tractate of *Baba Batra*, inferences of the Vilna *Gaon*, R' Elijah: '*Ayil Meshulash*' and others. On one occasion, he came to me, and showed me a letter from the Department of Higher Mathematics of 'Columbia University,' containing more or less the following words: 'Distinguished sir! We have received your solutions to the two mathematical problems that our editor had sent about a month and a half ago. We wish to convey to your honor, our deepest thanks. Your solutions have opened our eyes to facilitate the solution to other complex questions of a similar nature. Our editor requests that you send us a picture of yourself without delay, for purposes of publishing it in our monthly journal so that your name be publicized at large. In passing, we wish to advise your honor, that a position to teach mathematics at our university has just become vacant. One of the professors has passed away. If your honor wishes to accept this position – it would be helpful for you to let us know as early as possible...' Abraham'eh asked the *Rebbe* – and the latter ruled that it was not appropriate to send such a picture to the gentiles....

The baker continued to bake his bread 'with mathematics,' instead of becoming a professor in New York.

Two Young Literary Talents

By M. B.

A. David Scheinberg

From the depths of my memory, the stormy form of David Scheinberg arises, his early years, fermented by fate: an orphaned childhood, a boyhood of deprivation, suffering, want and loneliness, and a need to grow up too quickly.

As a boy, the hunger for life was awakened in him, a thirst form knowledge and a talent for creativity. He was seized by the muse of knowledge, and he was immersed in study and research, and his soul thirsted for the well springs of instruction, and was taken with dedication to its fires and adherence, and he fled from his misery to the pure tradition of the '*Chafetz Chaim*' drawn by the purity of his simple explanation, and lofty dedication.

At an early age, his works began to receive notice in the central religious newspapers. His first work was a very wide-ranging overview of the history of the Yeshivas of Lithuania and Poland, their courses of study, and the objectives of their Torah study and educational approach. In this piece, the literary style that he was to evidence in the future became manifest: thoroughness and acuity, and a facility of discernment, competent analysis and a pleasant style.

It was in this fashion that he prepared a comprehensive work of the venerated persona of the '*Chafetz Chaim*' ז"ל, chapters of which were published in the religious newspapers, and it was in these that he demonstrated his descriptive powers, in his portrayal of personality, on the nature of the ambience, and the surrounding personalities of his generation.

He had a fresh and fruitful talent. He read, taught and wrote a great deal. The 'student,' who yearned to study and get ahead academically, fought with the 'wise man' within him, that wanted to disseminate his ideas externally: the researcher with the tendencies of a publicist, and the formulation of analytical polemic.

He was killed in the Holocaust.

B. Shlomo Foxman

The young Shlomo Foxman was a rising force in the community, and a literary talent with much potential. While young, he published poems that were well received. He had a well-developed sense of taste and aesthetics. He would amaze people with his beautiful use of language, his polished style, and in the pleasant and structured style of his presentation. He did not content himself with poems and sparkling advertisements, rather, he permitted himself a much more encompassing range of expression, and research work.

He authored a substantial work in the research of Jewish folklore, wrote about the history of the Jewish community in Mys, and about its town Pinkas, and about the life of the community, and the way Jews made a living in our vicinity.

He was one of the founders of '*Poalei Agudat Yisrael*' in our city, and one of its activists. For a specific period, he was also the General Secretary of this movement in Poland, and an editor of its central communications organ. For a while, he was the editor of the 'Baranovicher *Vokh*,' in its day. Despite the

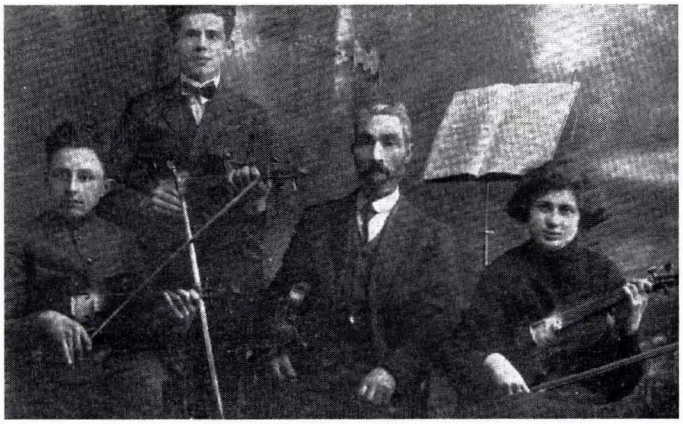
fact that a literary future, and a future in public life was foreseen for him in Poland, he prepared himself by studying a trade, to make *aliyah* as a religious Halutz. He was killed in the Holocaust on *Shushan Purim* 5712[151] in Baranovich.

The Family of Musicians (Szolomowicz)

By. Sh. Epstein

The family of musicians brought music and song into local Jewish life, and added much extra to its general folksy atmosphere.

Mikhl, The *Klezmer*, stood at the head of the family, with his broad-boned and solid build. A deep Jewish melancholy always looked out of his eyes. He was a many of religious feeling, and possessed of a rich musical soul, a man of a pure and sensitive character. He was known in the entire area, and even the gentiles would invite him to their weddings. His person elicited their consideration and respect. It was a source of wonder that this half-starved Jew, would be standing in the midst of the finest delicacies, and not take a taste because they were not kosher – but they respected him for his integrity.



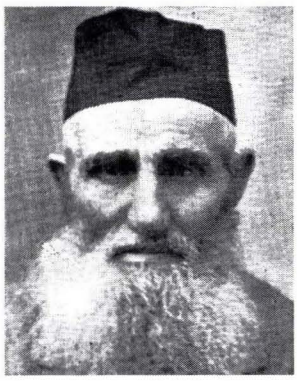
Page 447: ***Mikhl the Musician and His Students***

His son, Kalman Jonah, grew up to be tall, like a young tree, lean, and broad-boned. During his years as a youth, his fantasy roiled and stormed; his restless spirit looked for ways to express itself, and awakened in him the desire to create. He would, at that time, appear as a soloist at concerts, and a significant part of the program would be made up of his own original compositions.

The acme of the period of his greatest prominence was, when he appeared in a concert before the highest Russian aristocracy, and members of the royal court, who, at that time, were found in Baranovich. This was in 1914, after the outbreak of the war.

After this his star began to set. The war, at that time, tore him away from his family and his art. He served in the Russian military fought on the battlefield, was captured by the Germans – and he returned from his tribulations a broken man.

The talent of his younger brother Ber'l was fundamentally focused. He moved everyone greatly with his piano playing. His period of musical prominence went by like a storm. He too, was a victim of the difficult and ever-present poverty. He remained as one of the members who played in an orchestra.



Page 448: ***A. Y. Borowsky***

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151 There appears to be a misprint here, of an extra 'yud' in the date. A more plausible date is 5702, which makes the secular date March 4, 1942

Only one member of this family was privileged to free himself from the chains of poverty and find his way into the larger world, in America, as a famous pianist. His name is Sholom.

There were two other sons in the ensemble (one of them, Bon'cheh, is today in Israel), and a daughter.

Apart from the Szolomowicz family, Abraham Borowsky played the contrabass; a quiet, serious and very decent Jewish man, with an imposing patriarchal beard. He would appear festive in his long black coat and was a year-long member of the ensemble.

From its first to last day, the Szolomowicz musical family accompanied the Drama Circle on its artistic path, in operas, musicals, etc.

They contributed a great deal to the festive atmosphere at Jewish weddings and other celebrations, dance-evenings, and parties.

In all our prayers, let us recall them.
In all memorial services, let us mourn them.
In all recitation of the *Kaddish*, let us recognize them.
In all our renditions of *Ḥatikuah*, let them appear.

Yaakov Goldstein

THE HOLOCAUST

השואה – אוקמקום

Destruction and Struggle
The Last Road

By Dr. N[ehemiah] Kroshinsky

There They Go...

Here there are: the masses [suffering] of hunger, abandonment, oppression and need,
Here they are: the martyrs going on their last road to death;
Here they are, here they are passing by –
Four in each row, four in each row.
In a frighteningly angry and thunderous storm,
That cause the air and the earth to tremble;
Lightning flashes, and it thunders – it is chaos, a jumble,
Nature and humankind have lost their way.
Neither light nor dark, but something 'in between'
That changes its colors, constantly mixing them.
The winds rampage uncontrollably, they blow and whistle,
Wiping out everything in their path, they know, they grasp it...
Trees fall, in concert with the moods,
Houses burn, towns are consumed in flame,
There is no rescue... everything has been taken out in the cleaning;
Now, now –the entire world is upended with everyone together,
And a ruin of ash and splinters remains,
In which all the people are buried, with their bestial sentiment.

All at once, as if it is after a dissipated dream,
I stand bewildered, disappointed and deeply embittered.
The storm has passed; the heavens are once again clear and pure;
God did not want to comprehend my anger and wish.
The world continued to remain in its place, peacefully,
The masses continue to keep on going.
And this is no dream of fantasy –
It is only a part of the destruction, just a phase of it.
They go, because they were ordered to go,
God forbid that anyone should even pause for a moment.
Here they are, here they pass –
Four in each row, four in each row.

There go the wraiths, and they stumble along,
With hollowed out eyes, and indeed, bereft of thought;
With pale faces, and lips sharply bitten,
And with blood-stained and torn clothing,

With tightly curled fists, gnashing their teeth;
Where they are being taken – not one of them knows.
They go, guarded by 'Black Guards' –
A death march in the early morning hours.
No one weeps, no one asks;
Through fields, ditches, over hills, on all the roads,
In mud, snow, in storm and in rain
The masses go to confront their death.
And the train – it hauls itself for tens of kilometers,
Day and night, in heat, in cold, it goes in every weather.
They go, because they were ordered to go,
God forbid that anyone should even pause for a moment.
Here they are, here they pass –
Four in each row, four in each row.

There they go; I want to hear, I want to know:
Why are they silent? I want to be dragged along.
I look at them with inquiring eyes,
I feel – I am drawn to them.
I go, and join up with them in their ranks,
I want to ask: Where are they going? From where?
I search, I call out familiar names:
I call, I shout! – To no one who is there [anymore].
I see before me a long red street,
And all the people there look like they are dead;
The further I go, the more red the street becomes,
The people...more dean, and even more dead.
The ground – covered in bodies, all spread out,
Watered and fertilized with Jewish flesh and blood.
And the bodies writhe and spasm
On the blood, that forms a lake beneath them,

On the sun, that permits its light to fall upon them steadily,
Sending its rays to [gently] play over them,
And lights the way for the bandits,
That thirst, and lay in ambush for a Jewish visage.
I see the horror – and I remain standing...
I see – and I am off on a side of the road, alone.
And they go, because they were ordered to go,
God forbid that anyone should even pause for a moment.
Here they are, here they pass –
Four in each row, four in each row.

Here they are – the women, men, mothers-fathers,
Large and small, brothers-sisters with their yellow badges;
Children not born into the world very long ago,
On the ground, on snow and frozen ice;
Newborns, still wrapped in swaddling clothes,
Many of them dismembered by their limbs;
Torn away from a mother's hand or breast,
Beaten into pieces of meat for dogs;
Choked to death by feral murderers,
Torn apart and dismembered bu hand.
Their small hands and feet smashed by stones and against walls,
Their small stomachs disemboweled by knives and slaughtered;
Sunken into filth, excrement, and mud,
Tossed into rived and streams to be drowned.
Soap made from dead bodies, for use –
In washing one's hands clean... and for sale.
Tossed and burned... into fire and gas chambers
Little children – who haven't even taken note of the world yet.

They go, because they were ordered to go,
God forbid someone should pause for a moment.
They go, hand-in-hand, and stumble,
They go and go, and indeed, from the thoughts:
'Vengeance against the murderers, My God, Revenge!!
Exact it, for each and every Jewish life'...
Here they are, here they pass –
Four in each row, four in each row.

The Destruction of Baranovich

Baranovich! Look at how naked and impoverished you are;
Look what is left of you: –
A Holocaust... so many mass graves
[Left] from a Jewish settlement – so dear and beloved.
As if with breath being held, and struck dumb,
The world sits bent over;
A deathly silence reigns about.
One sits with tears in one's eyes.
Here he stands, here we here him tell
About troubles, rivers of blood and tears;
The witness wants to share with us
About the Holocaust, that is without a peer in experience.
His soft voice echoes lyrically,
Every word of his, congeals our blood;
Pale, he stands at the Bima,
One's heart goes out, and it now feels good.

The second week had barely passed
Fo July 1941 –
And the first calamity arrived;
Of a sort never seen before.
We lost seventy-three martyrs
Forever,
They were murdered
Pitilessly, by feral murderers.
Full of terror and full of fear,
Another day has already passed;
And a difficult morning awaits us,
At least to rest our exhausted limbs.
Before dawn, the doors and windows are torn open,
Wild voices curse, howl –
Something is going to happen here...
'Open up! And you will hear what we want!'
Awakened them from their sleep
The Germans, with their ever-ready hands,
Chased and drove them like sheep,
Their eyes still being closed.
Forcibly separating mother and child,
Watched over by wild 'Black Guards,
Marched a camp full of Jews to death –
A death-march... in the early morning hours.
Immersed the city in sorrow,
It stands as still as a cemetery;

A gray day comes and goes...
The feeling is hard and painful.
The day wore on a long time,
As long and as bitter as The Exile [itself],
The reverberation immediately spread,
Of the weeping and wailing.
They fell like flies
Those first martyrs, the seventy-three;
No one knows where they lie,
[Because] no one was standing thereby.

Yesterday's wound is still fresh,
The *'Thirty Days'* are not yet over –
The murderers are going to butcher again
Fifty and three hundred martyrs.
Children scream, women run,
Jews are wringing their hands:
Maybe they can be bought off?
There is a conflagration – It is burning! Burning!
Jews, we have to do something!
Don't just stand there, gather money and jewelry –
So many lives are at stake,
A decree of the *Gestapo* leadership.
Nobody acts, not asking, demanding,
There is a stirring in the *Judenrat*;
The money is brought from all sides, For relatives,
father, man and brother.
Then enemy bayed and laughed:
'*Verfluchtener Jude!*' Wait in the courtyard...
'You will see'– he thought;
Yes, the end has come.
You will no longer see them,
Those fifty and three hundred men,
Dragged off...no one knows where and when.
The community grows smaller and smaller.

At every stricken and beaten step of the way
Old people, women, large and small;
We have to wear the 'Yellow Badges,'
We have to go with a 'mark' on us.
Every day a new decree:
We have to walk in the middle of the street;
Is there any other alternative?
One is inured to decrees, hate.
We were driven into the ghetto:
Let no one do us any harm...
Well, there is no 'veto' over this –
A new chapter has now begun.
The witness speaks further, more softly,
His eyes look at some distant point;
The people become somewhat more watchful,
It is possible to feel what all this means.
This occurred on the Third of March,
Nineteen Hundred and Forty-Two,
The ghetto already was suffering greatly
From hunger, filth, from cold and snow.
And the Festival of Purim arrived –
That deadly, bloody twenty-four hour period,
Bringing a destruction and tribulation;
No, not any miracle...
Into the ghetto, there arrived
Police, *Gestapo*, military troops,
Rounding up twelve thousand Jews,
Like wild animals, with machine guns.
The murderers are giving out living passes –
Something is going to happen here...
'You will see now, *verfluchtene schweinen*!'
No one knows what and when.
For the entire night, until six in the morning,
The life-cards were distributed;
Life and death lies in a balance –
There is no way out, one must wait.
The night was terrifying,
It is not possible to describe it all,
People dash about, inquire, look, and think:
How is it possible to remain alive?
The wailing and the recitation of confessions
Of the old, and the bed-ridden sick,
Until the dawn began to break –
Not having received the 'U'-Tickets.

At six in the morning, it is *Shushan-Purim*,
The tumult becomes increasingly stronger and larger,
The storm has broken out
For the murderers, the cannibals.
It was not necessary to think for very long,
Everything now had become very clear:
The slaughter is now in full swing –
People are driven, beaten, shot and butchered;
Children cry, the elderly groan,
Loud voices...imprecations... wild sounds...
The half-dead cry out from their pain –
Here is 'this one!' There is 'that one!'
Women lose their children, husbands,

The alarming outcries grow stronger,
People fall like pieces of wood,
Hidden ones are dragged out of their holes.
There, the elderly *Rebbetzin* is being driven along,
With her daughter and two grandchildren together,
They fall to the cold ground,
The children crying for their mother.
Here, Mendl Goldberg can be seeing standing,
Wrapped in his *tallit*, wearing *tefillin*,
Ready to sacrifice his life for his faith –
He sings '*Shoshanat Yaakov*' and *Tehilim*.
And here stand a group of Hasidic folks,
And *Rebbe* Scheinberg, Nissan
Talk to them – he calls out, he shouts,
His hands outstretched to the heavens:
'Jews, brothers! – Drink and eat!
Dance and sing, join your hands!
Do not forget today is *Purim*...
The moment must be kept sacred!'
The blood seethes and boils,
One can see a hellish fire burning –
The Jews sing '*Shoshanat Yaakov*...'
Amazing what people of faith can do!
Be proud of Mendl and Rabbi Nissan,
You remnants of Baranovich origin,
Tell your children, let then know: –
From a dance of death... into the flame of a fire!
The final act takes place at the gate,
The bandits are splitting skulls and heads.
It is a fact, they are being led to death,
All is lost – all strength ebbs away...
They are sorted out: to the left to the right:
Who shall live and who shall die,
Go figure out – what is 'bad' here?
The skin literally crawls on you.
And the murderer shouted with glee:
Where is God? – he laughed –
Where is the mind? Where is the strength?
And Queen Esther?...Where is her feminine power?'...
The autos travel like a whirlwind,
Full of children, women and men,
They immediately return, all the more quickly:
Exactly as set out in the plans...
The martyrs are taken to the pits,
As the wailing and crying begins to diminish;
On trembles, one is tossed by cold and fever,
A stone could have melted at that time.
The autos stand somewhere,
We are driven out of the wagons like sheep;
What else will happen? ... No-No!
I am afraid.. it is better not to recall.
And the gentiles stand in the streets,
Wearing Jewish holiday clothing,
Clapping their hands and making jokes,
Enjoying it and laughing...
Oh, you holy souls!
Woe! You have seen all of this? –
A sinning world without compassion!
God! And where were you?...
The last of the martyrs were:
Weltman and his police,
And together with the heroine 'Mann' –
The hero, Mr. Izikson, Evsei.
The ghetto has become smaller,
There is a collapse and pain– in the hearts;
Children, mothers and husbands are missing,
The white snow is red from blood.
A woman rocks her child, her solace:
'The storm has passed us by;
What will tomorrow be like, who knows?
Today is a Festival, *Shushan-Purim*...'
And her sorrowful melody
Lulls the little baby to sleep:
'Sleep my child, lie in peace.'
The child understands.. – he falls silent.
On the field, near the green bridge,
Once eliciting so much wonder from us,
Has been sown just an hour ago – with the remains
Of three thousand and three hundred.

The raconteur bends his head,
His last words barely audible,
He casts his eyes downward –
Yes, he is seeking the location of the graves.
There lie relatives, neighbors, friends,
There lies his wife, their son, the daughters,
It seems I saw you just last night,
Seeing you at that terrible hour;
I saw you gnashing your teeth,
How you were chased and driven,
How the murderer breaks your bones,
How you are counted, selected.
I herd you crying, screaming,
Unable to then protect you,

Unable to set you free,
From those murderers and 'nobility.'
Deep in my heart, I will carry
Your last wish and look,
Always, forever, will I mourn
Those of you who once were my joy.

The month of May arrived,
Everything about was fresh and green;
Jews are living free somewhere –
Living, after all, still has a purpose.
How can you sleep peacefully there?
Does you conscience not torture you?
Look at what has happened to us here –
Blood is being spilled like water.
Do not keep silent, awake humanity,
Do not permit us to be forgotten,
Do not allow the Holocaust to be covered up...
How can you go on living? How can you eat?
The world – does not want to know about us,
Having become as hard as a stone;
It waits, sealing its eyes shut,
Until everything becomes *Judenrein*.
And the summer beckons, and awakens both
Man and unfettered nature,
And the ghetto chokes, and is in terror
With the advent of decrees and new slaughter.
On Sundays church bells are heard ringing,
Days and nights go by,
Birds sing in the trees,
And redemption?... – Lies far away.
Every day and every morning
Is overrun with trouble and fear,
A chapter brings new concerns –
Life no longer has any purpose.
It is *Elul,* the sound of the *Shofar* is heard already,
An old year goes, a new year comes;
Will we, at least, be allowed to live?
Does it augur, perhaps liberation?
Jews go to recite the *Selichot,*
Weeping, begging for a good year:
God, drive away these angry winds!
Live is hanging by just a hair.
Rosh Hashana has already passed,
Yom Kippur has barely arrived,
The murderers are again digging pits,
Sharpening and honing their spears.
Yom Kippur nineteen hundred forty-two;
Jews spill rivers of tears:
'God in heaven! Do it so
That we will be rid of trouble.
Do not punish us any longer,
Have we not suffered enough?
Let us live, let us hope,
Make it so you shield us from death.
You exacted such a sacrifice:
Children [taken] before their mothers' eyes;
Until we wrought them,
Until we raised them.' The world has gone to sleep,
Enough of wailing, enough of weeping;
Each one thinks: We have to hope,
Who knows what tomorrow will bring?!
The witness – his breath is gone,
He looks again over there,
He does not let a word escape his lips, –
Yes, we get the sense of it.
On the following morning, after *Yom Kippur*, early,
First the worker cohorts went out,
In locked formation, he and she,
Are we to expect something?!
Suddenly the murderers arrive.
'Brothers-sisters, it is not good! –
The ghetto is surrounded;
Jews, it is bad! – It smells of blood!'
Here they are again, those 'Black Ravens.'
With their guard dogs and iron staves –
Frightened Jews go running to their hideouts,
Pursued and harassed by the poisonous vipers.
They search, sniff about, seizures occur, pursuits,
The ghetto obtains another visage,
There is breakage, stabbing, shooting, beating –
It is a slaughter! A bloodbath!
It is frighteningly hot in the bunkers,
The crowding is great, it is hard to breathe,
The skin is think, and covered with sweat,
There is no air, one becomes asphyxiated;
People shout: 'Water! Water!'
Have pity, just a sip!'
And the faces become more ashen,
When something moves even slightly.
Shh.. do you hear? People walk, you hear footfall...
God! A mother chokes her own child,
That had been screaming (now barely inhaling air).
Yes, it now is no longer a sin...

Were there still any feelings left
In such danger, in such a nightmare?
Did the world then feel or see,
The mother's heart, the mother's sorrow?
Days and nights go by,
The slaughter goes on, it does not cease;
Jews, it is very bad!
There is no air, we have to go up.
Jewish blood is being spilled outside,
They search, they drag, weapons are discharged;
The murderers – their rage boils in them,
Crash! – A bunker disclosed.
A woman is driven towards death,
Two children run after their mother;
She goes, thinks, and wants to ask something...
Goes together with the girls.
Her husband had been shot not long ago,
It was Dr. Kaplan, the pediatrician,
Rivers of tears were then spilled –
Then, in the 'Doctors' Holocaust.'
She speaks to the German, to his 'conscience:'
'Do you not have children, a mother?
Let us enjoy your generosity,
Show mercy, be good.'
The murderer laughs... and spits –
'You will see how depraved I am:
The mother and one child can go free,
A second child must be sacrificed!'
She stands frozen and confused,
Taking in both of the children,
Wiping tears from her eyes:
'Who shall go to the *akeda*[152]?'
There is no time, no time is given to tarry,
Quickly, the decision must be made speedily;
What does a mother have to think about here:
She takes a child on her conscience.
Yes, she shuts her eyes quickly,
Seizes a child in her arms,
The second is pulled away...
'God! What am I doing – am I blind?'
She lowers the child,
Opens her eyes once again,
Runs faster, and faster, like a wind,
Grabbing the second child to her.
The selecting-changing does not cease,
For the time being there is still a choice,
A child down, a child up –
She picks, she changes, she has no fear.
The bandit looks at her outlook,
That doesn't allow her to decide,
Forgets his duty for the while
And lets all three remain alive.
But death did not spare them,
All three fell together
Later, at the time of the Third Calamity,
The little girls along with their mother.
At the gate on Sadowa *Gasse*,
Autos stand at the ready,
They are packed full as if they were barrels
The elderly, women, children and kin.
The weak fall, they remain lying,
The strong struggle with each other like bears;
It is difficult to overcome the enemy –
It is Hell! One can go insane.
The motors rev up,
Almost a week has gone by,
And the autos continue to drive-drive
With no end in sight, no end.
And the wheels turn,
Turning-turning speedily,
The autos pass over gardens and fields,
Running-running like a wind;
Everything blurs before the yes:
Houses..signboards...windows...doors...
Everything looks as though it is bowed
And the autos go, and go;
The mind works more and more quickly.
One thought races after another,
To flee, to run, like a whirlwind...
And the heart – gnaws and gnaws.
It is *Sukkot* already, the slaughter has been halted:
One searches, one asks: Where is 'so-and-so?'
Where is 'That one?' – and [discovering] who is gone,
He will never again be seen.
A stone stands by Grabowiec along the way –
A memorial to six thousand brethren;
Gone in the terror of those days,
Gone... and never to return again.

The world, in meantime, is consumed in flames,

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152 `The Hebrew word used in the Bible, to describe the binding of Isaac for sacrifice.

The war is going at full tilt –
No one knows from where or when
We will come to see the salvation.
The winter will soon come again
With its cold, hunger and want;
The Germans have already taken everything,
There is no bread in the ghetto.
It is enough gnashing of the teeth,
Enough of going out to death,
One is no longer allowed to just sit in the ghetto,
No more questions need to be asked.
Straighten out the limbs, have no fear,
Fortify yourself, become a partisan;
Cast off that terrible dark fear, –
Is there yet another way?

Again the winter arrived,
The earth is covered in soft snow;
The remnant in the ghetto grows weaker, weaker
Suffering, hunger and unbounded tribulation.
One sees shadows, only skeletons,
Without a hope, without any solace,
One begins to beg for death already –
The destruction, where it is and is going.
They are driven to forced labor,
The young flee off into the forest;
The remainder, about two thousand yet,
Lives under duress and lives in fear.
No one of them remains,
After the liquidation-slaughter,
(December nineteen forty-two)
In the course of a year – the third.
Enveloped in a veil,
This time no know, nobody will know –
And what transpired there,
Is known only to the One and Only God.
On the threshold of forty-three
–the witness ends his monologue –
Baranovich is *Judenfrei*:
He moves to take his leave of us.

Baranovich! Look what has become of you,
Look at what has happened to you –
You lost your zest, your crown is lost,
You will never see it ever again.
Your earth is now flecked with blood,
With Jewish blood, with suffering and pain,
A horror has separated us from you;
There is no glint, the shine has left.

The sun has passed over you,
There is darkness around and through;
It will never again shine,
It will never again come up.
The German came, the robber,
Exterminating great and small,
Robbing you of your magic,
Crippling your grace with his had.
You were a place of Torah study,
Of righteous men, *Gaonim* and scholars,
It awakens a terror, a fear,
When at this time, your face is seen.
You once had a large community,
With many leaders and many *Gabbaim*,
Every day the prayer was said:
'Next Year in Jerusalem!'
You have lost us forever,
Your daughters, your sons;
Even to pay respects to the dead in the cemetery
There is no one... there is no place to even go to...
When we now try to recollect:
Where are the young people? Where are the children?
Woe is me, have I gone blind?! –
Slaughtered like the flock of sheep.
Baranovich! See how naked and poor you are,
Look at what has remained of you: –
A desolation... so many mass graves
Of a Jewish community – such a dear one, such a beloved one.

Oh, you trained animals in human form!
Again you wait for crematoria and their smoke...--
It would be better for the earth to split,
And engorge all of humanity in its belly.

The Resistance Organization

By Eliezer Lidowsky

...concerning the resistance organization in our city, I am, regrettably, the only one here, who can provide a definitive and accurate overview, because, of the four members, who belonged to the staff of the clandestine organization, two fell: Moma Kapilowicz, and Dr. Abraha'sheh Abramowsky; the third, was Eli'cheh Zarickewicz, a Jewish student from Russia, who came to visit his family in Baranovich, Zarickewicz the Fisherman, and by happenstance, was forced to remain in our city and join in enduring the bitter fate of the Nazi occupation; now he is to be found in Russia. There was a fifth one, Chaim Becker – a refugee from Warsaw, now in Israel, who, actually, was not a member of our staff, even though he was responsible for the concealment of ammunition in the ghetto.

If, in other cities of Poland, the manifestation of resistance did not first occur until 1943, after the time when 80% of the Jewish population had already been exterminated – we, in the smaller towns of Byelorussia, cut off from contact with our brethren in the land, had already formed a resistance organization in the year 1942, and organized fighting groups. By the end of 1942, we were already active as partisans in the forests, fighting face-to-face with the bloody enemy, and exacting vengeance from him.

In the ghetto, also, there were many members of the fighting organization, who kept records and diaries. This very valuable historical material, however, was destroyed along with the fighters and those who kept these records. Accordingly, the only thing left is to utilize memory, which is not always so reliable.

Under the Nazi Occupation

Half dead, and half-alive, I arrived in Baranovich, after having escaped from the Nazi concentration camp in Minsk, where I has ended up by chance. The Jews had been beaten down. Many lived with the illusion that perhaps they will remain alive.

By good fortune, the first members of the *Judenrat* were me of honest disposition and inclination. It is worth mentioning the very decent persona of Yehoshua Izikson. In the ghetto, he showed the entirety of his spiritual grandeur, constantly serving as a living role model of idealism.

When I first returned to Baranovich, exhausted and spent from such a long trek by foot, Izikson came to me and said, that the *Gestapo* is demanding [the services of] two locksmiths, and if not, there will be victims [who will pay]. He beseeched me, and one other person, not to refuse him, and in order to raise our spirits, he came along with us, and took the first of the beatings.

At the end of 1942, the ghetto of Baranovich was officially created, in the four-sided area of: Howera-Poniatowskiego-Grafska-Wilenska.

The black, bitter end stood before our eyes, and despite this, Jews were not willing to believe. The refugees, who managed to steal their way into the Baranovich ghetto, after the slaughters that took place in the surrounding towns, like Ljahavičy, Haradzišča Hancavičy, Stoubcy, and others, told the full truth of what they had lived through, and despite this, people comforted themselves with: who knows, maybe this will not happen here – after all, Baranovich is a center for labor resources. However, there was no lack of people who

saw the dark side, such as Beloskurnik and Dr. Szafczyc (from Brisk). After Izikson's death, the openly cooperated with the *Judenrat* and with the Nazis.

Also, among the intelligentsia, there were pessimists, such as Dr. Nakhumowsky, Dr. Bussel, and others, who were raised in the spirit of a belief in humanity and civilization, found themselves now conflicted in their thoughts, seeing the world go under, the Jewish people exterminated, – and there seemingly is nothing that can be done.

The optimists tended to be the common people, people of faith and trust. One of these was my brother Herschel, who worked as a craftsman in the manufacturing plants of the air base in Baranovich, and every day, upon returning from work, he brought back some sort of a word of comfort, a good hope, a bit of an outlook; and it is ironic, that he was one of the first martyrs.

In the chaos of these sorts of conditions. every thought about a fighting resistance organization was frustrated. It was only after the First Slaughter, on March 4, 1942, was the ground made fertile for the concept of resistance.

The First Slaughter and the Rise of the Fighting Organization

On the eve of Purim of 5702 (March 3, 1942), the Nazi authorities began to divide the Jewish populace into those that were 'necessary' and those that were 'unnecessary.' The former, which consisted of those people capable of performing forced labor, received living cards for themselves and their families, together comprising about 6,000 souls. The others: older people, widows, and orphaned children – approximately 3,000 Jews – were sentenced to death.

The cards were given out on the last night before the slaughter. The ghetto was divided into two parts: the 'unnecessary' ones were allowed to remain in one part, and in the second – in the streets of Howera, Sadowa, and with these, having Wilenska as a border – for the so called 'lucky ones.' People ran about in a state of confusion for the entire night, pushing and straining to get the living cards, and going over with their families into the so called secure part of the ghetto.

At about 5:00AM, the distribution of the cards was halted, and all movement, and then – the bloodbath began.

By ten o'clock in the morning, about 1,400 Jews were killed. And when 1,600 victims were still missing from the quota of 3,000 at the designated hour, the murderers drove together all the Jews with living cards onto Rog Sadowa-Sosnowa (near the municipal area), and the *Gestapo* staff, by their sight selection, designated those whom should be sent to death, and who should remain alive. The elderly members of larger families were separately condemned.

On *Shushan-Purim* [sic: the next day], after the noon hour, exactly at the appointed time, the slaughter was halted. The Commissar of the *Gestapo*, Schlegel, ordered all of the Jews to assemble themselves at the house of the *Judenrat*, on Sadowa Gasse, and read out to them that the slaughter had ended, and they are being called back to normal life.

The leaders of the ghetto were detained at that time, and taken off to the killing field: Yehoshua Izikson, and his secretary, Mrs. Mann. From the German side, this was a warning, that these sorts of nationalist Jews,

possessed of awareness and character, are not desired by them in the *Judenrat*. For us, it was a sign, that the prior period, and its methods of operation are dead. Nevertheless, the new *Judenrat* learned nothing from this.

It was at that point that the decision ripened in my mind to establish a fighting organization.

The plan was built on personal contact with people, who had an idealistic upbringing, formed in smaller groups. Each group numbered five people, and one responsible individual; four groups (twenty people) formed a division, and a commander was placed in charge of the four groups. At the head of five divisions (one hundred people) was a Staff Commander. The activities were intensely conspiratorial. Upon formation of these groups, I connected with our comrades, Dr. Abramowsky, Warszawsky (the commandant of the Jewish Police), Oshmian, Ratkewicz, Hausenblosen, Mordukhowicz, Bussel, Gurwicz's son-in-law (who dealt in hay), Chaim Bussel and Yitzhak Itzkowitz.

Our first clandestine meeting took place on either the 17th or the 18th of March, two weeks after the slaughter, in the building of the Jewish Ghetto Police on Sadowa (Kessler House). Of the 22 Jewish policemen of the ghetto, 15 were in our organization. With the help of the Police Commandant Warszawsky, the above mentioned people were, so-to-speak, arrested in the middle of the night, – a natural occurrence in those days. The remaining 7 policemen were sent to perform service at some greater distance, away from the ghetto. On that night, an exception-resistance was declares, and it was made strongly forbidden for anyone to leave their homes. The Jewish Police were located beside the Gestapo (on the other side of the barbed wire). Two members of the ghetto police were set on watch (Schneidleder – today in Israel – and Mordukhowicz ע"ה).

The planning was short. I described the work-plan, which consisted of three parts: completing the organization of the quintets, obtaining arms, and obtaining money for weapons procurement. Then the fiery oath-taking was declared. Each member swore to be conspiratorial, loyal, and ready to carry out all orders of the command-organization. The oath was administered to all the attending participants with the exception of one (M. G.),who drew back at the last moment, declaring that he saw no good outlook for a resistance, and also that he cannot simply forfeit his family. The tone of the oath was:

> 'I swear by those of our own who have fallen, and those who remain alive, that I will exact revenge from the fascist murderers, will serve loyally to accomplish the objectives of the fighting-organization and carry out its orders unquestioningly. If I should betray this oath, – let the hand that punishes render its judgement.'

After the oath, the members were taken back to their homes under a police escort. Immediately after this, the actual work secretly began, on a broad front. In the course of April-May, our membership numbered 120.

At that time, I approached the ?? Moma Kapilowicz, and received a rebuffing reply. His position elicited a thought from me, that he was involved in this very matter on his own. I also was the recipient of rumors that Elyo'sheh Zarickewicz was organizing a group among the Jews doing forced labor, in the various *Gestapo* formations. To me, it was clear that the various fighting organization would complicate the situation and could precipitate a calamity. My first goal was to unite these previously mentioned three groups, at any price.

According to my information, Moma's group consisted of 24 young members (20 young men and 4 young women) and Elyo'sheh's group consisted of 40 men. I met for a second time with Moma Kapilowicz, and again, he stubbornly ignored me, and dissembled the truth. Later on, it became evident that he had no faith

in the older people, but only in the young. I then gave him an ultimatum, that if in the course of three days they do not agree to integrate their forces, their organization will be dissolved, and their weapons confiscated (we had precise information). He continued to attempt to resist, but on the morrow, after taking counsel with his members, he decided to accept the offer to integrate forces.

The united forces stood at close to 200 members, including 15 women. A staff of four members was organized: Dr. Abramowsky, Kapilowicz, Zarickewicz, and the writer of these lines.

The objectives were divided in according to the following: I was responsible for the organizing work – contact with members and coordination among them, the groups and divisions; Dr. Abramowsky – for all activity inside the ghetto (we worked outside); Moma Kapilowicz had the mission of procuring weapons and ammunition, and Elyo'sheh was designated to worry about procuring financial resources.

At the first meeting, Chaim Becker (today in Israel) was elected as the expert to look after the maintenance of all weaponry in good condition, and for highly clandestine negotiations. Our headquarters was on Orla [*Gasse*] in the home of Kh. Laksin.

Support and Reactions in the Ghetto

At the time that the fighting organization was organized, I was in contact with a variety of people about whom I did not have the slightest doubt as regards their reliability.

I met with Abba Zakin often, the leader of the division for social assistance in the *Judenrat.* His position was that, a group of 200 Jews do not have the moral right to find a way out, and in the process place in danger the lives of seven thousand Jews in the ghetto. His opinion was, that: if the fighting-organization, on the day of the uprising, can demonstrate that it can rescue a thousand, or two thousand Jews from the ghetto and transfer them to the forest – then, it is possible they can justify their existence; other than that, his conscience does not permit him to take part actively in such an organization. Despite this, he stood in contact with us, and generated financial resources for our battle fund. He withstood all tribulation, and stood pure as crystal to the last moment. With the last of his energies, he cared for all the Jews of the ghetto, without exception (the old, the sick, and the weak), to make sure they would not expire from hunger. He fell during the final slaughter, at his post.

Joseph Limon was a different type (from the workers' division of the *Judenrat*) and his position was different. Personally, having been raised religiously, he held that the only way left for us was to die as martyrs *'In Sanctification of The Name.'* Our struggle is hopeless, and we must prepare ourselves for an honorable death through a mass-suicide.

Dr. Nakhumowsky has a similar position. A number knew enough to tell, that he committed suicide together with his wife during the First Slaughter. It is more correct to say that he refused a life-card, which he most certainly would have been granted.

The young *Rebbe* from Slonim had a healthier view of the situation. He had already exhibited an interest in the fighting-organization, staying in contact with us, through Abba Zakin, and through him remained informed on the progress of the work.

Young Dr. Bussel was also one of the idealists. He was an expression of the mood of resignation that reigned among the Jewish intelligentsia. They thirstily imbibed each and every tale about the activities of the partisans in the forests, the echoes of which had begun to reach the ghettoes, – and yet despite this, remained unable to act, out of their sense of bewilderment. They would wish us that only the One God should help us...Dr. Bussel himself was killed very tragically; as an eye doctor, the Nazi murderers put out his eyes before they killed him.

Mr. Svjacicky (the Beer Merchant) was a role model for timidity . One day, he caught wind of some aspect of the fighting-organization, and suspected that I had something to do with the matter; so he invited me to a discussion for purposes of investigation, both pleading and warning, that the activity in question be aborted, for God's sake, because if the Nazis find out about it – the entire ghetto will be lost. At the same time, his wife, the Vice-Chair – was herself active in the fighting-organization, and stood at the head of a women's division.

Activity and Plans of the Fighting-Organization

The human resources of the fighting-organization consisted of three cohorts: young people, between the ages of 16 to 25-30 years of age, representing between 60-70% of the membership of the organization. Adults, who had already lost their families in The First Slaughter; a smaller percentage (about 5%) was made up of those, whose families were still alive. 40% of the members were refugees from surrounding towns. the majority – ordinary rank and file people; by contrast, the graduated intelligentsia was very poorly represented.

Sabotage

Apart from the previously mentioned objectives of the staff command, the immediate question posed was: by what means should our active endeavor be expressed against the Nazis? A work plan was laid out, which consisted of three parts: sabotage, preparations for an open rebellion and contact with the established partisan movement in the nearby forests.

The implementation of sabotage needed to be kept strenuously discreet. Members of the group were represented in each and every group that worked outside of the ghetto. The work groups were divided into two cohorts: unskilled and skilled. The degree of sabotage carried out by the first group was limited. Jews, with more capability generally presented themselves as skilled – it was held that this entailed a greater probability of staying alive – and around each skilled laborer, or craftsman, there congregated several fictitious ones. So, for example, there were 340 Jews working at the aerodrome as skilled workers, but in reality there were only 30-40 craftsmen.

As luck would have it, the oversight at the workplace in these factories was in the hands of older Germans – civilian craftsmen – the so-called 'technical support,' and they were more interested in their own private affairs. Enforcing discipline was a rarity with them, and for the most part, were not even at the workplace.

In the city (outside the ghetto) there were larger factories involving carpentry, making locks, clothing manufacture, etc.; The number of Jewish craftsmen there was larger. Many Jews worked in the ammunition dumps, that the Nazis had confiscated from the Russians. Jews also worked in the factories of Kushnir and Yosselewicz.

Our comrades in the groups received an order to sabotage the work, wherever possible. In this way, for example, basic and fundamental, and complex acts of sabotage, were carried out in the divisions of the craftsmen of the aerodrome for electronic technology, electrical machinery, lock manufacture, etc., and the work therefore suffered from chronic stress.

I worked in the factory of the small train cars that connected the aerodrome to the forests at Kryvošyn. At that time, in the summer of 1942, we got our first messages from the Russian partisans, that operated in these forests. they had blown up several of the locomotives of the small train, and we got them for repair. I got the opportunity to establish a relationship with a Polish overseer, a former communist (today, he is the chief of the same small train line in Baranovich), who worked with us for the entire time. Of the nine locomotives, that ran between the aerodrome and Kryvošyn, seven were always in the shop. The same occurred in other shop locations. Fires would often break out in the carpentry shops, and especially in the middle of he night, when we were all back in the ghetto.

During the summer, one of the larger powder magazines blew up (not far from the green bridge, where the victims of The First Slaughter are buried). Unfortunately, the explosion took place prematurely, and the suspicion fell on two brothers, the sons of the butcher, Shlomo Minkowicz; they were murdered by the Nazis. There were other instances of this kind.

We accomplished much by the use of bribery, which we gave to the local German and local overseers – and both left us alone.

Battle Plans

If, in regards to sabotage, there was a clear understanding in the staff command as to what this meant, questions of uprising and partisan-like activity elicited a sharp discussion over meaning and understanding, resulting in dramatic discussions.

Some held that we needed to get organize and go off to the forests under the rubric of 'Whoever can save himself, let him do it!' and leave the ghetto the sooner the better. Moma Kapilowicz and Alyosha Zarickewicz were of this view. They represented that under no circumstances would we be in a position to stage an uprising within the ghetto: – the populace – they said – is mostly made up of smaller and larger families, and at the first sign of a disturbance, they will run to hide themselves in the previously arranged bunkers, and we will be left alone, doomed to a certain death. It is only the forest that will enable us to implement an immediate program of vengeance against the Nazis.

The second school of thought. which was represented by me (and initially also supported by Dr. Abramowsky), demanded that we prepare for an uprising even before the Germans will organize a second slaughter, and with that, to enable additional hundreds, and perhaps thousands, of Jews to flee the ghetto. In those days, over 7,000 Jews still lived in the ghetto, and we had ammunition for only 40-50 men. My intent was that if we were to take the initiative in our hands, and use the element of surprise at the moment, there is the outlook that we could save several thousand Jews; in contrast, were we to sit and wait until they, the Nazis, will get their plans for a slaughter put together, – our chances would be non-existent.

A third point of view, represented by several responsible members of the fighting-organization, held the view that we should not elicit an uprising so long as we are not certain a slaughter was in the making – that we

should not 'call the bear out of the forest.' We must methodically prepare and organize the uprising in such a way, that it will be ready to break out not sooner than the day of the slaughter itself.

After all of the discussions, the proposal was accepted that: the initiative for the uprising must be in our hands, and we are not to wait for the slaughter.

The Plan for the Uprising

My plan for the uprising, with a number of improvements made by the staff members, consisted of the following:

The fighting organization was divided into two parts: the first for purposes involving fighting, and the second for a variety of commando sorties, such as igniting fires, mining with explosives, and the use of poison.

The plan encompassed the ghetto and the entire city, which was divided into three points, in accordance with those workplaces where Jews were employed, and entirely separately from those places where our members were present. The key access points to the city were exactly specified, the aerodrome, and surrounding military camps. The ghetto needed to serve as the communications center for the outbreak of the uprising.

Part of the ammunition, that was in our possession, was especially set aside for the ghetto, and the rest – divided up and hidden in various caches, as for example, in the Grafska Gasse and its surrounding smaller side streets, which were occupied by the Gestapo formations and where about 70 Jews were employed, most of whom were our organized members. Other points were the aerodrome, the military camp, and the radio station. The lighter weaponry, such as revolvers, was designated to be used at the lesser critical points, where only few Jews were employed, and the guard detail was weak.

Igniting the explosions and release of poison needed to take place simultaneously at all points. The appropriate flammable material was set up in designated spots, such as benzine, oil, dynamite, as well as a variety of chemical compounds to poison the Nazi kitchens.

For the interior half of the ghetto, a separate command was set up, consisting of the members, Dr. Abramowsky, and the Ghetto Police Chief, Warszawsky. A group of 30 members stood at their disposition, who were taken care of by Dr. Abramowsky, according to the cohort, with the appropriate materials for taking care of the sick and wounded. Their mission was to maintain the firearms, prepare the base for battle, and to guard the ghetto from a surprise attack. Warszawsky was responsible for giving the signal for the uprising in the ghetto. To accomplish this, eight members stood at the ready from the police manpower. Five of them were to attack the bordering Gestapo with hand grenades, and the nearby Byelorussian Police Station. Hillel Schneidleder (today in Israel) was delegated, at that same moment, to set the ghetto police headquarters on fire (Kesslin House). Our member Itcheh was delegated to guard the ghetto gate, and to wipe out every Nazi that should suddenly appear at the gate. Other members were to set various points in the ghetto on fire, on all sides. The necessary tools were provisioned for cutting through the barbed wire.

The flight was to take place in the direction of Kottliebeiss Forest, 17 kilometers from the city, on the south side. Special members were designated to act as traffic directors for those who would be fleeing.

The explosion, and the burning building of the Gestapo headquarters, was to serve as the signal of the beginning of the uprising, to all the members at all points. Every surviving member was required, after carrying out his specific mission, first and foremost, to present himself at a specified location in the forest.

Mrs. Svjacicky was responsible for carrying out the plan for poisoning the Nazi kitchens, and 15 women were placed at her disposal, who worked in the Nazi kitchens.

The order was that each member needed to carry out their mission at any price, and only after that, flee to the forest. The threat of a death sentence hung over the head of anyone who did not carry out his order for no good reason, or anyone who drew back. For this purpose, a precise list of the membership was drawn up, their points and orders. There were conspiratorial group meetings, in which the plan for the uprising was clarified.

After the first preparations were taken care of, the question arose for setting the day of the uprising. The mood of the membership was elevated.

In the end, the command selected the date and hour of the uprising: Thursday, July 19, 1942, at 4 o'clock in the morning. The date and time were communicated to the group leaders, who then authorized to convey this information to the membership not earlier that the last day before the uprising.

Taking the Oath

Approximately two weeks before the designated date, at a meeting of the staff, a proposal was placed on the agenda to postpone the uprising until the last day before the upcoming slaughter. They argued that the responsibility for the ghetto does not permit them to announce the uprising as the time it had been set for. It was their sense, that a danger was present, that most of the Jews of the ghetto will be asphyxiated or burned in their hideout bunkers, before they will be able to show themselves and get to the outside. They also held the position that, preparations were not at the required level, and more time needed to be allocated for preparatory activities. Apart from that – they added – a more intimate contact needs to be established with the partisan movement in the surrounding forests.

Despite the fact that I did not believe the outlook of their plans, I did not dare to take on my conscience the entire responsibility for the results of an uprising that might be premature.

As became evident later, the entire matter was a deception maneuver. Moma Kapilowicz and Alyosha Zarickewicz were able to win over Dr. Abramowsky, that the only realistic way for us to get out was for us to sneak out of the ghetto, with weapons, and to be active in the forests as a partisan group (meaning that they wanted to follow their original plan).

At that time, on a daily basis, when I would return from work, Warszawsky would report on the events of the day in the ghetto. On one of these stormy days, he described to me, that in our secret ammunition cache, near the Bund club on the Orla *Gasse*, where the large cement pipes went through from the city water reservoir, which also served us as a means of egress to the outside (outside the ghetto), about 40 of our comrades were gathering, who were planning to leave the ghetto in the middle of the night, along with weaponry; Moma Kapilowicz and Alyosha Zarickewicz stand at their head. There was a suspicion that Dr. Abramowsky was somehow also mixed up in this affair.

All my efforts to meet with Moma and Alyosha that evening came to naught. Later on, it became evident that each of the 40 who were invited, were led into the bunker near the pipes, and the way back for them was locked. A certain M. T. stood watch while fully armed.

The trained machine-gunner Kh' Shaul Wolansky was unsuccessful even in using all of his might, to convince the members there that their act was not the right thing to do.

The matter got through to the *Judenrat,* and from minute-to-minute, the mood of the ghetto grew increasingly tense.

At ten o'clock in the evening, I had a chance to meet with Alyosha. Our confrontation was a very tragic one. I gave an order to immediately evacuate the bunker, and declared that I see this as a betrayal in the ghetto, and a knife in the back of the fighting-organization. I also warned that 120 members of the organization, armed with revolvers and grenades, have surrounded the house, and the entire ghetto, and if they do not draw back, we will open fire on the Nazi police. Under these circumstance, it will be impossible to flee. All of us will be under fire.

Alyosha personally drew back, and entered the bunker to convince his comrades, that they should give up their plan. The atmosphere becomes increasingly more and more electrified. His first visit was not successful.

At the same time, the members of the *Judenrat,* the sorrowfully-known Beloskurnik and Svjacic, sent out a group of policemen, under the leadership of a certain Peretz (a one-time hansom driver, later shot in the forest), with a warrant for the arrest of Alyosha and to bring him to the *Judenrat*. Beloskurnik himself approached us, with sharp warnings, saying that everything is known to him, and he set out an ultimatum, that if we do not destroy our ammunition, and dissolve the fighting-organization, he will turn us over to the *Gestapo.* I asked for ten minutes time to consult with Alyosha. At that moment, I stood in a crossfire: on the one side, the united 40 members and on the other side – the *Judenrat*. Alyosha, at that moment, suddenly felt the entire responsibility for the created predicament, and reacted with lightning-speed: first, first to alert Beloskurnik and Sawczyc, and secondly, to extract the comrades from the bunker.

When we returned to the room, they asked: Nu? What is the answer? The answer was curt and to the point. As we had agreed among ourselves, Alyosha drew his revolver and categorically stated, that from this point and onwards, we do not recognize the *Judenrat* as a responsible agent for the lives of the Jews of the ghetto, and any further threats against us, to turn us in, will be punishable by death. Beloskurnik and Sawczyc turned pale as death – and stood standing as if paralyzed.

As soon as we exited the Judenrat, Alyosha went off for the second time to order his comrades to leave the bunker. At that minute, I coincidentally was able to accost Abramowsky: he was entirely disassembled. 'What is the matter with you?' – I asked.

–Let whoever can rescue himself, do so!!' – he answered in Russian, at the same time as he aimed a revolver at me. I coldly warned him: 'It is too late, the matter is resolved.' He then calmed down.

When Alyosha went into the bunker to demand that the comrades withing come out, I suddenly heard a shot from a sawed-off shotgun. A shudder ran through my body... 'a victim has fallen from an internal struggle among brothers' – is what I thought. Fortunately, the bullet did not hit in the dark, and with that, the matter ended – everyone left the bunker.

It is worth noting, in this connection, that the forty united comrades were mostly young people, refugees from the surrounding vicinity, who had no [real] connection to the city itself.

To our good fortune, this sharp, stressful crisis went by quickly, and the atmosphere became lightened. Our subsequent work was harmonious, and without stress.

At that time, we had already established contact with the Russian partisans in the surrounding forests. and they demanded young people and ammunition. The forest, at that time, had its own cruel rules. People without weapons, or unfit for battle, were threatened with death, in the event that they fled into the forests.

The taking of the oath was prepared under the influence of the information that we had received about the partisans. On the one side, the forest beckoned, with its promise of freedom and the opportunity to exact revenge, and from the other side – the enslavement and tortured waiting for death in the ghetto. The trial was intense...

We can underscore with both satisfaction and pride, that we had not a single provocateur or traitor, and this entire incident remained a secret in regards to the outside world.

Further Configuration of the Fighting-Organization

I proposed a reorganization in the allocation of powers and weaponry in the ghetto proper, with the objective of avoiding similar acts of passion. Will a number of improvements, the plan was accepted.

The reorganization took place in the following manner. The ghetto was divided into quarters, and over each quarter, a commander was appointed. The commanders were: Monik Muszinsky, Moshe Himmelfarb, Chaim y, Shlomo Rev, Monik Dobkowsky, and Chaim Osowsky.

A special cache was designated in each quarter for weaponry, under the oversight of a responsible member. These responsible members were: Chaim Stolovicky (today in Israel), Zygelboym (son of the well-known leader of the *Bund*, who committed suicide in London[153]), Zhameh Szwec and the previously mentioned

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153 *From the account of Jan Karski's attempt to tell the world about the dimensions of the Nazi Holocaust:*

Mr. Zygelboym listened in pain then said, "It's impossible, utterly impossible".

In London, Mr. Karski told his story to Szmuel Zygelboym, who represented the Jewish Socialist Bund in the National Council of the Polish Government-in-Exile. Mr. Zygelboym listened in pain then said, "It's impossible, utterly impossible." If he went on a hunger strike, he said, the authorities would send the police and drag him away to an institution. But, he said, "I'll do everything I can do to help them. I'll do everything they ask."

A few months later, on May 12, 1943, just after the Germans defeated the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, Mr. Zygelboym sent a letter to the president and prime minister of Poland in exile and took his own life.

Zygelboym wrote: "By my death I wish to make my final protest against the passivity with which the world is looking on and permitting the annihilation of the Jewish people."

members Itcheh and Shaul. The responsibility, as the general overseer for all weaponry, remained with Chaim Becker.

The centralization also had the objective of assuring immediate capacity for self-defense in the ghetto, should the need arise.

After arranging for the appropriate hiding places, the weaponry was transferred to the designated caches.

Work then returned to its normal course.

Ammunition

Abandoned Russian supplies served as our source of weaponry, which, in general, was scattered about in the war-plundered magazines. military bases, and the *Gestapo* locations, where our members worked(machine guns, rifles, grenades and cartridges). The Germans were rather certain that no one would risk their lives by possessing arms.

In, and around, the military bases, there were scattered rifles with broken wooden stocks, that the Russians left behind when they retreated. By contrast, being able to acquire a revolver was entirely not one of the easiest things to do; one needed to pay dearly for such an item, and to buy such an item from the local Christian populace entailed assuming a risk to one's life. Every member was under orders to extract whatever form of weaponry that was possible, that can be hidden or buried somewhere, and to advise the central command of it.

Then, a plan was developed for how to bring the weaponry into the ghetto.

In the first period, we principally relied on sawed-off rifles. The members would collect these items, discard the [broken] wooden stocks, and saw off the barrels. This 'operation' was carried out even under the watch of Nazi overseers, – under the pretense that such annular piping was needed for work. The disassembled rifle barrels, would be carried into the ghetto, one at a time, by various means. The same thing occurred in the plundered ammunition dumps.

The most difficult problem was, how do we smuggle the ammunition into the ghetto? – The work was organized on a collective basis. Upon returning from work, every one of us underwent a search at the ghetto gate. They especially were looking for foodstuffs. The hunger portion for the Jews in the ghetto consisted of 120 grams of ersatz-bread and several grams of groats, per person. At our workplaces, we additionally were given a watery soup made from vegetable residue. The intent was – to starve the ghetto [residents] to death. It is self-evident, that nobody spared any effort, or initiative, to fashion edibles for himself and his family Before departing for work, we would dress in the last of the clothing that we still possessed, in order to 'barter' it for food. The principal battle waged by the *Gestapo* and the Byelorussian police, was directed against the admission of just such products into the ghetto, and woe betide the individual who has packed away a bit of butter, or a small bread; not a few Jews paid with their lives for such an 'infraction.'

Despite this, a black market, in foodstuffs, flourished in the ghetto, that were brought in by various means from the 'outside.' In such transactions, the best coin was gold, silver and jewelry.

The 'underground'-activity of the *Judenrat* and of the ghetto police consisted of trying to get however more food was possible into the ghetto. The Jewish police, which served as the official service contact with the Gestapo, and its Byelorussian accomplices, exploited the inherent greed of the Nazis to enrich themselves on account of our denouement, and from time-to-time were able to bribe the guards at the gate, so that they should 'look between the fingers' during their inspections and not interdict the smuggling of food.

We, further, always endeavored not to let such opportunities pass by in our ammunition smuggling. Also, the relative freedom of movement of the ghetto police on the 'outside' helped a great deal. Our comrades in the police, on a daily basis, would brief us on the outlook for the inspections at the gate, and by a previously-agreed to password, we knew whether or not the situation was auspicious for us, or not. Our comrades, at the various workplaces, would then take out parts of the weaponry and ammunition and the sequestered grenades, and tie them around their bodies; bullets were hidden in shoes, and in boots. Upon entering the ghetto, the members of the police were already waiting for them, and escorted them to a designated location. From there, the materiel was taken and stored in a secret location, which was located in a large bunker that was ten meters long, and two meters underground. It was here that the wooden components were matched up to the rest, repaired, put together and the ammunition tested. It was here that shooting practice was conducted, mission objectives, etc.

The following members were responsible for safeguarding this location: Chaim Becker, Chaim Stolovicky, Abraham Lidowsky, and Zhameh Szwec – all former weapons craftsmen in the Polish army. The conspiracy was entrusted to the member, Orlick.

The second way to smuggle in whole rifles was discovered a little later. From time-to-time, we received permission to bring in a bit of firewood into the ghetto. In the wagon, there would be 10-12 short-cut two meter logs. We would split open such a log lengthwise, hollow it out a place in the middle large enough for a rifle, glue the two halves back together, sufficiently carefully that you could not detect the modification, and we would then toss this contrived treasure in, and mix it with the other 'innocent' logs. We brought in quite a large amount of weaponry into the ghetto in this fashion. All of this work was very risky, and demanded skill.

Another way to smuggle in weaponry was by means of the sanitation wagon, which was used to remove all waste from the ghetto. On the way back, a small amount of weaponry would be stashed in the empty barrel, and covered with remnants of the waste.

Every time we had the chance to get weaponry into the ghetto, was literally a holiday to all of the comrades.

Among the women, it was our comrade, Khil'keh Borishansky who distinguished herself in this undertaking (today in Israel). She would often tie grenades and other explosive materials around her body.

The First Failure

During the entire time of weapon smuggling there were no incidents of failure. Every one of the members naturally had their own ambition to possess a personal weapon. The majority of revolvers in the ghetto were in the private hands of the comrades.

We assured this, knowing that every improperly organized smuggling operation can bring all of us down. The one failure – carried out by Monik Muszinsky – indeed occurred in the area of a 'private initiative.'

Monik Muszinsky was the *de facto* head of the electronics division of the aerodrome, and thanks to his high position, he enjoyed a variety of privileges. Being a member in good-standing of the organization, that for this 'reason' it is desired that he should have a personal gun with bullets. He was also the transporter of wood into the ghetto, and because of this, it once fell to him to smuggle in a private rifle without our knowledge. Afterwards, he additionally planned to bring in bullets for his rifle, by his own hand. Since we were not informed, he would have to pick out a day on which a strict inspection was carried out. Taking advantage of the situation, in which he would be working alone on that day, he attempted to bring in the bullets with a couple of kilos of butter, in a breadbasket. Several hundred meters from the ghetto gate, he joined our ranks. The members, knowing the nature of the danger of an imminent inspection, were on that day proceeding 'clean,' and with calm. In order not to elicit any suspicion, he did not even make the customary casual inquiry of 'how are things?'

To his great astonishment, he spotted the stringent inspection not far from the gate, and not thinking very much, immediately hung the basket from the thill of the hitched wagon, that was hitched to a horse, and was being led by a young boy. He, himself, went through into the ghetto, and moved off to a side, in order to observe, at a distance, the critical moment of the inspection.

Not sensing any danger, the comrades spread out through the ghetto. I had not yet been at the point of coming home, when suddenly a great commotion ensued. Everyone began to run, and hide themselves in the bunkers, and before I even oriented myself to what had taken place in the ghetto, the sound of panicked voices reached me, saying: 'Ammunition has been found at the gate!' As I immediately learned, the Byelorussian police had inspected the basket and its contents, and then wildly shouted out in the direction of the Gestapo, in their broken German: 'Jews! Bullets!...' Their shout reverberated like thunder throughout the ghetto, and instilled a fear and a panic among the Jews.

The young boy was scared to death, and under a hail of blows, they extracted from him, that the owner of the basket was Monik Muszinsky.

The events developed at lightning speed. Monik immediately ran to me, admitted that it was his basket, and asked what should be done. My first advice was for him to hide himself in our hideout. However, it was already too late; before he could even try to do something, he was noticed by the Jews in the ghetto.

At the same time, Solomon Israel (the pathetically known intermediary between the *Gestapo* and the *Judenrat*) ordered the Jewish police to arrest Monik, and bring him to the ghetto police. He also called on all of the Jews to cooperate with him, in their own interest. Out of the entire ghetto police, only two policemen presented themselves to be at his disposal.

At that tragic moment, I met with Israel. With a cynical smile on his face, he called out to me: 'Well, what will you have to say about that? Now your end has arrived!'

'Your *schadenfreude* is premature!' I immediately replied, -- 'We will give you a short amount of time to resolve this matter by means of the ghetto-*Gestapo,* for the account of gold and jewelry fund, which is in possession of the *Judenrat* for times of need; if not...we will be compelled to open fire, and you will be the first victim' – I added.

His *schadenfreude* was immediately transformed into a bitter whine, and he immediately ran to the *Gestapo* to squelch the entire issue.

In the meantime, Monik fled... and before my eyes, to this day, the terrifying image stands, of a mob of Jews, bereft of their senses, chasing after him with wild shouts...

Our existence, as an armed fighting organization, on one side, awakened a sense of respect from the ghetto, spirit, and hope, but on the other side, also no small amount of fear and confusion. At this moment, that suppressed fear burst out into the open. People instinctively wanted to save themselves, for any price, and in any direction.

Recognizing his conflicted position, Monik decided to commit suicide, and on the run, he jumped into a deep pond on the Orla *Gasse.* Fate however decided that he should remain alive; The ghetto police pulled him out alive, and as if in imitation of some Black Wedding Ceremony, led the victim through the aroused mass of Jews, to the ghetto police.

In that gruesome hour, I stood under the circled fire of the members, who argues that now, everything was lost, and that Monik will be tortured for so long, until he will reveal everything – and therefore we have to do something, we have to make an immediate decision: open fire, meaning to begin waging a battle...or – flee immediately from the ghetto. I mustered all of my strength, in order to win over the membership, to recognize that every action, and every unplanned move is tantamount to suicide.

Monik was detained and incarcerated in the ghetto jail, and all members of the *Judenrat,* who would be answerable with their heads, in the event that he should escape, surrounded and sat around the building.

At a sitting of our staff, at night, at which this situation was deliberated, from all of its angles and dangers, it was decided not to undertake any action so long as the situation does not become clearer. All that was declared was a condition of ready alert.

We knew that the Chief *Gestapo* Commandant, Schlegel, comes every day at eight o'clock in the morning to collect his victims. In connection with this, we found it necessary to meet with Monik, before that murderer will move to appear in the ghetto, in order to observe his mood, and grasp of the situation, and to convey our decisions, and requirement of him, as to how he should conduct himself under cross-examination. We also agreed to demand that, should Schlegel decided to take him along, that he is to commit suicide by poisoning himself, but not in the ghetto...

The meeting with Monik carried with it the danger of being drawn in as a co-conspirator. The mood was tense – who is to be chosen for such a dangerous mission? This difficult mission was placed on the most senior member – on me.

At six in the morning, I was, so to speak, arrested by the ghetto police, and placed in Monik's cell. His bearing was heroic. Before I could even begin to open my mouth, he already said to me: 'I know the reason you are here… tell the comrades that even if I am cut to pieces, limb by limb while still alive, the *Gestapo* will get nothing out of me.'

I then took control of my own inner tension, and conveyed the cruel decision taken by our staff: 'We have full faith in you, but you must commit suicide, in the instance that you are taken out of the ghetto.' --and I said to him—'Warszawsky will convey the small bottle of poison to you at the last moment.'

Coldly and calmly, he consented to our decision, and provided the assurance that he will carry out the order. He asked that regards from him be sent to his wife and sister, and we exchanged kisses.

In the meantime, the gold and the jewelry, that Israel had offered to the local *Gestapo* Commandant, began to slowly have an effect. It was explained to him, that in the crowded conditions of the ghetto, many lice had come in, and it was Monik's aim to simply mimic the example of the German conscripts, who made use of the gunpowder from Russian bullets to burn out the lice.

The thought that Jews would be so bold as to even dare to think about an armed uprising in these conditions – looked fantastic and unbelievable in the eyes of the *Gestapo* commandant; he was more inclined to see, in the entire incident, the capricious act of an individual, rather than the conspiratorial action of a group. He faced the alternative of picking on either a massive bloodbath, or taking the gold and jewelry, that the circumstance had placed before him, and he picked the latter.

As to his observation, that 70 bullets were a bit excessive for the lice in a cramped jail cell, he was given to understand that Monik has in mind the lice pestering his comrades as well. As it evolved, 50 bullets completely disappeared under the control of the Gestapo commandant himself, and the remaining 20 bullets were worked over in a fashion so that the only thing remaining from them were the cartridge cases and the powder.

The idea about the powder and its use against lice, was originated by the ghetto police, and was immediately communicated to Monik for his use during interrogation.

A miracle occurred. The ghetto was saved from a slaughter and Monik paid for this with one hundred lashes, in two installments, in the presence of the entire populace of the ghetto.

On the Eve of The Second Slaughter

Our inventory of weaponry, on the eve of The Second Slaughter was: 70 rifles, 2 machine guns, 15,000 rounds of ammunition, 500 grenades, an a couple of boxes of dynamite. There were also 40 revolvers, mostly in the private possession of the membership. Part of the ammunition was sequestered away in a variety of places outside of the ghetto.

Our attention, at that time, was directed to preparing the comrades for the uprising, at the precise moment when it would become evident that it was needed to do so, as well as trying to amass additional firepower. On the basis of our own findings, and information we obtained from the Russian partisans, we knew that the best possibility for the survival of the Jews was dependent on the small cache of ammunition he would bring with him, into the forest, in the event that it becomes possible for him to flee.

The bitter time, and the indirect influence of our uncertain survival as a fighting organization, led many Jews in the ghetto to conclude that there was no way out by just sitting on one's hands and waiting for miracles to happen – something has to be done. A search began, to find various means that could be done by ourselves, that would enable us to rescue ourselves, such as obtaining a personal revolver, creating connections to gentiles of our acquaintance, and to prepare a place of refuge where to flee. Groups were also organized for the purpose of fleeing into the forest, in the event of a slaughter. Indirectly, the fighting organization was a supporting psychological factor, and an agent for showing the way, for those Jews in the ghetto, who were in viable physical condition, to save themselves in a time of distress. The plight of the elderly Jews, women and children, the sick and the weak, -- was hopeless. In their resigned circumstances, these people saw, in every initiative impelled by the desire to remain alive, and in every manifestation of self-defense – a danger to their own precariously uncertain existence.

In that time, we received daily gruesome reports about liquidation-slaughters in all of the surrounding Jewish settlements. After such an extermination, such a settlement was declared to be '*Judenrein.*' Despite this, there was no shortage of Jews to be found, who clutched at every burned stalk of straw: Who knows, maybe they will let us go!? – Baranovich is, after all, a large work-center, and one of the most important military bases.

In the last months of 1942, the solitary Jewish survivors, from the neighboring settlements, that remained alive, found their way to the partisans, and fought in their ranks against their common enemy. It was only now that the Nazis ran into a new type of Jew, that fought heroically, and exacted vengeance.

On a certain day in August 1942, we learned from the older German civilian overseers, that a funeral was going to take place for 12 Nazis, who fell in a sortie against the partisans in the forests between Baranovich and Slonim. According to their story, the majority, of this group of partisans, were Jewish, who fired on them from behind the cover of trees. Among those killed Nazis was the head man Grünzfelder, who on one morning, had ridden into the ghetto together with a woman – and just for the fun of it, shot several Jews.

The Nazis began to exhibit signs of nervousness. They then began to relate to us with suspicion and fear, and from time-to-time attempted to look for weaponry in the ghetto. Their sense of personal security became weaker.

Later on, it already became clear, that their extermination plan was being implemented stepwise, but only with the greatest precision. In the first phase, they concentrated the Jews in the ghettoes, after which, they exterminated all the weaker ones and their families. The later phase, aimed to liquidate the entire 'unnecessary' population of the ghetto, transferring the craftsmen and the remaining laboring resources to a concentration camp with the intention of eventually liquidating them as well.

One time, in the middle of a day, the Gestapo came into the ghetto and looked for arms in the attics (apparently someone had informed them). However, they found nothing. The truth is, that they were not far from their objective. So, for example, on the Sadowa Gasse, they thoroughly searched through the attic of a house, and went away with nothing. In that house, an arms cache actually was there, only underground.

This search served as a warning to us, that someone in the ghetto was passing them information about weaponry.

A War of Nerves

In that time, we lived through a particularly difficult war of nerves. Every day, contradictory rumors were spread amongst us. One person would bring a bit of news that he had personally spoken with a higher ranking Nazi official from the area administration and that the person has told him any day, at any hour, even at a minute's notice, we can count of an *aktion*. Someone else has information to say that, from a person that stands at the head of the Nazi Labor administration, that first and foremost, no more slaughters were going to take place, and all rumors and discussions, about this, were hysterical convulsions.

On their part, the Nazis worked out and prepared their plans in strict secret, and at the same time, they systematically spread contradictory rumors with the objective of destroying our morale. As a result, nerves became taut to the breaking point.

From time-to-time, we declared readiness drills on our part. There were instances, when comrades stood watch for the entire night beside the weaponry. Also, the machine guns stood ready in the attics, and special points of danger (one such point, diagonally opposite the ghetto gate, Rog Sadowa-Sosnowa, and the second near the old age home). The members were told that these were only maneuvers, to control the state of readiness of our organization, and its combat readiness. In fact, these alarm maneuvers were arranges at times when we had received information about a threatening danger of a slaughter, which we were to anticipate at any minute.

Nazi Preparations for The Second Slaughter

As later became evident, the Nazis prepared their plan for the slaughter in a fundamentally meticulous fashion. They even anticipated, and took into account, an eventual resistance, and made use of every ways and means to fool us.

Regrettably, I must confirm that Jewish informants aided them in this respect, who wanted to save their own lives through treachery. The Nazi strategies of deception, to our misfortune, were very effective. They knew a lot more about us, than we did about them.

It is also necessary to note, that in the cross hairs of a danger of extermination, we stood not only against the *Gestapo*, but also against almost the entire Christian population, which had, almost without exception, cooperated completely with the Germans.

The conflicted Jews would turn over their last bit of gold and jewelry to the Christians, and the gentiles, after they had sworn on their own humanity, and by everything that was holy to them, to help their 'friends' in a time of trouble – would turn them over into the hands of the Nazis.

The scope of the Nazi slaughter plan looked as follows: first to extract all those Jews who were able-bodied and able to work – and afterwards, carry out a liquidation of the ghetto.

In order not to arouse any suspicion, they wore the uniforms of their '*Todt*' organization, which consisted of the so-called work-battalions, which until that time, had never taken part in any of the slaughters. The Jews saw in tem only people who assigned work, and overseers. Some time previously, they had demanded of the *Judenrat* to supply a thousand Jews for work in Molodechno. At that time, they had taken only 700

men, and were now returning, so to speak, to fill out the number. The first to be deceived were the members of the *Judenrat,* and also a couple of comrades from the fighting organization, who were responsible for giving the signal for an uprising (Warszawsky, and under his influence, also Abramowsky).

A day before Yom Kippur Eve, I has an accident at work: a large blacksmith hammer fell and broke my foot. After receiving first aid, I asked Dr. Abramowsky to allow me to be taken home. I knew that, no matter what would happen, the first victims would be the weak and the sick in the hospital.

On the night of Yom Kippur the members of the staff paid me a sick call, these being, Moma Kapilovich, Dr. Abramowsky, Alyosha Zarickewicz, and Chaim Becker. None of them could foresee the slaughter that was going to erupt in the morning. Rather, we all senses the fate that waited us in the ghetto, and at the same time, reviewed all of our plans for an uprising (as we previously mentioned, it was again confirmed that Warszawsky was to order the policeman R' Yitzhak (Itcheh) to attack the first of the death machines that might appear at the ghetto gate, with grenades. Hillel Schneidleder was to set the Kessler house on fire. The Jewish police were then to attack by throwing grenades at the *Gestapo* police by the ghetto. The thirty comrades standing guard needed to set fire to the ghetto on all sides. Immediately then, those of the members at work, were supposed to begin carrying out their assigned missions.).

The Last Hours Before The Second Slaughter

On the morning after Yom Kippur, at 6:00AM, when all of the Jews usually went off to work, only the larger working groups were let out. Individuals, and smaller groups of people were detained within the ghetto.

Near the ghetto gate, the '*Todt*' personnel appeared, in their usual uniforms (later on, we found out these were really members of the *Gestapo*). To the question, posed by Warszawsky and the *Judenrat*, as to why they had come, the '*Todt'* personnel offered the explanation that they are here solely to fill out the contingent of an additional 300 Jews, and they were not going to assemble any larger work group.

About a half-hour later, the liaison member Khatzk'l came running to me, with Moma Kapilovich, and asked: what shall we do?

The entire matter looked suspicious to me, and I made the comrades cognizant of their need to stay on guard, and to be extra careful. However, they replied by saying that, according to Warszawsky's information, it is only a routine mobilization of laborers. I insisted that Moma and Abramowsky remain in the left side of the ghetto, near the Judenrat, and to decide on the spot, according to their own assessment of what they saw, when to give the signal for an uprising. I then took over responsibility for the right side of the ghetto; I had 10 members at my disposal (the larger part of the members were outside, at work). As a courier and liaison between the two halves of the ghetto, we designated the young, heroic 17year-old girl Ljahozwiansky.

After the larger work groups, in the amount of several thousand Jews, had already moved to the outside, a rumor spread through the ghetto, that a sortie is being prepared against the men to send them to work in Molodechno. All the men that remained behind, including among them our members, hid themselves in bunkers. The selection of a girl to be the courier and liaison was justified by this, since at that moment, only womenfolk could move about freely in the ghetto.

The Second Slaughter & Failure of the Uprising

In the course of an hour, or two, the situation became clear. The Nazis began to seize the womenfolk, and concentrated them at special gathering points in the ghetto. At the same time, the ghetto was entirely surrounded by the Byelorussian Fascist Police. It became clear with lightning-speed, like that of a blinding blade: It is a slaughter!...

The courier, who had already crossed the ghetto three times, from one side of the ghetto to the other, now ran to update Warszawsky on the situation, and at the same time, tell him that the uprising should immediately be launched. She did not stop when called to by the *Gestapo* beasts, and was shot in transit, before she could carry out her mission. She was the first victim of The Second Slaughter.

At the same time, both sides of the ghetto were cut off from one another, and the posted *Gestapo 'Todt'* personnel occupied, and strictly guarded, every point in the ghetto.

Then the tragic moment came, which brought about the failure of our uprising.

In that moment, when the *Gestapo* vehicles drew near, our comrade Itcheh was ready to throw grenades at them, from his hiding place between the ghetto gate and the *Judenrat*, and in that gruesome blink of an eye, Warszawsky grabbed him by the hands and said: Itcheh, don't throw the grenades! This is not a slaughter!...

In no case can Warszawsky be faulted for lack of loyalty or having succumbed to fear. He was a clever and heroic Jew. This handling of the situation requires clarification by means of subconscious factors. –

At this tragic hour, when the entire ghetto was already under the control of Nazi forces, and several thousand Jews – the principal reservoir of our own strength – were apparently guarded under strict oversight, and 'tied' to their workplaces, not having any sort of contact with the ghetto – the uprising would have only had a symbolic character, and would have fully condemned the entire Jewish population to extermination. It is possible that, the hundred or so Jews, who remained alive after that slaughter, may have Warszawsky's advice, to thank for saving their lives, and the fact that our planned uprising fell through.

I note this, and add, along with this, my own personal convictions, that despite the position I held, and still hold now, that when the bloodthirsty enemy forces a life-and-death battle on you, and all avenues of retreat are cut off, and total annihilation is threatened, -- there is really no other way, or alternative that to defend one's self, join the battle with vigor – no matter how one-sided it might be – and fight with the last of one's capacity. The fighting organization was in no way an life assurance society. Our oath was: -- Vengeance! --- All of us were at the time buried alive in the bunkers. The members literally busted a gut out of a sense of rage. As previously mentioned already, I, and ten of the members, were in the right side of the ghetto. A dew of them demanded that we should unilaterally commence the uprising. In the first minutes, I was inclined towards their demand.

However, in a review of the distressed situation (when we had literally only one rifle in our hands, and a few grenades; the house in which we were then found (the Rifkin house on Sadowa *Gasse)*, cut off from all of the secret weapons caches; all of the Jewish men in the ghetto, hidden in bunkers) – and in the assessment that a few circumstantial gunshots, or a single burning house would not be any sort of sign of an uprising – I came to the conclusion, that such an act, on the part of a handful of the members, taken on their own initiative, would have had the character of a senseless form of suicide, rather than a symbol of vengeance.

I will not pause here about the general mood and tension, which permeated us in the bunker. Everyone sat on the bare earth, contorted and pressed one against the other. The women and children cried and wailed, imploring us that we should not, God forbid, cause them to be killed because of a rash, or improperly thought out step. In that cruel moment, the emotions were deaf and dumb.

That day was the most tragic in the entire history of our fighting organization. We felt the entire burning shame of those who were completely deceived, and the shameful helplessness of fighters, when over our heads, a slaughter was taking place, and we were rendered impotent.

The wild bloodthirsty animals, being Germans of all sorts, Russians, Poles, and others – ran around with their hunting dogs, all over the ghetto, looking for and sniffing out blood and victims.

With typical German punctuality, the slaughter was stopped at 5:00PM that evening.

Comrade Lipnik and I were, at that time, hidden away under the floorboards of Rifkin's house, and in a space between the bricks, we were able to observe what was taking place in the ghetto, as far as our range of vision would permit. When the slaughter was halted, we went up to the attic, We then looked around on all sides – and it was hear that the terrifying image was laid out before us, a *bona fide* battlefield. The ghetto – dead empty. On the ground, the bodies of the dead lay strewn about. The single small horse in the ghetto – as scrawny as a skeleton – whose owner had been killed, walked around among the dead bodies, and searched for grass to eat (in the over-trampled crowding of the ghetto, grass did not grow). The houses had been pillaged, the window panes smashed, the open doors and windows banged back and forth in the autumn wind.

Around the continuous barbed wire containment of the ghetto, stood thousands of gentiles, included among them the elderly, women and children, with sacks in their hands, and like inflamed barnyard fowl, were champing at the bit to plunder. The Nazi-Fascist police sort of prevented them from entering, and only permitted access, only to those, who found favor in their eyes. And this wild mass threw themselves upon the dead bodies and stripped them of their clothing and shoes.

'It Is My Brothers for Whom I Search'

As previously mention, any meaningful contact between our members was practically cut off during the slaughter. The single privileged part of the ghetto, was the stretch of the workplaces, and its occupants, the craftsmen, who found themselves in a separately cordoned area – a sort of ghetto within a ghetto – and they were outside of the ambit of the slaughter.

On the second day of the slaughter, as soon as day began to break, I had the chance to break through the barbed wire and the strict watch, in order to make contact with the other members.

I was in a very tense state of mind. One thing was clear to me, that in an assessment of the newly-created situation, the previous plans need to be completely revised. We have to find a way out of this oppressed situation.

The depressing danger in the ghetto, on the one side, and the impotence of the fighting organization on the other side, taught us that there was no sense in continuing to remain in the ghetto, and immediately, on the spot, at the peak of the slaughter, decide on the further fate of our objectives, and our future.

I got in contact with Comrade Lasky from the workplaces, asking him for help in getting out of the ghetto. He had access to certain transportation possibilities at his workplace, and also familiar contact points with the so-called gentile clients of the workplaces. First of all, I wanted to get together with Comrade Zygelboym of the machinery works, which were in the Yeshiva building on Hower [*Gasse*] (outside of the ghetto). With the help of a Christian whom we had bought off, I was able to leave the ghetto in the guise of a 'gentile.'

The approach to the Yeshiva building, where the Jewish workers were crammed in after work, was not so accessible. A number of the members took note of my presence, and gave me a sign, that I should crawl up to the attic of the workplaces. I ran, in a crouch, in order that I not be seen, and quickly scaled my way up to the attic.

For the first time, in the course of the slaughter, I breathed easily, and slowly began to regain my composure. Several comrades gathered immediately at that spot, who communicated information to me about the situation, that they had gotten from gentiles of their acquaintance, about the plight of the Jewish workers outside the ghetto. They were detained, and crammed into their respective places of work, and had no freedom of movement. However, their hearts were there in the ghetto, where the slaughter was taking place. Their blood boiled, and called them to do something and exact vengeance.

It was first, on the third day of the slaughter, that I had the opportunity to make contact with Alyosha Zarickewicz who was among the workers in the Gestapo ranks, with Monik Muszinsky from the aerodrome, and Shlomo Rev (now in Israel) from the carpentry works. All the secret reports from members in a variety of locations had but one detail: 'Refrain from any and all action! Wait until we return to the ghetto!'

On the fourth day of the slaughter, we received an item of news that an armed group of 18 young members are to be found in the attic of the Jewish hospital, in the building of the old age home, and that Moma Kapilovich was among them, along with Avra'sheh Abramowsky and Chaim Iszman. They were ready to abandon this Hell, and were seeking contact with members outside the ghetto.

As I later learned, there was a difference of opinion among them, about means, that is, how to carry out the move they had in mind. Part of them, with Moshe Zalmanowicz at their head, were of the opinion that there was no time for debating and waiting; by whatever means, and whatever the cost, quick movement is needed, even if it involved open battle. Another group, under the direction of Avra'sheh Abramowsky, was against a separate departure, without prior contact with members who found themselves at work, outside of the ghetto. The conversation went on for several days, and in the last night, before there was a pause taken in the slaughter, three members left the ghetto by their own hand (Moshe Zalmanowicz, Lova Zeitman, and one other). On the following morning, the slaughter was halted, and the workers were returned to the ghetto.

This seeming cessation, was yet another trick of the *Gestapo*, in order to seduce the hidden Jews to come out of their hideaway bunkers. All comrades met again on that evening. We mutually exchange information about everything that had transpired that day, and took a count of the victims.

The general sense of the members was that it is not possible to continue living in this stifling atmosphere; there is nothing to wait for – first, we have to go off into the forests, and the exact vengeance from the bloody foe.

At this point, our existence was then no longer a secret in the ghetto. Despite this, any exit we would have to make out into the forest, would have to be done, as far as possible, under strenuously secret conditions. For the time being, we worked out a mutually satisfactory plan with the members in the hospital, up in the

attic. And on the following day, at a meeting of our staff, we decided that in that same night, after 12 midnight, we would leave the ghetto.

We found out, that while a slaughter is underway, so long as chaos reigned in the ghetto, and it is not known who has remained alive – this is the best time to get out. In this way, the absence of several hundred people in the ghetto would not seem so unusual, and would not place the lives of those left behind in any extra danger. This hour was also auspicious, because at 12 midnight is when the guard changes around the ghetto.

The organization was divided into two parts, because the departure of a larger host could have been compromised. The members in the hospital were complemented with a group headed by Alyosha Zarickewicz. The other part, the larger, was to exit by way of *Rog Orla-Orzeszkowej*.

But, it was probably ordained to be our fate that once again, the members of the *Judenrat* would butt into our plans –Svjacic and Beloskurnik. They found out about the group of the members at the hospital, and categorically demanded that we should destroy our weapons and disband. As an alternative, they threatened to turn us over into the hands of the *Gestapo*. The members were already tired, and tapped out from the heat, thirst, and stifling air, that pervaded the hideout in the attic – but despite this, did not want to give themselves up.

Sawczyc and Beloskurnik then approached me, asking that I handle the matter.

In order to avoid a pointless conversation, I requested that we should be given time until the next morning.

Before Leaving the Ghetto

The ghetto looked as if it had gone through a destruction. The atmosphere was very tense, the exhausted were disassembled, and nerves were shot.

That Sunday was a day on ongoing failure and disappointments.

On that same day, a girl, whose friend was to leave, and who saw in this a danger to his life, attempted to subvert our plan by a senseless provocation. At two o'clock in the afternoon, she approached the hospital, where her friend had hidden himself, and shouted out wildly: 'Flee -- The *Gestapo* is surrounding us!'

A frightful panic erupted, and several solitary members fled, among them Moma Kapilovich and Alyosha Zarickewicz. We were taken aback when they appeared at our concentration point, which was in the other part of the ghetto.

The meeting was a tragic one. Moma came apart completely at that point. I ask him:

--'Moma, what happened?'

-- 'I can't stand it anymore,' -- he replied in a choked voice, and broke out into tears.

At that moment, the 17 year-old Moshe'l Zilberman ran up to him and gave him two vigorous slaps to the face:

--'There you have it!... Why did you allow yourself to be provoked in this way!?'

This snapped Moma out of his weakness. The ghetto on that day was thrown into convulsions.

We decided that, approximately only ninety of the members, in the middle of the night, would leave the ghetto by way of the exit point at Orla-Poniatowski. At that specific point, we had 15 rifles, and a large number of grenades. At the designated hour, between 10 and 11 at night, the members began slowly to assemble, and to our amazement, every one of them was accompanied by a number of 'shadows' of relatives and acquaintances (from outside of the organization).

At a quarter after 11 at night, there were close to 200 men assembled at the designated point.

When it came time to allocate the weapons, to our astonishment, we collided with a devastating difficulty imposed by sabotage: all of the bullets had suddenly disappeared. As it immediately became evident, a few of the members – who were responsible for this point, saw in the mass following of peripheral people, a danger to our plan, and unilaterally decided to sabotage the escape. At my order to distribute the bullets, they answered by saying that they didn't know their hiding place.

With that, the successful ability for us to carry out our plan, fell through, and the members from the other division were compelled again to remain behind in the ghetto.

On the following morning, Monday, when we all went out to work, the Nazis renewed the slaughter. They arranged for a mass bloodbath of women and children... -- -- --

With our remaining behind for this slaughter, we finally came to the conclusion that with this nervous and chaotic atmosphere in the ghetto, no sort of plan can be properly realized. And if there is a decision to go off into the forest, it has to be carried out from the work places, which are on the outside.

We Leave the Ghetto

Several of the work locations were designated as points of exit: the aerodrome, the carpentry works, and the workplaces in the ghetto.

We were faced with a reverse problem: how do we get the weaponry out of the ghetto?

In essence, this problem was actually a lot easier than it had previously been, because in going out to work, there was not an inspection. Do understand, that there was no lack of other difficulties, but, in a variety of ways, we were able to get almost all of the weaponry to the outside, even before we had left the ghetto itself.

After The Second Slaughter, each and every person felt that the entire ghetto had been condemned to extermination; it is only a matter of numbered weeks, at most, months.

My family was still alive at this point, when I came to the cruel realization that I must leave them behind...one cannot remain in the poisoned air of the dead ghetto and wait with folded hands for that end of ire. It is necessary to go out to where it is free, and perhaps from 'there' it will be possible to do something for the hapless ghetto. Various thoughts and tentative plans flitted through my mind. The emotional agony was terrible.

In carrying out our plan, we, at the aerodrome, were connected with a patriarchal Pole, whose son operated the mini-train from Baranovich to Kryvošyn. From that point, the periphery of partisan control began.

At the end of the week, On the Sabbath, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, a group of us, consisting of 22 men (mostly craftsmen, with passes entitling us to move about in the camp), abandoned our work place.

Our weaponry was hidden about one kilometer from the aerodrome, in the woods of Grabowiec, and that was our gathering point, where we were supposed to meet at nightfall. Our exit could no longer be a strictly kept secret; others found out about it, and at the final hour, we were joined by three brothers, who were not members of the organization. The mood among the members was as tense as it could get, prior to our leaving. A number of them were overcome by a very painful sense of feeling lost. At the last moment, I made use of the traditional solution: 'Anyone who is fearful, or soft of heart, let him relent and go back.' Only one returned to the ghetto, and later was killed there.

At that agonizing hour, an 18 year-old young man from Lodz, a servant of the director of the aerodrome (who was German) informed on us to his 'boss,' that were hiding ourselves with weapons, in the nearby woods, and to our good fortune, the director chose not to react to this information. As to the reason for his incomprehensible position, we first found out afterwards, that a few days later, this German summoned to him a certain Jewish overseer, named Cohen, told him the whole story, and expressed his astonishment that a Jew should be such a low-life and betray his own brethren (incidentally, the informer was later killed in the slaughter). He noted that only a single telephone call on his part, could have caused all of us to be killed, but it was only his sense of chivalry which restrained him from doing this. Up to that point, he did not believe that Jews were competent to engage in a battle with the use of weapons. His astonishment was so great, that he decided to give us the chance to save ourselves, and to demonstrate how we can fight.

From that day forward, his attitude towards Jews was completely changed, and in The Third Slaughter he personally helped a few Jews save their lives.
On that night, the final episode of the fighting organization in the Baranovich ghetto came to an end.

On the Ruins

By Shmuel Yankelewicz

It was, and now – is no more.

It was a city that earned the sobriquet of being 'A Mother in Israel' and its existence was eradicated.

One does not see a Jewish face, nor hear a Yiddish word, or echo in the city, where not so very long ago, there was a large and significant [Jewish] community.

Merely 2% of Baranovich's Jewish population was, by some miracle, saved, and they too, could not remain in the City of Slaughter.

On June 27, 1941, the Nazis occupied our city, and the first of the victims fell immediately. During the course of a month's time, until the end of July, more that 400 Jews were seized, and they vanished. A mission began, involving supplication and fleeing. The Nazis began to gorge themselves on money, and levied the first of their excessive 'contributions' on us. They promised on their 'word of honor' to return those who had been taken from us, but after taking away the money, we never again saw our lost brethren.

After this, a hail of decrees fell on us, from all sides. Every day, a variety of extermination plans would ripen in the minds of the Nazi beasts and their accomplices – our 'old beloved neighbors' the Byelorussians: The yellow insignia, prohibition against walking on the sidewalks, forced labor, murder and assault to plunder, and other acts of predation.

All this was a prelude to the gruesome tragedy.

Thanks to the energetic activity of the *Judenrat* of that time, headed by the lawyer Yehoshua Izikson, it was possible, for a while, to buy one's way out of or 'argue out of' a whole array of these decrees, such as the organization of the ghetto on the 'Sakhalin' model and the later plan to transfer the ghetto to the Paulinowo estate, 18 kilometers from the city, where we would most certainly have died from hunger; the order to provide 60 Jewish girls (in accordance with the proposal of the Byelorussian Magistrate) for the Nazi houses of prostitution and many other decrees and harassments.

But we were not able to buy ourselves out of these situations for very long.

In September 1941, the Gestapo arrived, and the Nazi civil administration with that terrifying destroyer of Jews the *Gebiets-Kommissar* Rudolf Werner at their head. It was only then, that the planned and systematic extermination of Baranovich Jewry commenced. Under the pretense of security against murders at night, and robbery assaults, on December 12, 1941, we pressed into a ghetto, cordoned off with barbed wire, and surrounded with a guard composed of *Gestapo* and Byelorussian police.

The overcrowding was indescribable – there was a quarter of a meter per person. Food consisted of – 100 grams of bread per day, and the work – was physically taxing. On a daily basis, about 5000 of the 9000 ghetto inhabitants would leave to go to work, even in the worst weather, dressed half-naked (winter clothing having been confiscated).

The surrounding cities and towns had already, for the most part, been liquidated, or had been put through the first of the slaughters. The once chance that Jews had to remain alive, was in their work permit. A typhus epidemic broke out, but thanks to the dedicated efforts of the Jewish doctors, and the sanitary workers, with Dr. Nakhumowsky at their head, as well as the disciplined demeanor of the ghetto population, it became possible to combat this frightening disease, and to take it out of the hands of the Nazi authorities, and in this fashion avoid the extermination of the entire ghetto.

Life continued on. On a daily basis, the *Monarch of Death* demanded new victims. For the most minimal 'infraction,' for grabbing a small loaf of bread, or a piece of butter, one often paid with their lives.

The *Judenrat* threw itself into the work of organizing the ghetto with passion and suffering, to create some sort of modus Vivendi, -- hoping – blinded by an illogical optimism – that we would somehow overcome all of these decrees. Also the old belief in a head of police, that could be bought off, proved to be bankrupt.

March 4, 1942 (*Shushan Purim*) arrived. There was something suspect even before this. Several of the young Jews, who worked in the ammunition dumps, related that the Gestapo had checked out ten thousand rounds of ammunition from there… a variety of rumors circulated in the ghetto. Later on, we extracted the entire file from Jewish labor work force.

Purim, Tuesday, at two o'clock in the afternoon (March 3, 1942), the ghetto was suddenly surrounded by Byelorussian police, and Lithuanian military accomplices. By means of a narrow passage, it was required to pass through, in the course of two hours, from one half of the ghetto to the other. There, on the Orla Gasse, the political leader of the *Gebiets-Kommissariat*, Max Krampe, was already waiting, and her was distributing the passes of the living to those so-called 'useful' Jews.

It is difficult to describe that night of Purim to *Shushan Purim*, -- a night full of agony and terror. The confused cries of those, who did not receive any passes, the wail of the children, who lost their parents in the ensuing tumult, the recitation of a last confession by the old and the sick, -- all of this filled the streets of the ghetto and its environs for the entire night.

At six in the morning, the gendarmes locked off the exits from that part of the ghetto, that had been designated for those carrying the life passes.

It was only now that the real slaughter began. With the butts of their rifles, they hit the men, women and children in the head, and forced the victims to crawl into the vehicles that had arrived, which were then driven to the previously prepared pits dug beside the green bridge.

Several hours later, they came into the second part of the ghetto, drove everyone out of the houses, into the street, and sorting them out to the left and the right – and again, sent off approximately a thousand Jews to the pits.

The last of the victims of the gruesome slaughter were: 40 men from the Jewish ghetto police, with their leader, the former labor activist Chaim Weltman at their head, as well as the leader of the *Judenrat*, the lawyer Evsei Izikson, and the 'Mother of the Ghetto,' Zhenya Mann – his secretary.

Already, by the time of The First Slaughter, a larger number of Jews saved themselves by hiding themselves in bunkers, and a variety of other hiding places. This provided an impetus to the residents of the ghetto to complete the fabrication of bunkers (схрона – in Russian). Tens of systems, one more clever than the other, were employed in the building of 'living graves and caves' for one's self, under the surface of the earth. Beside one's self, there was grasping at every straw, and hope that the blood-soaked foe could somehow be deceived by all this.

After The First Slaughter, the Gestapo instituted a new registration. 7700 people still remained alive. And being alive made its own demands. While mourning those who were lost, -- truly with rather little optimism – we began to organize the new, shrunken ghetto. The decrees came with increasing frequency. In going out to work, we had to march in locked ranks under an armed escort. At the ghetto gate on Sadowa, we would undergo a rigorous inspection, and everything was confiscated. The crowding (70 centimeters per person) was asphyxiating. We slept in three-tiered bunks. Everything became infested with lice. Additionally, several hundred Jews were brought to u from the surrounding ghettoes that had been liquidated: Ljahavičy, Kleck, Moucadz', Sivitsa, Haradzišča, etc.

In the middle of the summer of 1942, about 350 abandoned and half-dead Jews were admitted to our ghetto from Mezrich.

Transports full of Jews, from Berlin, Hamburg, Leipzig, etc., travel through Baranovich. Ostensibly, they are traveling to do work in the East (most significantly, the victims actually believe this...).

On one occasion, a transport carrying 3,000 Czech Jews was unloaded from the train, and shot in the nearest woods, together with eight Jews from Baranovich from the Koldichevo camp[154], who had been taken along to cover up the victims with earth (among them was the well-known *Poalei Tzion* activist, Shlomo Ravitzky).

We live in constant fear of death. The news from the front about the victorious march of the Nazis through the Caucasus region choke us, and oppress us. Among the young, the idea gets riper and riper, to break out of the ghetto and flee to the forests. A large part of the young people had decided to put up resistance. It was planned that for the coming slaughter, to open fire on the *Gestapo*, burn down the ghetto, set the factories on fire, magazines, workplaces, etc., and in the ensuing chaos, to flee the ghetto. Weaponry is brought in from all sides, risking everyone and everything. The ghetto became a powder keg, ready to explode at any minute.

On July 4, 1942, thirteen doctors and dentists are taken out of the ghetto, ostensibly to do work in the Jewish camps, and they are shot on the same day, near Halinka.

On August 29, 1942, the marching ranks of the workers, exiting the ghetto, are surrounded, and 654 are detained and sent to do railroad work in Molodechno.

The Gestapo Chief, *Obersturmbannfuhrer*[155] Grünzfelder, does inspection sorties frequently by auto, in the ghetto, and amuses himself by killing hapless Jews, whom he happens to incidentally encounter on his way. A temporary amount of encouragement comes from the news that, this very murderer, along with several tens of other Nazis, fell in a battle with the partisans.

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154 The Koldichevo concentration camp was established in the summer of 1942 on a farm of the same name. It was located 11 miles (18 km) from Baranovich, on the highway to Novogrudok, Belorussia (which in the inter-war period belonged to Poland). In November 1942, a crematorium was constructed in the camp, and 600 corpses were incinerated there.

The Koldichevo camp was used for imprisoning Polish and Belorussian members of the underground and Jews from Haradzišča, Dzjatlava, Novogrudok, Stoubcy, and Baranovich. The Jews were put into stables, in a separate part of the camp. The commandant of the camp was Fritz Jorn, an *SS-Hauptscharführer.* During the period from 1942 to 1944, 22,000 people - mostly Jews - were murdered in Koldichevo. One of the prisoners in the camp, Dr. Zelik Levinbook of Baranovich, managed to supply medicines in large quantities to the partisans, with the help of a local peasant who was his patient. Eventually, Levinbook himself, together with this wife and eight-year-old son, managed to escape and join the partisans. There was a Jewish underground in the camp, headed by Shlomo Kushnir, a shoemaker. Its members had two guns and four hand grenades, and a Jewish prisoner in the camp, who was a chemist, manufactured a quantity of acid to be used in self-defense.

By means of tools that they obtained, the prisoners breached a wall. They practiced moving slowly and crawling on all fours, sewed cloth onto the soles of their shoes, and equipped themselves with knives. On March 17, 1944, a stormy night, they broke out from the camp, having first poisoned the watchdogs. Twenty-four prisoners were recaptured, but 75 escaped to the partisans. Most joined the unit of Tuvia Bielski.

Source: Museum of Tolerance - Courtesy of Encyclopedia of the Holocaust

155 He is elsewhere correctly identifies as an SS-*Obersturmführer*

Under a declaration of a demand for more people to work in Molodechno, the Gestapo troops let themselves into the ghetto in the altered dress of '*Todt*' uniforms (the labor service battalions). Several armed Byelorussians and Lithuanians from the Fascist Police.

The uprising, as was planned by the secret fighting organization does not break out. The explanation for why this was so, I leave to those who survived, who stood at the head of the organization. One thing is certain: there was no lack of idealism and energy among the members of the organization. It is possible that they were deterred by their feeling of responsibility for the entire Jewish populace of the ghetto and the several thousand Jewish workers who, at that time, still harbored the possibility of remaining alive.

By chance, traces of an ammunition cache were uncovered at the Rudnikov house on Sosnowa 20. The Nazis bring several hundred Byelorussian *junakehs* [156] who are champing about like hungry incited dogs, and the pogrom works. With bestial passion, they plundered the houses, and like wild pigs, rooted about and dragged into the open weakened and half-dead Jews. Barefoot, half-naked, the beasts would come into the ghetto in the morning, with a song on their lips, and they would leave in the evening well-dressed, with cases in their hands.

It was first on the 4-5th day, the Germans took note of the fact that they alone were the perpetrators... the murderers always found new reasons to run amok. In a dew solitary places, traces of an ammunition cache were uncovered. In Sadowa 16, an unknown heroic Jewish policeman fooled a Lithuanian junior officer, and quartered him with a knife. The barber, Zubak (son-in-law of Szolomowicz the Musician), on the way to the pits, slit the throat of a Byelorussian policeman with his straight razor.

These, and similar acts of vengeance, infuriated the bloodthirsty animals even more.

The bloodbath lasted for eight days, and the old ghetto, in which more than 500 Jews were crammed in, half-dead, remained surrounded for three more weeks.

This writer, concerned with running the ghetto, was consumed with trying to save the Jews condemned to death. With the help of a bribed German guard supervisor, I managed to transfer several tens of these unfortunates, during the night. This rescue operation more-or-less worked for two nights. On the third night, I encountered failure. I paid for this with the lives of my wife and child, along with other victims. I was saved by a miracle in the dark of the night.

The ghetto shrank even further, and live became even more unbearable. Night in and night out, the barbed wire was cut, and people flee into the forest. More than 200 people are already missing from the ghetto. The *Judenrat* is caught in the press between two fires, terrorized on the one side by the partisans, and threatened from the other side by the *Gestapo.* The *Judenrat* attempts to use all means at its disposal to restrain the revolting ghetto, but to no avail. There is nothing left to lose...

On December 2, 1942 Yud'l Oszerowsky kills a Nazi who had searched him, and wanted to take away his weapons, and falls victim himself to the same grenade, that he had thrown. The impending catastrophe can be sensed in the air, with larger groups going away at night, into the forests, to the partisans.

All of this accelerates the arrival of The Third Slaughter.

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156 Tough guys

On December 17, 1942 (10 Tevet) the ghetto is once again surrounded before dawn, with the 'Black Crows' and Lithuanians. Once again, the search through the hiding places lasts about a month. Once again, a terrifying bloodbath ensues, which engorges itself with close to 3000 Jews. The victims are taken away to the pits near Grabowiec by the ever-present gasoline-powered automobiles.

Baranovich is declared: *Judenrein.*

After the official liquidation of the ghetto, small groups of Jews continue to remain alive: the Molodechno group, of about 700 Jews, who were later exterminated (apart from 50 who fled to the partisans). About 300 Jews remained alive in the 'A. T. Lager' (they were incinerated on November 5-6, 1943 in the Koldichevo concentration camp, of which approximately 30-40 escaped to the partisans)., about 250 Jews continued to work in the '*Feldbauleitung-lager*' at the aerodrome, and were killed in the middle of 1943. About 100 Jews were still employed in Gestapo pharmacies; the largest part of these dispersed and fled to the forests at the end of 1943 and beginning of 1944.

Out of a community that numbered approximately 12,000 men, after years of forced labor, hunger and want, slaughters, and concentration camps, and later in battle as partisans, and fighting at the front to Berlin – only 250 Baranovich Jews survived (approximately 2 percent), sown and flung to the far reaches of the earth.

Health Services in the Ghetto

By Dr. Shabtai Sternfeld

With the establishment of the *Judenrat*, at the beginning of July 1941, a health service came into being, and at his head stood Dr. Nakhumowsky, and his initial cadre of helpers: Dr. Zvi Danilewicz, Dr. Bezalel Rabinovich, Dr, Bussel, and the writer of these pages. The core f our activity was the delivery of free health care to those who needed it. Even before this, one quarter of the Jewish population lived in crowded conditions, because even before the invasion of the Germans, hundreds of houses had been burned down because of the arson instituted by the retreating Red Army.

Groups of sanitation workers were enlisted, in order to guard health, who visited homes, along with the doctors, and taught the residents hygiene and how to prevent disease. This activity bore fruit. However, the central activity of the health service, with the support of the ghetto, since it was forbidden to the Jews there, to obtain any benefit from medical services outside the ghetto.

The health service was a branch attached to the *Judenrat*, and consisted of two divisions: Medical care, and sanitation. The second division was headed by Dr. Svjacic (currently in the United States). The center of the service was in the former 'Old Age Home,' where there was also a convalescent ward and hospital. Opposite it, was a hospital for infectious diseases, and the director of materials was Yitzhak Izikson. With the establishment of the ghetto, the following worked in the health service: Dr. Nakhumowsky, Dr. Danilewicz, Dr. Rabinovich, Dr. Lubranicky (the younger), Dr. Abramowsky, Dr. Bussel, Dr. Sternfeld, Dr. Skoyarsky, Dr. Mrs. Birger, and Dr. Kaplan. The remaining doctors worked until June 1942 outside of the ghetto, in the municipal hospitals, and after they were let go, they also worked in the ghetto hospitals. Among the ranks of the physicians, Dr. Fiedler and Dr. Jasinowsky worked as dentists, the midwives were R. Izikson, Kh. Baguza-Jasinowsky, M. Kabintman-Turetsky, and the nurse, M. Ljahozwiansky. I directed the division of infectious diseases. The following worked in the pharmacy: Rakow, Lyuna Abramowsky, Meiseles, Michael Mukasey, Sh. Stoliar-Mirsky.

In the first month, the amount of work was enormous. The degree of overcrowding in the ghetto – was beyond all description, a square meter per person. The filth in the homes and yards was great. We were especially suspicious of the outbreak of infectious diseases, especially typhus. The *Judenrat* had received a very specific order, to alert the authorities of every incident of an infectious disease. Sanitary cadres visited house and yards, and they cleaned out the refuse. In the large courtyard of the infectious diseases division, sewing machines were set up to make linens, and for the cleaning of clothing infested with lice. The bath house remained outside of the ghetto – and groups would go to bathe there on designated days. Incidentally, the bath house served as a point of contact with the Aryan world, and was useful in facilitating escape to join the partisans.

The Baranovich ghetto was transformed into a 'model ghetto' in accordance with the terminology of the times. Within it, pulsed the desire to overcome all tribulations, and to overpower the enemy. And in this regard, we managed to limit the incidents of typhus, in the midst of the ghetto residents. During the years of the ghetto's existence, December 1941 – December 1942, there were 8-10 incidents (we only reported 3-4 incidents). The incidence of 'natural' death in the ghetto was small, relative to the years before the war. The incidence of illness was not out of the ordinary in the ghetto.

After the death of Dr. Nakhumowsky (in the *Shushan Purim* Slaughter), Dr. Skoyarsky headed the health service until the ghetto was liquidated. After The Second Slaughter, the perimeter of the ghetto was shrunk, as well as its medical services: there was one room for convalescence, and one room as a patient room for the sick.

After the liquidation of the ghetto, three groups of workers remained in the Baranovich area: one under the aegis of the S. D, in the house of the noblewoman on the Narutowicz *Gasse*, and I was the doctor of this group until I fled to join the partisans. The second group was that of the 'Feldbauleitung' beside the aerodrome, and its physician was Dr. Ingelman, a refugee from Haradzišča, after the slaughter that took place there, in October 1941, and this group was exterminated on February 5, 1943. The third group was the O. D. (*Organization Todt*) – laborers that worked on the roads, and its physician was Dr. Sawczyc, until he fled to the partisans in August 1943. There was another group of Baranovich citizens in Koldichevo, a detention camp beside Haradzišča, and its physician was Dr. Levinbook, who fled to the forest with the members of his family, at the end of October 1943.

The Mezrich People

I will pause here a bit, to tell about the episode of the Mezrich people, that has a connection to the health service.

A group of about three hundred laborers came to Baranovich in June 1942, from the 'General Gouvernment' (these being the territories of Poland annexed to the 'Reich.') – most of them from Mezrich, and it was from this that they got their name. They were seized to do labor, and sent to the aerodrome beside Baranovich. The entire group was brought into the ghetto in one night. Their appearance was heart-rending; men who were skeletons, wearing rags. Many of the residents of the ghetto surrounded them, with tears in their eyes.

Food and clothing was brought for them immediately, and some sort of lodging was arranged on Orla *Gasse* 97,at the former *Bund* headquarters. Despite all of the sanitation measures, part of them came down with illnesses. With the passage of a few days, clear signs of the typhus pustules appeared among them. And this posed the question, whether there was cause to notify the German authorities or not a suspicion existed, that with the number of incidents, the Germans would be inclined to wipe out the people from Mezrich, given that they would be tied to the outbreak, and possible to liquidate the ghetto in its entirety; and if we do not advise them, we again could put all the lives of the ghetto in danger, especially that of the physician from the 'General Gouvernment,' Dr. Wikhman, who would visit the hospital for infectious diseases periodically. As the one responsible for this division, I consulted with Shmuel Yankelewicz (head of the *Judenrat*) – and we decided not to advise.

In the meantime, the number of the sick grew to between 10-15 over the course of two weeks. The building of the hospital was large, and composed of two wings, and not all of the rooms served as a haven for the ill – and the 'General-Gouvernment' physician was not aware of all the rooms. I took advantage of this fact, and we settled the sick in hidden rooms, whose entrance ways were hidden in a closet. As soon as the temperature of the sick fell, I moved them to these prior rooms, and on the temperature chart, I made marks of the symptoms of influenza, and lung inflammation, intestinal inflammation, etc. During 6 weeks, 25 sick patients were accommodated this way – and all got well! To our good fortune, the German doctor never visited our division once – and the entire episode ended as well as could be expected.

The house of the Mezrich people was fenced off by a barbed-wire fence. At the entrance, a sign was hung that read: A group of laborers from the General Gouvernment lives here.' They thought that this was some amulet that would save them. It was worth nothing, because in the second and third slaughter, they were also exterminated, and from all of the Mezrich people, only one survived, Moshe Ruzha, whom I met after the liberation.

Seizure of the Physicians

In the month of July 1942, the officer of the S. D. appeared at the Judenrat, with a list of 13 doctors in his hand, who are ordered immediately to present themselves, in order to be sent as doctors in the labor camps. In the liste were: Dr. Bartkowsky, Dr. Leon Kaplan, Dr. Levkowicz, Dr. Zvi Danilewicz, Dr. Danilewicz (his brother), Dr. Brawda (Khonya), Dr. Izikson (Shura), Dr. Siederman, Dr. Joseph Mirsky, Dr. Moshe Jasinowsky, Fantow (a dental technician), Dr. Zelik Levinbook, and Meron Szenicky (a medical student). The last two did not appear. The rest were shut up in an auto that disappeared from sight. Their families were ordered to prepare sacks of food and underwear. For a number of weeks, they lived under the illusion that they were still alive; from time to time, news would arrive about them, mostly from the word-of-mouth of Polish railroad employees, but when a short amount of time went by, they gave up hope for them. After the liberation, it became known that they were killed on the very day they were taken away.

The Fate of the Physicians, Pharmacists and Nurses from Baranovich

The following were killed:

1. Dr. Aryeh Nakhumowsky and his wife – in The First Slaughter;
2. Dr. Skoyarsky – in The Third Slaughter;
3. Dr. Betty Izikson in the Summer of 1942;
5., 6. Dr. Szeps, ENT Doctor, in the Third Slaughter, with his wife Chaya, a Bacteriologist.
7. Dr. Boris Shapiro, ENT Doctor, in the winter of 1942. At the outbreak of the war, he was in Russia, and returned to Baranovich. After The First Slaughter, he was informed on as a communist, imprisoned by the Nazis, and taken out to be executed;
8. Dr. Reuven Salutsky – In The Third Slaughter;
9. Dr. Bezalel Rabinovich – In The Third Slaughter;
10. Dr. Isaac Bussel, Eye Doctor, in The Third Slaughter;
11. Dr. Yaakov Oszerowsky, in The Third Slaughter;
12. Dr. Juzik Lubranicky, a refugee from Lodz, in the Third Slaughter;
13. Dr. Abraham Abramowsky (Avra'sheh), at the hands of partisans, in the forests of Svjacica;
14. Dr. Chaim Szenicky, in The Second Slaughter, September 1942;
15. Meron Szenicky, a medical student, in November 1943, in the concentration camp of Koldichevo, beside Haradzišča;
16. Dr. Aharon Goldin, during the days of Soviet rule, he worked in Navael'nja at a hospital for tuberculosis, together with Dr. Glass from Warsaw. It appears he was killed by the Nazis;
17. Dr. Yaakov Kagan, the Chairman of the 'Poalei Tzion' branch in Baranovich, and a leader of the Novogrudok ghetto rebellion. During the time of Soviet rule, he was exiled together with his family members to the town of Zhetl. After his wife and little daughter were killed, he was transferred to the Novogrudok ghetto. He escaped from there, with the last group, through a tunnel the last of the occupants of the ghetto

had dug, with is effort, and under his direction. He was killed upon exiting from the tunnel, on September 26, 1943;
18. Dr. Herzlich – came to Baranovich during the period of Soviet rule. He worked in the ghetto hospital, and fled in the Fall of 1942 to the Moucadz' forests, was caught there, and killed, along with his wife;
19. Dr. Zvi Badobla – in the summer of 1942, in Stalovičy, where he had gone over to at the beginning of the Nazi conquest. His daughter, age 3½ Zatorinsky the tailor, one of the Baranovich survivors, and a brother-in-law of Dr. Badobla, adopted the girl, and they are now in the United States;
20. Dr. Reuven Gavza, left the city with the capture of the city by the Nazis, and was killed unknowingly;
21. Dr. Mordechai Rifkin – Killed under unknown circumstances;
22,.23. Dr. Kaplan (the elder) and his wife, a dentist – in The Second Slaughter;
24. Dr. Burger (female physician) – in The Second Slaughter;
25. Dr. Moshe Berman, Dentist – in The First Slaughter;
26. Dr. Meiseles – Female Dentist – in The Third Slaughter;
27. Dr. Aaronson – taken out to be executed at the end of 1942;
28. The Pharmacist Rakow, the director of the ghetto pharmacy – in The Third Slaughter;
29. The Pharmacist Liuna Abramowsky – In The Third Slaughter;
30. The Pharmacist Meiseles – In The Third Slaughter;
31. The Pharmacist Siederman (the elder) – at the end of 1942;
32. The Pharmacist Molczadsky – In The Third Slaughter;
33. The Pharmacist, Shayna Stoliar-Mirsky – In the summer of 1942, at Niadbidica, intentionally committing suicide along with her husband and daughter Ruth, before the Nazi turned to kill them. She went there in February 1942 to run the pharmacy at the recommendation of the district physician Lukasznya ;
34. The lady Pharmacist Poliaczuk – at the end of 1942;
35. The lady Pharmacist Mir'eh Polonsky-Bloch – at the end of 1942;
36. The Pharmacist Shlomo Bitensky – At the end of 1942;
37. The lady Pharmacist Kantorovich – At the end of 1942.
38. The Pharmacist Ring – At the end of 1942;
39. Yitzhak Izikson – At the end of 1942. He was taken to Koldichevo, and from there, he was taken in the capacity of a carpenter to Minsk, and killed there;
40. Minna Ljahozwiansky – In The Second Slaughter. Born in Slonim. She worked at the TzYShO hospital in Warsaw. During the days of Soviet rule, she worked in the municipal hospital of Baranovich. She was the Head Nurse at the ghetto hospital. She fell at her post, in carrying out her mission on behalf of the ghetto underground;
41. Carla Baguza-Jasinowsky – In The Third Slaughter. She was a midwife in the ghetto hospital;
42. Raya Izikson – In The Second Slaughter. She was a midwife in the ghetto hospital;
43. Minna Kabintman-Turetsky – In The Second Slaughter, a midwife at the ghetto hospital;
44. Esther Gavza – the wife of Dr. Gavza – In The Second Slaughter;
45. Filitowska – In The Second Slaughter. She was a refugee from Poland. She was the Head Nurse in the Infectious Diseases division;
46. – 57. Dr. Shura Bartkowsky, Dr. Harry Levkowicz, Dr. Joseph Mirsky, Dr. Danilewicz (Gynecologist), Dr. Grisha Danilewicz (Doctor of Internal Medicine),Dr. Shura Izikson, Dr. Siederman (son of the Pharmacist), Dr. Hanan Brawda, Dr. Moshe Jasinowsky (Dentist), Dr. Fiedler (Dentist), Dr. Leon Kaplan (came to Baranovich from Vilna in 1935), Fanti (Dental Technician) – all wiped out in the seizure of the doctors, on July 3, 1942;
58.-59. Dies of 'natural causes:' Dr. Skoyarsky, pediatrician, in the summer of 1942; Dr. Lubranicky Wroclaw, a refugee from Lodz – among the partisans.

ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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To be set apart among the living: Dr. Zelik Levinbook, Dr. Shabtai Sternfeld, Dr. Zalman Braslau, Dr. Lul'ik Berkowicz, The Pharmacist, Michael Mukasey – all in Israel; Dr. Fishl Sawczyc – in the United States; Leah Baguza (daughter of the midwife), a medical student, who worked as a nurse in the ghetto hospital, and fled to the partisans. After the liberation, she remained in the USSR and completed her course of study in medicine.

The Destruction of Baranovich Jewry

By Dr. Zelik Levinbook

The description of Dr. Levinbook is presented here without modification (with minor summarization), exactly how it was written by the author, in order to maintain the mood of leaving the documented events untouched by an intermediary.

The Germans Arrive....

June 27, 1941 began as a quiet, sunny, summer morning day.

At seven o'clock in the morning, the sound of motorcycles, autos and tanks could be heard. Through the cracks in the closed shutters and doors, one could see the German military that was riding through, heading in the direction of the east.

It was first then, that the Jews decided to come out of the cellars and the closed up houses.

Several hours later, small groups of Germans began to walk about, with raised rifles, and searching for hidden Soviet soldiers, they examined all of the papers of the residents [they encountered].

The day passed quietly. On the following morning, the first to go off to work, were the Jewish doctors who went to the hospital, putting on an armband, on their left arm, that was white, bearing a red cross in the center. They were met by Dr. Deroset – a Pole, who was a fervent anti-Semite. He is the one who had taken over the direction of the hospital, after having been retiring and modestly sitting aside, during the time of Soviet rule.

-- Now your end will come! In the meantime, busy yourselves with the sick, but we will quickly learn to get along without you!

This was the first 'fine' meeting we had with him. The municipal authorities took the Poles in hand. On the German side, a local command structure was established.

As is usual in the case of any regime change, the currency traders opened their businesses. After that, an order was issued by the local commandant, that everyone should return to their normal place of work. Apart from this, the Germans, and the quickly-established Polish police force, seized Jews, on a daily basis, to do [sic: forced] labor, and requisitioned everything that it so desired. And the Christian neighbors began to bring, to the Germans, all manner of false, unsubstantiated stores, directed against the Jews.

Already by the third day, a gentile thug brought Germans into Oszerowsky's yard, and pointed out Moshe Oszerowsky, accusing him of having been a communist. He was immediately taken to the commandant, and at five o'clock, he was shot to death.

A couple of days later, the doctors, Shabtai Sternfeld, Czackes' son-in-law, Alexander Bartkowsky, and Aaronson – a refugee from Lodz, were arrested. They were informed on, to be communists. By a miracle, after the intervention and protection offered from a German judge, who lived with the Czackes, it became possible to gain their release through Jewish intermediaries.

The Jewish Committee (*Judenrat*)

The situation so created, gave the impulse to a few Jewish community activists, to established a central point for the Jews, which later became transformed into the *Judenrat*. The founders were Mendl Goldberg, Zukerman, Chaim Weltman, etc. The following subsequently joined them: the lawyer, Evsei Izikson, Mordechai Schiff, the former municipal treasurer, as treasurer, and Joseph Kuriniec – as secretary. Their headquarters were in Packer's house, on the Vilna *Gasse*. Their mission was to provide the Germans with everything that they asked for, including workers, who every morning were assembled at this location, and then marched off to the designated places by the Germans. The further mission of this committee was to provide bread for the workers.

All those who worked at stable locations, as for example, in the hospitals, the ambulatories, mills, pharmacies, etc., received work passes from the local command, so they not be taken away to do any other work.

All the rest, received invitations from the Jewish Committee to present themselves at an appointed time at the committee location. Despite this, it did not eliminate the practice, from time to time, of having Jews seized to do labor.

The committee also made an effort to collect money from the Jews, in order to be able to bribe specific influential Germans, and local Poles.

Already, by the first week, placards were put up by the German occupation authorities, with an order: among others, an order that Jews have to put on a white band on their left arms, on which there should be a sewn yellow Star of David. After that comes an order, that Jews must surrender their radio sets. Immediately after this, a new order, to turn in all papers of value, savings books, loan documents, whether pertaining to the Polish or Soviet regimes.

Meanwhile the better residences, in the center of the city, are requisitioned by the Germans and the Jews must leave their houses and places of residence in a matter of a few hours. On the part of the Christian citizens' committee, the former Czarist Пристав (Police Commandant), of the Baranovich environs, engages with the quarter leadership – a well-known bribe-taker from former times, and this issue was taken up on behalf of the Jewish committee by – Evsei Izikson.

Apart from the Jews being summarily thrown out of their homes, many leave their houses, and make an effort to settle themselves with the other Jews in the southwest part of the city, which was later transformed into the ghetto.

They turn over their furniture and valuables to their Christian neighbors to be hidden.

In the meantime, days go by, in fear, suffering, requisitions and forced labor.

Seventy-One 'Jewish Communists' Are Shot

On July 9, groups of workers go out from the assembly point beside the Jewish committee: over 200 Jews are taken to do work in the military barracks. They work, as usual until midday, under a hail of b lows, chicanery, etc. At midday, they three small tables are set up in the field, and the workers receive an order

to go to one of these tables, to register. Th group that happened to register at the center table, numbering 71 men, is gathered together after work, under beatings from rifle butts, and staves, are then taken off to one of the barrack buildings, and locked up there; the remaining Jews are sent home. For the time being, it is not known what is to become of these [detained] people. It is not possible this day, any longer, to attempt intervention, because 7:00PM is the 'curfew hour' – and it is not permitted to be in the streets again, until morning.

On the following morning, and in the next few days, efforts are made by the Jewish committee to make an appearance and get them released, but without any results – we don't know what is happening to them: we hope that they will yet return... however, a few days later, we saw on not large yellow notices, of the official gate postings, in German or Polish, where it is describes, that on July 9, 71 Jewish communists from Baranovich were shot. A terrible sorrow befell the families of those who were killed, and as well on all the remaining Jews.

The Murderers Run Rampant

Barely a few days go by. The men go out each morning to work, as usual. Suddenly, a detachment of S. S. troops arrives; they ride through the streets in autos, detaining Jews, who are hurrying to work, and load them into these autos. The loaded autos drive off, and immediately return empty, and more Jews continue to be seized in the streets. Only men are seized this way, with women allowed to proceed unmolested.

And in the houses – a wailing emerges, a weeping; we do not know what sort of new decree is on its way.

The autos bring the Jews to the bread factory. With hands raised, they are led through a gate, onto a large empty field; they undergo inspection, and all of their documents are taken away, which are all thrown together in a pile.

The men are told to quickly run and seat themselves in a circle at the center of the field, amid refuse. The S.S. men circulate around them, beating them over the head with their rifles and clubs. Two automatic rifles are set up un the middle of the circle. Two S.S. men load them up with cartridge belts. The automatic weapons are locked in place. The entire group goes pale and frozen in place.

The Germans pick up several documents from the ground, and call out: 'Marin, Marin! Over here!'

The former teacher of the dance class (in Oszerowsky's building) runs out of the place where he was sitting, and stands in the middle.

-- You are a dancing master?
-- Yes, I was.
-- Show us your art! Dance!

One of the Germans produces a harmonica, and begins to play.

Frightened, Marin begins to dance. Several other young people are dragged out and they are ordered to dance, and make all sorts of gestures: at the same time, the Germans are photographing these bizarre poses. A young man with a beard is called forward, and he is ordered to raise his hands, -- he is photographed, and then half his beard is cut off – and he is photographed again.

The murderers are laughing and joking with each other while this is taking place. The elderly Gershon Bregman is called forward. He, and another couple of Jews were seized while carrying their prayer shawls and phylacteries. They are ordered to put on their prayer shawls and phylacteries, and to demonstrate how Jews pray. The medical doctor Isaac Bussel is called forward:

– What is your occupation?
-- I am an eye doctor.
-- You are a physician? A shitty physician! -- and with that, his glasses are torn off. He is then beaten in his face.

– And what is it that you do? They ask Dr. Grisha Danilewicz.
– You have a doctor's diploma from a German university! We don't need any Jewish doctors!

And his diploma is torn to bits.

The executioners call out a simpleton to come forward. He answers all of their questions clearly and to the point.

The Nazis manipulate their automatic weapons, and point them at the Jews on all sides.

Then a young boy is dragged out. His is trembling over every inch of his skin. The Nazi bandits fall upon him, and severely beat him with clubs.

– 'I am not Jewish! – her stammers…

He is beaten again. He cries out: 'I am not Jewish!'

His documents are inspected and, it turns out he is actually a Christian.

He is let go.

A motorcyclist rides up, and he confers with those in charge. Then one of them comes forward, and speaks:

'All of you must work well and diligently and fulfill all requests from our authorities! – Now listen carefully:
-- 'If not' – we will shoot all of you! Understood?

There is a deathly silence.

-- Understood? –

-- Understood – all answer in unison.

-- And now, quickly off to work! Run! To the gate! Quickly! Quickly!

We run to the gate; along the ay, all are beaten on their heads.

We have to run through a gauntlet to reach the gate; Germans stand on both sides with clubs and rifle butts,

and they beat us, and beat us. One falls, and those running end up falling one on top of the other. And the clubs keep up their work; they are broken over the heads and the bodies of those lying there, and those continuing to run.

Beaten and bloody, all run to work. There is satisfaction that it ended this way, believing that we had been saved from certain death, only because the military authorities demanded the workers to do their work.

Seizures, Inspections, and Levies

On July 17th we become aware that an S. S. detachment has come to the city. Immediately, we saw them.

N groups of 3-4 soldiers, with rifles in their hands, they went from one house to the next, conducting very thorough searches, and robbed, taking thereby, items of value. The young Jewish people, who by chance were not at work, at the time, were taken by them to the market square. One S. S. detachment left, and a short time later, a second one arrived; from anew, they conducted an inspection, and again they took the men, who had been previously hidden. In this manner, six to seven separate 'searches' were conducted in the afternoon.

One of the Germans who came into our house with yet another group, who carried out the inspection, called my wife and I into a separate room and said, that he has an order to take the men along with him. – And do you know the implication of being taken along? – he added quietly. – It means you will never see them again.

After this, he turned to my wife and said: 'Give me your little ring.'

These 'kidnappers' took away about 350 young men on that day, and with the darkness of the oncoming night, their spoor vanished completely. They were never again seen…

Early the next morning, a demand came from the Jewish committee, that every Jew should turn in his gold and silver, and his money as well, to the committee. The German authorities has imposed a levy – 5 kg of gold, 10 kg of silver, and one million Russian Rubles.

The Jewish committee said, that this was needed in order to get the seized men released. From all sides, the Jews descended on the committee, some with golden rings, others with silver candlesticks, silver forks, knives and spoons, with money etc. Everyone gave what they had. The Treasurer, Schiff, took in all of the money, and the Jeweler Czacky assembled all of the gold and silver. In a very short time, the levy had been assembled, but the seized men were not seen.

The Jewish committee said that they demanded additional things: washing soap, toilet soap, new socks, etc. Emissaries from the committee went from house-to-house, gathering up all these items. Everyone donated, to assure saving them, but they still were not to be seen.

The Jews began to have doubt with regard to the motives of the levy, with insinuations being heard that this was solely a German initiative. Others argued that part of the money was taken by the Jewish committee for itself, to carry out important missions.

The Nightmare of the Ghetto Surfaces

In the meantime, the Christian Citizens' Committee was founded, at the head of which a certain Sobolewski was appointed, a Byelorussian from Stolpčy (He later became the president of White Ruthenia). An action involving passports was then carried out: Soviet passports were exchanged for visas in the German or Polish language. The German command came to the Citizens' Committee and also to the Jewish committee, about the procurement of necessities. From its part, the Citizens' committee sloughed off all of its tasks onto the Jewish committee and the latter was required to provide everything, getting it from the Jews, or buying it from the Christians, using the money of the Jews.

Desiring to take away the Jewish residences for use by the Christians, the Citizens' Committee was already planning to set up a ghetto for the Jews. It is desired to drive us off into the most isolated areas outside of the city – in the north-east part, which is called 'Sakhalin' and also outside of the city, in the Paulinava area. With a great effort, a lot of money, and the skillful intervention of the Lawyer Izikson, who was the leader of the Jewish committee at that time, it was possible to beat down these attempted decrees for a longer time. Nevertheless, the question of a ghetto is not taken off the daily agenda.

German political posture towards our neighborhoods changes with great speed. The proclaim the establishment of "White Ruthenia" in that sector that had belonged to Byelorussia during the time of the Soviets. The administration of our city passes into Byelorussian hands. The second official language after German – was Byelorussian. The Byelorussians raise their heads, and Dr. Wojtenko is nominated as the commissariat burgomaster of Baranovich, a physician and son of a priest. Once, during the Polish period, he was friendly with the Jews, and was a good hospital colleague, and in the Soviet period – a Deputy of the '*Gorsovet*' (municipal leadership). After the Germans marched in, he remained silent and trembled because of his activity in the '*Gorsovet*.' On a daily basis, we would run into each other, as neighbors, during which time, he would show a great deal of empathy for the Jews. On one morning, he was called to the municipal committee, and it immediately became known that he was the new burgomaster. On his way home, he does so, with his head carried aloft. He barely takes note of me... I congratulate him on his new position, and in the process I engage him in a conversation about the painful question: a ghetto. I say to him that he, as a physician, certainly would understand, that in an overcrowded ghetto, epidemics can break out, and the consequences will not be confined to the extent of the ghetto... and because of this, he should take this into account in allocating quarters for the Jews and give a greater amount of area.

He answered me as follows: 'We will combat the epidemics, by shooting and killing off all those who become mortally ill.' He so quickly altered his demeanor and revealed his true face, that there was no longer anything to discuss with him! All of our former 'good' Byelorussian neighbors, changed exactly in the same way.

The Decree Against The Medical Doctors

A new decree is proclaimed in a short time: against the medical doctors. Part of them must leave the city, and settle in the region, in those places, where doctors are not available.

The Byelorussian burgomaster's office carried this out through its hygiene office, headed by Dr. Vladimir Lukaszenie.

It is worth dedicating a few words here, to his memory:

Born, lived and studied in Baranovich, graduating from the Medical Faculty at Vilna, and afterwards practiced in Baranovich. A Russian in origin, he manifested himself to be among The Righteous Gentiles of the World, during that bitter and frightening time of the occupation. With a fatherly feel, putting his own life in danger more than once, he did everything he could, to lighten the fate of the many and the individual. He approached everyone, listening to everyone's concerns, and with an amiable smile, would attempt to soothe everyone, and thereby, did everything that was in his power to do. He did a great deal for his fellow Jewish colleagues, and school friends. I recall, when he came, following the order of the municipal Byelorussian authorities, to the *Judenrat*, in connection with procuring 60 Jewish girls for the German brothels in the city. With tears in his eyes, he came to the 'Jewish Eldest,' Izikson, and communicated the substance of this decree to him. He asked, consulted, about what to do. In the end, he found a way out: he personally traveled to Vilna, and gathered up 60 '*frauleins*' there personally – Christians, who as 'professionals' were prepared to voluntarily travel back with him to Baranovich. It was in this fashion that the 'Decree of Shame' was annulled.

When the ghetto was to be sealed off, he used all the means at his disposal to assure that all of the Jewish doctors should remain outside the ghetto, and he was able to gradually accomplish this a little bit at a time. He provided medications for the Jewish ghetto pharmacy, as much as he was only able to do.

When Michael Mukasey (now in Israel), a pharmacist, fled from the '*Todt*' labor camp, and after that, from the building of the Byelorussian police, who had captured him, he encountered 'Volodya' who sat him alongside in his дрошка (explanation: a horse hitched to a passenger vehicle) – and risking his own life, brought him to his own home. He kept him there for several days, and afterwards, conveyed him to a Christian of his acquaintance, Khacya, who sent Mukasey off to the partisans.

Finally, Dr. Lukaszenie helped the partisans with medications and other things.

His professional colleague Prawko, betrayed him, and the Germans took him and his wife off to the concentration camp at Koldichevo, were he and his wife were murdered in 1944, just before the Germans began to retreat before the advancing Red Army.

Not only once, did we, the Jewish colleagues, discuss among ourselves, that should we survive, we will propose that his name be given to a street in our city, but sadly, this never came to be!

Honor his memory!

Dr. Lukaszenie implemented the order, to send out the doctors to the region, in a manner that he gave each of the doctors an opportunity to decide his own way. There were among them those. Who for any number of reasons, did not want to continue remaining in the city, and these signed up to be sent out. It was in this manner that Fr. Betty Izikson and her son, Izzie went to Bartniki, because after having been so popular (she received the order of the Red Flag in May, from the Soviets) she was fearful of remaining in the city, and [eventually] she was killed there along with her son. Dr. Georg Weill and his daughter relocated to Haradisca. Dr. Hirsch Badobla and his family – to Stalovičy. The lady pharmacist Shayna Mirsky and her husband, Loly'eh Stoliar and their child, transferred to Niedwiediec, where they committed suicide, upon learning that they were to be executed.

At the same time, people came back to the city, rejoining their families, who were in other places at the time of the Nazi incursion into the city. It was in this way that the following returned: Dr. Loly'eh[157] Berkowicz (now in Israel), the daughter of Dr. Weill, who had been studying in Lemberg, and Leah Baguza who has been studying in Minsk. Also, Dr. Joseph Rutkowicz returned with his brother-in-law Pukhawicky.

Among the last to return were Dr. Bori'eh Shapiro, the son of the Rabbi Dr. Shapiro. Before the beginning of the war, he was in Kurot Kislovodsk – and from there he went away to Baranovich to his family.

The Yellow Stars of David

Several days go by, and the Jews receive an order to replace their armbands, bearing the Star of David, with 'Badges of Shame' – circular yellow patches, 10 cm in diameter. One badge is to be worn over the left breast, and a second on the back, on the left shoulder blade. A feeling of inexpressible denigration, and fear, reigned among the Jewish populace. The Christian population derived much pleasure from this 'Badge of Shame.' With circles in their hands, the Jews sat and prepared themselves for these 'marks of a Jew' in accordance with the instructions conveyed. In donning these badges, we felt like hunchbacks, especially the rear badge, that weighed like a heavy weight, dragging us to the ground.

In a rather short time, we were instructed to relocate the badges in such a way, that the hind-badge had to be sewn onto the right side, at the same place. Sometime later, an order came out again, that these badges must not only be sewn onto outerwear, but also on all clothing worn underneath, in order that it should be possible to distinguish Jews in the home. The last stage in the evolution of the 'Badge of Shame,' was in the form of a yellow Star of David, 10 cm un diameter, in front, opposite the heart – on the left, and on the back – on the right shoulder blade, somewhat higher than the previous badge. Taking note of the fact that some Jews were fastening on these badges with safety pins, which enables them to take them off in a moment, a more stringent order was issued that they be sewn on with the thread going around the entire perimeter. The doctors were compelled to put this 'Badge of Shame' on their white overcoats on the front – to the left. You can understand that minimum sentence for not carrying out the order was the death penalty.

Only one penalty existed for Jews who did not carry out German orders – the death penalty.

Among all the other orders, was a prohibition to deal in alcohol. One morning, at the soap factory, Tolya Bernstein was arrested, the youngest son of an extensively-branched family, the former owners of the soap factory in the city. No efforts to free him were of any avail, and also, the reason for his arrest was unknown. A few days later, we read, in the local Byelorussian newspapers, that a Jew, Tolya Bernstein, had been shot, because he sold a bottle of vodka.

He was killed as a warning to the remaining populace.

The threat of the death penalty also faced those caught providing bread, or food, to the captured Soviet soldiers. On a daily basis, thousands of prisoners were taken to work, and then back from work. They no longer looked like human beings, but rather like shadows, who were barely able to move; hungry, scrawny, filthy, clothed in tatters and barefoot, they were driven by the Nazi animals, who beat and bludgeoned them with *nagaikas,* clubs and rifle butts. At the end of each column it was possible to see, how living human

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157 This is the endearing Yiddish diminutive for Leib, or Leon.

skeletons would be supporting their half-dead comrades under the arms, who could no longer stand on their own feet. With barely audible voices, they would beg for a bit of bread.

Not thinking of the looming punishment, that threatened them, and themselves not having anything to eat, the Jews would put out bread, sugar candies, and other kinds of edibles on the streets, where the prisoners would be led through, and would be pleased when they saw them pick it up and eat it.

Fear and Tension

On July 30, after midday, an order was given to all Jews, that on the 31st, the night doors need to be locked, and shutters closed on the houses that are occupied by Jews. The Jews are not permitted to come out, into the street, for the entire day, and also not into their yard. They are not to look out of the corners of windows. The Jews, who have to go to work, may not go one at a time, they must gather together in groups – and group-wise, three to a row, they have to walk on the right side of the street, so that the sidewalk should be on their right side. They may not look behind them. In entering their places of work, they must cut through the sidewalk in a specific corner. After sin o'clock, no Jew is permitted to be seen in the streets. Any such person will be shot on the spot.

It is very easy to imagine what we lived through during the afternoon of July 31.

A sleepless night went by. Those, leaving for work, who felt themselves more secure, because they were working, had no hope to ever encounter those at home again. It was thought that the locked houses were going to be set on fire, and they would be consumed along with those Jews that would have remained inside them. Many went off in the night, leaving their homes, and going to Christians whom they knew, and then hid themselves until the early morning in the workplaces. The remainder – confused and listless, remained in the houses.

--'Jews, the Night of the Long Blade draws nigh!—the Zionist dentist, Dr. Berman says. 'The Night of St. Bartholomew is getting closer! We are all going to be slaughtered' – he ends.

The arriving Christian workers cause the discussion to be abruptly ended. We accost them, asking, what is to be heard, going on in the city. Everything is quiet. They know nothing of any orders issued, that were received the prior night.

What, then, did all of this mean? Nobody knew. It was even said that Hitler himself ימ"ש, had driven through the city on that day. It was said that this was a day of mourning for the Germans, for those killed in the war...

One day followed another, with greater or lesser tribulations, and we began to get used to the tension and pain. We settled in at work, whether in the municipal institutions, or private Christian employers, the German groupings, or at black market work for the Germans. For the first and second months we were actually paid our full wages at the municipal and private places of work, while later on, part of this pay was withheld for the use of the Christian magistrate. From time-to-time, we would obtain food products at work, together with the Christians, the Jews still being able to utilize the Christian health institutions, and we were still able to walk on the sidewalks, but having to get out of the way for the Germans. With badges worn front and back, but with the bearing of a person, we began to accustom ourselves to this gruesome life. Upon returning from work, we would drop into a Christian business (there were no more Jewish businesses), and buy bread, salt, and whatever vegetables we could obtain. From time-to-time, we would furtively go into the business

of a Christian acquaintance, sell goods and clothing to them, and obtain foodstuffs in return. New foods were created... a delicacy was created out of bread, that looked like, and smelled like fish. From time-to-time Jews would come from the surrounding towns, such as Haradisca, Stalovičy, Ljachavicy, primarily women, and they would bring along food. They told us that they did not encounter Germans there, and their existence there remains tranquil. This had the effect of causing people to relocate to the smaller towns.

The Expulsion to 'Sakhalin'

And suddenly: an awaited decree arrived, but was not anticipated – the Jews are required to relocate to a ghetto the following early morning, which is to be created in 'Sakhalin' on the other side of the Lemberg-Vilna railroad track, where there are small peasant-style houses. This relocation is to be accomplished in very few numbered hours.

The following day, was cloudy, dreary and rainy. Thousands of Jews, women and children, with sacks and packages on their backs, on small wagons, baby carriages, with the last of their assets, are slowly being drawn with the last of their energies, bent over, exhausted, in tears, on their way to the 'new' life in the ghetto – to 'Sakhalin.'

A military limousine drives by, and it stops. An elderly man emerges, wearing the uniform of a German general, and he asks: 'What is going on here?' – He is informed succinctly. The general shrugs his shoulders [and says]: 'It looks like 'they' – the local authorities – have nothing more important to do, so let them go to the front!' He sits back down in the car, and rides off.

The people reach their destination. The rain is pouring, and there is no place to hide. The little houses are occupied by their owners, the peasants, who are not prepared to leave them in the rain. We stand ourselves around the walls, covering up the crying children. And this is the way we sit until nightfall. Part of the group turns to go back to the city, to their own houses – and what will be, will be! Here, the rain is coming down, and there is no one to talk to, or whom to ask anything. What is to be done then, especially in light of the fact that part of the Jews have remained back in the city, of their own accord, and did not leave because of the rain. Part of the group remains overnight under the open sky. The houses back in the city, which were abandoned, in the meantime, are plundered by the Christians.

At the same time, the Jewish committee makes an effort with all its means, to take down the decree, and in the end, they get the result they want. We are permitted to return to the houses, wet, soaked, hungry, and barely able to drag ourselves, we all come back to lodge in the previously abandoned houses.

News of the Enemy from Surrounding Towns

In our ongoing contact with Christians of our acquaintance, we learn from them, that the surrounding towns are being visited by '*Strafbattalionen*' who gather up the Jewish residents and shoot them. The first news of this comes from Kryvošyn. There, the local Jewish pharmacist was shot, with is family, and the former Baranovich resident, Tzila Zablocky with her husband Hirsch'l Bussel and child. We also find out that the doctor, Aharon Filipowsky, from Baranovich, who practiced there, was able to escape into the surrounding forests, where the first of the partisan groups were created. Later on, we received further news that he, as a partisan, had taken part in a battle with the Germans, and had been killed.

The wave of extermination that cascades over the Jews, envelops more and more towns, and reaches the largest city of Hancevicy. There, the Baranovich lawyer Aharon Brawda is killed, along with his wife, who was literally taken out of confinement with her newborn child. The Baranovich resident Gurwicz was also shot there, the husband of Raya Tunkel, who had an 'ironclad letter' from the German military authorities as a critical employees at the pitch factories. He had the right to free movement, in discharging his work duties. As luck would have it, he happened to be in Hancavičy at the time. He was detained a number of times during the extermination *action*, but in showing his 'document' he was released. In the end, a Byelorussian policeman detained him, who tore up his 'ironclad letter' and after that, tore away his young life.

These arriving reports, overwhelm the senses, and at first they are not believed, that one could simply, and summarily, murder a entire community of Jews this way. And when the gruesome truth is in fact verified, a search begins for reasons, why did this happen, we say amongst ourselves, that the Jews in the towns and in Hancevicy were in contact with Soviet partisans, and this was the reason they were wiped out. This was the way we attempted to save ourselves from the thoughts of our own impending death. This very psychological trait of human nature was exploited by the Nazi murderers as part of their extermination tactic: Let the Jews think that they will remain alive. It was in this way that the murderers avoided uprisings in the time that they carried out their '*selektion*' processes (slaughters).

The *Judenrat*

The plight of the Jews became very tense, and life – full of suffering and worry, to the point of being unbearable. People waited for miracles, for changes. We began to say that the German civilian authorities are to arrive, and in this way, life will begin to stabilize. We waited and hoped. And we continued to wait!

In September 1941, they descended upon us – an entire staff of murderers, well-honed to the task, with *Gebiets-Kommissar Obersturmbannführer* Rudolf Werner at their head. They designated the good-looking building of the 'Bank Polski' as their place of residence, where we would have to appear from then on. A Jewish section was established within this *Gebiets-Kommissariat* which was supervised by a young lowlife, a murderer and a sadist, the Jew-murderer Krampe. Dr. Wikhman supervised the medical sector. A labor employment section was also created.

At the same time, arriving from Kovno, was the permanent *Gestapo*, with the cold plunderer Amelung at their head. One of his closest helpers was the young gentile thug, constantly short of money, Jozef Litwin, or 'The Pretty Jozef' as he was called. The *Feldgendarmerie* also took up residence in the city, and at the same time, a Byelorussian police force was created, and a local secret police headed by a local Ukrainian Christian named Diachenko. Apart from this, certain military units and bases remained in the city, and headquarters.

All of them together, and each separately fixed themselves like leeches on the backs of Baranovich Jewry, and began to suck their blood. All of them demanded and made requests for things that they needed to have. And the Jews had to give them everything, provide everything, seeking to save ones' lives for whatever price, and continued to keep giving and giving.

Decrees and demand began to rain down on us anew. Jews are not permitted to receive pay for their work. The civilian Christian and municipal employers are required to transfer the pay designated for the Jewish workers, to the labor office. Jews may not walk on the sidewalks. They must walk in the middle of the street. Jewish passports must be stamped on their front cover with the word '*Jude*' in large letters. This is to be done at the *Judenrat.* At the same time an official J*udenrat* was established, with all of its sectors, which in fact, was a reincarnation of the Jewish Committee, that was required to carry out all the orders of the Germans, in connection with the Jews.

Fishl Svjacicky directed the sector for provisioning and quartermaster, within the Judenrat; the social office – Chaim Zukerman; the labor bureau – Joseph Limon, assisted by Izzie Fiedler; sanitation office – Dr. Fish'keh Sawczyc; pharmacy – Manager, Mikhl Mukasey, and Rakow; storage – Idelczyk. Those who worked in the storage facilities were Pinia Jasinowsky, and Sima Lew.

The last three positions were created later in the ghetto. In the general, or primary division, the following worked: Mordechai Schiff –as Treasurer; Joseph Kuriniec –as Secretary (the latter kept a diary of the ghetto – but sadly, the book did not survive. As a former journalist and Zionist, he said more than once, that should he survive, the first article that he would write for a newspaper on the way to the Land of Israel would be written under the title: 'With my Rear towards Europe").

'Mulik Israel was the liaison person with the S. D. (*Gestapo*) and with the Byelorussian secret police. A Jewish police force was also created (about 50-60 men) headed, together with the chief of police by Chaim Weltman.

In time, new divisions were created, and new people joined up, such as, for example, with the only store where food rations were distributed, run by Moshe Litvak, the former owner of a paper warehouse, and a community activist. Dr. Isaac Bussel also took part substantively in the deliberations. Beloskurnik also worked along, who took to providing boots, shoes, etc. Baruch Galay undertook the bookkeeping. The lady, Genya Mann, was very important to the effort. Several years before the beginning of the war, she had come together with her husband, Engineer Mann, from Rovno, and took up residence in Baranovich. She was beloved in the city. A short time afterwards, her husband died, and she remained alone. She dedicated herself to community work. After the establishment of the *Judenrat,* she was drawn to the work that it was performing. She committed her entire being to this work, and quickly won the affection of her co-workers, of all Jews, and even of the Nazi murderers, who would seek counsel with her in arranging for their own domicile.

Thanks to this, not only once, was she able to get decrees set aside, and do a great deal on behalf of the local Jews. Always bringing in comfort and encouragement, into the sad lives of the perplexed, being often frighteningly perplexed herself. Being able to save herself from being killed (there was a German woman who wanted to keep her) she did not take advantage of it, and held that her place was together with all the Jews. During the time of the first *aktion*, she remained in the ghetto, and was killed as one of 'the last two.' In the ghetto, she was held to be the uncrowned 'Jewish Elder' who worked hand-in-hand with the *Judenrat* President of the time.

It was Mulya Yankelewicz that served as the representative of the 'Jewish Elder' (today, in Israel).

The lawyer, Evsei Izikson stood at the head of the *Judenrat*, the son of the well-known manufacturer-merchant, Hirsch Izikson (today in Israel). Evsei also had a manufacturing business. He was active in community life; he was a member of the Merchant's Bank, and other things. Apart from that, he joined the B. B. W. R. in the Pilsudski era (a non-partisan bloc for cooperative endeavor with the regime). What it was that moved him (and others) to cooperate in the 'Jewish Committee' -- has remained his secret.

After drawing himself into this work, he committed himself to it with life and limb. He made the greatest efforts in order to save the Jews of Baranovich from extermination. He wanted to believe, that he would be able to accomplish this. He thought that with his energetic work, he will be able to buy his life. It was not only one decree that he managed to get set aside. He accomplished a great deal. Very often, he was met with blows, and was beaten up by the Nazi murderers, in discharging the duties of his position, but this did not deter him from further work, from additional attempts at intermediation. Smart and ambitious, he knew how to handle [himself] and how to maneuver, in order to carry out his plans.

As the 'Jewish Elder' he also had his privileges: he had his own living quarters in a room, and he had permission to use electrical lights (all the other Jews were forbidden to do this). He also had a movement pass, entitling him to freely move about at all times, and other things. He would use this latter facility to help resolve important issues on behalf of the Jews.

He had to fulfill all the demands made by the Germans, and provide them with everything that they had requested. He gave, brought, and provided more than they even demanded, in order to save Jewish lives.

And when, during the time of The First Slaughter, the murderers came to him, and demanded that he turn over all the old and sick Jews, he answered them:

'I have given you everything, everything that you have asked of me, but Jews – I will not give you, because I am not the master of human lives.'

And with this answer, he sealed his own fate! With this answer, he lost his world.

He also enjoyed privileges up to the last moments: together with his lady assistant, Genya Mann, he was taken in a taxi (not a freight truck, like the rest of the Jews) and conveyed to the execution place... before the murderers shot them, they read a judgment of a death-sentence – and they saw, that in the face of death, Mr. Izikson comported himself calmly, as opposed to Mrs. Mann, who wept profusely. Both were sentenced, given the added 'privilege' that, after taking off their shoes and coats, they were ordered to run up the hill, and only first then, were they shot...

And that is how 'the first two' of the *Judenrat* – became 'the last two' of that Day of Slaughter.

Honor their memory!

In the '*Judenrat,*' that was established, the religious leaders of Baranovich Jewry partook in taking counsel not only once, [including] among others, the young Rabbi Scheinberg, his brother, the *Dayan* Nissan Scheinberg and the *Rebbe* of Slonim, Rabbi R' Shlomo Weinberg.

The *Judenrat* and the Doctors

Immediately after the first decrees of the civilian authorities, come new ones: Jews are prohibited from buying anything in 'Aryan' businesses. After that – Again, a levy of two million Soviet Rubles, or German Marks (in the course of events, the exchange rate was one Ruble = one Mark).

The *Judenrat* must gather up this sum.

This time around, it was more difficult than the previous time, because the people no longer had any money, and this time there was not the threatening call to wipe out the Jews.

So it was up to the *Judenrat* to specify how much each person, Rabbi Scheinberg, his brother, the Dayan Nissan Scheinberg, and the goods, materials, leather strips, etc.

For a rather large part of this sum, the *Judenrat* decided to borrow from the doctors, who became the target for all possible arrows. The doctors, numbering between 30 to 40, could not, even with the best of intentions, take on this burden. The taxes levied grew day by day. This ultimately led to a stormy meeting between the representatives of the doctors and the *Judenrat*. Among others, Dr. Leib Nakhumowsky attended this meeting. Pale, and upset, he arose and began to speak in a restrained calm tone:

--A time will come, when history will record that a certain small town, B., where the majority (the Germans and the Christians) imposed themselves on a minority (the Jews), and began to take advantage of them, and oppress them, and this same minority separated out from within itself an even smaller minority (the doctors), that was taken advantage of, and oppressed by them...

The President of the *Judenrat*, at that time, Evsei Izikson, leapt to his feet and exclaimed – 'I do not permit such speech to take place!'

'I take away your right to do so!' – He shouted.

A tumult ensued, with disorder – and the meeting was broken up.

After this, the *Judenrat* designated a commission, together with a few doctors (Dr. Bussel, Dr. Szeps), who should hear out the arguments of each doctor, and then set the sum, which he must pay.

Executions

Every day, the Germans gorged themselves, and Jozef Litwin also continuously took, and continued to demand more. Quickly, he became associated with the hanging of the three peasant 'partisans' from the electric light poles, beside the monument to the Polish Unknown Soldier. In the same period, executions were carried out of several Soviet prisoners of war, in Szulein's yard: they were doused in benzene, and set afire while still alive. Among them was a Jew, who called out from the flames: 'Long Live Stalin! Long Live Soviet Russia!' All of this summoned a terrible fear among the people, especially among the Jews.

News arrives of an *aktion* against the Jews in the nearby *shtetl* of Haradisca (30 Tishri 5702), where Jews from Baranovich were also killed. We learn that, in Novogrudok, the Jews were gathered together on the marketplace, together with the local *Judenrat* of that location, and they were shot, because they did not

provide the number of workers that was asked for. Among those shot – the Baranovich residents Ber'l Szwiransky, and his older son (the owner of a bakery) and Schmidow (who owned a clothing store business).

Ghetto

The mood in the city becomes even more tense, as the question of a ghetto takes on greater reality. The 'Jewish Elder' Izikson, makes every conceivable effort, to have the ghetto remain in that part of the city where the largest portion of the Jewish populace is located. In the end, his effort succeeds. The ghetto is designated in the southwest part of the city (see the map!).

Krampe, the director of the Jews-sector in the civilian administration, with his crop in hand, accompanied by members of the *Judenrat*, inspects the houses. Every house is haggled over. The Christian residents have no desire to vacate their houses. They make an effort to avoid having their houses included within the confines of the ghetto. One day they get their way, and on the next – the *Judenrat* gets its way.

In the end, the boundaries of the ghetto are precisely specified, with the understanding that each individual will get his/her square meter of space. The ghetto consists of to parts, with a small connecting passage (near the house on Minsk *Gasse* No. 100), which connects the two parts. One house is allocated to be used for the Judenrat offices, on the Sadowa *Gasse*, not far from the main ghetto gate. A second, small house, across the street –[was allocated] for the ghetto police. In the former old age home, founded by the well-known philanthropist from Israel Zalman Halperin, is organized to be a ghetto hospital and ambulatorium. Across from it – the division for infectious diseases, and the ghetto pharmacy on Orzeszkowej *Gasse*.

Peasants bring together posts and barbed wire. The post holes are dug, and the barbed wire is strung. They are building a cage for us, so that at any moment, they can take us out of the cage and slaughter us.

The previously mentioned Dr. Lukaszenie, the director of the hygiene office in the magistrate's office, conveys his intent to make an effort to permit the Jewish doctors – remain, each at his own place outside the ghetto, in order that they be able to serve the Christian populace at appropriate times.

The *Judenrat* is opposed to this privilege for the doctors, and makes every effort to thwart this. It is possible that it engendered a form of envy: perhaps the doctors will be better off: perhaps they will find it easier to save themselves. Also, those who were designated to be in the ghetto houses, opposed the doctors as well. A continuous struggle develops between Dr. Lukaszenie and the *Judenrat*, by way of the directors of the relevant sectors (hygiene and Jewish affairs) within the German civilian authorities.

It is finally decided that, those doctors that work in the Christian municipal health institutions, will live outside the ghetto, but not in their current places of residence: four houses are allocated for their use, outside of the 'barbed wire' close beside the ghetto, on the Vilna *Gasse,* in the quarter of the Hower *Gasse*, up to Sadowa. The ghetto boundary goes behind these houses. When it was already after the decision was taken, at the last minute, it becomes possible for the *Judenrat* to take one of these houses as a workplace (tailors, shoemakers), where the Germans can make appointments without having to go into the ghetto. The doctors receive permission to bring their nearest family members in to live with them in these houses. Dr. Lukaszenie also succeeds in to extract the doctors from the ghetto part, and settle them into these so-called 'houses.' At the last moment, he also succeeds in getting the head nurse of the ghetto hospital out, Minna Ljahozwiansky, the translator from the hygiene office, Wilhelm Feldman (a former teacher at the Polish government gymnasium), a few pharmacists, and lady laboratory workers (Dol'eh and Horowitz with her

mother) and settle them in these houses. And it is interesting: the doctors, who had previously opposed the 'outside ghetto plan,' settled themselves in here well, once the possibility to do so materialized.

It later became evident that, apart from these doctors, there were other Jewish families that remained outside the ghetto, and rather far from it, for example, the Stavsky family remained in its house, where there was a factory for making rope, the family of Engineer Singalowsky lived in the chemical factory, that he ran, the family of the dentist, Fiedler – in his office; The *Judenrat* did not know about this before, and because of this, let it be. It became evident that these residents helped the ghetto out a great deal, in that because of them, a great deal of food and other things were smuggled into the ghetto, under the wire, and into the ghetto itself.

The privilege of living outside the ghetto was not restricted to Baranovich only, but was also done in all of the other surrounding cities, as in Novogrudok, Slonim, and others. In those locations, the local *Judenrat* did not oppose this.

The *'Kolkhozes'*

In addition to all of the daily troubles that were heaped upon us, came the task of searching for a domicile in the future ghetto. It is understood that bribery, and acquaintance with the leadership played no small part in this process. Having one square meter of space per person, it was necessary to configure that apart from the beds themselves, that there should be at least one room with a small table and seats for between 15-20 people, who would be expected to live there. For this reason, it was necessary to construct bunk beds, that is, to built stacks of beds, to make use of the height of the room. Others elected to make two levels out of a room on one level: one underneath, and a second – over it. It needs to be mentioned that rooms in Baranovich were by and large quite high: somewhat more than four meters high. Apart from beds , a small table and stools, there was no talk of bringing in any additional furniture. The furniture in the former places of residence were either left behind, or given over for temporary use with the sense that 'if there will at sometime be a world where we will remain a live, we will get it back.' The beds of small children were fastened to the walls. Many arranged their sleeping quarters in the attics.

There were very few foresighted people, mostly from among the refugees, who arranged to make double-walls in the rooms, and other places to hide.

A serious problem was the one of cooking: in a house that had 4-5 rooms, with a general area of 80-100 square meters, about 80 people lived, which represented about 20 families, and all of these had only one kitchen. The only 'fortune' in this, was the fact there was nothing to cook, but the bit of warmed up edibles still needed to be prepared, and not only once did this induce bad blood, arguments, and often fisticuffs. The entrance way was not a small problem, which by the way, was in the yard. The matter of potable water was a serious issue. There were no facilities for water delivery in the city. Water had to be drawn from the flowing brooks, and carried into the house. A schedule was set up, whereby the residents had to fill large vessels with water, but each person had the impression that he was doing work on behalf of others. Arguments also broke out more than once on this matter as well. There was also the issue of washing and drying of laundry, especially in the winter months, which was a painful question. For this reason, every house that was occupied by a larger number of people was given the name '*kolkhoz*,' meaning a collective enterprise...

Also, the cleaning of the rooms, the washing of the floors and windows, was one of the '*kolkhoz*-related' questions of duty.

Of greatest importance was the matter of washing one's self in the morning: in order not to be late for work, it was necessary to get up quite early, while it was still dark, and reserve a place. There was no soap. Laundry was boiled together with ash; all manner of salves/ointments were created for purposes of washing hands.

A ghetto bath house was arranged for, so that the Jews could bathe themselves; the old bath house on the Minsk *Gasse*, outside the ghetto, was cordoned off with barbed wire, and the Jews were taken there in groups to bathe.

It is understood that those, who placed less emphasis on keeping clean, became infested with lice. Because of this, via the *Judenrat,* sanitation commissions were created. These consisted mostly of womenfolk, who did not go to work outside of the ghetto. Their mission was to uncover lice infestation, and in the case of those so infested, have their hair shorn, and then sent to bathe. Bedbugs became an ongoing plague in the ghetto, who enlarged the suffering of the ghetto residents, in a manner that was indescribable.

Meanwhile, until the official entry into the ghetto, additional decrees keep coming. The Jews may not take advantage of medical help in the municipal Christian institutions. The future ghetto hospital and ambulatorium are completed at a quick pace, and the Jews receive their needed help there. Despite this, they are illegally treated by the Jewish doctors in those institutions where they are still employed. In preparing themselves for the 'winter campaign,' the Germans issue an order that everyone must surrender their fur coats, heavy jackets, woolens and heavy underwear, for use by the soldiers at the front. The Jews must surrender the last of their warm clothing. A bitter cold winter draws near, and we are bereft of warm clothing, without any wood to heat ourselves, and the time is arriving for the ghetto to be sealed. Those, who do not go out to work (children, the elderly, the sick), will be crammed into the ghetto, and are not permitted to go out into the city. No way out is seen.

The day arrives. The sealing of the ghetto is set for 12 December 1941, at noon. Apart from all the Jews, also Jews who converted to Christianity must also go inside; however, by contrast, a Christian who converted to Judaism and is located in the city, does not have to go into the ghetto, because he is not of Jewish origin, but his Jewish wife must stay in the ghetto. Their children remain with their father, outside the ghetto.

The Jews take advantage of their last opportunity of free movement in the city, to take care of a variety of issues, and carry their meager remaining 'assets' into the ghetto.

The Gates of the Ghetto are Locked

At exactly noon, on December 12, the gates of the ghetto are locked. A watch is posted at the outside of the gates, consisting of Byelorussian police with rifles. Single Byelorussian police patrol the barbed wire perimeter, watching to assure that nobody tries to get out under the wire. Their guardhouse can be found at the principal gate on the Wilensky *Gasse*, corner of Sadowa, in the house of Moshe Mirsky, which is outside the ghetto. The Byelorussian guards are led by a German a chief of gendarme guards. On the ghetto side, a Jewish policeman stands at the gate. The Jewish police are differentiated by a white armband on which, in a dark blue color, the word '*Ordnungsdienst*' appears, with the circular stamp of the *Gebietskomissariat*.

There are two additional gates inside the ghetto: on in the northwestern part, and the second in the southwestern part of the ghetto. The latter is usually under lock and key, and is used to take out the Jewish dead to the Jewish municipal cemetery.

After the closure of the ghetto, those workers that work outside the ghetto receive work passes for purposes of leaving the ghetto. All Jews are permitted to enter the ghetto even without passes being inspected, however, on leaving, the passes are inspected by the Byelorussian police at the gate.

Entrance of ordinary Germans, Byelorussian police, and the civilian Aryan population – is forbidden. The latter mill around outside the barbed wire, and content themselves with seeing that the Jews are crammed in behind the wire. Only members of the Gestapo may enter the ghetto, representatives of the *Gebietskomissar*, and the German gendarmerie. Also, the Byelorussian Secret Police has access to the *Judenrat* building.

Life in the ghetto begins to stabilize, and one becomes inured to the tribulations, and to living in crowded quarters, and filth. The *Judenrat* carries out the orders given to it by the Gestapo police. It assumes control of its territory, meaning the ghetto. Its members begin to feel as if they too are part of the ruling class, because when the Elder of the Jews enters the building of the Gestapo police, everyone present must stand to attention, and salute, and the leader then turns over his report. This is a tragi-comic and tragic ghetto life! Despite this, the Judenrat makes every effort and exertion to ameliorate the living conditions of the residents, and seeks regular foodstuffs, one hundred grams of black bread is the designated ration per person. From time-to-time, it is able to get a hold of some rotten, frozen potatoes, sometimes some pearl groats, and a bit of [cooking] oil.

A cold and frosty winter settles out of doors. The water in the houses freezes. There is a scarcity of wood to be burned for heat. From time-to-time, the returning workers have an opportunity to bring in small pieces of wood and boards, and those are used to heat up the bit of 'warm food' and to warm up the air in the rooms.

Every morning, thousands of men and women go out to work. Those that work in enclosed houses, warm themselves up, and occasionally get something warm to eat; but the others, who work in the open air, freeze for the entire day. Upon leaving the ghetto, something is always taken along to be sold, and on the way back, one furtively sneaks into a Christian place of business, and one buys something for the hungry members of the family. It is for this reason that there are many willing to go out to work, rather than to remain on the 'inside.'

Apart from that which everyone needs to endure at work, especially at the hands of the Germans, their thoughts are always directed to their families, who are n the ghetto and turned back: those left behind in the ghetto are never at peace, and worry about those who have gone to the outside to work. It is an event to finally see one another after returning frm work, healthy and whole. Inspections also take place often also at the entrance to the ghetto gate, and the Byelorussian police confiscate everything that they find, with the first inspections not being so thorough, but later on they become increasingly more and more strict.

After returning from work, the workers are surrounded by those who know them, and are asked for news from the outside. For some, there is an opportunity to read a newspaper at work, and yet others – to even hear a radio broadcast. At best, understandably, one wants to hear the news and assessment of the optimists. However, it is not possible to remain optimistic when news reaches us of murder *aktionen* – of [the killing of] Jews in the surrounding cities and towns. We learn of this through Christians, and occasionally through

another Jew, who was able to smuggle himself into the ghetto. From time-to-time, an opportunity arises to send out a short letter to relatives and friends, and also to receive a bit of food from those living in the small villages, where there is no ghetto, and they are still able to come in contact with the local peasantry. All of this is undertaken at great risk. On one occasion, such a little letter was seized from Mrs. Brawin, who had written it to her father in Ljahavičy, and for this infraction, she is shot to death along with her child that she was nursing.

Slaughters in Ljahavičy and Slonim

It quickly becomes known that all the Jews in Ljahavičy have been 'liquidated.' We become aware of details: when these Jews were brought to the [sic: previously dug] pits, the former merchant from Baranovich, the elderly Gershon Bergman asked of the murderers, that they should permit the Jews to recite their confessions. In the glimpse of this tragic moment, the request makes an impression on the murderers – and they grant the permission.

The elderly Bergman dons his *Tallit*, which he had taken along on his last journey, and begins to recite, and everyone else repeats after him, in a broken voice, and a silent weeping. The murderers move back, and patiently wait. After completing the prayers, he approached the murderers and says:

– We are ready!

The murderers take to their 'work.' Among those killed – the former Baranovich resident, the pharmacist Alter Kurkhin, with his family.

Immediately, we become aware of a slaughter in Slonim, in which, among the others killed, were former Baranovich residents, among whom was the wife of the well-known Zionist activist, Yitzhak Jasinowsky; the daughter of the well-known manufacturer-merchant, Sonya Foxman, who was employed as a nurse and was also taken to the pits, and after she had been shot, wounded, but still alive – fell into the pit with the others who were shot. In the darkness of the night, she managed to get out from among the dead, and dragged herself to the Christian hospital, where she had previously worked. Her wound was bandaged, and she was laid in a bed. Someone among the hospital staff conveyed this to the appropriate authorities, and she was taken out of the hospital and shot. We also obtain information about the surrounding towns by other means: from time-to-time, the Germans bring Jews to the ghetto from the surrounding towns, and turn them over to the *Judenrat* to settle them in the ghetto. These are the survivors, the left-over Jewish skilled workers, that remain after the liquidation of their towns, once – taken out of their homes before the liquidation.

Attempts to Escape

It is not tranquil inside the ghetto either, we live in a state of perpetual fear: all it takes is for a member of the *Judenrat* to come, with a member of the Gestapo, and the entire ghetto trembles: what sort of decree are they coming with? What is he demanding? And here comes someone from the *Gebietskomissariat*. In the meantime, everyone conceals themselves in their houses, until he goes away. Also, there is an advisory from the *Judenrat*, telling people not to wend their way out in the streets of the ghetto, especially not in the vicinity of the *Judenrat* building, in order not to be noticed by the murderers. From time-to-time, young people are taken out of the ghetto, and they are sent out in cattle and horse transports in all directions: to Lemberg, Warsaw, etc. Their work consists of tending to the animals in transit: feeding them, and giving

them water, cleaning up after them, and later they are 'liquidated,' or they are thrown into the city ghetto, which is the final destination of the transport.

News arrives from Warsaw, and we also read in newspapers, that large factories have been created in the ghetto there, that do work for the German army. We begin to think that one's life might be more secure there than here. We look for ways to get there. When we learn that a transport of cattle has to be taken to Warsaw, there are many young men to be found, especially among the refugees from that area, who volunteer to do this work.

The older family men look for different means. An extensively branched illegal organization of Christians is created, that works in cooperation with the Germans, that occupies itself with the creation of false papers, and with the conveyance of people in sealed vehicles to Warsaw, understandably, involving large sums of money. A small number of groups find it possible to leave our ghetto this way. All of this is done secretly, so that even the closest of one's neighbors in the '*Kolkhoz*' do not know about it. Once, however, there was a failure: after entering the automobile, the vehicle was surrounded by Gestapo people, and all were seized. The punishment was what you could expect: several tens of Jews were shot to death, among them the surgeon from Warsaw, Backman, who was familiar to the people of Baranovich since his arrival as a refugee in 1939.

Once, on an early Saturday morning, when the workers were preparing to leave the ghetto, the gate is not opened (it was normally locked for the entire evening and night: from after working hours, until the time to leave for work [the next day]). A panic ensues in the ghetto, because no one knows what this means. The members of the Judenrat are summoned by the *Gebietskommissariat.* They are detained for about an hour, and questioned about incidents of typhus in the ghetto. After being assured that there is no one in the ghetto sick with typhus, and after a stringent warning, that in the future, each case must be immediately reported, the members of the Judenrat are let go – and the gates of the ghetto are opened. The workers leave to go out.

'At least we got away, even if with fear!'

Day after day goes by. We get acclimated to the prevailing conditions. We begin to look for means to improve our quality of life. We begin to 'settle down.' Despite the fact that we are not paid for our work, it happens that the Christian employers will throw a few marks to the Jews that have been yoked to them.

On a nice winter evening, several Gestapo members come into the ghetto with several 'Jew consumers' from the *Gebietskommissariat*, with Krampe at their head. Surrounded by them, there goes a pale, frightened Jew. Everyone in the ghetto holds back. The Nazis order the *Judenrat* to assemble all of the Jews in the ghetto. Now the man is recognized – this is the ladies' tailor Amstibowsky. Krampe reads the sentence: seeing that this Jew demanded money for his labor at the premises of the lady tailor Szulayka, which is against the laws that have been promulgated by the German authorities, he is sentenced to death by firing squad for 'sabotaging German laws.' And immediately, right on the spot, before the eyes of everyone that was assembled, he was shot on the spot.

The *Judenrat* Organizes Storage Facilities

The demands of the Germans grow larger and larger. The demand to provide all manner of necessities for them – more and more. It is not only once that they demand the things they want to be provided immediately. This moves the *Judenrat* to organize storage facilities, where everything, that is even possible, can be on the spot, and can be immediately produced on demand. The storage facilities must be filled with goods, and, as

understood, these things must be taken from the Jews of the ghetto. The *Judenrat* has no authority to conduct inspections of those who live outside the ghetto. It is only after making the relevant effort, does it succeed in getting permission from Krampe to conduct the searches and requisitions, among the resident medical personnel in the three houses outside the ghetto. On one night, these houses are surrounded by the Jewish ghetto police. No one is permitted in or out. The chief of police. with the *Judenrat* representative 'Mulik Israel come inside – and the inspection commences. They do not speak with people that they know for many years. – 'During the time when one is carrying out one's duty, it is forbidden to speak.' – the police chief says in Russian.

The inspection is carried out very precisely, and all items, that have any value, are taken away, after being recorded on a list by 'Mulik Israel. Words are to no avail. It was in this fashion that the *Judenrat* settled the score with those having the temerity to want to live outside the ghetto.

It must be said that not only once, were things distributed from these storage facility to the Jews of the ghetto, who were in need of an item of clothing.

An order is received one morning from the Judenrat, that all Jews, upon seeing a German in the street, must take off their hat. Along with this, specific instructions are provided as to how this is to be done. This is not a normal greeting. It has to be done in the following fashion: Upon seeing a German on the road, it is necessary to take the had with the right hand, and remove it from the head in a swift motion, rabidly dropping the hand with the hat in it, to the knee, and to keep holding the head covering in this way, until the German passes by. Only then, may the hat be put on again. For not carrying out this order – the sentence is death. We decided that we would go about without hats on, in order to avoid having to comply with this order, but in the meantime it was winter, and it was not possible to go about without a head covering.

It is noteworthy, that many German soldiers, and especially the officers, did not even know about this order, and when we would 'doff our hats' they saluted us in a military fashion. After several months of this, it moved the *Gebietskomissar* to cancel the order.

Then further incidents came to pass with the Germans, who did not know about the cancellation of this decree: they would beat up the Jews who would not take off their head gear.

Illusions

Paying no mind to the fact that continuous slaughter was going on in the surrounding cities and towns, and that other places are already '*Judenrein*,' the Baranovich Jews think they are going to avoid this: their labor is needed. Apart from that, an excuse is always at hand for the acts of murder of the Jews that have taken place: connection to the partisans, etc. There is also faith in the President of the *Judenrat,* [believing] that he will protect the Jews with his clever handling of the Germans.

Characteristic of this line of thinking by the Baranovich Jews is the following fact: on one fine morning, a large number of wagons, full of gypsies, was seen to be passing along the Narutowicz *Gasse (*formerly the Post *Gasse*), along with their wives and children; they were detained by the *Gestapo*, and taken into the *Gestapo* courtyard (the former '*Ozeh*' house) and they were all shot there; upon learning of this, the Jews immediately 'understood' that the Nazis were afraid of the gypsies, that they can take up espionage because of their nomadic lifestyle, and that is why the gypsies were 'liquidated.' Most of all, the mind does not want

to confront gruesome reality, and up to the last minute, each individual thinks 'this' will not happen to him... because...

Despite this, other Jews made an effort to get out of the ghetto, and to live among the Christian population. It is understood that only those, not really known in the city, or that did not have a Jewish appearance, could do this. It was in this manner, that the wife of the doctor, Braslau, and her sister, found it possible to get out of the ghetto and live as 'Aryans.' There was even a Jew by the name of Librecky, who worked in the *Gebietskommissariat* as a translator, and he and his wife passed themselves off as non-Jews.

A Chapter on Converts

Also, converts made an effort to get their wives out of the ghetto, and a few succeeded: the daughter of Bitensky, the Tailor, got permission to return to her Christian husband, who served in the Secret Police, with the condition, that she undergo a sterilization operation, in order that she not be able to bear children. A few days before the 'terrible Purim' she was admitted to the municipal hospital, where the one-time hospital director, the Byelorussian Prawko, carried out the operation after the Purim days.

An employee of the Post Office was able to get his dissident wife out of the ghetto, who incidentally, always lit Sabbath candles on Friday night.

Other converts, as, for example, the Brisk surgeon Dr. Mikicinsky, who worked in Baranovich during the war years, moved out to the smaller surrounding towns, and settled there as Aryans. Dr. Mikicinsky went to Byten' and would even play the church organ at the time of Sunday services, but even this did not stand him in good stead: Christians informed on him, and he was shot to death.

This was, more or less, what ghetto life looked like, until the first days of March, 1942.

The Purim *Aktion*

(The First Mass-Slaughter in Baranovich 1942)

It is the beginning of March 1942. The sun is shining, sending its springtime rays into the snow-covered ground. Also among the Jews, crammed into the crowded ghetto, surrounded by barbed wire, hopes are awakened. The nightmarish winter has gone, fill of want and suffering, atrocities and tribulation. It is necessary to hope... after all, the *Gebietskomissar* promised that in Baranovich, no harm would befall the Jews. They do work diligently, and the *Judenrat* provides the Germans with everything that they only have to ask for. 'The Jews here' – he added –'are, after all different from those in the surrounding cities and towns, where they have been executed.'

March 2$^{nd.It}$ is the Eve of Purim. After a hard day of work, groups of Jews gather in a number of separate houses and they read the *Megillah*.

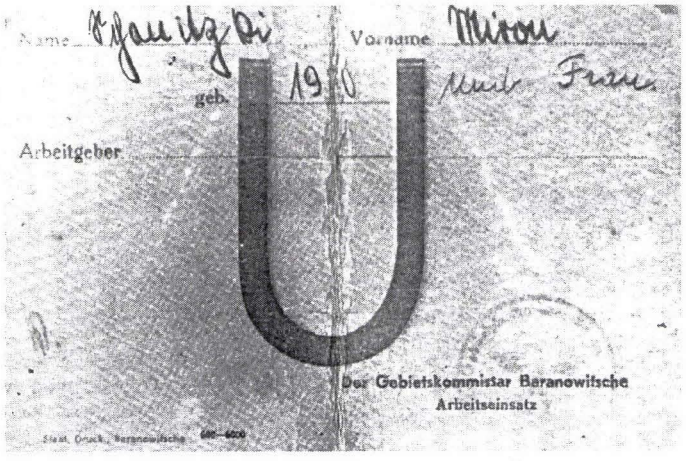
'*Shoshanat Yaakov* is sung,,,, the wish is made to survive the modern day Haman, and we disperse with the hope for a better future.

*

The Jews did not anticipate what the following morning would bring. They did not know that [Julius] Streicher had written in his bloodsucking periodical – in '*Der Stürmer*,' that this time there will be no Esther

to come forward and rescue the Jews. The Jews of Baranovich did not sense that the wagon – the fate of their annihilation had already been sealed by the *Gebietskomissar* Werner, by the director of Jewish affairs, Krampe, and the leader of the S. D. Amelung, to take place on Purim.

It is Tuesday, on March 3, 1942. [158] On the morning of Purim, after the reading of the *Megillah*, all the workers, as was usual, leave the ghetto going to their workplaces. The weather outside is beautiful. All around the ghetto, all is still. There is nothing suspicious to note.



Page 543: A Life Pass. These sorts of passes were distributed by the Nazis in the Baranovich ghetto, on the night of Purim, for Shushan-Purim (before the First Slaughter).

However, by noon, something abnormal can be sensed in the air: not everyone is let out through the main gate of the ghetto to go to work; people are still permitted to exit through the second gate. This does not last very long, and also no exit is permitted from this gate either. It is permitted to go inside through both gates.

In another moment, a freight truck drives up to the main gate. From it, Germans in helmets jump out. The gate is closed, and a machine gun is set up across from the ghetto. At this point, no one is even allowed to go in through the [main] gate. Going in, is only possible through the second gate.

The 'Jewish Elder,' Izikson, who has a pass to leave the sealed ghetto, is not allowed out, and every hope about intervention with the authorities comes to naught. His assistant, the highly responsible lady, Genya Mann, who, at this time, finds herself outside the ghetto (she had left earlier), makes all the efforts possible to be received by the authorities – but it is in vain.

–What can be done? – Where can we go? – All doors are closed, today, no one wants to grant an audience – she mumbles silently through her lips, She goes to the ghetto, in order to be with all Jews.

In between, the ghetto is surrounded by a strong cordon of Byelorussian police, with arms in hand. German field gendarmes ride all around the streets of the city on motorcycles. The Jews, who are returning from work, are sent to the entrance via the second gate.

In the ghetto, which is in the form of a rectangle, with one side open, the following takes place: the Jews in that part where the main gate is located, are required to leave their houses, and go over to the second part of the ghetto, taking along food for the day. This relocation is handled by the Byelorussian and Jewish 'Ghetto Police.' Before everyone else, the sick are transferred over out of the ghetto hospital.

Many Jews hide themselves in the cellars, attics and other hiding places.

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158 A typo, given as 1924.

The 'Ghetto-Police' gets an order to go from house-to-house and call for the hidden Jews, telling them to come out, that there is no danger. They did this, but at the same time, they called out to them (in Hebrew): 'Jews – no!'

All of the houses in the ghetto are under surveillance for the entire night. The Byelorussians go from house-to-house, carrying out a pogrom and plundering.

All the previously mentioned preparations are officially spelled out in the sense, that the Jews from the entire ghetto are required to assemble in one place, where they will be given work permits.

*

In that part of the ghetto, where all the Jews are assembled, there are yet no (non-Jewish) police.

A taxi rides up with the inspector of the labor office aboard, and he brings along a package of permits printed on green cardboard, where the family name is written, the name and the year of birth of the employee. It is signed by '*Der Gebietskomissar Baranovich, Arbeit-Einsatz*' with a round stamp. In the middle of the permit, there is prominently visible a large 'U,' whose meaning is unknown. It was thought that this stood for '*Unvertretbar*,[159]' but later on it began to be called the 'Permits for the Living.'

The package of permits is distributed. A second package is brought. A large part of the Jews remain without permits. The 'Jewish Elder' intervenes. Yet another package of permits is brought, which are blank, and have to be filled in. In this process, the *Judenrat* obtains permission to distribute permits for Rabbis and others.

Part of the workers still remain without permits
, and they are told, that additional permits will be brought. We wait for the entire night on the cold street, hoping, that we will get one. We stand in ranks, and we holler and jostle one another, as to who comes first in the row...

The old, the weak, children, and others, who have no hope of getting such a permit, hide themselves. Even some with passes, choose to hide themselves.

*

Shushan Purim. At four o'clock in the morning, an order comes from the Germans, that those who have the permits should go over to the now free part of the ghetto. They have to pass through a narrow passage of the ghetto between the two halves of the ghetto. At that passage, there are Byelorussian police standing, and inspecting the permits, while at the same time murderously beating the bowed Jews with their rifle butts, and with thick clubs.

The Jews enter the houses that have been subjected to a pogrom, where everything is broken and tossed around.

Not all holders of the 'green permits' go over to the second half of the ghetto; they are entirely attuned to what is going to happen to them; others simply delay doing this, because in two hours, they will not be permitted to leave. Amon these can be found Dr. Leib Nakhumowsky, the chief doctor of the ghetto hospital, and his family, Dr. Solomon Kaplan from Warsaw and his wife (the dentist). Dr. Nakhumowsky is

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[159] Untenable?

completely attuned to what is going on, and does not want to go over to the second half of the ghetto. It is only after a great deal of effort, that he is able to be persuaded, that he should go to the other ghetto hospital. However, he is not let out. It is already too late.

He remains standing by the barbed wire, with his head hung low. Seeing his friend, the 'Jewish Elder,' Izikson, who is exerting himself to get them to let the doctor through, but without success, he says to him: 'Be well, Mr. Izikson! I will finish.. with our ancient call of 'Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One!'

*

At the same time, a group of *Hasidic* Jews stands by. The form of the familiar *Dayan* Niss'ieh Scheinberg stands out among them. He calls out: 'Jews! Today it is Purim in the world! We must be joyous!

Fill the glasses! Let us drink *L'Chaim*!

We must not lose our faith! We must praise The Creator!

L'Chaim, my fellow Jews, *L'Chaim*!

The words have an effect. they engage in a mitzvah dance. Until... until the murderers load them up in the vehicle!

And on one of these vehicles, loaded with Jews sentenced to death, stands out the tall figure of Mendl Goldberg, the well-known former 'father of the prisoners – the hopeless' wrapped in his prayer shawl, his eyes lit up, singing '*Shoshanat Yaakov*.'

*

It is six in the morning. The gate on the Orla *Gasse* opens, in that part of the ghetto where the 'U' cards were distributed, and freight trucks arrive with Lithuanians and Byelorussians (police). The Germans of the S. D. (*Sicherheitsdienst*), S. S., the gendarmerie and the *Gebietskommissariat*. All the Jews are loaded up, who had remained waiting for the permits, and they are led out of the ghetto, under a hail of blows. In the first row of the trucks, the sick from the hospital are thrown in, who laid for the entire night, out in the snow, after being carried out and over from the hospital.

Over to the side, in the ghetto, there were a couple of bodies, '*Tzaddikim*' – they were called, who had died of natural causes. These dead were also loaded into the trucks, and they were conveyed to the pits, because they, the Germans, want to have a greater number to show for 'their account.'

Stonily, frozen and exhausted, the Jews are pushed up into the vehicles. accompanied by blows and beatings from all sides.

But there are also instances, where single people tear themselves out of the murdering hands, others leap off the trucks on the way, and flee. There are also instances of nobility: when the family of Dr. Nakhumowsky was already on the truck, a senior officer of the S. D. took note of the doctor's sister-in-law, Manya, who has worked in the S. D. laundry as a laundress. The officer designates that she should be taken off the truck. He wants to save her, but she sets a condition that he must take off her entire family together with her six year-old little boy, to which he does not agree. Then she shouts out: 'You filthy dogs! You, your wives, and children, your entire nation will pay with your blood for the innocent blood of

ourselves and our children that you have spilled.' Her words are cut short by a beating – and the truck rides out of the ghetto.

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The number of Jews, that were taken out of this part of the ghetto, did not reconcile with the number expected by the Germans. They had printed six thousand 'U' cards, distributed them, and sent the Jews having these 'life permits' to the other part of the ghetto that had been evacuated. The remainder, approximately six thousand Jews, were to be exterminated. However, they had not collected over a thousand Jews. A large part of these had hidden themselves in the ghetto, and some outside of the ghetto. There were also instances, where the Germans (military personnel) hid entire groups of workers among themselves at the places of work; there were very rare instances, when the local Christian populace hid individuals. Also, the Jews themselves added people from their families to their 'U' cards, saying, for example, 'and wife, and father,' etc. The Byelorussian inspection station at the passage through, into the second half of the ghetto, did not catch this, and let them through.

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The murderers were bloodthirsty! That '*Moloch*' demanded even more victims!

So the executioners went back into the ghetto, where the Jews with the 'life permits' could be found, and everyone was again ordered to leave the houses, and gather at the Sadowa *Gasse,* around the *Judenrat*, and there, in groups, of 4 in a row, march to the Sosnowa *Gasse*, where the murderers stood, and with a flick of their fingers, directed people to the right –'to remain alive' or to the left – 'to death.'

In that fateful hour, the fate of each and every Jew was sealed with a flick of a finger.

Those that were sent to the left, were accosted by the Byelorussian police with murderous blows over the head with sticks, iron bars, boards, and rifle butts. But, here too, there were individual instances when a Byelorussian policeman would smuggle a person over from the left side to the right side.

Finally, the freight trucks arrive in this part of the ghetto, and the people to the left are loaded aboard.

– *Schneller, gicher,ihr verfluchte, aruf!*[160]

And each one runs to the truck. Faster, in order not to be on the receiving end of even more blows. Let them shoot already, but stop torturing us.

The 'Jewish Elder,' and his lady deputy stand beside this, and attempt to extract as many people as they can from the 'talons of the Devil.'

– This is a good craftsman – a carpenter!

– This is the best shoemaker!

– That lady over there on the truck, is a good dentist, she must be allowed to live! And moment to moment, they get an opportunity to save these people.

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160 Quicker, faster, you wretches, get up!

In the meantime, the Byelorussian police is looking for additional people, who have hidden themselves, and they are brought to this place. Also, from outside the ghetto, apprehended Jews are brought into the ghetto.

A group of Jewish doctors is led in through the main gate . Returning from work the previous night, in New-Baranovich, and seeing what is taking place in the ghetto, they jumped into the first of the three houses outside the ghetto – and went up into the attic. They sat there for the entire night. They were discovered early in the morning by the Byelorussian police, who led them off to the ghetto. At the gate, Dr. Wikhman met them, the director of the health office, in the *Gebietskommissariat*. He expressed his wonderment that they had hidden and secured themselves, since nothing was to happen to them. In reality, medical personnel were spared in the first of the mass-murders because their services were still required.

And here, yet another group of Jews is led in. These are the mill workers, who did not return yesterday to the ghetto, after they had found out about the '*aktion*.' They hid themselves for the night at Szymszelewicz's mill, and came to work again the next morning. thinking they could save themselves in this way. But this was conveyed to the *Gestapo*, and they were taken away from their work. they are brought – shortly before the *aktion* is to end – and because of this, they remain alive.

The last one brought in is my blessed father. For the entire night, he sat in our room, and without being noticed, observed how the Byelorussian police plunder and search through everything.

They finally noticed him around midday, and led him into the ghetto. At that moment, a vehicle loaded with Jews left, and the murderers ordered that he by stuffed into this auto...

*

These trucks, full of standing Jews, under the guard of Lithuanians, left the ghetto. They are making their last j0ourney... to the pits... near the 'Green Bridge,' over which the Warsaw-Moscow railroad line passes, and under which the Lemberg-Vilna railroad line goes.



Page 550: ***The 'Green Bridge'***

On the trucks, – a whine, a cry, screaming. The observant Jews are reciting their confessions, others are quietly whispering excerpts from the Psalms, others are shouting out, '*Shema Yisrael*!' and yet others – 'Why?' Why do we deserve this? What was our sin? Why are my small children at fault? Save them! Others are holding up their 'living permits' in their hands and shouting out that a mistake has been made in connection with them: – We have permits! Why have we been taken? And over all the din, one word reverberates: 'Vengeance! Vengeance!'

Others wave their hands to the bent over acquaintances and unfamiliar Christians, and sent their last regards, to the dumb and cruel world...

And the sun shines, and sends its spring rays into the awakening nature, stirring it back to life...

*

Another vehicle drives into the ghetto, and 16 men are requested by the 'ghetto police' to maintain order.

– All of you, into the truck with me – calls out the ghetto-police inspector Chaim Weltman.

And 40 young, well-built young men leap into the truck, at the order given by their commandant. They are taken to the pits. They have to array the bodies of their murdered brethren in order, as they are lain into the pit.

... and at this time, when they are carrying out their work in the pits, and are getting close to the end, from underneath, not noticed by them, a couple of the barrels of rifles, in the hands of the Lithuanians poke out, who take aim at them. A signal is given... and 40 young lives are cut down.

... they didn't want to pay with their lives for such a paltry price, and the 'beast' sensed this, and in this sort of a deceptive manner, misled them, and then killed them.

*

In the ghetto, they are still loading people onto the trucks. And here, a truck, full of Jews, drives up to the exit gate from the ghetto. The S. D. officer who is on duty at the gate, glances at his wristwatch: it is exactly 2 o'clock.

– Halt! Everybody down!

'The '*aktion*', that had lasted for 24 hours had ended. German Cruelty – and German punctuality!

*

A taxi pulls up to the *Judenrat* building. Krampe goes over to the 'Jewish Elder' and to his lady assistant, and accosts them with his riding crop, which in this instance signifies – death.

He orders them to be put into the taxi, and they are conveyed to the pits.

These are the last two [victims] on that gruesome Purim!

*

On that day of Shushan Purim, over 2000 Jews, old and young, men and women, grandfathers and their grandchildren, Jews from the Baranovich ghetto, lost their lives, and the valuables of 12,000 Jews were plundered.

After the '*Aktion*'

After this storm of death, the *Gebietskomissar* Werner drives up to the *Judenrat* building. He calls together the members of the *Judenrat*, and orders that, by midday tomorrow, all those Jews who, up till now had lived in the second part of the ghetto, and outside the ghetto, must transfer to the eastern part of the ghetto where the *Judenrat* is located. From this time on, Jews may not go to their work alone, they must go to work -- in groups, accompanied by an 'Aryan' who must take them to work, and then bring them back.

Only the 'Jewish Elder' may go about without an escort, because he has a special permit for this. He has the right to escort the Jews that he has to, for those reasons that he cannot take them along with himself. The representative to date, Mulya Yankelewicz,(today in Israel) is designated as the 'Jewish Elder,' and he is also ordered to carry out a new registration of the remaining Jews.

Exhausted, confused, not giving themselves a chance to properly assess the events of the past two days, the remaining Jews go into their cold, plundered houses. There is not a single house in which there are not some people missing. Above all else – the terror, the uncertainty of tomorrow with regard to one's own self – have led to a situation where almost no one mourned those who had been torn away, and tortured. There is only silence, and unease. Those who did not see, with their own eyes, how their nearest were torn away from them, still hope that they will return. They thought that they were hiding themselves somewhere. Those who did see, cannot believe it, because these events transcend the ability of the mind to comprehend, because this event cannot be grasped by using ordinary senses.

After yet another painful and dark night, a sunny dawn arrives. Life demands its take from those that remain alive.

Those that have to relocate out of the western part of the ghetto, go into their houses, which have been subjected to a pogrom, plundered and broken up. They assemble their pitiful bit of 'left over goods' and carry, and drag it to the second side of the ghetto.

And it is worth noting: there were those that took along abandoned goods and food, a 'legacy' from those who yesterday in the morning were still alive, but today are no longer so. As the midday hour drew near, the relocation work obtains a quickened tempo: the remaining broken up 'furniture' is dragged over, and it is laid out in the yards of the designated ghetto territory. At midday, the west side of the ghetto is cut off by a barbed wire barrier and there is no longer any access to this side.

*

That part of the ghetto stands abandoned, orphaned, without a sign of life in it, in a place that teemed with people only yesterday, who wanted to hold onto life by all means.

The houses – empty, the windows and doors – open, the window panes – knocked out. A deathly silence reigns about. It looks like a large cemetery, surrounded by a barbed wire fence: its headstones – the empty houses.

All those that had lived previously in the remaining part of the ghetto, were not to the same extent that those who had to relocate here were ruined. The previous occupants felt more like balebatim of the places they currently occupied. the situation is worse for those, who are compelled, as neighbors, to settle themselves together with them: the original residents do not want to give up what they have, and it gets even more

crowded than before: [Each person] barely gets 70x70cm. Life is frightful, and they are almost envious of those who 'no longer need to exert themselves.'

The ghetto hospital is empty. The beds are turned around, the remaining bedding remains – tossed about. There is no trace of people; no personnel, no sick people.

We go from one room to the next, Empty. We go into the last room, What is this? Is there a sick person in the bed?

We draw nearer. [We see] the pale face of a twelve year-old boy.

What are you doing here? What is the matter with you? A barely distinguishable smile can be seen in his extinguished eyes: he has remained alive. We lightly lift up the blanket. His left foot is in a cast.

–Something to drink!

He tells us how he was saved:

– When the 'Black Ravens' (Crows) – that is how, at last, we came to call the Byelorussian security police in the ghetto, who wore black insignias – went into the patient ward, and dragged out the sick from their beds, I understood, that this was a bad sign. When they appeared to be occupied with their 'work' in the outer rooms, I slowly let myself down from my bed, and crawled under it. and covered myself with the bedding that I had pulled down.

It appears that they didn't notice me, and I lay there for two days. I saw how they searched through the hospital for the entire night, and plundered everything that they liked. When I heard voices speaking in Yiddish, I came out from my hiding place, and laid myself down back in my bed. I so desperately wanted something to drink, but I did not have the strength to go look for a bit of water.

Some of the doctors, with their families, who lived in the three houses outside the ghetto, hid, during the time of the 'aktion,' in the municipal hospital in the building of Zakheim 'the Turner.' When they noticed that the ghetto was being surrounded with a reinforced cordon of Byelorussian police, they sent out their wives, who either covered, or removed, the yellow badges from the children, in the hospital. they were not disturbed along the way. cut off form their families behind them, the doctors went, one at a time, with the badges on their coats, and with a Red Cross band on their arms. One single occasions they were detained by German field gendarmes.

–*Wohin gehen sie?* – they asked in a relaxed voice.

– We are going to the sick patients' ward, we now have an extra duty and we must carry out an operation – we answered.

–*Gehen sie ins ghetto!*' – they quietly said.

– We must do an operation at this time, which cannot be postponed.

–*Gehen sie ins ghetto!*' – they said again.

– We live outside of the ghetto – we replied.

The argument apparently convinced them: They permitted us to proceed onward.

In the waiting room of the hospital, I gathered together very many Jewish women and children, apart from the families of the doctors, but afterwards, as they had established telephone contact with their husbands, they went off to conceal themselves among Christians that they knew, or in the working places of their husbands. Others left their children with Christians.

The hospital radiologist, Dr. Aaronson (a refugee from Lodz), locked up the families of the doctors in a darkroom, where the X-Ray equipment stood.

During evening hours, the hospital director Prawko came, who had been informed of this concealment. He asked what the doctors were doing here at this time. We replied by telling him that an extra operation needed to be performed.

– And why so many doctors?

We enumerated that Dr. Levinbook was the surgeon, Abramowsky and Izikson (the son of the President of the *Judenrat*) as assistants, will operate. Meron Szenicky, a final year medical student (the son of the dermatologist Szenicky) has night duty in the surgical division, and Dr. Alexander Bartkowsky will administer the anesthesia, Dr. Aaronson needs to make an additional X-Ray, and Dr. Yoss'l Mirsky has the night detail for the gynecology wing.

After a deliberation, he consented to permitting the enumerated physicians to remain.

He then turned to Dr. Levinbook, and said that it was known to him that the doctor's family (mother, wife and son) were on the hospital grounds.

He orders that the immediately and forthwith leave the hospital. No entreaties or explanations helped, that the wife worked as a nurse in the hospital, and now it was past the 'limit hour,' and if they go out into the street they will be shot: they were directed to leave by the main entrance of the hospital. Only then, did he depart.

It appears that he did not know about the remaining families, and about Dr. Bori'eh Shapiro (the son of the city Rabbi, and pediatrician, Shimon Shapiro), who had hidden herself on the hospital premises.

After Prawko's departure, Dr. Levinbook surreptitiously took back the previously discharged families through the hospital fence, who had hidden themselves in a yard across from the hospital, and he returned them to the X-ray room.

Dr. Mirsky's wife was laid up in a hospital bed in the women's section, as an 'Aryan' patient. Apart from her husband, none of us knew about this.

The operation was carried out in the late hours of the evening. On the following morning, the arriving Christian hospital workers became aware that the Jews were being transported out of the ghetto by truck.

Fearful of being disclosed to the Germans, the doctors went up into the hospital attic, unnoticed, and hid themselves there. From there, they saw how, trucks loaded with Jews, were driving by on the Vilna *Gasse* to the Main road, on the left. A young man jumped out and off of one truck. the truck came to a stop, and a Lithuanian, who had approached the transport, aimed his rifle at him, and ordered his to get up on the vehicle. The man went back.

There were also instances, where Jews, wearing the yellow badges, were running bent over, so as not to be identified, in the surrounding yards, where they were making an effort to hide themselves.

The day went by, and then the night. The following morning, at about ten o'clock, the hospital physician, Dr. Bussel arrived, bringing 'life permits' for a number of the doctors, and advised that they had until twelve o'clock to transfer to the ghetto.

We come into the houses which have been completely pillaged. A Byelorussian is wandering through the rooms, searching, gathering and taking things, which appealed to him. We do not react.

A head guard from the ghetto gendarmerie enters and asks the Byelorussian what he was doing here. We reply, that we do not know him. The head guard approached the Christian with the same question. Holding our wall cock in his hands, along with other articles, he begins to stammer.

– What, you came here to rob? – he shouts at him, and in the process delivers a vicious slap to him. He begins to beat him.

–' By what right did you come here to plunder, you Byelorussian pig?' – he shouts at him, with foam at his lips.

After the gendarme had gone away, the Christian snuck back inside the house, and took away the things that he had selected.

A German soldier of affable appearance comes in. He looks at the shambles, and asks us, what has happened. We tell him about the '*aktion*.'

– *Ja, ja*, regrettably, you are all going to be killed, none of you will remain alive! This is the will of the Führer, and this is his order! – He says with the intonation of a sympathizer.

He stands for a while, looks about, sees the Byelorussian plunderer and says to him: 'Why are you taking this? You Byelorussians, as well, are slated to be killed afterwards! – This is the Führer's plan.

After this, he calmly leaves.

An hour remained yet for the period during which it was necessary to transfer to the ghetto, and there is no desire to take anything along, we are going to be killed in any event! So why make the effort?

At the time that the medical staff went over to the ghetto, they no longer were able to find any free space in which to arrange themselves. the *Judenrat* allocated a room for them, with an ante-room for infectious diseases, at the ghetto pharmacy. There was not even enough space in the room to sleep on the ground.

*

'Worker columns' that fill entire streets, are formed – under the oversight of the *Judenrat* – on the following morning, even before sunrise – from Sadowa to Sosnowa and from there to Orzeszkowej. Thousands, thousands of workers, exit in groups, through the ghetto gate, where their 'Aryan' escorts take them to their 'work jobs.'

–Does the larger world know what is happening here?'

'How does one leave some sort of sign, a mark, for our brothers and sisters in America, Africa, Australia, in the Land of Israel, and the world over, that they should at least know the day of the *Yahrzeit*, in connection with out extermination?'

It was this type, and similar discussions that took place among the gathered workers.

The old politics of the Judenrat had promised that we have to provide however more workers, and that this would save the remainder from annihilation. We took the young, thirteen–fourteen–fifteen year-old children, and sent them to work. Thinking that we stood on the verge of another mass-murder, mothers would take their young children with them to work, taking them through unnoticed, through the ghetto gate.

Very quickly, the ghetto is discomfited by the news that Dr. Bori'eh Shapiro was arrested at work in the municipal hospital by the Byelorussian Secret Police. All attempts to secure his release did not help. As was usually the case, when the jail was filled with prisoners (Christians and Jews), everyone was taken out to the Catholic cemetery, and shot there. Dr. Shapiro met his death there also. As it later came to light, the Byelorussian Secret Police had approached Dr. Shapiro some time long before this, and they said, that an investigation was being carried out against him, and that he is accused of communism and espionage. As is known, Dr. Shapiro returned from Kislovodsk (a Soviet sanatorium) to Baranovich, at the time when the city was already under German occupation. The Byelorussian Secret Police demanded a larger sum of money and gold from him, promising to eradicate the charge against him. Fearing that the entire matter would become public, he was taken away – and he never returned.

The extortion of money and gold from the doctors, by the Byelorussian Secret Police, in connection with so-called accusations of a political character, became a daily occurrence. Many of the doctors fell victim to such financial extortion. After the 'Shapiro Incident,' special 'levies' on the doctors were immediately paid out, and no one in the ghetto, except for a few individuals, knew about it. There was a great suspicion that a secret hand, in the ghetto, was guiding these 'money-*aktionen,*' indicating to the Secret Police, which of the doctors to approach: it was also thought that this 'secret hand' received some part of this extorted money.

*

A couple of weeks after the 'Tragic Purim,' another order was issued to the doctors in the ghetto. This time, it came from the head of the labor office Wikhman: all doctors must turn in their medical books and instruments. All of these items are to be conveyed to the *Judenrat*. Being unwilling to give the Germans these things, the doctors transported these things by wagons, which traveled from the ghetto to procure items in the city, and a large number of their valuable books and instruments were given to their Christian colleagues to hide.

*

Meanwhile, the ghetto residents began to get acclimated to their new circumstances. Those women who did not go to work, organized themselves and began to bake matzos, some from whet, and others from corn flour.

And there was very little bread. Only those with the required registration (many were afraid to even register), were given 125 grams of bread per person as a daily ration, sometimes, some pearl groats, beans, peas, sometimes – potatoes, a bit of olive oil, very rarely, meat, matches, etc. The *Judenrat* allocated these items, through three 'stores' that it opened, and there, the produce was distributed by ration cards. Along with the allocated products, goods purchased illegally in the city, were also distributed. In time, a tunnel was dug from the ghetto, reaching a stable of a Christian not far from the ghetto. There, a cow or a sheep would be slaughtered in a kosher fashion and the meat brought into the ghetto. Understandably, this cost a great deal, and only the very few, who had any money, could derive any benefit from this, while the rest hungered. Others even set up fasting days, fasting each Monday and Thursday, in order to conserve enough food for their children.

On the eve of Passover, many took to kashering their vessels and utensils, and that evening, Seders were conducted with the four cups (tea instead of wine) – for the last time, in the Baranovich ghetto.

*

Because of the frightful overcrowding, the *Judenrat* made all efforts to have the vacated western side of the ghetto returned [for use]. After an extended period of intervention, this area is received back under the condition that the part on the Orla Gasse, located between Sadowa and Howera *Gasse* – is to be converted into ghetto working places. These ghetto working places are separated from the ghetto residences by a gate erected on Sadowa. The gate is designated as the entry point for the workers from the ghetto. The original gate on Howera is left there.

Entrance and exit from the ghetto, and the gate, are guarded by Byelorussian police. The houses and workplaces are allocated by trade: women's clothing, brush making, upholstery, locksmiths, etc. A Nazi from the *Gebietskommissariat* assumes oversight of the workplaces. After getting back the western part of the ghetto, some of the Jews from the eastern side are transferred over there. A number of the houses are taken over by the *Judenrat* members, who select the best of the houses for themselves. One of these houses, got the nickname 'Belvedere' in the ghetto. One of the residents of this house even got permission to own a cow.

A corner for the fire-fighters was also organized in this part of the ghetto, with a small, old pump, which had been allocated by the municipal fire department.

'*Skhrones*' – Hiding Places

The fact that, during the 'Purim *aktion*,' many saved themselves, by sequestering themselves in a variety of hiding places, awakened, in the ghetto residents, an impulse to build new hiding places, of a more stable and durable character.

The architectural side of these hiding places is a chapter all unto itself. I will touch on them only by giving a short overview.

The following factors were taken into account, in planning a hiding place: 1) Camouflage (how to conceal its presence) of the entrance; 2) Protection against fire; 3) Ventilation (so as to have air to breathe); 4) Provisioning (Having foodstuffs and water); 5)Lighting; 6) Hygiene and sanitation.

The entrance to these hideouts were artfully constructed. For example, a small cooking stove might be standing here in a kitchen, a fire is lit and pots are boiling on it. By means of a secret manner, a wall in the

oven opens up through a side, and through an opening that was created for this purpose, one lets one's self down into the ground. From the inside, the wall quickly locks itself, the pots continue to boil, and no trace of the hideout is detectable. In general, an entrance way via an oven was not a rarity. For security purposes, duplicate entrances were usually made. Or: here, a couple of boards in the footway of a room open, one lowers one's self down underneath – the boards then close above you. On one's belly, one crawls on the rectangular foundation bricks of the floor. In one such space, a brick door opens up, and one goes down a ladder under the ground. The built-in brick door locks from the inside, and nothing is detectable. Entrance ways are also prepared through the culverts under baking ovens. The most popular for m of entrance is through camouflages walls in cellars.

Such camouflaged entrances, and others like them, are created in the 'Kolkhozes' In general, the entrance of each hideaway is a secret kept by the people of that Kolkhoz.

By and large, the hideouts are outside the houses themselves, in the yards, of an average size of 3x2 meters and at a depth of a meter under the surface. The surface of the sides and the ceiling are supported by blocks and boards.

The bunkers were built in strict secrecy, under the ground, or in the yard, covered up with bedding and sheets. After [construction] the area is smoothed out, and often planted with greenery.

The projects and implementation of these camouflaged entrances is carried out by specialists who earn a great deal of pain. One of the craftsmen who worked on them, was the familiar master builder Mukasey.

It was difficult to provision a bunker with water. Crawling on one's belly, it was necessary to drag along half-filled pails. Also, each family had to be concerned to provide an iron container of dried out biscuits.

Lighting was a question all unto itself. The fire from a lamp, or from candles, demanded access to air – also needed to breathe. Whoever is able to do so, provides for electrical lighting, and whoever cannot, makes do with candles, only at the entrance and exit from the bunker. Batteries and electric searchlights become among the most sought after necessities. In every bunker, there is also a covered pail in a corner, as a latrine. A separate bathroom is only available as a luxury item to the very few who can afford it. Apart from the bunkers, individual hiding places are also created in the houses, as for example, double walls, floors and soffits.

It was in this manner that a construction movement of 'dark graves' developed for people in their struggle between life and death...

The Following Events

Life in the ghetto begins to 'stabilize.' Every morning, thousands of workers march out of the ghetto, in formations. Also the workers in the ghetto factories go to their work. They also have 'workers passes,' (on blue cards with the stamp of the *Judenrat*). Everyone makes an effort to have his card bear the words 'skilled craftsman.' The theory is that the murderers will take this into account. one searches for the protection of being taken into the ghetto factories, or into the ghetto police force, which had been almost entirely liquidated in the first *aktion*.

At this time, Joseph – 'Yosh'keh Rutkevitz – stands at the head of the ghetto police, who had stood at the head of the re4sistance organization in the ghetto, as was later revealed. A number of former fire-fighters are engaged in their capacity, by the so-called fire-fighting organization. Not far from the *Judenrat* building, a hairdressing salon is organized, where a number of barbers work. For a small fee, one can get a haircut and a shave.

From time-to-time, Jews arrive in the ghetto from surrounding towns, and one gets regards from those locations. Pinia Jasinowsky arrives (who died in Israel) from Slonim. He remains in the ghetto, and is set up in one of the ghetto warehouses. Also, the wife of Dr. Wolfson comes from Haradzišča and remains in the ghetto. From time-to-time, the Germans send in Jews from the surrounding towns, often with their families. They are craftsmen. It appears that they are taken from their places of residence, and are sent to the ghetto in Baranovich before the liquidation of those Jews that remain behind. Jews are brought from Ljahavičy, Kleck, Moucadz', Haradzišča, etc. The *Judenrat* must provide them with a place to live, and get them integrated into a workplace.

And at the same time, Jews are taken away from the ghetto by the *Gestapo*. They are seized and sent to work in an unknown direction. Being unable to assemble the required number of workers and specialists, which they wanted, the *Gestapo* devised the following subterfuge:

Using a police van, a number of the *Gestapo*, with Jozef Litwin, rode up to a German working place where Jews were employed. In accordance with a previously prepared list, with the names of those Jews they wanted, they demanded from the German employers, that they should turn over those Jews demanded by the *Gestapo,* as being accused of political crimes. It was in this manner that they extracted the needed specialists from the Germans, who did not wish to relinquish their Jewish workers. These Jews, also, (40-50) were taken off in an unknown direction. They no longer returned to their families in the ghetto. A few days later, I became aware of the fact, that they were alive, and could be found in Koldichevo, in an estate of the former Polish employer Szalewicz, 17 km from Baranovich (5 km from Haradzišča). The Baranovich Gestapo was building a concentration camp there. The Jews are required to do all the construction work there. In time, contact is established with them by those Jews that work for the Gestapo, in the yard, as carpenters, locksmiths, electricians, laundresses, etc. The latter establish contact with the Jews by way of the Polish and Byelorussian drivers, that transport building materials for the camp. Sometimes, it becomes possible for the Jews who work for the Gestapo to also travel along, and upon their return, regards re received from the Jews there, who live under frightful conditions. It also happens that there are instances of Jews who, after paying a appropriate bribe, are able to return to the ghetto. Also, Mrs. Zeidman, the daughter of Riback, who under 'other circumstances' was afforded the opportunity to return to the ghetto, where they wanted to shoot her as a pregnant woman.

Incidentally, without taking into account the plight of the Jews, births take place at the ghetto hospital quite often. Weddings take place in the ghetto, all of which is celebrated as an 'amulet' to stem the plague. Also, the small children are taught '*Aleph-Bet*', how to read prayers, and the Pentateuch. Elderly Jews take up this task, for minimal compensation, more for the mitzvah that is involved, in order that the worthiness of the children be reflected on the home of their elders.

In a few side yards, tables and benches are provided, used by the elderly Jews to study the *Mishna*, recite the Psalms, and to pray. Very early on, before this, when the workers go out to work, one can see how the diminutive elderly wend their way, carrying their *Tallit* bags under their arms, and hurry to do 'The Work of The Creator.'

Jewish Medical Workers Are Released

In accordance with an order from the Germans, and on their own, the Byelorussian medical administrators of the municipal hospital and of the municipal ambulatorium released the Jewish doctors, nurses, and the remaining Jewish hospital workers from their posts. Young Aryan medical personnel are appointed to assume these positions, who are of Byelorussian and Polish origin. The Jewish doctors have to learn how to fit into this work. From Minsk, and other cities, Aryan nurses are sent in, It is only after expending considerable energy, that the Jewish nurses get the opportunity to continue working as sanitary aids, doing the dirtiest and most difficult of the 'scut work.' They are exploited by their Aryan colleagues at every opportunity. It is not only once that they find themselves having to work several days consecutively without any break, leaving their own sick children behind in the ghetto.

At the beginning of April 1942, the Jewish doctors are released from their positions, one after another, and in the end, all the remaining medical staff from the Christian medical institutions. At the beginning of June, all of these institutions were '*Judenrein.*'

In the ghetto, no one knows what do with these unemployed people. There was a reluctance to permit these workers to work at the ghetto institutions for a variety of reasons: first, they did not want to engender competition (the sick or also the healthy people, who would receive a sick pass from, the doctor, for a number of days, would often attempt to satisfy the doctor, bringing him something from outside the ghetto to eat); second, there was the fear that the Germans might concluded that there were too many doctors being employed; third, was the envy, that those who had, up till now, been employed outside the ghetto, and were able to enjoy somewhat better living standards. It was not permitted to send them to work outside the ghetto. In the end, it was decided they should be employed by the Sanitation Authority in the ghetto: digging ditches, etc. The doctors resisted this, and for the most part did not show up to do this sort of work. In the end, a number of them find part-time work in the ambulatorium, and they, like the others, receive a designation of being engaged in 'sanitation-work.'

It did not take long, and the Nazis took up the question of these doctors...

Transports of Foreign Jews

During the summer months of 1942, large transports of German and Austrian Jews travel through the Baranovich station. They stop at the station for a set period of time – and then continue to travel in an easterly direction. The Jewish worker group, that is engaged with cleaning the Baranovich station, meets with these Jews and talks with them. They do not want to believe what they hear from our workers about the mass-murders of Jews. They consider it to be impossible. They tell that they are traveling '*nach östen.*' to Minsk, to work. They are loyal to the '*Führer* and the Fatherland...'

Transports with French, Belgian, Dutch and Czech Jews travel through. They are all going to the east. And they are traveling there 'for the purpose of doing work. The group of Baranovich Jews warns them, but they do not believe. the only ones that do believe, are the Polish Jews. A few transports full of these, also travel through Baranovich. It happens that here and there, single individuals jump off the train and flee.

On one pleasant, early June evening, the ghetto is shaken by a frightening bit of news.

On that day, a transport departed from the rear train platform of the Baranovich station, containing 3000 Czech Jews. All were well-dressed, and they were in a good mood. The larger number of the train cars is being escorted by Czech train conductors, and not Gestapo staff. At the end of the long train – there are a few freight cars, with the baggage of the passengers. After stopping the train, it was related that now is the time for the midday meal. They accept this as self-explanatory. The men dust off their clothing and shoes. the women powder themselves. Freight trucks then come by, and everyone gets in, as well as the Czech train escorts – and the trucks ride off. Among these trucks are also a number of large vehicles with hermetically sealed doors. The Baranovich *Gestapo*, who has received these newly arrived guests, takes all of this – the Jewish-Czech intelligentsia: doctors, dentists, engineers, architects, teachers, jurists, and Rabbis, all with their families. They are taken to the 'midday meal' in the '*Gai*' woods behind New Baranovich to the northeast of the Zhlobin Lake. Pits have already been dug out there, in advance. The newly arrived Jews are ordered to disrobe, gather all their clothing in one spot – and after that, they are all shot, standing on the lip of the pit. The hermetically sealed trucks, called '*Dushegubkehs*' (from the Russian, for soul-exterminators) bring victims that are finished already, which do not require being shot: they were poisoned by gas, and smoke, which exhausts from the truck motor, after the burning of the benzine fuel. The exhaust fumes, normally discharged into the air. are channeled into these trucks through a special pipe and in this fashion, the people inside are asphyxiated by the fumes. Most of the dead show signs of blood flowing from the nose and mouth. In this instance as well, the murderers do not begrudge the dead their clothing. Also, the Christian Czech conductors are shot. There is no desire to leave any witnesses behind of this event.

The Byelorussian police undertakes to do this 'work' for the first time. The previous '*aktionen*,' were carried out by Lithuanians (assistant-police).

Not far from the pits, tables stand; on them – bottles of vodka and snacks. 'At first it was not very comfortable, but later on, we got used to it, and it didn't bother us,' – one of the perpetrators said to us – a Byelorussian *Gestapo* policeman from the Koldichevo concentration camp.

Before nightfall, the commandant of the Koldichevo camp assembled the Jews of the camp and asked if there was anyone who wanted to travel to Baranovich for work. Many of the Jews from Baranovich who were there, volunteered willingly to do this, thinking that they will be able to be reunited with their families. He selected 8 Jews, gave them passes, loaded them into the truck, and sent them off to Baranovich, to the '*Gai,*' where they had to cover the pits that contained the murdered Czech Jews, and in they end, they too, were shot.

Among these 8 Jews was the locksmith, Shlom'keh Ravitzky, an activist with *Poalei Tzion.*

After sending off the Jews to the '*Gai*' the trucks and freight trucks ride up, and the baggage that is left behind is loaded onto them, which is then taken to the building of the 'New Synagogue' on Sadowa *Gasse,* and in a house used by the *Gestapo*. Gold and silver items are transferred to the cellars of the *Gebietskommissariat.*

As soon as the next day, groups of workers from the Baranovich ghetto, are forced to sort these removed items. The work takes months, According to the documents found, the people involved were recorded for work in 'the east.' Because of this, each individual had the right to take along 60 kg of the finest and best of their belongings, apart from their working implements, medicines, blankets, and underwear. The better things are shipped off to Germany, to the families of the Gestapo members, the lesser quality – are gradually divided up among the police in the concentration camp at Koldichevo, where huge warehouses of clothing

are created. The Jews, who work at this sorting, also get some benefit from them. Part of them sell the clothing, and use the money to buy ammunition for the resistance organization in the ghetto.

Instances occur, upon cutting open a bread of someone who has been killed, that they find several hundred dollar bills. Also, hidden in clothing ans shoes, foreign currency and gold are found. The Nazis become aware of this, and take control of it, thereby finding many hidden caches of value (incidentally, these items made it possible for many families to extend their further existence).

Daily Incidents of Murder

The situation in the ghetto is tense. Inspections take place very often at the entrance gate. The products that are brought along, are confiscated. In addition, people are beaten. Rumors spread that among the Jews there are individuals, who turn over information to the *Gestapo* about what is going on in the ghetto. People become guarded about saying anything extra. From time-to-time, entire families are taken away for 'interrogation.' They no longer return to the ghetto. As we discover, these people who are taken away, are done so, on the basis of information provided by the Christian populace, who do not want to return any of the items that have been hidden with them. Either that, or an act of getting even for something that happened in the past. The former neighbors inform that one, or another person is a communist – and so he is taken away. It was in this fashion, among others, that they killed the former gymnasium professor, Wilhelm Feldman, his wife, and four year-old daughter. The doctor, Mordechai (Motya) Rifkin, is shot for this reason, along with others.

Every such incident created a shudder throughout the entire ghetto. No one is sure that he, himself, might not at some point be taken away. One is fearful of making any request of the Christians, asking them to return this, or that item, so it can be sold for bread. Despite this, there are Christians, who send money to those whom they know, in the ghetto, bread, and other foodstuffs. There is also an instance when a German soldier goes into a business, and seeing the young lady, Mir'eh Dworetzky, who works there, he asks about certain individual Jews, whom he knew, as to whether they were still alive, and when he finds out that they are, indeed, still alive, he buys cheese and other foodstuffs and sends it into the ghetto for them by way of her.

One day, the ghetto is shaken by the news that three young girls, who worked for the Germans as laundresses and 'makeup ladies' were arrested and accused of 'amusing themselves' with the Germans. The three are threatened with a sentence of death. Discovering that they are really innocent, the authorities of the *Judenrat* make every effort to save them. In the end, it is proposed that they be examined by a German gynecologist, After the examination, in the presence of the administrative physician, Dr. Wikhman, it is established that they are all clean. And so, in this fashion, this time, they are saved from a certain death – and the ghetto takes great pride in their innocence.

The '13'

It is 7:30AM on Friday, 3 July 1942, when an auto from the *Gestapo* rides up to the *Judenrat* building, and Jozef Litwin jumps out, and the well-known Gestapo-murderer Kuhn, who has a hand held machine gun over his shoulder. They enter the *Judenrat*. Jozef takes out a list with the names of the Jewish medical workers, He reads the names, and demands that the ghetto police personally inform those so enumerated to immediately present themselves.

One after another, the enumerated ones begin to gather. All – frightened, pale. Some come alone, others accompanied by a wife and other family members. The following come:

1. Dr. Harry Levkowicz – Gynecologist;
2. Dr. Joseph (Yoss'l) Mirsky – Gynecologist;
3. Dr. Hannan (Khonya) Brawda – Pediatrician;
4. Dr. Michael (Misha) Siederman (the Pharmacist's son);
5. Dr. Alexander ('Shura') Izikson (son of the first [*Judenrat*] president who was killed) – Practicing Surgeon
6. Dr. Grigory ('Grisha') Danilewicz –Internal Medicine;
7. His brother, Dr. Danilewicz (husband of Taib'l Wernikowsky) – Gynecologist;
8. Dr. Leon Kaplan – Pediatrician;
9. Dr. Alexander ('Shakhna') Bartkowsky) – General and urological medicine;
10. Moshe (Moisiyeh) Jasinowsky – Dentist (former community president 1929-33);
11. The Dentist, Moshe Berman (a Zionist activist);
12. The Dentist Yaakov Fiedler and
13. The Dental Technician Fanty.

The lady pharmacist Mir'eh Szenicky also comes, but the Nazi murderers say that they have not asked for any women. They let her go. It appears there was an error: the had asked for the medical school graduate, Meron Szenicky. He was now employed in a ghetto factory as a brush maker (after being released from the municipal hospital, he was able, after a strenuous effort, to get himself a position in the brush factory of the ghetto).

It is noteworthy that on the list, they also had figured the name of Dr. Boris Shapiro, who had been arrested and shot four months prior to this.

Also, Dr. Loly'eh Berkowicz (today in Israel) is requested by the police to appear. He goes out together with his brother-in-law, Dr. Brawda. Seeing the car with the armed Germans around it, he quickly reverses direction and says, that he will not go. His friend Dr. Shura Izikson leaps over to him, and asks what is to be done. Dr. Berkowicz proposes that they should hide themselves. He goes off, and does not ever return. Dr. Berkowicz wants to crawl underneath the barbed wire and get out of the ghetto, but he cannot, because it turns out that a patrol is standing not far away. He runs up to the attic of a house, and hides himself there.

The surgeon, Dr. Zelik Levinbook remains missing, who lives the section of the ghetto furthest from the *Judenrat.* A ghetto policeman runs to his location for a second time, and demands that he present himself to the *Judenrat* immediately.

–What's the rush? So I'll be shot a few minutes later! – he says without emotion.

– But for what purpose would you let yourself additionally be beaten? – the policeman replies, and in the process, quickly runs to the ghetto workplaces, to tell Szenicky that he has to also quickly present himself.

Not rushing, the doctor finishes his glass of tea, takes his leave of his elderly tearful mother, his father, Yaakov Levinbook, who had come – with tears in his eyes – to see his brother's son for the last time, and he then said good-bye to the other of his neighbors in the '*Kolkhoz.*'

– Why are you crying? – One must die once, in any event! And I believe that death, itself, is not so frightening.

In exiting the house, he encounters yet another policeman, with his bicycle in his hand.

– come quickly, doctor, they are waiting on you! The chain fell off my bicycle, and because of this, I was detained on my way...

Quietly, and unperturbed, Dr. Levinbook proceeds along his 'last mile' taking leave of the surrounding buildings and streets with a glance . He meets his wife, who is returning from the *Judenrat,* where she went to find out what is taking place there. She tells him that, the remaining doctors have already arrived, and he is being asked to come immediately.

They both go back together. The policeman runs ahead to inform them that the doctor is already on the way.

They go out quietly, and then they come to the other part of the ghetto, cutting through the Minsk *Gasse* and enter Sosnowa. Not rushing, in order that the way take longer, in order that they be able to be together for a few more minutes... it is a shame that I am not shaven! Even when going to die, one needs to look presentable! – he breaks the silence.

– If I get the chance, I will drop into the hair salon and get a shave! – he adds.

–Why do you speak of death? They have come to take the doctors for work! You will come back yet – she wants to assure him.

He goes quietly. He confronts his fate.

Why does he go so calmly? Why does he not flee? Why does he not take an iron rod in hand to split open the heads of the murderers?

Yes, such thoughts do run through his mind, and along with them, counter-arguments: he is no longer going to be able to save himself, bit the rest – his mother, wife, child, and the Jews left behind in the ghetto, who are not organized, who are helpless – he can still visit trouble upon them!

It is also possible that he is under the sway of an inner psychological shock, which stifles his strong will to live. And perhaps a spark of hope steals into his subconscious, that they are actually taking him to work, and not to his death?

And at the same time... the Nazi murderers order the gathered '13' to get into the vehicle. One after another, they get inside.

Ez'yeh Fiedler, who works in the labor office of the *Judenrat,* and is known to the two *Gestapo* murderers, asks of them, whether it might not be better to leave his father behind, because as an older man, the journey might be difficult for him. The bloodthirsty animals order him to come along, offering an assurance that they will return in the evening. The son takes his elderly father, the dentist, Yaakov Fiedler, under the arm, and leads him to the auto, and helps him get in. The son is leading his father to the *Akeda*....

The executioners don't wait any longer. They get into the car, and order the chauffeur, a Polish gentile thug, to drive out of the ghetto.

*

At that moment, Dr. Levinbook arrives with his wife on the Sadowa *Gasse*. Only a few houses separate them from the Judenrat building. They look ahead, and they see, how the *Gestapo* vehicle is riding out of the ghetto gate. They do not yet know what else will happen.

– One thing is certain: before I go into the *Judenrat* building – he says to his wife -- I am going to get a shave.

They go into the barber shop. Everyone is talking about the '13 who were taken away.' The doctor is congratulated for having saved himself.

After the shave, they go to the *Judenrat.* Here, there are no complaints about his tardiness, but they are not sure, if the murderers will not return for the 'remaining 2,' and for this reason, the doctor is sent over to the ghetto police and is detained there.

There, he encounters his other 'comrade in good fortune,' who also arrived late – Meron Szenicky.

With the feeling of those sentenced to death, who find themselves already in the execution chamber, waiting for the sentence to be carried out, they remain under the guard of the Jewish policemen, who relate to them with a sense of sympathy and common fate.

And hour after hour goes by, and the waiting becomes even more tense. The families of the detainees stand on guard with strained glances towards the ghetto gate, to see if the bloodthirsty animals are not returning for the quarry they have left behind.

– And maybe they will forget?

– Or it may not seem to them to be worth their while to return for only two?

At midday, news is received from the Polish driver of the *Gestapo* car, that he had taken the '13' to the central prison, and left them off there.

A Gestapo commander comes into the Judenrat in the afternoon hours and gives an order that the families of each of those sent away should get a package ready and have it sent to the *Gestapo*. In this connection, the details of what are to go into the package are precisely enumerated: one blanket, one pair of shoes, two pairs of underwear, one regular shirt, etc. No correspondence is to be inserted! On each package, the family name is to be written.

This demand offers some encouragement. We begin to believe that they are really being sent to work. The items are quickly packed together. The 13 packages are loaded on a wagon, and it is taken off to the *Gestapo.*

During this time, no mention is made of the two people who were late in arriving. On Friday night, they are permitted to go home, after they make a commitment, by signing a piece of paper, that they will present themselves to the ghetto police on the following morning.

After midday on the Sabbath, when the predators are silent, and no longer mention the two people who were late, they are released, after signing a document that they will immediately present themselves on demand.

All manner of rumors circulate through the ghetto about the 13 medical professionals that had been taken away. A young lady who9 worked at cleaning the train stations, related that the Danilewicz brothers came up to her, pale and frightened, without their yellow badges affixed, and wanted to say something to her. At that moment, a German nurse walked up to them, and invited them to come into a Red Cross train car for a cup of coffee.

From time to time, Christians told that they had heard from railroad employees, that the latter had seen the dentists Jasinowsky and Fiedler walking in Minsk. One also said that he had seen Doctor Kaplan.

From the other side, the wife of Dr. Wolfson said that some who worked in the laundry of the *Gestapo*, that at the midday of the day they had taken 'the 13' away, the Gestapo commander Kuhn came into the laundry in a state of agitation, and took the doctors away, taking off a bloodied uniform, and giving it over to be washed.

For a long time, the Jews who worked in the *Gestapo* building saw the packages prepared for the detainees just sitting there, which during the hour of departure, had been prepared for them, in accordance with the order of the *Gestapo* for the detainees.

Some time afterwards, Ez'yeh Fiedler plied a member of the Gestapo with strong drink, and got out of him that all of these medical professionals had been shot on that same day near 'Halinka.'

The secret of their last minutes, they took with them to their grave.

The People of Mezrich

A few days later, they again come to the *Judenrat* to demand a doctor for work. This time the lot falls on Dr. Yaakov Oszerowsky. He is immediately taken off in an unknown direction. The ghetto is again upset. Despite this, he is returned, to the ghetto alive and well, to everyone's relief, in the evening hours.

From him, it is learned that he had been taken to the aerodrome, behind New-Baranovich. There, approximately 300 Jews from Mezrich are to be found, who are carrying out a variety of construction tasks. They live in the fields in temporarily constructed huts. Their appearance and living conditions are frightful. they are barely able to stand on their own feet. Among them, there are many who are sick. He had been summoned for the latter, to dispense medical treatment.

In a number of days, they come to take him there, and it is later decided that he should remain with them. A freight truck comes riding into the ghetto. On it, they load us a small bed, table, a stool, and the bedding from Dr. Oszerowsky's domicile. At the previously mentioned aerodrome, he is allocated a hut for himself, in which to live, and treat the sick.

A short time later, the Judenrat is ordered by the Gebietskommissariat to allocate a number of houses for the Mezrich Jews. These houses, on the Orla *Gasse*, corner of Orzeszkowej, are surrounded by barbed wire: a ghetto within a ghetto. And on one evening, they are brought in, after work, to their new place of residence, and along with them, Dr. Oszerowsky returns.

The Mezrich Jews were overseen by an '*Öber-Jude*' a broad-backed, red-faced sweetheart, who would mete out murderous beatings for the slightest infraction. At the gate entrance, he hung a sign in German: *'Arbeit Einsatz von General Gouvernment*,' holding himself, by this, to be more special with respect to the local Jews. At a location, between the houses, a pot was set up to cook food, and do laundry.

After work, the Mezrich people would slither under the barbed wire of their ghetto, and go over to the '*Kolkhozes*' to beg for some food and clothing. The Baranovich Jews, themselves hungry and exhausted, never refused to give help, and did whatever they could.

In time, their '*Öber-Jude*' befriended the official Jewish representatives, and permitted them to come onto his territory.

Representatives of the Judenrat, from the Rabbinate, medical personnel, etc. would provide help, in their own areas of expertise, and help to sustain their homeless, beaten brothers and sisters from Mezrich.

Murder for Pleasure

We learn that in the place of the Chief of the *Gestapo*, the cold-blooded murderer Amelung, a new person has arrived – the *Obersturmführer* Grünzfelder.

What sort of a 'person' is he? What can we expect of him? – these were the questions that were circulating within the ghetto.

We do not have to wait long for an answer.

He begins his career with parties in the newly-opened Aryan restaurant, in the former coffee-local that belonged to Rapoport. After a night of drunken revelry, he comes riding into the ghetto before dawn, accompanied by another man and a Polish girl, and they take a stroll together through the streets of the ghetto, wanting to satisfy their accompanying emotions. They bang loudly on a door of a house, shouting '*Mach auf!*' A frightened Jew emerges. They begin to beat him using their feet to kick him in the belly and the Jew falls down.

Out of control, they run all over the ghetto. They encounter an elderly Jew, Moshe Steinberg, who is carrying his *Tallit* and *Tefillin* under his arm, on his way to prayers. He is shot to death, on the spot, with a single revolver shot.

They break into a house. They drag a youngster out of bed. Naked, they drive him out into the street, severely beating him, and wounding him, until he expires and dies.

Now they leave the ghetto, in order to return again and repeat their 'celebrations....'

Beaten, bent over, barely able to keep on her feet, the elderly wife of Moshe Steinberg follows the 'wagon' that is conveying her murdered husband to his eternal rest. Whiningly, she follows, complaining to her now dead husband:

Moish'keh, may you be a good interlocutor on our behalf!

For me, for our family, for all Jews! And see, Moish'keh, to assure that the murderer, whose name should be eradicated, will be apprehended! He should be struck with an epileptic fit!

And at the side gate of Orla Gasse, to the cemetery, when the wagon leaves the ghetto already, she shouts after him:

'Do not forget the murderer!'

A week later we find out that the murderer, *Obersturmführer* Grünzfelder, was killed along with approximately thirty other *Gestapo* troops in a battle with partisans in the forest near New-Sveržan (the area near Stalovičy), where he had driven to carry out an '*aktion*.'

The news is encouraging, and brings a temporary bit of vengeance-related happiness!

Amelung is appointed as *Gestapo* Chief again.

New-Mys

During the time of the German occupation, there are several tens of Jewish families located in New-Mys. Live there is a bit more quiet. Germans are not even seen there. The Jews go to forced labor.

At the beginning, only one of them comes to Baranovich, and later on, we receive messages through the '*Mieszczianiec*' of Mys, through the Christians, who occasionally bring a letter, and sometimes even packages of food. The Jews [of Baranovich] give their long-time neighbors the best of their belongings to be hidden for safekeeping.

After the establishment of the local Byelorussian authority and police, whatever is possible to extort from the Jews is taken.

The contact with the Jews of Mys is broken. Because of this, we do not hear of the mass-murders that took place there. There is no ghetto there. In time, a 'Jewish Quarter' is created there.

The Christian neighbors, itching for plunder, want to be rid of the Jews, who have given them their valuables to hide. The Jews are accused by them of communism – and they are taken off to Baranovich, in jail, from which the only way out is to the cemetery, where they are shot. this is how we find out that in the summer of 1942, the Mys residents Chaim Levinbook , his wife and two sons were brought to the Baranovich Byelorussian jail, all accused of communism (it is noteworthy, that during the time of the Soviet occupation, these same people were informed upon as being former members of the bourgeoisie, and all their assets were then nationalized). The Baranovich Judenrat learns of this arrest, but is powerless to do anything on their behalf.

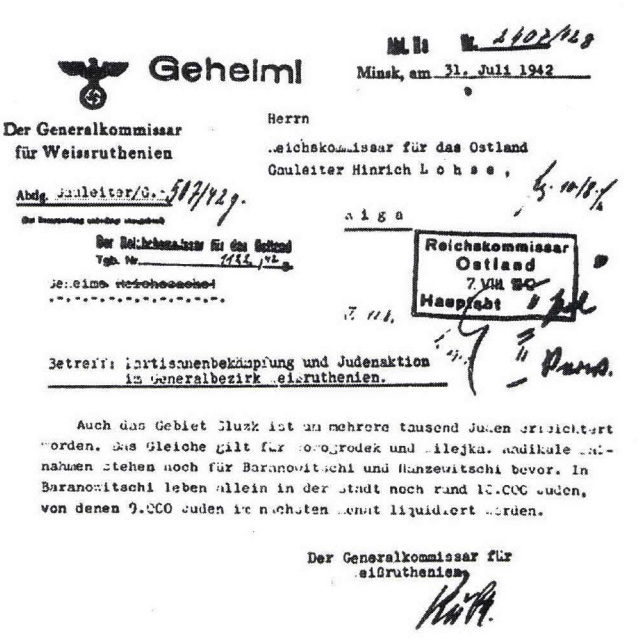
In a short time, we learn that a full-scale liquidation of the local Jews has taken place in New-Mys all at once. We do not learn any details about this extermination from the last of the Mys Jews. *However, news reaches us about an active resistance-initiative of one young Jewish lad. At the time of the* 'aktion,' *this young lad seized an axe he had hidden, and threw himself at a Byelorussian policeman, and cut off his hand. This was the first act of resistance in our area.*

The Mys Jews were all assembled at the large marketplace in Mys, where the Roman Catholic Church is located on one side, and diagonally opposite it, the Russian Orthodox Church, where the memorial to Czar Alexander II is located, who had freed the '*panczyzna*' the Mys peasant serfs of yore. Now, their grandsons threw themselves on the Jews, and 'liberated' them from their lives...

The cradle of Baranovich Jewry – New-Mys – had become '*Judenrein.*'

'Jews, Arise To The Slaughter!'

One after another, the frightening news keeps arriving in the Baranovich ghetto, about the liquidation of Jews in the surrounding cities and towns.



Geheim!

Minsk, am 31. Juli 1942

Der Generalkommissar für Weissruthenien

Herrn

Reichskommissar für das Ostland Gauleiter Hinrich L o h s e ,

Riga

Reichskommissar Ostland 7 VIII 42 Hauptamt

Betreff: Partisanenbekämpfung und Judenaktion im Generalbezirk Weissruthenien.

Auch das Gebiet Sluzk ist um mehrere tausend Juden erleichtert worden. Das Gleiche gilt für Nowogrodek und Wilejka. Radikale Maßnahmen stehen noch für Baranowitschi und Hanzewitschi bevor. In Baranowitschi leben allein in der Stadt noch rund 10.000 Juden, von denen 9.000 Juden im nächsten Monat liquidiert werden.

Der Generalkommissar für Weißruthenien

Page 574: An Excerpt from the report that Kube sent to his Chief in Riga. (Taken from the book, 'Hitler's Professors' by Max Weinreich, YIVO, 1947).

The Chief Murderer of Jews comes for a visit to Baranovich, the General *Kommissar* for White Ruthenia, Kube. He also makes a visit to the ghetto. We feel that no good can come from this visit. The ensuing events confirm this. Also, after the war, we discover a decision that was arrived at as a result of this visit. In his report of 31 July 1942, Kube writes, among other things:

> '... The Sluck District has been made lighter by several thousand Jews. the same also holds true for Novogrudok and Wilejka. Radical mass-methods are still being prepared for Baranovich and Hancaviči. In Baranovich, in the city alone, there are still 10,000 Jews living, of which 9,000 will be liquidated in the coming month....'

Having previously prepared hiding places, a part of the populace actually spends the night in them, especially the elderly people. Each *Kolkhoz* house sends out on the order of two people to stand guard, who relieve one another every 2-3 hours, there objective being to find out what is transpiring outside of the ghetto boundaries, and whether or not the ghetto is in the process of being surrounded by reinforced cordons of police and Germans. As silent as shadows, these guards sneak out from behind the houses, unnoticed, (since the Byelorussian police have the right to shoot anyone found loitering around at night in the ghetto), with ears tuned and eyes peeled, they attempt to pierce the darkness of the night about the barbed wire surrounding the ghetto. Upon noticing anything out of the ordinary, they must immediately awaken the people of their *Kolkhoz*, in order that they be able to hide themselves as early as possible.

On one such night, a detail of Germans from an S. S. regiment, marches up to the ghetto gate on Sadowa Gasse, all wearing steel helmets, and fully armed. At a command from their leader, they remain at attention.

Not waiting for anything further to occur, the Jewish police guard at the gate, Itz'l (Yitzhak) Narkonsky, leaves his post, and runs to inform the Judenrat member, Fishl Svjacicky, who lives in the second section of the ghetto. Svjacicky's mother-in-law, Mrs. Nussbaum, runs to inform the neighboring houses.

The impact made by the tone and words that she uses to arouse everyone, is terrifying.

In the dark of the night, when everyone is asleep, finally, after a hard day's work, and after a contest with the lice – a loud banging is heard on the shutters of the windows, and a voice with an elongated note, with which a Shammes might use to awaken people for Selichot services – calls:

'Je-w-w-s, arise to go to the slaughter!'

A terrible shudder goes through the entire body. Neither dead, nor alive, everyone tears themselves up and out of their beds, and in the light of a tiny oil lamp and wick, the little children are dressed, the outer wear is quickly thrown about one's self, and the sack with the previously prepared sweets is grabbed, we begin to crawl down into the ground – into the hiding places.

With a racing heart and bated breath, we await that which we understand will come.

A number of men are still circulating about 'up above' and are observing, to see what is happening outside.

Rather quickly, it becomes evident that the S. S. detail had received the following command, after halting at the ghetto gate: '*–Links um! –' – 'Grade aus, marsch!'*

The detail marched off to that part of the Sadowa *Gasse* that is outside the ghetto, The soldiers surround the houses of that part of the street, and carry out searches until dawn, among the surrounding 'Aryan' neighbors.

For a while, this occurrence calms down the tense mood of the Jews in the ghetto. The people hidden in the bunkers are informed of this, and gradually, with a certain measure of trepidation, they begin to crawl out of the 'holes.'

On one of the summer days, an order comes to the Judenrat from the Gestapo, that the tailor Gulkowicz and his family, should get together their belongings, and prepare themselves to travel to Minsk. On that same night, a freight truck arrives, and takes the entire family, and also his sewing machine.

As it later became known, this order came at the request of a German General, for whom Gulkowicz had, in his time, tailored a uniform, with which he was very pleased. The General was transferred to Minsk. From there, he would often come to Baranovich, especially to have items sewn by this tailor. He would often send senior officers to him, with recommendations to have uniforms sewn by him. In the end, he took him, with his family, to Minsk, where he arranged good living and working conditions for him.

After the liquidation of the Baranovich ghetto, Gulkowicz tries to bring his nephew to him in Minsk, who remained alive in the camp at Koldichevo. In the end, he succeeds in doing this. They continue to live for a long time after the 'liquidation' of the Baranovich Jews, but in the end, they too, are killed.

The Ghetto Is Abandoned

At the same time, an order comes from the Gestapo that all Jews, who have beards, must shave them off. The order creates a great deal of heartache among observant Jews. There are those, who do not comply with the order. They sit inside the houses and hide themselves. Often, one encounters the '*Rebbe* of Slonim' and his brother-in-law. as well as other Jews who keep their heads wrapped up in kerchiefs.

During the summer months of 1942, leaving the ghetto is renewed. It is grasped that nothing good will come by remaining in the ghetto.

Connections are sought with known Christians, and with their help, and all manner of stratagems, the ghetto and the city are abandoned. Refuge is sought among these, or with other Christians, in especially prepared bunkers.

In most cases, the Christians are paid for doing this, but there are also instances, that they will conceal someone at no cost, this is especially true of pious Catholics. Others are promised that because of this boon, that it will stand them in good stead with the Soviets.

It is not always possible to remain with the same Christians. Often, it is necessary to mover around, and go to others.

There are also cases, when they get the last of the money from the Jews, they no longer wish to keep them. There are also instances, in which the Jews detect that their former rescuers are willing to kill them – and in those cases, they must stealthily steal away and find another hiding place. They build bunkers with their own hands, in the forests, and hide themselves there.

At night, we go out 'scavenging' in the surrounding houses, to find something to eat. At the most, when it becomes possible, a connection is made with partisans, who provide some support, but there are also instances where the partisans kill them.

Others are able to get taken into the ranks of the partisans, and together with them, they carry out attacks against the Germans, and acts of revenge on the surrounding pro-German populace.

At the beginning, only single individuals leave the ghetto, but later – entire families. The departure from the ghetto takes place in strictest secrecy. so that none of the neighbors should suspect what is going on. There is great fear of those who are closest. because rumors circulate through the ghetto, that there are those among the people who are connected to the *Gestapo,* and must – whether they want to or not – convey news of what is happening in the ghetto. Also the *Judenrat* is afraid of these unknown individuals, and also of people who are suspected in this way.

Among the first to abandon the ghetto was Sonia Jasinowsky (today in Israel), the daughter of the dentist, and former community President who was taken away as one of the '13.' Remaining alone (her mother was a guest at her brother's Professor Szymszelewicz and as a consequence had remained in Russia),she creates a connection with a Christian woman of her acquaintance, and in the middle of one fine day, she rides out to her workplace on a '*droshky'* by way of the highway road, in the direction of New-Baranovich. At the town circle, she meets a Christian, who leads her to a nearby farm house, where this Christian family hides her, for the following 2 years, until Baranovich is liberated.

Quickly, the ghetto learns that also the wife of Dr. Mirsky – Sonia (now in Israel) suddenly 'vanished.' In settling herself into a wagon belonging to a Christian, outside the ghetto, she leaves the city and goes over to a village, where her brother, Dr. Berzak is, with his family, the rest flee into the forest to the regular partisan movement – and they survive the war as partisans.

At the end of August 1942, Dr. Loly'eh Berkowicz (today in Israel) 'vanishes.' After hiding himself with a Christian of his acquaintance outside of the city, he goes off to the partisans. In explaining his disappearance to the *Gestapo,* the *Judenrat* says that he had left the ghetto for 'personal reasons.'

Somewhat later, we become aware that Dr. Wacek Lubranicky and his wife Rita, the daughter of the well-known manufacturer-merchant Kaplan – also have disappeared. They had hidden themselves in a bunker at the location of a Christian, and later joined up with the partisans. Before the end of the war, after a long illness, Dr. Lubranicky dies, and he is buried in the Naliboki Forest (large forests), his wife survives the war, and returns to Baranovich (today in America).

Shepsel Krutocowsky, his wife and son (today in Israel) leave their workplaces at the time of the second mass-murder, where all of the Jewish workers are detained during the *'aktion*-watch,' and hide themselves for a bit under 2 years in a bunker with Christians in Baranovich. After coming out into freedom, they are barely able to walk on their feet that have become swollen from disuse.

The woman Pszenyi and her daughter Reynia (both in Israel) hide themselves with a Christian of their acquaintance in the city, in a hiding place under the floor.

After the second 'mass-murder' Fishl Svjacicky, the *Judenrat* member, also abandons the city, and along with his wife, takes refuge in a bunker, which he had previously prepared in the city, under his former soda-water factory. They don't remain there for very long, because they are being asked by the other Judenrat members, who know about their hideout, to return to the ghetto. They are killed during the 'liquidation-*aktion*,' in the ghetto. Their hideout does save the Wolansky brothers, and Shmuel Nussbaum (all in Israel), who are able to hide themselves there for a longer period of time. after the liquidation of the ghetto, and later go off to the partisans.

The departure of the first ones, moves many others. Anyone with a bit of capacity and energy – follows this example. Regrettably, very few were saved in this way.

The thought of leaving the ghetto, dominated the thinking of many, but many also thought that they could put this off to a later time.

The Two Doctors

In the middle of August, a *Gestapo* car comes riding up to the *Judenrat.* A *Gestapo* Nazi demands that 2 doctors be provided immediately, whom he must take along to the Koldichevo concentration camp. The two had previously been designated by the J*udenrat*: Dr. Engelman, and Dr. Levinbook. Ghetto police are dispatched to them. Dr. Engelman is brought immediately from the ghetto hospital. the policeman, who comes for Dr. Levinbook, finds the latter confined to bed, ill. He returned to report this. The policeman is sent back, with orders to bring him, even if he is sick. In between, a *Judenrat* member arrives with a *Gestapo* Nazi.

– Why have you not come when you were summoned? – the *Judenrat* member asks.

– Because I am sick, and I cannot get out of bed, I have a carbuncle on my left hand (showing his hand at this point), and also an elevated temperature.

– Our doctors at the front work with fever not only once – the Nazi butts in.

– Were I at the front, and compelled to do so, I would work, but being sick in my own home, a German doctor would also not go out under such circumstances. Apart from this, IO cannot, and should not perform surgery with such an infected hand.

It appears that this last argument persuades the Nazi, and he impatiently says to the *Judenrat* member:

– Are there no more doctors in the ghetto? Why did you bring me to a sick man?

They quickly leave the dwelling.

The messenger from the *Judenrat* grabs the first doctor that they encounter. The lot falls on Dr. Joseph Lubranicky from Lodz.

The *Gestapo* man takes both doctors into his vehicle, and drives them out of the ghetto.

But the matter did not end with this: the head of the Health Bureau at the Judenrat, Dr. Fishl Sawczyc again sends a policeman to Dr. Levinbook, and demands that he come to the hospital on a medical commission.

– Please convey to Dr. Sawczyc that I am bedridden and cannot come. If he does not believe this, let him, and his colleagues, come to me.

The policeman, named Peretz, who before the war was a wagon driver, and who often drove the doctor to his patients around the city, doesn't object, and goes back to convey the reply.

He returns immediately and says, that he has received an order to bring the doctor back, by force, if necessary, should he not wish to come along of his own free will.

– Listen, Peretz, I am unable to go under my own power, and if you wish to drag me along forcibly, and create a scene in front of all the ghetto residents, which will not bring any great credit to the *Judenrat*, that please, take me out of bed!

Despite the fact that I have received such an order, I cannot treat you in this manner, Let them send someone else, if they deem it to be necessary, and Peretz leaves.

Meanwhile no further emissaries arrive. A half-hour goes by,,,, three-quarters of an hour.... nobody appears.

An hour later, Dr. Sawczyc comes into the room, who is maintaining a bearing commensurate with appearing to be a second at a duel. Following him is Dr. Salutsky, Dr. Skwersky, and Dr. Szenicky. They take the pulse of the sick man.

120 per minute!

They measure his temperature: 38.6 [deg C].

The carbuncle on his right hand is examined. The glands under his right arm is inspected.

– The glands are enlarged!

After confirming the symptoms, the medical commission leaves the house.

The ghetto is shaken by the news of these two new victims.

The friends of Dr. Lubranicky mourn him, and in frustration they say: He, Dr. Levinbook, is guilty of his death! Because of him, 'Juzik' was taken as a victim!'

To everyone's relief and happiness, both doctors return the same day to the ghetto. They tell, that they were brought to the Koldichevo concentration camp. where they examined an array of the sick, afterwards, they were returned to the ghetto gate. No harm was done to them.

Soviet Bomber Squadrons

After a number of evenings and nights of being revived, and having their hopes raised, the ghetto residents survive the last of the summer months of 1942.

These are the evenings and nights during which large Soviet bomber squadrons fly through the skies above Baranovich in the direction of Warsaw.

During the fact, we do not know if their target is Baranovich, or somewhere else. It is only some time later, that we learn of the final destination of their nighttime visits.

During the warm summer evenings, the Jews sit in groups around the houses, and apprehend, with some satisfaction, the drone of the flying airplanes.

–Let them bomb away!

– Let them smash the entire city!

– If we are fated to be killed, better it is from the bombs, than at the hands of the Nazi murderers!

There is no fear, no being afraid, nobody runs to hide in the bunkers. At the same time, a shudder falls on the murderers. They, those heroes, who with their own hand, killed Jews, and continue, on a daily basis to extinguish thousands of innocent and helpless human lives, they now tremble in fear of their own lives. They run to hide in bunkers outside of the city, and in other places. Part of them run in the direction of the ghetto, others run right into the ghetto, with the thought that the Soviets will not bomb that particular part of the city, where the ghetto is located. Their terror is our spiritual encouragement.

The Saved Children

Later on, a number of 'Job's News Items' arrive: a new wave of murders and exterminations of Jews in the surrounding cities and towns. Many people from Baranovich are killed this way, who happen to be located there. The Baranovich Gestapo is directing the liquidation of the Jews, under the leadership of Amelung. This 'dirty' work is carried out by the Byelorussian police, the Byelorussian Gestapo-police of the Koldichevo concentration camp, and Latvians in German uniform. *For these 'spectacles,' the German women*

are brought along, who with their own hands, murder little Jewish children by shooting them, or throwing them into the fire, as was the case in Moucadz, where Jews had set fire to their houses.

In Navael'nja, the Baranovich doctor, Aharon Goldin, is killed with his wife. In Haradzišča Dr. Weill is killed with his daughter, the wife of Dr. Feller, with her daughter Nus'yeh. The husbands of the latter, Dr. Pomerantz, finds it possible to escape. He gets himself admitted into the Baranovich ghetto. There, he is detained, and placed in custody with the Jewish ghetto police, where he commits suicide. What drove him to do this – is unknown.

We learn that Loly'eh Stoliar with his wife Shayna (the daughter of Moshe Mirsky) and their child, committed suicide by poisoning themselves when they had come to take them away from the pharmacy in Novosiolki.

The lady doctor, Betty Izikson, and her son, Izzie, hide themselves for several days in the corn, when they learn that there is a desire to have then killed in the village of Bartniki. Not being able to sustain themselves in this situation, they go to the police and give themselves up.

In Zhetl, Rachel, the wife of the well-known *Poalei Tzion* activist, Dr. Yaakov Kagan, (the daughter of Fyvel Kroshinsky), is shot, along with their daughter Aviva.

Dr. Kagan, Yitzhak Rosenhaus and his wife (now in Israel)are transferred to the Novogrudok ghetto, after the liquidation of the Zhetl Jews. From there, they manage to escape by way of an underground tunnel, which the remaining Jews had built with their own hands.

According to lots, the first one to go out is Dr. Yaakov Kagan, who has a revolver with a single, solitary round of ammunition. He, and another group of Jews are killed, while the rest save themselves, joining the partisans of Tuvia Bielski's Jewish Brigade.

Solomon Wolkowysky and his two sisters, Rosa and Genya, attempt to commit suicide by drinking poison, while they are driven with other Jews to be shot. They worked in a warehouse, not far from Moucadz'. After taking poison, they collapsed, or jumped of the auto, and remained lying in the forest. After a longer time of sleeping, Solomon and his two sisters awoke, and fled to the partisans of Tuvia Bielski (today in Israel).

During the time of the slaughter in Stoubcy, Dr. Hirsch Badobla, along with his wife, Bat-Sheva (the daughter of the leather merchant Polonsky) and their little girl, manage to leave the *shtetl*, and get accepted into the Baranovich ghetto.

But how ironic is this fate: here too, in the ghetto, they have to hide themselves from the *Judenrat,* which demands that they leave the ghetto. It is possible that the *Judenrat* was fearful that their presence would be conveyed to the *Gestapo*, or has this already happened? The fact is, that after a week of hiding themselves, finding out that there were still a number of Jews still alive in Stoubcy, who were promised that 'no harm would come to them,' – Dr. Badobla and his wife leave the ghetto, and return to Stoubcy, where they are later killed. They leave their little daughter in the ghetto with relatives, the elderly tailor, Zatorinsky, and his chronically sick wife. And fate has it that this little girl, along with this elderly couple, should emerge intact from all the nightmares, and be saved (all today are in America).

One child from among the few in number that were saved: (The son of Mish'keh Galay, and Joseph Levinbook, the son of Dr. Levinbook, the writer of these lines) from the Baranovich Ghetto!

The last two are today found in Israel. Only three children – each by a different miracle – were saved from the entirety of Baranovich Jewry!

The 700

The rows of workers begin to form on Saturday morning, 29 August 1942, as is their usual custom, in the ghetto streets, which are close to the *Judenrat* (at Sadowa and Sosnowa). Thousand, upon thousands of Jews are ready to exit and leave. The ghetto gate opens wide, and the cadres march out, one after another, and it is here that they are taken over by their usual day-to-day 'Aryan' escorts.

However, instead of leading them in the direction of their workplaces, all of the cadres are taken this time in one direction: through the Sadowa *Gasse*, to the *Gebietskommissariat*. The streets are cut off by reinforced cordons of gendarmerie and police. The cadres are brought there, and arrayed in rows on the large spaces diagonally across from the *Gebietskommissariat,* and the building of the former Polish court building (*Sood*). The people sense that something is going to happen. They do not know what. The worst is anticipated.

Two young men tear themselves away from the ranks, and begin to run. They are shot on the spot. The rest remain standing, in fear of death. The Germans from the O. T. ('*Organization-Todt*') arrive with the murderers from the *Gestapo*. The pick out the youngest and strongest of the men, all together about 700 men, and put them off to the side. all the rest are sent to their customary workplaces. The ones left behind are told that they are being taken away and are being taken to Scucyn and Molodechno (the Lida District) to do work. The Judenrat is permitted to bring them packages of foot and underwear, which their families, who are being left behind, have prepared for them. They are taken away by train.

It appears that something reached the *Gestapo* about the resistance organization in the ghetto. In this regard, the Germans wanted to liquidate the underground ghetto strength.

During the initial period, those who were sent away get the chance to send a bit of a letter back to their families. They write that they are working at constructing a railroad line. A week later, or so, the engineer Lejzor Salutsky returns to the ghetto, who was asked for by the chemical factory in Baranovich, where he had worked for this entire time. A number of the women who had been sent away, later on present themselves and request that they should be taken to do work with their husbands. Their wish is fulfilled. They work there in the kitchen. The former Warsaw lawyer and journalist, Adam Mazurek, (later on shot by the partisans in the forest as an English(?) spy), is appointed as their *Ober-Jüde*. The group leaders were: Jonah Puczinsky, Mulya Lifschitz, and Gurwicz.

A small part of the 700 flee to the partisans in the Lida vicinity. The remainder are later exterminated.

To Koldichevo

On 1 September 1942, on Tuesday morning, a policeman comes running to Dr. Levinbook at home, sent by the *Judenrat.*

–Doctor, get ready, you have to travel to Koldichevo!

He remains standing on guard.

– Soon the other doctor will arrive here, and you will have to travel together!

It does not take long, and Dr. Yaakov Oszerowsky arrives, escorted by a *Judenrat* member, and two Byelorussian 'ravens,' police, with long riding crops in their hands!

– Quicker, quicker! – They shout.

They walk through the ghetto factories.

The wife of Dr. Levinbook attempts to go along. She wishes to travel with them. The 'ravens' raise their riding crops and don't permit her to exit.

– But I am also listed to travel – she says to them.

– We have not received any order to take you along! – they reply.

She had previously arranged with her husband, that at the first opportunity, he will send her a pocket wallet and this will serve as an indication that he is still alive. To write, could entail danger.

They take leave of one another at the gate.

The *Judenrat* member says to Dr. Oszerowsky:

– I give you my word of honor that you will return tomorrow! We will relieve you!

Dr. Oszerowsky goes, but is deathly pale.

– Why, specifically you? And not Dr. Engelman? – I ask him.

–He has hidden himself. so they took me.

– Now we are going as victims in place of Dr. Berkowicz – he adds.

As is known, Dr. Berkowicz left the ghetto nine days previous to this.

As we later learned, a mass-murder was supposed to have taken place on that day in the Baranovich ghetto, but for reasons unknown, this '*aktion*' was postponed in advance.

We are permitted to sit on a bench near the wall of the house.

– We are soon to be liquidated – Dr. Oszerowsky says to me. He is pale, and is trembling all over his body.

– Have no fear! They sentenced us to be sent to Koldichevo a long time ago. They could have liquidated us a long time ago – I make an attempt to soothe him.

At about midday, some freight trucks arrive.

They load them full of sacks, containing the effects and shoes of the exterminated Czech Jews.

Then we are ordered to board. The Koldichevo police fill up the vehicles, and we drive off.

Life in the ghetto proceeds 'normally.' Several days pass, and no message is received from the two doctors that have been taken away. The attempts to relieve Dr. Oszerowsky with Dr. Engelman remain fruitless. Dr. Levinbook's wife, attempts, by using Christians she knows as intermediaries, to have her husband brought back, and she receives a promise. She tells the *Judenrat* about this, and using this opportunity, the *Judenrat* also gets Dr. Oszerowksy back into the ghetto, holding the other party to their word. The wife goes to the *Judenrat* and asks that they send her to her husband. The *Judenrat* reminds the *Gestapo* of this, and they agree to it. The President of the *Judenrat* takes her to the *Gestapo.* On the way, he tries to persuade her not to make the trip. I would not let my own sister go there – he says. Do you know what sort of a 'pit' you are going into?

–And what do you suppose, that the ghetto is safer? The camp will probably last longer than the ghetto, but in any event, no matter what occurs, I will be together with my husband – is her reply.

Also, the Jews who work at the *Gestapo* location, make an attempt to dissuade her from this course of action.

– They can take you off of the auto, in transit, and shoot you. And they will take away your package of personal effects, – Bartkowsky says to her (now in Israel).

–Let it be what will be. I don't have any bad premonition.

The auto brings her to Koldichevo at midday.

– *Donnerwetter*, why did she come here, to the darkness of Koldichevo? – the Camp Commandant S. S. man Jorn, says.

– She will work as a nurse – I say.

*

During the first weeks, I make attempts to get permission from the camp chief to travel to Baranovich for medicaments for the camp. In the end, he grants this permission. In between, my wife arrived on Saturday, and Monday was the scheduled date of my trip. To take this back is impossible. So Monday, I travel forth, escorted by an armed policeman into the ghetto. I am only able to bring my child and mother – and somewhat before the time of departure, squirreled away some food.

Life in the ghetto is much more still, than in the camp. The *Judenrat* interrogates me for details about Koldichevo. I convey regards to the families of the Baranovich Jews, that are found in the camp. Others bring small packages with underwear and food for their family members. I meet with Dr. Oszerowsky.

–Do you have no regret for having left there?

– Never in my life. I am lucky, that I am back in the ghetto – he replies.

After spending the night in the ghetto, I am taken back the following day to the camp.

The workers who are employed by the '*Feldbauleitung*' get special work passes with photographs. It is believed that the holders of such work passes are safer. And there are 'intermediaries' who carry out the necessary 'formalities' with the Germans, to retain additional workers, and to issue new passes.

In general, all manner of stratagems are employed in order to obtain a work pass, for all manner of occupations. All sorts of bribes are utilized. Everyone wants to have the possibility of getting out of the ghetto.

Apart from this, other parents make the effort to give their children away to Christians. Understandably, this, in general, involves girls, with a 'good' 'Aryan' appearance. In this manner, for example, the teacher Bristiger gives away his little blond daughter to a Polish couple in Baranovich that is childless; the watchmaker and jeweler Romek Freedman gives his little daughter to a childless Byelorussian couple that they know. Also, Dr. Svjacic gives his blond-haired little girl to Christians.

– If we will no longer be here, then at least let our children save themselves!'

The Second Mass-Murder

It is *Rosh Hashana*, 5703 [1943]. We go to work as is usual, The elderly, who remain behind in the ghetto, gather in prayer quorums for worship. It seems as if their prayers tear through all the way to the heavens.

But does the world hear? Does the world even know what we are living through? Will anyone be left who will be able to say '*Yizkor*' for us?

On *Yom Kippur*, the *Gestapo* Chief , in charge of all White Ruthenia, comes to Baranovich from Minsk, and together wit the Baranovich *Gestapo* plans the second mass-murder in the ghetto.

On that same day, before nightfall, he arrives in Koldichevo, and distributes appropriate orders to the local Byelorussian police located there.

On that same evening still, large freight trucks leave, that take about one hundred of the policemen, provisioned with shovels and pickaxes, in addition to their rifles.

They ride off singing their beloved Byelorussian song, that ends with the refrain:

– Жидов коммунистов - мы всех перебём (The Jews – communists – we will kill them all!).

On the night after the end of *Yom Kippur*, the observant Jews begin to erect *Sukkot*.

The night passes in the usual manner.

The posted watchmen of the '*Kolkhozes*' do not notice anything around the ghetto perimeter.

After *Yom Kippur*, all of the workers march, as is usual, set out in columns, going to work.

However, the last smaller groups have not yet been seen leaving the ghetto, and a larger group of Germans arrives, wearing the uniforms of the '*Todt-Organization.*'

What is going to happen here?

We run to the *Judenrat* to find out what is taking place. Here we establish that they have come to take additional men for work in Molodechno, as had taken place about a month before this.

These are Germans from the O. T., looking for workers! Young people run to hide themselves in the bunkers.

But immediately we recognize that these so-called O. T. staff are *Gestapo* troops dressed in O. T. uniforms, who had, in a highly subtle manner fooled the unwitting Jews of the ghetto.

Immediately, a couple of hundred armed Latvians come into the ghetto. In the wink of an eye, the ghetto is completely surrounded by a strengthened watch of guards made up of Byelorussian police.

Young people begin to be seized inside the ghetto. For the time being, the womenfolk are permitted freedom of movement.

In a matter of minutes, the Jews descend into their previously pre4pared hiding places under the ground. People also hide themselves in other locations that are above ground.

Here goes the head nurse of the ghetto hospital, Minna Ljahozwiansky. She had just now barely camouflaged the cellar in the ghetto hospital, where Dr. Avra'sheh Abramowsky is hidden with other of his comrades. With her head held high, she proudly walks to the second part of the ghetto.

– *Halt!* – A murderer shouts at her. *Halt! Stehen bleiben!*

She pays no heed to his shouting, and continues to walk.

The report of a gun is heard. She gives a twitch, falls, and lays dead, in the street.

Now the murderers begin to seize the women.

The men, women and children that are seized, who didn't have the opportunity to hide themselves, are gathered together, under guard, at the Sadowa *Gasse*, near the Rudnikov house, diagonally opposite the *Judenrat.* Here, the smaller groups of workers were also detained, who now, no longer, could exit to go to work, especially women.

Freight trucks arrive. People are loaded onto the vehicles. One of the first to ascend is the daughter of Limon the Baker – It'keh, the wife of the Lawyer, Shlom'keh Epstein ('Big Moshe's' son), who is slaving away in the Koldichevo concentration camp.

The filled vehicles leave the ghetto, in the direction of the city. to the Grabowiec fields.

*

The streets of the ghetto, and the houses, are emptied of Jews. The members of the *Judenrat* are ordered not to leave the building. and the same for the ghetto police. A substantial guard is placed around all of the ghetto factories. The workers there, carry out their normal daily work routines. The ghetto hospital is emptied of all its sick, whom the murderers take into the vehicles, and send off to the pits. The sick who cannot be moved, are shot in their beds. The bandits run rampant through the streets, they run from house to house, from place to place, trying to sniff out and look for additional victims. They look in the beds, under them, in the closets, in the attics, and in the cellars. In the process, they rob the best of whatever might still remain with the people, anything that comes to their hands.

*

In the second part of the ghetto, on the Sadowa *Gasse*, in the house of Lejzor Rifkind, which had been emptied of its people, the elderly Rifkind lady lies on a bed in one room. She is very sick, and is unable to move from her lying position. Under these circumstances, it was not possible to take her down into the hiding place.

Her younger daughter does not abandon her sick mother.

–Let what will happen, happen! I will not abandon my mother! She remains sitting at her bedside. She knows what awaits both of them. She has reconciled herself to that which waits them.

– Come along!

– My mother is sick and cannot move – she answers quietly.

The murderers lose control of themselves, like wild animals.

They shoot the old sick woman with sadistic pleasure.

– Now you can leave her!

The beasts take her away from her mother's dead body, and lead her off to the gathering place. The blood stains remain visible on the walls for a long time...

*

In the 'underground ghetto,' in the hiding places, women and children sit crammed together, along with men, young and old, forty – fifty to a bunker. Being able to breathe grows increasingly more difficult. There is a lack of fresh air. The people are drenched in sweat. Drops of water condense onto the cold walls. There is also a lack of drinking water.

Nursing infants begin to cry, Mothers try everything they can to quiet them down. With bated breath, they listen to every sound that comes from above.

From time to time, the heavy footfall of the murderers is heard, along with their shouting, and their sarcastic laughter.

In such moments, when the murderers are not far from the hiding places, there are instances where mothers put pillows over their crying infants. and other things, so their crying not be heard, that could reveal the location of those hidden. It happens that children are asphyxiated.

The agonized frustration is great, but the will to live is even greater or, perhaps, it is the fear of death. And for this reason, people hold on, even under such inhuman conditions: without water, without food, practically without any air – half dead.

The first bloody day passes. Night arrives. It is still in the ghetto. From time to time, a shot is heard, which echoes through the stillness of the night.

Like mice creeping out of holes, with the greatest of effort, the people begin to crawl out of their hiding places, one at a time, one after another. The fresh air revives them. Quietly and silently, they return to their plundered houses. Food and water are searched for, and it is brought sown into the bunkers, A little at a time, we begin to orient ourselves to the action plan of the murderers, and we align ourselves to deal with it. In the coming night, when the extermination-aktion will normally be stopped, until the following morning, many emerge from their hiding places, and spend the night in the houses. This brings a certain amount of relief to the overcrowded situation, and helps to extend survival.

With the arrival of the dawn, they again vanish from being above ground. But not everyone is fated to survive until the coming night.

*

The '*aktion*' in the ghetto is proceeding at full tilt. From time to time, the executioners succeed in locating individuals, who didn't have a chance to hide. Women and children are dragged out. The hangmen no longer even make the effort to lead off their victims to the gathering point. they are shot on the spot.

As it becomes apparent, the murderers are aware of the various ghetto hiding places. They search and dig into the ground. The Byelorussian accomplices carry out their 'sacred work' diligently, but for the time being, without results. They flit from one place to the next, from one place to another, but without success. Their thirst for blood gets stronger and stronger.

Here, they are leading an apprehended Jew of middle age. The fear of death is mirrored in his eyes. Pale, he is barely able to keep up on his feet. He is not beaten. He is even shown some friendliness. He is given something to drink.

– We mean you no harm! Don't be afraid!

–You will remain alive, but you must show us where the others are hiding.

In the face of death – a promise of life.

He is silent. As expected, a difficult inner struggle is playing itself out inside of him. He is a decent Jewish person. He never hurt anyone at any time. He never did anything bad to anybody.

And the murderers try to persuade him with sweet talk.

They speak so sweetly and in such a 'friendly' way.

He is silent. A sweat runs down from his head to his feet.

They will not do anyone any harm, they just want people to be taken to work.

He is silent. Not a muscle in his face moves.

Are their words reaching his consciousness?

Is he taking into account what is going on about him?

He shakes himself. Like someone who is hypnotized, not looking about him, he moves forward.

The murderers follow him.

Mute, he points out a secret entrance of an underground hideout. the entrance to a cellar.

The murderers throw themselves at the camouflaged doorway, and tear it open.

– Everyone out! – They shout.

Not dead, not living, with eyes bulging out, barely able to move themselves, one after another, they begin to crawl out of the 'dark grave.'

–Faster, you scum!

Half dead, from fear of death, ossified, young and old, they emerge, men and women, carrying small children in their arms.

There goes Yud'l (Yehuda) Helman, with his head hung low. After him, comes his pretty wife, Faygl'eh, pale, frightened, carrying a small child in her arms. After them – in a death march – his sister Lyuba with her little son, pressed against her. And here is the tall thin person of the young girl, It'keh Szereisen.

Fifty-Sixty people are dragged out of the 'grave' –- and then led off to the grave.

The hangmen are jubilant, they will have work to do!

They throw themselves on their prey, and rain down murderous blows on them, making no distinction between women and children. They carry out their work with sadistic pleasure.

This is how the first hiding place, on Sadowa 17 was uncovered.

Now they know where to look. They find other hiding places, constructed in the same manner, They drag out their victims, and beat them murderously. There are screams, crying, and gunshots reverberate in the air. Everyone is gathered together in one place, and from there, they are sent off on trucks that have arrived – to the pits.

*

A Byelorussian policeman from Koldichevo finds a hidden elderly Jew. The Jewish man proposes to give him a ten-ruble gold piece, with the proviso that he not turn him in. The policeman accepts the offer. He takes

the money away from him, and after that, leads him off to the gathering point. The same policeman goes at abut midday, through the city streets, and he sees a Jewish girl walking who is from his *shtetl.*

– I once adored you, and even loved you – he says to her.

He detains her. She has 'Aryan' documents. However, he does not let her go. He turns her over into 'good' *Gestapo* hands.

Other Jews give money so that they not be beaten. They are ready to meet death, but to have to suffer physically – that they would like to avoid.

The Nazis also seize children, give them apples and other good things, and talk them into revealing hiding places, where other hideouts can be found.

Very often, the murderers succeed in extracting this sort of secret information from otherwise innocent and naive children.

*

Those workers that left early to go to work, do not know what is taking place in the ghetto.

Towards nightfall, as is usual, they are preparing themselves to return home, to their families. This time, there is no rush in bringing them back. Accordingly to the previously developed plan, they are detained at their workplaces for the night.

They are not permitted to return to the ghetto. They begin to understand what is happening. The feelings of those that left their families in the ghetto is indescribable.

The frightening truth is learned from the Christians in the vicinity.

Also, the workers, in the ghetto factories, are detained under a stringent guard in the buildings where the factories are located.

Five days, five painful days, these detained workers are kept in their workplaces.

There are instances where individuals among them are able to flee. These are people with no connection to the ghetto (they had no family there). They flee their workplaces going to Christians of their acquaintance, they hide there, in special hiding places that had previously been prepared for them, until the liberation of Baranovich. Among them: the family of Shepsl Krutocowsky.

*

Already, by the first day of the bloodbath, the murderers uncover, in a number of the discovered hideouts, arsenals of unused weaponry that had not been used against them. This moves them to employ security measures, In the evening, they leave the ghetto, leaving behind only patrols.

*

They return on the following morning, singing, into the ghetto. They bring shovels and pickaxes, and other digging instruments. They run down into the cellars, and look for camouflaged entrances. Finding such – they drag tens of people out of their hiding places.

When one such bunker at Sadowa 16 is opened, and a junior Latvian officer sticks his head inside, and orders the people to come out, an heroic young man throws himself at him, with a knife, and beheads him.

The remaining murderers jump out of the cellar with shouts of fear.

A reinforced group returns, but also this group does not dare to go down into the cellar. They throw hand grenades and detonate the bunker together with the people inside it.

*

Trucks loaded with the beaten and tortured Jews are taken to the pits at Grabowiec. A heavily armed Byelorussian police guard sits on each truck, and keeps watch over the death transports. On one of these transports, among others, can be found the wig maker Zubak, the son-in-law of the musician Szolomowicz. He reminds himself that he has a razor in his possession. He is not simply going to let them slaughter a hapless person! Vengeance!

Quietly, unnoticed, he takes out his 'blade' and throws himself on a Byelorussian policeman, and slits his throat. A panic ensues among the police, The Jews make use of this, and leap off the auto. They flee from death.

But death pursues them. The road to the pits is guarded by Byelorussian, Ukrainian, and Latvian police. A hail of fire is opened up against those fleeing, and one after another they fall, covering themselves with their own blood. The very few who succeed in avoiding the hail of bullets, are caught by the Christians in the vicinity, and turned over to the Germans.

The murderers begin to utilize hermetically sealed trucks in transporting the Jews, and with the '*Dushenovkas*' – the gas machines, in which the victims are asphyxiated in transit.

*

Those Jews brought down to the pits must completely undress, and stand naked. They are forced to run to the pits, across which there are wide boards that have been laid. They have to run on top of these boards, and at that point the death-dealing bullet reaches them. They then fall into the pits.

Not all are dead. Some of them – are only wounded, The bodies of the others cover them. They are asphyxiated.

Small children are thrown alive into the pits, or are torn in half before the eyes of their parents.

*

The Jews in the Koldichevo camp understand that 'something' is going on. The policemen that had ridden off, have not returned for two days time. No vehicles come from Baranovich, with construction materials for the camp, as had been usual each day. Frightful thoughts course through. Hearts are seized up. What is going on with their families in Baranovich?

It is first only on the third day, that the Byelorussian murderers from Koldichevo return. Each of them is loaded down with plunder they have brought back. They show foreign currency to the Jews, and ask what kind of money this is. Now, we know precisely that they have gone out to do a 'bit of work' and not against

the partisans, as had been previously thought. Others had thought that all they had engaged in was 'emptying' transports of foreign Jews. We look at the murderers who say nothing, and think: 'Did this one kill my child?'

Did this one kill – my mother, my wife?

Every morning, the murderers depart by car with their beloved refrain: И кровь горячая польётся... (and hot blood will be spilled...) And they then return in the evening hours.

Only a week later does an auto come from Baranovich, and we are able to find out about the bloodbath from the chauffeur.

*

In the ghetto, the murderers carry out systematic work. Every morning, they come into the ghetto singing. ;eave around midday, and in the evening, not finding any more 'standard' entrances through the cellars. they look for hidden hideouts around the houses. They stick iron pikes into the ground, they dig, and they search, and upon finding a bunker, they tear up a board, and throw hand grenades inside. Afterwards, they drag those remaining alive out into the daylight, blackened, wounded, filthy, fainting, and half-dead.

The murderers order their victims to lie down on the ground, and to remain motionless. For every movement, for every word – a hail of blows with clubs, iron rods, rifles and with feet.

For the entire midday, these wild animals gather together these hapless people, and hold them under the burning sun. it is first, after midday, that vehicular transport arrives, with which those sentenced to die are sent away.

*

And here, the robbers are digging on Sadowa *Gasse*, near Rifkind's house. in a small garden planted with potatoes. The place strike them as suspicious. In the end, they find the bunker. Those who were hidden inside are dragged out.

Here is the dentist Rivka Salutsky with her little Sender'l (named for her father Sender Salutsky, the owner of the paper business on Szeptycka *Gasse.* The child was born in the ghetto. the child screws up its eyes because of too much sunlight. He is happy that he is able to breathe a bit easier. His father, Moshe'keh Levinbook was detained at his workplace. He does not know, exactly as Sender'l does, what is happening at that moment to his family. The grandfather, Yaakov, is, however, beside his grandson. The grandfather, who devoted all of his time to the care of his grandson in the ghetto, does not leave him, even at this time. Following them goes Tsesya Angelowicz, (the oldest daughter of Aharon Zablocky), a cousin of Yaakov Levinbook. Both lived together in a '*Kolkhoz*.' They went into hiding together, and now – together they are going on their final journey, followed by the remaining of their neighbors from the house in the ghetto.

*

All those dragged out of the bunkers are sitting on the ground, near the *Judenrat* building. among them – the chemical engineer Singalowsky, with his wife. He does not want to live to see the horrible end that awaits him, and he takes out the previously prepared blueprint solvent, gives his wife a portion, and at the same time, they both take this dose to avoid their fate.

Here, also, the well-known Dr. Szenicky can be found sitting, with his wife. On his left arm – he has a white armband with a red cross. Many of the local murderers know who he is. Not only once did many of them

come to him to be cured of venereal diseases. He asks one of them for permission to stand up, to try and straighten out his stiff limbs, from sitting in the bunker, and to smoke a cigarette, The murderer is 'generous' and permits him to do this.

*

At nightfall of the third day, a work group of five people is led into the ghetto, among them the master shoemaker, Diszel (today in Israel). They work in the German gendarmerie. A gendarme serving as an escort leads them into a house and orders them not to come out. Along with this, he orders that no harm be done to them. On the following morning, he comes and takes them, as usual, to work, and after work, brings them back.

Their appearance in the ghetto is utilized. They are taken, along with the ghetto police, to remove the Jews shot that day, and lying in the streets.

Peasants are also brought in to help with this work, who search through the pockets of the victims, looking for money and other valuables.

The bodies of the shot victims are loaded onto wagons and vehicles – and taken out to the pits outside the city.

*

The group of workers that carry out a variety of tasks in the *Gestapo*, go out to their work the following day, after Yom Kippur, along with the remaining columns. At their workplaces, they have the opportunity, better than at other locations, to take note of the fact that something out of the ordinary is taking place that day: most of the *Gestapo*-murderers leave the building, running hither and thither, seeming to be very much occupied. Very quickly they become aware of the bitter truth. Tragically, however, they are in no position to do anything for their families, who have remained behind in the ghetto. They can barely wait until evening, in order to return to the ghetto as quickly as possible. but they are not permitted to go home. They are detained for the night.

Nadia the Manicurist works here as a laundress. She left her only baby son in the ghetto, for whom she had sacrificed her entire life. She lived and worked only for him. She had no other interest in life. Now she has been cut off from him. A threat of death hovers over him, and she cannot protect him. She is certain that her neighbors in the '*Kolkhoz*' have taken him into the hiding place, and she hopes that the bunker will not be discovered. She does not rest for the entire time. She must have him, here, with her.

During one of the nights, she steals out of the *Gestapo* premises, takes off the yellow badge, and takes the Minsk *Gasse* to the ghetto barbed wire fence. She quickly throws herself down on the ground, and wriggles under the wire. She is now in the ghetto. Very carefully, she proceeds to the camouflaged door of the hiding place; Open up! – This is Nadia.

She finds her little son alive and unharmed. She quickly takes him out, and together they re-trace her steps back [to the *Gestapo*]. She hides him in the attic of the Gestapo building, and she considers herself fortunate to have him with her.

*

After the fifth day of the bloodbath, the murderers leave the ghetto on Saturday after midday. A deathly stillness reigns over the arena of blood. Empty plundered houses. No sign of life in and around them.

In the stillness of the night, individual forms are seen to be slowly crawling out of their hiding places. They look about, searching, with their eyes, straining their ears. No one is seen, and nothing is heard. The moon looks down from above, lighting up the deathly-still objects.

– What is happening here?

– Is there anyone even left? – the ones who remain think to themselves. On the following morning, the same stillness prevails. The half-living, half-dead people become a bit more animated. They carefully exit from the houses, looking about, straining their listening senses, and slowly proceed further.

Are we the only ones who have survived this?

In the distance, one perceives a hidden form behind the corner of a house. Frightened, one pulls back. The form disappears. One is afraid of one's own shadow, and one trembles at the sound of one's own footfall. Once again, one peers outside. We detect one another: Jews from the neighboring '*Kolkhozes*.'

Like a flock of frightened sheep, we signal to one another. In time, a greater sense of personal security is acquired. We begin to gather in groups. There is a mute silence. No one speaks, only the beaten glances of the eyes sunken in their sockets speak for themselves.

The Judenrat receives an order from the *Gebietskomissar*, that on the following day, we are to move to the second half of the ghetto. All the employees of the ghetto and hospital ave to be transferred there.

We begin to make the move. We take practically nothing along: there is nothing to take. Everything has been robbed and plundered. there is apathy. There is nothing one needs to have.

At the corner of Sadowa and Minsk *Gasse,* a new ghetto gate is erected. Not far from there, a house is taken over on the Sadowa *Gasse*, for the *Judenrat.* Not far from it – the Jewish ghetto police. The workers from the ghetto factories are permitted to come into this part of the ghetto. A few other work groups are brought in from their workplaces, where they had been held for all of this time. The tragedy experienced by these arrivals, who did not encounter their families, is indescribable. However, one has the feeling that with this, the end has not yet arrived. It is held that the ghetto factories are now the most secure place to be; people make an effort to be taken in there. First and foremost, the little children are placed there, who managed to survive to this point. The Jewish factory operators do not want to let everyone in. It is necessary to bribe them with large sums.

*

On Monday morning, the workers leave the ghetto. An uneasy feeling envelops those who are left behind. Everyone is on guard. Vehicles, are observed not far from the new ghetto gate, that are full of Gestapo staff, Byelorussian, Ukrainian and Latvian policemen. Quickly, everyone lowers themselves into those hiding places that still remain, Many of the Jews, who had left the first part of the ghetto, and had bunkers there, in which they had hidden themselves the week before, now run back to those hiding places. Despite all this, not everyone manages to hide themselves.

The autos, bearing the murderers, enter the ghetto. They spread out across the ghetto with lightning speed. This time, they are not looking for bunkers, rather they are seizing the elderly men, and women. They take away those children that they can seize, who happen to come to hand. The young able-bodied who can work, are not touched. Seizing women who are carrying children in their arms, they order them to turn over their

little ones to the vehicles. When the mothers refuse, they tear the little children out of their arms. It is a special day of murder for children and the elderly.

The wife of Dr. Leon Kaplan is seized (who was taken away as one of the '13'). There are two little girls with her, one is five years old, and another is two, whom she hold by the hand.

A Gestapo man with a big belly orders her to turn the children over to the vehicle; she stands conflicted, as if frozen in her place. A member of the Judenrat, who is standing nearby, tells the German that the mother is the wife of a doctor, who had been taken away in July by the Gestapo 'to go to work,' that she is all alone, and the two little girls are her only solace.

He offers a 'compromise:' She has to turn over only one, and the second can remain with her.

> The hapless mother must surrender a victim, and she alone is the one who must choose! She turns over the younger one, A sever pain stabs her maternal heart. What has she done? Why did she turn over this tiny little life? She weeps, she pleads, she wants to make a change. It is permitted her to do so. She takes down the younger one from the vehicle and turns over the older one.
>
> *Mameleh! Mameleh!* – the little girl cries and screams. The woman runs quickly to the vehicle, and takes down the crying child, and once again, gives up the other. For a short while, she goes through this process of switching the children.
>
> – A mother's heart! – the *Judenrat* member says to the German.
>
> Tears appear even in the murderer's eyes. He breaks down. – Take both children! – He says.

During the ghetto liquidation, they are [eventually] all killed: the mother and both her children.

The second mass-murder lasts for eight days: from the morning after Yom Kippur, to the third day *of Hol HaMoed Sukkot*.

Some reckon the number killed at over three thousand, others – at six thousand. According to my own personal calculations, the number is up to six thousand.

All workers are returned into the second half of the ghetto. Those, who up to this point have hidden themselves in hideouts that had not been uncovered in this part [of the ghetto] emerge into the 'light' of day.

*

Yet, with this, the *aktion* is not yet over. There are about 500 people who have remained hidden in the first part of the ghetto, Jews who are hiding underground. They cannot leave their hiding places, because the 'liquidation-*aktion*' is still being carried out here, and this part of the ghetto remains surrounded by a strengthened watch guard. The Nazis come in every day, accompanied by their accomplices. They search, and dig in the ground. From time-to-time, they succeed in uncovering a bunker. Scrawny, overgrown, starved, and barely able to stand on their own feet, the people are dragged from their hiding places to the surface.

They are led out to the pits, others are shot on the spot. This 'liquidation' continues for an additional three weeks. In this fashion, the second '*aktion*' lasts for a month's time.

* *
*

In the first days, after the bloody week, the *Judenrat* members are still permitted to go into the first half of the ghetto and to transfer over the ghetto working places that had been left behind, the furniture from the *Judenrat* and from the ghetto hospital. In this manner, they get the opportunity to bring over single individuals, who had, up till that time, hidden themselves. The best time to attempt a rescue of these people left behind, is in the evening, when the murderers leave the ghetto.

The one-time president of the *Judenrat*, 'Mulya (Shmuel) Yankelewicz (today in Israel) buys off the German head of the watch that guards the ghetto, and together with Warszawsky, the representative of the ghetto police chief, they go into the first part of the ghetto, take out those remaining Jews, from bunkers that they knew about – and lead them over to the occupied part of the ghetto.

On the first night, they are able, in this manner to rescue several tens of Jewish people, otherwise condemned to death. On the third night, they again go back, to this truly sacred work. They have arrived at their destination. They look for hidden people. suddenly.... they are lit up. A projection searchlight silhouettes them.

Halt, halt!

'Mulya Yankelewicz does not lose control of himself. He gets himself out of the ghetto, and he is already out of the city. He saves himself. He survives the war.

The others are captured and taken to the *Gestapo*. Warszawsky is interrogated, beaten, and in the end, shot. The wife and child of Yankelewicz also pay with their lives, the *Judenrat* member Idelczyk, and many of the others rescued in the prior nights.

*

After the liquidation of the first part of the ghetto, the barbed wire is removed, and the houses there are occupied by 'Aryan' peoples. The prior Christian owners return to their former dwellings.

For a long time afterwards, Jews remain hidden in the underground bunkers of these houses.

In the night hours, when the residents in these houses are asleep, when the house is dark and quiet, these unfortunate Jews move themselves out of these hiding places. With a great deal of trepidation, they take water from pails, look for scraps from the Christian meals, and sometimes permit themselves to take away a bit of bread – and vanish again, into the darkness of the night. The Christians begin to notice that bread and water appears to be missing. and do not know why this is so. They begin to investigate and observe their 'night guests.'

In the end, they uncover the secret. they call the police, and turn over these confused shadows of human beings, into their hands.

The Incidents After the Second *Aktion*

After the former president of the *Judenrat,* 'Mulya Yankelewicz fled, the Nazis designate a new president, the locksmith master, Goldberg, a refugee who remained in Baranovich during the time of the German occupation. A clever and energetic Jewish man, whom the Germans respect for his diligence at work.

As police inspector (the current incumbent had vanished from the ghetto) the *Judenrat* selects the young, talented medical doctor, Juzik Lubranicky, a refugee of the war from Lodz. He does not want to take the post. However, the *Judenrat* persuades him to do so, for the good of the ghetto. Also, for this reason, they want to be able to keep him in the ghetto, in order that he not leave it, like his brother doctor, Wacek Lubranicky, [who left] a month ago.

Life in the ghetto is unbearable. The degree of crowding is great: there is only 60cm x 60cm of space per person, and the people are separated. Hunger and want are great, the sense of isolation – indescribable. There are almost no families left [sic: intact]. Everyone is either an orphan, widower, or widow. The *aktion* continues to proceed in the first part of the ghetto, and day and night – there is the sound of shooting.

–To save one's self and exact vengeance! – this is the thought that begins to arise in the mind. And already, in the darkness of the coming nights, the barbed wire surrounding the ghetto is cut. Groups, groups of young people, manage to get out from behind the fence, some with previously acquired weapons (from the resistance groups) and some with empty hands. The city is left behind in favor of immediate entrance into the forest. Others leave the city in the process of leaving their workplaces. These groups meet one another, and consultations are held. The *Judenrat* tries with all its might to stanch this flow of manpower into the forest, but they, themselves, the *Judenrat* members, are also planning to leave the ghetto, even though they aren't completely ready to do so: they have to provision themselves with food for a longer time (some even provide confitures for themselves), as well as clothing. Each of them keeps an eye out on the other as well, assuring that nobody flees before the others are ready.

From time-to-time, the *Gestapo* summons them and wars them.

– the overcrowding in the ghetto is great, and the people have no place where they can get any rest after work! – argues 'Mulik (Shmuel) Israel. – That is why they abandon the ghetto!

Taking his words into account, several additional houses are added to the ghetto on the Orla *Gasse.*

Others, especially the elderly, tied down by family connections, or lacking the capacity to move, try to get themselves settled into a variety of work situations: in the ghetto factories, in the *Feldbauleitung*, in 'Ota, in the *Gebietskommissariat*, and in the *Gestapo*, where there are factory works for a variety of specialists, such as shoemakers, tailors, watchmakers, etc. Those that get work, make an effort to take in their own, surviving family members, such as, for example, Dr. Sternfeld is taken on as a watchmaker. Everyone wants to hope that by being employed, this will save them from death.

*

Even in these inhuman conditions in the ghetto, life begins to take on a for of 'stabilization.' The sole concern is to survive. From the other side, a continuous stream of new demands keeps arriving from the Gestapo, which embitter life more and more. Among others, an order arrives, that all those underground hiding places located in the ghetto, are to be dug out and opened. If a bunker will be found that has not been

liquidated, all the people who live in that house will be shot. In each house, people are found who are against the opening and destruction of these hiding places, but there are others that are in sympathy wi9th this order. These latter inform the ghetto police about these still-extant bunkers. The larger number of these are liquidated. The one hope to be able to hide one's self in a time of need – is destroyed.

An account is taken of this last order, and is implications are understood. There is almost no hope left to be able to remain alive.

*

The stream of young people into the forest is unceasing. From time-to-time, partisans come to the city and assault the Germans and their dwellings. Their weaponry is taken away, and all manner of missions are carried out. They also come to the ghetto, encouraging the young people to leave, and go to the forest.

Two hundred young people have already left and gone into the forests.

The *Judenrat* detains those suspected of wanting to flee, and confines them in the ghetto jail facility. It interrogates these detainees, and wished to learn who else is thinking of running away. During these interrogations, it is not only one time that physical force is used [to extract information].

On 12 December 1942 (on the anniversary of the ghetto lock down) Yud'l Oszerowsky assaults a German railroad employee, and wishes to take away his weaponry. A fight ensues. The German is killed. Oszerowsky is also killed, throwing a hand grenade during his attempted retreat.

The situation becomes increasingly tenser. There is a feeling that the frightful unavoidable end is drawing nearer.. the Christians tell the Jews that they know, about a concentration of Byelorussian and Ukrainian police from the surrounding cities and towns.

On 15 December, a few Jewish partisans, led by Itcheh (Yitzhak) Medresh get into the ghetto. They were sent to carry out a mission: 'To get rid of' a member of the *Judenrat* who was the most active in detaining young people who want to leave the ghetto, and who routinely employs force during interrogations. Apart from this, they also have to free and release all those who have been put into the ghetto jail.

The first part of the mission is not carried out, because the individual involved was away at a meeting. However, the ghetto jail is destroyed, the young people are set free, and are led out of the ghetto. Apart from these, Medresh also takes along the medical student Leah Baguza with her companion. He wants to also take along Leah's younger sister, Giza, and her mother. the well-known midwife, Klara Jasinowsky-Baguza, but they postpone their departure to a later date, at a different time. The following morning, the events of these occurrences during the night are conveyed to the *Gestapo.*

The Liquidation of the Ghetto

Dedicated to the memory of my unforgettable
mother, Liebeh Levinbook ע"ה, who
was killed during the ghetto liquidation.

It is 17 December 1942 – 9 Tevet 5703. It is 6:00AM. It is still dark. Outside – a frost. Suddenly, the frozen snow begins to 'crunch' all around the boundary of the ghetto. Hundreds of armed 'raven' surround the ghetto.

In the ghetto – a panic ensues. There is no place to hide. The former hiding places have, for the most part, been destroyed. People are running about like poisoned mice, the workers in the ghetto factories, run with their families to the work places. Also [other] hundreds of Jews force their way into these factories. They are hoping to find a way to save themselves here. Others also hide themselves in hiding places here (up in the attics or underneath the floors).

The ghetto gate is opened. The *Gestapo* troops begin to stream inside, the Byelorussian police from Koldichevo, Ukrainian and Latvian police. The gate from the ghetto to the factories is placed under guard. It is now no longer possible to get in there. The groups of workers ar4e gathered together and segregated. Over 300 men are led out of the ghetto as members of the O. T. group, about 250 from the '*Feldbauleitung*' group, and over 100 from the *Gestapo* group. They are led off to their workplaces. All the other workers have to lay down along the sides of the streets, in the snow, with their faces down.

They are placed under guard. For even the slightest move – they are beaten fearfully. Hundreds, hundreds of men and women, are spread out [lying] on both sides of the street. The *Gestapo* – and the police offices walk between these rows [of people].

The young lady, Zeidman, among others, is lying on the ground, face down. Her husband is in Koldichevo. She was also there, with him, together. At that time, she was pregnant. They wanted to shoot her then, but she was able to get back to the ghetto. Here, she gave birth to a child in the ghetto hospital. Afterwards, she survived, here, the post-Yom Kippur mass murder. She then made efforts to get back into the concentration camp. in order to be with her husband. The camp commandant refused to take her back, and sent her back to the ghetto. She knows him quite well – the commandant Bobko[161]. Now, lying face down, she steals a glance to the side, and spies him, Bobko, bent down.

– Commandant Bobko, save me! – she says to him quietly. He hears her plea, looks away to the side, and continues quietly on further.

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161 The historical record shows the commandant of the Koldichevo concentration camp to have been SS- *Hauptscharführer* Fritz Jorn. See http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/Koldichevo.html

It is interesting to note, that later on in the narrative, the identity of Fritz Jorn is confirmed. However, Dr. Levinbook subsequently points out that there were four 'commandants' of this camp, so the man called Bobko could have been one of them.

Large sealed trucks come riding into the ghetto, and among them are also freight trucks. Under a hail of beatings, the people are driven into the trucks. After the doors are 'sealed' the trucks drive off to the pits at Grabowiec, to those very same pits where, two and a half months ago, approximately six thousand Jews from the Baranovich ghetto were killed. Now, the last remnants are being taken there...

An auto goes by 'crammed full' of Jews, beaten and apathetic. Among them – the previously mentioned lady, Zeidman, and the 18 year-old Mir'keh Vigdorczyk (the daughter of the owner of the pharmaceutical warehouse, Moshe Vigdorczyk). The latter says to those present:

-- My fellow Jews. why are you silent? Why are you sitting here so still? Do you not know where they are taking us?

– Come, let us together attempt to open the doors of the auto!

Her call is effective. They run to the door. Together, they begin to apply pressure to the closed, two-sided door. The door begins to yield to the pressure. Bit by bit, it begins to open. A bar spans the space between the two halves. Through it, one can see the street. Mir'eh looks out.

The auto is moving rapidly, and is leaving the city behind.

– Now we can see no one! Let us keep pushing on the doors!

Now, pressure is applied with all their might. Between the doors, and the floor of the auto, there is a triangular opening.

– Push just a bit more, everyone together!

The opening gets larger.

– And now, jump!

One after another they move themselves down into the opening and jump, falling on the snow, leaving a specific distance from one another. The people flee in all directions.

The vehicle arrives at the pits empty.

*

At the same time, the Nazi bandits enter the ghetto factories. They order everyone to leave the houses and to go out into the street. Here they engage in a *selektion.* The pick out the specialists, and put them to the right, and the remainder – women with children, and other men, who do not satisfy them – to the left.

The number of people is large, and the street is too small to hold them all. Because of this, it turns out that both of these groups do not stand far away from one another. The Jews on the left begin to move over to the right. The Nazis notice this, and begin to shoot down between the two groups, seeking, in this manner to keep them apart. A number are wounded in the feet, among them, Diszel the Shoemaker (his brother is in Israel). He does not complain, and does not let on that he is wounded. He considers himself fortunate that he was able to remain on the right side.

The lady lawyer, Zlata Szwiransky tears herself away from the death-side, and begins to run for the gate. She is shot on the spot, right in front of her brother, who is standing to the 'right.'

Heartrending scenes play themselves out. Here stands the mens' tailor Nissan Porecky on the 'side of the living,' while his wife and their two little children – are in the other group. The little children see their father from a distance. they cry and scream: '*Tateh,* come to us!' He cannot stand it: the good father goes to his children. He is permitted to go over to the 'side of the dead.'

The S. D. murderers discover one of their lady employees, who had hidden herself with her child. She does not wish to abandon the child, and stays with him. Later, when the murderers come to try and persuade her, she breaks down: she leaves the child with people she knows, to take care of him, and saying that she will return shortly, she goes over to the right side.

The group of specialists, about 350 men, is taken from the ghetto and led to the *Gestapo* yard. Among these can be found the following members of the *Judenrat* and workers: Dr. Sawczyc, who had taken off the armband with the red cross on it, and had given it to a lumber cutter, 'Mulik Israel –as abn electrician, Ez'yeh Fiedler, Elimelekh ('Maylikh) Limon with his son, Beloskurnik and Isaac Izikson (administrator of the ghetto hospital), as a carpenter. In the group, the Slonim Rebbe can be found, R' Shlomo'leh Weinberg, as a carpenter. The remainder, who had remained in the factories, are taken away in autos and driven to the pits.

It is eleven o'clock before noon. The ghetto officially no longer exists. The liquidation has lasted only five hours. In the official Nazi account, it is written: '*Baranovich ist Judenrein.*'

*

All the Jews brought to the *Gestapo* yard are sitting on the ground. they do not know what awaits them. They are surrounded by guards of Koldichevo policemen.

From time to time, a member of the *Gestapo* comes and takes out individual specialists from the group. They are transferred to established workplaces by the S. D. After the liquidation of the ghetto factories, the Gestapo bandits broaden the work positions that they oversee. They also bring the sewing machines and other equipment from the ghetto. They take what little of the remaining possessions they found in the ghetto, and put them into their 'storage facilities: beds, bedding, tables, chairs, food, medicines, etc.

A member of the S. D. detail draws near to the Jews at nightfall. and takes 'Mulik Israel out from them. He was never seen again. As it is related, the S. D. murderers abused him considerably and beat him. Later on, they led him out into the yard naked, and shot him.

During the evening hours, vehicles come riding into the *Gestapo* yard. More than 300 Jews are driven into them, and in the dark of the night, are driven off in an unknown direction.

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The *aktion* continues in the liquidated ghetto. The Byelorussian police roots about, searching for hidden Jews. They gather the captured in one place, beating and molesting them. Then they are sent off to the pits.

The well-known Zionist and community activist, Dr/. Isaac Bussel is captured. They learn that he is an eye doctor.

– You are an eye specialist? Huh?

They begin to punch him in the face with their fists, deliberately targeting their blows to hit him in the eyes. His field of vision is covered in blood, and his eyes become swollen.

– Now do you see really well, you eye specialist? Ha, Ha, Ha!

When a hiding place with Jews is discovered, it is not only once that those discovered flee in all directions. They are chased by the police, who shoot at the fleeing people.

And here, Dr. Reuv'keh Salutsky is running. A Byelorussian policeman with a rifle is pursuing him. From time-to-time, the doctor turns his head backwards, and shouts at the Byelorussian:

– Стреляй! Стреляй!(Shoot! Shoot!).

This time, he succeeds in getting away, but later on, he is captured [again] and is shot.

The doctor's two-year old daughter, Tzil'inka, runs by herself in the middle of the street. A murderous well-aimed bullet pierces her skin.

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The lady, Manya Vigdorczyk, and her little ten year-old son, get to exit the ghetto in a special way.

On the second day of the *aktion*, a sealed freight truck comes riding into the ghetto from the '*Feldbauleitung.*' Several Jews, and a German, disembark from it. They have been sent to gather up irons from the ghetto. Mrs. Vigdorczyk takes no0te of them from her hiding place. She recognizes the people, who yesterday were taken out with the workers' group, together with her husband. Looking all about her, on all sides, and not seeing any police, she runs up to the German, and asks of him, that he should take her, and her child to the '*Feldbauleitung*,' to her husband, who works there. He takes both of them into the sealed vehicle, and after they complete their work, he takes them off to the husband.

The joy of the saved family is indescribable, especially since their older daughter Mir'keh, who only the day before had leapt off of the 'death truck,' had also come to the camp. Since they were in need for additional hands to do work, the Germans took them in.

*

The liquidation of the ghetto lasts for over a month. A strengthened cordon of guards is placed around the ghetto perimeter, day and night. From time-to-time, they succeed in discovering hidden Jews.

During the last week, Jewish workers from the Gestapo are brought in to clean up the streets and the houses.

On one of these days, an elderly woman draws near to the Jewish workers, who had emerged from a hiding place. she had remained hidden for nearly a month. She is barely able to stand on her feet. She is trembling.

–'*Bobinkeh!*' – the Jews say to her – 'hide yourself quickly, or else they will be able to see you!'

– when it gets dark, sneak out under the wires, and leave the ghetto!

On the following morning, when the workers returned once again to the ghetto, they saw the dead body of the elderly woman, lying close to the ghetto perimeter. Apparently, she was the final victim on the territory of the Baranovich ghetto!

Approximately 300 Jews were killed in this third *aktion.*

A short time later, the barbed wire is taken down, the boards pushed to the side. The ghetto no longer exists.

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Up to this point, the young surgeon, Dr. Avra'sheh Abramowsky had remained hidden in one of the not-yet-uncovered hiding places. He quickly orients himself, realizing that he can no longer remain in this location: when the Christian residents will occupy this house, he will no longer be able to leave the bunker.

Well prepared for the journey, wearing a warm overcoat, with new boots on his feet, and a revolver in his pocket, he exits his hiding place, and leaves the desolation of the city behind. He immediately heads for the forest.

The 'Last of the Mohicans' from the ghetto!

After the Ghetto Liquidation

As is known, on the day of the liquidation, 17 December 1942, the following groups were taken pout of the ghetto:

'O. T.' Group, *Feldbauleitung* group, 'S. D. group and another group which was taken by auto transport to the Koldichevo concentration camp.

These vehicles are opened, and to the company of shouting and beating, from the local Byelorussian police: 'Bistro! Bistro! (Faster! Faster!), they are unloaded from the vehicles.

Suddenly three people tear themselves away from this group and begin to run out of the camp grounds. However, since they did not know the lay of the land in the camp, they run into a second part of the camp that also is cordoned off, and is occupied by the police themselves. In this dramatic attempt at escape, all four are shot down [dead]: the boot maker and member of the drama circle, Njasvizky, with his two grown up sons. All the remaining Jews are crammed into a barracks, which at one time served as a horse stable.

Here, in the dark, they meet up with Jews from Baranovich, who had been taken away from the ghetto a half year earlier.

They find out about the liquidation of the ghetto from the newly arrived Jews. Others receive 'last regards' from their families. It is only in the morning [light] that they actually are able to see one another.

No more Jews come to Koldichevo from Baranovich with only one noteworthy instance:

It is Mrs. Zeidman, and this time she is taken into the camp.

This happened in the following way:

A lady teacher from Stalovičy – of Polish extraction – comes to see this writer, who works as the camp doctor, and also has the duty to take in Christian patients from the surrounding villages (for which the payment is in products for the camp), a few weeks after the ghetto liquidation. She relates that Mrs. Zeidman

is hidden in her cellar, who asks to convey to her husband that she is alive, and that he should make an effort to get her admitted to the camp. I call Mr. Zeidman into the ambulatorium, ostensibly as a patient, and here he receives a first-hand message from his wife, who is still alive. We discuss all of the details, and devise an action plan: Mrs. Zeidman needs to come to the town of Koldichevo, not far from the camp itself, and to wait at a designated location for her husband. He will come to get her, and should he not appear, then she must return to Stalovičy.

On the designated day, the lady teacher came and told me that Mrs. Zeidman is already waiting at the designated spot.

Mr. Zeidman then went off to the camp commandant, Bobko, explained the situation to him, and made a strong plea to take his wife int the camp.

– This is impossible. Your wife is no longer alive, I myself saw when she was taken out of the ghetto on a vehicle! – he argues.

– But it is a fact, *Herr Kommandant*, that she is alive – Zeidman replies. After a moment of silence, Bobko says:

– Good, I will take her in, but under the following condition: she must tell the entire truth, how she saved herself.

– Where is she? – He asks.

– Not far from the camp.

The commandant calls in a policeman and issues the following order:

– Go together with him, and bring a woman to me, that he will point out to you!

In a half hour, they return with the woman.

She tells the commandant the story of her rescue, a little true, some of it contrived (she did not want to betray the lady teacher, who had hidden her). The story made sense.

– Well, good then. you can enter the camp and go to your husband!

The real story of her rescue is as follows:

Jumping off the truck, she does not know where to go. she hides herself until evening, and decides to go to one of the German working places, where all the entrances are known. She spends the night there in a stall, and in the morning, she is spotted by the employers of that time. What are you doing here? – they ask. She tells them the story of her escape. They don't quite know what to do with her.

– In reality, we should turn you over into the hands of the *Gestapo,* We are not going to do this. However, you cannot remain here, you must flee this place!

– And where shall I go? I will be captured, she says quietly.

– there is one way, go into the forest – an elderly German whispers into her ear.

She goes off to a Christian whom she knew, obtains a bag with some food in it, for the journey, and a woolen cover, which she wraps around her face: it is a cold, frosty day, and by doing this, she will not be recognized. She begins to go, and her feet take her to the Baranovich-Novogrudok road, in the direction of Koldichevo, where her husband is located.

It is nightfall. It is a market day in Baranovich. The peasants are returning to their villages, going home. She walks by the side of the road. She is barely able to drag herself along on her tired feet. A sled rides by, in which a young Christian woman is riding.

– Can you, perhaps, take me along? – she asks the Christian woman.

– Please, come on and sit!

– Where is it that you are going? – the Christian woman asks.

– I need to get to Koldichevo: my husband is there, in the concentration camp.

A confidential discussion ensues, and when they come to Stalovičy, the Christian woman takes her into her room.

– Come into my place, so you can warm yourself up a bit, and you will be able to go on further!

Sitting together with a glass of warm tea, she tells the lady teacher what she lived through during the past three days. The good-hearted woman keeps her in her premises, gives her food and drink, and during the daytime, hides her in a cellar under the table, and during the evenings, after locking the doors, she takes her out, into the room itself.

These actual facts are known.

*

About the martyr-life and murder of Baranovich Jews in other camps – it is possible to write entire other books.

Here, we will communicate briefly, about the further occurrences.

The '*Feldbauleitung*' Camp

Those belonging to the '*Feldbauleitung*' worker group, led out, during the ghetto liquidation (approximately 250 men) – are turned over by the *Gestapo* to the managers of the '*Arbeits-Einheit*.' They need to exploit the Jews as a labor force for their objectives, and they guard them.

The camp [for them] is organized not far from the aerodrome outside of the city. Crowding, hunger, filth and suffering, hard physical labor – this is the fate of the survivors.

From this work position, when there was still not a camp set up, many Jews leave the ghetto for the forest after the second '*aktion*.' They stay in touch with the workers that remain behind, who learn, this way, about

how life foes on in the forest, and the ways to get there. Now, first after the establishment of the camp, and after the liquidation of the ghetto – the residents of the camp begin to exit to the forest in groups. Every day, new people are missing. This desertion takes on a 'mass' character.

The *Gestapo* finds out about this. It decides to cut off this outflow into the forest. Their methods are well-known.

At the beginning of January 1943 a liquidation *aktion* is carried out in this camp. Over two hundred Jews are killed.

The *O. T.* Camp

The *O. T.* camp is located in barracks outside of the city, past the old train station, not far from the central prison. The camp is ringed with barbed wire. The Jews, approximately 350 in number, live in frightful hygienic conditions. The level of crowding is great. The starvation meals are distributed from a kitchen that has been set up there, where the chief cook is the former dance master Morin. The people are kept isolated from one another. They must carry out all manner of construction work on the railroad tracks and around. [It is] a camp regimen. Despite this, the notorious 'roll calls' and beatings exist here, just as they do in other concentration camps. Adjacent to the camp, there is a house for the sick, which is run by the master pharmacist Michael Mukasey (today in Israel. For the more serious cases, Dr. Sternfeld is brought from the *S. D.* camp. In the summer months of 1943, Fishl Sawczyc is able to get himself appointed as a doctor (a former *Judenrat* member), who comes here from the Koldichevo concentration camp.

During the working day, the Jews come in contact with the Christian populace. In this manner, others among them are able to procure something to eat, as a supplement to their starvation rations.

Koziol undertook a considerable burden on behalf of the Jews in this camp (today he is in Israel). He lived in this camp, but he worked in the city, at a soap factory. He buys products [there] and brings them back to the camp with a wagon.

The Germans who 'derive benefit' from what he does, feign ignorance of his action. Apart from this, he also supports the *Rebbe* of Slonim in the Koldichevo concentration camp, sending him food. It is still possible to deal with the Germans in this camp, because they allow themselves to be bought off with money and gold, which a few of the Jews still have with them. It is in this manner, that it becomes possible to get a few more Jews admitted into the camp, who had managed to get themselves out of the ghetto after the ghetto liquidation. The last, of those that were taken into the camp was the 10 year-old daughter of Dr. Sawczyc.

Also, more and more Jews begin to flee to the partisans [sic: into the forest] from this camp as well.

Those who remain behind are seized with a fear.

Each one starts to watch the others, who are suspected of wanting to leave the camp. Also Dr. Sawczyc and his daughter are kept under surveillance. They are not permitted to leave together. Dr. Sawczyc leaves only under the escort of an *O. T.* man. He leaves the German waiting, and himself vanishes. The daughter was supposed to have left later, accompanied by a woman. The woman manages to get out, but his little daughter is detained in the camp, where she is later killed, together with the rest of the Jews. Among those who

manage to escape into the forest are the master pharmacist Michael Mukasey, Moshe Tunkel and his current wife (today in Israel). Approximately 30 people left this camp and went into the forest.

In the later summer months of 1943, the camp is moved into the building of the ruined railroad station in New-Baranovich. Life here is unbearable. Hunger – is great. Clothing is torn, old, and the people sneak out after working hours and go begging at the homes of Christians in New-Baranovich for a bit of bread to eat.

Why do they not go off into the forest? It is entirely possible that they simply do not have the strength to do so. They are broken, apathetic, weak. It is [also] possible that they think conditions in the forest are even worse, than here, because they cannot conceive of where in the forest they would live, and what will there be to eat? It was especially so, now that the winter was approaching. Nevertheless, they wait....for the opportune moment.

And this was the way they waited....on 26 October 1943 in the evening, the people are ordered to get ready to go to get ready to be driven to work. Bread is distributed to them. They provision themselves with peeled potatoes.

On the following morning, Wednesday, 27 October 1943, large freight trucks come riding up as well as vehicles with open platforms. The people are loaded onto these vehicles, and are taken to...the Koldichevo concentration camp.

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Already, a week before this, workers were taken out of the Koldichevo concentration camp and led off to work in a forest, 3 km from Koldichevo, on the road to Haradzišča. There, 'pits' are being dug at a fast pace, and something 'appropriate for a large oven.' It is thought that 'bunkers for tanks' are being made here, to guard the road against the partisans.

On the morning of 27 October 1943, the workers are let out from the Koldichevo concentration camp onto the roll call plaza. They get their 'breakfast rations' and after that they are not sent off, as usual, to their workplaces, but rather, they are crowded back into their barracks. There is a feeling that something is going to happen. The worst is anticipated....

Suddenly, through the small windows of the barracks (it was actually forbidden to look out through them), large vehicles full of people ride up. The people all wear 'yellow badges.' Also, their belongings are taken off within the camp perimeter, where the police barracks are located. Here they are searched, and their money is taken away. Others among them tear up their money, and throw out the pieces. During this search and inspection, all the people are frightfully beaten. They are ordered to take off their shoes and outer clothing. Then, they are taken off to the nearby small forest, where the 'pits' has been dug. There they are shot, and their bodies are cremated in the oven that was built there.

From those documents that were found later on (the passport of Shmel'keh (Shmuel) Bussel, the brother of Dr. Isaac Bussel, of Shimon Mordkowsky, Arka'sheh Baguza, etc.) And from photographs, we learn that those who were killed came from the O. T. camp in Baranovich, who were 'liquidated' in this fashion.

After this, the workers from the Koldichevo concentration camp are let out of their barracks, and taken off to their work.

A larger part of them, more than usual, are taken off to the peat fields. Here, the empty freight trucks arrive, who had conveyed the Jews from the *O. T.* camp, and they are loaded up with peat, which is then taken to the *S. D.* in Baranovich.

S. D. (*Gestapo*) Camp

The Jews who lived under the best conditions were the 125 Jews who lived in the *S. D.* camp, in Baranovich. They are in a real house, the house of the Baroness Ber. The Jews here live in a state of cleanliness, are well-dressed, and receive good food. All of this is made possible because they are able to take advantage of the S. D. stores, where the effects of the murdered Czech Jews are inventoried. They are also able to take advantage of food products which had remained in the ghetto after its liquidation.

During one of my visits to this camp, my heart is vexed, when I see on one of the beds, the blanket used by my mother ע"ה with which she covered herself, up to her last day in the ghetto.

The Jews work in factories located at the *S. D.* They work as shoemakers, boot makers, tailors, seamstresses for underwear, watchmakers, locksmiths, mechanics, electricians, water carriers, and also in the horse stables, in which the mounts of the *Gestapo* leaders are quartered.

In general, the condition of the Jews here is good, because each of them produces good work for the Nazi murderers, who are constantly making demands, and send in tens of pairs of boots, shoes and suits, etc. to their homes, in Germany. And each provides his own 'master craftsman' with cigarettes, food and clothing.

That is why all the Jews in the Koldichevo concentration camp, which is under the supervision of the Baranovich S. D., to get out of there, and get over to the Baranovich [sic: S. D.] camp. Using all sorts of means, including bribing the bloodthirsty camp 'engineer' Syczuk, some manage to get transferred to Baranovich.

The last president of the *Judenrat*, Goldberg, is designated as the *Ober-Jude* of this camp. He is committed to the Jews. In the evening hours, he reads to them from a German newspaper, which he is often able to get a hold of at work. Everyone awaits the [sic: Final] Solution. It is Dr. Sternfeld who works there as the [sic: house] doctor, who had previously been employed as a watchmaker, beside his father-in-law Czacky.

It is necessary to note, that the Nazi murderers look after 'their Jews.' One time, when it became necessary to perform an appendectomy on one of the Jews named Gorelick (the son of the colonial merchant Gorelick), who as a Jew could not come to the Christian hospital, Dr. Levinbook was called out of the Koldichevo concentration camp with his wife as a nurse, in order to perform this operation. Dr. Levinbook is brought yet a second time, when the young lady Lucy Mavshovich falls off the second story at the time she was washing windows, and yet another time when Beloskurnik gets a gallstone attack.

This 'good' life has the effect of causing the Jews in this camp to refrain from fleeing to the forest. Nevertheless, they are haunted by this thought, and begin to amass weaponry.

It is decided that all must flee together, but one does not trust the other, and everyone watches everyone else.

After the liquidation of the *O. T.* camp becomes known, it is decided that it is necessary to flee as soon as is possible.

On Monday, 1 November 1943, at night, about 40 people flee to the partisans in the vicinity of Kryvošyn.

Those who remain behind live with the fear of death. One of them, a carpenter, slits his own throat, and suffers frightfully. Towards evening, he gets an opportunity to beg a Nazi to shoot him to death. On the following morning, all the remaining Jews are sent to the Koldichevo concentration camp.

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The Gestapo staff retain only one Jew in Baranovich, Portnow, who worked as an automobile mechanic for the murderers. He thought that this would permit him a chance to run away at an opportune time, but he miscalculated: unexpectedly, they fell upon him, beat he thoroughly, and afterwards, shot him.

Portnow – was the last of the Baranovich Jews, to remain in the hands of the Nazis, and the last to be murdered by them on the soil of Baranovich.

The Koldichevo Concentration Camp

The Koldichevo concentration camp is founded by the Baranovich *S. D.* (*Gestapo*) at the beginning of the summer of 1942, in the naturally beautiful property of the former Polish noble and Sejm Deputy Szalewicz.

Towards the east of the camp, is the birthplace of the great Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz – Zaosie,[162] to the south – large peat fields, and the beautiful lake named Koldichevo – a large water reservoir, which has an underground connection with the Świteź Lake, (written about by Mickiewicz[163]), while to the west of the camp, the Baranovich-
Novogrudok road passes through, and to the north the village of Koldichevo is located, and 5 km from it – the town of Haradzišča.

The camp, under the supervision of the Baranovich *S. D.* is managed by Byelorussian police, who are trained here to be *Gestapo* police, and exceeds the level of cruelty and murderousness of their German masters.

The fact is, that the sole German here, the Camp Chief, Fritz Jorn, is the 'best one,' and the one 'protector' of the Jews against the murderous Byelorussians; this fact alone is enough to enable you to imagine the suffering and pain, the agony, fear and eventually death, of the Jews in this camp. The following picture may, best of all, mirror the tribulations that the Jews had to withstand:

The Byelorussian Commandant Stepaniuk, who acts 'well' already towards those Christian detainees (the camp was also used to incarcerate Christian political and general criminals), beats and whips his own

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162 Zavosse (Belarusian: Завоссе, Завосьсе; Polish: *Zaosie*) is a village in Belarus, in the Baranavichy Raion of Brest Oblast.

163 See some of his short poems; in *Świteź* and *Świtezianka* the poet describes the lake *Świteź* (with vivid, extensive descriptions of the landscape: "Świteź stretches its bright bosom,/ In the form of a great curve,/ Blackened its shores by dense forest,/ And smooth as a sheet of ice").

brother-in-law that was sent here, until he can no longer control his bowels. The bestial commandant then orders his brother-in-law to eat his own excrement.

The very familiar 'roll calls,' when the people are counted six times a day, stand out for their most frightful tasks and impositions: marches, running, falling in mud, crawling on one's belly, getting up again and running further, then jumping in 'leap-frog' (with hands on one's pelvis, knees bent, with the body lowered towards the ground, and having to jump like a frog). From time to time, these beasts arrange for [what they call] entertainment: the Jews have to ride one on top of the other, and the riders are supposed to engage in combat with one another. When the one on top falls, or if the one underneath, the so-called 'horse' collapses, being unable to keep up on his feet, they are both beaten until bloodied, until literally their bones are broken. Then they are ordered to jump one over the other, and if one does not happen to be able to accomplish this, or in the instance where one of them falls down – again there is beating after beating. After these sorts of games, when everyone can barely stand on their own feet, (only 120 grams of black bread a day is allocated with a bit of watery soup), they are asked to pair off with one another, and dance the tango, waltz, and fox trot, and to sing along while they are dancing.

Beaten, bloodied, with broken hands, ribs and bones, they have to move to the rhythm and dance. This is a terrifying picture, that is indescribable.

At every roll call, the camp commandant shouts out(there are four commandants apart from their representatives):

– Здорово жиды! (I wish good health to you Jews!) And all must respond in one voice, with the loudest possible voice:

– Нехай сдохнет товарищ Сталин (Let Comrade Stalin Die). And woe betide anyone who remains silent, or whose response is not considered adequate.

Being stretched out and whipped across one's bare body is a daily occurrence. sometimes, they order that one Jew should whip another. When Yakl'eh Fireman, a refugee from Lodz, a former worker at a printing house, for the Bund newspaper, is designated as the 'boss' over the Jews and the sadists order him to whip a Jew, he measured the stick compassionately, and brings it down lightly on the body of the other person's back; so they order him to lie down, ands they 'give him a lesson' as to how the whipping is to be done. In general, they engage in this 'holy work' by themselves.

At work, the Jews are beaten and maltreated to the point where it is unbearable. And it is noteworthy – that all manage to hold out: the will to live and to survive is amazingly strong.

Mostly, it is not the craftsmen who are abused and beaten at work, who work under open skies, especially at the peat pits. Here, the police overseers beat people with heavy clubs, and with rifle butts to the left and the right. They order 'presentations' which they orchestrate in advance: one person is asked to get down on 'all fours' (bent over and on his knees), and a second person has to sit on him, riding on his back, and ride... at the question asked by the policeman:

'What are you riding on?" the required answer is:
'On an ass.' And to the question:
'Where are you going?' – The required answer is:
'To Palestine.'

After giving these answers, the rider is thoroughly beaten.

The incarcerated Christian inmates also take part in the beating of the Jews, doing so with relish. The Jews have not only to carry out their own 'work' once, but also carry out the work of the Christians.

The Jews who work in the factories as tailors, shoemakers, watchmakers, etc., are better off. They are not beaten during the time that they work (or very rarely), and also get something to eat from Christians, from the surrounding villages, when they come to make all sorts of demands. It is self-evident, that for work done this way, the Christians pay into the police chancellery, especially with [food] products.

Those who are worst off are those on whom the police are 'keeping an eye.' Mostly these are religious Jews, whom they call with the name '*Rabbin*,' and also the intelligentsia. For the most part, the Jews are abused by the technical work overseer, the so-called 'engineer,' Syczuk, a beast in human form.

The living conditions are also frightful: Living is in a former horse stall and sleeping is in three tier bunk beds. At night, after the evening roll call, the barracks are locked until the following morning. Rats, the size of cats, jump around over the people. The camp is surrounded by a high fence of barbed wire. All around there are guard posts. At the corners of the camp – there are underground bunkers manned by armed police, who guard the camp against the eventual assaults by partisans.

From time-to-time, the murderers order up improvised partisan attacks, usually during the night hours. A hail of gunfire ensues, machine-gun fire, the throwing of mines [sic: grenades]. The patrolling tank rides around the camp perimeter, and opens fire on all sides. In this manner, the observe how the 'inmates' behave, and whether they are prepared to offer resistance from the inside.

The police open the barracks, and if it encounters people who are not lying down, it orders a 'roll call' in the barracks, and beats everyone in a frightful manner.

As has already been said, many of the Baranovich Jews had been seized and sent to this camp since the time of its establishment. Together with other Jews from the vicinity (Haradziščа, Novogrudok, Zhetl, Stoubcy), they have to clean out the barracks and arrange them, install the barbed wire perimeter, etc. Every day, another Jew is shot because of someone saying that he wanted to escape. During work, a policeman will throw his hat down, and then order a Jew to go and pick it up, and in that moment, he shoots him. At the outset, the number of Jews is over 70. A little at a time, they are shot dead, and others are brought in to take their place. The situation is somewhat stabilized with the arrival of the German camp chief, who 'protects' the Jews against the Byelorussian executioners.

A couple of months later, he travels to Slonim for a period of time, and then the Byelorussians again begin to go on a rampage.

During his tenure, on 7 December 1942, over 300 Jews from Baranovich are brought in during the evening hours, after the liquidation of the ghetto.

On the following morning, at the first 'roll call,' when I go, as was my usual practice, to look in on the sick, I see all of them marching: all very familiar faces to me, former neighbors and friends. Among them is the generally well known *Rebbe* of Slonim, R' Shlomo Weinberg. He and his entire 'courtyard' of *Hasidim* from Slonim, were 'at one time or another' my regular patients. In the first instance, I did not recognize him, because he was without a beard. He saved himself by posing as a carpenter. My first advice to him, and to

the others, was not to say so much as a single word, that he is the *Rebbe*, because he would then have to endure frightening assaults by the Byelorussians.

In one of the searches, a quantity of gold is discovered, hidden away under a board that had been torn loose from a soffit in the barracks. This leads to an investigation. No one is prepared to own up to it. Everyone then, is severely beaten, and the murderers promise to continue to mete out beatings so long as the owner will not reveal himself. Someone fingers Sokolowsky, the former fire-fighter from Baranovich. He is taken out of the camp and shot.

The agony and hunger become unbearable. Barefoot and clothed in torn rags, we work in the intense cold. Hands and feet become frozen. Wounds break out all over the body.

People fall in with a variety of pulmonary inflammations [sic: pneumonia].

I am able to put together a cordoned off corner of the barracks to be used as a [makeshift] 'hospital.' Under the diagnosis of a cold, which does not have to last more than a day (if longer – the person is shot), I detain the people in the 'hospital.' And it is noteworthy: almost all very quickly recuperate. With rather small doses of medicine, and somewhat better food, which I had the opportunity to smuggle in (I get the food from those peasants that come to me as patients), they get back on their feet quickly, and go back to somewhat lighter work.

Instances of sickness, that, as usual end under normal living conditions in death, are cured here. I made this very same observation later on, when I was in the partisan movement.

Regarding infectious diseases, I have to say, and what such a statement means – is understood: death by shooting. During this period, there was only one outbreak of spotted typhus, in the case of a young man from Baranovich, Gitlin (now in America). Facing the danger of death, and no small danger, that the remaining Jews not catch it from him, I detain him as someone with the grippe, until he returns to normal good health.

Nevertheless, there were instances of death from illnesses and this striking people who lost consciousness (the fried of my youth, Abraham-Joseph Szwiransky, who fell sick from pneumonia, and immediately afterwards contracted meningitis – a brain casing inflammation); or those who were apathetic from the outset (an elderly Jew, a Torah scholar, and a very capable activist from Moucadz'). The latter absorbed all his suffering willingly...

The dead are carried out on fabricated cots on the shoulders of Jews, not far from the camp, and a interred to the south of the camp, under a tree.

The police, who stand guard over the 'funeral,' shout to the Jews: – Жиды молитесь! (Jews, pray!).

The Jews do not know what to do, because they do not understand what it is that these murderers are saying. The police then assault them, and beat them murderously. Each of them says what he knows, what he can, what has remained in his memory: *Tehilim*, *Kaddish*, and just plain whatever comes to mind.

Three-four graves of Jews have remained in Koldichevo, who died 'of natural causes' under unnatural circumstances.

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A few weeks after the arrival of the last group of Baranovich Jews, twenty carpenters are demanded by the Gestapo to be sent to Minsk, and people are ordered to volunteer.

Many Jews can be found who are willing to present themselves. the agony here is already well-known, and everyone makes an effort to get out of here. A group of twenty people from Baranovich, among them Isaac Izikson, Shimon Szenicky, the younger son of Dr. Szenicky, go off, and they are envied, not knowing what will really happen to them.

As we now know, they were, at that time, really taken to Minsk, worked there, and later on, nineteen of them were killed. Only one survived – Lipa Kaplinsky (today in Israel, who escaped from the camp there).

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The Jews who remained in Koldichevo make an effort to adjust to the situation. Many try to get a situation in the factories, where the Jewish Tailor Leib'l Zieger manages. He is also the 'commandant' of all the Jews in the camp. His relationship to the Jews is both correct and good. He tries to help them in whatever way he can.

Not everyone can get situated in the factories, and those who have to go to do ordinary physical labor, have a great deal to endure at that work, not only from the two-footed Byelorussian animals, but also the four-footed large dogs of the camp, who are sicced onto the Jews. The most frightening was the generally recognized dog named 'Lord.' Both my wife and I had occasion to feel the bite of his sharp teeth.

Having been somewhat popular with a few of the Byelorussian commandants, from time to time, I got a chance to do something for the good of the Jews. Also, the German camp chief consults me on matters that are important to life.

Knowing that Stepaniuk is fond of small scale manufacture, I give him the notion of opening a small soap works identifying the Baranovich Jew, Latow, as a specialist [in this connection]. It was in this manner and a few Jews got situated in doing this work.

I also present him the agronomist Krakowsky (today in Israel), and the tending of gardens is turned over to him.

The medical school graduate, Meron Szenicky, is appointed as the maintenance man for the little hospital. Dr. Sawczyc is presented as the best gynecologist of the city, and is taken into the ambulatorium as a specialist in female medicine. The lawyer, Shlomo Epstein, is set up in the later to be built bathhouse. The well-known amateur director Rayak is placed in charge of the disinfection equipment.

It was in this way, that it became possible to rescue a few Jews from being beaten, hard physical labor, and from death.

I provide the Jews with bread to divide among themselves. It lasts only once, since they are unable to divide the bread among themselves. The Baranovich Jews say that the bread is theirs, because the doctor is one of them, from Baranovich, and the others argue that all are the same – Jews – and the bread belongs to everyone.

The matter almost has to go to the commandant. It is turned over to me to decide. In the future, I must give a portion separately to each individual, so that one does not know what the other has received. Small bits of

bread are hidden for nighttime, when one lays down on the bunk beds, and it is at that time that one can get the most pleasure out of taking out a piece of bread and chewing it...

*

On Saturday 31 January 1943, another mass murder of Baranovich Jews takes place, this time, in Koldichevo. At the noon roll call, approximately 300 Jews are picked out. they are quickly surrounded by police, and they are told, that they are being taken to Baranovich to do work. They are taken on foot. They are brought to a nearby forest, not far from the village of Arabauščina (2 km from Koldichevo) – and all of them are shot there in the usual fashion.

*

Dr. Sawczyc is also placed on the side of those sentenced to death. He gets no sympathy from the murderers. One time, they took off a pair of nice boots from his feet, but it had patches underneath. After taking off the patches, it becomes evident that the boots are in fact unworn. He is then whipped. Now he stands among the 300. At the last moment, I am able to get him out. I remind the commandant Bobko that his wife has to give birth, and it would be desirable that a professional, skilled in the delivery of babies, should be in attendance. This saves him.

Among those who are killed: the Limons, father and son, the master watchmaker Anshel Brawda, and Izzie Fiedler.

It is worth noting here, that, to the very end, his former Christian nursemaid, Masha, would come to visit him every Sunday who would bring along food, which she would give to a Christian concentration camp inmate, with whom he would divide it up. (The Christian inmates had the right to be visited every Sunday by their families, and to obtain food from them).

*

After this *aktion*, the German camp chief returns from Slonim. He brings along two Jewish tailors, with the wife of one of them. He had already rescued them from death three times, and now, after the liquidation of the Slonim Jews, he sneaked them out of the city, and brought them to Koldichevo. From the chief, I learn that the Baranovich engineer Boma Kaplan has just been killed, along with his wife Ieda (the daughter of Yitzhak Jasinowsky) with their little son.

With the arrival of the camp chief, a bath is created, and a disinfection is carried out. Everyone's hair (Christians and Jews) is shorn off. The quality of the food is improved. He orders unnecessary horses to be shot, and provides horsemeat for consumption.

He frequently comes into the ambulatorium, and carries on a conversation.

He attempts to make life easier for the unfortunates, but the Byelorussians do their thing, when he is not looking.

After the de-lousing of the people and the barracks is implemented, I am called one night to the 'hospital.' I meet the commandant Stepaniuk there. He is drunk. He specifically asks about each of the Jews who are sick. I represent that each is only slightly ill, and in about two days, they will be able to return to work.

– Thank you, you may go now, he offers with enthusiasm, as always.

In about a half hour, peasant wagons ride up to the barracks, with their beds covered in straw. The sick are taken out, placed in the wagons, and driven out of the camp. They are shot to death on the Christian cemetery of Koldichevo. Among those shot are – Abraham'l Solomiansky, whom that very same commandant had previously protected and identified as a 'good' worker in the camp kitchen.

The Slonim *Rebbe*

The life and murder of the Slonim *Rebbe* is a chapter unto itself.

With a perpetual smile on his face, and in his eyes, tranquil and at peace, he was loving towards everyone and self-effacing.

As to his work as a carpenter, he is assisted by all of his adherents who are companions to his misfortune. When an inspection takes place, he picks up a plane in hand, and begins to smooth the boards. He never pushes himself forward. When he recalls, or talks about his family that were killed, he quietly begins to hum a *Hasidic* melody *sotto voce*. After work, in the barracks, he has about him a group of his *Hasidim*, and adherents. To the extent that thy are able to do so, they attempt to live under these circumstances in the spirit of *Hasidism.*

Three times a day, he is punctilious in observing the need for prayer, in the morning – with *Tallit* and *Tefillin,* always being under tension that the murderers should not notice this.

During the time I was in the camp, he never worked on the Sabbath or on Festival Holidays: he is released from work on those days under the pretense of illness. Jews do come to me and ask that he not be released on every Sabbath, because the authorities might catch on, and everyone can be punished for this. I calm them down, indicating that the only person who is responsible for this is me, and they have no reason to be concerned.

He does not partake in any food that is ritually unclean [sic: *trayf*] during this entire time. At first, he endures hunger, but afterwards, at my initiative, we arrange a 'dietetic kitchen for those with 'gastrointestinal disease,' with the understanding that Christians get the first priority.

Apart from bread rations, these people, 'placed on a diet' are given either coffee or a potato soup puree twice a day.

He eats nothing leavened during the Passover holiday period. His bread rations are taken away and put to the side. Whoever wants to, can take them. He, personally, does not give it away, not wanting to be one who gives leavened food to anyone during the holiday. His entire nourishment for the week of Passover consists of baked potatoes and baked beets, which his *Hasidim* provide to him.

A bit of flour is procured, and from it, some small matzos are baked in an oven, where little Khonya'leh Pilszczyk (today in Israel) is occupied with making lime. It is there that the potatoes and beets are also baked.

On Purim.... 'He' would like to engage is something of a little dance. So how is this to be arranged?

The Christian inmates are neighbors: their door opens into the Jewish barracks, and from this, he falls upon an original idea: in the evening, before retiring to sleep, the Christians are brought into the Jewish barracks, and a conversation is had about dancing.

–Who dances better? We or you? – We say to them.

– Show us what you can do!

The Christians begin to dance. they attempt to demonstrate their artistic capability. Afterwards, they say to the Jews:

–And now, you show us what *you* can do.

And it was for this, that they were waiting. Now, the *Rebbe* dances with his *Hasidim,* He has achieved his objective.

And he loomed large in the last of the moments as well.

During the *aktion* of 4 November 1943 (6 or 7 Heshvan 5704), during the *selektion*, he is placed among those who are sentenced to die. He is calm. He walks in the first row, with pride, with his head held high. He is going to fulfill the greatest mitzvah of his life – the mitzvah of Sanctification of the Name.

*

The Jews in Koldichevo confront they sorrowful existence. A little at a time, they become inured to this sort of living. The plague of lice is over. The rats, because of my initiative, are gotten rid of by poisoning. They are collected by the hundreds. and the Jewish tanners have to skin and tan their hides. The plague of fleas still remains, against which it is not possible to mount any resistance. By the thousands, these black jumping creatures assault the exhausted human bodies, and they bite mercilessly.

And yet, even under these conditions, the Jews do not lose their will to live. There is laughter; there is singing. Mrs. Zeidman has a particularly beautiful voice, who is able to sing very touching songs. She is a scion of the Riback family, where everyone is very musical. Her brothers are cantors in America. Even love affairs blossom within the ambit of death.

The Jews also do not lack for humor. They exchange witticisms even under those sorrowful circumstances.

The biggest comedian is Puczinsky, the son of Jonah Puczinsky who is well-known to everyone, who was taken away with the '700' to Molodechno.

The younger Puczinsky composes songs. He portrays the Jewish barracks as if it were a small Jewish *shtetl*, named *Fleisk* (because of the fleas). The aisles between the bunk beds are the 'little streets,' which are given appropriate names: the *Hasidic Gessel*, where the bunk bed of the *Rebbe* of Slonim is, along with those of his *Hasidim*; the Shoemakers' *Gessel,* the Tailors' *Gessel*, the *Gessel* of the Craftsmen, etc. Also, there is not missing a place called 'Under the Clock' (a wall clock hangs here). Even in the last months of his life, Puczinsky does not lose his sense of humor: standing during the time of the '*aktion*,' on the side of those condemned to death, he takes out apiece of bread from his pocket, chews on it, while cracking jokes...

My Escape

The question of escaping from the camp does not, for the time being, arise. The camp is strictly guarded, and a number of attempts by Christian inmates end with them being captured and being hung during the time of a roll call, in front of everyone. Despite this, I decide, along with my wife, that we must flee, if we are to save ourselves. Through a family of one of my village patients, we get the chance to make contact with a partisan brigade, named '*Molotov*.' I receive a letter from the commander of this group, a Captain Yarochkin, and they are ready to take me on.

We send over a large number of surgical instruments to the partisans, and also medicines. Our personal effects are taken away by the patients to their homes. We are risking a great deal this way, because the Christian, who is doing all of this, can be captured and interrogated, and if so, then we are all lost.

In the meantime, on a summer nightfall, two young Jewish boys escape from their work in the field. The police are not successful in apprehending them. The remaining Jews are murderously tortured. Especially, Meir Lozowsky (today in Israel), is so badly whipped and beaten, that his entire body turned black [and blue] from the lost blood. His tongue is pieced several tens of times with needles.

These forms of torture of those that remain behind, deter us from escaping ourselves for a longer time.

On 27 October, the Jews from the O. T. camp are brought to Koldichevo from Baranovich, and here they are shot, and their bodies are burned.

We decide: we will not wait any longer. A Byelorussian policeman, who reveals himself, in the middle of a conversation, to be an intermediary to the partisans, gives us encouragement by saying, that by staying we will not materially be able to save the people, because in the end, they are all going to be exterminated. The policeman tells me to bring grenades, and a small pistol, but he does not come at the designated time. But we are compelled to go on with the escape, because we are afraid that perhaps this policeman will betray us. At the time when the two young men fled, the camp chief told us: 'You will not perpetrate such a swinish thing on me!' We assured him that we would not, especially as we had a small child. Sunday, 31 October 1943 in the evening, was selected as the time to seal our fate.

Wanting to protect the remaining Jews from abuse, I leave behind a letter for the camp chief, which, to this day, is found in Baranovich. the content of the letter is as follows:

> Most Honorable *Herr* Chief!
>
> You will pardon us for the 'swinishness' that we have brought upon you. No one is responsible for our escape. We also have no responsibility, for the fact that we are Jews. We are still young, and can still bear the burden for the rest of humanity. Please forgive us for wanting to continue living.

At six in the evening, when it is already dark outside, I exit the ambulatorium with our eight year-old son and somewhat later – my wife comes out. We head in the direction of the peat bogs. According to our calculations, we have 12 hours ahead of us, and during that time, they will not catch onto the fact that we have fled, and by six in the [following] morning, we will be at the location of the partisans.

Regrettably, in about a half hour, they realize that we are gone, and they begin to search for us. The floodlights begin to illuminate the vicinity, and rockets, shot into the air one after another, light up the sky. There is the report of all manner of gunfire. In this dramatic escape, I fall into a deep peat bog, filled with water. The bogs are surrounded by police, who by now are quite close to us, but suddenly, after twelve hours of searching, they depart. We lie for an entire day in the bogs, a couple of hundred meters from the camp. Small gentile children from the villages find us, but they don't disclose our presence.

With the arrival of the night of 1 November, we set out on our risky journey, and by the middle of the night, we find ourselves already at the location of the partisans of the 'First of May Brigade.' As we later found out, the Jews [back in the camp] did not suffer much because of our escape, Only the veterinarian, Dr. Abba Goldstein (today in Argentina) was lashed under the order of the commandant. Dr. Goldstein had anticipated receiving this beating from the outset, and because of this, he wrapped himself in towels.

I was also told that the Chief had tears come to his eyes when he read my letter. Later on, he gathered everyone at a roll call, and said that we had been found as three dead bodies, after we had taken poison.

* *
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Only 122 Jews remained in the camp. On 3 November, over eighty Jews are brought in from the *S. D.* camp in Baranovich. A day later a *selektion* takes place.

The camp chief and the Byelorussian commandants mostly leave among 'those allowed to live' the Jews from Koldichevo, but afterwards, the leaders of the *S. D.* arrive from Baranovich, and they do a *selektion* starting all over again, in which they leave more of the Jews from the *S. D.* camp in the category of being 'among the living.'

An interesting incident occurred with the younger Gorelick. Standing on the side 'to death,' he takes out a sharp knife, and cuts up his boots in pieces (brought with him from the *S. D.* camp).

– What are you doing? Why are you doing that? – the Byelorussian police shout at him.

– I don't want to leave this for you to use – he answers.

–Now you will really get it! You will be the last one to die!

The murderers keep their word: he is left to be among the last.

In the meantime, his cousin Lucy Mavshovich, who was set aside to be among those left to live, went over to one of the Baranovich S. D. staff, for whom she had previously worked, and begs him to save her cousin. He does this. The young boy is led over to those that were separated 'to continue living.' He remained alive (today he is in America).

One specialist was rescued literally out of the pits: he is sent for. He was already stripped bare naked, and was waiting for his 'row' to be shot. Naked and shivering, he was brought back by car, into the camp. About one hundred Jews were liquidated on that day.

After this aktion, the Jews are ordered to remove their yellow badges. In place of these, they are to sew white stripes of linen horizontally (the Christian prisoners had always had stripes of this sort, sewn on vertically).

With Germans, who come to place orders, the Jews have to make use of a translator. They are not permitted to speak the German language. At the roll calls, one no longer hears the shout of Здорово жиды! II wish good health to you Jews!), but rather, Здорово хлопцы! (Greetings, young folks!) – as if they were addressing the Christian inmates of the concentration camp.

All of this is meant to indicate that no Jews exist any longer. The higher authorities are given a report that in the Baranovich district, all the Jews have been exterminated.

Those remaining Jews, are there, in fact left by the *S. D.* at their own hand, because those members of the Gestapo have a use for good specialists to serve their personal needs.

*

The escape of Dr. Levinbook and his family, and the discovery of the direction in which they fled (one of the young gentile boys, who encountered them, told the police on the following morning, that the escaped doctor had asked him the way to the village of Skrobowo) – gives those Jews who remained behind an impulse to consider their own personal rescue – by fleeing the camp.

This thought gets increasingly more ripened each day, and dominates everyone's thinking without exception. A plan begins to crystallize. Kushnir the Shoemaker with a few others, direct an escape action. They are able to establish a connection with the Byelorussian policeman from Arabauščina (there is a detail of Koldichevo police there), who is the liaison with the partisans. He provides them with pistols, and had grenades. Conspiratorial preparations are made. In a wall in the Jewish barrack, which shares a border with the tannery, a small number of holes are drilled under the bunk beds during the evening hours, which are then well-camouflaged. From the tannery, there is an exit leading to the barbed wire camp perimeter. Tools are procured for purposes of cutting the wire. The order of escape is established by lottery, and the various functions are allocated: who has to cut the wire, who has to stand guard, etc. Each individual also prepared a small bottle of poison for themselves.

A dentist is among the Jews – a convert to Christianity, with his wife and child. They keep their distance from the Jews, and make every effort to be transferred to the Christian barrack. The Jews fear these people. They are an obstacle to their escape plan. There is even a thought circulating that they be 'gotten out of the way.' After a very careful approach to them, we realize they too, are strong supporters of the 'plan.'

By and large, the Jews do not trust one another: the group, that does not work in the factories, is fearful, not wanting the specialists ro flee the factories, especially now that they are working in the evening hours.

The workers in the factories are afraid, that part of their comrades who work at trades in separate rooms, that have separate exits, might seek to escape on their own. Everyone watches the other person, and we are in a state of permanent tension.

The following fact takes place on a specific evening: Two of the factory workers go out on 'a break.' When the 'break' lasts longer, two other tailors are sent out after them, to see what is going on. They go into the rest room, and do not find the ones who went in there before them. Thinking that the first pair had fled, they decide to do the same. Quietly, they go outside, sneak through the barbed wire, and flee. When the first two, who had been delayed, because they carried on a conversation outside with the posted guard, who was

stationed at the factories, did come back – they don't find the other pair. A tumult ensues, a disturbance – and all the rest no longer are able to escape, because the police have ordered a pursuit of the escapees. They are unsuccessful in capturing them, and a short while later. we meet up with them in the partisan movement of the large Naliboki Forest. We also meet up with the original two boys that fled, in the Bielski *Otryad.*

The escape of these two tailor-specialists caused the 'escape-plan' to be deferred for a time.

In the meantime, the constructed three-story jail stands ready to be ended, and no means to save one's self from there, is seen to be possible. It is necessary to speed things up, if it is not to be too late!

There also is a danger, that the police can uncover the preparations (the holes that have been bored into the walls) and the hidden weaponry. Also, there is fear of the Christian inmates, hoping that they do not find out about this from one of the Jews. As it became evident, the police had a suspicion, because on 20 March 1944, they took away the former Baranovich Jewish chimney sweep, Borowsky, and incarcerated him in the police cellar, under the police building. He was interrogated fro an entire day, with the intent of extracting information from him. However, he discloses nothing. He is abused and beaten for a long time, until he finally expires.

A couple of days later, they again take a Jewish tailor to this cellar, which the chief had rescued from Slonim.

There is a danger, that he can destroy the plan and disclose it.

A decision is needed quickly: we have to flee today.

On 22 March 1944, on a frosty evening, the Jews hack through the wall, and leave the camp. Divided up into groups, they flee in a variety of directions. The police remain unaware of anything until morning. When the Jewish barrack is opened, it finds only a single, solitary Jew, a tailor by trade, who was sleeping soundly. In their aggravated state, the ones who were escaping did not notice him. Apart from him, there is only one other tailor that remains in the locked up bunker.

Several tens of the escapees are captured in an organized pursuit. One group of 17 men, led by Kushnir the Shoemaker, hides in a nearby forest during the following day, in a pit. suddenly, they hear the galloping pursuit of the mounted police, that rides past them, not detecting them. The Jews are certain they have been discovered. Two of the Jews quickly run out of the pit, and hide themselves in a concrete bunker dating to the First World War. They are saved.

Kushnir, possessing a pistol, and not wanting to fall into the hands of the murderers alive – commits suicide.

The sound of the shots gives the hideout away: the mounted police find them.

All those who were captured are brought back to the camp. They are not hung, as was the usual practice in such instances in the camp. They are allowed to live, because the Germans need their skilled labor. Even the attitude towards them improves. They are kept in the newly constructed prison until July 1944.

When the Nazis are compelled to abandon Baranovich under the pressure of the oncoming victorious Soviet Red Army, all of the inmates of the camp are shot to death, together with the remaining Jews.

A few of the inmates that they find useful, including a *Feldscher*, and as it is related, also the Jewish tailor from Slonim, who the camp chief had saved from being killed for this entire time (the chief adopted the ambition that he would save him to the very end) – were dressed in Nazi uniforms, and taken along on the retreat, in the direction of France.

* *
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Seventy-five Jews finally come into the zone of the partisans after a long period of wandering.

Those Baranovich Jews, who fled from the ghetto, and the camp, spread themselves out through all the surrounding partisan units: in the forests of Polesia, the swamps of Pinsk, and the Naliboki Forest.

The Christian, named Khacya, from Baranovich, who lives in a little hut behind the Jewish cemetery, provides considerable assistance in helping those Jews that fled, reach the partisan encampments.

Our Baranovich scions take an active part in the partisan movement, in exacting revenge from the Germans and their Byelorussian and Ukrainian accomplices. They fight, and carry out a variety of diversionary missions, against that bloody enemy of our people. Many of them receive citations and orders from the Soviet authorities.

Many of those from Baranovich fall in their fighting as part of the partisans, suffering an heroic death, as was the example of Asna Pearlstein (*Anya*), Tuvia Cyrynsky, Dr. Aharon Filipowsky, Moma Kapilovich, etc.

Some are murdered by the Germans and also by partisan-bandit groups, on the way to the forest, such as Dr. Yaakov Kagan, Dr. Avra'sheh Abramowsky, and others. The latter takes place at the first partisan guard watch outside the village of Svajatyčy. The 'partisans' take note of his new boots, and his good warm clothes, as well as his revolver. They take all of this away, and shoot him.

Later on, the Jewish partisans become aware of this, his former comrades from the resistance organization in the ghetto. They find his dead body under snow, carry him away into the village of Svajatyčy, and bury him on one of the hills.

Others are shot in partisan encampments under suspicion of being spies (Mukasey), others are shot by partisans returning from the battlefield to settle personal accounts (the watchmaker, Roman Freedman) and simply because they were Jews.

In the victorious assault by the Red Army in the months of June-July 1944, the partisans help out at the front with their diversionary actions, which are coordinated with the operations at the front through orders received by radio. In coming out of the forests, we almost come out by the hills of the Neman River, narrowly avoiding a pitched battle with the Red Army itself, who thinks that we are Germans, and we think that they are Germans.

For details about the Jewish part of the partisan movement (also of the Jews of Baranovich), consult the book, put together by the Historical Commission of the Partisan Union, published in Italy (About 1948), redacted by Moshe Kaganoovich, published by the 'Zionist Labor Committee for Help and Development' in America (New York, 673 Broadway), and also '*BaYa'arot*' by A. Lidowsky (Published by '*Am Oved*') and '*BaYa'arot'* by T. Bielski.

The Return to Baranovich

On 8 July 1944, Baranovich is liberated from its murdering Nazi occupants. The entire center of the city is burned down, and destroyed by the Germans, during their retreat.

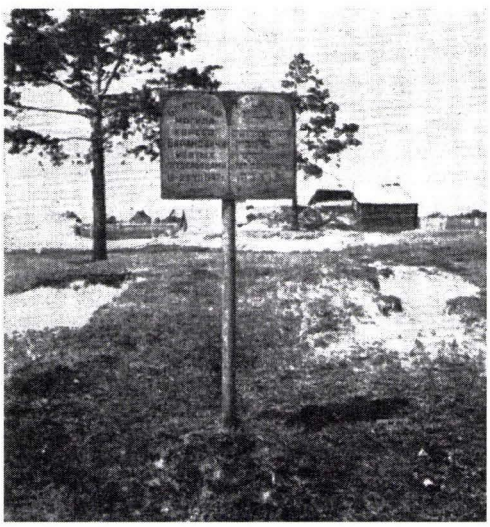
Those Jews who had hidden out in the city, begin to crawl out from their 'holes.' The few remaining Jews begin to trickle in, who had managed to hide themselves in the surrounding villages, and after them – 'more' Jews, wh saved themselves by joining the partisan movement. A number of the Jewish partisans, upon their encounter with the Red Army, are immediately drafted into its ranks, never showing themselves in their home town. Others of them, die at the front.

Baranovich Jews come to visit their home city who have been serving in the Russian army, from the beginning of the war, such as: Shmuel Epstein – an officer in the Red Army (today in Israel), Benjamin Ruzhansky – a professor of medicine from Moscow University, and a high officer in the army. Later on, those who survived by going into Russia since the beginning of the war, begin to return (Michlah Jasinowsky, the wife of the Dentist who was killed), and others.



Page 631 (Top): ***The headstone commemorating the Baranovich martyrs of the First Slaughter, beside the Green Bridge with the following inscription:***

The martyred Jews who were killed by
Hitler ימ"ש
Approximately three thousand people
From the City of Baranovich
Shusan Purim 5702
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה. 4.3.1942



Page 631 (Bottom): ***A memorial tablet commemorating the Baranovich martyrs of the Third Slaughter near the village of Grabowiec with the inscription:***

The martyred Jews who were killed by
Hitler ימ"ש
During the days of 9-17 Tevet 5703
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה. 19-25.12.1942

A small community of Jews comes together, of about 150 people, of which about one hundred were born locally. A prayer minyan is established, in the house of Kudewicky on the Vilna *Gasse*, at the corner of the Highway (*Shasei*) *Gasse*. The former locksmith Yaakov Ljahovicky serves as the Rabbi. A Torah scroll is located. There is also a *Shokhet* here, and for the High Holy Days, the synagogue is filled to overflowing. No Jew is seen who has a beard. It is only now, that the more observant Jews permit themselves to grow a bear and side locks.

Anti-Semitism is intense. The hate towards the 'survivors' by former neighbors is even more intense: they do not want to return possessions, which they had received to hide. A few Jews, who go to reclaim their effects are murdered by the peasants.

Every one of those who has returned, is under suspicion. Every one is asked the question: 'How did you remain alive?'

–What happened? What did you do? (for the Germans) that you were permitted to remain alive?

Go tell them...! Tell them, when each and every person has a story of their own, that each person remained alive because of their own circumstances.

The authorities are gathering historical material against Germany, in which the name 'Jew' is not even mentioned.

The authorities also created commissions, who do exhumations of the 'pits' and the gathered materials and judgements are sent to the central authority in Moscow and publicized in the Soviet press.

On Sundays, being off from work, this pitiful number of remaining Jews gets together, going to the 'sacred places' to the 'pits' where the remains of their martyrs lie, the martyrs of the Jewish people. Horses, cows and sheep wander about over these mass graves, who are taken there by the Christian shepherds from the surrounding villages.

The Jews bring down boards, dig them into the ground around those parts that most significant to them, and create a fence around the fields, where they parents, their brothers and sister, their wives and children, lie in eternal rest. The 'old' municipal cemetery is visited. Even here, on the 'old' cemetery, the Nazi hordes rampaged: the fence is smashed, the headstones broken, and tossed about. Also here, on the 'old' cemetery, we fine new mass graves of our shot and murdered kin.



Page 633: ***The headstone places on the mass grave near the 'Green Bridge'***

And also on the Roman Catholic and Russian Orthodox cemeteries, we find more and more new mass graves, where [our dead] lied together with Christians: at every step, and every turn – graves, graves, and graves!

*

The surviving remnant of Jews decides to place monuments on the two larger mass graves: beside the 'pits' of the Green Bridge (the mass grave of the *[Shushan] Purim aktion*) and by the pits of the Grabowiec fields (the mass grave of the 'Second Mass Murder' of the 'Ghetto Liquidation'). The money is collected among ourselves, and the headstones are erected in the summer months of 1945.

Not much time goes by, and these 'sacred places' are desecrated by anti-Semitic elements. The fences are knocked down, the fenceposts are uprooted. On the headstone, written in crayon, is found the following in the Russian language: 'Так им и надо было' (this is what they deserved to get). The other headstone is turned over and broken into two pieces.

*

We can no longer live among the graves. We cannot continue to walk about among the Byelorussian accomplices to murder and pillage, wh bemoan the fact that we had the 'good fortune' to remain alive.



Page 635-6: ***The memorial to the Baranovich martyrs of the Second and Third Slaughter near the village of Grabowiec***

At the first opportunity (the treaty between Byelorussian and Poland over the citizenship dispute) we leave our home town, with the intention of reaching the Land of Israel.

*

The thought about the Land of Israel percolates in the depths of everyone's soul.

Even back in the Koldichevo concentration camp. I would hear from all of the Jews, when they would come to me in the ambulatorium, beaten, wounded, and with broken bones: 'if they would give us somewhat better food, and not beat us, I would be happy to work for nothing in the Land of Israel.'

Also, in the partisan movement, when Jews would meet from different Christian brigades, there was one theme: 'If we survive, the one and only place for us, as Jews, – only in the Land of Israel.'

This is how everyone is talking: it is not only the Zionists, but former *Bundists* and even Communists.

After all the journeys as martyrs, this crystallizes as the only, single, objective, the one way to go.

We are certain that the doors of the country will be open to all survivors. The disappointment is enormous when we find out, along our journey of wandering about the 'White Book' and about the doors that have been closed and locked.

Waiting for years in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, France, Italy, Austria, and in that polluted and unclean Germany, for the possibility of being able to come to the Land of Israel – and not being able to sustain ourselves in camp conditions, leaving many of the camps, and emigrating to America, Australia, Canada, Brazil, [South] Africa, and other countries. A larger number comes to the Land of Israel.

*

After the Soviets march into Baranovich, a few of the Byelorussian police executioners are seized, and put on trial. The Jews appear as witnesses. The prisoners lie through their teeth. The testimony of the Jews is accepted critically. The murderers receive light sentences.

The Baranovich doctor Elchanan (Khonya) Narkowsky is very active in uncovering the Baranovich criminals. He comes from Russia, where he spent the war years. Also, Herschel Mukasey is also active in this respect.

Thanks to them, it becomes possible to detain the Gestapo hangman, well known to us, 'Jozef Litwin' (Jozef Gurneiwiec). Dr. Narkowsky is present at the entire interrogation, and then – at the trial proceedings.

Jozef gets the opportunity to escape from a prison van, and shoots himself in the hand with weaponry smuggled into him. He is captured. Dr. Narkowsky does not, however, let him go, until he is hung in the prison yard, where Dr. Narkowsky was present as the prison doctor.

Also one of the assistant commandants of the Koldichevo concentration camp, Viktor Diro, is captured and sentenced to death by the Danzig Appellate Court.

Dr. Narkowsky does not rest, in order to unmask the executioners of Baranovich Jewry.

However, the hundreds and thousands still walk about free, the smaller and larger murderers, and derived benefit from the stolen property of murdered Jews and even the gold teeth torn out of their mouths.

Many of the Jews, who had been sent off into Russia, come traveling through Baranovich. Some tarry a short while, visiting their home town, others want to avoid the pain of this, do not even get off the transport vehicles, and continue on further.

Only very few Jews remain in Baranovich, who were not there and didn't see what took place there with their own eyes.

Among those remaining were: the family of David Zmundziak and Shimon Shereshevsky, former residents of New-Baranovich.

*

And you, the survivors, and future generations, remember forever, and do not forget what the *Amalek* of our times did to us! Remember *Amalek!*

Lord of All Vengeance, Make Yourself Visible!

זכר

קהלת ברנוביץ אינגה.

עלה הכורת על קהלת הקדש שלנו, שאך זה עתה החלו שרשיה לשלח את שלוחותיהם ויונקותיה להסתעף; ואין בית שאין בו מת.

על־יד מצבת־נגר זו, ששמה ספר־הזכרון, עומדים אלמי־גון השרידים שנשארו לפלטה, ומעלים את זכר נשמותיהם של יקיריהם שבקברי־עפר של אחים הגיעו, מחללים בגוף וטהורים ברוח, אל מנוחתם האחרונה, או שפזרו עצמותיהם בדרכים־לא־דרכים של אדמת־פולין עקבת־הדמים, מאכל לחית־השדה ועוף־השמים, ולא ידע איש את קבורתם.

שריידי קהילת ברנוביץ ובניתיה
מיס, סטולוביץ, הורודישץ, מייצאס ופלונקה.

Remember

The community of Baranovich is no more.

The *Abrogator* ascended over our sacred community, that had only just begun to strike roots, and send out its tendrils and progeny to prosper; and there is not one house in which there is no one dead.

Beside this memorial of paper, whose name is 'Book of Remembrance,' the survivors stand, the remnants, struck dumb by exhaustion, who wish to raise up the memory of the souls of their dear ones, who found their end in the gigantic mass graves where they arrived, dead in body, and pure in spirit, coming to their final rest, or that had their bones strewn over the highways and byways of the earth of Poland, that reservoir of blood, to become fodder for the beasts of the filed, the flying predators in the sky, and no man knows where they lie buried.

The Survivors of the Communities of Baranovich and Its Scions
(Mys, Stalovičy, Haradzišča, Moucadz', and Palonka)

Scions of Baranovich All Over the World

באראנאוויטש אין דער וועלט

יוצאי ברנוביץ בעולם

In Israel

By Dr. Nehemiah Kroshinsky

Even before The First World War, efforts were made by individual Baranovich Jews, loyal to Zionism, to visit in the Land of Israel. Examples include Tanya, the daughter of the activist Yaakov Szymszelewicz, an active members in the local Zionist youth of the locale, and the well-known Zionist activist, the engineer Yaakov Berman, who, in those days, made *aliyah* to the Land of Israel.

In 1913, Benjamin Limon (the father of the current chief of the Israeli Navy, currently in Tel-Aviv), a scion of our city, arrived to study at '*Herzteliya.*' With the outbreak of the war in 1914, even he was compelled to leave the country.



Page 644: ***'The Baranovich Group' working on the construction of the Great Synagogue of Tel-Aviv, 1922.***

Close to this, a number of other Jews traveled to The Land, to determine if it would be possible for them to throw in their lot there, among them Mordechai Galay and Yaakov Szymszelewicz. Upon their return, these emissaries gave an not very encouraging report. Yaakov Szymszelewicz bought a parcel there – but afterwards, he sold it.

Aharon Yosselewicz was the first Baranovich resident to make a definite decision to leave the Diaspora, and to settle in The Land (he was a scion of the Yosselewicz family who at that time in Baranovich were known as the Berezovkers). With him came his future wife and her two brothers: Yaakov Berkowicz (currently in Degania) and Gabriel ז"ל (who fell in battle, as a soldier in the Jewish Legion during The First World War). Aharon Yosselewicz, one of the founders of Degania. is today a farmer in the settlement of Neta'im.

In 1929, the engineer Yaakov Berman, once again, made aliyah with his family, this time – to settle down. He was appointed as the director of *'HaBoneh'* but was not privileged to really have a life in The Land, because he died at a very early age.

The following could be counted among the groups who made *aliyah* from our city, immediately after The First World War. In 1920: The brothers Pesach and Aharon Zaklad, Mordechai Ankstein, ז"ל. and separated for long life, Moshe Feldenkreis, Ze'ev Kovensky, Gershon Yosselewicz, Moshe and Simcha Mlodok. This group represented a core of pioneers from our city, in the period between the two wars. Its members settled in Tel-Aviv, and laid the foundation for the workers that came from Baranovich, at whose head stood Ze'ev Kovensky.

After The First World War, Baranovich was made into an important center, and hundreds of refugee *Halutzim* streamed to it, on their way from Russia to The Land of Israel. This stream also attracted to it, a part of the local Zionist youth, who had for quite a time, yearned to leave the Diaspora, and to build its future in the *Moledet.*

The Baranovich contingent grew from year-to year, with the addition of tens of *olim*, most of them young *Halutzim*, who had left the well-established homes of their parents, and whatever they lacked in training and developed skills, was made up for by their intense ardor for the development of the *Moledet*, and it was this that stood by them, in all the years of suffering and wandering in The Land. For a specific period of time, they were engaged in the '*HaBoneh*' organization that, at the time, facilitate construction work in Tel-Aviv and its environs. This group fostered within it, the foundation for collective partnership, along with individual economic independence; providing for food, drink, lodging, and the conduct of community life, were all done in partnership (in [shared] costs), even if the salary that everyone received was individual. The members of this group lived in tents, and afterwards in canvas huts, and they had periods of distress, but their joy was pervasive among them. The pioneering spirit of The Third *Aliyah* pulsed within them, and they felt themselves to be fortunate in their lot.



P. 643:
Dr. Z. Levinbook, one of the survivors, and the author of the chapter on the destruction of Baranovich

This workers' group continued to exist in various forms until 1930, approximately. Afterwards, this union disbanded, and its people dispersed; they each pursued their own trade, and became independent craftsmen, and even large scale operators, and there were those among them who went off to a *Kibbutz*, or changed their professions, and carried on as individual workers.

With The Fourth *Aliyah*, in the middle of the twenties, the *aliyah* of the middle class people from our city also began. The first Halutz of this aliyah was the ardent Zionist David Zaklad, and after him – Menachem Mendl Ginzburg ז"ל, the Chairman of the Zionist *Histadrut* in Baranovich, and others.

The elderly Zionist activist, Yitzhak Jasinowsky also made *aliyah* during the twenties. However, his undertakings did not take root – and to the great pain in his soul, he was compelled to return to the Diaspora. Despite his personal failure, he strengthened his work on behalf of the Zionist concept, and looked for an opportunity to make *aliyah* again, an opportunity that never came.

During the years 1934-1936, a large exodus began from Baranovich. Many young people without legal certificates, took advantage of the second *Maccabiah,* in 1935, to come as tourists – and then simply remained.

At the onset of The Second World War, there already was a recognizable number of Baranovich scions in The Land, which grew slightly, with the arrival of survivors after the war. At this time, there are between 500-600 families approximately, descended from Baranovich émigrés, spread out over the entire country. Most of them – are in the large cities, and part of them – in the *Kibbutzim*. *Kibbutz Elon*, in the Western Galilee, is nicknamed the 'Baranovich *Kibbutz*;' also in *Kibbutz Mesillot*, and other *Kibbutzim*, émigrés from Baranovich have taken up residence.

Many of the scions of Baranovich are active in the life of the country, the economy, and the culture of The Land, and there are many of them who occupy important positions in the *Yishuv*.

The Organization of Baranovich Émigrés

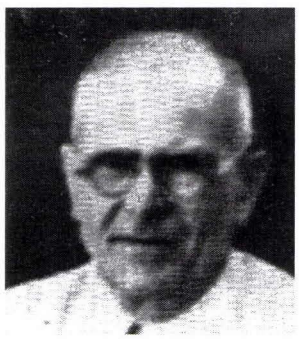
During the time of The Second World War, the connections to the '*alte haym*' were severed. Nary a person had any idea as to what was going on there. Nary a person could conceive of the magnitude of the Holocaust. Everyone held onto the hope of being reunited with the scattered members of their respective families.

The first ominous news reached us in 1944, from the exile in Siberia, from our city *landsman* Sholom Rabinovich, who had turned to Jewish institutions asking for assistance in finding his fellow *landsman* Eliakim Kushnir and, to be separated for long life, Mrs. Feldenkreis. From him we learned that many of the Jews of Baranovich had been exiled to Siberia. After this, we began to receive, in writing, many requests for help from relatives and friends.
With the effort of Mrs. Feldenkreis, an action committee was set up consisting of: Dr. Press, Moshe Mukasey,



P. 645-6 (Top): ***The Active Members of The Organization of Baranovich Émigrés***
Sitting (From the Right): Rivka Limon, Dr. Nehemiah Kroshinsky, Shayndl Feldenkreis, Aharon Cohen, Sonia Shatz (Paczapavsky), Moshe Mukasey.
Standing (From the Right): Zvi Wolfowitz, Yehoshua Kushnir, Aharon Kuszczyc, Shmuel Epstein, Dr. Sholom Press, Michael Mukasey

Aharon Cohen, Rivka Limon, Yehoshua Kushnir, Schraga Szenicky ז"ל, and others. A very substantial relief activity was organized via the sending of parcels to our *landsman* brethren, who were exiled in Russia. The Feldenkreis house in Tel-Aviv became the center of the activity. The house was flooded with a variety of clothing, and it became necessary to clean them, repair them, each according to their type, and then send them off. This difficult burden of work was shouldered by the seasoned activist, Mrs. Feldenkreis, and it was for good reason that she earned the name of 'Mother of those from Baranovich,' and her home – 'The Home of the Baranovich Émigrés.'



Page 645: ***Shakhna Szenicky*** ז"ל

The partisan, Abraham Lidowsky ז"ל, was the first of the refugees, from our city, to make *aliyah* to The Land, in 1944. With his arrival, a large gathering was immediately called for in the auditorium of the *Keren Kayemet*, and he gave a living eye-witness account of the Holocaust period, and all of its ramifications. His

revelations shook and devastated everyone. On the spot, a collection was taken up for an assistance treasury, and 'The Organization of Baranovich Émigrés' was established. The venerable lady, previously mentioned, stood at its head.

Opposite the situation, a multi-branched assistance activity developed. They no longer contented themselves with sending clothing and effects, but they also purchased the best and most highly select [merchandise] and sent it to those of our remnants in Russia, and afterwards to Baranovich, which served as a way station in their wanderings. Not one person among them wanted to remain in this place of slaughter. During this period, approximately 400-500 parcels were sent.

The *aliyah* of the refugees ushered in a new period of support bu the organization. 'The Organization of Baranovich Émigrés' helped these new arrivals to the fullest extent of their capacity to do so. Every new arrival received a set sum of money, with which to get settled for the first time. Craftsmen received loans for productive purposes, for example, the acquisition of tools and machines, and the like. The Organization also offered help in the location of relatives, the finding of employment, and other things.

Many of the more daring [sic: blockade running] Baranovich scions, were exiled by the [British] Mandate authorities, and interned in Cyprus, and there, they also created a committee that remained in contact with their 'Organization' in The Land, and was assisted by it. This contact was a very important source of encouragement to these daring blockade runners, most of whom were older.

With the *aliyah* of the surviving remnant, the 'Feldenkreis House' became the home of the Baranovich Émigrés. It was here that the new arrival found the warm atmosphere of that home which was lost. And the table was always full of everything that was needed, and 'Mother' carried on with receiving and encouraging new arrivals, seeing to getting them settled as quickly as possible, and to worry about the needs of their family members, especially their little children. There are simply no words to describe the range of her activity – for the new arrivals, she was a wellspring of resistance to disappointment, a source of help and encouragement.

This period represented a very hard period of gestation for the 'Organization.' The chasm between the many needs, and the limited means available, were huge. The parcels of aid, and the financial assistance for the *olim,* exhausted the Organizations treasury, which then turned, having no other alternative, with a call for help to our *landsleit* overseas. They heard the call, and responded. The warmest response came from our landsleit in South Africa. Thanks to their contributions, and their efforts, several times we received very substantial financial support from the 'Organization of the Minsk Brotherhood,' in Johannesburg, and from the 'Help Committee of the Jews from the Minsk Guberniya' in Capetown. Also the 'Mys and Baranovich *Verein*' in New York extended its help. A very pleasant surprise was the help we received from our *landsleit* in Cuba. It is self-evident, that all this help was like a drop in the ocean. It had the character of aid and support, but it did not have a basis for the realization of anything productive, or a solution to the quandary surrounding the settlement of our *landsleit.*

With the establishment of The State [of Israel] the activity of the 'Organization' flickered and waned. In the last of its time, the following were its leaders: Aharon Cohen, Moshe Mukasey, Syana Feldenkreis, Aharon Kuszczyc, Michael Mukasey, Sonia Shatz (Paczapavsky), Dr. Nehemiah Kroshinsky, and others. Year in and year out, a Memorial Day was organized for the martyrs of Baranovich, and in these special occasions of mourning, hundreds of our *landsleit,* spread all over the world, come to participate.

Yet other missions remained for the 'Organization, but these were more in the ambit of a vision of the future. We harbor the hope, that this book, will become the memorial to the Baranovich that once was, and is now

no longer, and will also serve as a unifying force, that will envelop our far-flung brethren, all over the world, a legacy to be guarded in their hearts, and a repository of those good memories of their '*alte haym*.'

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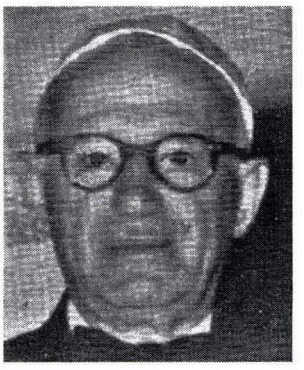
It is our sacred obligation to recollect our dear comrade, Shakhna Szenicky ז"ל, who excelled in his numerous endeavors. for his integrity, and his limitless commitment, as a member of 'The Organization of Baranovich Émigrés.' As the Treasurer of the committee, he was outstanding in his handling of the books, and invested much of his personal energy for the benefit of our *landsleit.* The efforts to create this Memorial Book about Baranovich Jewry, is one of his first efforts. It is a great sorrow that he was not privileged to see it appear.

May his memory be for a blessing!

The Mys & Baranovich Society in New York

By Azriel Galay

The Mys & Baranovich Society in New York was founded at the beginning of this [sic: 20th] century. The first meetings took place in the summer of 1904.



Page 647:
Azriel Galay *ז"ל*
(Former Secretary of the Yizkor Book Committee)

The first president was a scion of Mys, an intelligent Jewish man, with a sharp pen and influence. He is the one living witness to those years, which brought him together to be a part of our society, and with whom we are so proud: Ephraim Woloch (Wolochwiansky).

At that time, many *Landsmanschaft* societies already existed in America. Even Moucadz' Zhetl and Haradzišča, already had their own societies. All had the same inclination – to provide support, mutual assistance, sick benefits, and to provide the membership with a burial facility, after their 'hundred and twenty years,' and the ability to have a funeral, as well as helping out with a bit of money, in the case of a widow or widower.

The founders of our Mys & Baranovich Society in New York were: Ephraim Woloch, Yekhiel Szklar, Hillel Malakhowsky, Dr. Louis Zavelov, Aharon Woloch, Mikhl Silverman, and Chain Yitzhak Zeitchik ע"ה, who did not want to copy the existing *Landsmanschaft* organizational structure. Their guiding principle was a fraternal relationship between ourselves, 'one for all, and all for one,' and most important of all, not to forget the *'alte haym*,' maintaining the thread that connects us to our beloved hometown, Mys and Baranovich. At that time, the yearning for the '*alte haym*' was natural, because of the disappointment that all of us newly arrived had to suffer. Instead of the substantial earning that all of us had imagined in the '*Goldene Medina*' we, instead collided with great difficulties. No unions to protect workers existed yet. The worker and his trade were not accorded any value. The exploitation was frightful. There were small manufacturing establishments in dark holes, without air and light. We worked from 12 to 15 hours a day for starvation wages, with the frequent unemployment lasting for months. Most of the new arrivals – semi-skilled, self-taught in carpentry-turning, took here to learn tailoring, and got badly torn up, until they mastered how to sew together parts of a garment. In order to learn such a craft, it was necessary to pay the owner of the business a specific sum of money, and to work for four weeks without compensation. On the fifth week, if the me-too manufacturer wanted to hire this apprentice, he paid $2-3 a week for weeks on end. The working conditions were unbearable. Accordingly, Columbus came to be cursed for discovering a country like this, where it is so hard to earn enough even for a morsel of bread... this despite the fact that all these new arrivals knew, that the '*alte haym*' was cut off to them, and as



Page 650: ***The Presidium of the Mys-Baranovich Yizkor Book Committee in New York***
From the Right: Isidore Judkowsky (Secretary), Moshe Limon (President), Clara Israelite (Vice-President), Morris Strauss (Treasurer)

much as it is necessary to get used to America, they looked for the homey, familiar atmosphere, of being among their own *landsleit.* Together we would sing songs from home, and were drawn to our own circle. The *Landsmanschaft* was the gathering point for all the wandering souls, and every occasion for a meeting was like a holiday, to which one came dressed in Sabbath finery, and warmed oneself by a homey, domestic fire. At that time, it was an important living requirement to be provided with by a standing doctor, who served the member and his family, for a considerably reduced price. The society was a pillar of support to the member, whether in times of joy or sorrow. Our Mys-Baranovich Society excelled particularly in this area.

The leadership of the society was very emphatic in its insistence of strong ties to the *alte haym*, such that if, in Mys, there should be yet another outbreak of a fire, God forbid, that it will be our obligation to rebuild the city, as quickly as possible.



Page 652: ***The Mys-Baranovich Ladies Auxiliary in New York***
Sitting (From the Right)*: Sonia Curtin, Chana Schechter (Treasurer), Clara Israelite (ex-President), Sonia Miller (President), Chana Tronter (a guest from Mexico, and daughter of Yaakov the Butcher), Franya Limon,*
Standing (From the Right): *Sylvia Brody (Secretary), Golda Galay, Mrs. Ginzburg, Yetta Zuta (Fodorysky), Mokh'eh Kroshinsky, Reizl'eh Feinberg, Dora Leibowitz, Lyuba Diskin.*

On the first anniversary of the society, we celebrated with a festive evening. With beautifully covered tables, the members, and their invited guests permitted themselves to celebrate. A musical band played familiar dance music, certain Yiddish quadrilles, a Szer, Polka, Mazurka, and the genuine Russian Kozachok[164], and everyone lived it up. The audience was in a good mood, because they had gotten themselves somewhat better situated, oriented, and acclimatized to the new country, with good hopes for a better future. We had stopped cursing Columbus.... our 'greenhorns,' newly-arrived people, after they had been here for a couple of years, were able to see that the situation here was not hopeless, that it is necessary to fight for a better standard of living, here in our New Home, which is rich, and has all things available, which can make those who reside in it both fortunate and satisfied. What is missing, is a better order, a more just division of the wealth that the land possesses, and for this, one must fight.

We proposed that we build and consolidate our society. We worked out a constitution, in accordance with the understandings of the times, putting in points regarding obligations of the society to its members, about the appointment of its officers, how they would be elected, their responsibility, all according to democratic principles. The constitution, together with its various rules and regulations, wee substantially modified

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164 Perhaps better known as the 'Kazatzky.'

through the forty year life of the society, and thereby, improved. However, one clause will never be changed, so long as the society exists, and that is – its name, purpose and language:

1. The Society will carry the name Mys & Baranovich Aid Society.

2. The Society shall not b4 dissolved so long as members in good standing wish to perpetuate the Society.

3. The purpose of the Society shall be: Assistance in Case of Need, Sick Benefits, and in instances of decease, to provide for a cemetery and burial.

4. Dealings and proposals regarding a synagogue (house of worship) shall never be taken up by this Society.

5. Meetings and minutes shall be conducted in Yiddish and in English, when necessary.

A couple of years later, we found it necessary to found a '*Gemilut Hasadim*' in order that a member be able to borrow money at no interest. This institution continues to exist to this day, and is very useful.

Our Holidays & Celebrations

Our Society also created its own traditional festive celebrations: a celebration for the members, and also a general annual celebration for all *landsleit*. For the general celebration, we would stage a ball, to which landsleit would be invited by letter, and announcements published in newspapers. These balls were something to talk about in our circles. Young and old would come to spend a Saturday night until the wee hours of the morning. We had a good opportunity to meet with former neighbors, and have a chat about our past in the *alte haym*. The young people, even those who had been 'Americanized' also felt drawn closer to one another by this, when hearing what was being said by a father's or mother's hometown; and it did occur that such meetings often led to a subsequent wedding, to which the Society was invited, as the if they were the leading 'parent' and it gave its blessing, along with its own gift, a silver candelabra. Such celebrations are not now any longer in style, but from time-to-time, such undertakings are organized. The youth of that time has already matured, and today's children and grandchildren, are sad to say, distant from one another.

Member festivities were held several times a year, for example, when a new leadership was elected, the installation [of officers] would take place in an ambience of 'nicely covered tables.' There was also no lack of speeches. To attend an evening of this sort, members come with their wives, and also *landsleit* who were not members. Literary evenings are organized for the winter months, and lectures, as well as sessions with artists and people engaged in cultural activity.

We also celebrated special anniversaries with banquets, like our 5th, 10th, 20th, 30th, and 40th. In 1954, we will celebrate our 50th Jubilee. It will definitely be done in formal style...

Our 25th anniversary of existence was celebrated in fine fettle in the year 1929. At that time, we also published an Anniversary Journal, edited by our founder and respected 'Hillel the Elder,' Malakhowsky ע"ה, with the participation of us – many of the members.

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We must, now, return to the first ten years of the existence of our Society. These were the years of building and of setting down a firm foundation. At that time, we made an extra and intense effort to draw in all of our landsleit who were here, but sadly, this didn't happen for a variety of reasons. There were times because of they were of advanced age, and in other instances, of being too arrogant. We conducted ourselves very democratically, treating the rich and the poor alike: we were ethical, considerate and respectful, active as if 'we' are 'you.' For those from the *alte haym*, who felt themselves to be superior, such a positioning did not appeal to them, and the remained outside of our ranks, because we had no 'Eastern Wall,' for them. Also, there was a limited number of Baranovich Émigrés, that even though they came here from Baranovich, were not born in Baranovich, such as the butchers from Lida, the tailors from Pruzhany, Slonim storekeepers, etc. People of this sort gravitated to the *landsmanschaften* of their own hometowns.

We received recognition for our radical progressive leadership, and The Mys & Baranovich Society was thought, in the Jewish street, to be among the most radical and progressive.

And so, this is how we lived around our Society. Every two weeks we had a get-together and held discussions. Factions developed, but no enmity was created. After the meetings, we sat together at a table, having a coffee, in friendly conversation. Among us, there have been, and still are, socialists, Zionists, and other, but within the Society, we are *landsleit*. This same spirit, reigns over us to this day. Our obligation and mission towards our *alte haym* was fulfilled. We also helped in the development of our local charitable institutions, such as an old age home, an orphanage, Jewish hospitals, and other institutions, local and national offices, that the Jews in America were creating.

We completed ten years of existence in 1914. Being proud of our achievements, we had begun to make preparations for a large, imposing celebration in honor of our Tenth Jubilee. However, this festivity was interrupted. The [First Word] War engulfed all of Europe, and locked in our hometown. Correspondence came to a halt. The families who were left there, were cut off from those who were supporting them, from here. This was not just a 'fire in Mys' but a world-scale calamity.

It was at that time that The Mys & Baranovich Society begins to write a golden chapter in its history, which can be described by the name –

The Relief Period

In 1920, we selected one of our leadership, to be an emissary to Mys and Baranovich, and to take along our heartfelt words of consolation along with the more substantial aid, that had been collected throughout the war years. The emissary took along letters and money from landsleit for their relatives and nearest, as well as legal papers, for those who can, and were willing to leave their destroyed homes, and come to America. Our emissary fulfilled his obligations. We were able to bring 70 people her [sic: to America]. His report, his impressions, and experiences, which our emissary shared with us after his return were very sorrowful.

In the years between the two world wars, our Society proposed to provide assistance to Mys and Baranovich. On every Passover eve, we sent *Maot Khittim*, sending a significant amount of money for *Gemilut Hasadim*. We supported educational institutions, including the Yeshivas. Our members and *landsleit* here, in general, positioned themselves, so that the newly arrived here would be properly received by their relatives with a great deal of hospitality.



Page 653/654 (Top): ***The Mys & Baranovich Benevolent Association in New York (1952)***
Sitting (From the Right): *Sam Galay (Treasurer), Morris Strauss (Vice-President), Bruno Schachter (President), Sam Rutkowicz, Azriel Berkowicz (Secretary), Sam Szklar.*
Standing (From the Right): *Osia Tetz, Isidore Judkowsky, Ruby Zimmerman, Moshe Limon, Aharon Wallach, Michael Kushnir, Rabbi Chaim Korolitzky, Nehemiah Bitensky, Kagan*

Our Society acquired new members, and became even more active, buying a cemetery burial plot, so that the Society became the owner of three large cemetery parcels.

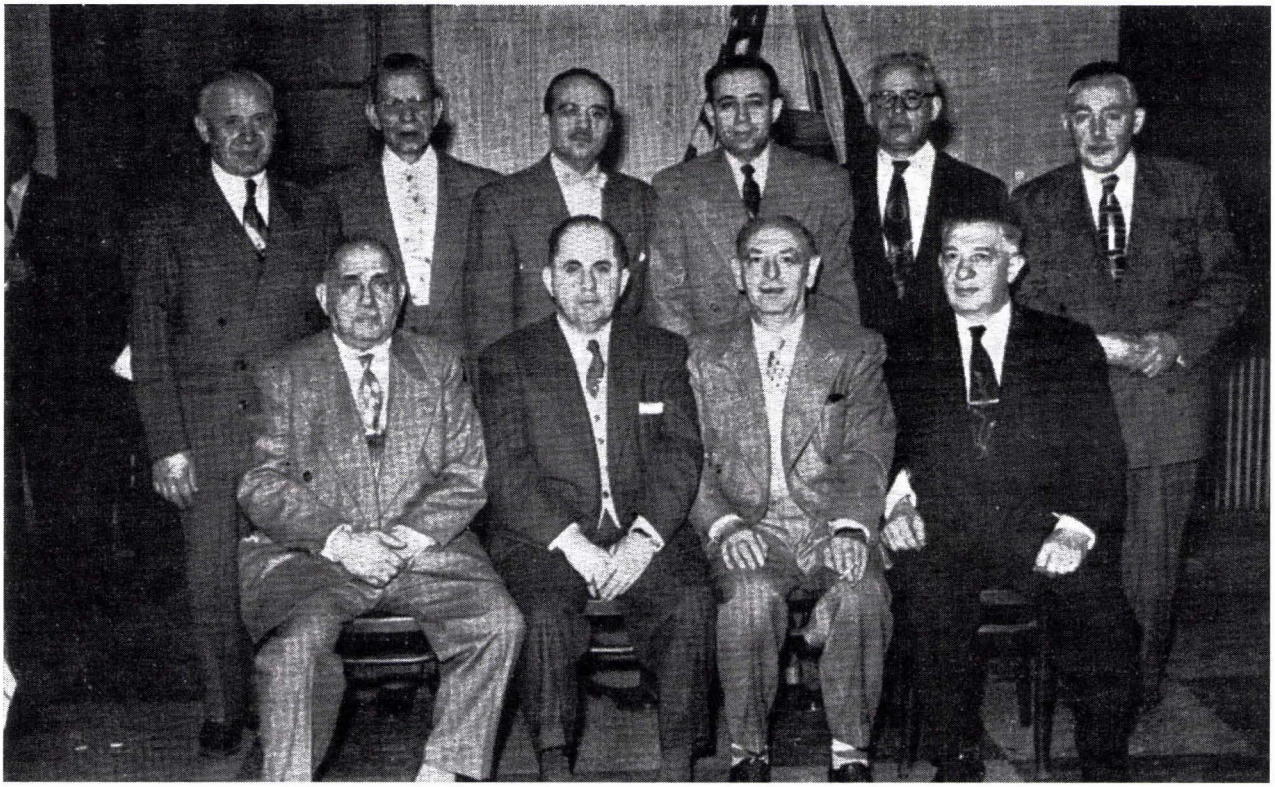
The members that joined when they were 25-30 years of age when they joined, became 60-65 years of age in 1935. And the older ones became that much older. We began to lose members, through natural attrition. That is why we had a very restive element drawn from the newly joined. In this way, the life of our organization proceeded in its course: sometimes better, sometimes worse. It was worse when misfortunes befell members at the same time, as happened to us, when members fell ill from tuberculosis, and they needed to be sent to the mountains where the climate was more suitable, and a great deal of money was required to support a patient of this kind and his family. Our Society had many instances of this nature, and fulfilled its obligation with heart and soul.

At the end of 1939, the heavens again became covered in black clouds. We already had the experience from The First World War that it would be the Jews who would be the ones to suffer most frightfully.

We understood that a certain number of us would be able to save themselves, and sooner or later, we will have to help them. And, once again, we began to collect financial resources.

Later on, we sought contact with Baranovich, after the German Beast had been conquered, but without success. We sent food parcels there through the 'Joint' in Teheran for a thousand dollars.

We did, however, establish contact with the camps in which people from Baranovich were located, with the help of Jewish newspapers. We wrote that Landsleit from Mys, Baranovich and vicinity, should get in touch with us. and we will immediately come to their assistance, as well as help them connect with their relatives here in America. A flood of letters reached us from all of the camps, and we reacted with pleasure in responding to their requests. Apart from parcels of food and clothing, which we sent out in full transports through a variety of organizations/societies, we did a great deal in the area of locating relatives, and connecting them with their nearest. The secretariat of the Relief-Committee was transformed into a miniature 'HIAS,' tens of landsleit, relatives of the letter-writers, immediately responded in connection with those relatives who had survived and remained alive. Our Relief Committee was very proud of what it accomplished. The secretary also received special recognition.



Page 653/654 (Bottom): ***The Mys & Baranovich Benevolent Association in New York (1953)***
Sitting (From the Right): *Morris Strauss (Vice-President), Bruno Schechter (President)Sam Rutkowicz (Ex-President), Izzie Rutkowicz (Secretary).*
Standing (From the Right): *Azriel Berkowicz (Secretary), Taub (Hospitaler), Sam Galay (Treasurer), Beilin (Hospitaler), Izzie Ginzburg (Marshall).*

[Note: The 'Hospitaler' the function of satisfying the mitzvah of '*Bikur-Kholim*' (visiting the sick), in the event that someone was hospitalized. Also note that there are two spellings for the name, 'Shechter/Schachter. - Ed.]

When a larger number of the survivors had been re-united with their kin, and others had made *aliyah* to the Land of Israel – we decided to dissolve the Committee. We sent the last of nearly two thousand dollars that had remained [in our treasury] to Israel for purposes of self-help.

Simultaneously, an action was undertaking to memorialize our hometown, Mys and Baranovich, by building houses in their name in Israel. We gathered funds and immediately paid for the construction of two houses, with a promise to collect more [funds] and to build more such houses.

The Future of Our *Landsmanschaft*

Notwithstanding all of the strenuous efforts we made (with a very small number of exceptions) we did not succeed in embracing our own children as follow-on members of our *landsmanschaften*, because there is no sentiment for such an association: the future of these societies, which had done so much, is therefore not a certain one. All the existing *landsmanschaften* are occupied with this problem. The newly arrived are also not active. The reason is clear. They see themselves in much better circumstances that we found ourselves, as newcomers. The current immigrant has someone to rely on, he has ready-made family members, etc. He is looking to forget the *alte haym*, which is connected to terrifying events. The yearning and nostalgia for the *alte haym,* and its homey ambience, has been locked out.

Our Mys-Baranovich Society is no exception. By natural attrition, we have lost a significantly large number of our members; the members that built up and sustained the Society for decades; the Society represented their ideal, and there are no others to take their place.

One wants to hope that the newly arrived that they are committing a sin against themselves – and will find their place in the Society that carries the name of their home.

I, the writer of these lines, when I think about the past, and look back over the mere five decades of the Society's life and its creation – come to the conclusion: If I had the chance to start all over again, from the beginning, I could not have found any better way than the one that our Society so generously and broad-heartedly took until now.

The Fifteen Years of the Mys-Baranovich Ladies Society [165]

By Clara Israelite (Chaya Judkowsky)

The Mys-Baranovich Ladies Society was founded 15 years ago. This was in the time when the *alte haym* had not yet shown any signs of being able to recover from the destruction of The First World War, and was already bearing the heavy burden of Polish economic anti-Semitism. Calls for help arrived from all quarters – from Yeshivas, orphanages, philanthropic institutions, etc.

At that time, our distinguished member, Moshe Strelowsky (Morris Strauss), aroused himself, and took upon himself the initiative to found a Ladies Society as part of the Mys-Baranovich Society.

Brother Morris Strauss, and his wife, dedicated much energy, and with their own life and limb, worked at organizing our Mys and Baranovich ladies, focusing them on activities aimed at providing assistance for the *alte haym*. Gatherings were called. As the first Chairlady, our Sister, Sarah Ginzburg was elected, who contributed enormously to the development of the very widespread and multi-branched range of activity of the Society.

Brother Strauss also concerned himself to assure that as soon as it was established, that the Ladies Society be autonomous in its activity, thereby assuring both friendliness and harmony between the two Societies. This tradition continues to be observed until this day.

It became possible for us to attract significant resources from among the women, for this work, activating their participation in Society matters, as well as creating a sisterly atmosphere among the membership.

With the help of a variety of organizational techniques, in short order, we were able to create a financial fund and to confront the need to render assistance.

With the outbreak of The Second World War, our contact with the *alte haym* was cut off. We lived through days and nights of fear and pain. After America entered the War, and our husbands and children were sent off to all of the fronts, the women assumed a double mission: to provide encouragement to those women and mothers who were left behind, and to provide solace to those unfortunates who lost their dearest, as well as carrying out our activity with the hope that, after this bloodbath, we will be able to extend our help. And this, indeed, is what happened.

Immediately after the war, we addressed the issue of providing aid. We organized a 'Yizkor' day, and on that spot, we collected several thousand dollars. Meetings were called, and at every meeting, we included our request for financial support, and we raised respectable sums of money commensurate with these events. the United Help Commission got in contact with our surviving landsleit, spread over all the countries and refugee camps; it sent them food and clothing, helped locate their relatives who , afterwards, brought them to America. We also helped them when they got here, getting settled in a place to live, providing them with furniture, etc., and other necessities. We also cooperated in the work of caring for orphans, and as a result, we are today

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[165] Appears to be equivalent to the term 'Ladies Auxiliary.'

active in the work for Israel. Among other things, we have implemented a campaign for a Children's Home in Israel, which bears the name Mys-Baranovich.

Scions of Baranovich in Argentina

By Fraydl Stein (Cirulnik)

The first arrivals from Baranovich to reach the shores of Argentina, as early as the decade of the 1890's, were the brothers Yaakov and Shimon Yosselewicz. At that time, there were, in general, very few Jews in the country. Mordechai Rozowsky arrived in 1902, and the Epstein brothers, the latter – with the help of *'JEKO.'* The Epstein brothers positioned themselves against *JEKO,* and founded an independent colony not far from the town of Médanos – an occurrence, which in those years, sent strong reverberations also well beyond the borders of Argentina.

It is worth documenting yet another episode. On 20 September 1910, when in Rome, the Church was separated from the country [sic: Italy], the Italians of Médanos organized a protest, and marched under their flag. Also, other nationalities took part with their flags flying, among them, we Jews, and in honor of our flag, the 'Hatikvah' was played.

Chai'kl Epstein, the familiar community activist from Baranovich, arrived in Argentina in 1912, with his sister, Frad'l, who here as well, demonstrated a very hearty level of activity in the life of the community, and participated in the founding of many Jewish institutions. Together, with Yaakov Yosselewicz and Mordechai Rozowsky, a *Bikur-Kholim* and a *Hevra-Kadisha* were established, the 'Ezra' Society with the Jewish hospital, and the Zionist Federation, where our *landsman,* Yaakov Yosselewicz served as the first president. He was a writer, and actively participated in a variety of Yiddish and Hebrew publications. These were the first of our scions from Baranovich, who were responsible for the content of the most beautiful pages in the history of Argentine Jewry.



Page 660: ***The Leadership Committee of the Baranovich Society in Argentina***

Sitting (From the Right): *Moshe Kagan, Mrs. Litvak, Mrs. Itzkowitz, Yaakov Kantorovich, Fraydl Stein (Cirulnik), Vikhna Mangen (Borowsky), Liova Mangen.*

Standing (From the Right): *Moshe Berkowicz, Shmuel Kotliar, Moshe Litvak, Abraham Abramowicz, M. Govezniansky*

In the course of the following years, the emigration through *'JEKO'* came to a complete halt. It was renewed after The First World War, under the pressure of anti-Semitism and economic crisis. In that time, a great deal

of propaganda was deployed for emigration to the lands of South America, where citizenship was granted after two years of residence.



Page 661/662: ***A Group of Baranovich Scions in Argentina***

Seated (First Row from the Right): *Mrs. Mordukhowicz, Mrs. Kagan, Unknown, Mrs. Mangen (Borowsky), Mrs. Stein (Cirulnik), Mrs. Kerner, Moshe Berkowicz.*

Second Row (From the Right): *Yankl Tziminsky, Moshe Kagan, Ts. Liobowicky, Yaakov Kantorovich, Liova Mangen, Abraham Abramowicz, Shmuel Kotliar, Unknown*

Third Row (From the Right): *Yitzhak Mordukhowicz, Nakh'eh Brawda, Unknown, Mrs. Berkowicz, Mrs. Kantorovich, Kantorovich, Moshe Litvak.*

Top Row (From the Right): *Chaim-Itcheh Lejzorowicz, Reuven Mordukhowicz, Cha'sheh Gitt'l, M. Goveznianskу, Mrs. Litvak, Mrs. Brawda, Zelener, Mrs. Itzkowitz, Abraham Kerner, Aharon Roitman, Max Koblowsky.*

One of those lands was Argentina, to where a substantial emigration of Jews from Baranovich flowed. It is self-evident that not all of these remained in Argentina. A number of this, after a short time, left the country and went to Cuba, Mexico, Canada, and even The United States – being unable to adapt to the conditions of an alien country and a foreign tongue. The largest part, however, remained in place, endured all of the difficulties, of the initial period, with the concomitant tribulations, and as a result, did not feel motivated to go and seek a better fortune in other places – and once again to become a 'greenhorn.'

The number of arrivals from Baranovich continued to grow. Approximately in 1935, a few enthusiasts made an attempt to organize our *landsleit* and it did not succeed. The Society did not have any social and community substance. It fell apart even before it could move itself to do anything. It is also possible that this happened because everyone considered themselves to be a temporary guest and did not really believe that they would putdown permanent roots. We stood at a crossroads, sitting on the luggage, looking for new destinations. A few left their families behind, in the *alte haym*, and the way back was always open.

It was first only after the great Holocaust, that all such dreams vanished abruptly. Suddenly everyone felt isolated and orphaned. The calamity was so great, that everyone lost their sense of orientation. One would run to the other, to ask if anyone had gotten some fragment of news about the tragic fate of the *alte haym*, about surviving relatives and friends. Perhaps someone fro the family remained alive, perhaps we should do something?! Many objectives stood before our eyes. Everyone's conscience was dominated that it was only with a combined effort that we can demonstrate our capacity to do something. An inner driving force impelled us to draw closer to one another. The thought was then born to organize our landsleit in October 1946, and the 'Baranovich *Landsleit* Society' was founded, which immediately placed itself at the service of the sacred task – first of all to search out and find the surviving remnants and then to help them with all means at our disposal. The Society established contact with all of the refugee committees in Poland, Germany, Italy and France. The first short list, of our meager assets, came immediately. We immediately began to send money, clothing, linens, food, etc. We found a young girl from Mys, who was the sole survivor of an large, extensively branched family, and did not know to whom and where to turn for help. We brought her to us, paid for her exit fees, when the authorities detained her, and later arranged her wedding, which was a festival for all the people from Baranovich. The Society did the same for all others who had survived, who showed a desire to come to the shores of Argentina. And it extended help not only to these newcomers, but also to *landsleit* who had already been in the country for some time, but were in need of help.

The proclamation of the establishment of The State of Israel imbued a new spirit into Argentine Jewry. People literally danced in the streets out of joy. Since that time, our 'Baranovich *Landsleit* Society' took a new tack. Every year, we celebrate the anniversary of the establishment of the Jewish State; we also contribute to all fund-raising activities for Israel.

At the cemetery in Buenos Aires, we brought ashes from our Six Million martyrs, and the Jewish community erected a monument here for them. Also, we, the scions of Baranovich, have a memorial placed there, on which the Yahrzeit of our martyrs is carved out, and every year we gather beside this memorial stone, and conduct a memorial service.

Our Society has about 100 members. Throughout all of Argentina, there are between 100-150 Baranovich families. Some are involved in commerce, some in industry, and a small number work as salaried employees.

The Baranovich Society also supports the local Jewish institutions: Jewish schools, the Yiddish Theater, the Jewish hospital, etc. Every one of us is a participating builder of the cultural and social life of Argentine Jewry.

Baranovich *Landsleit* in South Africa[166]

By Baylah Adler

Our activity in South Africa had its beginning with a few tens of men and women, whose family and spiritual threads tied them back to the *alte haym*. Our *Landsmanschaft* was founded at the end of 1937, or, as it is called here: Society. Its founders were also elected as its first [leadership] committee, which consisted of: Aryeh-Leib Isaacowicz – Chairman; Henya Siegel (a Neufeld daughter) – Secretary; The members, according to the [sic: Hebrew] alphabet were: Mrs. Baylah Adler; Yehuda Adler; Moshe Neufeld; Velvel Siegel; Mordechai Freimer. These committee members – themselves harried by their personal daily cares, dedicated much of their own personal time to substantive Society work, which consisted of raising money for the impoverished needy of our town.

At the beginning of 1938, until the outbreak of The Second World War, we sent rather larger sums of money, a number of times, to the management of the '*Beit-Lekhem*.' This institution in turn, supported a quantum of 700 Jews from our city, to assure that they have at least a portion of bread in their meal, a warm home and a kosher meal during the holidays. At that time, we were affiliated with the organization *'Agudat Akhim D'Minsk*.'

The greatest joy we got from our efforts, was the knowledge that these expenditures brought light and pleasure into Jewish homes, which were physically far away from us, but where we were firmly anchored because of our yearning for them.

We were also aware of the extraordinary gratitude from all our brothers and sisters without a mean of support and no livelihood. Also, there were the public expression of thanks that appeared in the Baranovich Yiddish Press, which gave us encouragement and energy to continue on with this sacred task. We had already made plans for the future to intensively step up the development of our activity.

But the murderous Hitler-Bacchanal, which flooded half of Europe with Jewish blood, with our hometown in its middle, put an end to our fantasies in a few short years. At that time, the concern arose about caring for the lives of all of our dear ones, rich or poor, whom we were unable to help even with words of comfort. It was in this way, purely by accident, that our initial efforts were paralyzed, but every one of us, during that tragic period, helped in the fund-raising activity of the wartime appeal, and other important and necessary general funds.

During the war years, we sent off food and clothing parcels, and money, to the *Irgun Yotz'ei Baranovich* in the Land of Israel, for our landsleit who had the good fortune and privilege of saving themselves and reaching a place of sanctuary; the work in connection with the Land of Israel was carried out under the direction of Mrs. Shayndl Feldenkreis. She would receive and distribute the goods and products among those in need.

After the cessation of hostilities in the spring of 1945, our assistance outside of the Land of Israel broadened itself to encompass Poland and the [D. P.] camps in Germany. We did this wok with complete focus, understanding that we were the ones privileged with the good fortune of being able to extend our hand to help this remnant of Jews who had been saved by a miracle. During all the years of the war, and to this day, our

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[166] Our special thanks to Mrs. Aura Bilchik Greenberg of Toronto, Canada, herself a scion of the Bilczyk family of Baranovich, for editing and supplementing the information in the original caption. We also note that the original spelling of this family name was, indeed, Bilczyk, which was changed to Bilchik in South Africa.

landsleit feel their obligation, to the best of their ability, and also generously donate to the general campaign. Apart from this, specific individuals in the Baranovich community undertake to do a variety of community work, and carry out important functions, as for example, which is worth mentioning here, also one of our lady members such as our respected Mrs. Adler, on of the most responsible of the Zionist activists, especially in *WIZO*.[167] A meeting of our *landsleit* took place, a couple of months ago, at Mrs. Adler's home. Our respected scion of our hometown, Rabbi Benjamin Neufeld, approached the people at this meeting, and reminded them of the responsibility to remain unified, that all scions of Baranovich should join together strongly, and unite, in order that they be able to preserve and carry forward their memory the sacred recollection of our martyrs, and to be proud of the beauty and greatness and importance of our 'Sacred Congregation,' which is deeply imbedded in everyone's hearts. This proposal, made by our respected Rabbi, was taken up with great enthusiasm, and it was decided to renew our activity. It is our hope that, in the future, we will be able to approach these honorable goals of the Society with increased commitment, readiness and dedication.

At a later meeting, especially called for this purpose, a new [leadership] committee was elected of the following composition: Chairman – Rabbi Benjamin Eli' Neufeld; Vice-Chairman – Yehuda Adler; Secretary – Paula Bilczyk; Treasurer – Norman Kaplan; Chaim Goralsky; Velvel Siegel; Mordechai Freimer; Rachel Frenkenthal; Greta Kaplan and Esther Schwartz. The official name of our Society is: The Baranovich Family Circle.

At this opportunity, we send greetings to our landsleit in Israel, and express our wish, to remain united in one family, that sacredly guards the memory of our dear ones, killed in Sanctification of The Name, those beloved brothers and sisters – the martyrs of Baranovich. ת.נ.צ.ב.ה. !

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167 Women's International Zionist Organization.



Page 663/664: ***A Group of Baranovich Scions in Johannesburg***

Bottom (From the Right): *Rivka Borsuk (neé Bilczyk), Paula Bilczyk, Ber'l Bilczyk (her husband), Gitt'l Kaplan (neé Bilczyk), Rachel Frenkenthal.*

Sitting (From the Right): *Yehuda Adler, Baylah Adler (his wife), Sarah Neufeld, Moshe Neufeld, Yehuda Naphtali Bilczyk, Chaya Ziss'l Bilczyk, Reizl Vigoshin.*

Third Row (From the Right): *Norman Kaplan (husband of Gitt'l), Joseph Polonecky, Fraydl Polonecky, Rabbi Benjamin Neufeld, Nahum Kroshinsky, El'keh Goralsky (neé Bilczyk), Chaim Goralsky, Chava Breitman (neé Bilczyk).*

Fourth Row (From the Right): *Pinchas Levy, Liba Levy, It'keh Freimer, Mariszka Levin, Hazzan Paul Breitman (her husband).*

Top Row (From the Right): *Lyuba Isaacowicz, Mott'l Freimer, Mikhl Schwartz, Esther Schwartz.*

Scions of Baranovich in Chile

By Moshe Yudelewicz

Also there, in that farthest corner of the globe, in that strip of land that sits between the Andes Mountains and the Pacific Ocean, a community of Baranovich scions lives.

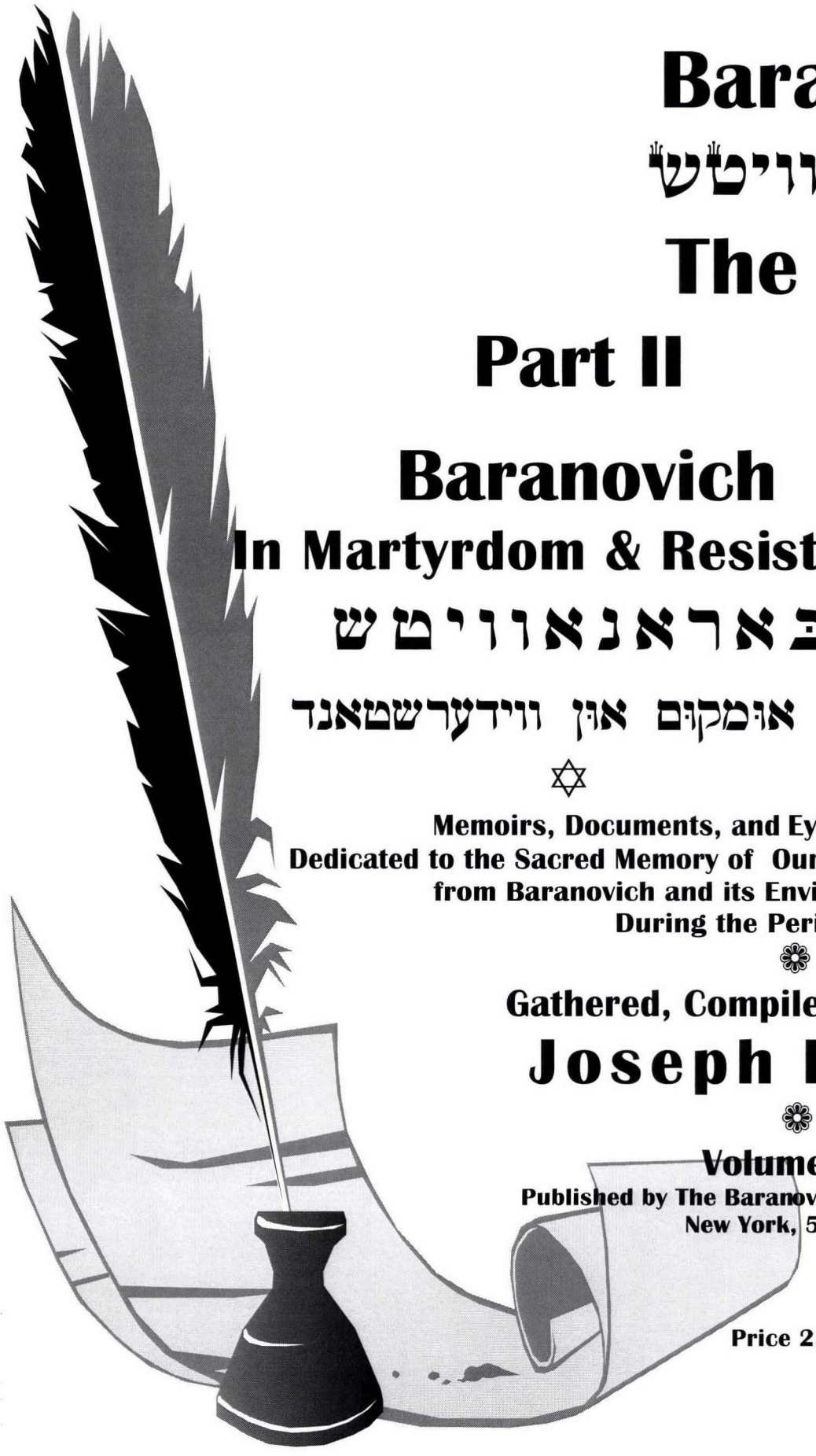
The immigration of the scions of Baranovich into Chile began in the 1920's with the Goldbaum and Yudelewicz families, Later, the families of Narkonsky, Sapatnicky, Rozowsky, Kletzkin, and others came. The entire community consisted of about 30 families, mostly connected by near and distant relationship. Added to those Jews in Chile from Baranovich, we must also count the Jews from Haradzišča, and Njasviz who there belong to the Baranovich family.



Page 667/668: ***Baranovich Landsleit in Chile***

The emigration to Chile went on for a long time, during the years of the 20's and 30's. One acted to bring the next one over. Despite the constrained possibilities for immigration (especially for Jews), groups of individuals managed to get in, parents and relatives, some already with their papers ready. But the great tragedy of the war sundered the conduit. The hopes of parents and children were brutally cut down, of brothers and sisters, who for years had dreamed to be reunited. Of those who were saved from the war, regrettably only one came to Chile, Ze'ev Yudelewicz, the son of the familiar Baranovich resident, R' Alter Yudelewicz הי"ד.

The Baranovich scions, like the majority of Jews in Chile, are engaged in commerce and industry, and the economic situation is a stable one; they also take a very fervent part in the local community life, and are generally quite visible in the colorful Chilean Jewish settlement, which numbers over 30 thousand souls. It is in this way, for example, that Mr. Moshe Yudelewicz founded the '*Tze'irei Mizrahi*' and the '*Yavneh*' School in our city. He is one of the co-workers and co-founders of the Chilean Jewish Press, '*The Chilean Jewish Weekly*,' and '*Dos Yiddishe Vort*,' which appears in Santiago. Other Baranovich scions are members of, and participate in Zionist work, Jewish education, and other community activities.



Baranovich
בראנאוויטש
The Trilogy

Part II

Baranovich
In Martyrdom & Resistance
בראנאוויטש
אין אומקום און ווידערשטאנד

✡

**Memoirs, Documents, and Eye-Witness Accounts,
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During the Period of the Holocaust**

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Gathered, Compiled and Edited by
Joseph Foxman

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Foreword

By Mordechai V. Bernstein

Baranovich belongs to those cities that, relatively speaking, was among the earlier ones to publish a *Yizkor* Book. This was indeed a virtue – the scions of Baranovich were among those who were early in commemorating [the tragedy of] the Holocaust. However, this virtue has one shortcoming – When *Sefer Baranovich*, which appeared in Israel in 1953 was prepared for publication, many details were as yet not yet known, and as it was, especially concerting the martyrdom and heroism of the Jews from Baranovich and its vicinity. It is possible that those who produced *Sefer Baranovich* did not have the ability to reach everyone, who could have helped to complete the picture, both of suffering and heroism. It is also possible that many of the survivors, at the time, had no knowledge that such a book was being prepared, or these events were still so fresh in their minds, that they could not yet digest them in order to put them down on paper – for everlasting memory.

Regardless of the reasons, in the fullness of time, a significant amount, and a very important body of material was assembled regarding the Holocaust and resistance period in Baranovich and its vicinity.

This material os of diverse character. Some of it is scattered and dispersed among a variety of anthologies, newspapers, and other publications; part are in the form of documents, such as eye-witness accounts, found in a variety of archives; and the part – the most important part – is still in the minds and hearts of those who were miraculously rescued by chance. It become evident that important details, facts, and events, still remain uncovered. They exist only in the minds of eye-witnesses who, to this day, have not yet been able to 'unburden' themselves with the things they lived through in 'that time.'

It is, indeed, therefore a most fortunate idea, that came to the Baranovich Society in America, which at the initiative of its dynamic president, Joseph Foxman, undertook to collect this related material 'under one roof,' in the Collections which is now being prepared as the *Part I.*

It is not only an obligation of truth, for those hundreds who were not mentioned, the forgotten, the abandoned, those martyrs and heroes who, up till now have not been recognized, from Baranovich and its vicinity. The Jewish research into that bloody era, obtains here a treasure of important documents, authentic documents from eye-witnesses, who complete the picture, the total scope – *both of the Annihilation and the Resistance.*

Baranovich – the city and its entire environs – is *sui generis* during the time of the Hitler cataclysm. Here, the resistance element played a very visible role. In the ghetto, in the camps (Koldichevo, Sveržan, Wilejka, etc.), in fields, forests, and swamps, it existed and made an impact, demonstrating the heroism of the Jewish resistance.

Accordingly, this collection contains rare chapters of Jewish heroism, in all its forms, in Baranovich

and its environs. The descriptions are written by those who were present, and took part in these events.

But it is not only the Holocaust era that is brought out in *Part I.* Justifiable, the editor has also included a wonderful section of the Jewish way of life, how its people lived, folklore, and the legends from this territory. These are pearls of Jewish identity, which otherwise would have been lost, if they had not been included within its pages. Accordingly, this work represents a form of double duty.

This 'confrontation' with the past, before the extermination, makes that much more distinct, makes even more clear, and more real, that bloody balance of the Nazi 'Final Solution' to the Jewish Question.

In this connection, we make an excursion into a vanished society, whose history takes on the appearance of fantastic legends, however, they were very much real. An entire world awaits the [Messianic] Raising of the Dead – Baranovich and Mys; Njasviz and Palonka; Ljahavičy and Stalovičy; Koldichevo and Chepeli; Sveržan and Navahardok; Zuhavičy and Salihorsk. Tens and tens of places with their quaint histories and wondrous Jews.

Those from Baranovich and its vicinity, that survived the slaughter, will truly be grateful to the prime movers of this undertaking. It is especially the researchers, who study the bloody Hitler period as a segment of Jewish history, who will especially find it most valuable. The next part of this collection will be eagerly and impatiently be awaited.

The Heroic Partisan Shlomo'leh Itzkowitz of Baranovich

By: Sh. Gerling

(20 Years After His Heroic Death)

On a frosty February evening, two black boxes were brought to the village of Goluby beside the Neman, by a boat. We took them down, and with great care, set them down by the river bank. According to the information that our *Otryad* received from the nearby peasants, we understood that these two boxes were the coffins of two heroic Jewish fighters, the partisans: Shlomo'leh Itzkowitz from Baranovich (born in 1928), and Ahar'eleh Heydukowsky from Zhetl (born in 1927), who had gone off to carry out a mission on the other side of the Neman [River] and there, they met their death...

There is much to tell about Shlomo'leh Itzkowitz. It is flat out astonishing, how such temerity and fearlessness attached itself to this Jewish boy, who was still a child. Among others, I remember an instance of the following kind:

This was approximately April, 1943. Our *Otryad* had assumed a defensive position along the [banks of the] Neman, protecting itself against the White Poles, who were on the other side. Having spent some time in one location, we decided to send a scout to search out the enemy. And it was Shlomo'leh Itzkowitz, who took this mission upon himself.. of his own volition, he presented himself to the group commander, with the request that he be allowed to ford the river to the opposite side. He asked that only one grown man be sent with him, because he is unable to row.

Approaching the other side, his companion remained seated in the vessel, and he, Shlom0o'leh, went off into the village. He entered the very first peasant hut that he encountered, and asks immediately, from the threshold, whether any White [Poles] can be found in the village, this from a strange young little boy, on a clear day, with a rifle that is much larger than he is, which elicited a rather understandable consternation from inside the hut. The peasant's wife asks gently:

– What is your name, boy?

To which he replies bluntly and curtly:

– I am a partisan!

At which, the woman peasant screamed in fear:

– Flee! Flee! They are all in the village! The Whites'....

However, Shlomo'leh Itzkowitz calmly asks further:

– How many are they, and how often do they come to the river bank?...

And it is to no avail that the peasant woman warns him out of fear that he will depart; and not that she tells him to come out to the river bank and there she will tell him everything...

The little partisan wants to be made immediately made aware of everything, right on the spot. And apart

from that! – Prepare me some food for several partisans, and two pair of underwear! This is for his comrades on the other side of the Neman... and he positions himself at the door:

– No one is to leave the house – otherwise I shoot!

At the time, the whole thing appeared to be comical, but when the little guy took the rifle off his shoulder, flipped the catch, and put his finger on the trigger, and loaded a round into the chamber – everyone in the hut suddenly became very serious.

... They forded back across the river late in the evening. No one in the *Otryad* was asleep. All of them, along with the group commander, lay in the stall, and waited restlessly. Hearing a movement, they move themselves from their positions.

– Who is it?

And a child's voice answers:

–Me!

The joy in the stall was indescribable. He is taken inside, and the commandant is holding him close near ti him, with genuine fatherly love.

– *Nu,* tell us!

In the darkness, no one notices that he is holding some sort of package under his arm.... and he reports both calmly and tranquilly, not leaving anything out, about everything that happened to him, and what he was able to learn – and the more he tells, the more he makes the impression of acting in a legendary manner...

This was no small thing – being on the other side, where no one from the units that lay close to the bank dared to go over, and come back unharmed!

And therefore, indeed, there was a group that was filled with a certain skepticism about the entire story, until Shlomo'leh opens his hands, and gives everyone a secret smile:

– Ребята подыхаете кушат![1]

And to everyone's wonderment, he opens the package, which, for all this time, had been in his possession, tied up with a peasant's kerchief, and he drags out a jar of honey, a big hunk of butter, and several small pieces of hard cheese.

He kept the two pair of underwear for himself, and for his friend Heydukowsky.

Now everyone is agape. The admiration is boundless. He is covered with kisses and picked up in the air.

After the feast, like a full-fledged partisan, he is offered a comfortable place to sleep. He refuses:

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[1] Guys, you are dying to eat!

– It is my time to stand watch! He quietly explains.

– No! Everyone exclaims spontaneously – Now we will go in your place. You go to sleep!

An order came: to destroy the rail lines throughout all of Byelorussia! Explosives were specially sent by air from Moscow, for this purpose, which were to be used to blow up approximately three-parts of three separate rail lines... Shlomo'leh Itzkowitz and Ahar'el Heydukowsky decided to carry out this mission together. This fortuitous joining in the same mission, caused them to be bonded in friendship even more strongly. From that time on, they were always seen together.

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They went as a pair on their last mission. It was January 1944. The Ruzhany-Baranovich rail line which leads to Minsk, and was located in the ambit of our activity – needs to be destroyed at all cost! The difficulty lay not only in the mining of the rails, as much as having to swim across the Neman, and get to the place, where apart from the Germans, the White Poles were also rampaging. Again, because of a shortage of explosive materiel, not everyone could be trusted to carry out such a task. In response to a special call, as to who would undertake so serious a mission, out of three hundred partisans, only two children's voices responded with a call of Me!' Shlomo'leh Itzkowitz and Ahar'eleh Heydukowsky... and they went. It was on that very same night, and they were never again seen alive.

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Opening the coffins, a frightening picture unfolded before us. The skin on Ahar'eleh Heydukowsky's body was covered in brown and blue marks, and he was shot in several places. It was apparent that he fought fiercely against the enemy. Shlomo'leh Itzkowitz lay at peace, as if he were asleep. A light smile was splayed across his young face.... one had the impression that he would momentarily wake up. Too bad!

They were buried in a common grave, at a crossroads. All the partisans of the Otryad attended, together with its entire leadership. The commandant gave a fiery speech, in which he enumerated the heroic deeds of these two young partisans, who fell for freedom for all humanity, and for the honor of their people.

The coffins are lowered into the grave, and a command is issues:

– Salute!

And the echo of three shots reverberates through the stillness of the forest, from a variety of weapons. A provisional partisan grave marker is placed on the grave, made of wood. On it, the names of the two young Jewish partisans are carved, and the inscription *Vyechnaya Slava Geroyam.'*

We Flee the Koldichevo Camp to the Partisans

By Pinchas Mordkowsky

Four days after the outbreak of The War, the Germans entered Baranovich. Already, there was o no possibility of escape. On the other side, no one could conceive that it would be so bad under the Germans.

Within three months afterwards, the Germans had already created a ghetto in Baranovich, in which approximately twelve thousand Jews were found. A *Judenrat* of 12 people was also created, with Evsei Izikson as the president. Chaim Weltman, a working man and activist, from among the craftsmen, was the

commandant of the Jewish police in the ghetto. An echelon of approximately 300 Czech Jews were also brought to the ghetto. Work contracts were consummated with them, purporting that they were to be sent out to work. The Czech police brought them to Baranovich, In fact, they were brought to be exterminated, and the police, who brought them, were killed.

When the Germans ordered Weltman to provide 25 of his policemen to be sent for work,' he refused to do this, because he knew that, in this process, they too would be killed. As a counter offer, he said that all of the police, himself included, should be sent to work. Weltman figured that either they will not send any of his policemen, or if they did, they will not be executed, because they are necessary to the maintenance of order in the ghetto. The Germans took all of the policemen. Weltman also went along with them, and they were all killed.

We had no ombudsmen for us in the Baranovich ghetto. During a rather substantial *aktion*, several hundred Jews hid themselves in the cellars of the workplaces, which were located outside of the ghetto. I was the director of these work places, and it was only with great difficulty that I was able to procure food for them. After the *aktion*, the people, once again, returned to the ghetto.

The *Rebbe* of Slonim, R' Shlomo-David Weinberg was among those who were in our work places. during the aktion in the ghetto, he wanted to go in there, in order to learn what had happened to his family, which was hidden there.

It was possible to go out of these work places, because people were taken from there, in order to take out the Jewish dead from the ghetto. When the Rebbe of Slonim returned before nightfall, I asked him what he had seen there, and he replied, that precisely at the moment when he found himself by the house of his family, they led his mother out, his wife, and his children.

On 18 December 1942, the Baranovich ghetto was liquidated. The Germans exterminated a part of them, and the remainder was sent to Koldichevo. Koldichevo was a death camp. Jews would be shot there, and the dead would be burned in an oven. The Germans themselves liquidated this camp before the Russians entered it. They even exterminated the police from Koldichevo, in order that no trace of the camp should remain.

At the time we arrived at the camp, we were arrayed naked in rows, and savage dogs attacked us to bite. Afterwards, we were driven into a cold stall, where we spent the first night. On the second day, the camp commandant, Bobko, ordered us to go out into the freezing cold naked, and forced us to dance. Those who could not take it, he beat murderously.

When the snow melted, and a mud hole developed around the stall perimeter, we were ordered to roll around in the mud until such time as the place dried out.

In the camp, we worked at chopping wood in the forest, building barracks, and removing the dead, etc.

Of the several hundred camp inmates, not more than 93 remained. These were only workers – craftsmen, that the Germans needed. We knew that the end would come for us as well. Consequently, we saw only one way to save ourselves – to flee to the partisans. We, the Jewish camp inmates, were separated from the Christians in the camp by only a single, thin wall. And the entire camp was cordoned off with electrically charge wire. In order to work our way out of the camp, we had to make a hole in the camp wall. To accomplish this, we had to work for several months, because we did not have the necessary tools to do this. When the hole was ready, every one of us equipped themselves with a knife and a small quantity of poison.

We obtained this from the material used to tan leather. We also established the sequence in which each of us would escape. On a night of a large snowstorm, we crawled out of the hole. I was the fourteenth one to go out. In order to cut through the electrified wire around the camp, the Jewish electrical technician in the camp made a short circuit, and we then cut the wire fence.

It was a difficult night, and when we were already on the other side, and thought we were already far from the camp, it became apparent that we were not far away at all. We anticipated that they would begin to look for us, and be able to find us rather easily. We then had only one course of action – to hid under the snow. We made holes in the mounds of snow, in order to see what was going on around us, and we lay that way for an entire day. In the evening, we headed in the direction of the forest, where the partisans were to be found.

When we were already in the forest, we encountered three people. This was a partisan scouting group. They assured us, that tomorrow, the commander would come with his support staff. And, indeed, this is what happened. They interrogated us, gave us a plan for the rest of the trip, and told us to wait until morning. We were, however, impatient to continue, and not wait until they would come to get us. The reason they wanted us to wait, was because we were Jews, and they did not want to take us in. The group that was together with me, after several days of straying about the forest, finally arrived in the partisan zone. We were taken into the Janowsky *Otryad* of the Pervomaisk Brigade, where we remained until the end of the war.

The Uprising in the Koldichevo Camp

By Shimon Berkowsky

On one day, while we were working in the carpentry factory in the ghetto at Navahardok, the factory was surrounded to have us removed – 28 men. We were ordered to lie face down in the vehicles, and the vehicles left the ghetto. We were beaten murderously for the entire time of the journey. We were under the impression that we were being taken to death.

When we arrived at our destination, where the Koldichevo camp was located, we were ordered down from the vehicles. After receiving a series of good [severe] blows, we were driven into a cattle barn.

During the course of three days, we cleaned the droppings out the barn, and set up bunk beds for sleeping. The camp was enlarged a little at a time, reaching 120 men, only craftsmen, and with them, less than 10 women.

During the course of seven months, in which the control of the camp was in the hands of the Byelorussians, the situation was very dangerous. We received food to eat once a day, consisting of 50 grams of bread and a bit of water. During the initial period, we were permitted no contact with people outside of the camp. In the four months since the creation of the camp, Jewish workers began to arrive to labor, and those that had families in the ghetto, would receive a bit of food to eat [from them]. In Koldichevo, there was a storage compound, where the Germans put everything that they had confiscated from the Jews in Baranovich and Navahardok – clothing, shoes and furniture.

Every day, executions took place in Koldichevo. Byelorussians [too] were brought into the camp, and were

killed by hanging, and during the execution, all the Jews were driven together and severely beaten. The Jews were forced to witness the executions. Koldichevo was called the death camp.' In the fall of 1943, 120 Jews were brought to Koldichevo from Baranovich. All the Jews of Koldichevo were surrounded and sorted out into those who were craftsmen and those who were non-skilled. The non-skilled were immediately shot. After this *aktion*, 95 Jews remained [alive].

Apart from the yellow badge, each Jew had to wear white stripes on the front and back of their outer wear.

The camp commander, a German, came and offered us words of solace, saying that if we worked well, no more Jews will be shot. However, no one had any faith in these words of his.

Immediately after the aktion, we began to organize ourselves, and to think about how to escape. The work involved was divided up, and everyone was required to fulfill their mission. The carpenters, myself, Shimon Berkowsky, Koren and Ravitzky, had the mission to prepare an opening in the wall, and we prepared such an opening secretly. Close to this block, there was a tannery, where Jews worked. They had the keys to the tannery. We created an opening on the wall, into the tannery. Five meters from the block, and you were already at the barbed wire fencing.

The locksmiths, Gorman, from Warsaw, Kenicky and Romek, had the mission of procuring wire cutters with which to cut the wires. At the end of 1943, Shlomo Kushnir was selected as a group leader, and immediately that same night, we agreed to leave the camp. At exactly 12 midnight, when the Germans were having a ball, and everyone was good and liquored up, we took advantage of the moment to flee. We went out through the exit in the wall of the tannery. There, the tanners with the keys were already waiting for us. And we went off to the wire fence immediately. The locksmiths had already cut the wires, and without any resistance, we went over the perimeter. When all the Jews were already free, meaning, on the other side of the wire fence, two men turned back – Romek and myself – closed the doors of the barracks, so that it will not be evident from the outside, and we planted dynamite beside the doors. When the guards will come to wake the Jews in the morning, it was set to explode. And as we, indeed, later learned, 10 Germans were blown up, and the entire barracks were burned down. Finding ourselves on the free side, we broke up into small groups, and headed off in the direction of Cyryn, where Bielski's *Otryad* was to be found. A group of 17 men lost their way, and after a full night of blundering about, they ended up back at the same place by the camp itself. The Germans immediately captured them, and shot them. Among them were 15 men and 2 women. All the rest arrived at Bielski's Otryad in the forest without any interference, were we were cordially received, and we remained in the forest with the partisans.

The Frightful Tragedy of the Baranovich Jews

By Herman Kruk

Written in the Vilna Ghetto in January 1943

This time, my storyteller is an educated man, a lawyer from Warsaw, and since the outbreak of the War, a refugee, who with his wife and child, managed to reach Baranovich. Now, he is in the role of an '*Öber Jude*' in Rekniamsz[2] 'O. T. Lager which is near the small town of

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[2] Author's footnote: Oshmianka

Anemsz[3].

The storyteller orients himself precisely, in the societal plight in which we found ourselves. He is an active participant in an array of preparations which are described here. Personally, he lost his wife and child in the Second Aktion in Baranovich, and is committed to everything, if only to die like a man, and not simply slaughtered like some pig.

Up until the cleansing,' there were about 12,000 Jews in Baranovich. The first cleansing' took place on 4 March 1942 and lasted that day. Four thousand Jews were killed. About 8,000 souls remain [alive] in the city.

The second cleansing' took place a day after Yom Kippur, Tuesday, 22 September 1942. This cleansing' lasted for eight days. Of those eight thousand Jews that had remained alive up to that point, approximately an additional 5,000 Jews were killed. Therefore, in Baranovich, only 3,000 Jews remained alive.

The third cleansing' began on 17 December 1942, and lasted for three days. The result of this, is that to date, in January 1943, there are up to about 200 [Jews] alive.

And approximately a month after the First Slaughter, it was completely quiet. You might have thought that no further changes will be made here. By 13 April, however, it had become very clear, that this process had not yet ended. Credible reports began to arrive, that in the surrounding towns, the Jewish populace is being liquidated – the entire province is being made *Judenrein.* Many, at that point, began to think about how to not allow themselves to simply be butchered. The thought of mounting a resistance begins to gain popularity.

The first rank of those who embrace this idea are those from whom families had been taken. They begin to gather weaponry, bringing into the ghetto in bulk. This idea of creating a resistance organization becomes more and more ripe. The first among the organizers were Hona Nivogracz[4], a former military man, who now works as a Pole in Aknaimsz,[5] then come Yankl Koven[6]. After than come the intelligentsia: Dr. Avra'sheh Yakswamarba , Lola Cziwonirab,[7], and others. The latter immediately entered the leadership.

The entire organization is divided into groups. The groups [are set up] by streets, the streets into regions, with suitable sub-groups. A group consisted of 25 men, sub-groups of 5 to 10 men. During the flowering of the organization, it consisted of up to 500 persons. A large number of Jewish *gesicilop*[8] joined up, among them

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3 Author's footnote: Oshmiany (Ašmiany)

4 Author's Footnote: Chargovin

5 Author's Footnote: The Camp at Oshmianka

6 Author's Footnote: Yankl Novak & Dr. Avra'dheh Abramowsky

7 Author's Footnote: Loly'eh Rabinovich

8 Author's Footnote: Policemen

Chief Szywekdar,[9] his deputies, Repesz[10] (9) and Yaskwashraw (10).[11]

The entire endeavor is driven underground: under the location of the *Judenrat*, a *podko*'[12] is built out, which also has to serve as a works for the assembly and repair of *reveg*.[13] Hear [weapons] were tested and cleaned. Also, often allocation is done here. All over the city, a few ammunition dumps were thrown together. One of them was not far from the Jewish hospital. In this magazine, there were approximately 280 grenades, 100 rifles, 10-15 automatic weapons, CKM[14]s,' machine guns, and thousands upon thousands of rounds of ammunition.

On the Orla Gasse, was a large and long hideout, which also served as a firing range for training. On that same street, there was also a large ammunition dump. Another such ammunition dump was located at *Rabin*[15] in a hiding place.

A unique underground architecture was created here, consisting of raspberries.' A raspberry' was dug out under practically every house. The entrance was always from its overhead house, or the residence of surrounding neighbors, that live under the same roof. It therefore gave the appearance such that, if an evening *aktion* were to take place, nobody would have to go out into the street. Most of the entrance ways into these hideouts were put under the floor boards and then camouflaged, as for example, placing it under a bed, and then covered with stacks of wood. It was done this way all over, so that no one would be inclined to take note of it, and as far as possible avoid being seized.

The architecture of these hiding places was as follows: a *Yameh*' was dug out that was five meters deep. The hideout itself took up two meters of this height. The first thing that was put back, was the remaining three meters of the earth. In order to assure that the *Yameh*' would not collapse, boards were set up in the form of the letter *Khet* [sic: three sides of a rectangle]. Nevertheless, a fear remained that because of the straight line, the earth will give way, and as a result the idea arose that such tunnels should be dug on a zigzag. According to engineering calculations, the walls become sturdier. And do understand, that the boards, as we have portrayed here, are further formed. The tunnels were provided with flowing water, or water collection points, plumbing, or an effluent point, eventually with pails and electricity. The electricity was tapped from the street in a way that no counter' should be in motion during an *aktion*. The hideouts were ventilated with the help of chimneys, through pipes of board, which would be pulled in from creeks, camouflage them, in

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9 Author's Footnote: Radkewicz

10 Author's Footnote: Unknown (The name Szeper is suggested by the reverse encryption)

11 Author's Footnote: A. Warshawsky

12 A mineshaft of sorts.

13 Author's Footnote: Reverse of the Yiddish, '*gever*' referring to arms.

14 Rendered in the Yiddish plural as '*Tzekaemen*,' it is the abbreviation for **Ciężki karabin maszynowy** (a heavy machine gun).

15 Author's Footnote: The *Rebbe* of Slonim, Rabbi Shlomo'leh Weinberg, who was later killed in the Koldichevo Camp.

thorns under wood, and just extend them out into the field and camouflaged them with undergrowth, etc. Inside the hideouts, benches and bunk beds were fashioned out of earth. Often, caches for products were arranged here. In part of the places, there were even special side branches for children.

The time that it was possible to do this work was only at night. The work was done from 11 o'clock at night until 4 o'clock in the morning. According to the calculations of the engineers, it should be possible to finish a tunnel of 5 meters depth in that time. It is understood, that only a few such groups worked at a time. However, this was the extent to which the work was systematized and planned out.

In the case of an *aktion*, the following plan of action was developed:

The ghetto has three gates. One gate is permanently locked, the second gate leads to the factories, and the third, is the principal gate through which all the traffic goes. To the right of the principal gate, there is a small side street. In the third house from the side street, is the headquarters of the *Judenrat*, Diagonally opposite the *Judenrat* are the Jewish police. In the event of an *aktion*,' two eventualities are anticipated:

1. An assault at night when everyone is in the ghetto, eventually also to include Sunday, when practically the entire populace is in the ghetto;

2. A forced entry into the ghetto when the workers are outside the ghetto, at their places of work.

The most active members of the organization were so positioned that they were never very far from the ghetto. Their work places always remained inside the ghetto. Most of them often had service, and regularly stood watch both day and night.

In the first case: an assault at night, or on a day of rest, the right side of the gate opens, and through both of the headquarters, the *Judenrat* and the police, a heavy automatic weapon fire is unleashed. Frightened by this unanticipated encounter,' the Germans pull back, while at the same time, two brigades are activated, one puts the ghetto to the torch, and the second leaves the ghetto and attacks the buildings of the *Gebietskomissar* and to the post office: everything is set on fire, and in the tumult and confusion, everyone who can, flees.

In the second case: – in the middle of a working day: the murderers are met with the same storm of gunfire, as in the first case. The ghetto is put to the torch, and this, again, become a signal that all the workers in the city are to set fire to their work places. Again, in the ensuing tumult and confusion, people are to flee to wherever they can.

The leadership was in contact with two external forces – with the partisans and the Poles. The degree of seriousness of these contacts is difficult to judge. The Poles would promise that they are organized, and that at whatever time when they are needed, they will help. A Jew, a '*Vostochnik*[16]' was in contact with the partisans, a lieutenant that had remained with the Jews with his son, and who supported himself in the ghetto.

The drilling activities of the groups did not only consist of learning how to shoot, absorbing discipline, etc. Alarms would be set off for purposes of drills, but these often took place where there was aroused suspicion that something is getting ready to happen.' Often, this was connected to not only the gathering of the groups, but also with testing the state of preparedness, the assignments to various posts, *de jours*, etc.

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16 Literally, someone from the East, from the Russian Восток, meaning 'East.'

When the Germans suddenly entered the ghetto with the announcement that they were looking for workers, the ghetto became, as previously said, like dead. On the surface, the only one left was the head of the *Judenrat*, Yankelewicz [17](13) and two other policemen. Apart from this, the Germans stationed three other men[18] on whom later on, a suspicion was cast, and among other things, those persons remaining in the ghetto, during the course of the *aktion*, received the mission to bury all the dead who had fallen in the ghetto. It was in this way, that about 200 martyrs were buried in this way.

As soon as it became clear that the marched entry of the Germans smelled like an *aktion*, nobody wanted to leave their hideouts. It appears that the Germans knew quite a bit about this, and understood it very well. The desire to first seize the menfolk, and the care they took in trying to uncover the hideouts, created a suspicion that the Germans knew about every jot and tittle of the underground ghetto, and a fairly clear view of the resistance that they could encounter here. The Germans, in an effort to make themselves more comfortable, drove 20 Christian engineers into the ghetto, technicians, and about 200 workers, who with axes, picks, and shovels, were to establish with certainty where these raspberries' were to be found.

Despite the good preparations, the distance from territorial readiness to the practical question of implementation of decisions, is miles apart. The result of this was a seriously tragic one. Everything remained in a state of battle-readiness, everyone at their post, and from the side of the resistance fighters, no order to fight was issued, and not a shot was fired.

After this *aktion*, which had been described, many of the most active and best, were sent to the camps in the surrounding vicinity. You do understand that among these most active and best' there were to be found participants of these self-defense groups. For this reason, the organization had become, about July, substantially weakened. Despite this, new people were drawn in, who managed, one way or another to take the place of those who had been sent away. Nevertheless, the organization remained in a weakened state.

The second blow that these self-defense groups received, consisted of the fact that three days prior to the slaughter, one of the prominent leaders, a doctor from Baranovich,[19] left the ghetto, without letting anyone know. It was said that he had gone off to a close lady friend of his, who also was attempting to stay alive herself in that location.

Dr. Yakswamarba[20] was designated as the leader of the resistance, who had to carry out the defensive actions from a specific hiding place. His bride, Minna Aksnaivrolov[21] served him as his personal adjutant. Herself an energetic and vigorous woman, went off to the gate, in her capacity as a nurse, with a revolver under her coat, in order to see what was going on there. Suddenly, she was hit in the head with a stick from behind. She falls, and is immediately taken into an auto and taken away.

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17 Author's Footnote: Shmuel Yankelewicz, who is today found in the country of Israel.

18 Author's Footnote: The names of the three men are given in the original. The editors do not take pride in them

19 Author's Footnote: Dr. A. Abramowsky

20 Author's Footnote: Dr. A. Abramowsky

21 Author's Footnote: Mina Lahozwianska, from Slonim, a nurs with an awarded diploma from the Czysta Hospital in Warsaw.

Did someone know about her? And maybe they informed on her? ....

All posts, for the time being, were manned. Apart from the occupied positions near the gate, there was a well-constructed hideout near the hospital, where machine guns were at the ready, and 60 men, armed from head-to-toe. The Germans react already to the fact that the order doesn't come.

Discipline, and no one wants to fire without an order!

Dr. Yakswamarba,[22] upon learning of the frightful end of his nearest, became discouraged, and doesn't give the order. Only now, at six in the evening, when the Germans leave the ghetto, and it became easier to move around, does it become clear that the commandant, Dr. Yaks[wamarba][23] went over to the second of the hiding places, and it was not possible to locate him.

As already mentioned, the *aktion* lasted eight days. The Germans instituted a normal eight-hour work day:

Every day, at eight in the morning, the Byelorussian, and Latvian police, entered the ghetto singing. After them, came the S. S. troops. Only after all of these, came the groups of Christians who had been mobilized from among the civilian populace. The work,' in this fashion, lasted until noon. Then came a midday break. The continuation came from 2 to 6 PM.

The people taken from the uncovered raspberries' were taken to the *Judenrat* building, and they would be concentrated there, and led off in groups.
Yankelewicz stands guard. In the dark of the night, he, along with the other remaining people, carry food to these hiding holes. He does this, exactly in this fashion, from Wednesday to Saturday. On Friday, the people who were initially ordered to settle themselves in the smaller ghetto, were ordered to go back to the old ghetto' during the course of Saturday and Sunday, in order to transfer their belongings from their former homes. Accordingly, over Saturday and Sunday, the *aktion* was interrupted. In transferring these belongings, many left their hiding places, and came along' to the small ghetto,' being convinced that the place there, was no longer in any danger. Those on guard did not prevent them from doing so.

On Monday morning, the smaller ghetto' was surrounded. Only the craftsmen are permitted to exit, in order to go to work. All the rest are going to liquidation.

Facts that need to be documented:

Fact 1: Yasmn[24], a local resident, upon being loaded onto a vehicle, uttered his willingness, that if he were permitted to remain alive, he will reveal hideouts to the Germans, and the Germans consent to this. He is seated, with respect, on a special armchair, and give him a good meal, and only after betraying 15 hideouts, is he sent off to the execution place.

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22 Author's Footnote: Dr. A. Abramowsky

23 Author's Footnote: Dr. A. Abramowsky

24 Author's Footnote: The name is known to the editors, but is being omitted from the text.

Fact 2: At the place where people are being gathered, to transport them to the execution place, a German Major came by once, and took out approximately fifty women and took them along in his vehicle. After the *aktion* came to an end, the same officer brought them back whole and untouched.

After the first day of the *aktion*, exactly on Tuesday at nightfall, when the executioners had left the ghetto, and the armed resistance groups began to look for their superiors, it was found that the last of them had been rooted out from the raspberry' that had been allocated for his use, and he was treated in such a way, that there was no real basis for any hope.

For two nights, his disciplined and obedient subordinates waited, as they rarely did, for an order. On these nights, the hospital was under guard – from the top, was the observation point with is full garrison, and below, two men with automatic weapons. When the fighting groups finally grasped the extent of their tragedy, laid bare before them, they came together and decided to leave the ghetto with their weaponry in hand, and head for the forests.

But it happened this way, that in order to get out of the ghetto without engaging in combat, they connected with a Byelorussian policeman, whom they paid twenty thousand rubles. The latter took the money, without offering any conditions. Suddenly, when they arrived at the agreed to place, searchlight beams were shined on them, and under this illumination, they were fired upon. Five of these brothers in battle fell dead, and the rest fled. Those that fled, went 80 km. from Baranovich in the vicinity of Telekhany, and a week later, several other groups went the same way.

The work of uncovering the raspberries' in the ghetto, was conducted very carefully by the Germans, out of fear for the concealed firepower, about which they knew. The Christians, who were forced into doing this work, uncovered about 70% of the hideouts present, by the use of their axes, picks and shovels.

During the darkness of the nights, the president of the Judenrat, Shmuel Yankelewicz, and the deputy of the chief of the Jewish police, a local factory worker, A. Warszawsky, are continuously occupied with the conveyance of food to the hideouts, and conveyed people from one part of the ghetto to the other. They conclude an understanding with the Master of the Guard for a bribe of two thousand rubles per capita transferred, and the deal is closed, now with his knowledge and assistance.

A few times, such a contraband' transfer succeeded. All of a sudden, when they wanted to transfer the people in the *Rebbe's* hideout, where, among others, the wife and child of our witness was located, all three were suddenly surrounded, as well as everyone else in the hideout. They were detained, and then sent off in an autos.

On the second day, after this occurrence, Warszawsky was brought back to the ghetto, half-naked, barefoot, bloodied and beaten, such that it was difficult to recognize him. There ,they demanded of him to reveal the location of the ammunition dumps, the location of the hiding places with people in them, etc. He, along with one other, were taken over into the old ghetto,' under very heavy guard. Warszawsky, however, did not lose his presence of mind. He led the executioners to those hiding places from which people were first removed several days previous to this... he was ceaselessly beaten to the end...taking away...the proud idealistic Warszawsky, who betrayed nothing. He stayed loyal to the Jewish masses to his last breath.

Everyone looked on to the finale with great pain, listening to the screams of Warszawsky and his comrades, the helpless imprisoned captives of the second smaller ghetto, who had to clench their fists and were compelled to remain silent.

The *shtetl* was practically cleaned of everyone, since in the initial betrayal, those three[25] were primarily guilty.

The third *aktion* against the remaining three thousand Jews, began on 17 December 1942. the *aktion* lasted three days, until the 20th of that month. Our witness, in the capacity of *Öber Jude* from a provincial camp, by circumstance, happened to drive up with his German. Seeing that the ghetto was surrounded, he oriented himself to what it was that was about to take place, and as a result, the German and he rode off immediately, because he feared for his *Öber Jude*...it was only later that our witness found out that everyone from the ghetto was led out of the city, and there, behind the tar works, near the village of Grabowiec, they were shot. According to my reckoning, there are about 200 Jews now left in Baranovich.

Remarks

The sorrowful details, with only a few comments, have been verified by the Baranovich resident Mott'l Yaksnalop,[26], a long-time active B',[27] a member of the local committee of "B" and *Zukunft*, A number of observations of a community nature are original with him.

The remarks about a number of the participants regarding their party affiliation or their standing, also comes from the same source.

The Lublin refugee Namdlog,[28] a serious and responsible individual, tells that the manager of the ammunition dump on Sosnowa, was the engineer Cziwobiel[29] (25). In that magazine, there could be found two CKMs, 200 hand grenades, 7 pistols, 20 rifles, and 2000 rounds of ammunition.

Now we discover that approximately on 28 March 1943, the eye-witness went off to the partisans with a group of 75 men.

Escape from Camps

By A. Srogowicz

We Escape from the Baranovich Camp

In Baranovich, there were two labor camps: one was under the oversight of the Organization *Todt*; the second, which is discussed below, was under the authority of the *Gestapo*.

In September 1942, the Germans liquidated the *Todt* Camp in Baranovich. The Jews, who worked there, were

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25 Author's Footnote: The names are omitted

26 Author's Footnote: Polonsky

27 Author's Footnote: A *Bundist*

28 Author's Footnote: Goldman

29 Author's Footnote: Engineer Leibowitz

deported to Koldichevo. Rumors were circulating that Jews were being cremated in ovens there.

Two days after the Jews had been brought to Koldichevo, two trucks loaded with peat were sent to us in the camp. When we unloaded the peat, we found discarded photographs of the Jews from the *Todt* camp from which one could conclude what had happened to them in Koldichevo.

We decided to flee the camp sooner rather than later. We wanted to do this in an organized manner, because we knew that when a single individual flees, the Germans resort from imposing a collective responsibility, meaning, that will punish the whole for the transgression of a single individual. We provisioned ourselves with 10 automatic weapons, several pistols, and bribed three peasants who served as our trail scouts to show us the way.

On time, at night, sixteen Jews, not taking into account the remainder, took all of the weaponry that had been acquired, and, by themselves, fled. An additional sixteen people joined them. The peasants led them to the partisans in Kryvošyn-Zalužža. In the camp, 68 Jews remained. We understood only too well what awaited us. One of us, a carpenter, using his sharp knife, slit his own throat. However, he did not do it well, and as a result, suffered in terrible agony. The Germans looked on at the way he was suffering, and declined to interfere and shorten the extent of his suffering. We were barely able to convince a German that he should put an end to the life of this hapless carpenter with a bullet.

On the second day, we were deported to Koldichevo.

We Escape from the Koldichevo Camp

Koldichevo – an estate of the nobility, [lay] 15 km. from Baranovich. The camp was created there, bordered on one side by the Neman River, and was cordoned off with barbed wire and guard houses for those on watch duty. A unit of 120 men on horseback, guarded the camp from assault by partisans, as well as guarding the camp inmates themselves, so they would not flee.

Koldichevo was both a labor camp, and a death camp. There, people worked at digging peat, and also constructed a three-story prison. Koldichevo was a mixed camp. There were political prisoners to be found there, of all nationalities. We Jews were settled into barracks that had been stables. We were together there with the 116 Jews that were previously brought to that location.

At the end of 1943, a rumor reached us, that the Red Army is getting close to us. We knew that this signaled the end of the Germans. They began to act somewhat better towards us, and actually proposed that we escape together. We dealt with them, but didn't trust them. Our barracks had a common wall with the tannery. From there, there was an exit leading to the barbed wire fences. We skillfully bored and hollowed out holes in the wall. At night, we pushed our hands through the holes, cut the wires, and fled.

The Germans organized a pursuit after us, and they succeeded in capturing 46 people. A group of 17 people , that had hidden in the forest, heard the footfall of the Germans. One of them, who had a pistol, wanted to commit suicide. He shot in the direction of his heart. The shot, however, betrayed everyone's presence. Our group was able to reach Bielski's Division (a Jewish Partisan Division), from which about 1200 Jews remained alive.

Ash..

By Z. Segalovich

Majdanek – Ash has covered everything
Covering the entire ambit of my life
Majdanek – Ash is imbedded
In my mood, and in my food.

Each meal is my last
An the wine in the bottle seems arrogant.
There is no sister, and no brother
Only ash, and ash.... Majdanek – Ash...

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Uprising in the Old-Wilejka Camp

By Baruch Kudewicky

The Wilejka camp was a labor camp, which was located approximately 100 meters from the train station[30]. The camp consisted of a single, large barrack, which had been divided into four rooms. One hundred people lived in each room. The camp was cordoned off with barbed wire, and was under constant guard by S. S. troops. Among the 400 men in the camp, there were also 23 women. All the camp inmates were young and healthy people, up to the age of 40. Most of them were Jews. Three hundred of these people were from Baranovich, 80 from Scucyn, 20 from Mezrich-Miedzyrzecz. All 23 of the women were from Baranovich. The S. S. command were the overseers of the camp, but the work was directed by the people from the *Todt* Organization. The work consisted of building a railroad line, fifty kilometers in length, between Molodechno and Braslau. The inmates from the Wilejka camp worked on one side of the line, and the inmates from Stragy (a camp made up of 250 slave laborers) worked on the other side. The people from Wilejka were divided up into the following work commands:

1. *Sondkommado* led by a certain German called Dibus;
2. *Forschtrecke Kommand* – by one Koenig;
3. *Stopfkommando* – Bezd
4. *Waldkommando* – Led by an Organization *Todt* man, whose name I did not know. People referred to him as the Blond Vagabond' or the nickname *Der Szalok;'*[31]

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30 Wilejka - The city, the district (*Rejon)* center, of Minsk region (*Oblast*), is located on the river Viliya 103 km from Minsk, a stop on the roads to Molodechno, Smorgon', M'adel', Dokshicy, and Plescheni cy; known since 1599 as a town, center of *Vilejka starostva* of Oshmiany *Powiat,* it became part of Russia in 1793, the district city of Vilna Guberniya; in 1797 (of 1270 inhabitants), there were 957 Jews; in 1803 - 1006 Jews (1387), in 1897 - 1328 (3560); in 1921-1939 part of Poland, as *Powiat* center of Vilna *Vojevodztwo*, since 1939 in BSSR, before WW II, 710 Jews lived there; occupied by German armies since June 26, 1941. On July 2, 1944, *Aktionen* to murder the Jewish population were carried out on July 12, 1941, on July 30, 1941 and on September, 6, 1942. During the entire occupation, 6972 people were murdered, and the city was almost completely destroyed.

31 The Madman.

5. *Brickenkommando* – I do not remember the name of its leader;
6. *Werkstubengemeinschaft* made up of construction carpenters, shoemakers, and tailors – led by a certain Schneider;
7. *Schwellenkommando* – The leader was a German, who was called The Blonde.'
8. *Küchenkommando* – Made up only of women;
9. *Weschereikommando* – Also of women. The leader of the previous two commands was Karol;'
10. *Kiesgrubenkommando* – I do not remember the name of the leader;
11. *Transportkommando* – The leader had the nickname *Komalas.*'

The principal chief of the camp was an S. S. man, an engineer, who was called *Szpakulnik*' because he wore outsized spectacles. His deputy was the S. S. man Sauer.

The chief overseer of the kitchen played a specific role in the camp, a former Soviet Russian woman, who in the camp was called *Vostotnicha*' (the woman from the east).

Of notoriety' in the camp was the S. S. man Busch (deputy of Koenig) and Hermann (deputy of Bezd). The latter always spoke to the workers in the camp in Russian.

Apart from the leader of the *Sondkommando*, Diubus, all the other Germans, enumerated above, displayed a human attitude to the people in the camp. The rest were cruel and sadistic. the impression was created in the camp, that the following Germans were attempting to outdo one another in swindling and in cruelty:

Koenig excelled in breaking the bones of the inmates. One day, he literally nearly killed two inmates – Postel and Kowalski.

Bezd would beat people to death with a swagger stick. Every day he had to have at least two victims. He would constantly take pride in his feats.' One day, he so frightfully beat the inmates Koncewicky and Bernicker, that they could not return to the barrack. They had to be carried away.

The Blonde Vagabond' or *Der Szalok*' would beat people in the face until blood flowed.

Also, Schneider was a specialist in torture and beating.

Busch was also a specialist in beating. Hermann was a frightful sadist, especially towards women. The Blonde' was a murderous beater.

Karol' made himself renown with is wit and jokes.' He would shoot into the windows of the barrack, when there were inmates inside, and in this way, he shot three people outright: 1) Chaim Gerszowicz, 2) Velvel Kutinov, and 3) Dobkowsky. In this process, others were seriously wounded. I recollect that one of these was Mota Szklar.

Szpakulnik' distinguished himself with is roll calls, which lasted for several hours, when the people were dead-tired from a 12-hour workday, and had returned to the camp. On time, he ordered the men to go to work in their underwear. It was in this fashion, that he punished everyone of the four hundred inmates, for the misdeed' of a single individual.

Sauer would always barge into the barrack at night to conduct an inspection, in order to determine if

everything was in order. And if he found something that was not in accord with the camp rules, he would bloodily beat the first person that came to his hand.

Komalas' beat the people with is rifle. Once, while murderously beating Moshe'l Grabowiecky, he broke the rifle.

When the three hundred Jews were brought from the Baranovich ghetto, to the Wilejka camp, twenty of the weaker and more sickly were selected, and sent back to Baranovich. But along the way, the S. S. troops altered the direction, going towards Molodechno, where they were all killed. These three escaped, and came to the Krasno camp. which was 30 km. from Wilejka. Krasno was the largest camp on the vicinity, with approximately three thousand inmates, all Jews, formerly from the Baranovich ghetto, Scucyn, Ivie, Beniakon, etc., and other locations in the Lida vicinity. (This camp was liquidated on Purim 1943).

Of the remaining 17 that were killed, I can recall the following names: 1) Yankl Szenicky, 2) Yankl Zakheim, 3) Leib Szamuszkowicz, 4) Mattes Israelewicz, 5) Bartkowsky, and 6) Pesach, The Tinsmith.'

One time, at night, when the exhausted inmates were returning from work, and made a fire in the yard, in order to bake potatoes, a large contingent of Byelorussian police came running, and with the consent of the S. S. troops, assaulted the inmates, and beat them brutally.

The Elder' among the Jews with the title, *Öber Jude*,' was a certain Yankl Goldberg from Ljahavičy. All the inmates respected him, because he worried about everyone, and did many good things for the Jews. His deputy was a certain Berg, from Baranovich, who was not like his Chief.' In fact, he was a collaborator, who cooperated with the S. S. troops. The four block Elders' were: Jonah Puczynsky, Wola Lifschitz, and Gurwicz. All had a good name in the camp. The fourth was a certain Kaniewsky.

Thanks to the efforts of the *Öber Jude*, a delegation of camp inmates traveled to Baranovich on two occasions, in order to bring clothing and foodstuffs from the ghetto for the inmates in Wilejka. At that time, the ghetto in Baranovich had the possibility of helping the deportees in the Wilejka camp, with a wagon load of clothing and food. The camp overseer, *Szpakulnik*,' took ten thousand Soviet rubles for the permission to travel to Baranovich, and also took the right to partake of the clothing and food, that had been designated for the needy camp inmates. He sent these things to his family in Germany.

At the initiative of a number of people from Baranovich, a resistance group was created in the camp, consisting of 40 men, under the leadership of six people. On 9 March 1943, a revolt broke out in the camp, and it was possible for 38 men to escape. Only 16 people were saved: the brothers Baruch and Leib'l Kudewicky, Yaakov Walkin, Kwiat from Slonim, Mott'l Fytelewicz, and others.

There was a spy in the Wilejka camp. He was a member of the resistance group, and took part in the revolt. However, he turned over everything that he knew to the *Gestapo* leadership. His name was Shulsinger, and he came from Scucyn near Lida.

We worked 12 hours a day in winter and summer. In the morning, we drank Rumianka tea, at 12:30PM a pea soup without peas, and in the evening, when everyone had returned from work, again tea, with 300 grams of black bread.

The camp existed between 15 Elul in 1942 unto July 1943, when the camp was liquidated and all the inmates were exterminated to the last one.

Before the 15th of Elul, the camp was a *Stalag* for Soviet war prisoners. all of them were killed and their remains were interred in two pits, that are located about 100 meters from the camp, on a hillock.

This, briefly, is what I recollect of the Wilejka Labor Camp.

Murderers and War Criminals in Baranovich At the Time of the Holocaust

By Yaakov Shereshevsky

During the time of the German occupation of Poland, I was in Baranovich. I was there up to the third bloody *aktion.*' The names of the bloody mass-murderers of twelve thousand Baranovich Jews, remain in my memory. There names are:

1. Baron von Schtackelberg The deputy of the *Gaukomissar* in Byelorussia. He lived in the house of Zarecky, which bordered on the ghetto. From the first floor of the house, he would shoot in the direction of the ghetto. He took part in the bloody *aktionen.*'

2. Werner *Gebietskomissar* of Baranovich. Took an active role in all of the *aktionen.*'

3. Krampe The director of the Jewish Section at the *Gebietskommissariat.*

4. Frau Krampe Took part in all of the bloody *aktionen,*' in Moučadz, on the way between Baranovich and Lida. She personally shot children.

5. Seemann Belonged to the *S. D.*

6. Wolff Deputy of *Kommissar* Werner, took part in all the slaughters.

7. Amelung The leader of the local *S. D.*

8. Bartel An important member of the S. S.

9. Steiner (*Kapitan*) Head of the gendarmerie, took part in the first *aktion.*'

10. Hoffer, An employee of the Labor Section, who would conduction the *selektionen.*'

11. Giezecke from the Labor Section, who took part in the first *aktion.*'

12. Meschke, a director of the factory employees in the *Gebietskommissariat.* Issued an order forbidding the entry of food into the ghetto.

13. Otto A *Gestapo* man, who took part in all of the *aktionen.*' He was a chauffeur by occupation.

14. Fritsch A director with the allocation of labor in the *S. D.* He constantly would be beating the

inmates, especially women. I remember one time, at night, he awakened the Jewish lady worker Kornowa, and took her out into the yard, and threw her into the brook. The 120 Jewish laborers who worked for the *S. D.* lived in a house belonging to the Baroness Ber, and her dwelling was from the start, transformed into a concentration camp.

15. Bertmann — Director of the Finance Section in the entire jurisdiction. All the manufacturing activity in the ghetto were under his control. He took part in all the aktionen.' When Meir Porecky, a manager of the tailoring works, approached him during an aktion,' asking him to offer protection for his wife and child, not only did Bertmann refuse, but also shot him, even though he was needed to do work.

Poems

By Itzik Manger

Orphans

The golden peacock and the pure-white little kid
Rock the empty cradles:
Precious Yankl'eh is no more,
The rocking is without a melody.

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The peacock's gold is a melancholy gold,
And that pious little kid –
Dazzles like a sorrowful snow – both of them
Orphans of my people.

(from his book, *Lid un Balade'*)

Sullen Anger

R' Levi Yitzhak is in *Tallit* and *Tefillin*,
Not moving from his place.
He stands by the prayer lectern. The Siddur is open,
However, he utters not a word.
In his imagination he sees images of the ghetto,
The death throes, the sorrow, and the derision.
Stubbornly he is silent. The old man is in sullen anger.

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A Six Year-Old Child Rescued Herself from a Mass Grave in Baranovich

By Rosa Shereshevsky

The German *Wehrmacht* marched into Baranovich on 27 June 1941. The Jewish population of the city, consisting of twelve thousand Jews, hid itself in their houses, fearing to show themselves in the streets. By the second day, the German soldiers had already begun to do inspections in the Jewish houses, under the pretense of looking for weapons and spies. You can understand that they found no weapons and no spies there. However, they plundered these residences, taking away money, jewelry, fur coats, and anything else of estimable value. In many cases, they murderously beat the Jews.

The wife of Engineer Sternin, director of the local gymnasium, and herself a director of a children's home, was forced to work by the Germans in one of their houses as an overseer at the latrines. Once, while smoking a cigarette, in order to drive off the foul odor of her workplace,' she was murderously beaten for this infraction,' until she fell to the ground, with no energy left, and never got back up alive.

I, myself, worked in Baranovich, in the Gendarmerie-*Kontrol*.' Once, during the bloody second aktion,' in the ghetto (I and two other women, as also did two men, had the benefit of protection in our place of work), when we were doing our work, a Polish woman came into our room, and she told us that a little Jewish girl of 5-6 years of age had come to her, beaten, her little body covered in wounds, and begged her for mercy. The child told her that she saved herself from a pit, that was full of dead bodies. Now, the child needs a place to hide. She, the Polish woman, cannot keep the little girl with her, because of fear. We, you understand, took the little girl to us. We learned from her that her father was Joseph Segal, her mother, and a sister, were shot by the Germans during the Second Slaughter. She was the only one who managed to save herself from the grave.

However, the little girl was no able to be hidden with us for very long. A German soldier took note of her presence, and brought er to the ghetto, where she was later killed in the Third Slaughter.

The Extermination of Two Thousand Czech Jews in Kaupenica near Baranovich

By Lyuba Parzen

In July 1942, a passenger train with two thousand Czech Jews, and their belongings, arrived at the train station in Old-Baranovich, near the storage facility of the *Spolem*' cooperative. The S. S. troops ordered the Jews to leave the train cars, and directed them to go have their midday meal. But, instead of eating, under a very strict guard of S. S. troops and Byelorussian police, they were ld to the Kaupenica forest, 5 km. from Baranovich. There they were all shot, to the very last person. After this, a number of laborers were brought from the Koldichevo camp, to bury the dead. And later on, they too were shot. The Christian police were also shot. On the second day [afterwards], the *Judenrat* designated fifty women to sort out the belongings of the murdered Jews.

The women were set up in a special house on the Narutowicz *Gasse*, where they laid out the effects in categories, and then transferred them to a special storage facility' under the supervision of an S. S. officer, Klocker, who, by the way, was an awful abuser of the women, and a sadist. The effects were laid out it the following categories: 1) Women's clothing; 2) Men's clothing; 3) Women's underwear; 4) Men's underwear; 5) Children's clothing; 6) New shoes; 7) Old shoes; 8) Medicines and Cosmetics; 9) Electrical appliances. Many items were gathered together from each transport, to the extent that it provided work for a year's time. The officer Klocker treated the women workers sadistically, at each *aktion*' in the Baranovich ghetto, part of the women, that he personally selected, were killed. Of the 50 women there remained only 12 alive, and at the end, only 5. My good fortune was to have been among those five last workers. Later, when these effects were transported to Germany, and this unit was liquidated, we had to knit woolen items for the families of the S. S. officers, who were in Germany.

Apart from the sadist Klocker, whom I have already mentioned, I wish to recall other German murderers, who helped to kill Baranovich Jews: 1) Schlegel, an S. S. man, who took part in all the bloody executions and in the deportations. 2) Giener, known by the name "Ghetto-Son-in-Law" who was active in all the extermination *aktionen*.

A Small Testimony to our Great Tragedy

By Joseph Szczawinsky

(A Visit to The Children's Home in Verenwald, in the Year 1946)

We open the door, and find them at play. They are occupied with their playthings, and barely take note of us. The governess puts on a questioning look in her eyes.

How does it go with the little children here? – we want to have a conversation, but it doesn't happen. We treat them to chocolate and candies. They become friendlier, and a bit of childish happiness shines through on their faces, and their little eyes begin to gleam happily. They surround the little table full of snacks.

Initially, I draw a pale little boy to me, with a log, drawn, sad face. His name is Yankl'eh. He does not remember his family name. He only remembers that his mother's name was Rivka. He is nine years old. With time, he becomes more friendly, and more forthcoming. – Where are you from? – I am from Tereszin, a small town in Hungary.

A charming little girl is standing nearby. She looks at Yankl'eh with a bit of envy. I take her to me, give her a couple of candies, and by a variety of means, with the help of the governess, and the UNRRA' nurse, I get her to talk. We find out that she is 6 years old, her name is Zelda'leh Abramowicz from Baranovich.

Where is your mother? The child lets down her head. I take her warm child's hand. – Does this make you recall the Germans? – Yes, she answers with a trembling voice – and I can feel that through her little body, a wave of fear courses through. And where were you? – In the forest, in a *zemlyanka*... me and my *Tateshi*, *Mameshi* and the little brother. My *Mameshi* was so good, always hiding away a bit of bread for me. My *Tateshi* would always run to the villages , bringing potatoes. One time the Germans came – and they shot. My *Mameshi* fell dead. The brothers went away and did not return... my *Tateshi* left everything, the bread, the potatoes... rather, he grabbed me in his arms, and fled. We hid among the trees and bushes. My *Tateshi* told that the gendarmes had shot one hundred Jews. My fingers we so frozen at the time...

Four Murderers of Jews in Baranovich Are Sentenced to Death

By M. R. Khayet
(Baranovich)

(The Criminals and Their Murders – Others Fled.)
(One of them Is Found in America.)

A large trial took place in Baranovich in 1962, against four fascist executioners from the so-called Nationalist Defense.' The courtroom could not accommodate the large number of people, who came to see the trial. The entire court building was overfilled as well, when special speakers had been set up. The entire Byelorussian press issued complete reports of the trial.

Who are these murderers and what were they being accused of?

Nikolai Kalko. Immediately at the beginning of the war, he sold himself to the fascists, came into the Minsk German officers school, and after finishing there, was sent with the somber, notorious 13th Battalion of the *Sicherheitsdienst* (S. D.). His hands are drenched with the blood of thousands of men, women, and children. He tortured, shot, and threw half living people into pits. The Germans and their Nationalist' accomplices, in Byelorussia, Ostrowski, Kuschel and others, appointed him as the commandant of the Koldichevo death camp (16 km. from Baranovich), where Jews, Byelorussians, Poles, Russians, and Ukrainians were to be found. In the camp, Kalko carried out frightful murders.

In June 1944, when the Red Army neared the camp, the thugs carried out a mass-slaughter of the prisoners. In one night, of the 29th and 30th of June – over 700 people were shot.

Leonid Sienkewicz also served in the 13th Battalion and for his accomplishments,' he was appointed as the deputy of the commandant of the Koldichevo camp. He exceeded his superior, the chief, in the extent of his murders. Sienkewicz would strip men and women naked, shoot them, and pile their dead bodies, one on top of the other.

When the Hitlerists retreated, Sienkewicz fled with them, and went through a course in espionage.

Mikhail Kukhta Carried out execution over the Jewish populace. In the summer of 1942, he was transferred from the police, where he had served right from the first days of the Hitlerist occupation, to the previously mentioned camp.

He also fled with the Hitlerists. After the war, he came back to Byelorussia, and hid for 10 years in the barn of a peasant.

Andrei Karalewicz Took part in the mass slaughters of Jews, among others, in the *shtetl* of Kosovo. In April 1943, he arrived in the Koldichevo camp as an executioner. His has hundreds of victims on his account.

All of these murderers belonged to the 13th Battalion. Wherever the Battalion made an appearance, innocent blood was shed, destruction ensued, and went up in smoke. they hid themselves for many long years. Now they stand before a Soviet court.

The eye-witness testimony of the Baranovich woman, Valentina Izvekova shook everyone up. A large group of Jews – tells Izvekova – men and women, old people and children, were driven by the thugs, out of the city to their death. A large pit had already been prepared for this purpose there. The men were thrown into the pit while still alive, shooting them with automatic weapons, and bullet-emitting weaponry.

– Did this happen? – the chief judge asks the accused Kalko.

– Yes, this did take place. Living people were often thrown into the pits.

– Did you, yourself do any shooting? – the chief judge asks further – Yes, I would shoot with my pistol – the murderer replies.

The thugs made an attempt to avoid the charges, blaming the occupation authorities, one on the other. However none of this was to any avail. Pushed to the wall during the testimony of the witnesses, they were compelled to admit their crimes.

The trial lasted for six days. The four fascist executioners were sentenced to death by a firing squad.

The prosecutor, Colonel Shinkaryov, in his summation said, among other things:

> – Let the Ostrowskis and the Kuschels know, ans well as the others who served Hitler, that the citizens of the Byelorussian republic, as well as all Soviet citizens – Russians and Byelorussians, Jews and Poles, Ukrainians and others, that we will never forgive these murderous killings. A time will come, when the hand of justice will also reach, and pay back [those who commited] the bloody killing of millions of innocent people.

Meanwhile, still walking around unencumbered and free, on English soil, is the President' of the Nationalist Régime,' that the Hitlerists created in Byelorussia, Radoslaw Ostrowski. He is accorded a great deal of respect . In London, Ostrowski created his so-called Byelorussian Immigrants Régime,' consisting of such murderers as Kuschel, Avramczyk, Khmaro, Rogula, and others.

The murderer, Sergei Gutireiczyk has found refuge in the United States, a man who butchered people in Baranovich, and also in the Koldichevo camp; Helmut Sauer, the executioner of 40 thousand Pinsk Jews, lives a tranquil life in West Germany....

But that innocent spilled blood will not rest, until these murderers will get their just punishment.

To the Heavens

By Yitzhak Katznelson

And so it began, right at the start... heavens say why?' Why, oh, do we deserve to be so shamed on this great world of ours? The earth is deaf and dumb, having shut its eyes... but you, the heavens, you saw it nevertheless....

You watched from up there, from on high....

(From *The Song of the Slaughtered People'*)

The Heroes – Vova Kopeliowicz and Shlomo Lansky

By Kh. Lidowsky

After The First Slaughter, when it became clear that the Germans intended to butcher the entire Jewish populace, from small to old, a Jewish partisan camp was organized in Baranovich. A leadership committee of four men stood at the head of this camp. Our first mission was to acquire weaponry. In the course of several months, we manages to wrest from the Germans 70 rifles, 50 pistols, and 500 grenades. With these arms, we went off to the forest. We fought with the fascist murderers for more than two years, blowing up bridges, echelons, attacking bases, in short – we did everything that all able partisans did.

It was not only once that we were surrounded. But, we were fortunate in always being able to break out, and carry on the battle. We lost 21 men in battle. All died an heroic death, and the Germans paid dearly for their lives. Here, I wish to tell about two of these heroes.

Vova Kopeliowicz

Our first victim in battle was our *Vzovod*-Commander, the 26 year-old student, Vova Kopeliowicz. He was a happy, energetic youth, both strong and lean. He was killed in the following manner: a group of partisans received an order to carry out a mission – to reconnoiter the byways of the Lipsk forest. We rode off there in ordinary peasant wagons. But as soon as we showed ourselves at the outline of the forest, we were immediately shot at. There was German bunker here, with rocket launchers, mortars and automatic weapons.

Our group only had nine rifles, and very few rounds of ammunition. However, we undertook the battle without any hesitation.

Vova hid himself under a wagon; the rest of us partisans, lay ourselves out under the bases of trees. There were many more Germans in number than us, and slowly, they began to encircle us. We drew back, deeper into the forest. Vova remained lying under the wagon. He shot one German that attacked him, but another German emptied an entire clip of automatic fire into him.

Later, we took Vova's dead body away, and gave him a proper military burial.

Shlomo Lansky

The second victim, in that same unfortunate battle, was Shlomo Lansky – also a *Vzovod*-Commander. Shlomo came from the *shtetl* of Njasviz, and by trade he was a locksmith – a technician, 29 years old.

Shlomo had quite a score to settle with the fascist executioners. He would constantly take of vengeance. Immediately at the beginning of the battle, he fell into the hands of the Germans after being wounded.

For the German scum, this was a great joy: it was no small thing to have captured a partisan alive! True, the partisan was already unable to move any limb, but for the Germans, this was an asset, since it would be easier to beat him. The fascists tortured Sholomo'leh gruesomely. – Tell us, where are the partisans? Shlomo spit in their faces.

The Germans promise to let him live, even to let him go free, and give him money; – all he has to do is tell them where the partisan camp is located, and its command. This low-life offer elicited a contemptuous smile from this great hero. He was additionally subjected to frightful torture. By the time they conveyed him to the shtetl of Hancevičy, the hero looked like a formless bloodied slab of meat. Practically dead, he was brought to be hanged. Despite this, Shlomo Lansky gathered up his last bit of strength before being hanged, and shouted out loud: – Your reign won't last much longer, you louts. Your end is near!

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The Baranovich-Kadainov Rebbetzin, Perel'eh Perlov, Organizes the Observant Jewish Women in the Vilna Ghetto

By Menashe Ungar

The well-known writer and historian of our great Holocaust, Professor at Bar-Ilan University in Israel, Dr. Mark Dworetzky, provides interesting details, as to how the *Rebbetzin* of Kaidanov was killed.

In a work that he published under the name *HaChaim HaDati'im b'Geto Vilna*' (Religious Life in the Vilna Ghetto), he writes about the Rebbetzin of Kaidanov as follows (here we provide only the Yiddish translation)[32]:

Before a ghetto was created, I lived in Vilna, as a neighbor of R' alter Perlov and his wife, the *Rebbetzin.* We would often visit one another. In addition, when the ghetto was created in Vilna, we thought, in the ghetto, and a door of hope existed, when we would flee from the accursèd and frightening ghetto, to some other ghetto.

We had prepared a joint escape plan to the ghetto in Baranovich, where we had relatives. A peasant's wagon stood ready to convey us there. However, on the night of the planned escape, the *Rebbetzin*, Perel'eh Perlov advised us that she would not be able to leave the Vilna ghetto, because she had hidden an amulet of the *Baal Shem-Tov*, in some secret place, and she did not have the spiritual strength to simply abandon the amulet and leave it behind.

And the following morning, the akti on' broke out in the ghetto, and from that time on, I never saw the Rabbi and *Rebbetzin* Perlov ever again....

The young Rebbetzin of Kaidanov, Perel'eh Perlov, was the daughter of the Siedlce-Biala Rabbi R' Yerakhmiel Zvi Hirsch Rabinovich, who was a son of the Rabbi Yitzhak Yaakov of Biala, as son of R' Nathan David of Siedlce, as son of R' Yerakhmiel Zvi, who was a son of the *Yid HaKadosh*,' of Psyszche. She also was descended from the branch of Rabbi Yehoshua of Ostrowo, and Rabbi R' Shlomo Leib of Łęczna.

The wedding of his brother-in-law, R' Alter'keh Perlov took place in Lodz, in the year 1929, in the courtyard of the bride's stepfather, the Rabbi of Fabianiec, Rabbi R' Emanuel Weltfried. Many Rabbis attended the

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32 Which is now being translated into English!

wedding, rabbis, who almost all were killed in *Sanctification of the Name*, such as: The Rabbi of Kozieniec, הי"ד; The *Rebbe* of Stolin; R' Ahar'eleh Perlov from Warsaw, הי"ד; The Rabbi of Ożarów - Ćmielów, R' Yekhiel Rabinovich (the current *Rebbe* of Biala in the State of Israel, the oldest brother of the bride); The Rebbe of Biala from London, R' Nathan David Rabinovich, a brother of the bride, who was a son-in-law to the previous Rabbi of Novo-Minsk in Warsaw. The Rabbi of Biala in London had passed away several years ago, and his son, Zvi Rabinovich, published his last will and testament in Hebrew, Yiddish and English in a small booklet *Divrei David, Tzava'ah.*' (Printed in London in the Year 5708 [1948]).

This was a huge rabbinical wedding, with many Rabbis and thousands of *Hasidim* [in attendance].

I also wish to convey an important word that my brother-in-law the martyr, R' Alter'keh הי"ד, said to me--' the current Sosnowiec-Kaidanov *Rebbe,* R' Naphtali Zvi Glickman, writes to me in a letter:

On the Saturday that I was arrested and exiled to Siberia, together with my Rebbetzin and child, and the gathering place was outside of the city, my brother-in-law, R' Alter'keh הי"ד sent us various things by way of his Hasid, Rabbi R' Yaakov Malkhes, who is today in New York, with the following behest:

Fear not, God is with you, and we only hope that we do not come to envy you!'...

The Kaidanov Rebbetzin, Perel'eh, was one of the first to found the *Women's Bet HaMedrash*' in the Vilna ghetto, which was an organization for observant womenfolk in the ghetto, founded by the renown *'Faygl'eh dem Rov's,*' a daughter of Rabbi Beigel of Trokhinbrod (Wolhynia).

Rather interesting information, about this women's organization, the *Women's Bet HaMedrash,*' is given to me by the Jewish folklorist and historian, Joseph Foxman, who was in the Vilna ghetto, and saved himself by a miracle, and today is to be found in Brooklyn, New York.

The *Women's Bet HaMedrash*' had previously been located in the house at Szpitalna *Gasse* Number 9, in the house of the *Hasidic Shokhet*, R' Aharon Jedidovich הי"ד. Later, the *Women's Bet HaMedrash*' was transferred over to the home of the Rebbetzin Reis from Lutsk, and even later than that, over to the building that housed the slaughterhouse.

The *Women's Bet HaMedrash*' was founded by *Faygl dem Rov's,*' after the Jews were crammed into the walls of the overcrowded ghetto, in the month of September 1941.

Faygl dem Rov's' together with a group of *Bais Yaakov* girls and *Bais Yaakov* lady teachers, from a variety of cities and towns, organized the observant girls and women of the ghetto. The objective of the organization, was to come together at Szpitalna *Gasse* Number 9, and here pray as a group, and recite *Tehilim* as a group. *Faygl'eh dem Rov's'* led the prayer and the Tehilim recitation.

The first of the women to present themselves to this Observant Women's organization were: Reizl Orlansky from Brisk, Shoshana Starobinetz from Mir, Leah Reis and a sister of hers, from Lutsk, Breindl from Pinsk, Rish'l from Darewno, Bracha and her sister from Bialystok, Malka'leh from Palonka, Berkowicz from Lutsk, Ruth from Frankfurt am Main, the *Rebbetzin* Shuv from Vilna with her daughter, the *Rebbetzin* Berek with her daughter, the *Rebbetzin* Berkowicz, the *Rebbetzin* Epstein, the *Rebbetzin* Perel'eh Perlov from Kaidanov-Baranovich, the *Rebbetzin* Dereczin, the *Rebbetzin* Levitan from Rakishki, and many others.

This Observant Women's Organization, would, on every Sabbath, in the *Women's Bet HaMedrash,*' study the Torah portion of that week, together with *Rashi*, and also other commentators, *Pirkei Avot*, the laws from the *Shulkhan Arukh*, and a variety of excerpts from books containing the traditional teachings (it is self-evident that this was all in Yiddish).

The popularity of this Observant Women's Organization grew daily, in the ghetto. The number of people attending its Torah and *Mussar* audiences grew.

The residence of the *Shokhet* Jedidovich, where the *Women's Bet HaMedrash* had previously been located, became too small to take in such a large number of women. Accordingly, the *Women's Bet HaMedrash* was moved to the Yatkova *Gasse*, in the house of the *Rebbetzin* Reis from Lutsk. In time, this location too, became too small for the *Women's Bet HaMedrash*, and then, thanks to the intervention of the Rabbis Landau and Jacobson, the common kitchen on the Deutsche Gasse was placed at the disposal of the Observant Women's Organization.

The praying, learning, the discussions about Torah and *Mussar*, the recitation of the *Tehilim*, was only for women. We are aware, however, of single instances – writes Mr. Joseph Foxman – when *'Faygl'eh dem Rov's'* invited men as well, to be teachers and lecturers. One of these, was R' Yaakov Zelwin (or possibly Zeldin), one of the great exponents of Mussar in pre-war Poland.'

A lecture on the theme of: Sabbath – the cornerstone and foundation of Yiddishkeit,' was given to the religious women by the young religious poet and martyr, Chaim Siemiaticky, הי"ד. Yoss'l Bialystoker also appeared there to give an exposition on *Mussar*. Also, Sholom Shuv gave an expository lecture to the religious women about martyrdom. These male speakers were always introduced by *Faygl'eh dem Rov's.*'

During the time when the meetings of the *Women's Bet HaMedrash* took place at the common kitchen on the Deutsche Gasse, Number 31, the walls were decorated with large calligraphic script written by a scribe. A number of them were:

אין הדורות נגאלים אלא בזכות נשים צדקניות שיש בם.

(The generation are not redeemed, except for the sake of the righteous women among them)

בזכות נשים צדקניות נגאלו ישראל.

(It is for the sake of righteous women, that Israel is redeemed)

לא חרבה ירושלים אלא בשביל שחללו את השבת.

(Jerusalem was not destroyed except specifically because the Sabbath was violated)

קדושים תהיו.

(Be Holy)

היט שבת אוז דער שבת וועט אייך היטן.

(Guard the Sabbath, and the Sabbath will guard you)

בשכר נשים צדקניות נגאלו ישראל

(It is as a reward to righteous women, that Israel is redeemed).

I had, in my possession, two written homilies about the Torah' – writes Mr. Foxman – from *'Faygl'eh dem Rov's*,' which bore the imprimatur and signature of R' Yaakov Lutsker הי"ד (Zelwin). One manuscript had the title: And Abraham came to grieve for Sarah and weep for her," in connection with the *parsha, 'Chayei Sarah*.' The second manuscript had the title: And Jacob set a gravestone on her grave,' in connection with

the *parsha* of *Vayishlakh.*' Both manuscripts are found in the Historical Institute in Warsaw (It is a shame that Mr. Foxman does not have these manuscripts, Were he to approach the Historical Institute in Warsaw, I am certain that the Director of the Institute, Dr. Ber Mark, would send him photostats of these manuscripts, and we hold that Mr. Foxman needs to do this). Another manuscript with the title: All that Sarah says to you, listen to her voice,' I turned over to the Rabbi of Vilna, after Vilna had been liberated from the German murderers.'

Many of the girls – Faygl'eh's *Hasidistehs*, would always carry miniature prayer books with them. Also, the *Rebbetzin* Perlov always carries such a miniature prayer book as well. On the innermost sides, the following was written:

The heavens and the earth, and all that is on the earth, were not created except to satisfy the needs of man). After that it said:

אליך ד' נפשי אשא

(It is to you, O Lord , that I raise my soul)

...and then came the blessing one must recite if one is to die in *Sanctification of the Name*:

> Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who has commanded us in His commandments, and commanded us to sanctify His Name, and the Name of All Israel among the many...'

And when the Germans seized the *Rebbetzin* Perlov, she probably took along this little prayer book, and made this blessing, in *Sanctification of the Name*....

The largest part of the girls from Faygl'eh's observant coterie, writes Mr. Foxman, dis not work at the German places of work, in order that they not violate the Sabbath. They worked in the ghetto and became protected' with the so-called protection-passes. Not one of them had a yellow' pass, which secured' the life of the owner.

Many of the girls were fictitiously registered as wives of men, who had passes.' However, they lived separately, despite the fact that according to the ghetto regulations, such couples' were required to live in one residence...

With the exception of one girl, Breind'l from Pinsk, all of Faygl's girls were saved from the slaughters. It was on a light, beautiful summer day, in September 1943, that *Faygl'eh dem Rov's*' was seized, by the Germans, may their names be eradicated, with the majority of her girls, they were driven to the *selektion* place under the bayonets of the German, Ukrainian and Lithuanian thugs, on Rossa in Vilna. A number of them were sent to the let.' *Faygl'eh dem Rov's*,' with the larger part of her soul mates, were sent to the right,' which indicated – to remain alive....

They were sent off to Riga in sealed and locked cars, like cattle. In the month of July 1944, when the offensive of the Soviet armies reached Latvia, the largest number, who were crammed into the twenty Latvian labor camps, were transferred to that notoriously somber camp, Stutthof, near Danzig.

Faygl'eh dem Rov's' was also brought there from Trokhinbrod, with many of her companions. Only two of them were able to save themselves, the *Rebbetzin* Berkowicz, and her daughter, who today are found in

Israel. All the rest died from hunger, and a variety of diseases. *Faygl'eh dem Rov's'* died immediately after the liberation from spotted typhus.

It was in this manner that, a group of religious girls, managed an observant women's organization in the Vilna ghetto, under the name of the *Women's Bet HaMedrash,'* among whose members could also be found the *Rebbetzin* Perel'eh Perlov, the wife of the Kaidanov-Baranovich Rabbi, who was killed together with her husband, in *Sanctification of the Name*, in the Vilna Ghetto. ה"יד

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Slonim Hasidim among the Daf-Yomi Resistors In the Vilna Ghetto

By Joseph Foxman

In October 1942, placards were hung in the streets of Vilna, in Polish, Lithuanian and German, signed by *Gebietskomissar* Wolff, that in order to prevent epidemics and disease, the houses of worship of all religions must be locked and sealed.

After the High Holy Days, a sign was also posted, that all schools, *Shtiblakh* and *Batei Medrashim*, must be locked down, and indeed, on that very same day, all the schools in the ghetto were sealed shut by the Jewish police.'

In Vilna, however, there was a *Daf-Yomi* cadre, who did not want to give up studying together; it was [the week of the] *parsha* of *Lekh-Lekha*, seven days in *Heshvan*, when the ninth *Yahrzeit* fell, of the *Gaon* and founder of the Lublin Yeshiva, *Yeshivat Khakhmei Lublin*,'and the cadre of *Daf-Yomi* studiers, under no circumstances, were prepared to sanction an instance of no study of a *Daf-Yomi* in a group session.

And the *Daf-Yomi* session was conducted in *Jogicheh's shtibl,'* and at the afternoon *Mincha* service, *Kaddish* was recited in memory of the *Gaon*. However, suddenly, a band of Jewish police' burst into the place, and with rubber truncheons, began to beat and disperse the gathered crowd. The Jews fled, but 15 men resisted, and did not want to vacate the premises. Beaten, and with clothing torn, they were all forcibly thrown out of the building, and the building was again sealed up.

From a notice of mine, made in the ghetto, I have the names of those members of the *Daf-Yomi* cadre , who stood up to the Jewish police,' and did not permit the *shtibl* to be locked up. They were: R' Yaakov Zelwin, R' Yoss'l Bialystoker, R' Nissan Jaffe, Landau, Burko, Kwiat, Weinberg, Lev, Kozlowsky, Epstein, Jacobson, the Slonim *Hasidim* Rabbi R' Moshe Weinberg, and Rabbi R' Abraham Lejzor Kwiat, refugees from Baranovich. The poet, Chaim Siemiaticky and the renown culture-activist Zelig Kalmanowicz.

Zelig Kalmanowicz was the only one treaded cordially by the Jewish police,' and after everyone else was thrown out, he, the last one, went out of the building by himself.

Two days later, it was learned in the ghetto, that all eight of the police sergeants, who took part in this brutal assault against the *Daf-Yomi* cadre, in *Jogicheh's shtibl*' were, by special order of the Ghetto Chairman,' Yaakov Gans, demoted in rank from sergeant for a period of one month's time.

Let the names of some of the Jewish police be set down here. they were: Lutek Zalcwasser from Warsaw, M. Rodoszicky from Warsaw, Juzik Witkowsky from Warsaw, Janek Kalisz, Nikki Dreizin and Zelazo, also refugees;' Bernstein and Kaplan, both from Vilna.

The punishment meted out to the sergeants was a result of an intervention made by Zelig Kalmanowicz directly with Gans.

At worst, the poet Chaim Siemiaticky was discouraged from being a protagonist against the police. At night, the Jewish criminal police conducted an inspection of his residence, and took away everything that had any value, that they found in his room.

All those who were assaulted were [eventually] killed. My their sacred memory be forever blessed!

Jewish Resistance in the Sveržan' Camp

By Tevel Rozowsky

In November 1941, a liquidation of the Jewish populace was carried out in Turèc in the Stoubcy area. in this *aktion*,' Byelorussian police took part under the direction of S. S. officers. In Turèc, the police commandant Serafinovich was very active in liquidating the Jews, having been born in the village of Peretok, in the Stoubcy area. Out of the entire Jewish population, that consisted of 574 souls, only 104 remained alive. The rest were killed out.

The group of 104, consisted of skilled younger men, who were expelled to the slave labor camp in Novy-Sveržan'. There were already Jews their from Stoubcy, Mir, Turèc, and Sveržan, in total, 300. Apart from the Jews, there were also 200 Poles to be found in this camp, and 90 Russian prisoners of war. The overseer of the camp was named Okun, who was the director of the factory works. The guard was manned by German S. S. troops. The Jewish elder over the 300 Jews was Kazik Reichmann, from Lodz.

Those Jews in the camp, who by a miracle survived their experience in the Sveržan camp, and saw the extermination of the Turèc Jews, began to think about resistance. Under their initiative, 150 energetic fighters were organized. This group was led by a staff of three people: Joel Mazurkewicz from Mir, the second was a refugee from Warsaw, and the third – from Stoubcy.

The command staff divided up the people into 6 groups of 25 fighters in a group. Also, the group of 25 was divided internally into fifths. At the head of each 25 and 5 stood the senior. All these seniors were appointed by the command staff.

I was the senior of a group of 25. Our fighting organization bribed and bought weapons from Polish workers. We also provisioned ourselves with axes, knives, shovels and swords, and also benzine and matches. All of this was cached under floorboards. It was agreed, that in the event of an aktion,' by the Germans, we would mount a resistance, using this weaponry we had procured.

In the summer of the year 1942, rumors reached us that partisans were to be found in the forests around us. We also noted that, the number of Russian prisoners of war was getting smaller from day-to-day. We were told that they were escaping, and going over to the partisans.

The 150 men divided themselves up into four groups, and on the night of 29 January 1943, they all fled into the forest. Apart from this group of 150, a second group of 80 men, fled into the forest. I was to be found in the group of 80. In the camp, 70 people remained, who were immediately executed after this.

The groups that fled, set out on the road to Minsk, Uzda and Mogelnica, where partisan divisions were to be found, of Kapuchin and Bielski, and also the Kalininsky' and Komsomolsky' brigades. On the way, in the process of escape, 70 resistance fighters were killed. Of those that managed to reach the forests, and fought in the various partisan divisions, a portion fell in the battles with the Germans, as heroes, and a portion survived to the end of the war.

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Concerning the Baranovich Yizkor Pinkas

By Daniel Charney

In my childhood years, I would take pride in the fact that when *Yizkor*' was recited (as is done today), I did not have to exit the synagogue sanctuary, as other children did, who were not orphans.

I would be eager to recite *Yizkor* for my father, creating the illusion that I was already also mature, grown up, like all the other Jews in the synagogue, just not wearing a *Tallit.*

Now too, in my later years, I take special satisfaction in seeing every new Yizkor Book that enriches the Holocaust literature. It is precisely from Yizkor Books of this kind, that we come to know what sort of wondrous people we had in the *alte haym,*' and thanks to these Yizkor Books, they will remain forever as part of out people's collective memory.

Just recently, I have received a number of important and substantive books, or better said – *Pinkasim*, which have, once again, bolstered my belief in the everlasting existence of Our People.

This time, I will pause and discuss one such book. that is called Baranovich.' Even if you do not have roots in Lithuania, or Byelorussia – you would have most certainly heard of such a city, called Baranovich.

In the good old days, Baranovich was written about frequently in newspapers and journals. *Sholom Aleichem* himself, in a parable, refers to the Baranovich train station. Indeed, it is because of *Sholom Aleichem*, that Baranovich became so popular in all Jewish communities, all over the world. As it happens, it was in Baranovich, that *Sholom Aleichem* was suddenly taken ill, and the entire Jewish world, at that time, focused its eyes on Baranovich.

In the Baranovich Yizkor Book, that recently appeared in Tel-Aviv in Yiddish and Hebrew, Dr. N. Kroshinsky tells us something about *Sholom Aleichem's* visit to Baranovich[33]:

In the year 1908, *Sholom Aleichem* undertook a tour of the Jewish Pale of Settlement in Russia, Lithuania and Poland. His visit to Baranovich was set for the beginning of August. For weeks, long before his visit, the city manifested a sense of a great event. In the businesses, factories, and in the street, there was ongoing talk about *Sholom Aleichem.*

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33 Details can be read in Part I of this Trilogy, beginning on page 55.

The tickets that the welcoming committee had printed, were immediately sold out. On the eve of *Sholom Aleichem's* arrival, the Jews from the surrounding towns, literally streamed into Baranovich. Many walked tens of kilometers on foot. The houses were filled to overflowing with relatives, friends, and other acquaintances from the province. When the important guest finally appeared on the streets of Baranovich, escorted by the welcoming committee, *Sholom Aleichem* himself looked tired, and exhausted from his considerable travel, lecturing, and banquets, during the course of the hot summer months.

After a festive and hearty welcome – Dr. Kroshinsky continues – *Sholom Aleichem* gave a lecture in the summer theater. The hall was overflowing with an enormous crowd. suddenly, in the middle of his lecture, the writer showed signs of not feeling well. He fell down from a hemorrhage in his lungs.

The local doctors immediately had the sick man carried to one of the nicest hotels in the city, the so-called Slavic Hotel.' Doctors from Minsk and Vilna were immediately summoned. The condition of the patient was very serious. He needed to spend two consecutive months in bed, from August to the end of September 1908. The mood in the city was very anxious. Every person, who was in attendance that evening, felt as if he was personally responsible for this mishap.

For the two months that *Sholom Aleichem* lay sick in Baranovich, the entire town went on a binge. Every now and then, reporters and photographers would come, from the surrounding cities and towns, and also just plain visitors to comfort the sick, from all over the world. It was in this fashion, that *Sholom Aleichem's* triumphal tour of the cities and towns of Russia, Lithuania and Poland, came to an end, with the catastrophe in Baranovich, from where he then traveled to Nervi (Italy) to convalesce.

At that time, in 1908, *Sholom Aleichem* was just 49 years old, but the city of Baranovich was not more than 23 years old. It was hard to believe that the newly-famous city of Baranovich was first established in 1885.

Before that, Baranovich consisted of a Jewish tavern, and a Polish farm. But when rail lines were put through that vicinity, one called the Moscow-Brisk' [Line] and the other – the Polesia [Line], and both lines constructed separate stations – an influx of a variety of Jews commenced, and from the previously Baranovich tavern, a city of approximately twenty thousand people developed.

When *Sholom Aleichem* was asked his opinion about Baranovich, he once offered the reply: There are two train stations on either side, and in the middle – a great bog. A second time he answered that Baranovich is a A little town that stands outside, a little town of newcomers.'

But precisely these Jewish newcomers, in the course of merely a couple of decades, transformed Baranovich into a great Jewish center of culture, with the complete variety of parties and societies, just like all other cities with venerable Jewish communities that had been in development for a long time. It suffices to say, that Baranovich was visited by all of the important Jewish personalities [sic: of the day] such as Chaim Nachman Bialik, Meir Grossman, Yakir Warszawsky, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, Leib Jaffa, Dr. Gershon Levin, Dr. Yitzhak Szyfer, Professor M. Schorr, others, and others.

In the Warsaw Literary Pages,' of 1924, M. R.(It is probably Melech Ravitch) tells:

In Baranovich, one passport is valid: Yiddish! The entire cadre of Jewish doctors and pharmacists in Baranovich is filled with Yiddishists. For this reason, it is possible to shop in the big city Jewish pharmacy, in the same comfortable homey fashion as workers do in their own professional union.'

But Baranovich also has its own share of Hebraists, Zionists, as well as substantial Yeshivas, with many Torah scholars. It suffices to say that, the Orthodox Jew, R' Pinchas Kaplan became the Burgomaster of Baranovich. Incidentally, it is the only instance in Poland, where an Orthodox Jew had become Burgomaster.

Five separate weekly newspapers were established and appeared in Baranovich in the years 1928-1937. The editors, employees and publishers were all native to Baranovich.

From where, the question begs, did such an ardent and deep reservoir of traditional *Yiddishkeit,* Hebraism, scholarship, Hasidim, Zionism and socialism come from, in such a young Jewish settlement?

The creative impetus, and the dreamy visions, appear to have been drawn from the neighboring cities and towns, which were much, much older than Baranovich. It suffices to say that, the neighboring *shtetl* of Mys, already had to its credit a history of over eight hundred years of Jewish life and creativity. The nearby town of Ljahavičy had also already been in existence for over five hundred years.

Not far from Baranovich, there were also to be found such familiar Jewish cities, such as Slonim, Volkovysk, and Bialystok. As a consequence, Baranovich too, became a City and Mother in Israel,' not counting the fact that on the eve of the Slaughter of The Second World War, it had existed barely for fifty-five years!

Yes, on the eve of The Second World War, Baranovich counted about twenty thousand Jews, who on these prior muddy bogs of Polesia, erected a viably functioning Jewish settlement, which sprouted with Torah, wisdom, with force and confidence.

When during the years 1940 -1945, the Jewish settlement of Baranovich was also exterminated – it had not yet achieved sixty years of existence. Seeing that the Jewish settlement in Baranovich was still so new, so vibrant – it also was exterminated with an extraordinary show of heroism and martyrdom, that our keyed up nerves can in no way grasp and properly internalize.

It is a miracle, that a couple of hundred of these people from Baranovich saved themselves, who today are found in Israel, in South Africa, in Argentina, in Chile, and also, understood, in America.

It is this saved remnant, who have now published a sort of bi-lingual Yizkor Book of 670 encyclopedic pages, that should be read, and must be read, by even those who are not from Baranovich. because it is not written by writers and historians, by simple, ordinary people, that fate decreed – it is they who shall remain alive, and that they should be the ones to prepare such a meaningful monument. which can then be handed down from generation to generation.

Despite the fact that I am not from Baranovich, I have been very much taken by their Yizkor Book, simply because of the fact that I saw that, those who participated in creating of the Baranovich Yizkor Book, remain suffused with that same heroism, and sense of martyrdom, that their fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, were suffused with, as they went, singing, to the slaughter.

True, today is the second day of Shavuot, when Yizkor' is recited, and it would be appropriate to insert here, at least a couple of episodes of heroism from the Yizkor [Book] of Baranovich, but I fear for the nerves of my readers and also – of my own kith and kin.

Here, I wish only to thank my active reader, Joseph Foxman of Baranovich, who brought along the sense of

martyrdom and heroism of his place of birth, to New York, and it is this very friend of mine, Joseph Foxman, sent me a copy of this Baranovich Yizkor Book, with a sort of companion letter, that looks like a guide through the vale of tears' of Baranovich, as it is described in the *Pinkas*.

On page 537, my friend Foxman informs me, you will find a description of how my sister Sonya (the fifth in the row), survived the fright of death twice, because she was killed twice. Such a tragic portrait cannot be found in the entire Holocaust literature.

On page 598, the tragedy of a mother is described, who needs to decide which child of her two little girls (six and two years old) she has to surrender to the murderers.

On page 622, the story of the last Hasidic Rabbi, R' Shlomo'leh Weinberg ז"ל, is told, and how he goes to his death, singing a *Hasidic Nigun*, being at that time, in his thirties.

It is this way that, my friend Foxman, acquaints me with the all the instances of martyrdom and heroism, which have been affixed in the Baranovich Yizkor Book.

I am, however spent from counting those who were killed, and would better be counting those who remained alive. Accordingly, I look with happiness at the pictures of those Baranovich *landsleit* committees in Israel, in New York, in Argentina, and in Chile, as well as in South Africa. I counted about 150 men and women in these pictures, who carry their past in Baranovich, with pride and a sense of self-worth. It is precisely these living survivors, will not permit the memory of their Baranovich, to be erased from the collective memory of our people.

The same can also be said of all those other *landsmanschaften* that have already memorialized their destroyed homes, by the creation of *Pinkasim* and Yizkor Books.

These Yizkor Books occupy a very prominent place on my bookshelves. Every time the date arrives for the recitation of Yizkor,' I take down a Holocaust Memorial Book, and read it, just like my mother would read her copy of *Korban-Mincha.*'

If, today, I happened to have taken down the Baranovich book, it is only because Baranovich, at one time belonged to my own Minsk *Guberniya*, which up till now remains a forgotten *Guberniya*. Apart from that, Baranovich is practically the same age as I am. Baranovich was born in the year 1885, and I – in the year 1887. For what good deeds did I do to exceed the life of an entire city – I do not know. Do you , my friend, Joseph Foxman, perhaps know?

Regardless, right now, at the reading of our Holocaust literature, I feel as high and as elevated as I was in my childhood years, when, during the recitation of Yizkor,' I was able to remain in the sanctuary with all the other bereaved Jews, wrapped in their prayer shawls, during that time, when all the other children were compelled to go outside.

What was it that *Sholom Aleichem* said: I have it good – I am an orphan!'

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Baranovich

By Ben-Zion Goldberg

Baranovich Station' is better known in the Jewish world as plain Baranovich.'

The *Sholom Aleichem* story, Baranovich Station,' has nothing at all to do with the real Baranovich. The story could have taken place in precisely this fashion, at any other train station. By giving Baranovich this publicity, *Sholom Aleichem* was, in a manner, thanking the Jews of that *shtetl*, the great and heartfelt love that they showed him, during the time when he suddenly fell ill there – having come simply to deliver a lecture, and then forced to be bedridden for several months.

The entire *shtetl* mobilized itself, to help the beloved writer, to crawl out from under the dangerous illness, especially the youth. Young boys stood watch outside, to divert the flow in the street, in order that it not be too tumultuous to the patient. And the young girls organized themselves into volunteer nurses, to help watch him. *Sholom Aleichem* never forgot this love and dedication. He maintained a contact with Baranovich years after he had left that place.

One of those volunteers, that took care of *Sholom Aleichem* in Baranovich – Guta Tetz – happened to find herself in New York, in 1916, at the time that *Sholom Aleichem* lay on his deathbed. *Sholom Aleichem* asked that she come and take care of him. Back then, the lady from Baranovich helped to save him, and he was hoping that perhaps this time, her care would also have the same impact here. The Baranovich woman indeed did come, but the Baranovich touch' did not help him this time.

Had the antibiotic drugs, we have today, been available at that time, it is possible that this great writer may not have passed away at so young an age. He was barely 57 years old, and was at the height of his creative powers....



However, there also was a *shtetl* called Baranovich – a *shtetl* that is out of doors, without any park, and two railroad stations on either side, and in the middle, a huge bog of mud, as *Sholom Aleichem* attempted to characterize it, in his good-humored way.

And this very *shtetl* was tied to the Baranovich Station,' the train transfer point. It is possible that some sort of settlement existed in Baranovich ,much earlier than the tracks of the two train lines passed through there, but Baranovich only first became a city, when the trains came. It is in this sense, that Baranovich was a new' city, a young city, with people who came to it – meaning that the largest portion of the populace had come here along with, and after the arrival of the railroad.

A young city with recently arrived residents has it good points and its shortcomings. The shortcoming is that the cit lacks seasoning, roots and tradition. The good point is that the city has a freshness, and a sense of life, a tempo, which one does not fined in older places, more set in their places. In the case of Baranovich, the good points outweighed the shortcomings. For its size, for its population, Baranovich was very active in many social and cultural areas.

This is the impression that I have from the Baranovich Memorial Book, which I received this summer. It is a large, interesting book, in album format, with a wealth of photographs, which was published by the Baranovich *landsleit* in Israel. The Israeli landsleit were the ones to carry forward the initiative, and the

Baranovich societies in America, South America, and South Africa, assumed the burden of the large financial outlays that this undertaking required.

At the same time, it is a Yizkor Book of Baranovich. And like most of the books of this genre, it consists of four principal sections: the very old history, the history of the city, that is summarized; the recent past, the time that the living people from Baranovich today can remember – in length and illustrates; the catastrophe – The Nazi Holocaust and the extermination of the Jewish settlement; and the Baranovich emigration – those *landsleit* in various parts of the world and their accomplishments.

And seeing that it soon becomes a tradition, the Baranovich Yizkor Book was published in Israel, and because of the Israeli influence – a major part of the book is in Hebrew. The language of these Yizkor Books becomes a problem, in order that the current day landsleit be able to read it, it has to be written in Yiddish, but those who have future generations in mind, the notion of making these writings eternal, argue that since Hebrew is the eternal language of the Jewish people, especially now that it has become the language of the Jewish State, therefore, for truly permanent memorialization, it has to be in Hebrew. And in reality, one can say, that the issue is one of Yizkor' vs. Memorialization.'

The Baranovich Yizkor Book solved this problem by chance. If someone wrote something in Hebrew, it was produced in Hebrew, and if someone wrote in Yiddish, it went in as Yiddish. A better solution, in my view, would have been, instead of relying on the chance choice of Hebrew, everything should have been done in Yiddish, in order that the Yiddish reader should have access to the entire body of the reading material, and a summary of the historical elements should have been created in Hebrew.

As I, personally, am not from Baranovich, and actually never was in Baranovich, we have the greatest interest in the general things, such as, the visits of *Sholom Aleichem*, Ch. N. Bialik, Vladimir Jabotinsky to Baranovich; the Yiddish Press in Baranovich during the period between the two wars; the development of the educational system in the city, the establishment of the various [political] parties – and Baranovich had all kinds of such parties; and the Slonim brand of Hasidism in Baranovich, and its two leading figures, Rabbi Moshe Midner, and Rabbi Abraham Weinberg – is these articles that those who were not Hebrew-speaking, would be drawn to read first of all with great interest.

For those from Baranovich, this book is a treasure filled with information about their city, which will refresh their memories, and their memories of the destruction of Baranovich – which all Jews need to read, in order that they not forget what the Nazis did to their own flesh and blood, and how heroically the downtrodden Jews managed to fight against the enemy. Would that Jews in today's peacetime, exhibit the sort of energy that they showed during the time of their annihilation.

Dr. N. Kroshinsky is especially thanked in the foreword, and also A. Sh. Stein. they, and those others, that dealt with the creation of this book, deserve recognition for the fine literary manner in which they had the book published, and for the large number of quality photographs, that came out so well. It is a book that every scion of Baranovich will want to have in their house.

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The Baranovich Yizkor Book

By Ber Green

A new, important book, has been added to the Holocaust literature – a Yizkor Book: Baranovich.

This Memorial Book (668 pages, in chronological sections) appeared in Yiddish and Hebrew (in Yel-Aviv, 1953), published by the Baranovich *landsleit* in Israel.

This is a moving, heartrending work, about the establishment, rise, life, and denouement of a very special city – a Mother' in Israel – a book of remembrances, descriptions, essays, documents, and many photographic images, about a substantive Jewish community, which the Nazi barbarians exterminated in the years 1940-1945.

Who has not heard of our beloved Baranovich? Our beloved *Sholom Aleichem* made it renown among Jews the world over. He permanently memorialized the Baranovich station in the Minsk *Guberniya* in one of his stories. In 1908 (then 49 years old), during a lecture in Baranovich, he was suddenly taken ill. He was bedridden there for the following two months.

In his memoir, Under Czarist Russian Rule,' Dr. Nehemiah Kroshinsky tells, in the Yizkor Book, about *Sholom Aleichem's* sudden onset of illness in Baranovich: The news of the tragic event spread with lightning speed throughout the city.... the mood of the Jewish populace was very anxious... everyone felt somewhat personally responsible for the misfortune.'

The wondrous and extraordinary reception that *Sholom Aleichem* received, from the Jews of Baranovich, their standing watch beside the bed of the patient, day and night, made a very strong impression on the great classical writer. He very much took Baranovich to his heart. After his going off to Nervi, Italy, to obtain additional cure, he carried on from there, for a longer time, a regular correspondence with Baranovich, and sent his pictures.' In his own preciously humorous fashion, *Sholom Aleichem* characterized Baranovich as a *shtetl* standing on the outside, a *shtetl* of newcomers;' on another occasion, he said about Baranovich: A *shtetl* without a park;' and also: There are two large train stations on either side, and in the middle – a large muddy bog.'

Much space is devoted, in the Yizkor Book, to the birth of Baranovich, the city of the two railroad stations, and large muddy bogs – the youngest city in Europe. Baranovich was established in either 1883 or 1885. On the eve of the Holocaust, it had a population of approximately twenty thousand Jews. At that time it was all of sixty years old, when the Hitlerist murderers, in 1944, exterminated them, along with the Jewish settlement.

In that place, where Baranovich stands today, there once was a forest; near the forest – a saloon; the saloon belonged to the first resident of Baranovich, Shai'keh Baranovicher. He was the first Jew that resided on the Baranovich tract, when it was not yet even formally in existence. He was the one who built the first houses, and the saloon, which stood on old-Baranovich. Another pioneer was Yitzhak Berezovsky. In 1868-1869 he was living in the Baranovich forest providing cross-ties for the Moscow-Brisk railroad line, which was, at that time, under construction.' Later, in 1880-1883, the Polesia railroad was put through. These two train stations began to attract Jewish immigrants,' migrants in general, and newcomers,' from the surrounding Jewish towns. On the Polesia swamps, on the former tracts of forest, Jewish laborers, and Jews seeking a way to make a living, built a settlement, Baranovich, which continuously grew, drawing much

spiritual capital from the older Jewish cities and towns, such as Mys (in existence for more than 800 years), Ljahaviči (in existence for more than 500 years), Slonim, Haradzišča, and others. Jewish Mys'– Dr. Kroshinsky relates – Slowly transferred itself to Baranovich, and helped the new settlement.' (P. 27).

The colorful history of this very settlement, is systematically organized and told in this Memorial Book. You can see the pictures, read the writings, memoirs, set down by those survivors who are from Baranovich, and it tears at your heart: before you, you se an young, up-and-coming, burgeoning settlement, with a dynamic, creative, and variegated life, with its own unique face, with a substantive, affectionate, stormy idealistic youth – a youth with dreams, longings, striving, hopes, yearnings, with a pull to the larger, wider world...

The essays, writings and photographs also show a settlement in the process of growing: movements, parties, community endeavors, cultural activities, class conflicts, social struggles, heroism and dedication and resistance and struggle against the Hitlerist murderers.

The book portrays Baranovich as a bulwark of *Hasidism,* and also as a genuine center for Yiddish culture. Jews of all persuasion,' are portrayed, simple folks,' wondrous folk people, tireless workers, factory workers, craftsmen, Torah scholars, Rabbis and *Rebbes*, zealous *Hasidim*, and *Mitnagdim*, observant orthodox Jews, and modern enlightened people, rationalists and people of reason, intellectuals, professionals; misers and monied aristocracy;' Yiddishists and Hebraists; Zionists, *Bundists*, communists. Apart from this, there are pen-portraits of colorful personalities, very colorful personalities of individuals, who are etched into memory.

Here, you have many dramatic images and memories of the one-time Baranovich way of life, various aspects and customs; [tales of] Baranovich yeshivas, *Heders*, modern educational institutions, libraries, institutions and organizations, trade unions, beginning in 1903, the growth and development of the local Jewish labor movement; First of May celebrations, assemblies, special articles deal with such issues as philanthropic institutions, and also the Fire-Fighters Association, the Jewish Drama Circle, *Gemilut Hesed*,' and *Kleinkredit*' Society, the sports society *Maccabi*,' etc.

Of great interest, is the article by Aryeh Szamuszkowicz, about the Yiddish Press in Baranovich: six Yiddish weeklies (Baranovich *Leben*, *Baranovicher Vokh*,' *Bleu-Weiss,*' *Dos Freie Vort*,' *Baranovicher Courier*,' *'Baranovicher Vokhnblatt'*) were published in the years of 1928-1937.

The participants in the creation of this very valuable book write, with justifiable pride, about the many important guests that made the effort to visit Baranovich. Among them: Dr. Chaim Zhitlowsky, Ch. N. Bialik, Yakir Warszawsky, Dr. Yitzhak Szyfer, Prof. M. Schorr, Leib Jaffe, etc. It was the ardor of the Baranovich audience that drew them to come there, its respectfulness, and great deference shown to the icons of that generation.'

Dr. Z. Levinbook's memoir occupies a central place in the book.: The Destruction of Baranovich Jewry.' Here are the gruesome images, against which Dante's *Inferno*' pales – descriptions of horrifying, blood-congealing episodes, of the Nazi cannibalism in the Baranovich ghetto, in the torture camp of Koldichevo, and in the ghettoes of the surrounding towns; what life' was like in the underground hideouts,' the three mass-slaughters in Baranovich, the slaughters in Ljahaviči and Slonim; pictures of the mass graves, of the pits' full of those who were killed.

A. Lidowsky's description is very moving: The Resistance Organization" – images and episodes of resolute

self-confidence, of strength and heroism, of heroic attempts to organize a resistance against the murderers (a early as 1942!). You learn of the traitorous role of the *Judenrat* member who cooperated with the Nazis. You learn about how, individual Jews, risking their lives, saved themselves from the ghetto, fleeing to the partisan divisions in the forests of Polesia, the swamps of Pinsk, and the Naliboki forests. You read about the partisan Otryad called Molotov,' about the partisans of the First of May' Brigade, about the help of the Soviet partisans and the partisan personnel who were liaisons to the Jews in the ghetto; about the heroic part of the Baranovici Jews in the partisan battles against the barbarians.

You also read items written by individuals from the Baranovich landsleit in Israel, Argentina, South Africa, North America, and Chile. Moshe Yudelewicz writes about the Baranovich scions in Chile that, a brother of theirs, and employee of the *Morgen-Freiheit*,' Abraham Yudin, in his substantive section Memories of Folklore,' participated with M. Yudelewicz, in an outstanding nostalgia memoir, Extending Hospitality,' (about Shai'keh Baranovicher).

The Baranovich Boo, has been written, compiled and edited with understanding and skill, with a great deal of dedication, with deep affection and loyalty. In reading this Memorial Book – about that burgeoning Jewish settlement in Baranovich, and about the Nazi extermination of that very settlement (amounting to a third of our people), I get lightning sharp pains in my head and the behest of the heroes and martyrs stands out prominently in my mind: Do not forget, and do not forgive! Remember what the Nazi [Amalek] did to you!

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A Baranovich Bat-Mitzvah in the State of Israel

By A. Sh. Uris

Just like a drop of sea water contains all of the elements of the sea, so is the life of an individual a reflection of an entire generation, in a given historical period. And there certainly has not been such a period in human history in general, in which an individual lived a general life, and had a fate identical to that of the whole, as it was in our time. And if, in the final analysis, the individual escaped the fate of the whole, it was an exception, a miracle. Here, we will describe the story of such an exception, which only confirms the greater tragedy, and illuminates, all the more, the miracle that occurred to an individual.

It is the biography of a Jewish family. The family of Eliezer Lidowsky from Baranovich, a city that was a Mother in Israel,' a loyal family, that was Zionist. The storm of the Nazi Brown Beast arrived, and in annihilating the Jewish people of Europe, it also eradicated the Lidowsky family, wife and children. Only the head of the family remained alive, because, in the spirit of the Zionist concept, he was able to decide, in a timely fashion, not to passively' accept the fate that history and the Brown Barbarians had meted out, but rather to actively, with arms in hand, resist Enemy Number One of the Jewish people. It was in this manner that Eliezer Lidowsky joined the partisan brigades in the Polesia forests, and together with other Jewish and non-Jewish partisans, fought the holy war against the Enemy of Humanity, and of the Jewish people. It was in this fashion that Eliezer Lidowsky fought for the human-Jewish dignity of the people of Israel. He had decided that when the storm will pass, and were he to remain alive, he would immediately make *aliyah* to Zion.

The storm did pass, and the régime of tyranny was defeated, but a third of the Jewish people had been annihilated, and along with them, the family of Eliezer Lidowsky. Those who survived could no longer remain in that vast cemetery of the Jewish people in Polish soil, and had only one demand: a return to Zion. But a hostile authority, the Mandate Administration of the mighty global British Empire, locked the doors to the homeland. A continuation of the partisan initiative began, on the seas and on land, on direct and indirect ways to get to Zion, and for a freer *aliyah.*

Fate decreed that our good friend Eliezer found a loyal life's companion in our [other] friend Rachel, who was prepared to fight alongside him for the right of the Jewish people, and for all Jewish individuals, and for the God-given natural rights to a homeland in Zion. And so it was, that Eliezer and Rachel, despite the fact that she was in the later months of pregnancy, set out by direct and indirect means, on trains and ships, without passports and visas, only with a Zionist vision in their hearts, to reach the shores of the Land of Israel. But that alien and cruel authority, interdicted their entry into the homeland, and relegated them in the Diaspora; the Diaspora of Cyprus.

But here, in Cyprus, a great wonder occurred. With great good fortune, a baby daughter was born to them, and the joy of this evidence of continuity was so great, they could not find any better name for her, other than Aliza.' For them, it was a symbolic Zionist act. The Brown Beast wanted to exterminate the Jewish people, and it was The Beast that was exterminated, and *Am Yisrael Chai.*' This little Aliza was, for them, the symbolic and real argument for the continuation of their family, and for the continuity of the people of Israel. Their joy and happiness knew no bounds.

The second miracle was the single humane paragraph in the otherwise inhuman, anti-*aliyah* decree of the English Mandate Authority: the birth of a child on English territory, Cyprus, even though it was an occupied Greek-Turkish island, and even though the child was born in a camp of illegal aliens, gives the child a right to be int eh Jewish homeland of Zion. And seeing that a newborn child must have its parents, the entire Lidowsky family was privileged to be granted an exceptional legal entry into the Land of Israel.

That first year in Zion was anything but an easy, tranquil year for the Lidowsky family. They, once again, fell into a period of unrest involving the struggle of the Jewish *Yishuv* to obtain the right for the Jewish people to establish its own state in Zion. Once again, we see our friend Eliezer, with a rifle in his hand, defending Jewish property with life and limb, in *Kibbutz* Netzer, against feral Arab neighbors. Barely five months old, little Aliza must taste the taste of evacuation from Kibbutz Ashdod Yaakov, because hostile Egyptian airplanes had set out to annihilate Jewish life in Israel, and to drown the one last hope of the Jewish people for a sovereign Jewish nation, in Jewish blood, and in the process, set themselves to snuff out the life of little Aliza. And then yet another miracle occurred; Aliza was saved, and the Jewish State in Israel was saved, and in that very same year when Aliza was born, the State of Israel proclaimed its independence.

Little Aliza began to grow and bloom in the free Land of Israel. Barely two years old, and she was already in nursery school,' and was already showing signs of her artistic talent. She is drawn to the area of music. At age five, she begins to play the piano, and exhibits talent as a pianist that is out of the ordinary. At the age of ten, she receives a stipend of support from the Norman Fund, in order to continue her studies of piano. She is an outstanding student as well, especially in history and literature, and most of all, in *Tanakh*, her favorite area of study. And in this fashion, she was fortunate in reaching the age of Bat-Mitzvah, at the same time as the Bat-mitzvah year for the State of Israel.

Her parents, Eliezer and Rachel Lidowsky, decided to express their happiness, and the happiness of their

child, in an artistic fashion, in the form of a piano concert given by little Aliza. Quite a substantial audience came together in the auditorium of the *Agudat HaSofrim*, in the house named for Shaul Tchernikhovsky: former partisans, and young Sabras, writers and performers, politicians and journalists, members of the Knesset, among them also Moshe Sharett. In a word – it was the political-cultural world of Tel-Aviv, and of Israel in general.

The speech of the Director of the Ramat-Gan School, Shmuel Epstein, a friend and fellow fighter alongside Eliezer Lidowsky, was a sort of overture, dedicated to the Lidowsky family, their struggle for survival and *aliyah*, and especially for that great double-miracle, of having the State of Israel and their daughter Aliza born in the same year. Both the State of Israel, and Aliza became Bat-Mitzvah in one and the same year. And when the little Aliza then performed on the piano, playing perfectly the artistic compositions of Bach and Mozart, of the romantic Schumann. and the poetic creations of the impressionists Debussy and the divine Beethoven, and compositions of the Israeli Avidom – one could see in her a future piano virtuoso, and a heavenly spiritual joy imbued all the listeners. It is hard to conceive of a more beautiful celebration of Aliza's Bat-Mitzvah.

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She Did Not See Death Only Once Before Her Eyes

By Sh. Bank

(The Experiences of a Heroine from Baranovich)

Helen Finn, a 19 year-old girl from Baranovich, saw death before her eyes many times. At the end, though, she dispatched tens of Germans to their eternal rest. She derailed the enemy's trains, and blew up the enemy's bridges. She took revenge for the death of her mother, and for her own frightful suffering.

Helen's brother had left Poland while he was still a young boy. Her father had died when she was only 13 years old. In order to support herself, and her ailing mother, she took on students, while she herself was still in high school. In 1939, when the Soviets took control, Helen went off to study at the Pedagogical Institute.

When the German-Soviet War broke out in 1941, Helen took her 64 year-old mother and went off to Haradzišča, 25 km. from Baranovich.

In September of that year, the Germans carried out a registration of the entire male Jewish population. The Jews then received an order to dig pits, allegedly for military purposes. Afterwards, they were all shot and buried in these pits. Later on, the registration of the women and children began.

Hidden in an Attic

When the women and children were driven to their execution. Helen and her mother escaped. For two days, they hid themselves in a warehouse, and on the third day, when they could no longer hold out because of hunger, they left their hiding place. They learned that on that day, 1,400 women and children were shot to death by the Nazis. Seventy men and ten women who remained alive in Haradzišča, where transferred to small huts were declared by the Nazis to be a Jewish ghetto. Shortly afterwards, however, the Jews there were murdered. Helen Finn and her mother hid themselves in the attic of a house, where the *Gestapo* detained fifteen specialist craftsmen under guard.

'You Are Too Young To Die'

When the pogrom was over, the girl decided to return to Baranovich. However this was dangerously risky, and Helen began to think about committing suicide. However, her mother restrained her, saying: My child, you are too young to die yet, you must live!'

Ten Thousand Are Killed

Nevertheless, they did arrive in Baranovich, and for close to a month, they were hidden by a Polish woman, Olympia Bulmer, an old family friend. One day, however, an informer betrayed their presence, and the mother with her daughter were forced to abandon their hiding place, and go off to the ghetto. At the end of 1941, there were about 2,000 Jews in the ghetto. Ten thousand Jews had [already] been killed.

Taken Away in Gas Trucks

On the third day, the Nazis found out about their hiding place, and in the time that the Gestapo man ran to summon the police, six people were able to come up and hide themselves in the same house. From the attic, they were able to see how the police drove out 44 people from a pit, and then threw grenades in there, and how they took off their victims in gas trucks.

Without Food or Water

Only 200 people remained in the ghetto; they were capable craftsmen, so called *Wert-Juden.*' The Nazis needed them, and had decided to temporarily postpone their death.

At the end of 1942, the Nazis again took to the ghetto. Forty people, who had hidden themselves in a cellar, in fact ended up living their last days there. The chewed on their leather thongs, and drank their own urine. Eight people, including Helen and her mother, who could no longer stand the hunger, filth and thirst, went up to the attic before the pogrom began. Thirty-two people were killed there directly by the Nazis. The eight people had neither food not water. The November cold arrived. Helen had decided to go into the house, to find food or drink. It was dark, and in the oven, she found a small pot of fresh water. She grabbed a drink and immediately spit it out.... the small pot was full of the soap suds from washing dirty laundry.

Her Mother in Nazi Hands

Quickly, she ran back up to the attic. she saw how Germans were running about, and she saw how they were beating women and children, and raping girls in the streets. Suddenly, one of them turned away, and went to the attic. She hid herself behind a chimney. In the half-darkness, she saw how the German was going from one spot to the next. She heard how he was cursing, and using foul language. Suddenly, his hands touched her mother... He called other Nazis. They dragged people down and murdered them, one after another. They did not find Helen. Miraculously, she saved herself.

Praskovya Ivanovna Munkus, a Byelorussian woman, risking her own life, hid the girl. At the beginning of 1943, she came in contact with partisans. A new life began for her.

Partisan Missions

Apart from Russian and Yiddish, which she speaks fluently, she also knows German and Polish well. Sometimes, she would go dressed as a peasant girl, another time – in elegant urban dress. Occasionally, she would be pregnant,' and another time – a prostitute.' This was the way she would carry out partisan missions.

She was born and was raised in Baranovich, but no one was able to recognize her origins. With a hairpin, she would mark on her own tanned feet, the place where the enemy's camp was, and as quickly as she would get outside of the city, she would transcribe it onto paper. Looking for the birth clinic,' she would circulate through tens of German offices, where she would gather needed intelligence. She took part in blowing up bridges, and derailing trains; she participated in the famous train derailment in Brest-Litovsk.

Today, Helen works as a translator in the Commissariat of Municipal Security.

I do more here than I do in school' – she says – I help to uncover who the German animals are. God! How I hate them!

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The Fate of the Jews in Baranovich and Vicinity

By Joseph Ziegelbaum

Four days, after Hitler-Germany attacked Russia, meaning 26 June 1941, Minsk, the capital city of Byelorussia, fell. And it was only several days later, that the Germans reached the territory of Greater Russian Republic.

The just-occupied Byelorussia made a frightening sight. The cities suffered from fires. The population of the cities had hidden themselves in the surrounding forests and villages, or wandered over the roads – some to the east, and others to the west.

The frightening scene, in those hot June days, were manifest on the roads of Byelorussia. All the roads were covered with dead Russian soldiers, civilians, women and children. No one showed any concern about the dead. At the most, they were heaved off the middle of the road into the ravines by the side, in order that they do not impede traffic. Among those killed, were a large number of Jews.

And there was much traffic on the roads. The German military, armed to the teeth, was on the march. Columns of huge tanks lumbered by on their tracks. Thousands upon thousands of refugees, of all nationalities, were wandering all about.

German field command stations were set up in the cities. They initiated their authority by engaging in mass shootings. This took place in almost all the cities, Lida, Baranovich, Slonim, Stolpčy, Minsk, Mozyr, Gomel', etc. It was the Jews who were shot. We are familiar with incidents of that time, that took place in Lida and Baranovich. On one specific day, the Germans, in both cities, dragged seventy-three Jewish men out of bed, led them out to placed in the middle of the city, and shot them to death.

On that same day, after noon, huge placards appeared on the walls of the cities, in which the German field command advised that it had shot 73 Jewish communists, who had been informed on, as being prepared to carry out an underground war with Germany, through espionage, and diversionary tactics.

Among the 73 t5hat were shot in Lida, were two Bundists of note from Warsaw: Natanblit (*Tazhan*), a member of *Zukunft-Sturm*' and one of the best sportsmen of the Warsaw *Morgenstern*,' and the second, Israelik, a former functionary of the Warsaw Society, the husband of Kh'teh Chay'keh Levin, who was very well-known in Warsaw, as a sparkplug, futurist, and a very active party member of the time.

After the first *aktion*, the field command began to organize the administrative apparatus. The majority of the volunteers in Byelorussia at that time were the Poles. It was from their ranks that the first of the burgomasters were designated in the cities, and they formed the first of the police cadres that the Germans created.

The Polish-German police gave itself considerable license at Jewish expense. Groups of Polish police

appeared, with Germans, who robbed Jewish houses. In the process, many Jews fell dead and wounded. There were young Polish police who were thugs, who threatened, that the streets would quickly be paved with the residue from Jewish heads. In that period, may Byelorussians represented themselves to be Poles.

Two weeks after the German troops marched in, an order came out that Jews must wear a white armband with a yellow Star of David on the left arm, and Jews must life in a special quarter of the cities. Ghettoes began to be created – the first stage of the full physical extermination of the Jews.

A new thing happened several weeks after the ghettoes were created. Byelorussia was declared as a separate country, with its own administration. The Polish employees were replaced with Byelorussians. Byelorussians signs began to appear on the public buildings. The flag of Byelorussia was raised (White-Red-White) as was the national sym(A Rider on a Horse). Beside each Byelorussian flag, there also stood a flag flying the swastika.

The Byelorussian police demonstrated that it was no less anti-Semitic than the Polish ones. The guard duty, around the ghetto, was taken over by these police. By contrast with the Polish police, the Byelorussian police were armed.

For the Jews, this was the beginning of a difficult period. An order came out that Jews [now] had to wear two yellow badges: one on the breast, and one on the back. Jews were not allowed to walk on the sidewalk, only in the middle of the street. Jews were not permitted to appear on the Aryan side after 6:00PM. For not obeying this order, many Jews were shot in the street. I was witness to such a scene in Baranovich, where Yankl Zeleznicky was shot, a boy of 16 years of age.

In that period of time the Germans set up *Judenrat* organizations in the ghettoes. The *Judenrat*, in turn, created a Jewish police force. The Germans tasked the Judenrat with such demands as: if a German made a demand for a certain number of Jewish laborers, they were to provide them. The *Judenrat* also had to deal with providing the food for the ghetto, and also care for the state of health of its residents. And the most important thing: it was the *Judenrat* that had to produce, by a specific deadline, all of the demanded tributes that were levied against the ghetto in question.

In September 1941, the Germans levied their first tribute on the Jews. In Baranovich, the German *Kommissar* of the city, Werner, levied a tribute against the ghetto in the amount of one million Russian rubles, ten kilos of gold, and one hundred kilos of silver. In case this tribute were not paid, *Kommissar* Werner threatened to shoot the entire *Judenrat.*

The demanded amount was gathered in the time required. however, this was only the beginning. Following this, a whole array of tributes were levied against the Baranovich ghetto. The Chairman of the Judenrat, the well-known Baranovich merchant, Evsei Izikson, together with his wife, Genya Mann, literally worked miracles, and always were able to produce the demanded sums on time. However-, they were not fated to live for very long.

In the middle of September 1941, a handful of Jews arrived in Baranovich from the small towns of Moučadz' and Ljahaviči. The Jews smuggled themselves in, among the columns of workers that were returning home. The Jews told of frightful things. A day earlier, the ghettoes in both towns had been surrounded by Germans, Ukrainians, and Byelorussians (the latter two, as police), Lithuanians and Latvians. All the Jews were led to the cemetery. There, pits had already been dug, in preparation. Beside the pits, the Jews were shot, one

part at a time. A few in number managed to save themselves, and it was these, who had come to Baranovich. Among those who saved themselves, was the Ljahavičy resident Lejzor Segal, who later became the commander of a large partisan *Otryad*. (Today, Lejzor Segal lives in Israel with his wife).

This news made a frightful impression on the Jews in Baranovich. For everyone, the fate of the Jews in the Baranovich ghetto, and that of the Jews, in general, now became very clear. As a result of these incidents, the young people in the ghetto began to look differently at their own fate, and the idea was born, to mount a resistance, and to exact a dear price for one's own life.

The largest part of them worked at a variety of German commands. More that a thousand young people worked in a command called *Feldzug B*.' This was a command that would gather up the spoils of war, especially [discarded, or abandoned] Soviet weaponry. Jews worked at sorting this weaponry, polishing it, etc. A second large contingent of Jews worked at an airfield, doing similar things. Apart from that, several thousand Jews worked in a variety of factories, workplaces, mills, and in just ordinary German military units.

A day after the news of the events in Ljahavičy and Moučadz' reached Baranovich, twelve young people got together in the evening, to take counsel. Among the twelve were: Tot'keh Ljahavicky (an activist in *Zukunft*, and a former functionary in a Warsaw metal works), Tob'cheh Geber (A lady member of the Warsaw *Zukunft*), Foxman (A Warsaw *Bundist* representative man), Blondman (a *Bundist* and typesetter for the Warsaw *Volks-Zeitung*' and an active member of the Warsaw press union), the writer of these lines, Chaim Stalovičy (a Revisionist, a student from Baranovich), Shlomo Ravitzky (Right-wing *Poalei-Tzionim*, Baranovich), and others. At this consultative meeting, it was decided to organize armed groups with the objective of mounting resistance to the Germans.

It was decided to begin smuggling weaponry into the ghetto. this work was immediately allocated out. Tot'keh Ljahavicky needed to organize the operation of smuggling weaponry out of *Feldzug B*, because he worked there, and Chaim Stolovicky – was to do the same from the airfield. It was also decided to begin a clandestine recruiting campaign among the young.

The smuggling of weaponry went very well. The Germans in each of the commands, permitted the workers to take away bundles of wood to heat the houses. Part of the time, the German officers permitted whole wagon loads of wood to be brought into the ghetto. And it was in between the pieces of wood, that parts of rifles, and even mortars would be smuggled in, that were later re-assembled inside the ghetto. The sanitation workers of the ghetto also took part in the smuggling operations, who in the empty latrine barrels, would bring in boxes of ammunition and weapons, into the ghetto. Monik Muszinsky, from Częstochowa, was especially good at this work. Monik was personally responsible for bringing in half of the ammunition into the ghetto. Monik later became the commander of a diversion-group' and a great hero.

The fighting organization grew very rapidly. About a week after the first meeting, there were already sixty armed members.

Tunnels were built out at a several points in the ghetto, with special caches for the weapons and ammunition. In the long underground corridors, or tunnels, the young ghetto fighters learned how to handle the weapons. This [training] work was carried out under the supervision of the former non-commissioned officer of the Polish army, Moma Kapilowicz (*HaShomer HaTza'ir*, Baranovich). Later, he was killed in the fighting of the partisans. There was also a doctor in the organization, Dr. Arnold Aaronson from Lodz, who put together a sanitation group. Dr. Arnold Aaronson was a famous radiologist from Lodz.

In time, the *Judenrat* and the Jewish police became aware of the organization. Their attitude towards it, from the outset was not a constructive one. However, in time, this changes, and many Jewish policemen joined the organization. Their example brought along several members of the *Judenrat* itself.

News came via people from Slonim, Njasviz, Kleck, and other small towns, that similar groups had been created there as well.

A shameful thing occurred in October. Everything about this undertaking was revealed to the *Gestapo*. The Germans began to conduct searches, based on the indications that were given to them. they found a small amount of weapons, but they arrested a large number of the members of the organization. Several days later, those who had been arrested were hanged. The following were killed: Tot'keh Ljahavicky, Tob'cheh Geber, and her husband, Foxman, Franka Goldstein (the daughter of the publisher of the *Volks Zeitung*,' David Goldstein) with her one year-old son, and others. The writer of these lines was fortunate in being able to flee, together with fifteen Jews, into the Polesia forests.

After these events, many Jews began to escape from the ghetto. Every day, several people would disappear.

At that time, the partisan struggle began to develop in the Baranovich vicinity. News would reach us about German soldiers and officers who had been killed on the roads.

In November, the Germans captured four partisans in a village. Their crime was to have incited the peasants of the surrounding villages, persuading them not to give the Germans the set quantity of grain, meat, etc. This is what was represented in the official German communique.

The Germans hung these four peasants in the middle of the city. Over their chests, signs were hung with the inscription: This is the end that will come to anyone that will raise a hand against the Thousand-Year Reich.' The four peasants hung this way, for three days.

This, however, did not frighten the populace, but rather the exact opposite: whether it was among the Jews or the Poles, of the city and its vicinity, resistance organizations were established. The organization was very helpful to the Jews, even with the supply of weaponry.

And so, it continued this way, until March 1942. On 4 March, the *Judenrat* suddenly began to distribute blue cards among the ranks of the more important Jewish workers. with a large letter U' in the middle. Whether or not the *Judenrat* knew the meaning of these cards – I do not know. About an hour later, a gendarmerie entered the ghetto, along with the *Gestapo*, and their Byelorussian, Lithuanian, and Latvian accomplices. They divided the ghetto into two parts. All the people with the blue cards were driven into one part of the ghetto, and the second part had those without such a card. In the part where the people had no cards, freight trucks came in, and the Germans and their accomplices began seizing Jews and loading them into the vehicles. The filled trucks would immediately ride off to the green bridge,' outside of the city. There, two huge pits had already been dug out. Strong units of Germans, Byelorussians, Lithuanians and Latvians, waited for the Jews. The Jews were forced to strip naked, with no consideration for the bitter cold, and they were then driven into the pits and shot.

On that day, three thousand Jews were murdered.

There were two instances of resistance. the Warsaw worker, Felek Rutkowsky, stabbed a German, and a Lithuanian was also killed.

During the course of the *aktion*, the Elder of the *Judenrat*, Arnold[34] Izikson was murdered in a sadistic fashion, and his previously mentioned wife, Genya Mann.

The resistance organization, de facto, had ceased to exist, because its members, partly were killed, and partly fled to the surrounding forests.

A similar *aktion* took place in the little shtetl of Njasviz at the same time. there, a more substantive, but shorter battle took place between the Germans and the armed Jews. There were over ten Germans killed and several tens wounded. Almost all the Jews were wiped out. (from approximately three-and- a-half thousand, only 25 survived).

After this *aktion*, a new period began for the Jews – the period of partisan warfare.

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The Heroism of the Baranovich Jewish Partisans

By H. Vital

In the Hebrew newspapers in Israel, we find an interview with a Jewish partisan from Baranovich, who in the course of about a half-year, fought in the forests and swamps of Polesia. For personal reasons, his name is not given. In that region, he fought against the German murderers, until the Russian Red Army liberated the region. Soon, after the liberation, this particular partisan left Baranovich, and had just now arrived in Israel.

Before a reporter of the [newspaper] *Davar*,' he related his impressions of the destruction of Baranovich, and the heroism of the Jewish partisans. and of himself, he tells [as follows]:

I took vengeance upon the Germans with everything, with whatever it was that I could use. My arms were soaked with Nazi blood up to the shoulders. On 10 October 1942, I, and other of my comrades fled from the Baranovich ghetto, and we organized a partisan group, which operated with great heroism up to February 1944, until the Red Army entered, and liberated, our entire region. We assumed the burden of many things in the passage of that time. About many of those things, the time has not yet come to tell about them.

The list of the railroad trains and freight trucks that we blew up is a long one; we sent many Germans off to the Other World. The partisans took nothing into consideration, not even their own lives, and they demonstrated substantive heroism, that only embittered people, and people gorged on frustration and disappointment, can stand to bear. And even one of us thirsted for revenge...'

He goes on: After the First Slaughter, when 3,500 Jews were led away to the green bridge' and were killed there, the ghetto built up a secret fighting organization. In a short time, this organization numbered 180

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[34] It is unclear why this person, usually referred to as 'Evsei Izikson,' is referred to as 'Arnold' here. It may be an inadvertent confusion with Dr. Arnold Aaronson.

members, both men and women. Every fighting unit consisted of five people, and it was necessary to be extremely careful not to be caught.'

At the risk of one's life, weaponry was smuggled into the ghetto. The rifles and revolvers would be disassembled into their components, in order that they not be recognizable. In the course of the time, we acquired 80 rifles, two light machine guns, and 12,000 rounds and explosives. Military training was conducted under the most stringent conditions of security.

The Jews prepared hiding places. By accident, a German once uncovered a Jewish hiding place. However, he never left that place.

On 10 October 1942, 19 young men and 3 young women stole out of the ghetto. Among those 19 was the teller of this story. Each was supposed to bring along the weapons to their place of work. Afterwards, they made rendezvous in a small woods, near the air field. There, they waited the entire day, and at night, they set out on the road. They proceeded for three days in this fashion, using a map and compass that they had with them. They traveled for 55 kilometers, until they reached the village of Zalužža. There, the peasants told them that on the other side of the Szczara River, there was a Soviet partisan division, and that the two Jews from Kryvošyn, Zavelowsky and Blum, have just gone over to the partisans.

The bridge was burned, and a Byelorussian peasant ferried them over the river in a small craft. After several days of slogging through the mud, they spied, in the distance, that an armed man, in a German uniform, is drawing near to them. They grabbed their rifles and wanted to shoot in that direction. However, the man began to shout loudly in Russian: 'Что ето такой? (Who are you?) And the youths lowered their rifles, when they heard the sound of Russian being spoken.

I went up to him,' he went on to tell, and he approached me: You are a Jew, and I am a partisan. My name is Kolya, from the village of Kryvošyn.' He exchanged kisses with me arduously, and shook my hand with vigor. He also conveyed regards from our five comrades, who had left on the 5th of October from the Baranovich ghetto.'

They completed the rest of the journey together, after which they encountered their 5 comrades, who were re-united with them. And the following night, they all went out to work,; or to do operations' – as it is called in the lingo of the partisans. Their first job was to find food for the partisans.

At the end of 1942, they were joined by 25 additional comrades from the Baranovich ghetto, who told that at the end of December, the murderers had killed the last of the Jews in Baranovich. Hundreds of the men, who had been skilled craftsmen, were crammed into a separate camp, because the Germans still had a use for them. But when the Germans discovered that these hundred men were looking for weapons, they took everyone out to the gas chambers there, and gassed them to death.

For two months time,' he goes on to tell, we occupied ourselves with laying in food stores for the winter. From traitorous peasants, or peasants that were friendly to the Germans, or were known for they hatred of the Jews – we took away everything that they had. If we found any Jewish possessions in the hands of a peasant – we would burn his house down. Once, a band of peasants attacked us. We were traveling to one of the villages to return the wagons, after that, on the previous night, we had confiscated foodstuffs from the peasants. A battle ensued. Two of our comrades fell in this battle, and one was wounded.

On another occasion, we were attacked by a band of Germans. Moma Kapilowicz from *HaShomer HaTza'ir,*' fell at that time. We took his remains along, and interred him in the forest with military honors. A salvo of 15 rifles were fired, as he was lowered into his grave. Another comrade, Shlomo Landsky[35], was captured alive by the Germans. They tied him to the rear of a horse, and dragged him along that way for a long distance. Despite the frightful tortures, that he suffered, he did not tell the Germans anything.

Three of the lads were given the mission to blow up a factory near Baranovich. One of the youths, whom we referred to as Moshe *Kotolyik*[36]' was caught before they had carried out their mission. the two others fled. Moshe was brought to the interrogator. There, from a hidden place, he took out a hand grenade, and threw it at the interrogator. The hand grenade did not explode, and Moshe was killed on the spot.

A group of three comrades was sent to spy on the railroad line, to see how many trains go by, and what their cargo is. They sat in hiding for three days, and came back with the required information. After this, a second group of three comrades went out, to spy on the rail lines, but only one of them, Mukasey, returned. The other two, Moshe Krawicky, and David Ossowsky, fell into German hands. After that, the Germans chopped down the trees on both sides of the railroad tracks, for a stretch of 200 meters.

New partisan comrades came to join us. However, they had no weaponry. And the problem of weapons and ammunition was the most difficult problem to deal with. At that time, we decided to go out onto the Brisk-Moscow road, in order to rob the necessary weaponry. We left in a band of twelve men, to do this particular foray,' but only two had real rifles. The rest had only staves, that looked like rifles. The foray' succeeded, and we came back with a lot of automatic rifles.

We also confiscated a great deal of ammunition from the peasants. in the villages, and where the peasants were antagonistically inclined to us, we notified them that they have to turn over all their weaponry to us by a certain deadline date. After that, we searched these houses, and if we found any armaments there, they were shot.

Because of their fear of the partisans, the Germans issued an order to their military people, that traffic is to be stopped at night on the Brisk-Moscow road. We then mined the road, and caused them a great deal of damage. the Germans then issued an order that a patrol is to traverse and inspect the road every morning, to see if it is clear of mines. At that time, we decided to take down the patrol on the road. The patrol consisted of ten bicycle riders, On one nice morning, we took them all down. We returned on their bicycles, and with their weaponry. After that, the Germans began to send automobiles to patrol the road. We then sent a larger group, and they wiped out the automobile with its occupants. The Germans then began to send armored cars.

We had a multi-branched level of activity. One night, we went out on a hike of a kilometer and a half, and we tore up telephone wires, and uprooted telephone poles. On another occasion, we blew up a turpentine factory, and factories making other materiel, that were required for the German war effort.

After each operation,' we would relocate our headquarters. We lost track of the days. We were genuine forest people. Later on, we were joined by Russian partisans. We would get our orders from the general partisan command.

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35 Spelled 'Lansky' most elsewhere in the book.

36 Possibly derived from the Russian for a 'little tomcat.'

For a variety of political reasons, and differences, 24 of our comrades split off from us, and we organized a separate partisan division. Close to the Passover of 5703 (1943), six peasants informed on us. On one fine morning, we were assaulted by 80 Germans. A very severe battle ensued, and three of our comrades fell, and one was wounded. Also, two of the Germans were killed, and one was wounded. Later on, we found out that the Germans killed 6 peasants, because they had misled them. The peasants told them that the Jews had no weapons. In the following week, we found the bodies of our three comrades: Shary from Kalisz, Nioma Yosselewicz, and Szinewsky from Baranovich. We buried them all.'

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Partisan-Resistance Groups in the S. S. Camp In Baranovich and the Koldichevo Camp

By Lyuba Sluczak

In the year 1942, after the ultimate liquidation of the ghetto in Baranovich (*Ostgebiet* of Poland), the Germans organized three Jewish slave labor camps in the city, as follows:

1. The *'Bauleitung'* Labor Camp
2. The *Todt'* Labor Camp
3. The S. S. Labor Camp

The S. S. camp, which had been set up in the house of the Baroness Ber on Narutowicz [*Gasse*], there were 125 souls; 103 men, and 22 women. The names of the 22 women were[37]:

Doba Cirulnik	Myt'eh Cirulnik	Riva Bolszynska	Fela Zukerman
Rachil Dobkowska	Koronowa	Chana Zaturonska	Chaya Rogotinska
Bat-Sheva'leh Badobla (the three year-old daughter of Dr. Hirsch Badobla, who was killed together with his wife in the Stalovičy ghetto)		Zablocka	Lizka'
Leah Mandel	Rachil Winikowska	Yentl Winikowska	Fanya Sternfeld
Lyuba Altschuler	Folya Sawikowska	Mukasey	Nadia
Lucia Mavshovich	Lyuba Sluczak and	Riva Zaturonska.	

The chief of the camp was the S. S. officer, Ginter. The camp Elder was the Jew, Goldberg, from Suwalk. Goldberg, who could foresee the tragic ending for the people in the camp, meaning, liquidation, and being killed (as happened to all the other slave labor camps in the Baranovich ghetto), began to organize a resistance group in the camp. He put himself in touch with people that had contact with partisans, who fought the Germans in the surrounding forests. Goldberg also cemented a relationship with a Byelorussian policeman who was a member of the camp watch, who was able to procure weaponry, for a huge sum of money.

It was decided that, all those interned in the camp, will on a specified night, designated by the leadership, flee the camp for the forests, and join the partisan camps. Part of those interned knew about the plan, but the plan was kept secret from the larger part of the internees, for security reasons. there was, however, an agreement, that on the specified night of the escape, all the people in the camp would be taken along.

Through an informer, however, the S. S. became aware of the plan, and only 45 people were successful in fleeing to the forest. The rest remained in the camp.

Goldberg, who from the start was the initiator of the plan, did not flee with the group. and remained in the camp. After the escape of the 45, the already sorrowful condition of the internees became even worse, and in the end, they were all liquidated. the remaining slave laborers were driven over to the prison-work camp at Koldichevo, where they had to perform their slave labor under the most unbearable circumstances. From time to time, the S. S. also carried out a *selektion.*

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[37] Please note that all of these last names are given with their Slavic feminine declensions, so that Rachil Dobkowska is a member of the Dobkowsky family, etc.

A secret resistance group was also organized in the prison-labor camp of Koldichevo. On one night, a group escaped through an underground tunnel exit that had been previously prepared and well-camouflaged – to the partisans in the forests. I fled with this group.

The names of tow torturers in the Koldichevo camp have especially become etched into my memory for their cruel handling of the internees. These are:

1. Stepaniuk, a Byelorussian. He was the senior person in the camp. He would murderously beat everyone who came under his hand. He took part in all of the *selektionen*. One time, he forced an inmate, a Byelorussian (in the camp, there were a number of Byelorussians and Poles, incarcerated for political crimes), to eat his own excrement.

2. Viktor Diro, police commandant of the camp, also a Byelorussian. He would torture inmates in a frightful fashion, and take part in all of the *selektionen*.

In the year 1949, the appellate court in Danzig, heard the case of the gruesome murderer, Viktor Diro. He was accused of murderous activity, he carried out during the years 1942-1944 in the Baranovich area.

The bill of accusation against him indicated that, while being a policeman and a member of the criminal Hitlerist organization, *Sonderdienst,*' he carried out an entire array of cruelties against the civilian Jewish, Polish and Byelorussian populace, as well as against partisans, who operated in the Baranovich area.

And the accused was especially brutal during the liquidation of the Jewish population in a whole array of places throughout Byelorussia. He took part in carrying out mass-murders, and personally murdered, beat and tortured innocent people.

Also, that Diro was the deputy to the commandant of the concentration camp in Koldichevo, where he treated those under arrest in an inhuman fashion.

Witnesses testified that he would, with pleasure, attend the executions, at the shooting and torturing of people, and on the even of the entry of the Red Army into the Baranovich area, Diro took an active part in liquidating the camp. This was confirmed by Jews from Koldichevo that survived.

Recognizing the guilt in its entirety, the court sentences the murderer to death. the sentence was carried out by hanging.

In the destruction of Baranovich, I lost my entire family. A father, a mother, brothers and sisters, single and married with small children. We provided thirteen martyrs to the great Holocaust.

As to the death of my dearest family members, in the Baranovich ghetto, I will however, not hold any of the *Judenrat* members responsible, and none of the Jewish police, because both of these bodies did everything within their power to protect and save the Jews of the ghetto. Everyone in the ghetto saw in the *Judenrat* and police, organizations who had to maintain order in the ghetto, organizing the Jewish forced labor for the German *plyatzuvkehs*,'in the city, and to see to it how to carry out the orders of the Germans in the realm of the possible.

The first President of the *Judenrat* was the well-know manufacturer-merchant, and President of the Merchants' Society, and community activist, the lawyer, Evsei Izikson. If, during the Polish régime, Izikson was an active B.B.' member, during the German occupation, in his position as President of the *Judenrat*, he was a proud, nationalist Jew, beloved by the entire ghetto populace, without respect for class of political persuasion. Everyone related to him with great respect, listened to his opinion, and took it into account. All of his instructions, in his capacity as President of the *Judenrat* were scrupulously carried out. Using much diplomatic wisdom, and tact, he would always strive to fulfill the demands of the Germans.

When he needed people for forced labor, in the city, or outside the city, he attempted to get the Jews to do the work without force, not using drastic means, but always in a decent way, even to the point of getting them to volunteer.

Izikson, told the Jews of the ghetto to always provide a clear account about those dangers that hovered over the unprotected Jews in the ghetto. He would plead, and appeal for people to take counsel, and to deal in a responsible fashion. Evsei Izikson, as also did the other members of the *Judenrat,* such as Zhenya[38] Mann, and even though he was not from Baranovich, Idelczyk, Yosh'keh Limon, and also the others, did everything to save the lives of the Jews in the Baranovich ghetto, and many times they managed to succeed.

We relate a number of incidents:

1. In the *aktion* of the 200 young men, out of which none returned. our family suffered the loss of three martyrs, my oldest brother Noah, the little brother Mikh'eleh, and my brother-in-law, Avra'sheh Bass from Hancevičy. And when it came time to distribute the passes for the living on the night before the great Shushan Purim slaughter, in the middle of the night, a Jewish ghetto policeman, came to us, in our *kolkhoz*' and brought three life passes from the *Judenrat* for our family, saying: the *Judenrat* member Idelczyk send you these three living passes, and wished you good luck.'

2. When the Germans came into the ghetto, and removed the heavier, better, and newer furniture and candelabras, from the Jewish houses, all of the furniture was taken out of the house of my married sister. But the next day, she was called to the *Judenrat,* and the *Judenrat* treasury compensated her for almost the entire cost of the furniture that was taken away.

3. The *Judenrat* extended a great deal of care to those families, whose husbands and fathers had either been killed, or deported to other camps. Our family, too, was in this category. I was assigned to the working post in the Judenrat to a group that would go to work outside the ghetto, and to such a group which worked at a location where it was possible to get something to eat, and there was a possibility to buy or barter for foodstuffs, in order that later, this be smuggled into the ghetto for the hungering members of the family.

4. The Jewish police that would stand by the gate, in order to, so to speak, conduct inspections of the Jewish workers returning to the ghetto, so that they not smuggle food inside, did everything they could to assure that as much food got in, as was possible. They would constantly feign unawareness, or that they hadn't seen anything. When my father fell ill in the ghetto, I was even able to smuggle a live chicken inside. The Jewish police saw this, and even went so far as to make it easier for me to bring it in.

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[38] More often given as 'Genya.'

5. The Baranovich *Judenrat* did not only concern itself for the Jews in the Baranovich ghetto, but also concerned itself for the smaller towns, around Baranovich, even though there were *Judenrat* entities in those locations. The Baranovich *Judenrat* helped out the surrounding towns with the levies that were placed upon them [sic: by the Germans].

6. After the Great Slaughter of Shushan Purim, with its 3,500 victims, the Judenrat member Idelczyk came to us in our *kolkhoz*,' to check and see that, God forbid, we had not suffered anymore loss of life.

7. We learned of the decree to transfer the Baranovich ghetto to Ljasnaja, and the *Judenrat* was unable to do anything to avert the decree, so the *Judenrat* sent a women's delegation to the *Gebietskomissar*. At the head of the delegation were the ladies, Chana Mirsky, and Genya Buchhalter, and the intervention of the women did indeed help. The ghetto remained in the city.

8. The larger part of the members of the Judenrat and the Jewish ghetto police were the fathers for the Jews in the ghetto, and when we, the survivors from Baranovich light our Yizkor candles on the days we remember the slaughter of the 12,000 martyrs of our Baranovich, we also light candles in memory of Izikson, Mann, Idelczyk, Limon, Warszawsky, Weltman, and the others. May their memory always be held sacred in our hearts.

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A Jewish Trade School in the Nineteenth Century

By Shlomo Foxman

(*Hevra Kadisha 'Shokdei Melakha'* in Navahardok)

It is known that, the Jewish communities of past years, in our country, developed a proportionate level of support activities in keeping with the needs. The communities in Poland, prior to its independence, had much greater competence that the current ones do. Despite the fact that the Jewish community in its older form was still quite distant form being a democratic institution, its rights and potential were much broader and larger that those of current communities. The one-time communities in Poland would collect government taxes, had the right to impose their own taxes, and oversight and control of Jewish trade unions (in the non-Jewish trade unions, where a fanatic Christian spirit reigned, it is known, that Jews were not permitted to join), regulation of disputes between Jews, as in general, being able to regulate the entire economic life of the Jewish populace.

Thanks to this, the Jewish communities developed a very rich and productive social activity, which encompassed just about every aspect of the neglected and economic aspects of Jewish life. There was practically not a corner of Jewish community life where the community dis not penetrate with its rule and activity. The community carried out a blessing-laden work on the social-economic front, for the good of the needy Jewish populace. The large number of paupers, which could be found among the idled Jewish people in Poland – their number being especially large because of the frequent wars, from which the land greatly

suffered ceaselessly – were one hundred percent looked after by the communities. The latter not only looked after their own local poor people, but also itinerant guests.' The orphans, poor girls without a dowry, the ill, the aged, the homeless – it was these that the community took under its wing as the social ombudsman. It was in the community that they found complete protection and support. The communities in each city had the necessary institutions: *Haknasat-Orkhim* for the itinerant poor, Halfway Houses' for the homeless and the sick, and the like.

However, we have little knowledge, that already in previous generations. Jewish society had already been working on the idea of making all these people productive, that otherwise were being carried on the backs of the community. It is well-known, that Jews, who were paragons of compassion, always donated charity in generous amounts. Also, community activity always carried with it a character of philanthropic charity giving. However, it is almost unknown that in the seventy years of the past [sic: 19th] century, the notion of social assistance in its productive form had already awakened, whose objective was to strive and make everyone who fell down and became a burden, into a productive person, those [pauperized individuals with hands outstretched for charity, those who have to beg – to transform themselves into vibrant, useful citizens, equal and fully enfranchised members of the community.

It will therefore be of interest to prepare a short historical section about the history of the social institution that developed this creative thought already, in the 19th century. This society has the name: *'Shokdei Melakha,*[39]' and was founded in Navahardok in 1872 (5632). The founder of *Shokdei Melakha*' was Gershon Harkavy, who dedicated himself entirely to the institution.

What objectives did the *Shokdei Melakha*' set out for itself? It strove to provide a home for abandoned orphans, and for homeless and abandoned children. In this home, the children must be prepared to assume the responsibilities of life in all respects. They have to be raised, and developed, and receive an elementary education. However, Harkavy was not satisfied with just this. Institutions with such objectives, or once like them, and with attempts to do this, already existed previously. The new home that Harkavy projected, has to prepare the children *economically* for life. They have to receive training in some sort of trade. Each child must be provided with a trade, so that he will not always have to depend on the support of strangers, and that in the future, he will be able to build an independent life.

The children, drawn from the ranks of the poor, who are accepted into the home of *Shokdei Melakha,*' are provided for in the complete sense. Teachers and *Melamdim* come to the home. The things learned there are necessary and useful. By contrast, a professional education could not be provided in this collective home. Here, each individual was provided with a place in a private workplace of a craftsman in the city. The *Shokdei Melakha*' mad a contract with the craftsman to which they sent the young boy, where the conditions of employment were documented and signed, describing what training would take place.

The *Shokdei Melakha*' had many members who helped financially to assure that the institution would meet its objectives. At the general annual meetings, those who were elected became the leaders of the institution. The more elite organs were required to carry out the oversight and inspection of the students, at the location of their masters, as well as generally organizing and leading with the activity of the institution. It was necessary to procure the necessary material means, assuring that good teachers were retained, people who would be inspirational, as well as being skilled, and to provide oversight, that the objectives set forth for a trade-institution will get their just consideration.

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[39] Hebrew for 'Those Eager to Work.'

From this institution, a folio was created and kept, in which there were documented all of the amendments, rules of assembly, financial procedures, contracts with the craftsmen, etc.

It is worth becoming a bit more familiar with the amendments of this trade school. Apart from the fact that they contain interesting details about the organizational apparatus, and the range of work of the *'Shokdei Melakha,'* they also shed light on the cultural and social way of life of the Jews of Navahardok of that time period. I will therefore provide a short summary of these amendments, in a Yiddish form:

First of all, the institution in the Pinkas is designated as a Sacred Group' (*'Hevra Kadisha Shokdei Melakha'*), which shows us that the work of the institution was considered to be religious in character, and its objectives and obligations carried with it, a religious character.

1. The leadership sets the level of entrance fee for a member. But it may not be less than 1 Ruble and 35 Kopecks.

2. The minimum weekly payment for a member is 2 Kopecks.

3. The membership fee, and all other money collections are encashed by members themselves, who are designated by election. Whoever fails to discharge his obligation three times, will be dropped from membership, and attendant rights, for three years.

4. Elections take place every Saturday evening after Shavuot. The managing personnel are: 2 Directors, 4 managing members (*Gabbaim*), One Trustee, An Audit Committee, and a By-Laws Committee.

5. On the Saturday after *Shavuot* (meaning when the elections were held), all the members must worship together in the large municipal synagogue.

6. Obligations of the leadership: Identifying sources of funds for meeting the objectives, entering into contracts with the craft masters, engaging in all matters pertinent to the institution.

7. Obligations of the membership: Helping the leadership , designating the group of members who will encash the collected membership dues, auditing the account, oversight of the students placed with the craftsmen.

8. The Trustee assumes the position of Treasurer and Bookkeeper. He must not expend more than 1 Ruble without the knowledge of the leadership. The accounts must be ready for inspection at all times.

9. The By-Laws Commission maintains oversight to assure that the activities are conducted in accordance with stature. It must work out new amendments, or modify existing ones, in accordance with the demands of the times. All of this is to be approved by a majority of the members.

10. The Audit Commission has two annual meetings: *Khol HaMoed* Passover, and *Khol HaMoed Sukkot*, and it audits the activities in the treasury, prepared a treasury report for the general meeting, that is to be posted in all houses of worship.

11. Before being turned over to the craftsmen, the children are presented to a commission. After

becoming familiar with their age, skills and interests, the commission designates a trade for each of them.

12. If the *Hevra* should experience an overflow of candidates and not have the possibility to care for everyone, those who have to go begging from door-to-door (this was how the plague of beggars was dealt with once! – Sh. F.), were designated as a genuine orphan' that takes preference, in that an orphan gets preference over a non-orphan. If all are of the same standing, then a lottery is used. The leadership has the right to overrule the prevailing statue in this regard.

13. A young lad is given over to a master craftsman for no more than a four year term.

14. The master craftsman pays the leadership for the period of apprenticeship. The *Hevra* must provide footwear and clothing.

15. The *Hevra* is responsible for the hiring of a *Melamed*, who will learn with the boys who go to work for a craftsman. The *Melamed* learns with the apprentices on the days that they are off from work, especially on the Sabbath, and Festivals, Torah or *Chayei-Adam*, as is appropriately matched to the intellectual grasp of the children.

16. Should a member of the *Hevra*, God forbid, pass away, all the members must take part in his funeral, worshiping for the entire week of the *Shiva* period in the house of the deceased.

This in summary, is a short version of the content of the By-Laws, which richly portrays all the details of the *Sacred Group Shokdei Melakha*' And contains much worthwhile material about the way of life [of the people], especially as it concerns the procedures in the social institutions of the past.

All of these statutes/amendments, which are followed by 88 signatures, are dated from the Sunday of 10 Kislev of the year *Yitbarakh*[40]' – 5632 (1872). In the new year 5641, and advisory addendum was added that says the following:

17. Women are also accepted as members of the Sacred Group.' They are given full rights to express themselves regarding its activities. The women of the Hevra are building their own special group, and will maintain their own folio, which represents a second part of the first folio.

It is interesting to note, that the emblem and the stamp of the *Shokdei Melakha*' had in it a number of elements similar to the details of the organizational stamp of *Poalei Agudat Israel.*' On first glance, it appears that there is no difference at all. The emblem of *Shokdei Melakha*,' has within it, symbols of labor: a scissor, a hammer, a saw, etc.

The *Shokdei Melakha*' in Navahardok had aspirations to expand its circle of activities to encompass the entirety of the Navahardok Voievodeship, and in time, to even further districts. It strived to become a central union of many branches, with the same objectives and character, in yet other cities and towns. In this connection, we are cognizant of attempts to establish the same type of institutions in Lida, Zhetl, and other

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40 This is a play on the numerical value of a Hebrew word, where the 'nominal' letters are replaced with numerical equivalents, but produces a word with some ritual significance. In this case, letter were selected totaling 5632, but spell out the Hebrew word for 'will be blessed.'

places. The trade institutions in these previously mentioned places, however, were not privileged have any longevity... in Lida, the *Shokdei Melakha*' was founded there by the local popular activist, Ze'ev Sokolowsky. It existed up to the World War. During the period of its existence, it did demonstrate the capacity to turn over one hundred young boys into productive people.

The first *Shokdei Melakha*' in Navahardok, went through many changes, in its time, and also improvements, which the times demanded. It modernized itself, and aligned itself to the oncoming [sic: newer] demands and needs.

During the time of its existence, the society showed itself capable of winning the sympathy, not only of the city dwellers, but also those outside the limits of the city. For that time, it also was able to create a number of buildings of is own. In the year 1929 (29 December) there was a new building dedication ceremony of their own building, which was transformed into a much larger celebration of Jewish Navahardok. Academies, and other social events, were organized, with the participation of the representatives of central assistance bodies: Melech Neuczat (the Joint'), Moshe Shalit (JeKoPo'), Y .Goldin (The Orphanage Union).

Shokdei Melakha' did benefit from the support of other central Jewish Aid Societies. It had been subsidized by JeKoPo' in Vilna, since 1919, which set for them a stable monthly stipend.

From time-to-time, the society would organize a variety of public presentations, whose purpose was to popularize and also make known the doings and accomplishments of the institution. In the year 1932 (18 October) there was a presentation of its carpentry works. In the celebrations, representatives of the authorities participated, and delegates from JeKoPo', the Messrs.: Director Moshe Shalit, and Engineer A. Klebanov. The presentations, which elicited a great deal of admiration, went on for several weeks one after another. The broad swath of Jewish society expressed their recognition and wonder about the achievement of such successful results.

What was the situation of *Shokdei Melakha*' in the year 1937: In its own building, it has two dormitories (separate facilities for boys and girls). However, there is no intimacy of interest shown to it by the community activists of the city. The larger part of them takes an attitude towards such an important productivity-enhancing institution with casualness and indifference. Others even – with an unexpressed antipathy. The few active doers, have emigrated. No others arise to take their place. The few last of the Mohicans,' are thinking of throwing in the towel. The craftsmen activists, who common sense would tell you would have related to such an activity with interest, stand on the margins. The young workers, who themselves received their training in crafts from *Shokdei Melakha*,' fight against it today, through the union movement. They, figuratively are throwing stoned into the very running stream from which they drank water in their own time of great thirst.... in short, the institution is vegetating, an important organization, replete with useful obligations, with a past that is rich in activity behind it, nevertheless, went downhill!

When the individual is found, who wished to undertake the thankful task of researching and documenting the history leading up to this religious work,' and labor movement, the history of Poalei Agudat Israel' – he will have to pause more fully, in describing the role of Shokdei Melakha; and its place in the religious labor movement history.

(*Judische Arbeiter-Stimme*,' Lodz, 1937)

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The First Host of Baranovich

By Moshe Goldman

Some 70-80 years ago, when our isolated colony (later Baranovich) was still tiny, in the literal infancy of its being built, there was a solitary house that stood by the old train station, belonging to the first Baranovich resident, R' Shai'keh Baranovicher. This Jewish man was a scholar, a formidable host, and an ardently faithful *Hasid* of the Kaidanov sect.

The old *Rebbe* of Kaidanov, R' Aharon ז"ל, when he would travel through Baranovich, he was always a guest of Shai'keh Baranovicher, who would receive the Rebbe in a festive manner, and wanting to fulfill the mitzvah of receiving guests, he would always allocate his two best rooms especially for the *Rebbe*. In those day, it was the *Gaon* of Brisk, R' Yosh'eh-Ber זצ"ל who was the more popular.

R' Yosh'eh-Ber ז"ל would observe the Diaspora. He would go from city to city, village to village, dressed as a pauper, so that he would not be recognized. Passing through Baranovich on one occasion, he happened to need to spend the night, and not having anyone to turn to, he made his way to R' Shai'keh Baranovicher, and asked for permission to spend the night with him. On that night, Shai'keh Baranovicher was expecting the Rebbe of Kaidanov, and as a result, could not accommodate R' Yosh'eh-Ber. Shai'keh Baranovicher did not know the *Gaon* of Brisk, and seeing the pauper's clothing. he showed him the antechamber as a place to sleep, saying thereby" Here is my ground before you.... the floor is available to you for free.'...

R' Yosh'eh-Ber took a candle out of his traveling bag, pulled out a book, and sat down to quietly study. In the meantime, the *Rebbe* of Kaidanov arrived. R' Shai'keh Baranovicher brought him to his house, and in leading the Rebbe to the rooms that had been prepared for him, they had to pass through the antechamber. It was here that the Rebbe of Kaidanov saw Yosh'eh-Ber. He ran over to him and called out: *Sholom Aleichem, Gaon* of Brisk, how are you? The Rebbe drew R' Yosh'eh-Ber very close to him, and took him under the arm, led him into his room, and instructed Shai'keh Baranovicher to put another bed into his room, for R' Yosh'eh-Ber.

Upon seeing the great respect that the Kaidanov *Rebbe* was extending to this seeming pauper, R' Shai'keh Baranovicher went up to him and said: *Rebbe*, please forgive me, and do not take offense against me, for not appropriately fulfilling the mitzvah of welcoming guests.'

R' Yosh'eh-Ber answered him: Now the question has been answered fr me: the virtue of welcoming guests is a very beautiful virtue. The *Gemara* says: It is more significant to welcome a guest than to show deference to the Almighty,' and the first to perform this mitzvah was our Father Abraham. Paying no mind to the fact that it was the third day after circumcision, and he was indisposed[41], seeing three people in the distance, he ran towards them, presented himself, and asked them into his home, to eat and drink. Our Father Abraham truly fulfilled the mitzvah of welcoming guests, and that is why the mitzvah is ascribed to him.

So the world asks a question: Did not Lot also fulfill the mitzvah of welcoming guests? The Torah tells us how, the angel came to destroy Sodom, and so Lot ran out to meet them, and invited them into his home, and even to the point of persuading them,' and went so far in his feeling of welcoming guests, that when the

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41 Jewish lore tells us that it is on the third day after a circumcision, when an adult male will feel the most pain and discomfort from the procedure. See for example, Genesis 34: 24-25

men of Sodom demanded of Lot that he should had over these guests that had arrived to them, he answered: Here please take my two daughter, who have not known any man , I will bring them out – and you can do what is fit in your eyes, but only do nothing to these men because they have come under the shadow of my wall.' So Lot, too, was one who welcomed guests, so why is this mitzvah ascribed to the account of Father Abraham? The reply is: Our Father Abraham made no distinction. As we know, he opened the gates of his house on all four sides, and whomever he only encountered, he fulfilled the mitzvah of welcoming guests, while by contrast, Lot only sought angels....

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Portraits, Folklore, and the Way of Life Before the Holocaust

By Joseph Foxman

The Ignored Grave in Mys

In the *Pinkas* of Mys, under the date of Av 5634' a decision of the community is recorded, that the funeral of the girl, Sarah, should take place after midnight. The deceased is not to be carried on her bed, but is to be brought to the cemetery in a wagon. Apart from the functionaries of the *Hevra Kadisha*, and the parents, no one is permitted to escort the funeral procession to the cemetery. The *Shammes* may not announce: Go to the funeral.' The deceased is to be buried near the 11 graves of the victims of the typhus epidemic of the year 1861. The grave is to remain forever without any marker.

The young researcher and folklorist, Shlomo Foxman, who in the thirties, edited and completed the two Mys *Pinkasim*, researched this matter by talking to the old people in Mys, and this is what he found out:

A daughter of an important family in Mys became pregnant by a young nobleman from the Old-Mys estate. When the parents of the girl found out about this, they confined their 18 year-old daughter to a potato cellar, under their house. They kept her there for several months, giving her only bread and water, and from this [treatment] the girl died.

The community did not punish the parents, who murdered their own daughter deliberately, but rather, punished the unfortunate Sarah, even after her death.

The writer Hillel Malakhowsky who came from the little shtetl of Mys, told the same story, in his autobiographical book, A Life of Eighty Years,' which appeared in New York in the forties.

Malakhowsky says, that this did not take place in Mys, but rather in the neighboring *shtetl* of Zhetl.

(*Der Morgen-Zhurnal*, August 22, 1957)

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The 'Clothes for Eternity,' for Use After 120 Years

In the little *shtetl* of Mys, there was a custom, going back generations ago, to prepare, and have burial shrouds on hand, while still alive. Men did not abide by this custom, only the women did.

The reason behind the custom was: first, not to be punished' by the frightful imprecation that: You should die in some one else's burial shroud,' or They should hide you in stranger's clothing.' At one time, this curse was considered one of the most frightening. Second, it was believed that if one prepares the burial shrouds in advance, one lives longer. Third, If one buys the burial shrouds personally, one buys the best linen, and one is able to see that the linen is kosher. Fourth, one sews the correct length. Fifth, this was also considered a mitzvah. And seeing that every year the burial shrouds had to be replaced, one would donate the older,

year-old shrouds to the *Hevra Kadisha* for use on behalf of the deceased poor.

Both the rich and the poor held by this custom, especially the poor. For an entire year, a groschen was saved on top of a groschen, a kopeck on top of a kopeck, and on *Hoshana Rabbah*, as soon as they left the synagogue, after prayers, after beating the *Hoshanot*, the women would go to the clothing stores, to buy kosher cloth. At the time of purchase, the words burial shroud' were never uttered, but rather indirect mention was made of clothing,' wear' or garments.'

My great-grandmother Roch'eh (Rachel) made her own burial shrouds for 41 consecutive years, 41 years she donated them to the *Hevra Kadisha*, and for 41 years bought herself new clothing' on *Hoshana Rabbah*. On the 42nd year, my [great]-grandmother needed them herself...

In Baranovich, the well-known Minia Aydel'eh the Baker' also bought burial shrouds for 40 consecutive years, and on the day of *Hoshana Rabbah*, donated them to the *Hevra Kadisha*, and again bought herself new ones.

This custom persisted until fifty-six years ago. It was abandoned on its own. Only a few diehard women still persisted in doing this, and continued to do it right up to the outbreak of the Second World War.

After Hitler's arrival, there was no need for burial shrouds. The entire Jewish population of Mys was annihilated on a beautiful day in Tammuz, brought to their graves' without burial shrouds, but only in their blood-soaked, sanctified day-to-day clothing. May God avenge their blood.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, March 8, 1953)

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A Toast to the Messiah in Ljahavičy

In the twenties, the *Bundist* leader A. Litwak was in Baranovich at a lecture on The Concept of the Messiah in the Yiddish Literature,' and at the end of the lecture, he told of a *Hasidic* episode, that he had heard from a Jew form Karlin.

The *Rebbe,* R' Mordechai the Second, lived in Ljahavičy, at the same time that the *Rebbe* R' Aharon lived in Karlin.

These two *Rebbeim* were very good friends, one with the other. R' Mord'khehleh of Ljahavičy would travel to Karlin and then both of these *Rebbeim* would have a joint *Tisch*,' and when R' Aharon of Karlin would come to Ljahavičy, the *Hasidic Tisch*' was also a joint one, presided over by both of them.

On one occasion of such a joint *Tisch'* in Ljahavičy, the Karlin *Rebbe* calls out to the Ljahavičy *Rebbe*, saying: Let us drink a toast in honor of the Messiah.

The Ljahaviči *Rebbe* stubbornly refuses to drink this *L'Chaim*' in honor of the Messiah.

The Karlin *Rebbe* said – Listen to me, and drink this *L'Chaim*' – I am, after all, Aharon of Karlin, the grandson of R' Aharon the Great of Karlin. and I know whereof I speak.'

No, I will not drink this *L'Chaim*'' – the *Rebbe* of Ljahaviči replied, I am Mott l'eh of Ljahaviči the person who has taken the place of the first Mord'kheleh of Ljahaviči, the *Saba Kadisha*,' on the rabbinical seat.' I have it handed down by received tradition, that when the tread of the Messiah is heard, indicating that he is coming, then Hasidim must refrain from drink, and must all be fasting clean, because if that is not the case, the Messiah will lead us out of the Exile of *Edom*, and into the Exile of *Amalek*. We will raise a toast to the Messiah only when we finally are in the Land of Israel.'

I retold this story to my grandfather R' Abraham Foxman זצ"ל from Mys, whom the author of *'Yesod HaAvodah*' of Slonim[42] had selected as a groom to marry a grandchild of his, and my grandfather answered, that the story is known to him, but rather, that its origin is from the camp of the *Mitnagdim*, who aver that *Hasidim* are drunkards.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, January 2, 1960)

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A 'Donkey's Burial' in the Little Shtetl of Staloviči

Among the Slavic people, there is a belief, that a person can sell his soul to the spirits of the underworld. Jews, who lived among the Slavic peoples for more than a thousand years, adopted this belief, from which is derived the expression: he sold his soul to the devil.'

About a half century ago, in Byelorussia, there was a very famous miracle worker, the Rabbi, R' Shlom'keh of Wilejka. A faithful disciple of the first Rebbe of Ljahaviči, R' Mordkheh'leh, who said of R' Shlom'keh of Wilejka, that he is a man possessed of the Holy Spirit.'

One time, an apparition came to R' Shlom'keh of Wilejka in a dream, of the Miller from Staloviči, Chaim-Leib, who was already dead and buried, which said to him, that in *kashering* his mill for Passover, he was caught between the millstones, and was ground up and killed. Paying no mind to the fact that he had died while attempting to fulfill a *mitzvah*, because he was *kashering* the mill for the use of the entire Jewish community of the *shtetl* in general, the *Hevra Kadisha* in Staloviči gave him a donkey's burial' behind the wall of the cemetery.

R' Shlom'keh of Wilejka, who was born in Staloviči, came there to the *shtetl,* to investigate the matter, together with R' Yekhiel'keh of Mys. The community presented the argument, that Chaim-Leib the Miller consorted with underworld spirits, and no-goods,' and there were bad forces' at work within him, which

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42 This would be Rabbi Abraham of Slonim, a disciple of Rabbi Noah of Ljahaviči, and Rabbi Moshe of Kobrin.

merited that he should be given a donkey's burial.'

Rabbi Shlom'keh of Wilejka, and R' Yekhiel'keh of Mys invited a third' to join them, the Rabbi of Haradzišča, and as a [fully constituted] *Bet-Din* of three, they ruled, after hearing all the witnesses, that Chaim-Leib the Miller, never sold his soul to the devil, and that he was killed while acting to perform a *mitzvah,* and therefore is deserving of a respected place on the cemetery.

The *Hevra Kadisha* then came to the cemetery, and begged the deceased for forgiveness, in the name of the entire community of the shtetl, and moved the wall of the cemetery three aisles over from the grave, and in this manner, Chaim-Leib the Miller received his right, and was absolved of a false accusation, that he had sold his soul to the devil, and that there was no good' residing within him.

This story was recorded in the *Pinkas* of Stalovičy, and additional details are known to me from my family, who are descended from Chaim-Leib the Miller.

(*Der Tog- Morgen Zhurnal*, June 19, 1958)

The Hidden Tzaddik, Called the 'Barefoot Melamed'

In Lithuania, during the time of the Vilna *Gaon,* there was a Hidden *Tzaddik,* and a wondrous scholar, who was called the Barefoot *Melamed,*' whose name was R' Moshe of Ivie, and he was revealed by the Vilna *Gaon* himself.

R' Moshe of Ivie, before he was revealed to be a Hidden *Tzaddik*, was a journeyman *Melamed.*' He would go from village to village, always in bare feet, and learn the *aleph-bet* with the children of the village residents, teach them to pray, and Pentateuch. When he would find out about a Jewish wedding, he would come to the wedding, feigning the role of a simpleton, and enliven and gladden the bride and groom, and their parents. Being at such a Jewish wedding in Zuhavičy, R' Shia of Zuhavičy, recognized in him, as a disguised *Tzaddik*, and the disguised *Melamed* wept before R' Shia, asking that he not tell anyone, and not give him any publicity. R' Shia promised him, but under the condition that he always be his guest at Passover Seders.

One time, however, the Barefoot *Melamed*' was on an annual' visit to the Vilna *Gaon*, in order to personally represent that he is no *Tzaddik,* and no scholar. He was then exposed by the Vilna *Gaon,* and from that time on, became prominent as R' Moshe of Ivie.

R' Moshe of Ivie was a constant guest at the home of R' Shia of Zuhavičy, who was a very great extender of his hospitality.

R' Shia of Zuhavičy built a small wooden *Bet HaMedrash* in Zuhavičy, at his own expense, in which the settlers in the area would come to pray.

After the passing of R' Shia of Zuhavičy, the small *Bet HaMedrash* burned down. The prayer quorum in Zuhavičy continued to function until after The First World War.

R' Shia was renown for his Passover Seders, which he would hold in his large tavern. All of the settlers from

Mal. Zuhaviči, and Vjal. Zuhaviči, Zhazewia, Raskosza, Burzewicz, Prosczy, Dobroczic, Njasviz, Sruliči, Mahil'na, Paruczyn, and all of the other surrounding villages, and hamlets.

Among the permanent guests at R' Shia's Seders, there also was the Hidden *Tzaddik*, R' Leib'leh of Malahowiec, who was called the 37th *Lamed-Vovnik*' and R' Moshe of Ivie.

(*Der Tog Morgen-Zhurnal*, May 8, 1958)

Permission from a Hasidic Dayan in Baranovich to Build a New House

There was a custom, that one did not construct any new house on a piece of property where no house had stood before, and if one wanted to build a new house, it was necessary to obtain permission from Rabbis.

An instance of this sort is indeed documented in the *Pinkas* of Mys, where the sitting Rabbi of the town issued such a permission to a certain Jew, to permit the construction of a house on a location, where previously there had not been a house before.

In the year 1920, my father had bought a parcel in Baranovich on which he wanted to build a house. The parcel was covered in forest trees, because the entire area, on which the city of Baranovich was later built, was a large, thickly wooded forest of pine trees. It was certain that no house had ever stood on this parcel. So my father ז"ל, went to pose this question to the *Hasidic Dayan* of the Slonim *shtibl*, Rabbi *Gaon* R' Nissan Scheinberg, זצ"ל.

The *Hasidic Dayan* ruled, that he was unaware of any such prohibition, or remark to that effect, that forbids the construction of a house on a parcel that previously did not have a house built on it. What he did know, is the matter in the Mys *Pinkas*. It was therefore his opinion, that permission needs to be formally granted.

The Rabbi, R' Nissan Scheinberg, issued his permission in writing, and cited motivations containing 10 points. The most important of them were:

1. Exposure to Carnality" – It is undesirable that a family of 9 people, with members of both genders, should be living in a smaller and more crowded domicile, and a new house with more rooms can ameliorate such a situation;
2. Saving Lives' – The owner of the house where we used to live, a butcher who was uncouth, once got drunk, and with an axe in hand, came into our premises as a guest'...
3. Respect for the Torah' – Every Jewish residence added to the city, not only represents a beautification of the city, but also honors Baranovich, which had already become known and famous in the Jewish world, as a City and Mother in Israel,' a city of schools, study houses, *Shtiblakh*, *Heders, Talmud Torahs*, and Yeshivas.

The *Dayan* ordered the written permission placed inside a bottle and to bury it in the niche, under a threshold, when the foundation of the house is poured. and indeed, that is how it was done. The ceremony took place on a Tuesday, in the presence of Rabbi R' Nissan Scheinberg, and a minyan of Jews. A *L'Chaim*' was drunk, followed by a piece of honey cake, and the wish was made that within these new walls, let the *balebatim* know only of joy and happiness,' and never have any sorrow.'

In the year 1945, I was in the process of taking my leave of Baranovich, and I found the house intact, and not damaged. Of those, that lived in this house up to the Holocaust, no one remained alive. הו"ד.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, April 15, 1958)

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R' Pini'eh, 'The Guest Ombudsman' of Baranovich

The first *Bet HaMedrash* in Baranovich, which later became popularly known as The Old *Bet HaMedrash*,' had in its by-laws, a point that, apart from a *Gabbai* and *Shammes*, the *Bet HaMedrash* must have a Designee,' who would provide, for poor people that were traveling through Baranovich, food, drink and a night's lodging, and provisions for the road.' In these by-laws, it is noted that this Designee' shall not be an employee, but rather a congregational volunteer.'

In later years, when Baranovich grew to become a City and Mother in Israel,' with schools, prayer houses, *shtiblakh*, and houses of study, this specific by-law of the Old *Bet HaMedrash* was stringently observed as a custom, by all the houses of worship in the city.

The most popular Designee' in the city, was the Designee' of the Great *Bet HaMedrash*, where the sitting Rabbi of the city worshiped, R' David Weitzel. Over the course of several decades, the position of Designee' was the exclusive franchise of a worshiper of that congregation, the orchard keeper and butcher of kosher meat, R' Pini'eh Kudewicky.

R' Pini'eh the Designee' who would say, that the greatest mitzvah in the Torah is And you shall take hold of him,' and the *Dvar Torah* of R' Aharon of Karlin: Look after the dignity of the poor, on evert Sabbath and Festival, to the extent that is possible,' – broadened the role of Designee' throughout his life, not only to provide for and provision the poor itinerants, but also disciples of Rabbis, emissaries, itinerant preachers, coordinators, and victims of fires, and in general, all Jews that were traveling through the city, that needed some help or support.

R' Pini'eh quickly became popular in the country as the Ombudsman of Guests.' And everyone who came to the city, and needed help, came to R' Pini'eh with their letters of reference,' and he would take care of them all.

There were instances, when in the Great *Bet HaMedrash*, there would be a Sabbath where there were more poor people as guests, than there were *balebatim*, who had the means to take such a guest home with them, and then R' Pini'eh \would divide up the guests placing them in inns, and later pay for them out of his own pocket.

During the time of The First World War, the Baranovich garrison was substantially enlarges, and it was then that R' Pini'eh, with heart and soul, threw himself into the task of taking care of the Jewish soldiers with kosher food, especially on the Sabbath and the Festivals.

On Shavuot of the year 1915, Russian gendarmes came to R' Pini'eh's house, and arrested him under the charge of attempting to persuade and encourage Jewish soldiers to desert. This was a very serious charge, and R' Pini'eh was threatened with a very severe punishment by a military court. Tow Jewish soldiers were also arrested under the same charge.

This blood libel, against R' Pini'eh the Ombudsman' and the two soldiers, greatly shook up the city. An energetic intervention at the supreme headquarters of the Russian front, which had its seat in Baranovich, by the Rabbi of the city, Rabbi R' David Weitzel, and the famous intermediary, R' Pini'eh Kaplan (the grandfather of the former Israel Minister Chisling), produced good results, and the arrested ones were set free.

R' Pini'eh, the tireless emissary for good deeds, carried on in his work as the Designee' until the great global Holocaust, and even then, when the Baranovich Jews were crammed into the ghetto, he committed his entire energy to the principle of And you shall take hold of him.'

On Yom Kippur 1942, R' Pini'eh was killed in *Sanctification of the Name*. His martyred and bullet-riddled body, is to be found in the sacred mass grave on the air field in Baranovich.

May his memory be for a blessing.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, January 24, 1958)

Leib'eh the Miller from Kuncevičy

The burial shrouds, that the Jews of Byelorussia would prepare while they were still living, had many names, such as: Clothes for Eternity,' Clothes for the Other World,' The Priestly Clothes,' Messiah's Clothes,' Execution,' and Eighteen Measures of Linen.'

In the small *shtetl* of Mys, the women would buy the linen on *Hoshana Rabbah*,' and the men on *Shusan* Purim.

My grandmother, Esther-Dvosh'eh from the little *shtetl* of Mys, who had a dry goods store, would always give the following blessing to the lady buyer of this kosher linen.' May the worms eat this up in your commode, and may you come back [sic: next year] to buy other linen...'

She would bless the men by saying: May you live to see the coming of the Messiah.' As an act of good will, each year, the old Eternal Clothing,' would be donated to the *Hevra Kadisha*, for those poor deceased, and new clothing would be purchased.

In the little shtetl of Mys, there were special seamstresses, and tailors for these type of garments. Approximately 70 years ago, the following frightening incident took place, regarding burial shrouds prepared in advance.

Leib'eh the Miller from Kuncevičy, bought 18 measures of kosher linen from my grandmother's dry goods store, to make these clothes,' and 6 measures to make a *kittl*. Afterwards, he went off to Micah the Tailor of Mys (Micah of Zablocz), who was the town specialist' for these Clothes of Eternity.'

Micah the Tailor, as was his custom, on taking an order' for white clothing, hoisted a *L'Chaim*' with Leib'eh of Kuncevičy, reciting the sentence: so long as there are white clothing, a man does not know his time.' He then took the measure' of the customer by eye, and told him to come back in a week's time.

A week later, when Leib'eh of Kuncevičy came for his Clothes of Eternity,' a glass was drunk another time. However, the L'Chaim' was of a strong spirit, and Leib'eh the Miller threw off his clothing, that he normally wore during the week, which he had one, donned the white burial shrouds, and merrily did a dance, singing the song of Micah, the Tailor of Burial Shrouds: In woven [goods] does one die, and is taken to the cemetery, in tailored [clothing] one lives forever, and you [also] get taken to the cemetery.'

Later, he put on his regular weekday clothes over the white clothing,' and traveled off to Kuncevičy. Later that day, a tumult broke out in the little *shtetl* of Mys: Leib'eh the Miller died of apoplexy, while still being dressed in burial shrouds.'

The matter was brought before a Bet-Din of the Rabbis of Mys – R' Lejzor-Yud'l, R' Yitzhak-Yaakov, and they ruled: the deceased is to have the already prepared burial shrouds taken off, the body is to undergo ritual purification, new burial shrouds are to be sewn, and those he had previously prepared, are to be interred in his grave.

After this tragic incident, Micah the Tailor lost all of his clientele in the shtetl, and became a custom tailor for the village peasants.

Beyrakh the *Melamed* documented this story in the Mys *Pinkas*.'

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal,* April 25, 1962)

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The Great Conclave Wedding in Baranovich

When the last Baranovich Rabbi, the Rabbi R' David Weitzel ז"ל, married off his daughter to one of the best students at the Yeshiva of Mir, R' Asher from Zhaludok הי"ד, many Rabbis-*Gaonim* and renown Yeshiva headmasters, were invited, and for this reason, in Baranovich, this was called the Great Conclave Wedding.'

The world famous Gaon, R' Elchanan Wasserman הי"ד participated in the wedding, the renown *Mashgiach* of the Yeshiva of Mir, R' Yerucham Leibowitz זצ"ל, as did the Headmaster of the single *Hasidic* Yeshiva, R' Shmuel Hirszowicz הי"ד, the Rabbi *Tzaddik* R' Israel Lubczansky הי"ד, the Rabbi R' Zvi Gutman הי"ד, the Kaidanov Rabbi, R' Alter'keh Perlov הי"ד, The Slonim *Rebbe* R' Avrem'eleh זצ"ל, the future Slonim *Rebbe* R' Shlomo'leh, הי"ד, and many other great and outstanding Jewish figures.

On the Sabbath of the wedding, the *Rebbe* of Slonim made *Kiddush* in the Slonim *Hasidim shtibl*, and went off for the Sabbath feast to the home of R' ?? David Weitzel. Many Slonim *Hasidim* accompanied the *Rebbe* from Slonim.

As was the custom, refreshments are then served, and in that process, a fresh hot *kugel* is brought, which the Rebbe of Slonim crumbled up with his fingers, and begins to distribute the *shirayim*[43]' you understand, by hand, to all those around him. The Slonim *Rebbe* also handed a portion of the *kugel-shirayim* to R' Yerucham, the *Mashgiach* of the Yeshiva of Mir. Quite deliberately, R' Yerucham turns away, not taking the *shirayim* from the *Rebbe's* hand, explaining, that he doesn't eat cold' (the kugel, because of being crumbled, and having lain on the table for a longer time, had become cold).

The Slonim *Rebbe* then gives an order to the *Hasidim*, saying out loud that R' Yerucham does not eat cold.' Well, I should be brought something that is warm.' In the blink of an eye, a large warm *kugel* appears, and the first hot piece is given to R' Yerucham.

However, the clever R' Yerucham replies: It isn't new' (the *kugel* however, was a new, fresh, *kugel*). The Rebbe of Slonim then heaved a heavy sigh, and said: R' Yerucham, don't you know that when a *Tzaddik* eats, he helps to rectify' a lost and blundering Jewish soul with his act of eating, and the place where he does this eating, bears witness in the World to Come, and that all those who eat the *shirayim* along with the *Tzaddik*, will also bear witness, as it is written in the Holy Torah: And Jacob called it *Gal'ed*' (a witnessing stele). And in general, R' Yerucham, I believe that it is time for *Hasidim* and *Mitnagdim* to eat together from one dish.'

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal,* September 11, 1962)

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R' Leib'eleh of Malakhowiec – The 37th Lamed-Vovnik

There is a legend among the Jews, that the world is sustained because of the *Lamed-Vov* (36) Hidden *Tzaddikim.*'

There was, however, a hidden *Tzaddik*, who was called the 37th *Lamed-Vovnik*, and this was R' Leib'leh of Malakhowiec.

It was about this hidden *Tzaddik*, that R' Alter Woronowsky wrote a work called R' Leib the Customs Man, זצ"ל. And the young historian and researcher, Shlomo Foxman הי"ד [wrote]: The *Seder* of the 3 *Lamed-Vovniks*' (printed in the periodical *Blau-Weiss*,' under the pseudonym Sh. Eideles).

And here is what is told about that 37th Lamed-Vovnik, R' Leib'leh of Malakhowiec:

R' Leib'leh of Malakhowiec was an innkeeper on the tract of Stalovičy and Mys, in which his inn was an open and cost-free lodging for all transient Jews who would be passing through. The inn was run by his wife, and he always sat in the upstairs small room, and studied. From time to time, he would take a stick in hand, and go off to the villages, to teach the [sic: Jewish] settlers a special bit of *Yiddishkeit.*

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43 Among the *Hasidim*, the spiritual leader (usually the *Rebbe*) would distribute these so-called 'left-overs' as a sign of his generosity, and the recipients sought this handout as being of special significance, because of who provided it.

On one Friday, a fire broke out, and the entire inn was burned down to its foundation, and it was not possible to save a single thing from the fire. Then, R' Leib'leh rented a boat from a peasant, and went off to the river to catch fish, and he later cooked the fish on the embers of his burned down premises, in order that the Sabbath still be graced with one meal worthy of the Sabbath, and that this possibility not be prevented.

R' Leib'leh of Malakhowiec. was a steady guest at the home of the Tzaddik, R' Shia of Zuhaviči, who was a rich estate manager, and under his management, he had both a mill and an inn in the village of Zuhaviči, which at that time, was in the possession of the nobleman Wendorf, of the house of Zhazewia.

R' Shia constantly had guests in his inn (he did not take money from Jews), and always recited the blessings after the meal with the minimum 3-person quorum (e.g. a *mezuman*). R' Shia had a custom, that he would always recite the blessings himself, and never give away the honor of doing so, even to the 37th *Lamed-Vovnik*, R' Leib'leh of Malakhowiec. R' Shia personally was the *mezuman* leader' and he would always recite the line with the permission of the Master of the House,' meaning the Master of the Universe...

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, May 11, 1958)

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Customs of the Hevra Kadisha in Ljahaviči

My grandfather, R' Gedalyahu Miletsky, ל"ז, was the First *Gabbai,* Treasurer, and Recorder of the Ljahaviči *Hevra Kadisha*. He held these positions from 1876 to 1916. Before my grandfather took over these positions, they were for many years in the possession and were a franchise of my great-grandfather, R' Chaim-Leib Miletsky, ל"ז.

I was a frequent guest at my grandfather's, and in the years of 1914, 1915, and 1916 – practically a tenant' in his home, and it is because of this, that these customs are known to me.

According to the old by-laws of the Ljahaviči *Hevra Kadisha*, the *Hevra* had the following composition: A First *Gabbai*,' Treasurer,' Recorder,' and one [sic: additional] person. There were two people designated as a Deputy (Second) *Gabbai*,' and two additional people as Assistant Deputy (Third) *Gabbai*.' All the others were designated as those who engage in the *mitzvah*.'

No one who desecrated the Sabbath was permitted to be a member of the *Hevra Kadisha*, nor those who did not observe family purity, and also not anyone who shaved their hair. It was also a point, that the members all had to be married men.

On one Sabbath during the year, all of the members of the *Hevra* were required to pray together in one synagogue, and take all the *aliyot* for that week's *parsha.* This was the Sabbath in which the *parsha* of *Re'eyh* was read, because there were specific sentences in the *parsha* of *Re'eyh* which were read on the final day of Passover, the Second Day of *Shavuot,* and on *Shemini Atzeret*, when *Yizkor* was recited. The sixth *aliyah* (*shishi*) was reserved for the First *Gabbai*; The third *aliyah (shlishi)* and *Maftir*' – the *aliyot* for the two Deputy Gabbaim, and in this order, according to the titles of the *Hevra* leadership. Also Opening the Ark,' *Hagbah*' and *Glilah*' belonged to the members of the *Hevra Kadisha* on that Sabbath.

Four complete feasts were arranged for by the *Hevra Kadisha* throughout each year: Hanukkah, Passover, *Shavuot*, and *Sukkot*. They also sponsored the *Kiddush* on the Sabbath of *parsha Re'eyh*. The five *Gabbaim* held the franchise for these festive events. The Hanukkah feast was sponsored by the First *Gabbai*, R' Gedalyahu Miletsky in his house. All the expenses associated wit this festive event, were covered by the First *Gabbai* out of his own pocket. The expenses of the other four events were covered by funds from the *Hevra*.

Apart from the *Gabbaim*, and those who engage in the *mitzvah*,' there were also those characterized as taking part,' who would be paid for their work, and would participate in all meetings and all festivities of the *Hevra*.

Among the most important of the by-laws of the *Hevra,* it is necessary to recall that those residents of Ljahavičy, after one hundred and twenty years, must be brought to their final rest in Ljahavičy, and may not be taken out of the city. An exception was made for those deceased, who were guests in the city.

In the *Pinkas* of the *Hevra Kadisha*, are recorded all those who died in the past 300 years. The *Pinkas* was a very accurate address book,' for the residents' of the new cemetery, and a little also for the old cemetery, which was on the *Toter Gasse*.'

The Pinkas of the *Hevra Kadisha* was divided into ten-year chapters. After each ten years, there would be an empty page, and later on, a page on which a variety of [sic: biblical] sentences were written, such as: Remember the days of old – understand the years of your generations;' And they sprouted from the city – like the grass of the ground,' and others like this.

My grandfather, the First *Gabbai* of the *Hevra Kadisha*, took extremely great care of a rather simple iron key, which lay in a silver *Etrog* Box from the Land of Israel. This key was the most valuable possession of the *Hevra Kadisha*. My grandfather obtained this key from his father, who also was a First *Gabbai*. According to the oral tradition, this was the key to the very old cemetery in Ljahavičy, which used to be placed under the pillow of Jewish women going into labor. This cemetery key was treated as an amulet, safeguarding the delivering woman from any sort of, God forbid, misfortune.

It is now many, many years, that this key is no longer used for this purpose. Despite this, it is guarded like a sacred relic.

During The First World War, in the year 1916, when the expulsion from Ljahavičy took place, the *Hevra Kadisha* placed the key and the *Pinkas* in the custody of my grandfather, to be taken along with him.

Any trace of the key was lost in Bezhenstvo, and in the year 1929, I gave the *Pinkas* to the YIVO archive in Vilna.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, April 5, 1956)

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The 'Pinkas - Wedding' in Mys

Among the Jews, certain kinds of weddings obtained a variety of designations. For example, there was a

Quiet Wedding' (that is what a wedding was called in Galicia, if a wedding took place involving someone divorced, or if there was a widow or widower involved). A Quiet Wedding' was also one in which the groom was deemed to be too young and was not permitted to wed (as in the case of not having yet served in the military). There was also a Cemetery Wedding,' when there was a plague raging, and as an amulet against disaster, the town would arrange for the wedding canopy to be placed in the cemetery for a bride and groom without the financial means on their own to marry.

In the little *shtetl* of Mys, a wedding involving the wealthy, or the well-connected (by pedigree) would be called a *Pinkas*-Wedding.'

The expression, *Pinkas*-Wedding,' has its roots in the following story: In the year 1832, the richest man in the little shtetl of Palonka. Lejzor Bialogursky, sought a union through marriage with the richest of the settlers in the area, Hirsch'l-Zvi of Chernigov. Both the bride and the groom were 12 year-olds. The Rabbi of Palonka did not want to preside over a wedding ceremony, because the bride and groom were too young.

The parents of the couple then had the wedding performed in Mys, where it took place with considerable panoply. The matter was recorded in the Mys *Pinkas*, under the name: The *Chuppah* from the Outside.'

One hundred and ten years ago, an additional wedding was recorded in the Mys *Pinkas*. In this instance, as well, the bride and groom were also 12 year-olds.

The bride was the grandchild of the first Rabbi of Slonim, R' Abraham, the author of the books, *Yesod HaAvodah*,' *Hesed L'Avraham*,' and other books. The groom was the son of Moshe-Yitzhak of [Stary] Domanowo, near the small *shtetl* of Byten.

From that time on, no more weddings were recorded in the Mys *Pinkas*. Despite this, every expensive wedding in the *shtetl* was called a *Pinkas*-Wedding.'

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, May 27, 1962)

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Two Lamed-Vov Tzaddikim

R' Shia of Zuhaviči and R' Joel'keh of Ščepliči

One of them lived during the time of the Vilna *Gaon*. He was called Shia of Zuhaviči. He was an estate manager in the Zuhaviči estate between the towns of Mir and Polonieczka. He was held as being holy as a *Lamed-Vovnik*' not only among the Jews, but was also renown among the Christians in the entire area of Byelorussia.

The young historical researcher, Shlomo Foxman, הי"ד gathered over one hundred legends surrounding Shia of Zuhaviči. A number of them were published in the regional Jewish press of Byelorussia. I have ten such stories about him, in my possession.

The wondrous legends of Shia of Zuhaviçy were told with the same fervor whether by *Mitnagdim* or *Hasidim.* The *Mitnagdim* say, that Shia of Zuhaviçy was a *Mitnaged*, and a disciple of the Vilna *Gaon*, to whom he would often make journeys. In opposition to this, the *Hasidim* say, that Shia of Zuhaviçy was a *Hasid.* In the world, there were four Jews who do not make trips to visit a *Rebbe*, nevertheless, they are well acquainted wit the *Hasidic* way of life, and conduct their lives in the *Hasidic* way. One of these four was Shia of Zuhaviçy, and he would travel to the Vilna *Gaon*, in order to defend the *Hasidim*, and constantly worked to extinguish the disputes between *Mitnagdim* and the *Hasidim.* He would also travel often to his neighbor, R' Israel of Ivenets, a fiery, and avowed opponent of *Hasidim.* He saw to influence him [R' Israel] not to be so antagonistic in his attacks against *Hasidim.*

However, it was R' Joel'keh of Ščepliçy, the *Lamed-Vovnik*, who was more renown as a miracle worker. He was an estate manager in the village of Ščepliçy, between the small towns of Ljahaviçy and Kleck, which was in the possession of the well-known wealthy family of Reitan.

When R' Aharon of Karlin made his first journey through the cities and towns of Byelorussia, R' Joel'keh was among the first who welcomed him. Later on, he became a *Hasid*, of R' Mordkhe'leh of Ljahaviçy, and with the latter, would travel together to Karlin.

The usual outfit worn by R' Joel'keh was a coarse cloth jacket, high boots, a cap with a visor, and the jacket was tied around with a rope. While riding a horse, he would travel between all of the settlers in the villages. He would teach them Judaism, and later on, the *Hasidic* way. He would inspect the *mezuzot*, and with the children – their fringed garments, and he taught the women the specific laws that pertain to them. With a variety of medicaments and amulets, he would heal the sick.

The village Jews called him Joel'keh *Ness Gadol*,[44]' and the peasants called him Joel'keh *Nasz Godel.* They elided the [Hebrew word] Ness,' into the [Polish] *Nasz*,' rendering the meaning Joel'keh, *Our* Great One.'

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, April 16, 1956)

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The Four Feasts of the Hevra Kadisha in Baranovich

The various *Hevra Kadisha* organizations in Byelorussia were known for their frequent festivities, which they would put on at every opportunity.

Apart from the various regular opportunities to hold a banquet, the *Hevra Kadisha* in Baranovich had four traditional feasts, as recorded in the *Hevra Kadisha Pinkas*, which were obligatory for all the members and those involved in its work. The dates of these feasts were as follows: 15 Kislev; 7 Adar, The Last Day of Passover, and *Lag B'Omer.* The first three of these feasts were paid for out of the *Hevra Kadisha* treasury. The fourth, which was called The Feast of the Maintenance of *Lag B'Omer*' was paid for entirely by the community. The Rabbi of the city would attend this feast, as well as the most prominent of the *balebatim* of

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[44] Joel'keh the Great Miracle [Worker]

the city.

In the morning, immediately following prayers, everyone would go out to the cemetery, examining and reviewing all of the headstones, to see if they were in good condition. Also, the fence around the cemetery was inspected, and see to it that everything was in order. Afterwards, they would all return to the Workers' *Bet HaMedrash*, near the house of the sitting Rabbi of the city. There, a banquet would be proffered and funds collected for the Maintenance of the Fence.' It was from here, that the feast took its name of Maintenance of *Lag B'Omer.*'

The Jewish settlement of Baranovich no longer exists, The cemetery, about which the dedicated members of the *Hevra Kadisha* took so much care, is today abandoned, and neglected, without a fence, and without any maintenance.'

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, July 30, 1962)

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By-Laws from the Mys Pinkas

The following by-laws are recorded in the Mys *Pinkas*:

When the Rabbi of the *shtetl* would rule that a slaughtered fowl was ritually unfit for consumption [sic: *trayf*], he would give the *Shokhet* a note, that he is to slaughter the second fowl presented without being paid his usual fee.

When someone would build a new house, he was obligated to give a tithe' and charity' to the community.

If a groom is poor, the gift of the community is to be *Tallit*; if the bride is poor, then the gift of the community is to be a set of candlesticks for blessing lit candles.

Burial of a deceased is to take place on the same day of passing. The community is to be informed of the death, and the *Shammes* of the *Hevra Kadisha* is to lead the funeral cortège, and intone: Go to the funeral.'

The *Maftir aliyah* for the Sabbath of the Hanukkah week is to be given to someone named Benjamin.'

The *Maftir aliyah* of the week of the *parsha Vayigash*, is to be given to someone whose name is Gedalyahu. In the year 1869, and entry was made in the *Pinkas,* that no Purim-Rabbi' will be selected.

Beside each *Get*' that was recorded in the *Pinkas*, the following saying was entered: For him who divorces his first wife, even The Altar weeps for him.'

In the *Pinkas,* it was recorded that the Rabbi of Mys, R' Lejzor-Yud'l gave out slaps to a certain Yankl

Jonas's for not being willing to comply with a rabbinical ruling (in the text, the [Hebrew] word *malkot*[45]' is used, believed to signify slaps).

The same Rabbi, R' Lejzor-Yud'l, one time, in the middle of prayers, ejected an informer from the *shtibl,* using his elbows, and ordered that it be recorded that it is forbidden to include this informer in counting for a *minyan* of worshipers.

In the *Pinkas*, several instances of handshake' [agreements] are recorded. One of them is: That Nathan-Neta, Meir'keh's gave a handshake' at the open grave of his deceased father, Meir'keh Nathan-Neta's, indicating that he will take his bride to wife under a *Chuppah*, and not in any way shame a young lady.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, May 27, 1962)

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The Will of a Jewish Tailor from Mys

The Tailor, R' David the Levi' as he was called in Mys, got his extra name because all the *Kohanim* of the *Bet HaMedrash*, where R' David prayed, wanted R' David to be the one, to pour water over their hands, prior to their administration of the Priestly Blessing.

David the Tailor was very gifted musically, and was very good at leading services, but he seldom took the pulpit to lead such prayers.

David the Tailor made his living from tailoring. However, he spent more time in the Bet HaMedrash than he did in his tailor shop. For his entire life, he scrupulously made sure to participate in the first morning *minyan* for *Shakharit.* He would always make sure that he always prayed with a minyan, and not alone, and to be someone who would be sitting by the table during the study periods in the *Bet HaMedrash* after *Shakharit*, and also between *Mincha* and *Maariv.*

All the outer garments that David the Tailor sewed buttoned on the left side. – To button on the right side, David the Tailor said, is the custom of all nations,' and therefore, Jews should button their clothes on the left side of the garment.

When, in old age, David the Tailor fell sick, and he sensed that he was 'tending towards death,' he sent for the *Gabbaim* of the *Hevra Kadisha.* and charged them, that he is communicating to them, in the form of a will, that when he dies, he wants the planks for his coffin to be made from his work table in his tailor shop, which in the World to Come, will be his witnesses that for his entire life, he derived his sustenance for his family from the exhausting labor of his own hands,' and that the boards will further testify that he lived a decent life, and never took so much as a groschen inappropriately.

When R' David the Levi' died, his will was scrupulously carried out, just as he had demanded before his

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[45] Conceivably could have been a flogging.

death.

His son, Shlomo the Tailor, as a young lad, acquired the name, Shlomo, Shlomo's,' because his father left him a behest, to thrice daily recite the 13 attributes of *Ani Ma'amin.*' Later on, he obtained the appellation of Shlomo the *Dayan,*' because, just like his father, he never missed one occasion for either learning or praying.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, April 2, 1958)

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A Din-Torah with a Deceased Person in Stalovičy

In the Yiddish literature of tales, one can find a variety of legends, having to do with calling back a person from the dead, to participate in a legal process [sic: *Din-Torah*], as did R' Itzik'l Horowitz, the Rabbi of Brody (Later on the Rabbi of Hamburg), in calling a deceased person to such a *Din-Torah* (See *Die Khasidishe Velt'* by Menashe Unger, pp. 210-212).

In the municipal *Pinkas* of Stalovičy, a Din-Torah with a deceased person is recorded, which can serve as the source of Sh. Ansky's famous drama, *Der Dybbuk.*'

The small *shtetl* of Stalovičy, was one of the few such towns in the one-time Pale of Settlement, which kept a chronological *Pinkas*. Everything that happened, and took place in their area, was recorded for the benefit of future generations.

One of the most interesting pages in the Stalovičy *Pinkas*, is the story of the deceased, who was called to a Din-Torah. The story is as follows:

Approximately 140 years ago, the daughter of the richest man in Stalovičy, broke off her intended marriage with a groom, who was the son of a Stalovičy craftsman who had already passed away. The father, of the embarrassed groom, took upon himself to defend the honor of his son, who was so shamed, and entered the bride in the form of a *Dybbuk.*

The parents of the bride, took their stricken daughter to all the great professors and doctors. Nobody was able to help. They took her to all of the Good Jews' of that time, but none of them was able to help.

The renown R' Yekhiel'keh of Mys, who was selected to be the Chief Rabbi of Mys in the year 1811, was the first *Hasidic* Rabbi in Byelorussia, was, at that time, a guest in the little *shtetl* of Stalovičy. The father of the unfortunate girl, came to R' Yekhiel'keh, and with tears in his eyes, beseeched him, asking R' Yekhiel'keh, who already had a reputation as a miracle worker, to drive the *Dybbuk* out of his daughter.

R' Yekhiel'keh sent a *minyan* of Jews to the cemetery, to invite the dead craftsman to a *Din-Torah.* The deceased came to the *Bet-Din shtibl*, and stood behind a linen curtain, which had been ordered in accordance with R' Yekhiel'keh's instructions.

After carrying out an argument with the deceased, R' Yekhiel'keh made the *Dybbuk* swear to go out from

the young lady who was to be a bride, and that he should return to his [eternal] rest.

On that same day, the young girl returned to good health, and in that same week, with great fanfare, the wedding of this girl and her previously spurned groom took place.

The Baranovich Yizkor Book also relates this story from a different perspective.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal,* February 12, 1958)

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The Inauguration of the Baranovich Cemetery in 1888

In the 70's and 80's of the previous [sic: 19th] century, about 5 km from the small *shtetl* of Mys, a Jewish settlement began to develop, near the Moscow-Brisk railroad line. It grew to become the Jewish *shtetl* of Razwodowo. The *shtetl* grew to become the city that is widely known in the world by the name, of Baranovich.

Graf Rozwadowski the owner of the entire lands of Baranovich and its environs, donated a parcel of land to the first Jewish settlement, near the village of Znaiec,' for use as a cemetery, for the small Jewish population.

This gift was transacted officially in Navahardok, in the name of two members of the already existing *Hevra Kadisha.*

The first Rabbi of Baranovich, the Rabbi *Gaon*, Tzaddik, Chaim-Leib Lubczansky זצ"ל, a related by marriage to the renown R' Yuz'l *Harif*[46], opposed the gift, because a burial place is to be purchased and needs to be a purchased asset of the Jewish settlement.

At the beginning, the members of the *Hevra Kadisha* were opposed. In the end, however, they approached Graf Rozwadowski, indicating that they want to pay for this gift. The Graf was insulted. However, he was agreeable to transforming the gift' into a fully paid for parcel for burial.' The second act also took place in Navahardok, because in Razwodo-Baranovich, there was not even a single official entity.

But even after the cemetery was already in possession of the Jewish community, and had already been enclosed with a fence, it remained unused for many years.

Then, a dispute arose between the *Hevra Kadisha* and the Rabbi. The members of the *Hevra Kadisha* wanted to inaugurate the cemetery with a single deceased person to be interred. The Rabbi, however, was opposed to breaking a tradition, that such an inauguration is to take place with the interment of two deceased. And

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46 From the Hebrew word for 'sharp,' indicating someone gifted in analytical thinking.

so, the Rabbi of Ljahaviçy, the Rabbi *Gaon,* R' Simcha HaLevi Hurwitz, was invited to come to Razwodo-Baranovich, to rule in the matter of this dispute. The Rabbi of Ljahaviçy ruled, that a tradition is tantamount to a law, and a tradition cannot, and should not, be broken.

The deceased from Baranovich were, once again, taken to Mys for burial. In the year 1888, a tragic misfortune occurred in Baranovich: two little boys, in a mid-week day, when the bath house was locked, stole into the bath house. and were drowned in the newly-constructed *mikva.*

The two drowned little boys were brought to their final rest on the same day. This common grave, is the first grave in the Baranovich cemetery. Their grave was the inauguration of the cemetery in Baranovich.

The Rabbis from all of the surrounding towns came to attend the inauguration of the cemetery, all of whom delivered eulogies.

On the gate [of the cemetery] was hung a writing as follows: This is the Gate dedicated to the Lord, Through which the Righteous Shall Enter.' A year later, this writing was altered to read: A Resting Place to All the Living.'

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal,* February 4, 1954)

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Well-Known Hasidic Leaders of Prayer from Mys and Telekhany

A hundred years ago, the *Baal Tefilah*[47] R' Nathan-Neta of Mys, a son of *Shma Yaakov'* of Navahardok, was renown through all of Byelorussia.

R' Nathan-Neta was a very accomplished scholar, a wondrously learned man, and famous for his command of liturgical music. R' Nathan-Neta held the franchise of the prayer pulpit' for a bit under 50 years, of all Sabbaths and Festivals. His sweet voice, he delectable rendition of the prayers, would cause everyone going by the synagogue to pause.

R' Nathan-Neta did not make a living by being a *Baal Tefilah,* but rather as a *Shokhet.* When he would have a good week,' and earned more than he needed for his expenses, he would divide up the excess' among the poor on Friday.

In Mys, it was held that R' Nathan-Neta has a spark of the melodies of the Rabbi, R' Aharon of Karlin.

R' Nathan-Neta passed away sixty years ago. The Rabbis of the surrounding towns all eulogized him.

The *Baal Tefilah,* R' Yankl of Telekhany, was also renown throughout all of Byelorussia and Polesia. R' Yankl of Telekhany was not only a renown *Baal Tefilah,* but also a famous composer of *Hasidic* melodies.

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47 One who leads prayer, but is not officially a Cantor, or *Hazzan.*

His style in the *Hasidic* melody form, and music, was very pleasing. His melodies were sung in all of the courtyards' of all the Rabbis of Lithuania and Byelorussia: Ljahavičy, Kobrin, Slonim, Stolin, Karlin, and Kaidanov. His melodies are still sung in America, by those remnants of *Hasidim*, from these previously mentioned *Hasidic* courts.' Two fo the melodies composed by R' Yankl of Telekhany were borrowed' and applied to the lyrics of two Yiddish songs, and are played on records.

The *Baal Tefilah*, R' Yaakov-Moshe of Mys, was also renown in the entire territory of Byelorussia, who was blind, but was able to chant even the entire service for *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur* from memory. R' Yaakov-Moshe was a Slonim *Hasid*. His rendition of the prayers was done with exceptional ardor.

I, personally, knew R' Yaakov-Moshe the *Baal Tefilah*, and heard his wonderful rendition of the prayers. When he would step down from the prayer pulpit, there would be a river of tears beside that pulpit. His weeping would last from *Kol Nidre* to after *Ne'ila*.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, September 21, 1956)

The Will of Sarah-Risha ע"ה, the Charitable Woman of Mys

A few years before The First World War, the *Hasidic* woman, Sarah-Risha Steinberg, passed away at the age of 90 years of age, and she left behind a will that all of the metal charity boxes she had, were to be buried along with her, in which every day, after ritually washing her nails, she would drop coins for a variety of Jewish charities, and along with them, to include all the receipts that she had gotten from the various Yeshivas and Talmud Torahs, and also her little notebook, in which she had itemized her private donations, and donations that she had made in secret.

The family of the deceased then went off to the Hasidic *Rebbe*, R' Lejzor-Yud'l זצ"ל, to ask is opinion, about what is to be done regarding this will, seeking advice as to whether the will should be carried out as written, or not. The *Hasidic* Rebbe, R' Lejzor-Yud'l ruled that everything that the deceased had requested in the will, must be carried out exactly and precisely as indicated.

For the *Gabbaim* of the *Hevra Kadisha*, who were *Mitnagdim*, the ruling of the *Hasidic Rebbe* was insufficient, and they went off to ask the Rabbi of Mys, who was the Rabbi of the *Mitnagdim* of the *shtetl*, but also the Rabbi of the *Mitnagdim*, R' Yitzhak-Yaakov זצ"ל, ruled that there is nothing in the will that is against Jewish law, and must be carried out exactly as indicated by the family via the *Hevra Kadisha*.

There was even a proposal, that because of her admirable philanthropy, that the deceased bu hidden' near the grave of the legendary righteous woman, Dvora'leh the *Gabbait*, in the very old cemetery. However, they refrained from doing this, because there was no more room there for an additional grave.

The righteous woman, Sarah-Risha ע"ה, indicated in her last words, that everything that will remain after her, should be divided among poor families. Her candlesticks, in which she blessed candles for 90 years, she ordered be given as a gift to a poor bride. For her daughter, Rachu'sheh, a daughter-in-law to the *Starosta* of Mys, R' Shmuel-Yoss'l, ז"ל, she left only her *Korban-Mincha Siddur*.

The deceased Sarah-Risha Steinberg, who dedicated her entire life to fulfilling the mitzvah of giving *Tzedakah*, was a simple woman of the people, who would deny herself, in order to be able to give what was

needed, to a second party.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, March 1, 1956)

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Residential Nicknames Attached 37 Towns in Byelorussia

1. Slonim – The Slonim Fools
2. Lida -- The Lida Drunkards
3. Bobruisk -- The Arrested of Bobruisk
4. Sluck – The Sluck Fruitcakes
5. Kapyl' – The Kapyl' Blabbermouths
6. Kleck -- The Kleck Pigs
7. Palonka – The Palonka Billy Goats
8. Kazluščyna - The Kazluščyna Nanny Goats
9. Belica – The Belica Thieves
10. Haradzišča – The Haradzišča High Pressure Salesmen
11. Dvarec – The Dvarec Intestines
12. Eishyshok – The Eishyshok Big Shots
13. Moučadz – The Sour Milk from Moučadz
14. Karelicy – The Karelicy Dissenters
15. Oran – The Oran Corpses
16. Lotwa – The Lotwa Gentile Thugs
17. Navael'nja – The Navael'nja Cover-ups
18. Krynki – The Krynki Thieves
19. Bialystok – The Bialystok Bread Roll Gorgers
20. Sokolka – The Siberians 9sic: criminals) from Sokolka
21. Wasilkow – The Wasilkow Billy Goats
22. Svislucz -- The Sislevich Nanny Goats.

<u>People from Baranovich Had Five Nicknames</u>

23. Baranovich Over-Eaters
24. Baranovich Guzzlers
25. Baranovich Egotists
26. Baranovich Self-Promoters
27. Baranovich Snobs

<u>Ljahaviči Had a Host of Nicknames. the Most Popular Were:</u>

28. The Ljahaviči Fur Coats
29. The Ljahaviči Pickpockets
30. The Ljahaviči Hatters
31. The Ljahaviči Ass Whippers
32. The Ljahaviči Cucumbers, and many other nicknames

<u>Mys Had Five Nicknames</u>

33. The Mys Barley Soup Makers
34. The Mys Critics
35. The Sniff of Tobacco from Mys
36. The Mys Midget'
37. Kiss me in my Mys

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal,* November 25, 1959)

The Will of a Jewish Horse Thief

There was a time when the Jewish community of Baranovich did not have its own cemetery, and at that time, the Jewish deceased were buried in Mys. And even after the time, when Baranovich had its own cemetery, Jews left behind wills, indicating that they were to be buried in Mys, because they wanted to be interred beside their parents. Such a will was left behind by Nathan-Neta The Regretter,' who was also called Noss'keh the Horse Thief.'

The will was written by the Shammes of the *Bet-Din* of Baranovich, signed by the decedent, the horse thief, R' Noss'keh. The witnesses were: The members of the *Hevra Kadisha*, the shoemaker, Dark Moshe'keh, and the shoemaker, Abraham'l Zeldin, and the two sons of the horse thief, Shaul'keh and Hirsch'keh.

The writer of the will, a literate Jew, embellished the will with a sentence from the Pentateuch: *'... that you will show me kindness and faithfulness. Do not bury me in Egypt, but when I rest with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me where they are buried.*[48]'

R' Noss'keh the Horse Thief authorized a second will, to be written in the Russian language, by the well-known Jonah the Lawyer.'

When the writer of the will passed away, the Baranovich *Hevra Kadisha* were happy to escort him to another place for burial. In the will, Noss'keh requested that he be eulogized by the Rabbi of Mys, and seeing that he did not obey the commandment Thou Shalt Not Steal,' he, nevertheless, for his entire life fulfilled the *mitzvah* of wearing *Tzitzit*, and putting on *Tefillin*, the *mitzvah* of praying three times a day, the *mitzvah* of observing the Sabbath, he said his prayers while wearing a *gartl*, he did not defile his beard, even with a small scissor, wore side locks, and was the first one, on Purim, after the reading of the *Megillah*, to donate his *Maot-Khittim,* for the poor.

The Rabbis in Mys, one was *Hasidic*, and the second – a worldly person, could not arrive at an understanding of which one of them should give the eulogy. Each one offered this honor' to the other. In the end, both of the Rabbis gave a eulogy.

Afterwards, it was told in Mys, that Noss'keh's two sons stole a horse, saying, that they needed to pay the *Hevra Kadisha* for the burial plot of their father...

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, November 12, 1962)

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[48] Genesis 47:28

The 'Sacred Stone' of Ljahaviči

On the *Schulhof* in Ljahaviči, a Sacred Stone' stood for generations at a time, on which the *skhakh*[49] was burned after *Sukkot*, and also wedding canopies were set up near this stone.

A folk legend tells, that the *Mitnagdim* once seized the Rabbi R' Mordkhe'leh, and whipped him on the stone, near the synagogue.

The *Mitnagdim* had become incensed by R' Israel-Leib'l of Navahardok, the author of the anti-*Hasidic* book, *HaVikuakh*[50],'

When the *Hasidim* found out about this, what the *Mitnagdim* had done to their Rabbi, they sent out a general call to all *Hasidim,* that they should bring the books of R' Israel-Leib'l to Ljahaviči.

A day after *Sukkot,* the *skhakh* was taken off of the *sukkah* of R' Mordkhe'leh, and placed on the stone, near the synagogue. *Hasidim* also brought the *skhakh* from their *Sukkot*, and a great fire was lit in the synagogue, and in the fire, all of R' Israel-Leib'l's books were burned.

From that time on, a custom was initiated to burn on the *skhakh* on this stone.

Following this, a practice was initiated to set up a wedding canopy beside the stone where R' Mordechai'leh of Ljahaviči had been whipped.

In the course of time, this stone was sanctified also by the *Mitnagdim*, and during a funeral procession, the deceased was eulogized at the site of this very Sacred Stone.'

During the time of The First World War, the shtetl of Ljahaviči was destroyed, and the Sacred Stone' disappeared.

The *Gaon*, R' Meir of Karelicy, a brother of the renown *Khazon Ish*,' who in the years of the 20's was the sitting Rabbi in Ljahaviči, once, during Sukkot, held forth in an oration, and beseeched the Jews, that if they knew where this Sacred Stone' was to be found, that they should inform the Rabbi, but nobody knew what had become of the Sacred Stone.'

This Sacred Stone' had existed in Ljahaviči for 124 years, surrounded by these wonderful legends and customs, and now, only the legend remains, but there is no stone, just like there are no longer any of those who held it to be sacred.

(*Der Morgen Zhurnal*)

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49 The roof thatching on the temporary booths constructed for this holiday celebration.

50 The Discussion, or The Debate.

A Rosh Hashana 'Rebbe' in Mys

In the little *shtetl* of Mys, the most prized *aliyah* was that of *Maftir* on the First Day of *Rosh Hashana.* Namely: The *Haftarah* of I Samuel 1.

The purchaser of the right to chant the *Maftir* on the First Day of *Rosh Hashana*, was crowned with the title of *Rosh Hashana Rebbe*,' for the entire year, from one *Rosh Hashana* to the nest *Rosh Hashana.*

This *aliyah*, the *Maftir* on the First Day of *Rosh Hashana*, and the title of *Rosh Hashana Rebbe*,'was auctioned off at the *Bet HaMedrash* of the Rabbi, in the synagogue, where the sitting Rabbi of the *shtetl* prayed.

The elite among the *balebatim*, the wealthy, the more aristocratic, the Torah scholars, never bothered to pursue this *aliyah*.' Second of all, it would not be of any help to them, in any event, even if they bid a huge sum, because this *aliyah*' was considered to be the exclusive franchise of the common folk.'

It happened quite often, that the person who bought the *Maftir* of the First Day of *Rosh Hashana*, did not even know the Hebrew in the *Haftarah* very well. Despite this, he was crowned with the title of *Rosh Hashana Rebbe.*'

Before the *Maftir* was auctioned off, there would be a recess declared in the *Bet HaMedrash* of the Rabbi, in order to make it possible for those worshiping in other houses of prayer, to come and bid on the *Maftir.*

The worshipers at the *Hasidic shtibl* in Mys, never attended the auction of the *Maftir*, and never bought the *Maftir.*

The one who purchased the *Maftir*, who was crowned with the title of *Rebbe*,' served for an entire year as an intercessor for Jewish pregnant women.

When a Jewish expectant mother began to feel the onset of labor pains, before even going to summon the midwife, one would go to the *Rebbe.*' The *Rosh Hashana Rebbe*,' immediately would come running with the *Mahzor* for *Rosh Hashana*, and would read the entire *Haftarah* from I Samuel in front of the expectant mother.

This *Reader of the Maftir*' received no pay from the community, nor any fee from the family of the expectant mother.

Among the common people,' it was considered a great honor to attain the prestige and the association of being the *Reader of the Rosh Hashana Maftir*' in the *Bet HaMedrash* of the Rabbi.

My grandfather told me, that this custom existed in Mys for many centuries, and in the 80's of the past [sic: 19th] century, a wagon driver from Mys held the franchise' for this *aliyah* for a stretch of a full 10 years. For this, the wagon driver paid for a full year's worth of heating of the *Bet HaMedrash*, and at the level of this price, he had no competition.

During the 80's of the past [sic: 19th] century, when a new settlement began being created and developed 5 km from Mys, later known as Baranovich, and whose first residents were from Mys, this custom was

transferred to Baranovich.

This custom was continued in Baranovich until the outbreak of The Second World War.

In Baranovich, the franchise' to auction off the I Samuel *Haftarah*, did not belong to the Rabbi's *Bet HaMedrash*, but rather to the *Old Bet HaMedrash*,' which was the first *Bet HaMedrash* built in Baranovich.

I know people in America, former residents of Baranovich, who would buy the *aliyah*, and were called as a good-luck presence to visit expectant mothers going into labor.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*)

A Rich Man's Will Breaks an Old Custom of the Hevra Kadisha in Mys

There was an old custom in the little *shtetl* of Mys, that deceased men were interred separately from the women in the cemetery.

The old cemetery in Mys, which was closed in the year 1790, was divided into separate areas – a separate plot for men, for women, and for children. In a far corner, there was a separate plot with graves that had no markers or headstones. These were graves for those who had transgressed against the community, such as informers, people who flouted their violation of the Sabbath, who were then hidden away' in a donkey's grave,' and the community did not permit memorial stones to be placed on their graves.

In the new cemetery, which had existed since the year 1777 as a *Hasidic* cemetery, was, in the year 1790, renovated by the community and made a general cemetery both for *Hasidim* and *Mitnagdim*, and it too, was divided into separate aisles for men, aisles for women and aisles for children.

In the year 5601 (1850), a wealthy man passed away in Mys, who was also a substantial Torah scholar. The deceased had left a will in which he requested that he be interred beside the grave of his deceased wife, and because this will went against the existing custom that was observed in Mys for generations on end, that men and women must lie in separate areas, a *Bet-Din* of three Rabbis was empaneled: The Rabbi of Staloviči, The Rabbi of Palonka, and the Rabbi of Mys, R' Yekhiel'keh זצ"ל. The ruling of the *Bet-Din* was that it is necessary to carry out the terms of the will exactly as ordered by the deceased, even though it is not in accordance with existing custom.

Some time after this, an indigent shoemaker died in Mys, who shortly before his death, in front of witnesses, expressed his wish that also he is to be hidden' near the grave of his deceased wife.

The *Hevra Kadisha* and community were opposed to carrying out the will of this poor shoemaker, R' Yekhiel'keh, however, ruled that the prior ruling of the three Rabbis about the wealthy man held sway in connection with the will of this poor shoemaker. This will was also carried out, and from that time on, for all practical purposes, the very ancient custom that had been in force for generation on end, that there be separate aisles of burial for men and women, was broken. And here, we present the following event that took

place in Mys:

In the year 5631 [1870] a certain Hurwitz died in Mys, who was the Jewish manager of the local noble's water mill in Palatewicz, who in his will, had ordered that he be buried near his wife. However, the deceased had two wives, both of whom were already deceased and buried, and in his will, he did not specify which of these wives he wanted to be buried next to. A dispute erupted between the children he had by both wives. Each side of the children argued that their father had intended their mother specifically.

The children went off to the Rabbi of Mys, R' Yaakov-Moshe זצ"ל (the author of *Be'er Yitzhak*,' *'Bet David*,' and *Nakhalat David*') and the Rabbi issued the following ruling: It is not clear from the will, next to which of his two wives the deceased wish to be buried, and in order not to bring shame on one or the other of them, the will cannot be implemented, and the deceased is to be interred in the cemetery of the nearest *shtetl*, Palonka.'

All of these facts are taken from the community Pinkas of Mys, and the writings of R' Yitzhak-Matos Miskin (a grandson of the *Yesod HaAvodah*[51]' זצ"ל), and the stories of my grandfather, Rabbi Abraham Foxman זצ"ל, who passed away 35 years ago, at 80 years of age.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, April 21, 1955)

A Shokhet Strike in Baranovich

Worker strikes against *balebatim* in Baranovich took place very rarely. Among the strikes that did take place, the *Shokhet* strike was perhaps the most interesting and most original.

The strike was proclaimed by the ritual slaughterers in the year 1923, and went on for a long number of weeks.

At that time, the ritual slaughterers had a collective agreement with the butchers, as to how much they were to receive for the slaughter of cattle, and how much for a calf. However, because the Polish zloty fell in value, the ritual slaughterers demanded a raise. The butchers did not want to give this raise, and as a consequence, the three ritual slaughterers, R' Menachem Kaplan, R' Ephraim Kopeliowicz, and R' Itcheh (a Slonim Hasid), went on strike.

Then, the butchers approached the two ritual slaughterers in the city, who slaughtered fowl, asking them to undertake slaughter on their behalf in the large slaughterhouse. The fowl slaughterers agreed, and on one weekend, 70 living items' (cattle) were slaughtered.

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51 Abraham (I) Weinberg of Slonim (1804––1883), the first titular *Rebbe* of Slonim, serving from 1858, who was primarily responsible for establishing the sect's unique doctrine, one that came to be deeply influenced by the *Misnagdic* yeshiva culture dominating nineteenth-century Jewish Lithuania and Byelorussia.

The sitting Rabbi of Baranovich, R' David Weitzel took the side of the three veteran ritual slaughterers, against the butchers, and declared all seventy of the slaughtered animals ritually unfit for consumption [e.g. *trayf*].

The butchers were then compelled to concede, and sold the meat to the unkosher sausage manufacturers at half price.

Arbitrators were then empaneled. The third man' was – Rabbi Fein of Slonim. Both sides came, each with their arguments. The dispute was resolved, and the original strike was ended.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, April 26, 1957)

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The Hevra 'Shomrei Shabbat' in Baranovich

In Poland, after The First World War, it was already possible to find individual Jews in Poland, who permitted themselves the option of keeping their businesses open on the Sabbath.

In order to interdict this desecration of the Sabbath, a number of cities established Societies of Sabbath Observers [e.g. *Hevra Shomrei Shabbat*].

In Baranovich too, during the decade of the twenties, a *Hevra Shomrei Shabbat* was established. The following distinguished *Gaonim* stood at the head of the *Hevra:* Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman הי"ד, and the Rabbi R' Israel-Yaakov Lubczansky הי"ד.

Under the influence of the *Hevra Shomrei Shabbat*, those businesses that had opened on the Sabbath and Festivals, once again, chose to close, and the *balebatim* who owned these businesses signed pledges to observe the sanctity of the Sabbath. From its side, the *Hevra Shomrei Shabbat* would publish notices that such-and-such a business, which previously had desecrated the Sabbath, were, from this day forward, recognized as having returned to the fold. These notices would be put up in all the synagogues, study houses, and *shtiblakh*, and also in the regional press.

My son, who has just now returned from a visit to Israel, brought me a variety of interesting documents, relating to the history of Baranovich. Among the documents is an original notice from the *Hevra Shomrei Shabbat* with the following content: Notice," we have the honor to advise all Jews of Baranovich and vicinity, that the management of the Pluto's' chocolate business, Mr. Hirsch ZELIKOVICH, and Mr. Moshe Grabowiecky, came to the local *Bet-Din* of Righteousness, and expressed their regret for their past desecration of the Sabbath, declaring, that they had been misled because of threats regarding possible loss of their business. They assumed the ongoing obligation not to keep the store open on the Sabbath and Festivals, God forbid. And because of their sincere assurance that they will stick to their promise, in return for their observance of the Sabbath, may they earn the blessings of success, thereby remaining in business among their fellow Jews, and may they, and all others who observe the Sabbath, be blessed because of the Sabbath [observance] with good luck, *selah*. The writers and signatories, in honor of the Sabbath. The Rabbi

and [Senior] of the Bet-Din of Righteousness in Baranovich. *Hevra Shomrei Shabbat* of Baranovich, published on Thursday, *Matot-u'Mas'ei*, 29 Tammuz, 5694, in Baranovich.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, 1960)

'At Weddings, At Ritual Circumcisions'...

In the little *shtetl* of Mys, years ago, there was a custom: when dogs would bark at night, the womenfolk would go to the threshold of the doorway entrance, bang on the door lintel, and say: At Weddings, At Ritual Circumcisions'...

Where does this saying come from?

My grandfather, Rabbi Abraham Foxman זצ"ל, himself having been born in Mys, and knowledgeable in the local customs, explained it as follows:

In the Gemara, it is stated: If dogs cavort – Elijah the Prophet is coming to the city, If dogs cry – the Angel of Death is coming to the city.'

So, in times gone bay, there was a Jewish custom in Mys: When dogs are heard crying at night, indicating that the Angel of Death is then in the city, one should go to the door and recite the prayer: *'Hob khass auf dyneh B'nai-Briss'* (Show mercy to the sons of Your Covenant;' meaning, to show mercy to the Jewish children).

When, upon hearing the Hebrew words *Khass'* and *B'nai Briss*,' the Jewish women did not grasp the correct meaning, they erroneously altered the prayer to *Auf Khassenehs, auf Brissn...* (At Weddings, At Ritual Circumcisions')...

Shlomo Foxman
(*Yiddish far Alleh'* August-September, 1938)

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'God's Street' in Baranovich

The Szeptycka *Gasse* in Baranovich, to this day, is called Marinska by the Jews – in line with its pre-war Russian name, Marinskaya.'

A number of the elders tell that the Russian name is taken from Maria,' – which was the name of the daughter of Graf Rozwadowski, the master of the land, on which the city was built.

Other hold that the name comes from Holy Mary' and it was for this reason, indeed, that the Jews before

The First World War, altered the name to God's Street.'

In Baranovich, it was once told that a curious person once asked a Jewish woman: What street do you live on?' She replied: I live on the street where I have not yet washed my hands...' (This is how the elderly women would express themselves in our area, not wanting to speak the name of God).

I am also aware of a second interpretation of the name God's Street:' it was on that street where the largest buildings were located, and the richest businesses, and where the wealthy of the city lived, God's Street' then means: it is the street on which God has bestowed His plenty and blessing.

It is the principal street in our location, and during the German occupation of 1915 - 1918, it was called *Hauptstrasse.*'

Shlomo Foxman
(*Yiddish far Alleh'* January, 1939)

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A Forgotten Province That Made Our People Great

By Daniel Charney

Only two cities in the Minsk *Guberniya* were privileged to be memorialized through two substantive memorial books, and these are Baranovich and Pinsk

(Reprinted from *Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, 9 July, 1955)

My respected colleagues and *landsleit,* H. Leivick and Daniel Persky, recently registered complaints with the various *Landsmaschaften* of the Minsk *Guberniya*, as to why none of them, to date, had published even a single Yizkor Book?

Their justifiable complaints touched me personally, because I am a scion of the Minsk *Guberniya.*

So I leafed through the book, *Landsmanschaften* of New York,' which the I. L. Peretz Literary Society had published in the year 1938, and I noticed, that the city of Minsk alone, had 19 societies, of various sorts, in New York.

One such Minsk *Landsmanschaft,* which recently celebrated it 50th Jubilee, even boasted that it had resources of $160M.

What this means, is there was not any shortage of funds, with regard to publishing a Yizkor Book about the mother city of Minsk.

No shortage of people to do the work would exist as well, because just for the *Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, there

are six writers there, any one of which would be qualified to be the editor of a Minsk Yizkor Book.

Here they are in [sic: Hebrew] alphabetical order: Daniel Charney, H. Leivick, the one who is alive, Sh. Niger, Dr. Shlomo Simon, and Aharon Zeitlin (and Daniel Persky of *HaDoar*,' who also has something to offer).

But perhaps Minsk is one of those provinces of Byelorussia that may not have produced too many Jewish personalities, who would be worth memorializing in special Yizkor Book?

So I was not lax, and I perused all four thick volumes of Zalman Reisen's Lexicon, and... wonder of wonders!

I counted about one hundred and some sixty Yiddish and Hebrew writers, who come from sixty cities and towns, that were part of what was at one time the Minsk *Guberniya.*

It suffices to say, that the first classical writer of the modern Yiddish literature comes from Kapyl' in the Minsk *Guberniya.* This is *Mendele Mocher Sforim*, who died exactly one month after the October Revolution, and 20 years later, this self-same October Revolution killed the first Yiddish-Soviet poet,[Yitzhak] Izi Kharik[52], who also comes from the Minks *Guberniya.*

But Izi Kharik no longer figures in Zalman Reisen's Lexicon, because the Lexicon was published barely thirty years ago.

Understand, that in the years of 1920 - 1940, when Yiddish-Soviet culture still flourished, tens of other writers, talented people, artists, and people who brought culture, came to the Minsk *Guberniya*, who made the Minsk Guberniya even greater, but all of these are not accounted for in Reisen's Lexicon, and they also can no longer be found in the new Soviet Lexicons and encyclopedias, because, quite simply, they were erased from there.

The sole Yiddish writer that the Soviet encyclopedia did leave in, was *Mendele Mocher Sforim*, because after his death, he was titled as a proletarian' writer.

It is, indeed, for this reason, that the recently deceased Israeli ambassador in Moscow, Shmuel Eliashiv, could, under no circumstances, persuade the communists to allow *Mendele's* remains to be transferred from Odessa to Israel.

However, apart from the 160 Yiddish and Hebrew writers, that it is still possible to find in Zalman Reisen's Lexicon, which appeared thirty years ago, the Minsk *Guberniya* also produced a large number of important personalities, not in the literary sphere, who became renown the world over, and not only in Jewish circles alone.

Do you know that General David Sarnoff, President of the Radio Corporation [of America] comes from the small *shtetl* of Uzlyany, not far from Minks, and not more than 20 *viorst* from my own home town *shtetl* of

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52 Kharik, Izi (Yitzhak; 1898—1937), Soviet Yiddish poet. Born in Zembin, Byelorussia, he began publishing Yiddish poetry in 1920. In June 1937, at the peak of his career, he was arrested, and killed later that year, as part of the Great Purges that decimated the Soviet cultural elite. His work was not republished until the late 1950s after his rehabilitation following Stalin's death.

Dukora?

By the way, the well-known American writer in English, Eugene Lyons[53], whose real name is Mosh'keh Gebeleyev, also comes from the same *shtetl* of Uzlyany.

Do you know that the world-famous artist, Chaim Soutine[54], for whose paintings, one pays millions of francs, comes from the little *shtetl* of Smilavičy, which is all of ten *viorst* from my own little *shtetl* of Dukora?

Do you know that the first President of the State of Israel, Prof. Chaim Weizmann comes from the little *shtetl* of Motal, near Pinsk, in the Minsk *Guberniya*?

Do you know that the renown revolutionary, Gershuni, who is already woven into legend, comes from Minsk[55]?

Do you know that Manya Shokhat[56], the former Manya Wilbuszewicz, who in the years 1902-1903 aroused the Jewish labor movement to a frenzy with her Zubatovščina[57]' comes from Minsk?

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53 Eugene Lyons (1898—1985) was an American journalist and writer. A fellow traveler of the Communist Party in his younger years, Lyons became highly critical of the Soviet Union after having lived there for several years as a correspondent of United Press International. Lyons is remembered by many as a biographer of President Herbert Hoover. Eugene Lyons was born July 1, 1898 to a Jewish family in the town of Uzlyany, now part of Belarus but then part of the Russian empire. His parents were Nathan Lyons and Minnie Privin. He grew up on the East side of New York City among the teeming and odoriferous tenements of Sidney Kingsley''s Dead End.

54 Chaïm Soutine (January 13, 1893 — August 9, 1943) was a Jewish painter from what is now Belarus. Soutine made a major contribution to the expressionist movement while living in Paris. Soutine was born in Smilavičy near Minsk, (modern day) Belarus (then part of the Russian Empire). He was the tenth of eleven children. From 1910—1913 he studied in Vilnius at the Vilna Academy of Fine Arts. In 1913, with his friends Pinchus Kremegne (1890—1981), and Michel Kikoine (1892—1968), he emigrated to Paris, where he studied at the École des Beaux-Arts under Fernand Cormon. He soon developed a highly personal vision and painting technique.

55 Grigory Andreyevich Gershuni (September 29 [o.s. September 17] 1870—March 29 [o.s. March 16] 1908) was a Russian revolutionary and one of the founders of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. Born in Kovno, Russia 1870 to Jewish peasants. Gershuni studied as a pharmacist at Kiev University and later opened his own bacteriological laboratory in Minsk.

56 Manya Shochat (or Mania Shohat), née Wilbuszewicz, (1880* — 1961) was Russian Jewish politician and the "mother" of the collective settlement in Palestine, the forerunner of the kibbutz movement.

57 Named for Sergei Vasilyevich Zubatov, a Russian revolutionary turned informant for the Czarist secret police, the *Okhrana*. Despite his deeply held monarchist convictions, Zubatov earnestly believed that repression alone could not crush the revolutionary movement. He therefore also promoted the organization of pro-government trade unions to channel protest away from agitation between 1901 and 1903, a practice named *police socialism* or lambasted by revolutionary activists as Zubatovščina after him, which gained support from Moscow Governor General, Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich.

Do you know that Esther Frumkin, the former *Bund* leader, and the founder and progenitor of the modem Yiddish education system, and later on a Communist, who was killed in a Soviet prison, was from Minsk?

Do you know that the world-famous philosopher, and Enlightened Thinker, Shlomo Maimon (1754 - 1800) the close friend and disciple of Moses Mendelssohn, the founder of the *Haskalah* movement, comes from Njasviz in the Minsk *Guberniya*?

Incidentally, the well-known Yiddish and Hebrew writers, such as Dr. Mordechai Ze'ev Reisen, the Rabbi of Paterson, Dr. L. Fogelman, co-editor of the *Forverts*,' and Shlomo Damesek of Lakewood, also come from that same *shtetl* of Njasviz.

Do you know that the poet and publicist, David Einhorn, comes from Karelicy?; The Yiddish-Hebrew writer Y. D. Berkowicz (a son-in-law to *Sholom Aleichem*), whose dramas *Mosh'keleh Khazer*' and *Landsleit*,' were produced by Maurice Schwartz in New York, with great success, comes from Sluck; The well-known actor, Ben-Ami, is also from the Minsk *Guberniya*; Shaul Ginsberg, the editor of the first Yiddish periodical in Russia, *Der Fraynd*' is from Minsk; Dr. Yaakov Wigodsky, whom the Nazis killed in Vilna, is from Bobruisk; Baruch Wladek (Charney) comes from the little shtetl of Dukora; Alexander Zeldin, the former employee of the *Tog*' comes from the little *shtetl* of Lelcyc; Sh. Janovsky, the former editor of the *'Freier Arbeiter Stimme*' comes from Pinsk; the well-known writer YHL"L (Yehuda Leib Levin) and YaKNeHoZ (Y. Goldberg) are from Minsk; Nahum Chanin, the General Secretary of the Workmen's Circle, comes from Holopeniec; A. Litwin (Sh. Hurwicz) – from Minsk; The Living One (Chaim Gutman) – from Piotrkow; A. Liesin, the former director of Zukunft' – from Minsk; The Hebrew poet Ephraim Lisitzky, who won the Lamer Prize, comes from the Minsk *Guberniya*; The reverend, Zvi Hirsch Masliansky, comes from Sluck; Yaakov Marinov, former editor of Kundes' comes from Sernik; The literature and drama critic, Dr. Kh. Mokdoni, comes from Ljahaviči; Vladimir Medess, the renown leader of the *Bund*, is from Minsk; *Mendele Mokher Sforim*, as I have already mentioned, comes from Kapyl'; Sh. Niger, as you know, comes from the little *shtetl* of Dukora; Yitzhak Neufach, former Chief Justice from Tel-Aviv, comes from Minsk; Dr. Shlomo Saymon, and employee of the *Tog-Morgen-Zhurnal*, comes from Kalinoviči; Dr. Aharon Singalowsky, the President of the Old World ORT' Society, comes from Pinsk; The beloved Mendl Elkin, who directs the library at YIVO, comes from Bobruisk; The literary and theater critic, Joel Entin, comes from Pohost; Daniel Persky, the foresworn Hebraist, supporting the Ashkenazic style, and the perpetual employee of the weekly *HaDoar*,' in New York, comes from Minsk; Aharon Zeitlin, the perpetual employee of the *Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, comes from Ovoroviči; Eliezer Kaplan, the first Finance Minister of the State of Israel, comes from Minsk; Ber'l Katznelson, the former leader of the *Mapai* Party in Israel, comes from Bialystok;[58] The martyred poet, Yitzhak Katznelson, who left us the poem, *Dos Lied fun mayn Oysgehargetn Folk*' comes from Karelicy; Dr. Yaakov Klatzkin, the philosopher, who spent the years of the slaughter of The Second World War in New York, and went off to die in his beloved Switzerland, comes from Kartuz-Bereza; Leo Koenig, the well-known essayist, who lastly took up residence in Tel-Aviv, comes from Salen, near Bobruisk; Hillel Rogoff, the Editor-in-Chief of *Der Forverts'* comes from Berezin; Menachem Mendl Rosenbaum, the Yiddish essayist and Zionist, who recently died in Israel, comes from, Pleščeniči; the poet, Joseph Rolnik, who for many long years was a proofreader for *Der Tog*,' comes from Zuhaviči; Shneur-Zalman Rubashov (Shazar), the first Education Minister of the State of Israel, comes from the little shtetl of Mir; Abraham Reisen and Zalman Reisen, come from Kaidanov; The manufacturing director, Joseph Schlossberg, whose 80th birthday is currently being celebrated both here in America and in Israel, also comes from Kaidanov; the famous novelist Shomer (Shykevich) comes from Njasviz; his son, Abraham Shomer,

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[58] Since Bialystok is not in the Minsk *Guberniya*, it is not clear why this is included here.

is from Pinsk.

Here, I have alphabetically [sic: by Hebrew] listed not more than several tens of names, which are very well known to everyone, without commentary.

At the end, I also wish to recollect, that the Minsk Guberniya also produced a fine number of women storytellers and poets. Here they are (again in [sic: Hebrew] alphabetical order):

Rachel Berachot from Minsk; Tzil'ia Drapkin from Bobruisk; Yehudit (Rachel Bernstein), from Minsk; Bertha Kling, from Navahardok; Sarah Reisen from Kaidanov.

If there is anyone of my colleagues that I have inadvertently omitted, it is not my fault. They are not to be found in Zalman Reisen's Lexicon.

There are certainly additional Yiddish and Hebrew writers from the Minsk Guberniya, who took up this art after the time that Zalman Reisen's Lexicon was frozen, some thirty years ago. I would be grateful to them, if they contact me Ein due course, in order that I be able to include them in the list of the creative Jewish personalities, that are to appear in my forthcoming planned book. *The Forgotten Guberniya.*'

In this context, I have omitted all of the great Rabbis and other clergy from the Minsk Guberniya, beginning from the Great One' of Minsk, until, may he live long years, Rabbi Nissan Telushkin, from Brooklyn-Dukora. Regrettably, I do not have access to the book of Rabbi Ben-Zion Eisenstadt, *'Minsk and its Sages.*' However, the future publishers of a Yizkor Book, about the mother city of Minsk, will be able to find Rabbi Eisenstadt's book in the library of the Schechter's Teacher Seminary.

I say the future publishers,' of a Minsk Yizkor Book, but I really mean, as you understand, the immediate, the publishers who will publish tomorrow, because I cannot conceive that the well endowed, and many *Landsmanschaften* from the Minsk *Guberniya*, will be indifferent to their destroyed homes, and rely on future' historians, who, you can understand, will never materialize...

In ten to fifteen years, all the above-mentioned writers, who still have something to contribute to such a Minsk *Pinkas*, will no longer have the wherewithal to undertake such a task, and so, one asks the question of one's self, who is it that can take their place?

Therefore, I, indeed, appeal now, along with my colleagues, H. Levik and Daniel Persky, to all of the *Landsmanschaften* of the Minsk *Guberniya*, that they should accelerate the publication, and produce a Yizkor Book however more quickly, whether in the form of a *Pinkas*, or as a Lexicon about our *Guberniya* that has been destroyed, which raised our generation to greatness, and elevated our people.

Only two cities in the Minsk *Guberniya* have thus far been privileged to be memorialized through such substantive memorial books, these being Baranovich and Pinsk.

These two memorial books can serve as models for all the other cities and towns, of the Minsk *Guberniya*[59].

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[59] The Yizkor Book *Minsk, Ir va-'em: Korot, Ma'asim, Ishim, Havai* [*Minsk; Jewish Mother City: A Memorial Anthology*], edited by David Kohen and Shlomo Even-Shoshan. (Jerusalem, 1975-1985).

The first volume (693 pages) was published in Jerusalem in 1975 by the *Irgun yotse Minsk u-venoteha be-Yisrael*

A Seder Night Without Matzos in a Soviet Prison in Baranovich

By Fishl Ludmirer

On 12 Nissan, it became 4 months that we were incarcerated in prison. God in heaven – how many incidents of imprisonment did we already go through in these short four months. In Mockiszky and Soleczinek near Lida, we still believed that we would only be detained for a few days, as some of those who tried to cross the border before us, and we would be summarily released. In the Lida prison, we were still being assured: you Torah scholars will certainly be released, but in the second pavilion of the Baranovich prison, in cell number 81[60], there we were, 38 people, for more than 3 months, and tomorrow is the day to clean out the *Hametz*, and the day after, in the evening, is the night of the first *Seder*.... we are prohibited from eating any *Hametz*. And so, what is to be done about Matzos?

Ach! If those dear Baranovich Jews only knew, that here in the prison, in their own city, there are 25 Jews, among them 10 Torah scholars, and that all, as one, including Yankl'eh the Communist from Kovno, decided that on the first *Seder* night, they will eat no *Hametz*, they would most certainly have sent in Matzos. But the Baranovich Jews do not know, and they are kept from being informed as to who is languishing in their city, behind the walls of the prison...

We have no contact with the outside world. For us, only number 31 exists, where there are 17 cots, where in the old days, 17 genuine criminals would sleep, and here 38 people are crammed together, who wanted to leave this liberated Garden of Eden'...

[It is] the Eve of Passover. Through the bars in the elevated prison windows, that reach practically up to the soffit, the bright rays of the sun shine in, and a piece of the blue sky can be seen.

Leib'leh Ber'ish from the Bialystok Yeshiva, is still certain, that the Creator of the Universe can still perform a miracle, and have all of us Jews set free. It will be, he says, our genuine festival of liberation. But the day moves on. On the western wall one can see the shadows of two large barred windows. It becomes evident...Leib'leh's confidence is not justified, and not even the belief that we will get Matzos sent in at the last minute. It was yet another miracle, that we had, early on, sold off our bundles' of bread to the gentiles for 8 portions of sugar (Leib'l among us), and were it not for that, we would have transgressed in possessing *Hametz* by default...

Night begins to fall. Spontaneously, all 25 of the Jews gather on two of the beds, on which the Torah scholars

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[Association of *Olim* from Minsk and its Surroundings in Israel]. It covers the history of Minsk through 1917. The second volume (504 pages) covers the period after 1917 and was published in 1985, also in Jerusalem. Both volumes are in Hebrew and each has a separate table of contents and separate name indices. The name indices are not necrologies, but contain the names of people mentioned in the volumes, both Jews and Gentiles.

[60] Seemingly a typographical error, since the cell number is subsequently given consistently as 31.

are sleeping. The Lawyer, Marek Cahan (a former syndic of the Polish periodical *Moment*'), and Yankl'eh Riback, also come over, and set themselves to begin the *Maariv* prayer for Festivals.

As the oldest of the Torah scholars, it falls to me to have the honor of leading the services. The heart is pained by a heavy weight of suffering, oppression, and indescribable feelings of sorrow; a minute earlier, I noticed that the perpetually hopeful young lad from Rawa-Ruska – Moshe Gruber, dissolved into whining tears...

I quickly run over to his bed, on which he had thrown himself, and buried his head in the prison-issued blanket. What is the matter, Moshe?' – I ask him – Are you too beginning to break down? You, who are the one to always be the one to cheer us up? Is this what your *Rebbe* of Belz taught you?...' Moshe quickly raises his head, wipes away the last of his tears, from his tear-stained face, and slightly embarrassed replies – I reminded myself of my father's *Seder*. And as you can see, it possessed me entirely. – But it's over. –' Well, pick yourself up, we are getting ready to pray,' I say to him, and I immediately begin the prayer using the Festival melody: *Barchu et HaShem HaMevorakh.*' and the congregation responds *'Baruch HaShem HaMevorakh LeOlam VaEd....'*

The guard then raps on the door to cell number 31, and shouts out loud: Прекратит Шум.'[61] We pray more quietly. We recite the *Hallel* in unison, *Hallel* behind prison walls... a wellspring of tears erupts from each of us. The Jewish heart [in each of us] is crying, which in no way can encompass the suffering that his people have endured innocently, and beseeched the Father in Heaven – Oh Lord, deliver my soul, compassionate God, who is righteous....

The Jewish mind takes pride in the words of – *the very stone, rejected by the builders has become the keystone – in the Lord's name, we will cut them down ans we will live through this.* The congregation repeats, with great fervor, praying louder and louder... and we take no note of how, through the peep window, the guard is looking in, and immediately unlocks the heavy iron door, and remains standing there, agape. It is truly a rare sight! Jews praying in a Soviet prison... What is going on here?' he asks. The lawyer Cahan steps out of the throng, and explains something to him in Russian. The guard heads for the exit, and the words Толко без шуму'[62] reach my ears, along with a strong scraping sound of the keys in the iron door.

After wishing each other *Gut Yom Tov*,' we sit down to the *Seder*. We all seat ourselves about on our cots, which are in the southeastern corner of the cell. My dear brethren in common woe' – I say to them – In this year, we will emulate the *Seder* of Mordechai'... I explain to them more precisely. We read in the *Megillah*, And Mordechai passed – so what exactly did he pass over? – Our Sages tell us that – he fasted on Passover.. and we now face the need' – I say further – to perform such a *Seder*, but without Matzos....children! Whoever knows the *Haggadah* by heart, should begin, and we will listen'. With a quiet whispering from all the surrounding Jews, and from the entire gentile cell, all of whom are looking at our corner with bated breath, Leib'leh begins the recitation of the *Haggadah*, with a strong complaint to Our Father in Heaven: 'Why is this night different from all other nights? In our minds, all of us ask this same very pressing question – why is this *Seder*-night different from all other *Seder*-nights, that we have already lived through?...And so comes that ancient response, We were slaves...' slaves to alien Pharaohs... and we feel that this, indeed, is the appropriate reply. This is why our ancestors suffered, and this is why we suffer... our

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61 'Cut out the noise.'

62 'Do this without noise.'

eternal tribulation, slaves and servants to foreign rulers, in alien kingdoms, but not in our own land, for ourselves... Leib'leh reads the *Haggadah* continuously, as if it came straight out of the *Siddur*, and we hear this, and get lost in our own thoughts. But with a start, Leib'leh awakens us from our daydreaming. He is already at the end, the completion of the Passover Seder... *Liberated to Zion, your city, in song* – he ends. All of us awaken, even Yankl the Communist shouted, literally shouted: *Next Year in Jerusalem!*'....

The door to the cell is vigorously opened. The guard runs in with a shout: Go to sleep already, if not, you will all go into the dungeon.' But who is listening to him at that moment. As soon as he leaves, we all begin to sing *Adir Hu...*' May he build His House Soon... Quickly...Quickly... In Our Day...Soon... Lord, Build....'

Mendele Gersztner, from Tarnow, sings all of the Passover songs: – *Ekhad Mi Yodea*, *Chad Gadya*, and just plain other cantorial pieces. We all feel a little more lively. We have gotten ourselves drunk on hope, on this very *Seder*-night, without Matzos. We have a goal before our eyes... the future is so close, and lit by a clear and shining sun... and so who is really missing the Matzos on this very *Seder*-night in prison, seeing that here, at hand, we have that very day that God has given us, so let us be happy with it – *This is the day that the Lord hath made, let us be happy and rejoice in it....*

Let us make a very significant point: On that *Seder*-night, Yankl Riback the Communist, became a Zionist, a religious-nationalist Jew...

Shavuot in the Slonim Shtibl in Baranovich

By Fishl Ludmirer

(Those on High rejoiced, and those Below made merry, on receiving the Torah)

Hordes of people, *balebatim*, scholars, young men from the Yeshiva of the *Mitnagdim*, little children from the various *Heders,* and the elementary level Yeshivas, are being drawn to the large, wooden *Bet HaMedrash*, on the Minsk *Gasse*, built out of large long blocks, piled one on top of another, up to the roof above. All are going in the direction of the Slonim *shtibl*, to see the *Rebbe* and the *Hasidim* at their *Shavuot* Festival prayers, and the receiving of the Torah. By the time you reach Rog Senatorska, you can hear that voice striking with tongues of fire,[63]' that is carried to you through the open windows of the Slonim *shtibl*, and when you get closer to the *shtibl*, its exterior gives the appearance of a tall, high pauper, dressed in weekday clothing. The walls of the *shtibl* accost the eye, with no color, no levity. Here and there, pieces of moss and cotton protrude from under the beams that have been tossed together – you are left, in that first glance, especially after you see the *Bet HaMedrash* for the first time – standing agape. Really? Is this the spacious Slonim *shtibl* of Baranovich?

So you come into the courtyard of the *Bet HaMedrash*, through which you push yourself, because Hasidim are already standing here crammed in, and with effort, you force yourself inside, into the *shtibl* interior, from which a wave of heat emanates, and a cloud of humid air, and you are immediately drenched in sweat – the

63 A biblical allusion: see Psalms 29:7

prayer shawls of the *Hasidim*, which make the more rapid impression by virtue of wrapping their heads in them, seeming to be black tarred neck adornments, which are worn by the Slonim [*Hasidim*], analogous to the silver neck adornments of the *Hasidim* from Galicia and Poland; so you stand for a minute, and you hear the Slonim style melody, with their whining-like tearful cry, and hoarse voice, such that the beasts themselves might expire. You stand for a minute, and you see how Jews hold up their heads, covered in sweat, wet prayer shawls, and who cry out so often: *Oy*, Sweet Father, have mercy [on us]' and who gurgle hoarsely this way, in the back of their throats, some with glazed over eyes, as if they were about to die, and others gesturing with their hands, and knocking with their fingers; then a fear and terror seizes you, and genuine feelings of holiness take control of you. But now, you hear how the *Rebbe* is leading services at the pulpit, his voice sounding rusty and hoarse, and it is hard to hear the words, because each word is accompanied by an entirely long series of *ay, ay, ay....* and hear I can distinguish the sound of *'Tashuv Enosh Daka,... ay, ay,.. VaTomar Shuvu B'nai Adam – ay, ay',....* the words coming out is such a whining manner, that a chill passes through your bones...between the hand-waving of the *Hasidim*, and the choked whisper – Oh hear us, Father in Heaven, have pity'– with beards and side locks raised upwards, the sweat that covers your face becomes literally cold. And even if you were a person with iron nerves, a robot without any feelings, such a picture would sweep you away, and who knows if it would not introduce a touch of repentance as well...

The reading of the Torah. The *Rebbe* himself reads, in that same hoarse style, without musical notes, without any reading style. Jewish *Mitnagdim*, who are fastidious about ritual, are simply turned off by such reading. *Ach*! They shrug their shoulders, such reading does not satisfy the requirement...

But when you hear from the *Rebbe*, either *'That shalt not kill....* or *Thou shalt not covet...* and you remind yourself, that you once did try to sin... and in your ears, there echoes that sorrowful Sweet Father, show mercy, show mercy,' from the *Hasidim*, as a soft reply to the *Tashuv Enosh Dka*' coming from the *Rebbe* – then it is specifically this type of Torah reading that gives you a shove to your soul, and a rip, a frightening rip to your heart....

Fervent Jews, Jews full of heart, Slonim *Hasidim*, where are you on the Shavuot of today? Was it the Voice of God striking tongues of flame' that consumed you – or the fiery crematoria ovens of Auschwitz?....



Who is it that sways in prayer with the Slonim *Bet HaMedrash*? Who there raises the soffit, and makes merry with the floor? Why is it that the window panes tremble so in the window frames of the *shtibl*? And who is this Jer, with the white socks, and white trousers, that peer out from under his black silk *kapote*? Who is this Jew with his face aflame, eyes shut, his head thrown back, and his crushed and bared heart? And for what is he whirling himself about so, in the wild dance of the rollicking throng? And oh, how they dance! With feet tapping, hands thrown around each others shoulders, and backs, faces all sweaty, and the black edges of the *kapotes* throw themselves about, long white fringes, and throats rattle as if these were death throes taking place at a last stand, using up the last of one's energy. What are they mumbling so incoherently, with whom are they speaking? Are they here, or are they in the Other World? But do I nevertheless not hear our own holy words? What, you don't hear them? Well, do you not, listen carefully to the chant of this very same old man, with the white beard, who is dancing near you? Do you finally hear? Those on High rejoiced, and those Below made merry, on receiving the Torah,' *ay, ay, ay....* Do you not see the joy, to the point of forgetting one's self, here Below' on our insignificant little world, with receiving the Torah. And indeed, that is how those Above' rejoiced, the angels. But, perhaps are not all of these Jews angels, who have come down Below' and rejoice and dance with the Receiving of the Torah?....

And where are you, you Slonim Jews, today at the time of the Receiving of the Torah? Your *Bet HaMedrash* is burned down. There is only an empty space that is left where it used to stand. Your *Rebbe*, R' Abraham'leh זצ"ל, still had the privilege for a few years before the *Great Destruction*, to literally dance with those from Above,' not here on this sinful, forsaken earth, but [up] there, where unclean human hands can no longer reach them with their Holocaust. Who knows if their technology would enable them to reach up into the heavens, that they would not attempt to destroy, and to reach even your *Rebbe* in heaven to exterminate him as well. Only one miracle remains to us, that he who dwells in the heavens may rejoice, and laugh at all the human terrorists.... so dance then, all you people from Slonim, with your *Rebbe* in heaven, a dance in honor of the giving of the Torah! Unimpeded, joyfully, take yourselves around in a circle in that Slonim *shtibl* in the heavens, and dance, with your hoarse voice, and laugh in the face of the one who murdered you and your *Bet HaMedrash*. Sing, and stomp your feet, so that the heavens themselves might tremble: Yesterday, those Below' rejoiced in receiving the Torah — today it is those Above' who make merry in receiving the Torah...

R' Moshe'leh, Hasid from Slonim [64]

By Yekhiel Granatstein

(Reprinted from '*b'Sha'ar*' Paris, *Rosh Hodesh* Kislev 5709 [December 2/3, 1948])

The little wooden house, in which he lived for all his years, stood on a hillock, in the *Schulhof*, together with the totality of the poverty that was crammed into those crowded and filthy side streets.

Apart from an attic room, this old, broken down house on the ground floor, abandoned, and never occupied.

The windows of the rear rooms were always wide open, as though after a fire. On the wooden beams that hung down from the walls, and which bend under rains and snow, huge mushrooms sprouted, and corroded the wood until it collapsed.

From this emptiness, and while the rooms served other purposes, fetid odors would waft over the Schulhof, so pungent, that it was necessary to hold one's nose, in order not to inhale it while passing by.

In spring and fall, this wreckage served as a meeting place for the cats in the entire *Schulhof*, and also from the other streets. They would spent entire nights roaming around there, meowing, and committing all manner of mischief. The dogs in the city, mostly those who had no owners to control them, would hide there, with all manner of things they had stolen, especially pieces of meat, which they would drag off the slaughterhouse blocks from the nearby slaughterhouse street.

And if one wanted to go upstairs to R' Moshe'leh, first one had to negotiate the wreckage, and from there, work your way into the dark yard, where there was not much more room that for a pail for slops, and an outhouse. Here, a broken ladder led up to the attic room, which was somewhat larger than a large animal pen, with a small window, which had two panes, that were never washed.

Here, R' Moshe'leh lived with his wife, who, in her younger years did not bear any children, and remained permanently childless.

Over the years, the sloping roof of this hut, became entirely crooked, and bent itself away from the other ho9uses of the *Schulhof*, as if it wanted to have nothing to do with them. The roof remained hanging like a cap with a visor, blocking off the sun with its shingles, and never permitting even a shred of light to come into the attic room.

Day and night, R' Moshe'leh sat over his books and learned. His oil lamp constantly sputtered, and on the floor, there were round black hoops, like iron bars, as if they were supporting the weak soffit from falling to the ground.

R' Moshe'leh was a puzzle to the people of the city. Nobody knew how he made a living, how he feeds himself and his wife, and what sort of person he was in general. In contrast to this, women, who were good Jewish ladies, not even religious, spread various stories, that here, we are dealing with an esoteric type of

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[64] R' Moshe'leh *Hasid*, was the son of the Slonim *Shokhet*, R' Yud'l Foxman ז"ל.

Tzaddik, a sort of *Lamed-Vovnik*, who is not readily understood by common folk. And despite the fact that he would drive people away from himself, people would come to him in time of trouble, when there was a difficult labor and delivery, a dangerous sleepiness, God forbid, and other situations. In those situations, the women would want to leave something behind, in order to relieve some of the poverty in that household. but R' Moshe'leh does not want to hear of this, puts on an angry demeanor, in silence, keeping his large brown almond-shaped eyes shut, over which stiff thick eyebrows hung.

In his middle years, Moshe'leh would show himself in the street more frequently.

In returning from the mikva on Friday evening, before the Sabbath, with is soaked beard, and long side locks, and his ruddy face, R' Moshe'leh would run through the streets, in the middle of the road, and shout into the tumult:

– *Shabbes....*

– *Yidd' lekh, Shabbes....*

But as it grows late, he wishes to discharge his duty not only with shouting, and he leaps into each place of business, bangs on the posts, the doors, some getting annoyed, others sneering at him, but no one dares to say anything, because they are afraid... they fear his rigor in observance...

On one sunny day, it was a Sunday, the tranquility was suddenly broken, and mortars began to rain shells and shrapnel on us that we had not heard in a long time. They created desolation in the city, igniting fires. At night, the Germans entered the city. R' Moshe'leh did not come out of his house until Friday. Allowing sufficient time before the lighting of the candles, he descended from his dwelling, to go, as usual, to the municipal baths. Having gone part of the way, several German soldiers approached him from the opposite direction. The latter took hold of him by his arms, like one takes hold of a pack of matches, and took him into the Jewish barbershop. At the beginning, he did not grasp what was taking place here, and what is wanted of him. But they then did what they wanted to, cutting off half his beard, and with lit splints, burned his long side locks.

The Germans beat him with their rifle butts, dragged and pulled him by his half beard, yet he remained silent. When they threw him out of the premises, R' Moshe'leh uttered a few words to the barber, as if it was in the good old days:

Shlomo'leh, it is almost time to light the candles, close up the store, it is *Shabbes.'*

From that Friday onwards, he no longer went out into the street.

* * *

God's wrath poured out over the city of Slonim. On each day, Jewish lives were consumed. The Germans permitted themselves every license, torturing Jews with all manner of brutality, but R' Moshe'leh did not come in contact with any other person, and did not know about everything [that was going on]. His pale face became yellow with sorrow and hunger, and for half days, he would go about in his prayer shawl and phylacteries, and fasted from one Sabbath to the next.

A half year went by in this manner, and a hard and frightful winter drew nigh.

After the first frosts, the Szczara River froze. The gentiles, who lived in the area, each morning, would test the thickness of the ice sheet. Wagons and sleds began to haul their loads, bypassing the bridges, and both sides of the city became closer to one another. Along the entire length of the frozen river, Polish school children would skate and frolic, while Jewish *Heder* students looked out and knew that they were not allowed to come out.

* * *

It is Friday, after the noon hour. The frost has rendered the windows of houses opaque, and few people can be seen out in the street. From time-to-time, convoys of Jewish groups are marched through the bridge, from and to places of work. They walk stooped, with their heads hung down to the ground, and both on their backs and fronts, the yellow Star of David stands out.

When the sun began to set in the west, then, R' Moshe'leh came down from his attic room, slogged through the Schulhof, and with quick steps, went to the river. The streets were practically empty, and there were no Germans to be seen within eyesight. And so, he calmly went, as he had done in previous times, until he came to the same place, where in the winter time, he would make his ablutions.

From under his kapote, he took out a small axe, and found a thin patch in the ice, cut out a hole, and quickly undressed.

R' Moshe'leh didn't waste any time. The thin, pole-skinny body immersed itself in the ice-cold water, once and again, leapt out, pulled on his Sabbath underwear, his outer clothing, and raising his eyes heavenward, offered praise to the Master of the Universe for the boon that her enabled him to perform this ablution in honor of the Sabbath.

He ran back home the same way he had come, and... when he arrived at the *Schulhof,* it was full of Germans. He was still intent on running to his home, and to get into the dark yard, not hearing how two German soldiers were shouting at him with wild voices:

– *Halt, stehen bleiben, du verfluchter Jude*[65]...

The soldiers ran after the footprints in the snow. R' Moshe'leh stood on the first run of the ladder, and wanted to enter into his house. However, the thugs continue to harry him with swinish shouts, cursing and shouting:

– *Herunter, du verdamter, du dre... Jude*[66]...

R' Moshe'leh didn't understand everything very well, again, not understanding what was happening, and why they were shouting like this in his small and dark yard. He paid no heed to these wild voices, and went up a further rung.

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65 Halt, stand there, you despicable Jew...

66 Get down here, you damned, you .... Jew.

And at this point, the entire house shook, as if it were about to collapse. Both soldiers fired their weapons simultaneously. R' Moshe'leh did a quick clamber up the ladder, as a result of which the skinny body suddenly let go, and he fell head first onto the outhouse. The blood that ran out of his mouth ran into the waste pit. He was still able to say a few words, words which the Germans did not understand. Minutes later, R' Moshe'leh lay there with open, vacantly staring eyes, with a splayed beard, on which there were congealed clots of blood.

The sun set on the city of Slonim. Night fell, and covered this otherwise also naturally dark little yard of R' Moshe'leh's house. His wife sat beside his dead body, and cried, not knowing that on that very same night, a slaughter was carried out of over ten thousand Jews, who were led out of the city, and thrown into pits, prepared by the Germans during the past week.

She sat and stared at the sky, looked at her husband, who was no longer alive, and no longer wanted to go up into the attic room.

R' Israel Zalman Szelowsky זצ"ל from Moucadz'

By A. Rosen

Many residents of Jerusalem still remember the tall, old Hasid, R' Israel Zalman Szelowsky. He was the aide to the Slonim Chief Rabbi, R' Shmuel זצ"ל, one of the greatest of the Chief Rabbis of his generation and among the founders of *Agudat-Israel* in Russia and Lithuania. R' Israel Zalmon was greatly beloved by the *Hasidic* world in Jerusalem. Despite the fact that quite a number of years have passed since his death – he died at the age of 85 years – he nevertheless remains remembered. Hasidim loved to be in his ambit, to listen to what he had to say, to the conversations surrounding a Hasidic Elder, who was yet privileged to follow about in the shadow of the first Slonim Chief Rabbi, the author of *Yesod HaAvodah.*'

R' Israel Zalman was not like the usual run of people who served as either a *Gabbai* or a *Shammes* to Chief Rabbis or *Tzaddikim.* It was the *Rebbe* himself who appointed him to this position, and he did so, because R' Israel Zalman's entire being spoke of integrity and truth, and in observing him, the Hasidim, by association, would be reminded of the story of R' Mendele of Nemerow. R' Mendele was once asked why he allows himself to be served by his own student, R' Zvi the *Tzaddik*, and the *Rebbe* replied: It is said explicitly in Holy Writ: He who walks in the way of integrity, he will be the one to serve me.[67]'

When the Rebbe notified R' Israel Zalman, that he had selected him to be his Shammes, R' Israel demurred, and made the excuse that he feared his faith in the Sages might be compromised, because the way of those who serve as a *Shammes* is that he keep his mind clear – and his heart coarse. It can happen that through becoming accustomed, a Shammes can forget who he is, himself, and who is the *Rebbe*... the *Rebbe*, however, promised R' Israel Zalman, that such pride will not affect him. It was only then, that R' Israel Zalman consented to take on this position as *Shammes.*

And indeed, such hubris did not affect him. He served the Rebbe as a devoted servant, looked after all of his household concerns with full commitment of heart and soul, and even accompanied him on his journeys. On

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67 See Psalms 15: 1,2

the Sabbath and Festivals, he directed the preparation of the *Rebbe's Tisch*, served the Sabbath feast, and looked after the mass of guest so that they not go hungry, called out the names of those *Hasidim* who had provided drink, and reminded everyone of the names of the sick and the weak, who were in need of help.

R' Israel Zalman had a special mission at the *Rebbe's Tisch*. He had to listen very carefully, and apprehend the *Divrei-Torah* of the *Rebbe*. On Saturday nigh [e.g. after the Sabbath], R' Israel had to write them down. This particular obligation of his, was one of the most difficult. He needed to pay attention to every detail, and change nothing of what the *Rebbe* had said. the *Rebbe* would personally review his writing. One time, out of tiredness, R' Israel Zalman didn't exactly record what the *Rebbe* had said: You need to be whipped.' R' Israel became frightened at these words from the *Rebbe,* and had a great deal of aggravation. Friday, in the bath, the *Rebbe* smote R' Israel Zalman with a broom over his neck. R' Israel breathed easily, regained his composure, and felt like a severe decree hanging over him, had been torn up.

Years went by. The Chief Rabbi, R' Shmuel passed on, and R' Israel Zalman, hid his handwritten transcriptions as if they were a precious treasure. He hid it in his home, in Moucadz, and only very privileged people were allowed to look into these writings.

In his older years, before the outbreak of The Second World War, R' Israel Zalman made *aliyah* to the Land of Israel. For an unknown reason, he left these writings that contained the *Rebbe's* disquitions, in his home in Moucadz. When the awful news of the European Holocaust reached the Land of Israel, about Jewish communities that had been completely eradicated from under the sun, the destruction of Moucadz was also revealed. R' Israel Zalman's pain was doubled, his heart which cried for the destruction of his city, the annihilation of the Jews, among whom were members of his family, and for the loss of his writings containing the *Rebbe's* disquitions, which, to him, were dearer than anything else in the world. Having no alternative, he simply gave up on the writings.

An here, a great wonder took place. A grandson of R' Israel Zalman, who survived all seven furnaces of Hell, by a miracle had been saved from being killed. He escaped from the Koldichevo Labor Camp, and joined up with the partisans. Immediately after the war, R' Israel Zalman's grandson – himself a veteran of the Slonim *Hasidim* in the Diaspora, today in Israel – risked his life, went off to Moucadz, which, at that time, was already under the communists, and visited the destroyed remains of his grandfather's house. To his great astonishment, among the burned out effects of the house, he saw a bundle of paper, rotted and dissembled. It was his grandfather's hand written transcription of the sacred disquitions of the *Rebbe* זצ"ל. This paper had been shoved into a corner, and was untouched by anyone.

The grandson left Moucadz, and continued his wandering. Arriving in the Land of Israel, he found his elderly grandfather still alive, and turned over his writings to him. R' Israel Zalman's joy, you can understand, was indescribable. He rejoiced at this find, and he guarded these writings like the apple of his eye, until his last day.

As it becomes evident, this handwritten record was to undergo added tribulations. On the day that R' Israel Zalman died, this handwritten record again disappeared. The sorrow of the Slonim *Hasidim* was very great. They harbored the intention to have these precious and sacred words of the *Rebbe* זצ"ל printed, and published in a book. However, the handwritten manuscript was found again, and turned over to R' Israel Zalman's grandson.

The Institute for the Publication of Books of the Torah and Hasidism' which is a part of the Yeshiva Bet

Abraham of the Slonim Hasidim, will engage in preparing this handwritten manuscript for publication. May R' Israel Zalman rest easily, knowing that his work has not been in vain, and was not lost.

(From the Hebrew: David Bass)

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My Father's Boots

By Yeshaya Spiegel

My father's boots –
Patched,
Forged –
Still lie in the sand
Of that mountain in Auschwitz.

The heels –
White,
Shined –
Blend into the sand
Of that mountain in Auschwitz.

From your sacred, patched boots,
From those sacred shined heels
I can still hear your voice, within me:
-My son, with this kind of patched boots
And with these sorts of shined heels –
I will go out to meet even the Messiah....

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Our Grandfather, the Gaon R' Elchanan Wasserman זצ"ל

By Minna Chana & Elchanan Meir Wasserman

When we were little, we wondered and were dismayed that we did not have a grandfather the way the other children, with whom we played, had one. We would long for a grandfather who would play with us and tell

us lovely stories. At that time, it was difficult for our parents to explain to us, the cruelty with which our grandfather had been stolen from us. As we grew older a bit, we began to understand the greatness of that loss, not only to us, from whom a grandfather was stolen, with a number of stories, but also for world Jewry in general, which was robbed of a teacher of Torah and a leader of the people.

From the stories that we heard about our grandfather from those of his pupils that we met, and from the praise offered to his name and memory, that people would express, when they hear that we were grandchildren of the Rabbi *Gaon* R' Elchanan Wasserman ז"הי, an image of our grandfather, began to take form before our eyes, that was more realistic; it was the persona of a teacher loyal to hundreds of students, of which, those that survived, praised his name and memory, and evinced pride that they had the privilege to be one of his students; it was the image of a leader of his people, who foresaw from the outset, the terrible calamity that was gathering force, to come upon the European Jewish Diaspora, and his attempt to arouse them to repentance in his speeches and sermons, and also in his book *Akavta D'Meshikha*,'[68] that he published here, in America, a short time before the outbreak of The War.

During the thirties, when there was a huge protest meeting in the Great *Bet HaMedrash* in Baranovich, against the persecution of Jews in Germany, our grandfather explained the situation with the parable of a man who is beating a dog with a stick, and the dog jumps and tries to bite the stick, and in his canine comprehension, the dog is unable to understand that it is not the stick that is hitting him, but rather the man who is raising the stick to hit him. This, he said, is the same with out plight, in which we are protesting against Hitler, and we do not understand that Hitler is the Scourge of God's wrath, to which we are being subject for straying from the path of the Torah.

When our grandfather was in America, a short time before The War, those who admired him attempted to persuade him not to return to Poland, because of the impending and foreseeable danger. However, our grandfather refused, and explained to his son, our Uncle, R' Simcha, that despite the fact that he knows the impending danger to be one of total annihilation, with all that, he decided that his responsibility was to be together with the students of his Yeshiva at the time of such an extermination. This incident displays for us, his love, and commitment to his students, like a father would have to his sons. This was the characteristic way our grandfather behaved for all his life, to do that which was placed on him [as an obligation] according to the dictates of the Torah, without giving consideration to the difficulties and dangers that were also embodied in that which was required for him to discharge his responsibility.

Our father told us, that when he was a boy of five in Brisk, where our grandfather was the Headmaster of the Yeshiva, out father had fallen sick with a gastrointestinal malady, and was seriously ill. Grandfather would sit next to his child's bed all night, and in the morning, he would go off to lead the lesson he gave at the Yeshiva. One time, our father's illness worsened, and all the doctors in Brisk gave up, telling our grandfather that there was nothing left to do but throw one's self on the mercy of God. When the time for the lesson arrived, grandfather left the side of our father's bed, and went off to the Yeshiva. In the meantime, one of the doctors came, and did something that alleviated the worsening condition, and rescued our father from danger. A messenger was sent to convey this good news to our grandfather. Our grandfather immediately took not when the door to the Yeshiva was opened, and a man entered heading for him, and could not discern the emotion of the messenger from his face, as to whether the news was good or not. Grandfather interrupted his lesson, and said to his students: I fear that I will not be able to continue the lesson, because I believe I have just become bereaved.' This story left a very strong impression on us, in that it demonstrated how strong

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[68] In the Wake of the Messiah.

our grandfather was in his perception, and to maintain control over his inner emotions, and not permit them to interfere with fulfilling his responsibility and the demands of his position.

A Pity for Him Whom We Lost, and We Will Not Forget Him

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'O Compassionate One, look down from the heights,
at the spilled blood of the righteous and their very lifeblood,
see from Your chamber, and remove the stains [of sin],
O King, Who sits in the Throne of Mercy!'

(Closing lines of the *Yom Kippur* Martyrology)

Baranovich – The 'Tel-Aviv' of Lithuanian Poland

By Moshe Yudelewicz

I am not going to write specifically about the Holocaust, nor tell of the tragic epic of blood and fire, because I am not an eye witness to the frightful tribulations that occurred then. It is entirely possible, if not certain, that at that same moment, when my father and mother, sisters, brothers and other relatives, were condemned to frightful torture, hunger and death, I, am here in America, and may have been sitting at a well-provisioned table, together with good brethren, amused by some good witticism, or entirely possible at some banquet or another, a Jubilee celebration, an *Oneg Shabbat*,' as it were, or at other unique community events – celebrating in a carefree manner – but regardless – it is important to confess – that we were very far from that Vale of Tears. We lived in a well-fed and tranquil world, to which the painful screams of the martyrs did not reach...and in order not to disrupt our condition of well-fed tranquility, we consciously chose not to look the horrifying truth right in the face, and it is possible that the real impact was simply above our ability as humans to grasp, but no matter what it was, we did not see the smoke coming from the fire. – – –

However, I do remember their life and joy, their song and hopes, their spirit and their labor. They remain in my memory, as if they are still alive, just as I left them that long time ago.

I remember how my little *shtetl* of Baranovich built itself, and how it grew.

There was something about this original Jewish settlement, that set it apart from the other Jewish settlements that were destroyed.

The Jewish cities and towns, of the *alte haym*,' were full of historical relics, with living witnesses of times gone by, that testified to ancient occupation, and times gone by. Jews lived their entire lives together. Generations lived out their lives on the same little side street, in the same little hut, a legacy haded down from some great-grandmother. And it was this very intimacy that accompanied the Jew from his cradle, until advanced old age, and eventually to the grave.

And the cemetery? Grandfathers and great-grandfathers, under old headstones, found their eternal rest there, the sanctuaries of ancient good Jewish men and their Rabbis.

Baranovich? There were no old cemeteries there, no old Jewish synagogues, there was nothing there to bear witness to times gone by, fathers did not transmit anything to their children, and no one went there to pay their respects to the dead. In this settlement of fifteen thousand Jews, there was not a single person who was 50 years old, that had been born there.

It was a new Jewish settlement, the youngest in all of Eastern Europe, a city in which all the Jews came there from somewhere else, a sort of ingathering of exiles' in the middle of a Diaspora city.

Propelled by decrees, harassment and expulsions, the Jewish spirit of taking the initiative, in its ever-present search for survival, contributed to the creation and the building of newer and newer places to live.

It is for this reason, that Baranovich is through-and-through, symbolic of that Jewish spirit of initiative and dynamism, that stands for Jewish destiny and character, this being true of its rise, and destruction, which was [also] symbolic of all the other Jewish settlements that were destroyed, because the new, only recently constructed Jewish homes, just freshly built, which enjoyed so little happiness, and that saw so little light, is no more!

In the same generation – It was built up, and then destroyed!

At the beginning of the 70's of the previous [sic: 19th] century, Baranovich Was an insignificant village consisting of a few peasant huts. The railroad line, from Moscow to Brisk, which cuts through Byelorussian territory from east to west, is the first that can be found in this village, lost between the Polesia forests belonging to the Russian *Graf* Rozwadowski.

At a distance, without abutting the village, the first railroad station was cut out of the forest, where, in the long winter nights, hungry wolves would prowl and carry on. An old inn that stood across from it, was the sole building, which during the night, through its half-sunken windows, gave evidence, that there was human habitation.

Shai'keh Baranovicher' – that is what the single, solitary Jew of Baranovich, at that time, was called – and he was an estate manager, who managed the inn for the Graf, an ancient building, with a high four-sided straw and moss-covered roof. This was a sort of lodging place, for transient passengers, and a saloon, where the village peasants and lumberjacks could come to get a drink of whiskey, with marinated Russian *Taran*[69] as a bite to eat.

Until the development of the train interchange, the village of Baranovich was way off to the side of the old, wide tract, that cut through the vicinity in the direction of Minsk, through Stalovičy and Snov, entirely bypassing the forests of *Graf* Rozwadowski. This tract, called Catherine's Road' was the living interchange nerve center of that one-time world, and it was through here that Catherine the Great,' and [Czar] Alexander I traveled to Poland.

For a while after the establishment of the train interchange, Catherine's Road' continued to hold on to its prestige as the Royal Road.' With the passage of time, however, the people became more accustomed to the use of the railroad, rather than the old royal stretch, over which, at one time, Napoleon's soldiers marched,

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69 *Leuciscus rutilus*, a fish indigenous to Russian waters, in the carp family, akin to the American chub.

initiating his period of decline, and leading to his complete downfall. Its clay-dried boards become overgrown with wild grasses, and only the old markers, that stand to this day, on both sides of the road, testify to its former greatness.

Baranovich Station' becomes the new travel center. he number of passengers, coming and going rise, and Shai'keh Baranovicher prospers.

New York, Lodz, Baranovich, it is not important what the scale is, but the reasons are same, driven by the same destiny, the force of Jewish initiative, with its temperament, which was characteristic in its creation and building.

Baranovich, which was built almost exclusively by Jews, was a sort of Tel-Aviv in Lithuanian Poland.

The Baranovich area is the first sandy elevation at the edge of the Polesia swamp, an area of pine forests, and of yule bushes, grown over fields, a mix of fields and forest. With the hilly *Oyezd* of Novogrudok to the north, and the Polesia swamps to the south, destiny decreed that on this dry flat sandy terrain, was where the new roads would be cut.

Added to the Moscow-Brisk rail line, a second is added immediately: the Vilna-Zdolbuniv line, which runs by the swamps, in the direction of Rovno and Pinsk, Wolhynia. These two referenced, important lines, cut through Baranovich. Later, a third line comes through: the so-called central-line. which cuts through Slonim, Zelva, Volkovysk, Pruzhany, towards Bialystok.

Baranovich is transformed into the largest railroad center of Byelorussia.

In between, the Russian military authorities build a large ammunition dump and the Сухарни Завод,[70] one of the largest military production facilities of its kind in Russia.

The first-class strategic significance of the one far-flung forests of the *Graf*, transform Baranovich into a new source of livelihood for the Jewish merchant and craftsman, from the thick net of Jewish settlements that are around it.

Graf Rozwadowski takes advantage of the opportunity, that these new circumstances present, for his heretofore out-of-the-way land holdings. He transforms the village into a Мястечко' in order that Jews be permitted to enter. He swiftly cuts down the forests, cleans off the land, and sells parcels on an instalment payment basis.

With the expulsions from the villages in the 80's, a significant Jewish immigration begins, to the new and growing settlement.

Former estate managers, saloon keepers, millers, orchard keepers, factors, and others, leave their Byelorussian villages, and en masse, come to find refuge in the Мястечко' finding a home for themselves there, and a means to make a living.

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70 A bread-biscuit factory

Instead of New York, Johannesburg and Buenos Aires, Jews traveled to Baranovich. If there was an unemployed craftsman, was there one of the *balebatim*, who went broke, was the enlightened son-in-law done drawing support from his wife's parents, and didn't have any productive work to turn to, or if there happened to have been a disastrous fire in a *shtetl,* no matter what misfortune arose, Jews left, and headed for Baranovich. They bought parcels from the Graf, somewhere or another, on the city outskirts,' but very quickly, new Jews arrived, and caused further cuts to be made into the forest, which continued to retreat in the face of the newly cleared land.

The slender pines of the *Graf's* forests became quickly thinned out, but from every freshly felled tree, a new completed roof was fashioned, and a bunch of freshly sanded boards. The hum of the saws of the carpenters along with the echo of the sharp axes, in the hands of the Jewish lumberjacks, carried on the wind, together with the strong odor of pitch and turpentine from the cut down lumber.

One after another, the new Jewish houses were put up, from which freshness and joy emanated. The dry air from the forest remained a permanent part of the massive wooden woodwork in the Baranovich houses.

The mixture of nature and the city, forest and settlement, during those first days of Baranovich, left behind its characteristic marks on the city up to its destruction. One of these signs, were the massive walls of the Baranovich houses. Apart from the natural lack of use, in a newly thrown together settlement, the danger of wolves, for which the area was famous, always lurked during the first phase of the city's construction, especially on winter nights. The older residents would tell, that fear reigned there, regarding going out during the night. The settlement was full of isolated pockets of forest, and no one literally knew, where the center of the city was, and where were the outskirts.

The great folklorist *Sholom Aleichem*, who, incidentally, resided in Baranovich for a period of time, had an expression – as the Baranovich residents tell – that Baranovich is out on the street' (or a second version, is outside'). In comparison with the old and crowded Jewish ghetto-towns, Baranovich truly stood on the street.' In the year 1908, the writer visited Baranovich. In the middle of an address, which he was giving there, the writer became indisposed, and fell down from a burst blood vessel in his lungs, a consequence of a virulent infection of tuberculosis. He lay in Baranovich for two months, from which he then traveled on to Italy. But Baranovich was the home for the *Sholom Aleichem* family for over a year's time. His son-in-law, the writer, Y. D. Berkowicz included. (More information about this period in the life of *Sholom Aleichem* can be found in the Baranovich Yizkor Book, published by the Organization of Baranovich Émigrés, Tel-Aviv, 5714, in which Dr. Nehemiah Kroshinsky related interesting details about the great writer, which, up to that time, were not generally known in the wider world).

However, Baranovich did not stand outside' for very long. The Jewish temperament built up and created sources of livelihood, in this strategic military center, and new horizons for trade and the enclaves of forest rapidly vanished and were built over, creating a compact, solid settlement.

Little Warsaw,' the Jews of the vicinity called it. The old trading centers of Minsk and Vilna, began to feel the existence of this new competition. The new railways opened up the world for tens of isolated settlements of the communities without rail service, in Novogrudok, Slonim and Sluck regions. The warehouses of the Baranovich general traders became full of good luck and blessings from the great Russian land. Huge barrels of rice-oil from the rich Ukrainian fields, packaged flour from Bondary, oil from the Caucasus, stone-hard, white-blue sugar loaves' from the Kiev works, smoked fish from the Volga, the most expensive Baltic herring, and tens of other manufactured articles, would, on a daily basis, be drawn on peasant carts and the

wagons of teamsters, from the Baranovich train station to the dense network of Jewish settlements in the area.

In every new settlement, where people come together from various directions and places, problems arise that do not exist in settlements of long standing.

Social isolation, and the absence of family intimacy, are, without a doubt, one of the burdens that people in a new settlement must endure. It has, however, the virtue that relationships between people are on an equal footing, without any preconceived personal judgements, which are characteristic of an older settlement. In a place where people don't know each other particularly well, one doesn't really know who is who. Who deserves an important aliyah, and who requires reproof, who is a Big Shot,' and who, God forbid, has some skeleton in the family closet. Baranovich, for this reason, immediately in its first phase of development, had the impersonal character of a large city, that is to say, nobody looked with any care into a second person's business: neighbors, many times, did not even know one another. Such a situation must have had an unavoidable influence on community social activities. In a place where local patriotism is absent, where there are no professional opinion makers, where there are no arguments in front of Rabbis and Cantors, where each individual goes his own way, there is no driving force for community organization. However, there was a case of: each found his own kind.' Learned Jewish people immediately identified one to each other, and as to Hasidim, it goes without saying. The same to place in Zionist and Haskalah circles. And it happened that everything that was created in the social, community, religious and political arenas, has a healthy and untrammeled idealistic core.

One after another, Yeshivas, *Batei Medrashim*, charity institutions, and general cultural and political institutions, came into being, that blossomed and grew together with the settlement. This occurrence, in a settlement of Jews who had newly come together, and in particular in the idealistically pure cultural level of the community development, was not just an accident in Baranovich. Baranovich was the loyal custodian, and the essence, of the dense circle of the old Jewish settlement out of which it grew.

This circle spread out from Novogrudok and Lida in the north, to Luniniec and Pinsk in the south, from Njasviz, and Sluck in the east, to Slonim, Volkovysk and Pruzhany in the west, in the center of which the city of Baranovich grew. This was one of the most lively, and colorful Jewish' provinces in the one time Pale of Settlement.' an area that lay on the crossroads of Lithuania, Byelorussia, Poland and Wolhynia, and manifested the spiritual attributes of all of these together.

Here, the Lithuanian asceticism and dryness was laced with Byelorussian breadth, and Wolhynian completeness, the scholarship of the Mitnagdim, and analytic style of Mir and Volozhin – [intermingled] with the spirit of Polish mysticism. The greatest Yeshiva centers, on the side of the fervent believers from Karlin, and of Chabad Hasidism, from the extreme mystics, from R' Yuz'l Mussar acolytes in Novogrudok, and the good Jews' of Slonim, to the modern Yeshiva of Rabbi Reines in Lida, and in one assemblage – the awakening Enlightenment, and the progressive nationalist and socialist movements. It was a dense collection of colorful Jewish settlements, nests of Torah, Hasidism and wisdom, and this was the fountainhead frm which Baranovich suckled itself in general, and from which it obtained it creative sense of tolerance in specific.

However, Baranovich reached its greatest strategic momentum in the year 1915, during the time of The First World War, when it becomes, in the summer of that year, transformed into the seat of the supreme headquarters of the Russian Army, with Nikolai Nikolayevich at its head. The most mysterious persona of

all Russia, the Czar, Nicholas II, is often a guest there, where he spends weeks at a time (for the country, it was presented that the king had traveled to the front...), traveling about, taking walks through the surrounding towns, traveling twice a week to bathe in the famous lake *Sviechanka*' (In Polish Switez'), the legendary place where Poland's greatest poet [Adam] Mickiewicz, dreamt and creates his literary poems.

There is an interesting sidelight, regarding the new venue for the Little Father' of all Russia: for the first time, Nicholas works up the energy to freely stroll through the streets of this Jewish city, and permits himself to be seen by everyone, Jews among them, who, in this sense, are treated equally like the other citizens. In the little town of Haradzišča, where the king would travel through twice a week on his trip to Switez, the Jews of the shtetl would array themselves in a long row, to await and greet the Czar, who would respond to this with a military salute, sitting in his open auto, and looking with great interest at the Jews, with their beards and side locks, giving the impression, that this was the first time that Nicholas had the opportunity to look face-to-face at these, his Jewish subjects, not having any fear of an attempted assassination... the majority of the religious Jews held the opinion that it is a mitzvah to use the opportunity to recite the blessing: Blessed is He, who has allocated to flesh and blood, a part of his glory.' There were, however, Jews, who let down the coverings over their windows, not wanting to look at his countenance, because, it is forbidden to view the face of a tyrant.'

In Baranovich, where the highest level of administrative and military authority would have been the Russian *Pristav*, in normal times, suddenly became filled with the greatest personalities of the Russian nobility. On the sidewalk of the main street, you could see Jews, with their prayer shawls under their arms, returning from prayers, side by side with Russian generals, and members of the royal entourage.

Sh. Zakif, whose son visited Chile several years ago, and whose name previously was Shmuel Zhukhowicky, known in Israel as *Aluf Magdiel*,' and was in fact its founder, tells in his memoirs in the Baranovich Yizkor Book, that at that time, the Moscow Chief Rabbi MZA"H, came to Baranovich in order, with the help fo the local community leaders, to find a way to approach the monarch, or the supreme commander, Nikolai Nikolayevich, and to undertake the effort to cause a cessation of the expulsion of Jews, and the leveling of accusations of Jewish espionage.' *Sh. Zakif* related interesting details about this, among others, that the Rabbi MZA"H came into indirect contact with the supreme commander through the intercession of the Russian church, and thanks to that, was able to ameliorate the situation a little at a time (see *The Baranovich Memorial Book*, Sh. Zakif During the First World War').

Regrettably, this period was the apogee of the period of good will and progress for the Jews of Baranovich. No times came afterward that wee better than that Czarist period. Before the time of the Polish hegemony, this lively railroad center becomes transformed into something of a sort of Polish Siberia.' One no longer hears the frequent sounds of train signals, in the night, and the huge country of Russia is cut off, and there are Jewish voyagers' from Odessa, Moscow, Kiev, Kharkov, and other Russian centers, no longer travel through Baranovich Station.'

In its short existence, the main street of Baranovich was privileged to carry many names. During the Czarist times, it was known as *Marinskaya Ulica*.' In 1916, during the time of the German occupation, it was *Hindenburg Strasse*,' afterwards, *Leninskaya*,' and a short time afterwards, it bore Pilsudski's name, ans then, again, *Leninskaya*.' In that same year, it becomes *General Szeptycki*,' a name it keeps until The Second World War. Then come: *Stalinskaya*,' *Hitler-Strasse*,' then again *Stalinskaya*,' and now will it become *Khrushchevskaya?*' And who knows how many other names this street is destined to have in the future. But, the future fate of this once entirely Jewish street, no longer interests us, being without any Jews

today.

Jews, being of a conservative nature, never took any of these names, hung on their street, very seriously, and it is noteworthy that once, as it is today, it remains forever – *Marinska Gasse.*' But in its formative years, the Jews called it God's Street.' Why? I do not know! Was it perhaps because of God's wonder' in its rapid rise? It was an entirely Jewish street, where house after house, shop after shop – Jewish! And wherever you turned, onto a side street, there would be a small house of prayer, a *Hasidic shtibl*; it was a Jewish street with a Jewish life, which took it s names form their language, like *Yatkover*,' *Schnitkover*,' or *Nalewka's*,' but not a God's Street' but an airy, free and lively Jewish street, across whose length, tall lean pine trees looked out.

God's Street' the symbolic name, which would have fit to all Jewish streets, which Jews built up on foreign soil, was the most appropriate of all the other names, that rulers and governments created, God's Street, His street! God has given, and God has taken;' Once again, there is only a single solitary Jew in Baranovich, but this time, not that one-time full-blooded, robust Jewish innkeeper, Shai'keh Baranovicher.' There are no more Jewish transients on the Polish and Lithuanian roads, one Jew! A sick, Jew, beyond pain, a remnant of the seven fires, and skips alone on the destruction of the once Jewish street, searching for the escape from the Vale of Tears, to those of his own kind, who are, once again building a new life, but this time, not on foreign soil, but on a Land of their own.

For the Sin I Have Committed

By Fyvel Blank

For the sin I have committed, that I transgressed,
When you sat imprisoned in the camp.
And I was hidden with a non-Jew,
Crammed away, but through the cracks –
My gaze climbed up to the sky so blue –
For the sin I committed, for taking this pleasure.

For the sin that I committed, when naked and in want,
You wandered in an even greater solitude,
Swollen from hunger, suffering from cold –
While I still had an item of clothing to wear,
Still having a loaf of bread on my table –
For the sin I committed, for this bit of satisfaction.

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The Hideout of the 71 in the Baranovich Ghetto

By Isaac Fayglstein

I was in the Baranovich ghetto from the first day of its establishment, until the third day of the Third Slaughter, which coincided with the liquidation of the ghetto.

I worked for the entire time at the groat mill, where I had the opportunity to be in contact with the peasants of the surrounding villages, who would come to the mill, and I would trade clothing with them for products.'

Thanks to my employment at the mill, all 71 residents of Grabowiecky's *Kolkhoz*' on the Hubar *Gasse*, had food to eat and drink.

Grabowiecky's 'Kolkhoz'

Grabowiecky's *Kolkhoz*' which was in his own house on the Hubar *Gasse*, between the houses of the *Shokhet* from Palonka (Kaplan) and Steinberg, had a well constructed and secured hideout, with an entrance from the ghetto, and an exit outside of the ghetto. During the times of the slaughter aktionen, the hideout provided a home and sanctuary to 71 people, among them: the family of Leib'keh Grabowiecky – 9 people, Itcheh Berkowicz – 7 people, Matos Fidel – 6 people, Gavza – 2 people, Hirsch'l Kaplansky – 4 people, Fayglstein – 4 people, Asher Elstein, and others.

During the time of the Second Slaughter, the hideout was uncovered, and all 71 of those in hiding were taken away to the mass graves, where they were all shot to death.

In the hideout, were also my wife, my child, and a brother of mine, all of whom were killed. Only I was

fortunate enough to be able to save myself. Together with the brothers Yekhiel and Moshe Wolokhwiansky, we fled the ghetto during the Third Slaughter.

Being Quartered and Helped by Christians

Not having had any connections prepared in advance, with people in the forest, we went off to the village of Mlinek, where we knew a Christian named Zielinski. The latter gave us food, drink and a place to sleep. In the morning, following what Zielinski showed us to do, we went off to the forest to the partisans. The younger of the Wolochwiansky brothers, injured his foot along the way, and could not proceed further.

Risking our lives, we entered the first, best hut between the villages of Luki and Ostrowa, and requested that the Christian there hide us, until his injured foot would heal. He led us into the stable, and hid us in the hay. When the foot got better, the peasant gave us exact instructions as to where we should go, in order to reach the partisan base without undue stress.

Being in the forest later, we heard shouts: – *Kto Tam? Stoii! Ruki V'verkh!* And how great was our joy, when we saw a partisan patrol near us, and a Jew, no less, and who? Misha Zalmanowicz from the Baranovich ghetto.

At the Partisans

Misha Zalmanowicz led us off to the Pugachev *Otryad.* The leader' arrived, and we were examined and found to be satisfactory. One of them called out, a fine lot,' good human materiel,' but after a short and private counsel, we were inspected, and after they took away from us the only pistol we had, we were assigned to the partisan family-camp,' where there were many Jews from the Baranovich ghetto, but all unarmed.

The commander of the Otryad was an Easterner' who was known only by his first name, Misha.

A week later, all of the armed partisan groups went off further to the east, and the Misha-Group' was left abandoned, without any form of protection. The group had only one rifle, and this was in Misha's possession.

One of us then had the thought of making fake rifles out of wood, dyeing them with soot, and with this fake' weaponry, make an expedition' to the nearest village to obtain food.

My First 'Zadania'[71]

With permission from Misha, I went off to Baranovich, in order to find out if it would be possible to procure weapons for money. I met with Khat'cheh, and for a good price, he got me several rifles and two pistols.

The liaison, Khat'cheh, which whom I was in contact, was a Pole, who worked at transporting waste out of Baranovich. Many times, he would utilize the barrels that contained the waste, ti save the Jews from the ghetto, and from other places. A larger part of the Jews, who survived, did so with his help. and he didn't

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[71] From the Russian, задаия, meaning job, or task (i.e. mission)

do this for pay.

Thanks to Khat'cheh, the Family-*Otryad*' in the forests of Switez, was able to arm itself with a bit of weaponry. A larger number of the young people, later were adopted into the fighting brigades, as fully-fledged partisans.

The weaponry was divided up within the *Otryad*, among the young and skilled partisans. A day later, while on Бомбёшка[72]' in a village, to obtain food, we were surrounded by a group of armed *Zhorkintzehs*[73]' who not only took away our weapons, but also our boots. We were happy to get away with our lives, because in many instances, the *Zhorkintzehs*' would take away the arms from the Jewish partisans, and their lives as well.

The 'Zhorkintzehs'

There were many Russian partisan groups in the Byelorussian forests, who fought against the Germans, and also murdered Jews. The notorious among them were the partisan murder-bands of: *Yermovtzehs*,' *Kurbanovtzehs*,' *Danilovtzehs*,' and others.

The partisans, who murdered Jews in the Switez forests called themselves *Zhorkintzehs.*' the *Zhorkintzehs*' were notoriously well-known in the entire vicinity. The Jewish partisans would be on guard against the *'Zhorkintzehs'* just the same as if they were Germans.

Tens and tens of Jewish partisans were killed at their hands. From the summer of 1942, to the middle of the summer of 1943, they were a source of disruption, and rampaged without regard.

The Jews, who fled from the ghettoes and camps, were without any protections, and fell victim to their tragic, barbaric acts. The situation improved in the summer of 1943, when Moscow instituted contact with the partisan brigades in Byelorussia.

Troops' arrived from the east. A partisan staff command was organized, with more-or-less accountable military officers, who took over control of the small brigades and groups. They instilled an order into the operation against the Germans. They accorded a great deal of attention to the *'semianikehs*,' looked after the *proviant*,' and also gave them assistance.

The 'One-Fifth' Jewish Partisan Group on a Weapons Mission

Designated by Misha as a scout, I learned through a contact in the city, that the engineer Sharon, the manager of the construction of the new Minsk-Baranovich rail line, and who lives in Baranovich in the *'Kolonia Uzhendicheh*[74]' near the Bank Polski,' has, in his possession, several pieces' of armament.

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72 A raid, taken from the description of a 'bombing run.'

73 Bandits, from the Russian Жаркий, meaning 'violent.'

74 This appears to be the latter day *Uschodni Pasiolak.*

A group of five partisans then went off with me to Baranovich, with the objective of taking possession of these arms.

The partisan heroine, Sar'keh Rabinovich, posing as a village gentile woman, with a box of eggs, went off to the engineer at his house, and engaging in the haggling' over the eggs, she carefully and accurately cased the inside layout of the house, and late at night, the five Jewish partisans surrounded the engineer's house. Two of them, Sar'keh Rabinovich, and Isaac Fayglstein, went into the house through a window, and the remaining three, Medresh-Kacap, Traub'eh, and Monik Dobkowsky, stood watch outside the house.

Everything went peacefully, and apart from the arms, we also took away boots, warm underwear, and other necessities, which were important to the partisans.

Mulya Yankelewicz

A couple of days later, I was again in the city, and brought out five Jews that had fled the Third Slaughter. Among them, was the former President of the *Judenrat*, Mulya Yankelewicz, who was beloved and respected by all the Jews of the ghetto, for his dedicated work to rescue Jews from the ghetto.

The Partisan 'Special-Group' and its Commander, Orlovsky

On one day, a new partisan group appeared in our vicinity, that was comprised of 40-50 people.

At the head of this group, stood someone sent by Moscow, named Orlovsky. Before the war, he was known in Byelorussia by the name Mukha-Mikhaelski,'

Orlovsky was a straightforward and decent person with a solid character and an iron will. As soon as he arrived, he began to institute order among all of the partisan groups. He took special interest in the fate of the Jewish Semain-*Otryad*' and with the remaining Jewish groups in the Miszuk forests, and in the swamps of Switez.

He ordered that the Semain-*Otryad*' be given food by way of the cooperative product base of the armed partisan brigades. It was Orlovsky, who was the one, who put an end to the hooliganism of the *Zhorkintzehs*,' and of the predations of Gypsies against the Jewish partisans. He took in many of the Jews from these separate groups in those places, into his group, and the rest, he took under his aegis, and gave them protection.

During his tenure as commander, better conditions were created for the Jewish partisan groups, and the atmosphere was cleared of enmity, distrust, and insecurity.

When the German general Penz and his entourage was being pursued in the forests of Miszuk, A well-planned assault against the Germans was organized by Orlovsky, and they were all wiped out.

At that time, Orlovsky lost both his hands, and was called back to Moscow.

Commander Nikolski

After Orlovsky was recalled to Moscow, his deputy, Nikolski became commander, Nikolski was also sent by Moscow, and took great care of the Jewish groups in the region.

On a certain day, a new partisan group, with its commander, Mironov, came into the forests of Miszuk. They came as guest for a few days, but in the end, they became residents, and were absorbed into Nikolski's group.

Mironov was a virulent anti-Semite, and the Jewish partisans began to sense a different attitude towards them. The previous friendliness, was quickly exchanged for an open hostility.

It was clear to everyone, that the death sentence meted out to three Jewish partisans, for, so to speak, taking away a new machine from a peasant, was inspired by Mironov. The death sentence was carried out against Peretz Plocky, and Yitzhak Lobozowsky. For the third partisan, the death sentence was exchanged for undertaking a dangerous *Zadania.*' his mission was to blow up a certain object' in the city, which he carried out successfully, and remained alive.

The 'Zadanias' of the Partisans

There were ten Jews in Nikolski's group. Almost all of them had taken part in all the missions against the enemy. I remember the names of the following Jewish partisans: Lejzor Segal, Pin'keh Jasinowsky, Mul'yeh Yankelewicz, Sar'keh Rabinovich, Philip Penczansky, Rosa Penczansky, and others.

Our Otryad made three assaults against German patrols in Kryvošyn, and also other attacks, and always successful. without any victims on the side of the partisans.

I, personally, was the leader of the scouting detail, and went on a *Zadania*' more than twenty times. While still being in Misha's Semain-*Otryad*,' we assaulted the village of Luki, where there was one German and one Byelorussian policeman. the following took part in the attack: Eli'yeh Lipnik, David Molowicky, Kiwelewicz, Yosselewicz from Slonim, Isaac Fayglstein, and Tuvia Cyrynsky.

We shot the German. the [Byelorussian] policeman was able to flee, and Tuvia Cyrynsky was then mortally wounded, and later died.

We took him with us, into the forest, and buried him beside the grave of Dr. Avra'sheh Abramowsky, who was murdered by the *'Zhorkintzehs.'*

The Partisan Zone

Our partisan zone was surrounded on all sides by deep swampland. The territory was so thickly covered by swamps, and a horse could not walk through. It was not only once, that our boots remained stuck in the mud. In the wintertime, when the swamps would freeze over, we had to withstand blockades' and attacks.

The peasants from the villages of Zalužža, Switez, Razdielowičy, Lipsk, Miszuky and others around our partisan zone, were, for the most part, friendly to us, because they saw that the Germans were their enemies and oppressors.

Also, the intensity, and many instances of truly needy moments, when the partisans stood to defend individuals and also entire villages, was an influential impetus to engendering their friendliness' to us.

Sar'keh Rabinovich – the Partisan Heroine

Apart from myself as the scout, in the service of Mikulski[75], after the time when Orlovsky was called back to Russia, and he took his place as commander, there was also the heroic Jewish partisan woman, Sar'keh Rabinovich. She played a very significant role in the diversion work of the partisan special-group.' She was the most reliable liaison in the special-group, and also among the security people in Baranovich. Tens of times, she went on dangerous and complicated missions, of great importance, and consistently carried out her missions completely.

She was alert, capable, and endowed with an ability to get quickly oriented in the most dangerous of situations. Sar'keh Rabinovich was the most popular woman partisan in the Switz forests; beloved by the command, by the commander, and by the entire partisan group.

Commander Lejzor Segal

Lejzor Segal was one of the most popular of the partisans in our area. He was beloved by all the partisans in the forests. Whether the partisans, or the local village Christian population, they all called him Батка' (Father').

When the ghetto was liquidated in Hancevičy, he had an opportunity to save himself. As a craftsman who worked in the forest products works, he knew the forest terrain in that area very well, where he had worked for many years as a lumberman, and he went off into the forest with a few Jews. Later on, additional Jews joined them, and he was designated as the commander of this group by the leadership.

Lejzor Segal was very talented, energetic, and a practical man. He was the best specialist in matters pertaining to manufacturing operations, and was highly successful. Segal had many friends among the local Christian populace, who would give him accurate and reliable information, necessary for the partisan command.

Commander Yud'l Wisznia

Yud'l Partisan' was also very popular – our beloved Yud'l Wisznia from Baranovich. He came to the forests with a group that had fled from the Baranovich ghetto. Later on, he went on missions, and brought back more Jews.

Yud'l Wisznia was the liaison between the Family-Camp' and the leadership of the brigade. He would take care of all issues. It also became possible to get the permission of the leadership, for the 'Family Camp' to procure its own foodstuffs.

Yud'l Wisznia was the oldest in age, among the Jews in the forest. But, he was among the best and most outstanding of the partisans.

Yud'l Wisznia brought many needed things to the Jewish partisans, which they greatly appreciated, loved him, and respected him. Yud'l Wisznia was the one, who, in the forest, organized a *minyan* for prayer on

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[75] Previous to this, the name had been given as 'Nikolski.'

Yom Kippur, and led the *Kol Nidre*' services.

'Rosa Бойевая'[76]

Philip Penczansky, and his wife, Rosa Penczansky, were outstanding partisans – Rosa, the commander of the women, was known by the name, Rosa Бойевая.'

Medals for the Jewish Partisans

The Jewish partisans in the various groups, *Otryads,* and brigades, showed what Jews are capable of doing, at a time when they are given the opportunity to fight.

Many Jewish partisans fell in battle with the enemy. Many Jewish partisans were cited with medals for heroism.

In May 1944, when our area was liberated by the Red Army, many of the Jewish partisans were nominated to receive citations and medals for their heroic deeds in the fight against the Germans.

The Baranovich Judenrat

Twenty years have gone by, frm that moment, when we, the Jewish remnants from Baranovich and the forests were liberated.

Two decades is sufficient time to make some kind of assessment and give an accounting about certain specific issues of the ghetto period. The accounting is indeed done by historical chroniclers, and writers, but very few of them lived during that period in heart and soul. Many of them are very subjective, and flawed in their analysis, especially when it comes to dealing with the problem of the *Judenrats* and the Ghetto Police.'

In almost all instances, the *Judenrats* are designated as institutions that collaborated with the Germans, and betrayed their Jewish brethren in the ghettoes.

There are no lack of people, fortunately only single individuals, who compile a blacklist of traitors, that also includes names from the Baranovich *Judenrat.*

As a ghetto Jew, from the first day of the establishment of the ghetto in Baranovich, until the final liquidation, I wish to set the record straight, that all the members and employees of the *Judenrat* in Baranovich, acted decently, and with full awareness, and complete commitment, feeling it was their mission to do what was best for their fellow brother Jews, as their representatives to the German authorities.

I remember the following names: Evsei Izikson, Zhenya Mann, Mul'yeh Yankelewicz, Joseph Limon, Abba Zakin, Mikhl Mukasey, Mendl Goldberg, Chaim Zukerman, Chaim Weltman, Mordechai Schiff, Joseph Kuriniec, Fishl Svjacicky, Dr. Svjacic, Izzie Fiedler, Moshe Litvak, Idelczyk, Baruch Galay, Beloskurnik, and Warszawsky.

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76 'Fighting Rosa.'

Was anyone among them a collaborator? Was anyone among them a traitor or informer? No.

Almost all of them sacrificed their own lives for the greater good. A few of them actually dies a martyr's death, הי"ד.

The position of the Baranovich *Judenrat* was, that a group of 200 people, whether they are called resistance fighters, battlers or partisans, has no moral right to seek a way to save themselves, by fleeing into the forest to the partisans, and by saving themselves, place ten thousand Jewish lives in the ghetto at risk.

They were also opposed to resistance, because this would give the Germans a pretext for liquidations. Only Jewish decency, and a profound sense of responsibility for each individual and for the totality of the whole in the ghetto, compelled the greater number of the *Judenrat* members to fight against the rebels and resistance fighters.

The entire Jewish populace of the ghetto was on the side of the *Judenrat*, and also the populace in the ghetto knew that every act of revolt, even by a small group, would lead to the liquidation of the ghetto. It was clear, that even if a single individual were to go off into the forest, and if the *Gestapo* were to find out about it, then all the members of the individual's family came under the threat of a death sentence; everyone that had the same [last] name; everyone who lived in the same residential quarters, or house of the escapee, and also all those who worked with him in the same workplace. It was a system of Watch out for me, and I will watch out for you.' because I am responsible for you both for you as an individual, and for everyone in general.

It must not be forgotten that both the *Judenrat*, and the ghetto police, did underground work in the Baranovich ghetto, not for 100 individuals, and not for 200 individuals, but for everyone. It is sufficient to recall the instance of Evsei Izikson and Zhenya Mann; the example of Chaim Weltman and the 40 Jewish policemen.

The *Judenrat* was the go-between vehicle, and representative of the working Jewish people in the ghetto, opposite the Germans. It was the objective of the *Judenrat* to assure that the demands and instructions of the authorities, in matters of internal administration, the allocation of ration cards, concern over foodstuffs, providing labor for the German workplaces, social help, oversight regarding sanitation and order in the ghetto – should be precisely and accurately carried out.

The Jewish police in the ghetto assisted the Judenrat in carrying out its mission, and took care that, all of the innermost demands of the *Judenrat* were implemented and observed.

The *Judenrat* was energetic and proud to turn back the demand of the German authorities to give up all the old and sick people. The answer was: <u>we have given you everything that you have demanded from us, but Jews – that we will not give you, because we are not the masters of human life.</u>

The response of the *Judenrat* was also energetic and proud when the *Gestapo* asked for 60 young Jewish girls for the German houses of prostitution in the city.

It is necessary to document the fact that the Jewish ghetto police were subordinate exclusively to the *Judenrat*, and carried out orders only from the *Judenrat,* but at no time ever, did they carry out orders from the Germans.

The conscience of the *Judenrat* and the Jewish police in the Baranovich ghetto, was clear, from any blame for Jewish victims.

Those of them that were killed were martyrs and were pure.

Those that, bu some miracle, managed to survive, were heroes.

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The 22nd Day of Remembrance for the Martyrs of Baranovich

Yizkor

The sacred Baranovich community, who at the hands of the German murderers, with its accomplices, servants and partners – the Poles, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, and Lithuanians – was annihilated.

Yizkor

Those dear Jews, who were tortured, abused, and killed in the slaughters and expulsions.

Yizkor

Those pure and innocent souls of our sacred fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, wives and children, whose creative lives were cut off, and whose souls demand vengeance to be exacted from their torturers and murderers.

Yizkor

The innocent Jewish children, who were killed in front of the eyes of their hapless parents.

Yizkor

Our dear Baranovich scions, who were killed in the camps of: Koldichevo, Wilejka, Bezdonys, Oshmiany, Rzesza, Kena, Radom, and others.

Yizkor

Those who fell in the forests and fields, killed by German bullets, or by traitorous hands.

Yizkor

Those who expired from hunger and cold, in their hiding places, in the caches' and could not hold out until the liberation.

Yizkor

The familiar and the unfamiliar, those we have mentioned and those we have forgotten!

We, who by some miracle, or by chance, who happened to remain alive, those who with there own eyes witnessed the torture and killing of our nearest and dearest, we will never forget them, we will not permit the world to forget.

With a holy trembling in our souls and hearts, we honor the memory of our Baranovich martyrs.

The Baranovich Society in America

Joseph Foxman
President

Members: ***Itcheh Estreich, Isaac Fayglstein, David Wasserman, Min'keh Leibowitz. Solya Kurkhin, Ely'eh Abramowicz***

A list of fallen fighters, resistance personnel, and partisans from the Baranovich Resistance Movement. The list has been assembled on the basis of tens of eye witnesses, memories, notices, and post-war publications.

[Note: The Original Hebrew Alphabetical Order Has Been Preserved]

1. Abramowsky, Abraham, Dr.
2. Osowski, Chaim
3. Ordianska
4. Oszerowsky, Yitzhak
5. Oszerowsky, Leib'l
6. Itzkowitz, Shlomo
7. Brzezinsky
8. Braverman
9. Gurwicz, Vova
10. Gurwicz, Mot'ik
11. Gursky, Aharon,
12. Gursky, Aryeh
13. Glinik
14. Green
15. Dors, Abraham
16. Wolinsky-Epstein, Saul
17. Wiszniewsky, Esther
18. Zolotursky, Mott'l
19. Zilberman, Moshe
20. Zilberstein, Moshe
21. Zalmanowicz
22. Yosselewicz, 'Nioma
23. Lobozowsky, Yitzhak
24. Lansky, Shlomo
25. Lubranicky, Vaclav, Dr.
26. Lipnik, Moshe-Aharon
27. Lipnik (Brother)
28. Lipnik, (Brother)
29. Molowicky, David
30. Molowicky, Yitzhak
31. Mazurek
32. Molczadsky
33. Mukasey
34. Mordukhowicz, Yerakhmiel
35. Mordkowska, Sarah
36. Muszinsky, Monik
37. Newakhowsky
38. Novak
39. Sabak
40. Sabavkewicz
41. Slucky, Peretz
42. Polonsky, Mott'l
43. Florans, Itcheh
44. Cyrynsky, Tuvia
45. Kagan, Yaakov, Dr.
46. Kaplinsky, Khatzkel
47. Karelicy, L.
48. Kapilowicz, Mom'eh
49. Rabinovich
50. Ruzhansky, Mosh'keh
51. Rosengam, Mendl
52. Rayak, Siam'keh
53. Khaitowicz, David
54. Shari, Israel
55. Swec, Ruzh'keh
56. Shifris
57. Schleifman, Yaakov
58. Szereszewska, Bluma

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Baranovich
בראנאוויטש
The Trilogy
Part III
המאבק לחיים
של יהודי ברנוביץ'
קובץ זכרונות על השואה של ניצולי גיטו ברנוביץ' ולוחמיו

The Struggle to Stay Alive
By the Jews of Baranovich
A Collection of Memories of Those Who Survived the Baranovich Ghetto, and Its Fighters

Publisher: Nechama Zukerman
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In Memory of The Martyrs of the Baranovich Ghetto and its Vicinity



אברהם סדובסקי, פסל

**This Memorial Candle was rendered by Abraham Sadowsky
Especially for this Volume.**

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Introduction

By Nechama Zukerman



In this collection, I have attempted to provide a Hebrew translation of testimony and chapters of things from the mouths of those who survived, the remnant, of the Baranovich ghetto and its fighters. Part of it has been written in Yiddish, part in English, and Hebrew. The translations and assemblages have done out of a sense of remaining close to the language and the spirit of those who are doing the telling.

With the passage of time, when eye witness accounts that encompass the horrors of the Holocaust become fewer, I assembled what I could directly from the mouths of eye-witnesses, who told of their experiences after a long period of suppression, and silence.

In my work, memory led me to recollect members of my own family, the Sadowsky family: My grandmother – Chana-Feiga, My mother – Manya (Miriam), and my sister Hadassah הי"ד, who were killed in the Holocaust.

I am of the hope, that this collection, will encourage comrades to extract other eye-witness testimony, in order to tell, and to preserve the names of the martyrs and those we lost, who were not brought to a proper Jewish burial, and they have no memorial over their remains.

I am grateful to all of those who participated in this endeavor along with me, the tellers, the translators, and finally, most of all, my gratitude to my husband, Matityahu Zukerman, I would not be standing at this point of culmination.

Foreword

By Hon. Justice Ram Savir
(Relik Zablocky)

Much has been written about the Holocaust, from the time that the smoke began to dissipate from the crematoria in the cities of extermination.

Much has been written, and is yet to be written, because This People have a responsibility to fulfil yet an additional *mitzvah*: 'To Remember, and Not Forget,' and that each of us fulfils this *mitzvah* in his own manner.

Those who documented their recollections here, fulfilled this *mitzvah*, and bequeathed a legacy to coming generations. They placed a monument as a memorial, to the city that will never again be, except as it exists in the pages of memoirs, in our hearts, and they also raised their arm in salute, to those who were exterminated.

The book has been written by those who saved themselves, and are the remnants from the ghetto and from the forests of the city of Baranovich in Poland.

The significance and importance of these memories, lies in the fact that they are documented authentic eye-witness testimony, of those that actually experienced the passing of what was in the ambit of an apocalyptic cataclysm.

It is not within the scope of the human soul and mind, to grasp what it is that took place there, and for this reason, the value of these memories, and their preservation in written form, which can serve for those who remained alive, and for coming generations, who would seek to uncover historical facts, the consecutive living experiences of the people of the times.

This collection of memories is similar to a torch that illuminates a dark time. And it is good that torches of this kind are lit.

The General Overview

An Overview of the Area

By N. Zukerman

The area in which the city of Baranovich is located in Byelorussia, today a republic that is part of the union of Russian nations, has had many masters. In the Middle Ages, the area was ruled by Lithuanian royalty and nobility. Their rule left behind a mark in the names of cities, such as Brest-Litovsk (called *Brisk-D'Lita* in Hebrew) , or in the Hebrew nickname for Vilna as '*Yerushalayim D'Lita*.' And as it happens, even the Poles referred to this territory as 'Lithuania.' Adam Mickiewicz, the greatest Polish poet, was born in a village beside Novogrudok, which in those days, was the provincial capital for Baranovich, in his famous poem, '*Pan Tadeusz*,' wrote: 'Lithuania, the place of my birth...' Even Marshal Jozef Pilsudski, the international hero of Poland, came from the area around Vilna. He even left a will that his heart was to be buried in Vilna (his body was interred among the great leaders of the Polish nation, in Cracow).

Up to The First World War, Czarist Russia ruled this area. During the First World War, this area was captured territory, under German occupation. From 1920 to 1939, the area was part of the independent Polish Republic. After that, it went through a year and a half of rule by Soviet Russia. In 1941, the Germans invaded it, and they ruled it until 1944, at which time it was liberated by the Red Army. Today, it is one of the provinces of the Republic of Belarus.

Even though Russia and Poland ruled in these lands, with changes, numbering hundreds over the years, the Jews who resided in this area were thought of, and deemed to be 'Lithuanians' or '*Litvaks*.' The traditions, and the accent of the Yiddish here, were different from other parts of Poland and Russia, and the source of their pride is – classical Yiddish, and together with that, the language of the ordinary people.

By virtue of being in the Pale of Settlement since Czarist times in Russia, and possessing a highly dense Jewish population, the area became a source for tradition, organization, Jewish scholarship, and a center for commerce and industry.

An Overview of the City

By Dr. Sh. Klass

The city of Baranovich, in the Novogrudok Province of Byelorussia, was founded in 1883. It developed rapidly, and by the time of the outbreak of The Second World War, the number of its inhabitants has reached about 30,000. As a new city, it had a modern face to it. Its streets were wide, and intersected in a straight rectangular grid.

By virtue of having in its vicinity, a railroad, running from north to south (Vilna - Lvov), and from west to east (Warsaw - Moscow), it had a recognized strategic importance. The city became an anchor for a widely-branched set of economic activities, and a center for commerce and industry. The abundance of forests in the area, contributed to the development of all manner of factories engaged in working with wood, (sawmills, etc.). Military barracks of the Polish army, in an area bordering on Russia, contributed to the development

of warehouses and services for the military. The Poles cared little for the local population, consisting of Russians and Byelorussians. The Jews represented a high percentage of the population. However, the hear of the city was a Pole, but his deputy was a Jew.

From an economic standpoint, the situation of the Jews was relatively good. In the community, you had the usual institutions associated with the internal organization of Jewish life. It had synagogues, Yeshivas, institutions for charity and rendering assistance, an orphanage, an old age home, *Linat HaTzedek*, charitable food donations, etc.

Baranovich served as a center for education to the children of the nearby villages, and as a cultural center for them. There was also no lack of modern institutions: cooperatives, welfare societies, labor unions, commerce, and banking.

On the community political front, there were branches of parties and youth movements, who were active on the Jewish street throughout all of Poland, a network of independent education, beginning with the '*Heder*' system, and Yeshivas, to the Hebrew '*Tarbut*' gymnasium. The city resonated with cultural, community and political activities, of many sorts, whose most visible manifestation was that six weekly Yiddish newspapers were published on a regular basis.

On 22/6/1941, with the outbreak of the German-Soviet War, the German army overran the area, and within five days, the city of Baranovich was captured by them.

At the time of the capture of the city by the Nazis, about 12,000 Jews lived in the city, of which about 3,000 were refugees from western Poland.

Chapter I: The Ghetto

The Last Road

By Dr. N[ehemiah] Kroshinsky

Sections of the poem, translated from Yiddish [sic: into Hebrew] by Shoshana Roczinsky.

The Reader is referred back to the translation of the original Yiddish into English, found in the first section of this Trilogy, starting on page 346.

A Diary of the Baranovich Ghetto

By Dr. Zelig Levinbook

This highly substantial memoir, appears in its entirety, and translated into English, in the first part of this Trilogy under the title, '*The Destruction of Baranovich Jewry*' beginning on page 384.

Page 8: *Dr. Zelig & Manya Levinbook – 1940*
Below: Image of an Israeli Coin

Page 109: *Remnants of the central prison of the concentration camp and death camp of Koldichevo, in which tens of thousands of Jews, Russian and Poles were murdered. The picture was taken by Chaim Stolovicky at the end of July 1992.*

The Baranovich *Judenrat* – Its Structure and Its Mission[1]

By Dr. Shlomo Klass & David Nir

From the testimony that we have in hand, there is scant information about the structure of the *Judenrat*, its various divisions and its leadership. We derived a considerable amount of help from the focus of Michael Mukasey, who was able to testify, and, as the chief pharmacist in the ghetto pharmacy, was close to what went on in the *Judenrat* quarters, even though he was not a member there.

The Period of the First *Judenrat*

'The Open Ghetto'

Immediately upon the arrival of the Germans in Baranovich, the German soldiers burst into the houses of the Jews, accompanied by the local Poles and Byelorussians, to rob and plunder, and for purposes of abuse.

On the morrow, a roundup began of Jewish 'communists,' even if their connection to communism was happenstance. Many were totally innocent of this charge, but ins spite of that, they were taken out to be executed. One after another, Jews were seized to do a variety of work, and their family had no idea whether they were taken for work, or whether they might have been murdered. There was also no lack of informing by neighbors, Poles and Byelorussians, in order to settle accounts over economic disputes, or in order to be able to seize Jewish assets. Merchandise and furniture were plundered. Many Jews were even forced to leave their homes on an immediate basis.

The Jewish Committee

This condition of insecurity, to their lives and possessions, caused a number of men from the Jewish community to come together to take counsel. It was R' Mendl Goldberg, who instigated the first meeting, which took place in the synagogue on Wilenska Street. Activists from past years were called to this meeting, from all branches of Jewish activity in the city: municipal officials, community leaders, with the lack of power of the economic institutions, and cultural institutions, and also the leaders of the parties. The natural course was that the impetus to new action came from the activists and workers because of their membership in the various offices. In the entire 21 months of the Soviet occupation, there was not any sign of such a form of Jewish community activity of this kind, and here, it seemed that in one step, there came 'to life...' in that meeting, a proposal to set up a committee, and to select its chairman, in order to try and come in contact with the German occupation authorities for purposes of resolving matters pertaining to security, procuring food, work and cessation of seizing people.

Yehoshua[2] Izikson was acclaimed as the Chairman. An office was established for the committee, in an ordinary house on the Wilenska Street.

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[1] An independent translation of this chapter has since been brought to my attention, and may be found at: http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/baranovichi1/bar110.html

[2] In the Yiddish texts, he is referred to by his 'secular' name, 'Evsei.'

This committee immediately received the name of 'the Jewish Committee,' and it organized itself along the lines of the way the community of the past did. The structure and membership of this committee, with specific modifications, remained in force until the first '*aktion*' in March 1942. It quickly assumed authority, both with respect to the Jewish populace in general in the city, and with respect to the ruling authorities of both the Germans and Byelorussians (this committee was in existence for three month, until September '41, when it was superseded by the Germans, and changed its name to '*Judenrat*').

Chairman Izikson, upon his election, immediately undertook an effort of contacting people he knew among the Byelorussians, in order to access their means of reaching the German occupation authorities. The Jews, in the meantime, stayed living in their homes. This situation was referred to as 'the open ghetto.' In the center of the city, the better homes were taken away from their Jewish owners, who were forced to vacated them in a matter of a few hours. All their possessions were plundered. There were some Jews who, upon making a quick assessment of the situation, left of their homes of their own free will, and moved to the southwest section of the city, a section that was populated mostly by the poorer part of the Jewish population.

Regarding Work – In accordance with an order of the military authority, that was made public in the first days of the occupation, all of the populace was to continue doing their regular work. All those who work in critical locations, as delineated by the Germans (hospitals, flour mills, pharmacies, etc.) received work permits. The permit was a form of protection for the holder, against being seized to do other work.

Already, by the first week of the occupation, notices had been posted by the military authorities about wearing the yellow Star of Davis. Similarly, it became forbidden for Jews to walk on the sidewalks, but only in the middle of the street. They made it obligatory to take off one's hat when in the presence of a German soldier.

All promissory notes and loan portfolios, whether of the Poles or the Soviets, had to be turned over to the German authorities.

From the hours of 19:00 to 6:00 a curfew was declared. Violation of the curfew – resulted in a death sentence.

The 'Citizens Committee' (a parallel municipal institution created by the Germans, composed entirely of Byelorussians) served as a conduit for passing along the economic demands of the Germans to the 'Jewish Committee.' Because this 'Citizens Committee' was interested in the homes of the Jews, it began to apply pressure to concentrate all the Jews in a ghetto, that was designated to be in a distant and run down suburb, called 'Sakhalin,' that was located outside of the city. Izikson was able to get the worst of this decree repealed through his intervention, and the use of bribery.

After approximately two and a half months (September 1941), the S. S. people appeared in the city, headed by *Obersturmführer* Adolf Lerner, as the district commissar. As head of the Jewish section in his office, a young aide was designated – Krampe – a Nazi scourge. Gestapo officials also arrived from Kovno, with the Nazi Amelung at their head, and as his aide, he had a young, brutal Lithuanian, Jozef Gurniewicz, nicknamed 'the Lithuanian.' In the same month, the German *Feldgendarmerie* arrived in Baranovich, to provide food, and organize a Byelorussian Secret Police, that entailed yet a different assault, headed by Duczenko.

The Establishment of the '*Judenrat*' and Entry into the Ghetto

In September 1941, as was previously stated, the 'Jewish Committee' formally was changed to become a '*Judenrat*.' It was then that a firm basis was received regarding the intent of the Germans to create a ghetto. From the part of the Chairman, Izikson, a great deal of effort was invested in getting the designated area of the ghetto enlarged, and by the use of a great deal of bribery, they succeeded, with Krampe's help, to set the boundaries of the ghetto in the southwest part of the city – an area of dwellings that was populated in an excessively crowded condition.

The erection of a barbed wire fence, around the ghetto, of 2.5 meters in width [sic: height], encompassed in its entirety only 60 houses. They were supposed to accommodate 12,000 people – the overcrowding was terrifying, and the houses got the nickname of '*kolkhoz*'. 20-25 people were crammed into a room that was 4 x 4 meters in area, and the bunk beds were three tiers high.

The ghetto was in the middle of the city and had two gates: one, the main gate, on the Wilenska Street, and the second, in the cemetery.

The '*Judenrat*' and the police were concentrated beside the main gate, and opposite them, on the second side of the street, was the *Gestapo* building.

A strict guard was kept all around the ghetto perimeter. It included watchtowers, with machine guns. During the period of transition to the ghetto, almost all of the Judenrat members were occupied with keeping the people clam, and setting up residence arrangements for each family. the ghetto was closed on 12.12.1941.

The Structure of the '*Judenrat*'

The Chairman – Yehoshua (Evsei) Izikson – Sone of a wealthy dry goods merchant. He was active in the community life of the city, a member of the municipal council, a member of the management of the merchant's bank, and accordingly, a member of the 'unaffiliated bloc,' that supported the Pilsudski régime. He had connections to Polish and Byelorussian people in public life in the city. He was also a man of pleasant appearance, and a skill for diplomacy. He was able to earn the trust of the Germans that worked the Jewish Street, without exception.

Izikson believed that he could save the lives of the Jews of Baranovich, based on his connections, the use of bribery, and his personal intervention. He, personally, conducted all negotiations with the Germans.

On 17/12/41, 72 Jews were arrested, and an indication was passed to the Jewish Committee, that it will be possible to save them by payment of a 'contribution.' (A fine), in the amount of 20 kg of gold, silver, jewelry and in addition – one million Rubles. The matter was made public, and to everyone's astonishment, the sum was raised rather swiftly. There were no demands imposed, and the Jews brought their valuables voluntarily. The payment was turned over to the Germans, despite the fact that nothing was heard from the people seized, because all of them had been shot on the day they were taken. This only became known afterwards.[3]

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[3] Writer's footnote: A certain part of the sum collected remained in the hands of the 'Judenrat,' and it was used for a variety of outlays. In the course of time, suspicions were raised in the Jewish street, with regard to the sums collected.

Izikson expressed his trepidations about the future not only once, but out of a belief in the possibility of survival, he said one time: 'My friends, without ignoring our end in being wiped out, another month, several added months – the Germans will not let us remain alive. However, no price is too dear to extend the lives of 12,000 Jews for even an hour. What this means, is 12,000 additional hours of Jewish life, and this is more valuable than 20 kg of gold, Therefore, I say, let us give the gold, and there will be other demands– I am sure of that. But in the meantime, let us shut their mouths.'

On one occasions, the Byelorussian 'Citizens Committee' demanded that the '*Judenrat*' provide 60 Jewish girls for the houses of prostitution for the German soldiers. Izikson succeeded, with the help of a Christian friend, to have this demand annulled. An emissary from Vilna sent 60 'professional' Christian girls to Baranovich, and in this way, the '*Judenrat*' discharged its obligation. Izikson announced that 'Innocent Jewish girls I will not provide to you.'

It is worth citing here just a bit of Izikson's deeds, and that of the entire '*Judenrat*,' during the time of his leadership. He constantly argued 'I will give you gold and silver – I will not give you the lives of people.' In the city, both the Byelorussians and the Germans knew this.

The procedure in the work of the '*Judenrat*' was authoritative, and the direction and authority of the '*Judeneldste*' (Jewish Elder) Izikson were an order. Izikson, nonetheless, made it a practice to call the '*Judenrat*' to regularly scheduled meetings, to consult them, and even to invite people of reputable standing and influence within the Jewish community, to these meetings.

Before The First Slaughter ('*aktion*'), Izikson and Mrs. Zhenya Mann, his secretary, were invited to the office of the *Gebietskommissariat*, who had demanded of him, a list of 3,000 elderly and sick Jews 'having no value' with the promise that nothing bad would happen to them. Izikson strongly refused, [saying]: 'You can demand everything you want, just not the lives of people. This is in God's hands' This answer doomed his fate, and he lost his life. No amount of extreme proposals helped, that he would pay for everything at a high price. Accordingly, both he and Mrs. Mann were taken to the slaughter pits, and there were witnesses to what happened there. They were the last ones shot.

The Secretary – Mrs. Zhenya Mann came to Baranovich from Rovno, after her marriage to Engineer Mann. After the establishment of the '*Judenrat*,' she was invited to work in it as the secretary to Chairman Izikson. In her dedication to her work, which knew no bounds, she immediately earned the affection of all the '*Judenrat*' members, and of all the Jews in the ghetto. Being skilled at interior decorating, she was invited to the houses of the senior German command, to be consulted in this regard. Her extensive connections helped get a number of decrees canceled, and others deferred. In her folksy character, she radiated compassion and trust, as a bulwark between the Jews of the ghetto and their terrible plight. She was known by the nickname of 'The Mother of the Ghetto.'

Mrs. Mann received an offer from one of the German *Luftwaffe* Generals, when she worked at his home as an interior decorator, to transport her to the home of his parents in Germany, but she side-stepped this offer, and replied that she will share the fate of the rest of her people. As previously mentioned, she and Izikson were the last to be murdered in The First Slaughter.

Deputy Chairman – This was Shmuel (Muly'eh) Yankelewicz, the owner of a musical instrument and bicycle store. He was not part of the coterie of activists in the city. He agreed to work in the '*Judenrat*'

because he was known to be a man of integrity, and easy to get along with. He served as the Deputy to the Chairman. His area of responsibility were not circumscribed.

Liaison – As the person who was the go-between to the Gestapo and the Byelorussian Secret Police, the Chairman designated Shmuel ('Mulik) Jezereel. He was a young man who spoke a fluent German, who developed relationships with those around him, as well as the officers of the German authorities. Because of his position as a liaison, he took care to dress elegantly, something that angered many in the ghetto.

The opinions about him, because of his delicate position in regards to raising the contributions for purposes of satisfying the various financial demands, were different in different periods of the ghetto. Especially true was the increase in criticism leveled against him after the Holocaust. His connections to the Germans caused him to be suspect among many.

Over time, he developed connections to the *Feldgendarmerie*, and the person who was the contact was Yitzhak (Izzie) Fiedler, who worked in the labor section.

The *Judenrat* Head Office : Divided into Three Different Sections

1) Secretariat – Joseph Kuriniec served as a secretary, who in the past was an editor of a weekly in the city. He was a student of the law, knew German very well, ready and able, serious and dedicated. He was not a member of the 'Judenrat,' but he participated in its meetings. The essence of his duties was to deal with the paperwork required by the city authorities, both Byelorussian and German.

2) Treasury – This was under the direction of Mordechai Schiff, who previously had been the treasurer of the Jewish community in the city. This was one of the most significant and sensitive positions in the ghetto, which had to function withing the trust of everyone that touched on these matters. He was a man of integrity, pleasant in his demeanor, who succeeded under difficult conditions, that were created, causing him to continue with his diligent work. Schiff too, was not a member of the 'Judenrat,' but rather an especially selected appointee. He, also, participated in the committee meetings.

Regarding the bookkeeping – it was Baruch Galay who was responsible for this, being a past community activist, a man of integrity, on whom it was possible to rely.

3) Labor – Joseph Limon stood at the head. He was a religious Jew, well received by all, and well-known in the community. He conducted his affairs with understanding. Everyone trusted him. His assistant and right hand was Yitzhak Fiedler, a student and son of a well-known doctor in the city, who stood out because of his organizational talents. In this section, an inventory of the entire Jewish population in the cit. When the news of the establishment of the ghetto reached them, this section initiated the allocation of the houses and residences, and this issue became easier during the time the ghetto under went a transition from being 'open' to being 'closed.'

As previously mentioned, those that worked in essential services, earned the right to passes, and those that didn't have steady employment, were obligated to present themselves, at the direction of the '*Judenrat*', at an appointed day and hour, beside the '*Judenrat*' building. This was an internal, independent method of organization, in order to keep people capable of doing work, at the ready, in the event of a need.

As to work that was ordered, the workers went out each morning, in an organized fashion, from the

'Judenrat' building, in accordance with the orders of the Germans. At the time that the ghetto was still open, a Jew stood at the head of the work contingent as it left, who was appointed to do this. At the time the ghetto became 'closed,' a German or a Byelorussian had assumed this position.

It was expressly forbidden to pay the Jews for their labor. Employers were required to turn over the salary equivalent to the labor division attached to the German *Gebietskommissariat.*

An incident occurred that one of the Jews, who worked as a tailor for a local man, asked for wages, and the latter turned him in to the *Gestapo*. That evening, all the Jews in the ghetto were assembled, and the tailor was publicly hanged for this 'transgression.'

House servants were a sought after job. By and large, they were dispersed all over the city. The attitude towards the servants was generally decent. More significantly, there was the opportunity to eat to satiety, and even to acquire some food to take back into the ghetto.

There were a few locations, in which several hundred workers were concentrated, such as the Air Force base – [which had] 350 workers. In the 'depot,' (the workplaces of the railroad) there were 250 workers.

Over 5,000 workers would leave the ghetto daily, to go to work, all went – the young as well as the old – wanted to get out and go to work, in order to remain alive. The labor division was established immediately after the occupation of the city, and continued to function for the entire time the ghetto remained in existence.

The Work Places, or 'The Good Ghetto'

In the ghetto area, several houses were set aside, and separately cordoned off. There, manufacturing facilities were set up. This thing was done at the initiative of the '*Judenrat*' with the consent of the Germans. There were about 60 -70 craftsmen that worked there, of the first class, who obtained their work at the personal orders given by Germans. There were seamstresses there, furniture makers, upholsterers, work places for glass making, etc. There was also electrical repair, and watch repair was done there. The organization was a wonder. In most cases, the Germans brought the raw material, and the work was done for free. This workplace was considered to be the safest of all, and many Jews put pressure on the '*Judenrat'* to be assigned there. It later became known, that after The First Slaughter, not a single Jew was taken out from that location to be killed.

Sustenance – Fishl Svjacicky headed this effort, who in the past had been the owner of a manufacturing establishment. In the past, he had not been active in Jewish community life in the city. In his position in the *Judenrat*, he stood out for his subservient and conciliatory nature, and responded to all the demands of the Germans out of fear of retribution of what might come otherwise.

Premises – It was Idelczyk who dealt with living space in the ghetto – a brusque young man, mostly, as has already been mentioned. The preparations for dividing up the living quarters had been done by Mr. Limon, from the Labor Division, before entry into the ghetto. Within the ghetto, this was one of the busiest of the areas because of the burden of the inadequate space, and the inability of the ghetto dwellers to alleviate the circumstances of their overcrowding.

Provisioning – The central issue surrounding the physical survival of the Jews in the ghetto was provisioning of foodstuffs. The Germans provided no foodstuffs at all, but they made it possible for the '*Judenrat*' to get

access to food. Food was obtainable only at exorbitant costs, which was facilitated by this section. Purchases were made with money, or money equivalents. It was necessary to overcome enormous difficulties both in acquisition and transfer. The access to food, and its equitable distribution, turned into a real trial for the '*Judenrat*,' and they would distribute 120 grams of bread for each individual.

Warehousing – Beloskurnik was made responsible for this division. He was a brusque and energetic man. He had been involved in sourcing boots for the officers of the Polish army, and continued doing this, during the time of the German occupation, where he became a supplier of boots. It was from this vantage point, that he developed extensive contacts among the German officers.

In the '*Judenrat*' he attached himself to that group of Jews, that volunteered to serve the community in its time of distress. His image is subject to controversy. There are those who accuse him of being obsequious to, and even in collaboration with, the Germans. Other point out the conditions under which he had to function. In any event, the provisioning of foodstuffs required development of storage facilities, but in this case, they did not content themselves with storing just flour, groats, potatoes, etc. Rather, they expanded the ambit of their effort, that also came to include clothing and footwear. There were many sorts of craftsmen that worked at these warehouses, who provided assistance to the ghetto, in the form of shoe repair, clothing repair, and the like.

Assets – Those responsible for allocations, attempted to retrieve all Jewish assets that were outside the ghetto, in order to fund the acquisition of food. Along with this, they attempted to generate other sources of income by disposing of things that were not necessary. There were Byelorussians that were persuaded and agreed to pay specific amounts, apart from the fact that the house, the surrounding property, or the business would fall to them legally. It was Beloskurnik who dealt with all of this.

Food – As it happened, there was a store, in which food was allocated, and it was Moshe Litvak who was responsible for running it – a man of means, who in the past had been a community activist – who enjoyed a respected position, and engendered trust. This was one of the most sensitive areas of daily life in the ghetto.

Food Provision – Chaim Zukerman stood at the head of this section, and his deputy was Abba Zakin – both past activists in the community, whose reputation for integrity preceded them, as did their concern for the poor of the city, going back to the period of Polish rule. Their outlook could be summarized in the statement: 'In the Baranovich ghetto, no Jew will go hungry for lack of bread.' In accordance with this line of attack, they did great things, along with a coterie of loyal helpers, among them Mrs. Zhenya Mann.

Under the oversight of this Food Provision section, pairs of distributors would go through the city (during the period of the 'open ghetto'), and would gather money from those Jews who had means, for eventual distribution among the needy. In general, they had a good idea of who had what, and how much, or who had managed to succeed in getting a quantity of food into the ghetto from the outside.

In the ghetto, it was felt that there is an agency that is concerned with the poor, and is not inhibited from taking, even by force, if necessary, from those that had the means. And therefore, it becomes clear, from all of the testimony that has been given, that there was, indeed, no hunger in the Baranovich ghetto due to lack of bread. The work of the section was based on the work of volunteers, and after work, the volunteers continued to work in groups: one going to acquire foodstuffs, while a second went through, distributing these items.

Health – While the origin of the sections such as Sustenance, Food Provisioning, and Labor goes back to the time of the 'open ghetto,' and subsequently only changed or expanded their functions later, the section dealing with Health only was established with the advent of the 'closed ghetto.' Dr. Nakhumowsky stood at the head of this section, who was one of the veteran physicians of the city. He was renown in the city, and throughout the entire vicinity, not only as a highly skilled physician, but also as a man of the people, who was quick to deal with issues, even with no compensation, and was very well accepted by the physicians of the city – Jewish and non-Jewish. There were three separate branches within this section: Healing, Sanitation, and Pharmacy.

Healing – There were ten doctors who stood at Dr. Nakhumowsky's call, to assist him. In the 'Old Age Home,' of past days, a hospital was established, and a clinic. Medical help was delivered at no charge. Opposite this, was a small building that served as a hospital for infectious diseases. The great fear was regarding the potential outbreak of epidemics, especially of typhus, and it was from this that the importance of sanitation was derived.

At the head of this branch stood Dr. Svjacic, who accomplished great things in his area of responsibility. Among those in the ghetto, he was thought to be of the type who was ready to do everything, and especially not to incite the bloodlust of the Germans to kill. This contributed to an atmosphere of acceding to German wishes.

It was not possible to overcome the problems associated with overcrowding, and it was terrible. However, in the area of maintaining cleanliness, there were things that could be accomplished. Sanitation groups visited homes, and instructed the residents in those homes. They personally disposed of garbage, and brought order to those corners that had become filthy. In this regard, they cobbled together a machine to be able to de-louse clothing. A responsibility to bathe periodically was instituted, The fear of an outbreak of an epidemic – that could engulf the many – hovered over the heads of the Jews in the ghetto. The Germans were strongly motivated to take out and kill anyone who fell sick with an infectious disease. It is because of the efforts of this section, and because of the good will and cooperation of the people, epidemics did not break out. The Baranovich ghetto became a 'Model Ghetto' in the discussions of the Germans.

Pharmacy – This was a separate branch, headed by Michael Mukasey, a pharmacist, and a community person. It was very difficult to overcome the shortage of medicines, but despite this, because of the connections that they had with colleagues on the Aryan side, they succeeded in getting medicines into the ghetto, by way of a unique permit; they also were able to transfer boxes of medicines that had been held in Jewish pharmacies in a hidden cache.

By way of the testimony that was given by doctors that survived, it became clear that among the cadre of health care professionals (doctors and pharmacists), 57 people were killed. Two died a natural death, and only 7 remained alive, of which 5 reached the Land of Israel.

Police – This division was organized by Chaim Weltman, who volunteered, and stood at its head, until The First Slaughter. He was one of the most import6ant activists of the city, the head of the craftsmen's union, s member of the community and municipal councils, and was known as a spokesman for the poor. His home was open to all the needy. There were times when he neglected his own personal affairs, and he was completely immersed in his community work.

'The police force in the Baranovich ghetto was unique of its kind,' says Mukasey, 'in comparison to those in other cities.'

Weltman assembled 40 young men about him, mostly from the '*Maccabi*' group, that was not only a sports club, but also a center for group endeavors. During the period of the 'open ghetto,' the young people were utilized as 'messenger boys,' and were engaged in the delivery of notifications, invitations to meetings, sometimes as escorts to work, etc. Their mission became totally different after the establishment of the ghetto. They participated in standing guard at the gate. In addition to the Byelorussian police, they were very helpful to the Sanitation Division, in enforcing the maintenance of cleanliness in the '*Kolkhozes*' and their environs.'There was no incident of any violence in the ghetto.' This is difficult to understand even today.

They had several bicycles at their disposal, and they were able to move about the city with permission. They would pass along notices to those returning from work, with regard to inspections that were to take place at the gate, with regard to bringing in foodstuffs. They warned the residents of the ghetto about surprise inspections by the representatives of the *Gebietskomissar* (the latter giving notice about a quarter of an hour before his arrival).

Their personal conduct led to no erection of a barrier between them and the rest of the ghetto denizens, but they were still called 'policemen.' but they acted as a band of helpers, that eased the suffering of their brethren in the ghetto. Accordingly, they earned a favorable assessment.

They helped people on the outside (farmers, in matters of barter, etc.) to gain entrance to the ghetto. From all testimony, the esteem of the ghetto police goes up, with regards to their behavior towards, and help to, the ghetto denizens.

On 4.3.42, the day of The [First] Slaughter, the *Kommissar* turned to Weltman, asking him to deploy 15 policemen at the 'Green Bridge,' (the location of the execution of the Baranovich Jews), to 'keep order.' Weltman turned to all of the policemen, saying: ' Boys, everyone is going up on the altar. We are traveling to *The Sanctification of the Name*.' The first stepped forward, and then all the rest of the young men went after him. After they had completed all the burials, in that Valley of Death, they were all shot to death, to the last one, by the Byelorussians.

The Invited Ones – In the fullness of time, a group was created of 'Invited People' who attended *'Judenrat'* meetings. These were recognized people who were accepted in the city, who were invited to various adjudications.

Dr. Isaac Bussel was present at almost all of the '*Judenrat*' meetings, without being a member, and was considered as one of the exponents of the intelligentsia of the city. He stood out in his opposition to all manner of self-organization involving arms. During the time of the Slaughter, an S. S. man approached him, and asked him his occupation. After hearing that he was an eye doctor, the S. S. man stabbed out his eyes, and only afterwards, shot him to death.

The *Dayan*, Niss'eh (Nissan) Scheinberg, was popular in the midst of the city's Jews, and not only in the religious part of the community. His brother was the young Rabbi of the City, who had inherited the seat from their father. Berezovsky lived together with them in the same '*kolkhoz*,' who served as an arbitrator for Jews at the time there were disputes to be resolved.

The Chairman, Izikson, would frequently come to them for consultation. He would consult with R' Niss'eh on every difficult question, before arriving at a decision. On their part, they too, would attend '*Judenrat*' meetings.

Culture & Education – There was not a division of this type in the structure of the '*Judenrat*,' but despite this, it was on the venerable teacher and educator, Miszlewsky, that this responsibility was placed, to organize classes of instruction for the children: This teacher would go from one '*kolkhoz*' to the next, during the day, teaching and giving instruction.

There is no testimony to the cultural life such as: plays, drama circles, Zionist activities, or just plain Jewish-oriented activities, in which the community usually engaged (such as 20 Tammuz – A special holiday in memory of Herzl and Bialik, on May 1, a holiday for people like Borukhov, etc.) Instance of these sort of events are known only in one '*kolkhoz*,' or another, that was inclined to do this sort of thing as an internal event.

Yeshiva students, and many of the city elders, especially the more religious among them, participated in Torah study, and the study of the *Gemara* in the evening, in a number of the '*Kolkhozes*,' and did so in the house of R' Mendl Goldberg, where a *minyan* was even put together. Being personally an ardent supporter of *Agudat Israel*, he became known for his teaching of *Mussar* to both criminal and political prisoners. During the time of The Slaughter, that fell on Purim, he wrapped himself in his prayer shawl, ascended the freight truck, and called for the Jews to join together at this 'Binding.' And to the sound of the singing of '*Shoshanat Yaakov*,' that burst forth from the truck, they made their way to the pit of death.

From the little we have been able to discover of the structure, initiatives, and work of the 'Judenrat,' we get a picture of an effort to organize a constructive and critical leadership, in which two central thrusts stand out: Externally – An effort to stem the tide of increasingly frequent demands for assets and money, but stopping short of turning over lives. Izikson's mantra became the standard position: 'No human lives.'

Internally – An endeavor to protect lives, based on the mantra of Zukerman and Zakin – ' There will not be a single hungry Jew in the ghetto,' and wherever possible, to provide the minimum required for survival, to the needy, without hesitating to take from those who had the means to give. From the standpoint of carrying out a mission, all matters were conducted as if it was within the same 'family' environment. At meetings, not only members of the '*Judenrat*' participated, but also recognized and invited representatives. And while this did not cause them to excel in impact, nevertheless, the efforts of Izikson stood out, mostly because of the trust that he earned in carrying himself with pride to the outside, and not being obsequious in the face of the enemy.

The Period of the Second '*Judenrat*'

On the day after The First Slaughter (*Aktion*), on 4.3.41, the survivors were compelled to immediately exit and go to their daily work places. At the direction of the Gestapo, a new registration was prepared, that counted 7,700 Jews. the area allotted to the ghetto was shrunk. Space was allocated at the rate of 70 [sq.] cm per person.

Conditions deteriorated, and the attitude of the gentile neighbors to the Jews worsened. The working conditions also grew worse. Also the illusion that we would remain alive melted away. The Slaughter had been carried out in the bright of day, and everyone knew exactly how, how many, and the way, in which this was all going to end. The strength of the escort to work was increased, and the inspections [upon return] at the gate became more difficult and intense. Despite this, the will to live, and to survive, grew stronger, and the ghetto began to organize itself anew.

It was Yankelewicz – Izikson's Deputy, who was nominated to become the Chairman of the Second '*Judenrat*.'

The divisions were activated as they had been previously, but with a different outlook. The number of workers was decreased, and the work was carried out by people who clustered around these division, and with fewer helpers. Where in the time of the First '*Judenrat*' there were 50 appointees, in addition to the 40 or so members of the police, in the Second '*Judenrat*,' there were only 10 appointees, in addition to the 25 members of the police.

From among the eight members of the First '*Judenrat,*' the following were killed: Izikson, Mrs. Mann, Weltman and Zukerman.

Yankelewicz, who was Izikson's Deputy, was appointed by the Germans to be the Chairman. Taking Zukerman's place הי"ד, was his Deputy, Zakin, with Warszawsky as his Deputy. All 25 of the policemen were new. The engineer, Goldberg, was added to the 'Judenrat.' In the tally, the new 'Judenrat' numbered 8 members. The changes in the membership were stark, but the real change came in its posture.

The new Chairman, Yankelewicz, tried as best as he could, but the behavior of several of his associates had changed. The influence of several central appointees rose to a higher level than was the case in the First '*Judenrat*,' and not in a positive way. Svjacicky, Beloskurnik and Jezereel – were more tentative in their approach to the Germans, and was expresses in concession to each and every demand and request from them,. By contrast, the wife of Svjacicky, who was the head of the activists among the women of the city, was a central group in the armed underground. This is how a gap developed between the nominal members of the '*Judenrat*,' and those that had previously participated in its meetings, but now wielded greater influence.

The head of the police, Rutkowicz was involved in matters pertaining to the underground, and it was his deputy, Warszawsky that carried out the police direction. He was a member of the fighting resistance organization that had been established in the ghetto after The First Slaughter. Similarly, 17 of the 25 policemen were part of this underground organization, and were of great help to the organization and arming of this resistance organization. Without actually being members, both Zakin and Limon were secretly members of the resistance organization.

In the half year between The First Slaughter to the Second Slaughter of 22.9.42 – the change that stood out in the live of the ghetto was expressed in a number of areas. The construction of hidden bunkers increased in tempo, because there were many, who during The First Slaughter, hid themselves in such bunkers, and saved themselves. After the First Slaughter, the organization of the fighting resistance organization began. This endeavor received much attention and work from the younger cohorts of the populace. The introduction of arms, by all methods, intensified. The task was executed with relative ease, because in the many places where the Jews worked, there were substantial inventories of armament, that had been abandoned by the Soviets. The relations between the '*Judenrat*' and the fighting resistance organization grew more tense (over the issue of the seizure of a member of the resistance, during an attempt to smuggle arms into the ghetto). During the course of the second half of 1942, the level of escape to the forests, and then joining up with the partisans, grew higher. News began to reach us regarding the murder of Jews in the surrounding smaller villages. Also refugees from other towns began to arrive, and their stories about the extent of the killing added to the unrest. Despite the prohibition to do so, the '*Judenrat*' looked after providing these refugees with living space and food. Young people returned from the forests, to persuade their friends to leave and come join them. Preparations for an uprising intensified, but the second *aktion*, which came unexpectedly,

interdicted a meaningful execution. During the course of 10 days, the ghetto was sealed shut, and during that same time, the Germans took out and killed 6,000 Jews.

When the ghetto was divided into two parts, the Chairman Yankelewicz, and one of the policemen, Hillel Schindler, who knew where the bunkers were, went out during the nights, and transferred their occupants to the large ghetto. On one night they were caught, but they managed to get away, and both of them left for the forest on that same night, and joined the partisans.

In the second ghetto, as previously mentioned, the standing of Yankelewicz was not up to that of Izikson. This situation led to an adverse independence on the part of people like Jezereel and Beloskurnik, Dr. Svjacic, and others, to no good. Together with this, as was the case in the first ghetto, there were activists who continued to follow the dictum of 'There will not be any hunger in the ghetto.'

The bitter dispute that could not be bridged, was between those who favored an uprising, and escape to the forest, and those who held the view that such a move would bring a calamity on the rest of the ghetto denizens, reached a level to the point of revelation to the Germans. Despite this, the matter remained as a 'family dispute' between Jews. the circumstances thus created were difficult to say the least, hope just melted away. During the Second Slaughter, there was an increase in isolated incidents of individuals who rose up, assaulting, and in some cases, killing those who were trying to murder them. After The Second Slaughter, only 3,000 Jews remained out of the entire city population.

The Period of the Third '*Judenrat*'

Among those members of the second '*Judenrat*' that survived The Second Slaughter, were: Dr. Svjacic, Svjacicky, Beloskurnik and Goldberg. In addition to these four, meetings in the '*Judenrat*' house were also attended by all the central appointees concerned with the protection of the ghetto. All of them pressured the engineer, Goldberg, to accept the position of Chairman. He, himself, was a refugee from Western Poland, a perceptive and energetic man, who knew German well, and was well accepted by the Jews of the area. And even the Germans showed him deference. The Germans encouraged this selection, and the election led to his appointment.

The appointment of the head of the police was much more complicated. Not a single person was left of the police from the second ghetto period. Many were killed, and others succeeded in fleeing to the forest, and as a result a severe pressure was brought to bear on the few of those, who were available to do the job, but steadfastly refused to do so. In the untenable circumstances that were created, Dr. Lubranicky arose, and clarified the fact that it is not conceivable to leave a ghetto with 3,000 Jews [unprotected] without a police force, and he volunteered. His offer was gladly accepted, not only because of the exigency of the moment, that had been relieved, but also because of his personality. He was a refugee from Lodz, whose brother had married a local woman, and who had managed already to flee to the forest.

The area of the ghetto was again reduced in size, as might have been expected. This time, the calculated space for each resident was worked out at 60 [sq.] cm. The shortage of food grew more acute, because most of the families had been torn apart, and were composed of widows, children, the elderly, and fragments of families (of those who had fled to the forest).

At this stage, there was no longer any talk of organized divisions. The work was done by a limited number of people, and the principal concern they had was to get access to foodstuffs for those who had remained alive. The new

Chairman, the engineer, Goldberg, applied pressure to get a transfer to the labor camp at the Koldichevo camp. He assessed this as the better chance to remain alive. As a result, and with his encouragement, many went off to join the partisans. 'I see nothing, and hear nothing – do whatever you can to flee, everyone who can.' He also helped the partisans faithfully, especially in obtaining medicines for their use in the forest. Despite the fact that Dr. Svjacic continued to fight against escaping to the forest, Goldberg's approach stood. A particularly painful issue was the one of leaving families behind, because most of those who fled to the forest were men that left behind wives and children, or aged parents in the ghetto. After The Second Slaughter, the workers in the so-called 'good ghetto' were compelled, in the evening, to enter the ghetto and spend the nights there.

For close to three months, the Baranovich Jews continued to struggle for survival, until 17.12.42, when hundreds of *Gestapo* forces burst into thee ghetto, as well as Byelorussian policemen, Ukrainians and Lithuanians, and amidst terror and murderous beatings, they concentrated all of the Jews in am area that was two hands breath in size. There a *selektion* took place, from which 400 Jews were selected, who were then attached to various placed of work, while the rest, conveyed in freight trucks, were taken out to the pits at Grabowiec, where they met their death.

350 Jews were taken to the Koldichevo camp, among them Goldberg, Dr. Svjacic, Fiedler, Limon, and Beloskurnik. Jezereel was taken into the yard at the *Gestapo,* where he was tortured and executed on the spot. Dr. Lubranicky was also killed there in the same way. The liquidation of the ghetto, up to the elimination of the last Jew, continued for a month's time. Many hid themselves in the bunkers, but yard after yard was searched rigorously, by the Germans and their accomplices, and in no small measure, in search for hidden valuables. Close to 200 people fled to the forest in an organized group, and after them, approximately another 500 people. Baranovich was declared *Judenrein.*

At the end of The Second World War, out of all the Jews in the Baranovich ghetto, close to 400 survived.

Table of Changes to the Positions in the Judenrat

Position	Judenrat I	Judenrat II	Judenrat III
Chairman	Lawyer Izikson	Yankelewicz	Engineer Goldberg
Senior Secretary	Mrs. Mann	--	--
Secretary	Kuriniec	Kuriniec	Kuriniec
Deputy Chairman	Yankelewicz	–	–
Police	Weltman	Rutkewicz-Warszawsky	Dr. Lubranicky
Food Provisioning	Zukerman	Zakin	Zakin
Labor	Limon	Limon	Limon
Labor Deputy	Fiedler	Fiedler	Fiedler
Work	Svjacicky	Svjacicky	Svjacicky
Health	Dr. Nakhumowsky	Dr. Svjacic	Dr. Svjacic
		Beloskurnik	Beloskurnik
		Idelczyk	Idelczyk
Treasury	Schiff	Schiff	Schiff
Bookkeeping	Galay	Galay	Galay
Assets	Beloskurnik	–	–
Food	Litvak	Litvak	Litvak
Premises-Warehousing	Idelczyk	–	–
Pharmacy	Pharmacist Mukasey	Pharmacist Mukasey	Pharmacist Mukasey
Liaison	Jezereel	Jezereel	Jezereel

Summary

Page 126: *A copy of the Sarovsky Candle*

In the First '*Judenrat*' there were 8 members, of which 4 were murdered in the First Slaughter.

In addition to them, were 10 senior appointees, of ongoing significant standing in the life of the ghetto.

In the Second '*Judenrat*' – there were also 8 members – Four of them had served in the First '*Judenrat*' and four others had been murdered. All of the senior appointees, the head of the police, his deputy and all of the policemen were new. Seven of the eight members of the second '*Judenrat*' were carry-overs, which testifies to personal compatibility of almost the entire group.

Despite this, as we have attempted to portray above, this continuity of personality – did not contain within it a continuation of the behavior inherited from the first '*Judenrat*,' neither with regard the Jews nor with regard to the Germans. In the first '*Judenrat*,' it was Izikson's leadership that stood out. His line of behavior and his personal stance were acceptable to everyone.

Yankelewicz, who was Izikson's Deputy, and worked as his right hand, this same Yankelewicz as a Chairman, was not as dependable as his predecessor.

According to all of the testimony at our disposal, in the first '*Judenrat*,' there was not even a trace of any underground organization, notwithstanding the news that reached us from the surrounding towns. A forced illusion reigned that the ghetto of a large city would not be attacked in this way.

Between the First and Second Slaughter, a change took place, and an armed underground began to be organized, the bringing in of arms, and plans for an uprising, or an escape to the forest, all served to change the subject of discussions, and the planning, whether of the second '*Judenrat*,' or the ghetto denizens themselves. Despite the existence of the underground, conversations were carried out openly in the beginning. Differences of opinion caused splits within families, between institutions, and within the '*Judenrat*.' The fact that 17 of the 25 members of the police belonged to the underground, bears witness to the scope of the organization, and the degree to which this [allegedly secret] underground was well-known out in the open.

During the tenure of the second '*Judenrat*,' as had been noted, the internal dispute over the underground with regard to resistance and escape to the forest, reached its highest intensity.

It was the Second Slaughter, that precipitated the escape of hundreds of Jews from the ghetto into the forest. It was not only young people, and isolated individuals, but also heads of families also left.

At a distance – about 20-30 km from the city of Baranovich, where there were stands of forest – the quandary was raised of separating members of a family; one of the causes, if not the central one, which was responsible for the small number of family men that left.

The third '*Judenrat*' encouraged, and actually assisted those wanting to escape into the forest. 'Whoever wants to save himself, should do this and flee,' said the Chairman, Goldberg.

The story of the Baranovich ghetto, before being thoroughly researched, have in its records the forms and methods similar to those of the large ghettoes in Poland. There was an open ghetto and a closed one: three periods of the '*Judenrat*' some similar, and some different. A minimal amount of help from gentiles, as opposed to the cruelty exhibited by the majority of the local populace; the Jews of Czechoslovakia, Germany and Holland, who were hauled to be murdered beside Baranovich; a ghetto withing a ghetto, of the Jews of Mezerich, who were brought from Poland. The escape to the forest, and the military battles, serving in the '*Partizanka*;' most of those who saved themselves, and the remnants convey one great sentiment about the ghetto, being unique of its kind: 'We had people in the ghetto, all of whom were holy, and pure.. and their memory will remain in hour hearts forever.'

Chapter II: A Collection of Partisan Tales

A Doctor Among the Partisans

By Dr. Leon Berkowicz (Berk)
Sydney, Australia

The Table of Contents of the Hebrew text identifies this as a work, originally prepared in English, and which was translated into Hebrew by Miriam Sokhowolsky-Bussel.

When researched a bit further, it was discovered that the 'excerpt' in this book, is derived from a much more extensive work written, in English, by Dr. Berk, which is available in the public domain.

It therefore did not seem meaningful to expend the effort to translate the Hebrew back into English, in view of the availability of an English text to the interested reader.

In lieu of such a translation, we present a number of interesting reviews of this work, which originally appeared in 1992, that provide a good summary and overview of Dr. Berk's work.

Book Review

Title: *Destined to live*
Author: Leon Berk
Publisher: Paragon Press
Place of publication: Melbourne
Year of Publication: 1992
Location of Book: Sir Louis Matheson Library, Monash University Clayton Campus
Cities/town/camps: *Poland:* Baranovich, *Lvov,* Italy: Milan

Note: those cities/towns/camps underlined are those which are most central to the narrative

Leon Berk's compelling autobiography tells of his experiences during World War II, first as a medical student, then in hiding from the Nazis, and finally as a doctor working with the Russian partisans. The first 28 pages of the book deal with the pre-war years in Eastern Poland and Berk's travels to Italy and Lvov as a student of medicine. Some 62 pages recall the Nazi invasion of Eastern Poland and the formation of a ghetto in Baranovich. The next 126 pages relate Berk's flight from the ghetto, his time in hiding, and his life as a doctor with a Russian partisan unit. The remaining 15 pages describe liberation and Berk's subsequent migration to Israel, and later Australia. The memoir was first published in 1992.

Leon Berk, born Leonid Berkowicz, was a member of the Jewish community of Baranovichi, Poland, which came under Russian rule when Poland was divided in 1939. Berk, who had been studying

medicine in Italy, was in his hometown for the academic break when the Russians took power. He resumed his studies in Lvov, also in Poland, and graduated in 1941. Ironically, Berk had previously been unable to study medicine in a Polish university because he was Jewish. Shortly after he finished his studies, massacres of Jews began in Lvov. Berk and his friend, Shurka, walked for three weeks to get back to Baranovich.

His family confined to the ghetto, Berk spent his days working at a local hospital administered by the Germans. Soon enough, even the doctors were moved to the ghetto. Berk's friend, Shurka, as well as his brother-in-law, also a doctor, were killed in a rounding up of doctors by the Nazis, ostensibly to work at a P.O.W. camp. Berk escaped, and went into hiding.[4]

As news of the many atrocities taking place in the region reached Berk, he became despondent. Feeling hopeless, he felt that the only thing left to do was fight, but he had no weapons or contacts. Finally, with the help of his father, Berk managed to leave the ghetto for the house of a local peasant, Pashka, who promised to help him join the partisans. Unfortunately, the Polish partisans did not want him because he was a Jew. In the meantime, all of the Jews of Baranovichi were murdered by the Nazis; Berk could hear the gunshots of the *Einsatzgruppen* for several days. After remaining in hiding, working for Pashka for a long period, Berk finally managed to join a group of Russian partisans.

Slowly, Berk was able to win the trust of the unit and become an integral part of the organization. He remained relatively secure amongst the partisans until liberation by the Red Army in 1944. Berk offers a detailed, disturbing account of partisan existence, emphasizing the simultaneous humanity and brutality of the partisans. He describes the difficulty of practicing medicine with limited means, and dwells on the ability of a universalistic, Communist ideology to overcome deep-seated anti-Semitism amongst the partisans. Although mention is made of other Jewish survivors and the existence of a Jewish family camp nearby, the focus of the account remains on the members of the partisan unit, reflecting the relative isolation of Berk's experience.

The book is written in descriptive, articulate, compelling prose. Every character appears as a multi-dimensional, complex person. The book's preface, originally published as an article in The Age newspaper, was written by journalist Vitali Vitaliev. Vitaliev describes how he came to read a manuscript of the book almost by accident, and was taken aback by its incredible lucidity and attention to detail. Destined to Live is a gripping, moving, eloquently written account of Berk's war experiences.

http://arts.monash.edu.au/jewish-civilisation/resources/holocaust-memoirs/link.php?id=219

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4 Dr. Alexander ('Shura') Izikson (son of the first [*Judenrat*] president who was killed) – Practicing Surgeon. Documented by Dr. Zelik Levinbook, in his memoir.

Leon Berk: Destined to Live Australia 1992

By Tim Metcalf

Leon Berkowicz's tale of his life during World War II is harrowing. There is a relentless alternation of human warmth and darkness, superbly told, making it a powerful and very moving narrative. At times it is almost too exhausting to read, never mind to have actually experienced. As he says, though, the survival instinct is strong in animals.

Survival, however the movies like to portray it, is not always a great thing. Berk introduces his memoir with an acknowledgment of his survivor guilt, and especially remembers the many people who died from light wounds that became infected with tetanus.

His tale begins as he leaves his Polish home for fascist Italy in 1936 to study medicine. In Milan he is forced to join the Fascist Confederation of Foreign Students, which for him begins the inexorable slide into the blitzkrieg of Poland in 1939. By the time Hitler invades, Leon is in the southern city of Lvov completing his studies. Hitler and Stalin agree to divide Poland, so that he finds his home town is on the Russian side. Observing that 'No-one foresaw the Holocaust', he completes his studies on the eve of the Nazis taking Lvov (having breached their treaty with Stalin). He finishes his exams, and on 5/7/1941 the Nazis summarily execute all the Polish Christian academics and their families. It is only a few days before the Nazis have stirred up long-standing hatred of ethnic Ukrainians against the Jewish population to create a pogrom lasting 3 days and in which 6,000 people died. Somehow Leon survives a crowd being driven against a prison wall and crushing itself to death as officers take photographs. Next he must avoid a fellow student (now, like him, a graduated doctor) who passes by wielding a stick and wearing an armband.

Consider: What is the best way to prevent doctors becoming agents for a destructive enemy? Should they or should they not have a political education?

Stunned by the sights he has seen, in hiding, and scared to ask for food, Berkowicz decides with a friend to walk 500km home to Baranovichi in north-east Poland. It is clear the Nazis have found a fast route to spread hatred of the Jews among rural peasants, in retrospect assisted by the beliefs of the Catholic population:

'What! Get on your way now! I don't help Jews who killed our Lord and started this dreadful war.' In more recent times Pope John Paul II was called to account for this by the secular left in Europe, as well as by some Jewish people. Berk, however, shows us the picture was more complex, especially when he relates an episode as a young boy when he joined in his peer-group trying to stone a local Jewish girl in love with a Christian boy. The argument over Romans versus Jews as the killers of Christ is recalled, to everyone's detriment. Later on, a Jewish merchant is shot by the Russians for selling methylated spirits to soldiers who tragically find it rapidly lethal.

In Baranovichi he gets assigned to the hospital surgical department. Colleagues under the Russian partition were friendly, but under the German's hostile, and he soon found himself wearing his

yellow star front and back. The sudden shunning of Jewish colleagues by other doctors proved a good survival technique for the latter, as the collaborators, helpers, and friends of all Jews and the military enemy were later executed (this was done on both sides).

'To my great joy I found that Shurka had escaped the killing squads.
.....

We talked all the time and escape was our only topic. Then we learned that it was Dr Prawko who had given the order for the Jewish doctors at the hospital to be sent to the ghetto.
'The man must have known he was condemning us to death, how could he do it?'I asked Shurka.

It was a question I kept repeating. Though I had never had a high opinion of him it was almost beyond comprehension to find he was capable of this.

'So he has no time for Jews as such but, damn it, we are all members of the same profession and we all took the same oath which binds us to respect the sanctity of life. We should be if not brothers, then at least allies in a noble profession'.

'It's wartime, Leon,' said Shurka gently. 'People do strange things in wartime.''

Prawko's rather flexible interpretation of the Hippocratic oath under the stress of occupation is soon forgotten by Leon himself when he has the opportunity to handle some stolen weapons. He cannot wait to use them on some Germans, whose murderousness was becoming both methodical and continuous. The Rabbi who tells him off for creeping out of the ghetto and joining the underground, such as it was, is one of thousands executed and dumped in the trenches they had previously been forced to dig on the outskirts of town. Leon lies in hiding in a peasant's pig sty and listens impotently for three days as the job, which includes almost all his family, is completed. He notes laconically that 'The good are easy to deceive.' How much pain is behind that simple sentence!

In 1942, after three months hiding from the Nazis in a pig sty and making black market vodka for Pashka the peasant who sheltered him, he finally makes contact with the Russian controlled partisans in the forests. After describing his first amputation he observes that:

'I don't know who invented the dum-dum bullet but I hope retribution awaits him somewhere.'

Consider: What sort of justifications do we hear for the manufacture of weapons such as those topical today: the anti-personnel land mines? What kind of person goes to work each day to make them?

Berk describes the medical system outside the cities:

A *Feldscher* was a regional phenomenon deeply rooted in Russian tradition. At the time of the Czars there were very few trained doctors so members of the community were chosen and taught how to

recognize basic illnesses and how to give injections; with time they gained a status between doctor and nurse. Fyedik had been one of them. Now his knowledge was being put to use. But as he confessed, he would have preferred to be a fighting man rather than a *Feldscher*. He certainly looked nothing like a doctor. He was wearing side-bulging pants tucked into high boots and the typical Russian *rubashka* — a long shirt which reached the knees and had four very large pockets.....
'Now,' said Fyedik, 'before we start seeing the sick, there are a few things to remember. First, if you don't agree with my diagnosis don't say so in front of the patient — they're all damn fools anyway. And, second, never — do you hear — never question my treatment. Got it?''

Consider: Would you take this advice?

The narrative becomes exciting as the partisans go about killing Germans, 'the race that taught us to hate', ambushing and destroying rail lines; and by February 1943 the Red Army has secured Stalingrad after a stupendous battle and loss of life. But the fate of the captured enemy is grisly indeed, and the stories more and more desperate and horrific.

'Look what they have done to my people. Look what they have done to me' cries one woman reduced to raging hatred and violence. A partisan's lover has a baby in the forest — Leon 'puts it to sleep'. The brutal necessities of war exist in personal interaction and in state-directed rules, such as the orders to kill the sick if required (from the increasingly organized command structure emanating from the government in Moscow).

After another execution of a collaborator, a village elder who hated communists more than the Nazis, Leon records:

I had to go away. By now I thought I had seen it all; slaughter had become almost commonplace. 'You will get used to it, Leon,' I had been told, and I was sure I never would. I was wrong. The times were tough, the enemy was vicious; it was a case of kill or be killed.''

An historical note: George W. Bush rallied people behind the USA after the September 11, 2001 attacks with the same slogan Lenin used as he forged the USSR, and Stalin as he rallied the Soviet people to defeat the Nazis: 'Those who are not with us are against us!'

References and Further Reading

Berk(owitz) L (1992) Destined to Live: Memoirs of a Doctor with the Russian Partisans Paragon Press

http://timmetcalf.com.au/home/readings-in-literature-and-medicine/leon-berk-destined-to-live.html

Yiddish poetry on the radio

By Jennifer Dowling

Date: Monday, April 19th, 1999
From: Jennifer Dowling
In: Volume 08.139

While I have not heard any of those radio broadcasts (08.135), I do know that Dr. Leon Berk ז"ל wrote a poem entitled "*Di Shikh*" while hiding in a barn waiting to be taken to join the partisans. It was later performed in Paris in 1946 by Jonas Turkov as part of a performance in the Sarah Bernhardt Theater. Dr. Berk (originally Berkowicz) was from Baranovich and was the chief medical officer with the "*Sovyetskaya Beloruss*" partisan unit. He later settled in Sydney, Australia.

Jennifer Dowling
Sydney, Australia

http://mendele.commons.yale.edu/wp/tag/jennifer-dowling/

My Way to the Forests

By Hil'keh Borishansky-Bussel

During the time of German occupation, I worked at the *Luftwaffe* armories. Across the area of the camp, there were piles of armaments, spoils taken from the Russians, some damaged, and there was a need to tally it. There were 120 people working there, from the ghetto, and among them were many young women. We went out of the ghetto every morning to work in that camp. The shattering events, of The First '*Aktion*' in the ghetto, aroused a decision in me, not to be passive in the face of the existing Nazi terror, and, in my heart, I said 'I will obtain a grenade, and I will detonate it by my body, together with the German that will come to kill me. Let my soul perish with the Philistines.[5]' I saw German pilots practicing the throwing of grenades, and from their moves, I learned how to use grenades.

One day, I said the following to one of my comrades at work: 'We have to do something. It is not conceivable that we just sit here, and wait, while doing nothing, anticipating the second *aktion*.' My comrade replied: 'They are already up to something. If you have a desire to join up, take two grenades, and hide them on your person, and take them into the ghetto.' It was in this fashion, that I learned of the existence of a resistance movement in the various workplaces, especially beside the ammunition dumps, done by small, secret cells.

Of the 120 people who were working there, only 10 or 15 were in on the secret of these matters. There were other secret cells, but I did not know the names of their members or where they were located. The Jewish leader of our work contingent was aware of the resistance organization, but did not interfere with its activity.

Among those most prominently active in the gathering of armaments, were Moshe Pupp and David Winter. they were not native to our city, but rather Soviet soldiers who had served in the vicinity at the time that the

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[5] Echoing the utterance of Samson, in Judges 15:30

war broke out. Because the Germans searched for the Soviet soldiers, with the objective of killing them, these two fled the war prisoners' camp, and reached Baranovich. The '*Judenrat*' Chairman, Izikson, looked after providing them with the appropriate ID cards, and they remained in the ghetto in Baranovich.

They began to get involved in the work of procuring arms. the men prepared the components of arms, and the women transferred them, hidden on their persons, into the ghetto.

Intermittently, inspections took place at the ghetto gate, in which they especially were looking for smuggled food. However, the Jewish policemen, who stood at the gate (together with German police), found a way to warn the women on those days when inspections were going to occur. During the time that the smuggling of armament was underway, we got in touch with a young Jewish lad named Kudewicky, who would take human waste out of the ghetto in a wagon, outside of the city, [to be dumped] beside the railroad tracks. He arranged for a double cover in the waste wagon, and he would hide the armament in the middle [of the wagon] that we would bring to our meeting point. There was a n instance, when a German soldier, who worked at the ammunition dump, saw me heading in the direction of the railroad tracks, with the outline of a rifle showing through my jacket. Despite the fact that I became frightened, I continued to walk. The German did not interdict me, but on the following day, in front of a group of the women, with a glance towards me, he said: 'We are aware that the Jews have arms in the ghetto.'

The amount of arms that members of the underground smuggled into the ghetto of Baranovich was relatively substantial. There was also a substantial organization in the labor camp beside the airfield, where 600 Jews worked. Together with the gathering of the parts of arms, and commissioning it, discussions were held, as to how and when an organized resistance should be initiated. The thinking of the members of the underground was, that with the commencement of the second *aktion*, it would be necessary to blow up the ghetto, and to begin a mass escape.. However, many suspected that any action against the Germans could precipitate the liquidation of the ghetto. there were always those, who held the hope in their hearts, that the war will end, and they will be able to survive. The 'Judenrat' knew of this organization, and they pleaded with us not to initiate any action that could result in the mass murder of the elderly and the children who would not succeed in fleeing. It was because of this, that many among the young were reluctant to engage in battle with the Germans.

The organization activity in my cell went on for about a half year. As best as I can remember, it was decided to defer the instant of the start of the uprising, until news would be received that the second *aktion* was imminent, with the hope that such a time would never come, but should the *aktion* commence, it would be the time to blow up the ghetto.

And then Yom Kippur of 1942 arrived. On the following day, October 12, the Germans began to assemble hundreds of people to go to work, as it were. I stood among throngs of people, and suddenly, we were surrounded by German soldiers carrying machine guns and with trucks. It quickly became clear that they were not talking about transport to work, but that this was an *'aktion.'* I jumped between the rows, and despite the bullets that began to whistle by me, I succeeded in getting away, and I reached the bunker where the members of my cell were awaiting news of what was going on outside. I turned to the head of the cell, Dr. Avra'sheh Abramowsky, and I said to him: 'There is an *aktion* underway outside, and your comrade stands in the first row, opposite a machine gun.' Abramowsky was so shaken that he said to us: 'Do whatever you decide to do; I am, at this moment, unable to function.'

The discussions continued all night long, without a decision being reached. In the dark of night, the group

went over to a larger bunker, in the other part of the ghetto, but most of the arms remained back in the previous bunker. During the aktion, the Germans sealed off that original part of the ghetto, and the arms remained behind.

In the middle of the discussions, one of the members stood up, Moshe (Mish'keh) Zalmanowicz, and said: 'I can see that you are going to be here discussing this for a long time yet, so I, in the meantime, will go out into the forest to find a way to reach the partisan divisions. In my opinion, we will not be able to accomplish anything here in the ghetto. I will return to extract people, so long as I am still alive. If I do not return in a week to ten days, you will know that I am no longer alive.'

He left together with a young man named Leib'l Zeitlin. the two of them took along a lot of arms, including a mortar that they had. After 3-4 days, Moshe returned to the ghetto. He assembled the cell leaders, and drew a map for them, of ways that led to the partisans in the forest. The unit head, was Moma Kapilowicz, the director of '*HaShomer HaTza 'Ir'* was 24 years old, while all the others were about 17. After Zalmanowicz had returned, an attempt was made to do a night crossing into the sealed off section of the ghetto, where the weaponry had been left behind. However, they opened fire on our people, and they had to retreat to the small ghetto, and our attempt to regain the arms was undercut. In the second *aktion*, that started on October 12, 1942, my mother and sister Shoshana were killed. Mt father was killed in the third *aktion.*

My group, which numbered 11 people, 10 young men and myself, being the lone woman among them, were the first unit to leave the ghetto for the forests. We reached the partisans with a minimal amount of weaponry, and the partisans were disappointed by this. After Moshe had reached them, being well-armed, they had an expectation that every Jew that would reach them, would come well armed. Because this did not happen, they did not want to accept us into their ranks. These were difficult people, without any pity. They proposed to us that we organize a separate partisan unit.

At the outset, the partisans were not organized. there were some that consisted of Soviet soldiers, pulled off behind the lines, or Russian partisans from the vicinity. However, there were no lack of lawbreakers and criminal types among them. There were instances of robbery and murder among their ranks, and Dr. Abramowsky, who had left the ghetto carrying a variety of medical instruments with him, fell victim to them. His new boots fell into the hands of his attacker. Someone who coveted them, killed him, and took them off him. After this first period, leadership that parachuted in, arrived from Russia, and brought new orders with them. Among these orders was one to organize 'family division,' in the depths of the forest, where the scouting of the Germans would not reach. This was done in order to both concentrate and protect the women and children, who were wandering around in the forest without any protection. This involved both groups and solitary individuals, who had managed to steal out of the ghettoes at the last minute. In the family divisions, the cooking was done, laundry washed, and the wounded were attended to. In general, women were not accepted into the fighting units. the knowledgeable among them, those that spoke several languages (German, Polish, and the like), worked in the partisan divisions as translators, secretaries, etc. I was transferred to a family division, where I was until the end of the war.

To the best of my knowledge, about 500 people succeeded in getting out of the ghetto, and joined up with the various partisan groups in the forests of Byelorussia. On their way, many were helped by the Pole, [Edward] Chacza, who resided on the outskirts of the city. In general, people left the ghetto in the morning, as if they were going to work. During the day, they hid themselves in Chacza's house, and at night, they continued on to the forests. He assumed the risk of great personal danger in these undertakings. Once, was he even taken for an interrogation by the Gestapo, and tortured by them, but he did not break, or admit anything, and was set free.

Incidentally, after the war, those very partisans, whom he had helped this way, invited him to Israel, and he received the award of 'Righteous Among the Nations' from *Yad VaShem* in Jerusalem. He was invited to the Independence Day parade of the IDF, and was even given a place on the honorary review stand. When the unit of women soldiers marched past, he burst into tears, and said: 'How many young Jewish girls did I see like these, going off to death.'

The Jewish partisans were happy to off to battle, and perform acts of vengeance. Many of them fell in battle, and among them was the head of our unit, Moma Kapilowicz. Out of the entire group of 11 that we started with, that left the ghetto, only two survived alive: Moshe Zalmanowicz and myself.

The reputation of the Jewish partisans spread far and wide. The objective of the partisans was to disrupt roadways, railroad tracks and bridges, and in this way interdict the military plans of the Germans.

With the liberation of the vicinity by the Red Army, in the summer of 1944, the partisans came out of the forests, and I returned with my comrades to Baranovich. All that were left were gigantic mass graves, a testament to the denouement and destruction of the Jews of the city, a city that was once a 'City and Mother in Israel.'

Not one member of my family survived. One day, I screwed up my courage, and went off to look at the house of my parents, and the yard of the flour mill that belonged to my family, on the Shosowa street. One of the older workers recognized me, 'The daughter of the Owner...' and asked for my address.

I left the place emotionally overcome. That evening, the worker brought me a bag of flour and said: '[This is] in order that you not hunger for bread.'

After a while, I left with my comrades on my way to make *aliyah* to the Land of Israel.

A Tourist among the Partisans

By Chaim Stolovicky

Page 192 (Top): *Temporary Certificate of Recognition No. 58375: 'Chaim Stolovicky (ben Gedalyahu)received the decoration of a Partisan during the War for the Motherland, and for his courage demonstrated during the partisan struggle against the conquering Fascist Germans.'*

Signed by the Commander of the Byelorussian Division, April 1945.

(Bottom): *Chaim Stolovicky, Partisan Scout, 1944*

Memory Fragments from the Forest

After The First '*Aktion*' on Purim of 1942, an underground was organized in th ghetto, that sett itself the objective of assembling arms and ammunition to do battle with the Germans, at the auspicious hour, and to practice with arms, in order to increase the number of our comrades who would be knowledgeable in its use.

The members of the underground did implement training in the ghetto, and were in a state of constant readiness. They posted watches on the other side of the ghetto gate, and the fenced perimeter, especially before dawn, and at noontime, in order to sense and activity that involved a liquidation initiative, which was likely to be sprung on us by surprise.

This state of readiness was compulsory, because during all hours of the day, all those able to work, and among them many members of the underground – were on the outside, and only a few solitary young men remained in the ghetto, in order to remain close to the arms stores, should trouble arise.

The underground cell to which I belonged, was about 7-8 members, and among them were young men who were war refugees from Western Poland, that had reached our district in 1939, as were two young ladies – who were also refugees.

The armaments that we stood over, were concealed in an underground cache, in the yard of the Rudnikov family, on the Sadowa Street 20. It was a wooden two-family house, with an entrance from the center into a hallway that separated the two residences. Each residence had three mid-sized rooms, a not-so-large kitchen, and sinks surrounded by wood. The kitchen led to a rear hallway, that also served as a storage location. In its floor, there were stairs to the cellar, and there was an exit from the hallway to the yard, in the direction of the well, and the storehouse, all connected to the house.

With the closure of the ghetto in 1941, many families lived in this house, in overcrowded circumstances that is difficult to describe. Three-tiered wooden bunk beds were erected along the entire length of the walls. The older women, who did not leave to go to work, cooked the meager meals in the little kitchen, according to a schedule, and around the clock. It was necessary to be extraordinary careful about sanitation, in order to prevent disease.

In the three rooms on the left, the Sukharewsky family lived, the owner of the inn on the Szeptycki Street, his wife, there son, Shabtai (Szef'eh) and his wife Zuzya (my sister ה"יד); also my brother Moshe' leh ה"יד, as well as the Grodno forest merchant Strelec, who was uprooted to Baranovich. Strelec later became the translator of the Jewish section in the ghetto, with myself among them, who worked for a *Luftwaffe* (German Air Force) unit, on the Cmentarna Street. In this house, also lived Dr. Avra'sheh Abramowsky (one of the underground leaders); the nurse Mina Ljahozwiansky Galay; His (?) wife Rivka and their little son (now a lecturer at the university in Israel);The brother of Rivka, Akiva; Dr. Khonya Brawda, and his wife Manya (the sister of Dr. Leon Berkowicz), and their little son, and another family, whose name has fled my memory.

The Rudnikov house was in the vicinity of the gate to the ghetto, on the corner of Sadowa-Wilenska (the names of these streets until the outbreak of the war in 1939). To the left of the gate, was the station of the ghetto police, in a house that faced the Wilenska Street.

The police, approximately 40 in number, under the direction of Chaim Weltman, were derived from the best of the Baranovich young people, among them being married and single men, and most of them having served in the Polish army of the past. Among the policemen was also my brother-in-law, Szef'eh Sukharewsky ה"יד, Aron'chik Yakimowicky, Moshe Stoliar, and many others who were good. All of them, along with their leader, Chaim Weltman, were killed in the First '*Aktion*' on Purim 1942. They were shot along with all the other martyrs of our city, and among them, Dr. Izikson, and Mrs. Mann, on the same day, and they were buried in pits beside the 'Green Bridge.'

The German officer in charge of the ghetto and the ghetto police, was the S.D. officer, Schlegel.

The bunker at our residence was dug during the nights, in great secrecy. Section after section, with clotheslines hung with sheets, obscuring the work from view. The entrance to it was accomplished through the cellar, as explained above. A secret door was created in the brick wall of the cellar, barred and covered in bricks, that opened in front of the bunker. The camouflage was complete. Benches for sitting were configured along the length of the bunker walls, with a ceiling window allowing air to funnel in from the hollow in the nearby well, and at the end, was an exit taking you out into the storehouse in the yard. The bunker was prepared to be a hiding place for the residents of the house, in the event of an *aktion*, and the intent was to flee into the nearby forests from there.

With the digging of the bunker, the possibility for escape was made easier. All the soil taken out was spread out in the local area, because the German watch would inspect all the spaces between the house properties. In this way, open areas for passage were created. The extent of the crowding caused the outhouse pits – built of boards, and vulnerable to being moved – to fill up quickly, and it was necessary to dig new pits, almost every week, and move them. The soil removed, in doing this, was co-mingled with the soil excavated in the creation of the bunkers, and spread about.

Arms were hidden in the bunker, and during daylight hours, we would practice in it. The heavy reports of the gunfire was swallowed up in the surrounding noise, and did not attract attention. During one such practice, a string of clothing was accidentally shot up with holes, that were prepared for the bunker by neighbors, at the time of concealment. It was from this that it became known to them that we were concealing rifles in the bunker, grenades and ammunition. they became very frightened, because they were afraid that if the Germans, God forbid, would discover that Jews were hiding arms on their property, they faced the threat of a certain death sentence, because at that time, the general will was to continue to hope, thinking that perhaps they could survive. The attitude of these residents spurred us on to try and find an alternative cache for the arms – perhaps less secure – but not to endanger unarmed Jews, and that it permit those who were involved with this matter to get out of it with relative ease, and to open fire, if the signal was given.

We moved the arms to the cellar of an old house, that faced the Wilenska street. The walls of the cellar were built from thick boards of wood, measuring 2 x 2 meters, Behind the walls, whose panels were movable, a hideout was dug that with considerable crowding, could accommodate about seven people, as well as their arms. The sum total of our arms in this cache, consisted of a number of sawed off Russian rifles, a number of military knapsacks with explosive Russian and German grenades, and an amount of ammunition rounds. The dilemma that faced us was, should utilize these arms in order to break out of the ghetto, and get out to the forests, or use it to smite the enemy with all our might, for purposes of exacting vengeance, in order that we not continue to live like sheep being taken to slaughter, and fall with the weapons in our hands.

Despite the certainty that the ghetto would eventually be liquidated, and could not be denied, since it was only a question of time, and since there was no other solution available to the community, involving making a stand with the arms and rebelling, the tendency was therefore to not delay and try to hold onto every possible spark of hope, hoping that the impossible might yet occur. Everything was organized for an uprising, but in their gut, remained the question as to whether it was morally proper for us to assume the responsibility for the lives of the women, children, and the elderly, would will [sic: very likely] not be able to flee, and therefore seal their fate immediately. It was necessary, therefore, to delay the move until an '*aktion*' was initiated, to then give battle, and flee to the partisans, to the extent that each individual was capable of doing so.

On that very *Yom Kippur* day of 1942, the cry that went up form the Jews, in the Baranovich ghetto, in their distress[6], did not reach the Throne of Glory, and they were not privileged to be saved. Before the dawn of that following day, the ghetto was surrounded by German forces, S. S. troops, *Gestapo*, and the Byelorussian police, Lithuanians and Latvians, and this is how the Second *Aktion* ("Slaughter") began.

Our unit went down into the cellar containing the arms, and we accommodated ourselves there under extreme crowding. After returning the walls to their proper positions, from the inside, we placed sacks of sand along its entire length., so that our position would not be revealed as a result of the insertion of a bayonet. From time-to-time, one of us would emerge out of the cellar, in order to observe, through the cracks in the door that led to the yard, what was going on outside. We heard the cry and the wailing of the Jews that had been discovered by the Germans, and their henchmen, in the cellars and attics of the surrounding houses. They were concentrated in an open space, and taken off in conveyances to the killing fields. the Lithuanians and Byelorussians came down also into our cellar, and attempted to force the barrels of their rifles and bayonets between the walls, but the sacks of sand on the other side prevented this from happening. Between the stabbing motions, we would hear words of summoning, Вихудйй, Вихудйй, Друг (Come out, come out, comrade), but luck was with us, and we remained undiscovered, Out of the extent of confusion, the signal to set the ghetto on fire and to open fire was not given.

Night fell, and with it came silence. We decided to establish contact with the remaining groups that had hidden themselves in bunkers, on the Wilenska ans Sosnowa streets. Electric lanterns could be seen glowing in the ghetto, and random, solitary rifle shots could be heard, and we saw policemen and ordinary residents going through and searching the houses. We skipped through a number of the houses, in the hopes of encountering the people with arms, but we did not succeed in finding anything. Two hideouts that we uncovered were empty. We returned to our cellar, and decided that we would not act until we found out what happened to the other groups. The mood in the hideout became hard, both from the standpoint of crowding, and not having a place to take care of one's bodily functions. We were eight in number, including two young women, in an area of about 4 [square] meters, a confinement that was suffocating and malodorous. The night of the second day fell, and we decided to exit, even if were not to succeed, to connect with our other comrades. We came out of the cellar, and part of us remained to conceal the weapons in the hallway of the house in which we had been hidden. Along with two other of my comrades, we did an early reconnoitering of the area, in the direction of the barbed wire fence, that we would have to traverse, on our way to the forest. Along the way, I entered Rudnowsky's house, in order to determine if there was anyone in our previous bunker there, which we had thought to be 'secure.' I was hoping to be able to find my sister there, among those in hiding (who had already been widowed), and my brother Moshe'leh, and the rest of our neighbors. The door to the cellar was open. The secret door to the hideout was also open. An electric light was shining on inside the bunker, and in the doorway, there was the body of a woman that had been killed. To their misfortune, the rather complete camouflage of the bunker did not stand up for them, and protect them from predation.

Later on, I learned that the woman I saw in the doorway of the hideout was responsible for its exposure. she had been living in the second half of the house, whose residents had also dug out a bunker. When the Germans entered the ghetto at the beginning of the *aktion*, she didn't make it in time to get into the bunker on her side, since it had already been sealed from the inside, and wanted to find sanctuary in our bunker, which also was already sealed. She began to bang on the door and plead that the door be opened, and in the meantime, the murderers heard her, and descended into the cellar after her. It is enough to say that the people inside were forced to heed the German orders and came out of the bunker, to be led to their death. In days,

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[6] The writer invokes the metaphor of Psalms 118:5 in this description.

I found out from my friend Moshe Topf ז"ל, that my sister was not in the bunker I just described, but rather, had hidden herself in the attic of that house, which had also been set up to serve as a hiding place, by the construction of a [sic: false] third wall adjacent to the sub-roof under the main roof, and it was possible to hide a number of people between the two gables. Topf told me, once we had met in the forest after some time, that several days after the *aktion,* my sister emerged from her hiding place, and returned to her job with the Germans. After that, came the initiative to liquidate the 'remnants' in the workplaces that employed Jews, and my sister was executed in a gas truck (Дошоговка). Moshe Topf ז"ל did not forgive himself for not taking my sister out along with him, when he left the ghetto. Before he parted from her, she gave him the warm flannel shirt of my brother-in-law ה"ד, to be given to me, if he should encounter me in the forests. I received this red shirt, with the blue decorations.

From the cellar, I went up to our room, and from the armoire, I took a number of necessities that had not yet been touched. These included white goods, family pictures, and also the winter short jacket (Куртка), that I had acquired during the Bolshevik period, from the green military uniform.

It was a clear and moonlit night, and cold. Towards midnight, our group started to move, with our arms, towards the fence, in the direction of the Catholic cemetery. In the meantime, a number of other boys joined up with us, among them Yaakov Malakhowsky (a blacksmith from Ostrowo), Chazanowicz, Vov'keh Gurwicz (the younger brother of a son of one of the returnees from the government gymnasium), Mott'ik Gurwicz, the young Vov'keh had training he received at a Soviet military school for operating mortars, and his military training subsequently was of use to us, in many of the partisan ranks. all together we were now about twelve people. Malakhowsky was the one who showed us the way, because he knew the vicinity quite well.

During the time of getting through the fence, we ran into a Byelorussian policeman, who called out to us to stop. Without hesitation, we shot in his direction and also threw a hand grenade. He fell, and did not get up. We broke out into a run, towards the Ljasnaja forests, in order to reach a trustworthy way to get to the village of Tuhovičy, from where the swamps of Polesia then spread out past it. Hunger began to gnaw at us, and since we had a little money, we paid for food that we were able to get access to along the way, from farmers. It began to get light, and we needed to find a place to hide, until the return of darkness, because we could only make progress at night. We selected a clump of trees in a relatively young forest, that was surrounded by a rather broad pasture area. A rain started to fall, and from the distance, we could see a herd of cows approaching, and we could hear the voice of the herders. It is possible that one of the herders detected us, or that after we killed the policeman, a pursuit of those who fled, was initiated, because in the afternoon hours, at about 4 o'clock, fire was opened in our direction, but at a substantial distance. It was random shooting, for the sake of feeling out the area only. We hid ourselves as best we could, and after a half hour, the shooting stopped. From there, we continued to walk for the entire night, until we reached the village of Rogacy.

At the same time, a group of partisans arrived at that village to gather food. A number of them were wearing Byelorussian police uniforms, and we sensed a need to exercise caution, and we remained hidden outside the village behind the houses. they too, sensed that we were there, but they did not approach us. One of our boys, who before had entered one of the houses to ask for some bread, came out to return, and in that split second, one of the partisans emerged from another house, in the uniform of a policeman. We fired in the direction of the policeman, but our lad was also hit and killed.

Along the way, we found it advisable to assume the character of a partisan group, with Yaakov Malakhowsky appointed as its head, and Gurwicz as his deputy. Part of the duties of the leadership was to be responsible

for guard duty and security, and to manage the relationships with the farmers, and to assure that what we demanded was the minimum we required for survival, all of this transacted for a price.

We also began to speak Russian, and use terminology like 'товарищ Командир,'and 'товарищ Комиссар,[7]' in order to get the refugees among us, who had come from Western Poland, who did not know Russian, accustomed to the terminology, and thereby prepared themselves for the inevitable meeting with the real partisans.

We continued to walk, now by daylight, and at night, we lodged at the periphery of the forest. On the fourth day, we ran into a partisan roadblock in the thick of the forest. After a short interrogation, and inspection of our belongings, we were led to a Russian partisan group, whose name was 'Group 112.' In the group, there were also young Byelorussians from the surrounding villages, who were active in the communist party during the Soviet occupation, Russian soldiers, and officers that had escaped from German captivity, and a number of prisoners, who had gotten themselves free from Soviet imprisonment, with the German victory. These prisoners were sentenced to hard labor, and were so employed, until the outbreak of the [German-Soviet] War in 1941, in the construction of an airfield beside Baranovich.

When we arrived at 'Group 112,' it consisted of about 150 men. It was quiet in this vicinity, after the summer of 1942, in which the Germans had conducted a sortie to root out and corral the partisans of the region. The partisans inflicted heavy losses on them besides the 'Tenth Dam" (Called Десятый шлюз in Russian). Tens of Germans were killed, and drowned in the waters of the dam, and for a long time afterwards, the partisans would come to that location to fish out rifles and sub-machine guns from the water, as well as heavy armaments, like mortars. The reverberations of that battle reached us even back in the ghetto, during the months of July-August 1942. At that time, I was still working, by myself, for the *Luftwaffe*, as a locksmith, and in the ensuing days, the coffins of the soldiers from the unit, were brought into our courtyard, who had been killed in battle with the partisans. It was given to me, to prepare metal boards, on which the names of the dead were inscribed, and their army serial numbers, and to attach them to the coffins. The coffins were sent to Germany. Because of this, we were happy to understand the news that there was a substantive partisan force in the forest.

We had just arrived at this unit, and already, after the noon meal (a sumptuous meal of beef marbled with a lot of fat, potatoes and dried bread), a group was organized from among the past captives, and I was among them, to go to the air field at Baranovich, in order to arm ourselves with discarded Soviet arms, which were to be found in profusion in the storage compounds, housing the spoils of war. the captives, who had worked their prior to their escape, knew the area very well, and there were very good possibilities that their endeavor would succeed, but the matter never came about. We had not even gotten a short distance away from the camp, when we fell into an ambush by Byelorussian police. One young man was killed, and a few were wounded. The killed one, with his head blown open by a dum-dum bullet, we buried by the side of the road, in a wine colored woolen shroud. The plan was thus canceled, for the time being, and the *Otryad* (partisan brigade), left that location, which had now become dangerous. The last months of the fall were especially quite cold, but no snow fell. The brigade went through extensive movement in the forests, in changing the places where it would set up camp.

We went along like this for tens of kilometers, sometimes backtracking in order to avoid the trajectory of the German security forces, and the Byelorussian police in the area, and also the '*Samoakhova*' – an organization composed of Byelorussian villagers, that received arms from the Germans in order to guard their villages

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7 Comrade Commander, Comrade Commissar

against the partisans (a sort of citizens militia). They were not terribly effective fighters, but dangerous nonetheless, because they knew the area like the back of their hands, and were capable of setting ambushes in places without warning.

We continued to wander. Occasionally, we would requisition wagons and horses to convey what we had gathered to the camp. [This included] large vessels for milk that were used for cooking meals, filled with foodstuffs. At the end of December, snow began to fall. I remember an incident, that on one of the sorties made by a section, which had been charged with bringing fresh food, they were exposed by the people of the *'Samoakhova,'* because they left behind tracks in the snow. It fell into an ambush that was set for them by the Byelorussians, and they failed to carry out their mission. His name was Shchukin, a Jewish-Russian who was a sergeant in the Red Army. His position in the 112th was as a 'Завхоз [8]' responsible for administration and provisions. He did not identify himself to the few Jews that were in the group.

There were 10 of us Jews in the group: Malakhowsky, Gurwicz, myself, the two Leskin sisters, Sasha and Sonya, from Baranovich, Esther (presently the wife of Engineer Warhaftig), and her husband, Abram (who had been drafted and served as a sergeant in the Polish Army). In February 1943, a group of Jews from Slonim joined our group, among them a young woman named Masha Moszkowsky (today in Holon), the Kitaywicz brothers, and other young women. Vov'keh Gurwicz was appointed as a section head, and afterwards to be responsible for a unit, and excelled in all of his undertakings. Malakhowsky was also appointed to head a section, but both of these were placed over non-Jews. In the summer of 1943, our group placed an ambush for a unit of S. S. troops, that were moving along the Brest-Moscow road. In the ensuing battle, from a crossfire that erupted, Vov'keh Gurwicz and the officer Chertkov fell, as did another number of partisans. Our comrade Vov'keh was brought back for burial at the outskirts of the village of Zhitlin, in the Ivacevičy district. The battle was crowned with victory, but it cost us heavily in terms of blood.

I attached myself to the section of scouts and communication. In days, I was transferred to the Dzerzhinsky Brigade, which was a cavalry unit that engaged in scouting and in establishing contact and communication with the people in the underground in the villages and towns, and those who were employed by the Germans, in train transport, etc., the purpose of which was to acquire as current information as possible for purposes of planning assaults [sic: sabotage].

For the sake of the truth, things 'went my way' for this entire period. It would appear that my command of Russian and knowledge of firearms, was recognized in my life in the forest, as well as the skill to manage horses, and to ride well, and my ability to participate in drinking of Самагон (the vodka that the villagers concocted from flour or potatoes[9]) stood me in good stead in all of the tribulations that I confronted among the partisans. In my role as a scout, when we would reach some obscure village overlooked b the Germans, which had not yet been put to the torch, it was always my role to talk to the assembled members of the village, who would gather in one of the houses, by the light of burning embers, giving them the latest news from the battlefields (последняя сводка). The villages would spin the flax on their wheels, singing along

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8 A superintendent

9 Самагон (*Samagon*) is moonshine, or bootleg alcohol in Russian language. The word "Samagon" means "self-distilled," and can often refer to vodka that has been made by either typical ingredients, like grain or potatoes, or dangerous ingredients, like shoe polish. While not all samagon is inherently dangerous, like any moonshine alcohol, it does have the potential to kill.

with folk songs. The recognition, that I would imminently have to go 'home,' into the forest, on the frozen snow, and even the lice that would be moved to bite when they felt the warmth of the house, could not detract from the satisfaction that I felt during those hours.

Indistinctly, I recall the celebration of the secular new year of 1943. I was on a mission with two other scouts, coming to obtain news at one of the villages in the ambit of the partisans. The farmer and the members of his household had gone to the Russian Orthodox Church. On their return, they set their festive holiday table, and hosted us with vodka and songs. We had to be very careful, because even on trusting the master of the house, there were instances when neighbors would shout out to the Germans or the police, from the station in the nearby village, and a festive occasion for drinking like this, would be turned into a death trap.

Our company was formed at that same time, whose name was changed to Molotov (which before had been included in the Dzerzhinsky Brigade), the forests of the nobleman, Paslawski, about 14 km from Ivacevičy, beside the Brest-Moscow railroad line. The camp was located in a swampy area, at about 10 km distance, and the grasses of the swamp provided green fodder for the surrounding villages. Large piles of fodder stood their through the winter, because it was only possible to reach them with crawlers, only when the swamp froze over. Many of these piles remained standing on their location until the end of the war, because the Germans put a number of the villages in the vicinity to the torch, and liquidated their residents under the charge of aiding the partisans. Their bodies were thrown into the village wells, and only occasional cats, prowled the area, remaining faithful to the area. From time to time a row of partisan-driven wagons would pass by, through the burned out village, and afforded me an opportunity to look around quite a bit, between Wiado and Bobrovičy.

The second way through the swamp, a distance of about 12 km from our camp, was created by some solitary farmers, in the middle of the village of Svjacica, and consisted of a group of partisans under the command of a Russian officer, Pugachev. Most of this group were Jews, some of them scions of Baranovich. Not all of them had arms, and the commander, from my impression during my brief visits, treated them harshly.

In order to reach the Pugachev camp, it was necessary to ford the swamp. It was necessary to proceed carefully one step at a time, because of a danger of drowning. It was covered in high grasses and bush with the water reaching sometimes as high as the belt. The passage was particularly difficult at the end of the fall, when there was a thin sheet of ice on the surface of the water. The ice would break underfoot, and cause a great deal of pain.

At first I was invited because I was on a mission to Baranovich. I was happy to run into people that I knew, that were also among my comrades from our underground. Moshe Zalmanowicz and Moshe Topf were there, Noah Roitman, Fima (Fyvel) Lev, Khil'keh Borishansky, Ethel Wilensky, Shmuel Winiarnik, Eliezer Lidowsky, Liova Mandel, and many others. In the morning of the day, I arrived at the Pugachev company, and at that point, Yitzhak Medresh appeared from the direction of Svjacica (Baranovich, with a [German] *Schmeisser* mortar slung on his shoulder, escorted by two young women, these being Leah Baguza, and Freida Avramczyk. He had extracted the two of them from the ghetto, and thanks to him, they were saved.

The young people of our city, crammed themselves into a large granary, in the camp, onto straw-covered boards of wood, in an atmosphere almost like a summer camp.

In the camp house itself, the command took up residence: the commander and the commissar, their 'attachés,' and a number of their trusted aides. Vodka flowed like water, and the singing did not lag far behind; given

the circumstances, it was literally a 'Dolce Vita,' but in the end, it was not possible for me to continue on to Baranovich, because of circumstances that developed in the area, and I returned to my company.

I came an additional time to the Pugachev unit around the end of December 1942. Some sort of an accident occurred there, that caused the granary to go up in flames, and a dispute broke out among the people in the unit. There were those in favor of moving eastward, to 'winter quarters.' Their thought was that it would be easier to pass the severe winter months there, for m the standpoint of provisioning food. I can recollect that a group arose, that had most of the weaponry in its hands, and wanted to leave on its own.

We left them, and my comrade and I continued on to Baranovich. Not far from Svjacica, among the small huts of Lipsk, there was a small group of partisans that had left Pugachev, and built itself a *zemlyanka* (an earthen bunker). I spent the night with them on my way to Baranovich. The residents of that bunker behaved as if they lived in secure premises. As I later learned, there was no justification for this sense of security. the Germans uncovered the hiding place, attacked it, and killed some of them.

Yaakov Malakhowsky attached himself to me, and Kapilowicz (who was not a member of our company), and one other. Our forest was the residence of our contact person, Edek Chacza. We reached him before daybreak, and we waited until nightfall. At that point, each of us headed in their own direction. I went off to the house of Vov'keh (Volodya) Sopr, a Byelorussian who before the war worked in Tunkel's barber shop. I spent a long hour, waiting beside the Polish cemetery, in order to arrive at Vov'keh's house as late as possible. It was Christmas Eve, December 24. the house was located on the Holowki Street (this is the street where my own family's house stood, before it was torched by the retreating Germans). It was cold, and I was frozen literally down to my bones. In the pocket of my Куртка(short jacket), in which I left the ghetto, and was still serviceable, was a Russian explosive grenade, and a holstered Russian thin pistol.

I sidled up to the entrance gate, at the fence in front of the house. From all around, the sound of singing drunken soldiers, and the sound of gunshots could be heard. The units of the army were celebrating Christmas in their own fashion.

The concatenation of cruel events decreed that it was in those days, that the final liquidation of the ghetto was continued. It was the Third '*Aktion*,'and the last of the Jews, who had managed to hide themselves for days, attempted to flee the city. Temporarily, they sought to hide themselves in the yards of houses on the outskirts of the city.

At a distance, I caught sight of a group soldiers, wandering about and singing, getting nearer to me. the gate was locked. With a considerable effort, I leapt over the fence, and flung myself inward into the yard.

One of the shutters on the house was not shut and tied down, and I could see Vov'keh's family seated about the feast table, with a guest beside them in the uniform of a Byelorussian policeman. It was later explained to me later that this was the homeowner's brother-in-law. I hid in the woodshed that was adjacent to the house, and waited for the guest to depart. In the meantime, I heard the sound of running between the houses, shouting and shooting. Vov'keh's brother-in-law came out on the run, circulated around the yard,, and got of a few pistol shots. When everything quieted down, and the policeman turned to go to his own nearby house, I peered warily through the transom. Vov'keh came out and stood struck dumb, as if he had seen some sort of spirit from another world. I was shivering from the cold, and only with difficulty could I get any sound out of my mouth. He and his wife took me down into the cellar of the house, and brought me a bit of food. I explained to him that I wanted to get in touch with a relative of mine, Ben-Zion Fodoroysky, who had

hidden himself in the cellar of his family's house, and with the help of his assistant Liza, from past years, this cellar was dug out under the floor of the bedroom of the house. A German officer was billeted in the house itself. When the officer would depart from the house, Ben-Zion would come out and get a bit of fresh air. I wanted Ben-Zion to come to us in the forest, seeing that he was a pharmacist, and his skill could be of considerable use to the partisans. I also wanted Liza to look after provisioning medicines, and also get her hands on newspapers and current German bulletins , that would serve as sources of intelligence. Towards the end of the day, Vov'keh returned from his mission with a negative reply in hand. Ben-Zion stubbornly insisted on remaining in his hideout inside the city. He was deathly afraid of the 'Reds.' The reason for this was, that in the civil war in 1919, during the Bolshevik Revolution, he was a medic in the army of Danikin with the 'Whites,' and suspected that if this was revealed, this will not count to his benefit. I was saddened by his refusal, and accordingly returned empty-handed, except for a number of packs of German cigarettes, and flints with which to light them. My relative was not destined to remain alive. During the German retreat, he went over to the village beside Milobidy, to the home a farmer known to him. At night, he lodged in the farmer's house, and during the day, he hid himself among the piles of hay near the house. Byelorussian police, that were fleeing the onrushing Red Army, detected his presence in the byways of the pasture, and shot him. He is buried in a plot on that farmer's family land.

On my way back on that same winter day, I got the idea of trying out the weapon that I was carrying, to see whether or not it would still be working when I needed it. Before my eyes, was a picture of oncoming Germans, and I pulled the trigger, and all I heard was a faint click. The cartridge failed to go off. the same thing happened to the rest of the cartridges in my bag. I took the grenade in hand, pulled the pin, and threw it. I heard the report of it falling, but the grenade did not explode. In any event, I had a Polish rifle bayonet in my side pocket, but I was not going to depend on it, if I came in contact with the Germans.

An important way station for the Jewish partisans, on their way to Baranovich, was a natural swamp, an area of about 2 sq. km. Surrounded by pasture grounds, belonging to the villager of Wilejka Luki, Malaya Luki, and to a group of farmers in their midst. We called it '*Die Blot'keh*'(A swamp). The Greiber family and the family of Rachel (Litvak) and Chaya Rabinovich, that were related, found a hiding place their. About a half km. from the hut of the Greiber family, was the hideout of Shmuel Yankelewicz, the last President of the *Judenrat* in the Baranovich ghetto.

'The Guest House' of the Grabber family, was a hut made of branches and green shoots, with a network of branches on the swamp. It was of great utility to us, and out contact in Baranovich, Ede Chacza, would come to meet us there, bringing us important news from an intelligence point of view, and occasionally provisions, such as cigarettes, medicines, and even vodka. Chacza also concerned himself with providing for the needs of Shmuel Yankelewicz.

In the fall of 1943, several partisans from the various groups, met at the '*Blot'keh*,' among them Yitzhak Medresh and myself. The two of us were on a mission to obtain news from the city. We needed to stock up on provisions for the trip. Yitzhak Medresh, and two others, left in the night to bring back food from the village of Baranovich (there was a village nearby with this same name). I did not join them, because I had to await the arrival of Ede Chacza. They loaded up a wagon with all manner of goods, and returned to us. Before dawn, a rain fell, and the ruts left by the wagon showed very clearly where the wagon had been unloaded, at the edge of the swamp. The farmers, who had been 'robbed' apparently had alerted the Germans, who came and took up a station in the middle of the village, and these troops reached the trail of the wagon with no difficulty. The group was still spread out on the grass, around the blanket, on which the food lay, with the bottle of vodka in the middle, preparing to have an early breakfast, when they were attacked by

surprise heavy gunfire, from automatic weapons. The confused diners scattered in all directions, but this laxity, that caused the partisans to lower their guard, cost the life of Zvi Plotnik ,a youth from the city of Hancevičy, the husband of Rosa Narkowsky ה"יד. We buried him where he fell, at the edge of the swamp.

This period, which began with my escape from the ghetto in September 1942, and my joining the ranks of the partisans, until the liberation of the region by the Red Army in June 1944, a sum total of 22 month, entered my record as a victory, because I was immersed in it day and night, as if these were the entirety of my life, as if it had been written in the Passover *Haggadah*.

I have already noted that the beginning in 'Group 112' was difficult because of the conditions. It was a very cold winter, and we were harried by the Germans. There was loss of life, and an unending string of moving around. Daily life, or nighttime activities reflected the activity of constantly trying to procure food, at times, in circumstances of great danger, in standing watch in a rigorous fashion, in cutting of firewood for heating and for the kitchen.

The responsibility of standing guard was most onerous of all. You stand for hours, at a distance from the camp, focused on the noises coming out of the wet, or frozen, forest. You look at the moon peeking though the clouds, and no doubt think at those moments about those people located in areas where they do not know war. You wait impatiently for your relief to arrive, quietly giving the password, and then you will be able to tread quickly off to the *balagan* [10], to sink into sleep beside the campfire that is within, until they will awake you for your next turn to stand guard. I always dreamt, that were I to stay alive, and that life would return to its former state, I will arranged for a fireplace in the living room, cut into the floor, and I will snuggle up to it in woolen sheepskins. I dreamt that I would be able to sleep the night without weapons in hand, and not feel the lice, who are awakened by the warmth of the fire, to do their dastardly work.

Conditions changed when 'Group 112' was transformed into the Molotov Brigade. The control of the partisans in this 'no man's land' continued to strengthen. Even the internal configuration of the brigade became more rational with emphasis on military discipline. there was no more Sash'keh, Anya, or Serozh'eh, but rather 'Comrade Unit Commander,' 'Division,' Battalion,' or 'Comrade Brigade Commander,' etc. It became routine to stand to attention with the entrance of a [senior] officer into a tent, or a residential bunker, from morning meals, to order drills, demonstrations of proficiency with all those weapons, that were in the possession of the partisans, and available to all soldiers.

The ambit of our activity spread to well-recognized distant locations. For purposes of sabotage, and derailing trains, we would go the entire length of the railroad tracks, from the station at Baranovich , to Ivacevičy, Kartuz-Bereza, all the way to Kobrin, in the direction of Brest-Litovsk. We also were active along the Baranovich-Luniniec line.

For a period of time, we engaged in action against the Byelorussian police and the German gendarmerie

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[10] Author's footnote: '*Balagan*' in the parlance of the partisans – a tent in the form of a hut, whose frame was made from straight young pine trees, whose branches had been trimmed, with only residual projections sticking out. It was covered in layers of grass from top to bottom, so that each level served as a shield to the one beneath it, and the configuration prevented rain water from penetrating inside. The topmost part of the frame was left open, and served as a sort of smokestack for the fireplace inside. On the floor of the square tent – there was an enclosure of four thick wooden boards (about a meter square)in order to keep the fire from catching onto the straw mat that surrounded the fireplace, and it was on this that one slept.

beside Ivacevičy, Telekhany, Raczki, Swiataya-Wola, and the villages of Zhitlin, Adutiškis[11], Olosowcy, and Peski. For purposes of acquiring foodstuffs, we would go into south to more distant villages, already into the area of Wolhynia, Obrowa, and Wolka Obrowska. In those mentioned villages, it was possible to get fruit, pigs, flour, salt, and even changes of clothing, because these locations had surpluses even before the war, and partisans would get to those locations less frequently. The territory was not guarded, and therefore dangerous. However, units that had military firepower were able to permit themselves free movement in that locale, being able to eat, drink, and also to take produce back, to the camp.

The Hunt

Among the events that remains especially etched into my memory, was the great hunt conducted against the partisans, that the Germans organized in the last days of the fall of 1943. We has a more-or-less permanent camp near Ivacevičy, with heated bunkers dug into the ground, a pharmacy, a bath with a sauna, a stable for horses, and food storage facilities. I was already among the scouts, and our intelligence had detected that there was army movement that was out of the ordinary in the Baranovich-Ivacevičy area, both on the trains, and the traffic on the Brest-Moscow road. The Germans had completed a plan to uproot the partisan holds, in order to remove the threat of the disruption of communication, that caused heavy damage to the order of German weapons logistics, and the movement of trains, that were supplying ammunition and supplies to the front, and those that returned tens of thousands of wounded to the rear, in total disarray.

Approximately 2 divisions of S. S. troops were taken out of the front, in addition to brigades of Hungarian cavalry. In order to strengthen the ranks, were the able-bodied members of the forces in the rear echelons of the area. All these forces were deployed against the partisans in our vicinity.

Our camp was already in a state of readiness, although it was not our intent to pro-actively engage the enemy, because of our inferior circumstances. We mined all of the bunkers, food storage facilities, and all the surrounding roads. The partisans hid themselves at the roads that provided for retreat, and I was sent to the ?? point, beside a water channel about a kilometer from the camp, on the side of the road leading to Ljahavičy. I drew close, riding on my horse, about 150 meters from the channel, tied him to a bush. And began to move in the underbrush, to the other side of the channel. When I began to get up to the bank of the channel, I was greeted by mortar and automatic weapons fire. The bullets literally shaved off the blades of grass around me, and they kicked up clods of the swampy ground, that hit me in the face, as I lay concealed. I fell back to my horse, and galloped back to the abandoned camp. My hat got caught in the branch of a tree, and in this manner, I continued to ride bareheaded.

In the camp, a scout was waiting for me, with orders to remain in the rear, to report the place where the brigade had moved, to the command, and to monitor developments in the area. In the middle of our abandoned camp, there was a family camp of villagers, who among them had members among the partisans, or that were themselves members of the community party during the Soviet occupation. There were elderly, women and children among them, and there were a number of cows in the camp, horses, and chickens. The family camp also looked after provisioning vodka (Smarhon) made from grain or potatoes, that would be provided by the enlisted resident members of the families. With our retreat, this camp too, was abandoned, however a live inventory was left behind, and it was up to me to care for the horses (most of them having been brought from faraway villages), so that they not act up, and thereby reveal the location of the camp. I tied the reins of each of them up at a suitably high level, in order that their necks be oriented upwards – this

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[11] Lithuanian, also called Haydutsishok, or Hoduciszki

was a situation guaranteed to help preserve the silence. It was sad that we had to spill out the vodka that was in the pipe stills. We drank to our fill, with two of the residents of the camp that had remained behind in the redoubt. We wrung the necks of the chickens, and tossed them into pails of boiling water. This was the first time in my life I had wrung the neck of a chicken, but as we have previously said, 'necessity is the mother of invention.'

Now the really difficult period of my mission, in this area, began. Waves of unending gunfire began to be heard all around, and it sounded like a rolling thunder, rising and falling with each shift in the wind. The Germans combed the area row by row, as far as the eye could see, covering all tracts of the forest in which the camp was to be found, and after that, they dug emplacements for heavy mortar, along the entire length of the joining road that led to the burned out villages in the vicinity. the emplacements were manned by Hungarians who maintained an uninterrupted bombardment of fire, day and night. To permit me to retreat, I needed to reach a point by way of a swamp, frozen in its center, covered with a layer of ice and snow, at a distance of about 5 km. I left my horse behind in the family camp that I mentioned previously. At that time, I was also suffering form a plethora of carbuncles on my body (as a result of the cold, sweat, and also a lack of vitamins). And the wounds around my waist were especially painful to me, because it was against them that the belt holding grenades pressed. And so, in this fashion, I made my way across the ice, feeling the pus oozing from the cuts in my wounds, until I reached the forest. I gave a report to the appropriate parties, and it was only then that I noticed that I was burning up with fever. I got a bit of vodka, rested for a couple of hours, and returned the same way I came, with an elevated temperature, to enemy territory.

The Operation to Move the Wounded

With the end of the 'blockade' (the siege) described above, the brigade rose up again – now as a brigade, bearing the name of Dzerzhinsky, that was to be counted along with a Brigade called Kalinin, and a brigade named Kautsky – in a new location, close to Telekhany. The command of the Byelorussian partisan movement issued an order to get all of the wounded ready for evacuation to be concentrated at a certain point, from which they will be flown to Moscow, away from the front. Our brigade provided about 30 people for this purpose, who were especially selected for this, and I was nominated among them. We traveled for a few days, also during daylight hours, in an intermittent fashion, out of concern for the well being of the wounded. It was a gigantic echelon, consisting of tend of wagons, and also the logistics unit. We reached a village called Sibrin, in the vicinity of a lake called Белое озеро(the White Lake). It was an overlooked village by the side of the road. About a kilometer before it, there was a hillock that was not high ,and the villagers had designated that spot as a burial place for itinerant Jewish families, that had lived in the village, but were then liquidated by the Germans.

The goal was to prepare a temporary field for purposes of flying out the wounded. Immediately, a temporary hospital was organized in one of the houses, for purposes of caring for the wounded. Many of the wounded died in front of our eyes, because of a lack of both means and medicines or for lack of adequate medical attention.

It was necessary to smooth out the frozen ground for purposes of permitting the aircraft to reach us. A snow fell, and we drafted the local farmers to do snow removal, to wet it down with water, in order to facilitate the creation of a runway, that was lit for its length by skinny torches. With the completion of the work, planes began to arrive at night from Moscow. These were two-engine Lockheed Electras, whose pilots were jovial young men. They looked to us like creatures from some other world. they were happy to load up the wounded, and also take a number of sheep, as well as vodka, to hungering Moscow, and then to depart.

During the time we were in this village, we learned about the siege of Stalingrad, and the defeat of von Paulus' army there. By chance, I ran into one of the nurses there, who had escorted the wounded from the '*Sovietskaya Byelorussia*' Brigade, and in our conversation, I discovered that she works with Dr. Leon Berkowicz – from our city, and a friend of mine – about whom I had not heard from the time that I secretly left the ghetto. I was very happy, and took advantage of the opportunity to convey my warmest and best regards to him, through her, and an indication that one of the other members of the ghetto that had been condemned to death, was still alive.

Our Thrust to Kobrin

Our stay at the village stretched out. During the several months, we had the opportunity to go out from time to time, to conduct provisioning operations. In most of these instances, we worked together with other escorting units, in order to increase our force, and to limit the potential danger in the event that we should encounter Germans, or the Bandera Ukrainians[12], that were accomplices to the Germans (because of their uniforms, they were called 'The Greens'). This area was also rife with the *Armia Krajowa*, who fought the Germans, and as you can imagine, the Russians and also the Jews.

Towards the end of the winter, in March 1944, all of the partisans concentrated in the Sveržan area, with the support of local partisan forces, took aim at Kobrin. On the way there, we conducted pitched battles with the Ukrainians, and also with the Poles, who we were able to repulse with our superior forces, without any losses to our side. We were able to capture Kobrin in one day. Here we are, walking on the city roads, most covered in boards (much like Baranovich in the twenties), in broad daylight. We are searching house to house, to see if there are police hiding there, and doing what we will there. We received permission to take clothing and boots, but only if it was a matter of survival. For a period of time, I was wearing a pair of 'Lavti,' made from the bark of an almond tree, and the homespun flaxen linen of a peasant. The 'Lavti' are tied to the leg by flaxen shoestrings, that are cross-tied, just like the peasants on the estate of Lev Tolstoy in Я́сная Поля́на[13]. I did succeed in organizing a pair of boots for myself, in my size, and these served me practically to the end of the war. With sacks full of goods, as was permitted, and only those clothes that were absolutely necessary, we returned to our marshaling point – the church square, in the center of the city. With the end of this operation, we were surprised to hear the screams of a young woman, coming from one of the houses. Her house had been plundered and some of her possessions taken. It later became clear, that one of the partisans from a local brigade, a young man of about 17, had taken a pretty kerchief from the house, wanting to bring it to his friend in the forest, and the young woman ran after him, shouting that he should be stopped.

To the misfortune of the young fellow, his officers were in the vicinity, and he was ordered seized, and tried for the abuse, to make an example of him. The sentence was handed down swiftly, and the judge ruled – that he should be take out and executed by rifle fire, in front of the brigade. It was a lovely sunny day, with

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12 The troops of Stepan Bandera (1909 - 1959), a Ukrainian leader whose loyalties during the Second World War were ambiguous.

13 Yasnaya Polyana (literally "Clear Glade")was the home of the writer Leo Tolstoy, where he was born, wrote *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, and is buried. Tolstoy called Yasnaya Polyana his "inaccessible literary stronghold". It is located 12 kilometers (7.5 mi) southwest of Tula, Russia and 200 kilometers (120 mi) from Moscow.

everything green all around, and everyone was happy with the successful operation, even if this blond young man paid with his life for the kerchief, and was shot, opposite the cross with the crucified Jesus, that stood on the square.

In the middle of the winter of 1944, matters began to move with greater momentum. The Red Army began to roll up victories, and the German war machine continued to be broken up. We began to receive weapons and ammunition, and also some items of clothing (shirts, waterproof boots made of leather) That were parachuted in. We moved over to more modern automatic weapons (I received a P. P. Sh. in place of the P. P. that I had), and we received rifles to be used against tanks. For a while, I was responsible for such a 'cannon,' and I even tried it out on a train locomotive in motion (the name of the rifle was P. T. R. -- Противотанкове ружьё (A rifle with anti-armor capabilities).

The Train Sabotage Operation, the Night of the Rails[14]

In honor of May 1, 19944, all of the partisan brigades went out covering the entire length of the Brest-Moscow railroad, that was in the area under German control. For this simultaneous sabotage of the rails, each partisan stood about 23 meters from his nearest neighbor. He had received a small charge of explosive with a fuse, which had enough force to destroy a piece of track and take it completely out of service. The operation was well planned. As a prelude, a hail of fire was rained down on the troops guarding the rail line, and the searchlights used to illuminate the track at night, were destroyed. All the approaches to the rail line were inspected for possible mines, and when the operation commenced, the night suddenly was transformed into a festival of fire sparks jumping out of an oven. Suddenly, the approach to the rail line was open – which in the past had always been so dangerous, when we would sneak up on it, to lay a charge under it. It was open, and there was no movement. the operation was crowned with complete success. All train traffic was interrupted completely for a period of time, As was the case with many operations of this kind, there was a large number of wounded from mines underfoot, that the Germans had buried on the roads leading to the rails, and we were not able to uncover them all.

After 'The Night of the Rails' the winds of liberty began to blow with added vigor. We were witnesses to the advent of a festive movement among the partisan forces, even those who had, in their time transformed

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[14] On the eve of June 20, 1944, the partisans carried out a mass attack on all the key lines of rail communication, blowing up more than 40,000 rails. As a result, traffic was completely stopped in many sectors, including the Orsha-Borisov, Orsha-Mogilev, Molodechno-Polotsk, Molodechno-Lida, Baranovichi-Aspovičy, Baranovichi-Minsk, and Baranovichi-Luninets sectors. The enemy was never able to restore some of these sectors. During the offensive the partisans continued to strike at lines of communication. In three days alone (June 26—28) they blew up 147 military trains.

The partisans prevented the enemy from making an organized withdrawal by holding important lines and roads, thereby forcing enemy units to leave the roads, abandon combat matériel, and withdraw through the woods in small groups, suffering heavy losses. Byelorussian partisans liberated and held a number of populated areas, including Vidzy, Ostrovets, Svir', Ilia, Starobin, Uzda, Kapyl', and Karelicy. With the approach of tank units, they operated as tank-borne parties and took part in the liberation of Minsk, Slutsk, Borisov, Cherven'', Dokshitsy, Mogilev, Osipovichi, Klichev, Pinsk, Luninets, and other cities. The partisans helped Soviet troops to eliminate encircled enemy groupings, cover the flanks and rear of the units, and mop up remnants of defeated enemy units in the liberated regions. During the Byelorussian Operation the partisans killed more than 15,000 enemy soldiers and officers and captured more than 17,000.

themselves into a unit, like the force of General Kapusta[15], who returned from a trip covered in victory, from the Carpathian Mountains, and conducted vigorous battles with the support of light tanks, cannon, and armor, against organized German forces. It was an inspiring thing to see the partisans under his command, armed with the best of weaponry, both Soviet and German, that had been taken as spoils of war, and the noble looking steeds that were taken from the Hungarian cavalry, along with saddles of expensive leather, stitched by skilled craftsmen, the brand new boots of the Hungarian infantry, and the spoils from the Magyars, Hungarians, Germans and Italians, etc., the heart leapt with joy, and was even slightly irregular – out of envy.

The day of leaving the forest drew nigh. Our brigade decamped in the town of Kosovo as a temporary armed force. We had to man the '*Kommendatura*' (The military administration) of the town, to place guards around the municipal buildings and man patrols. Together with this, we had to thoroughly inspect all of the residents of the town, and to look for Nazi collaborators. I remained in Kosovo for about a week. It was in my mind to immediately join up with the [sic: regular] army, and to continue in the war before it ended. I felt a terrible sense of loneliness, after my sister and brothers were killed in the ghetto, and I had no idea about the fate of my father and my sister Mir'eh, who, on the eve of the outbreak of the war, in June 1941, had traveled off to Pinsk for a few days. It was my friend Yaakov Malakhowsky ל"ז, who advised me of this. It was with a heavy heart that I gave up my personal weapon (a P. P. Sh. sub-machine gun) with the receipt of the liberation from the nearby Germans, and I ascended the platform of a freight train, headed in the direction of Baranovich. The rail line did not yet reach our city, because part of it was still in a state of disrepair. For the entire length of the journey, I saw the rail lines destroyed, with the ties uprooted and torn apart. The Germans sabotaged them during their retreat. For the entire length of this wrecked line, along the ways, there were bloated bodies of dead German soldiers. It was in this way that I reached Sanya, and from their in an army truck that was summoned, I got to Baranovich. My first direction was to the barber's house, Vov'keh, about whom I have already written before this. I was welcomed with open arms. they gave me food, an opportunity to bathe, and gave me a clean bed to sleep on. I slept for more than two days.

When I finally got up, I wanted to start again from the point when I was compelled to leave, upon arising to the sound of the birds awakening me on the early morning of June 22, 1941, to begin life anew.

Let me say a few warm words about my friend – my rescuer: Edek Chacza.

After a number of years went by, Edward was invited by those he rescued, partisans of the bygone era, to visit Israel. They spoke affectionately of his work, and heaped a surfeit of love on him, as well as expressions of gratitude. As understood, they underwrote his trip. He received the award of 'Righteous Among the Nations' at Yad VaShem in Jerusalem. He was invited to observe the march of the IDF in the Independence Day parade. As he sat in the reviewing stand, reserved for honored guests, he saw a marching division of young women. He burst into tears and said: 'ow many young Jewish girls, young and beautiful like these, did I see, marching off to their death.'

The Organization of Émigrés from Baranovich in Israel maintained a strong and intimate tie with him and his family, offering him support in the form of food packages and medicines, when his wife fell ill. The writer of these lines continued to remain in contact with him via letter correspondence, when Chacza fell ill with throat cancer, and until he succumbed to it. He left behind a daughter and a wife.

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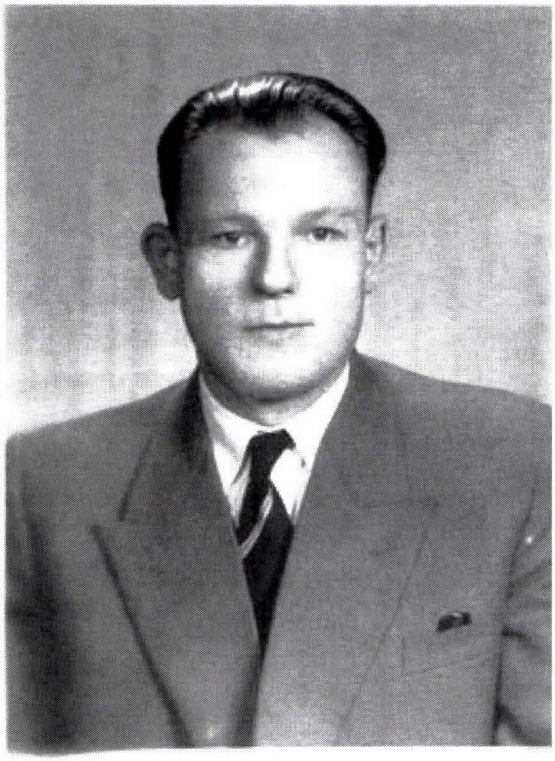
[15] Major General Filipp Filippovich Kapusta, (1907 - 1973). Commanding Officer of the Slutsko Partisan Zone, and Chief of Staff of the Bialystok Partisan Zone.

The address of his family is Wlobzyk, Ulica Pocztowa 5/11, Poland. The date of the passing of Edward Chacza, Righteous Among the Nations is 6.10.1980.

Edward Chacza – Poland

By Kh. S.

Copied from *Yad VaShem*, in Jerusalem



חצ'יה אדורד

1942/13-ח

Edward Chacza, the Polish teacher, rescued Jews when the '*Aktionen*' began in the Polish city of Baranovich. He would transport the Jews, one at a time, or in groups, from the ghetto, through the swamps to the forest, to places where there were partisans. He personally led 150 people out himself, and an additional 150 with the help of an 'organization,' that was composed of two or three of his Christian friends.

From the first 'aktion in Baranovich, in the year 1941, until his arrest in 1944, put his own life in danger, as well as the lives of his own family members, first as someone who would save lives, and later on, by doing much more, after there was no one left to save, acting as a liaison between groups of partisans, in which those whom he had rescued, fought. His home was the first refuge station, for those fleeing from the sword, in which he fed them, and gave them drink. In his home he bandaged up the wounded, and gave refuge to anyone seeking it.

He was arrested twice. After the first time, he was released, and the second time, he was held prisoner until the end of the war. During his second imprisonment, he was beaten for days on end.

The Stories of a Partisan

By Noah Roitman

Experiences Lived Through in the Forest

From the first day of the German conquest, I wanted to flee from the ghetto. This came after I had gotten slapped in the face by a *Gestapo* officer who had ordered me to clean out latrines. After this, having reached the home of my parents, on the run, I let them know that I could not continue to remain here, 'with the Germans.' My mother began to cry, and said that she felt that she will never again see me alive, if I were to leave. Out of respect for my parents, I stayed. I began to work in the military camp of the Germans, *Feldzug B*, in inventorying arms. I looked after procuring food for my family, that being the little I was able to get, in those instances when I was outside the ghetto. However, the idea of escaping from the ghetto never left me. Along with a number of my comrades, we decided to dig a tunnel under our house, on the Orla Street (The Eagle Street), which will connect to a sewer drain that leads outside of the city, and could be used by us in a time of distress.

In the meantime, my family was on the receiving end of the first of the Nazi predations. My oldest brother, Mordechai was taken out to be killed with the group of 72 Jews. After this, the time of the first '*Aktion*' arrived, what was termed the 'First Slaughter.' The remainder of my family was murdered then, my parents, Esther and Yaakov, my sisters Rachel and Deborah, and my little brother Moshe'leh, as well as many of my uncles and their children.

Immediately after the aktion, several groups of young people organized themselves to engage in underground activities. I was a leader of '*HaShomer HaDati*' and 17 years old. Most of my comrades in the underground groups were in the age group of 17 - 25. Most of them were members of youth movements from all sides of the spectrum of opinion on the Jewish street.

The core of our activity at that time was to smuggle arms into the ghetto, and become proficient in their use. Together with these substantive actions, discussions were initiated concerning the timing and means of how we would act. Our concern for the residents of the ghetto, the inform and the children, dampened our will to open up an armed conflict in the ghetto itself. We, the young people, were ready to do anything, even if it mean certain annihilation by superior forces to which we were unequal. Especially, we were prepared to fight for our honor, that had been trampled underfoot, and to exact vengeance for the spilled blood of our parents and brethren.

Between the first *aktion* and the second *aktion*, was a period of about a half year. We were able to smuggle in a significant amount of arms into the midst of the ghetto, however, it was decided not to put it to use. However, at the moment that we would find out that an 'aktion,' had been initiated, then our consciences would be clear – we would not have acted impetuously, and we would not have placed the lives of the ghetto residents in danger prematurely.

But the day after Yom Kippur of 1942 arrived. the Germans began to assemble people to go out to work, as it were, in accordance with their routine, and I was led out under deceptively false pretenses. In a short time, our liaison reached me, this being Khil'keh Borishansky, with the bad news on her lips, 'this is an '*aktion*,' and not an exit process for going to work.' We were on the roof of the hospital, with two young men, the young doctor, Avra'sheh Abramowicz, and Moma Kapilowicz, a leader in '*HaShomer HaTza'ir*.' There were

many other young people: Leib'l Zeitlin, Hillel Schneidler, Khil'keh Borishansky, and others, whose names I cannot recall. We had a machine gun, and a sawed off rifle (we had modified the wooden rifle parts in order to make transfer into the ghetto easier). We waited for the signal to begin the uprising. For reasons that were not clear to me, the signal was not given, and the *aktion* continued in full force...

At night, along with other of our comrades, we went over into the other part of the ghetto, to the house of my family. We had decided to leave the ghetto. Only 7-8 people were in this group – a small group from out of many candidates. [We did this] in order to ease our movement through the various stretches of field and forest, before we will be able to reach the partisans, whose exact location and nature were not known to us.

On that same night, we waited until three in the morning. among those leaving, was Munya Latto, Yaakov Geller (a resident of Kleck, who reached our ghetto when the Kleck ghetto was liquidated), myself, and several others. We had three rifles, a number of pistols, and about 12 hand grenades. Most of the arms had remained in the other part of the ghetto. We drew close to the ghetto fence. On the other side of the fence, stood a Byelorussian policeman. My comrades hid themselves, and I approached him. I told him, that in the sealed off part of the ghetto, in the house of my family, there is gold hidden. If he will permit me to exit, I will bring him the gold. As we were in the middle of this conversation, my comrades fell upon him, there being among them, some who had received military training. They tied him up, and threw him into an empty house on the other side of the fence. We did not kill him. We shut the barbed wire gate, and with an effort, on the run, we got as far as the Polish cemetery. Our thought was that, it will not occur to the German to look for Jews there, and indeed that was the case.

In the meantime, dawn was breaking. Until nightfall, we hid ourselves in the cemetery, and at evening, we continued our trek towards the forests. We were set to go in the direction of Grabowiec, and from there, to the villages of Zalużża, and Svicjaz', in the forests of Kryvošyn, a walk of about a day or two. However, we lost our way in the forest, and we blundered about for ten days. We moved only at night, and hid during the daytime. We ate anything we could get our hands on: vegetables from the field, we drank the water of the swamps, until we reached the outskirts of the village of Snoy. The villagers took kindly to us, showing us how to reach the center of what we were looking for, and how to get around the watch posts and ambuscades of the police.

The First Period in the Forest

Finally, after a considerable amount of wandering, to our great joy, we reached the village of Zalużża, in a nearby forest. We ran into a group of comrades from our city. there were two groups of fugitives from the ghetto that had gotten there before us, totaling about twenty people. However, many that escaped from the ghetto, didn't reach the forests, because they fell at the hand of bandits. In that same forest, there was a band of Russian partisans, under the leadership of Zhurkin, and called '*Zhurkintzim.*' These were soldiers of the Red Army that were uprooted from behind the lines. They numbered about 40 men, and were well-armed. They were virulently anti-Semitic, who robbed and plundered the Jews that happened to come their way, and there were those who, apparently, murdered Dr. Avra'sheh Abramowsky, who had left well-provisioned with medical gear, for purposes of joining the partisans, and to serve them as a doctor. However, he went alone through the forest roads, and the bloodlust, and greed for spoils of those he encountered, overcame their sense of his utility to them, in his capacity as a physician.

At the beginning, the people of Zhurkin received the first two refugees from the ghetto, this being Zalmanowicz and Zeitlin, in a gracious manner. Their leader saw before him two young and strong lads,

armed with weapons and all its appurtenances. They thought that every young Jew, coming out of the ghetto, would be armed this way. However, when tens of Jews began to arrive, among them women, and the more mature (between the ages of 40 - 50), without any arms, they did not hide their displeasure. They did not accept them into their enclosure, and told them to organize a separate camp for themselves. They even took away the little bit of weaponry that they did have, and in place of that, gave them aged armaments, including rifles that didn't fire, and grenades that didn't explode. Zalmanowicz remained as the liaison between us and the people of Zhurkin.

We organized ourselves into a civilian camp, according to family. The womenfolk cooked and did the laundry(they used a form of burned wood black coal as soap), and also participated in guarding the camp on a steady twenty-four hour cycle. Food was in limited quantities, and we quickly began to suffer from the attack of lice. As a cover, we used trenches that we dug into the earth, covered with tree branches.

Getting People Out of the Ghetto

During that same initial period in the forest, I went out several times to the ghetto in order to extract comrades from there. The first time, I went with Sevek Ravicz. We entered with the ranks of the Jews who were returning from work. Sevek went to his friends, and I came to my uncle, Yekhiel Roitman. I proposed taking him to the forest, but he refused, saying: 'They killed my wife and children, and I have no more taste for living.' There were many like him.

Despite this, there were many young people who wanted to get out. In that same initial period, among those I extracted into the forest was my fried Rozh'keh, my future wife. Rozh'keh was a refugee from southern Galicia, whose entire family was liquidated in the Kharkov ghetto. I settled with an additional ten people that after work, they are not to return to the ghetto, but should rather make their way to the Polish cemetery, and there, wait for me. And indeed, when I got there in the night hours, they emerged from their hiding places when I gave them the pre-arranged whistle signal, and we went to Chacza's house, the Pole who helped the Jews to reach the partisans. The following night, we continued onward to one of the villages. there, we hit in a grove of trees behind the house of one of the farmers, who helped us.

In the evening, we continued on to the village of Zalużża. As it happens, there was no one there particularly pleased with our 'visit.' They were under the influence of the people of Zhurkin, that complained that too many Jew were getting to the forest, and taking food that belonged to the poorer villagers.

As understood, there were other people working to get additional people out of the ghetto, among them Yitzhak Medresh, who came a number of times from the forests of Polesia. There, he was with a camp of Russian paratroopers.

The last time that I went to take out people from the ghetto, I did not know in how many hours the Third '*Aktion*' would commence. to my sorrow, I was not able to take very many, but only a small group of people, among which were the girls Ethel Wilensky (Wineirnik) and Baylah Trobowitz. In the middle of the ghetto, I saw many Byelorussian policemen moving about, and the matter did not find favor in my eyes to say the least.

We continued speedily towards the gate. Along the way, we say the frail Moshe Bezalel, a well-known person among students, the owner of a used book store (*Antikwahreit*). He was a *Hasid* from the Slonim *Hasidim*. He was clutching a Torah scroll in a hug, to his breast, and surrounding him stood policemen. They kicked

him, and struck him with their bayonets, and mocked him. What could we do, against tens of policemen? We continued along our way. When we approached the ghetto gate, I hugged the two girls close to me, as if we were going out for a leisurely stroll. No one stopped us, and no one asked us for our credentials. We continued on to the Polish cemetery. There, additional people were waiting for us, and from there, we continued on, in the usual direction, to our camp in the forest. It was only afterwards that we learned that on that very same day, in fact, shortly after we had left, the last aktion began. As it turned out, this was the [sic: final] liquidation of the ghetto.

Single individuals, and groups, continued to reach the forest. The group of Chaim Becker reached us, of Lidowsky. together, we were about 50 people. We had two machine guns, 30 rifles, and hand grenades. During that same initial period, our activity was centered on survival – obtaining food and standing guard.

From the Life of the Partisans

The missions of the partisans were not yet organized. Groups wandered about here and there, with little in the way of weaponry. We went out to the villages to ask for food, or to take it by force. We always went in bad weather, at the end of a rain, or snows, in general, in groups of four or five of us. Among those who went were Abraham Szifris, Sioma Berkowicz, and Yaakov Geller. They had friends in the villages, who would get together provisions for us. There were instances when we had to take food with force and the use of violence.

There was an instance when we had gotten together 100 kg of salt, out of the expense and scarcity. We divided up the salt in our separate carrying bags, and a farmer's wife prepared a meal for us. Suddenly, one of our comrades looked out the window and shouted: 'Germans.' We broke the window, opened fire towards the Germans, and fled. We did not forget the salt, and took it with us...

Despite the fact that there were not yet organized partisan missions, I sought opportunities, and volunteered for all missions. As it happens, I was not the only one, there were always many volunteers among us, for all manner of missions.

The last words of my father reverberated in my ears, as the Germans took him out of the bunker during the First '*Aktion.*' He said: 'If one of my sons remains alive, let him not forget what they did to us.' Of his five children, only I survived. This drove me, and gave me courage during my entire service in the partisan movement, and the war that ensued afterwards.

I found it easy to get around the various paths through the fields and forests. I had spent time in these environs from the time of my earliest childhood. My father, Yaakov Roitman ז"ל was a contractor for providing milk and dairy products in the estates of the 'nobility.' These were the Polish and Russian nobles in our area. He would prove milk and its derivative products such as cheese, etc., to the residents of the city. My oldest brother, Mordechai ז"ל, and myself, would help him during our vacation time, in providing oversight for the proper sanitation of the dairy equipment. We also did inspections when the cows were being milked. We made certain that the women washed their hand and the pails. I was familiar with the argot of the villagers, and privy to their thinking. I enjoyed going out with my brother on sleds, or on horses, to the outskirts of the city for a ride.

When I reached the forest, and I was a partisan, I had connections in the villages that bordered on the forest. I knew how to obtain daily intelligence about the Byelorussian police, the Lithuanians, and Germans, where they were billeted, and were they were setting up ambushes.

Once again, I set out for Baranovich to acquire weaponry, and to get people out. We established contact with those Jews who worked in sanitation, and in caring for horses at the S. D. Among them were Noah Mandel and Sevek Bulszinsky. We made up with them, that they should prepare ways for us to get in, and that we would take all the weapons and horses, and get way with them, together with all the Jews that worked there.

We set out to achieve this objective with a well-organized group, consisting of about seven of our comrades, among them, David Winter, Moshe Topf, and the Wolochwiansky brothers. We reached Chacza's house, and awaited the young men from the S. D., but only two of them reached us, saying that it would not be possible to carry out the plan. The sum total of what they brought us was two rifles.

We would gather rifles and pistols one at a time. One time, we killed a German in the home of a farmer, and took his arms and uniform. Once we took rifles from two Byelorussian policemen, who shot into the air during a wedding that took place in a village.

One day, about two months after we had reached the forest, we learned that the Germans were planning a sizeable campaign against the partisans in 'our neck of the woods.' After some clarification, we agreed with the people in Zhurkin, that we will jointly set up an ambush for the Germans. We will be on one side of the road, with them on the other side, and we will catch the Germans in a crossfire. The Germans arrived, but the people from Zhurkin left us alone, against the attacking Germans. they literally picked up and left. We opened up with heavy fire in the direction of the Germans, until Moma Kapilowicz, our leader yet from the ghetto period was hit in the head by a bullet. Despite the fact that he was wounded, he managed to get off more fire, and killed one of the enemy soldiers, a Latvian, as indicated by his uniform. After this, we retreated into the forest. The Germans left as well. An hour later, we returned, and retrieved Moma's body. He was the only one who fell in that battle. We brought him back to the cemetery based at the camp, and we took our leave from our commander with the recitation of the '*Kaddish.*' We were in a bad state of mind, especially because of the loss of a comrade, but also because of the betrayal we had suffered by the people of Zhurkin.

On one night, we went out on a mission in a large group, the Lipnik brothers, Moshe Topf, David Winter, Tuvia Cyrynsky, Fin'keh Jasinowsky, Monik Dobkowsky, and others. We traveled on sleds. In one of our villages, they told us that five German policemen are scheduled to pass through there. We set an ambush for them on two sides of the road. We wanted to capture them alive, but we did not succeed in this respect, because they did not move together as a unit. We shot at them one at a time. Three were killed, and two managed to get away in the darkness of the night. In the midst of this action, a random shot came out of a solitary hut in the forest, and struck Tuvia Cyrynsky, wounding him mortally in the abdomen. We drew near the house from which this murderous bullet had come, we opened fire, and killed all of the inhabitants of the house, except for one, who managed to escape. After this, we set the house on fire. On the way back, our wounded comrade was suffering a great deal of pain from his wound, and he asked us, 'My comrades, don't spare a bullet, and just kill me.' Nevertheless, we hoped we would be able to save him, and we proceeded with all deliberate speed to the camp, in order to attempt to give him the appropriate care, and save him, but beside the village of Zalużża in the vicinity of the camp, he died of his wounds.

In the meantime, a group of partisans from the Pugachev brigade reached our area. The commander of this group was a sergeant in the Red Army, who adopted the name of the Russian hero 'Pugachev[16].' The group

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16 Pugachev, Emelian Ivanovich, c.1742—75, Russian peasant leader, head of the peasant rebellion of 1773—74. A Don Cossack, he exploited a widespread peasant belief that Peter III had not actually been murdered. Claiming (1773) to be Peter III, he soon found himself at the head of an

came from the vicinity of Slonim, and had a number of Jews in it from Slonim and Byten.' there were a number of young women, and a Jewish doctor.

We organized ourselves along with the Pugachev people into formal ranks, and began to engage in substantive missions, such as the detonation of police stations and the killing of the Germans inside them. But, more importantly, we were no longer fearful of the Zhurkin people, because Pugachev stood behind us. I attached myself to a group of five people, who went out on horseback to gather intelligence from the villages. Once I was informed that Germans had reached a nearby village. I was sent out on a mission with a Russian officer. Before we left, the 'political commissar' of the division came to me and whispered in my ear that it was up to me to execute the officer, because he was suspected of being a spy for the enemy. I did not agree to this, and said 'after that, you will kill me.' 'If so,' he said, 'then come with him after the mission to a hut in the vicinity.' We went out, with the officer, on horseback. When we reached the river, he ordered me to leap over the water into the forest. He remained in his place. When I already reached the other side of the river, I saw Germans in the center of the forest, and I circumvented them by going around them, and eluded them. Was this by chance, or was this a set up to entrap me? I returned to the officer, and at a fast gallop, according to the instructions I had received, we reached the solitary hut. The political commissar was waiting for us there. 'You are a traitor,' he said to the officer, and shot him in the head. Afterwards, he took out a certificate on which was written that on that day, a traitor was executed, and he wrote me down on the certificate.

On this same subject, we had an occasion when 4 Russians came to our camp. Their behavior was suspicious. After two days, as we were sitting by the campfire, with our weapons, as usual, at hand, we disarmed them. We searched their belongings. And we found incriminating documentation on their persons. they admitted their guilt, and were taken out to be executed.

As early as 1942, when we had been in the forest for only a couple of months, we were advised by our informers that a Soviet aircraft had crashed near Pinsk. We went off with Sevek, who was an engineer, to search the airplane. We reached the location, and there was no trace of the pilot, to indicate if he had fled, or was taken prisoner by the Germans. People were afraid to approach the plane, on the chance that the Germans had laid an ambush nearby, or mined it. We went up to the airplane, and took out a machine gun, that was mounted inside, along with a lot of cartridges. We made a wooden housing for the machine gun, and returned to our camp feeling lucky. Moshe Topf and Sevek repaired the machine, and it served us much like a cannon.

After some time, a change in attitude took place on the part of Pugachev towards the civilian cam, whose majority were Jews. He began to look with disfavor on a large encampment of women and older folk in the forest, beside his division. He decided to leave this location, leaving the family encampment behind, and to attach only 70 actively fighting men to his ranks, and move off to the east. I received an order to move out

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army and of a revolutionary movement. His followers – Cossacks, peasants, runaway serfs, Tatar bands, and serfs from the mines and factories – all belonged to the lower classes, whose rights and liberties had been increasingly curtailed in the past two centuries. Pugachev announced the abolition of serfdom. His army overran the middle and lower Volga districts and the Ural region and took Kazan and several fortresses, committing barbarous excesses and threatening the throne of Catherine II, who was waging war on the Ottoman Empire. However, the rebels lacked experienced leadership and were ultimately defeated. Pugachev was betrayed, taken to Moscow, and beheaded. As a result of the rebellion Catherine introduced the administrative reform (1775) that increased the central government's control over outlying areas and more firmly entrenched the institution of serfdom.

with the rest of the fighters, but in my heart, I was not at peace with this idea, of leaving this large encampment of Jews, among which was my friend, Rozh'keh. Without provisions, no protection from the Zhurkin people, and no protection from a possible German attack. But an order is an order. We then went out in a large echelon, on sleds and wagons hitched to horses. There were four people to each sled. At night, a heavy snow began to fall. I disembarked from a sled with one other Jewish comrade, as if to light up a cigarette. The echelon continued ahead, and we went back behind it. Amid the darkness and the heavy snow, our absence was not detected. We went back along our tracks to the camp to our friends, and there was no end to their joy.

We needed to organize ourselves in a new configuration. We had altogether [only] two rifles. We began to organize provisions obtained from the villages, and to get our hands on weaponry by all manner of indirect means. For about a month, we sat and did nothing, except engage in our missions to secure food. One time the people of Zhurkin came, and killed two of our comrades, Velvel Green and Sioma Rayak. They attempted to steal what little weaponry we had, and in very blunt terms, they told us ro get out of the area. Once, they opened fire on us, when we were on the way to a village in search for food. We were greatly angered by the fact that we were being driven away, but we had no choice. We left that location. in our group we had about twenty women, ten elderly, and about thirty young people. We suffered from the neglect by the villagers. One of our young women was seized by the Germans and tortured to death, however, she did not reveal the location of our camp.

The Desantist[17] Paratroopers Arrive

In March of 1943, a change in the order of the partisans in the forest took place. Groups of paratroopers arrived with suitable weaponry, medicines and sophisticated methods of communication, that connected them directly to the headquarters in Moscow.

The two commanders, Orlovsky (known by the nickname Myxa – meaning a fly– who worked as a spy going back as far as the days of the Polish régime, in the border area, and Nikolsky. Immediately they began to organize the partisan groups in the area that were spread out. Names were given to units, like a brigade named for Grizhobov, in which there were three battalions. I was attached to a battalion named Matorsov, that was in the brigade. After training, I was assigned to control a machine gun, in which I was 'number two.' I sensed no anti-Semitism from the Desantists. They took all the people found in the forest under their aegis, including the family camps. We now had enough weaponry and food, and we did not fear the Zhurkin people any longer. They were warned that they would be punished to the fullest extent of the law, for every violation, accordingly.

About 200 Desantists reached our section of the forest. Many members of the Pugachev group returned as well, who has sustained defeats at the hands of the enemy. Among those who returned from our ghetto, were

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17 The airborne, air-assault, and amphibious troops of all services are referred to as *desantniki,* which literally means "those who land". The term *desant* is defined by Radzievskii as:

Troops intended for landing, or which have already landed on enemy-occupied territory for the purpose of conducting combat operations. According to the transportation method used, a landing force may be amphibious, airborne, or combined; and according to its scale and purpose, such a force may be strategic, operational, or tactical.

The concept of *desant* is linked with the Russian doctrinal emphasis on flanking maneuvers.

Moshe Zalmanowicz, Leib'l Zeitlin, and Ahar'eleh Gursky.

One day, we went out on a mission near the village of Babbin. Our objective was to blow up a train, however, there were strong German patrols with dogs. Despite the strength of the patrols and the dogs, we succeeded in planting charges under the rails, and to set them off. After the explosion, heavy fire opened up towards us, and we holed up in a tree grove near the scene, from which we could not pull back because of the heavy fire. We lost four people, two Desantists, a young man from Slonim and a young girl who had come along to handle the explosives. The mission succeeded, but we took a heavy blow and lost people.

On day, when I was scouting on horseback beside the village of Lipsk, I saw a group of Jews from Baranovich, of about fifteen people. Among them was Rena Bloszinsky (Rabinovich), and her brothers. They fled the ghetto at the last minute. There were people from Zhurkin beside them, who had stolen their possessions and made sport of them. I jumped off my horse and threatened them with my rifle. 'Get out of here, or I will kill you,' – I said to them. They saw the look on my face, and they left. When the news of this group of refugees from the ghetto became known, Pugachev did not agree to accept them, because he was told that these were people who had worked for the Germans (in their workplaces). The group continued past Pinsk, and found refuge with a different partisan brigade.

After this, in the summer of 1943, a group of about fifty Jews arrived, that was well organized and suitably armed, also possessing horses and cows. In this group were Lejzor Siegel, Yud'l Wisznir, and Velvel Ogulnick, and these were taken into our brigade.

One of the major missions undertaken by the Desantists, in which I participated, was against a contingent of five hundred German soldiers, that had begun to assert control over the villages in our area, and confiscate their livestock. We reached a small villages, and the Germans were in the houses, eating and resting, with their arms outside. We opened fire from all sides, and despite the fact that they were not ready, they returned fire. One bullet wounded Orlovsky in the hand, and since he was ho9lding a grenade in his hand, both of his hands were severed right on that spot. Medics began to tend to him immediately. He gave an order to continue the mission, and turned to our camp. After this, he was sent to Moscow for care. Tens of Germans were killed in the village. A few managed to escape into the forest, but even those were subsequently captured and killed.

One day, when we returned from a scouting trip with Itcheh Lovzowsky and his friend Peretz, we were detained under the order of Nikolski. Our effects were searched, and ten ruble gold piece was found among Itcheh's belongings. They found nothing in my possession. I had neither money, nor gold. We were brought before Nikolski, who asked me if it was true that we had stolen a sewing machine in a village, and traded it for the gold. In the middle of his discourse, Nikolski took out his pistol and aimed it at me and said: 'If you do not tell me the truth, I will kill you on the spot.' I told him that there is no gold, and I had no gold, but that I had taken a sewing machine from a small village, but that we had wanted to trade it for weaponry, because in his time, the Zhurkin people had taken away our arms. Chacza, in whose house the negotiation regarding the weapons issue took place, would be able to vouch for this. An order was given to undress me and drop me into a deep pit, from which only my head would protrude. Moshe Stolovicky stood above me, with his rifle to the ready. This was in the month of March, with the winter at its peak intensity, and I am practically naked in the pit. They took Itcheh and Peretz out to the forest. I heard several shots. It is not hard to figure out what their fate was.

The officers about Nikolski whispered among themselves. Even the members of the partisan group, from what was evident, attempted to vouch for me. They said that I was a brave partisan, loyal, and prepared to volunteer

for every mission. 'It would be a pity to kill him,' they said. 'It is possible to send him on dangerous missions for purposes of rehabilitation.' The order was given to take me out of the pit.

Immediately after this, I was sent on a mission to Baranovich to blow up a brick factory. We were given two weeks to complete the task. One of the officers, named Buchin, who apparently like me, lowered his pistol, and handed it to me, saying: 'Go and be successful.' Two of my comrades, Leib'l Sanovsky, and Noss'ik Switicky, volunteered to accompany me on this mission. They were familiar with this factory and its surroundings, because they had worked there prior to leaving the ghetto. We received ten kilos of dynamite, mines with plastic explosives, and English fuses, that the Desantists had brought with them. We set out on the road. At the house of Chacza we sought to get a better understanding of the work schedule and the guard arrangements at the factory. We got to the location at ten o'clock at night, after the workers had already left for some time.

In the darkness, using a small pocket flashlight, we mined the entire factory. I attached the dynamite, and set the timer, and we then went off at a distance from the place. All about, it was empty. A light rain began to fall, and we found some shelter in a very tall stand of scrub brush. We went into it like gophers, and the waiting for the explosion seemed like an eternity. We thought that perhaps we had incorrectly put together the materials for the explosion. Suddenly, explosions erupted, the Germans arrived immediately. They ran hither and about the burning scene. they even got as far ast the pile of the scrub grass in which we were hidden. They stabbed into them with their bayonets. To our good fortune, their bayonets were short, and didn't reach us.

We remained in our hiding place until everything about us quieted down. We wanted to circumvent the city. Along the way, we found a small house, out of which there suddenly emerged a German. He shouted out 'Halt!' and said 'I know that you are partisans.' We attacked him, and while we could have killed him, it was dangerous to do so. He had not taken his rifle off of his shoulder. We left him, and proceeded on to Chacza's. On the following day, we asked him to go into the city, and clarify the extent of the damage done to the factory. Chacza returned, and he related to us that there was a lot of destruction, with any bodies strewn about the area.

We returned to our division in the forest at the end of four days instead of the two weeks allotted to us for this mission. Nikolski sent messengers to investigate whether or not the mission was carried out in the manner that we described.

I had the feeling that Nikolski wanted to get rid of me. It appears that he thought I would not return alive from a mission this dangerous. During this period, a group of Desantists reached us from the Pinsk area, who were from Siberia. They were of stout spirit, and belonged to the Igor command. They were given the nickname of 'Igorniks.'Nikolski gave me an order to go out with them on an intelligence gathering mission in the area. They were well armed, and I had no weapons. I asked why they did not give me arms, and they replied that 'You are under suspicion, and are in a trial period.'

I was sent with them, because I knew the villages and roads in the area very well. We wandered about for a week's time. I brought them to every location, and I introduced them to the village contact people. They created maps of the rail lines and bridges, and did not engage in any attacks. After this, we returned to a designated place in the swamps of Polesia. I did not return to my comrades and my unit.

From the time of the incident of the pit, and my assignment to the Igor troops, I had the feeling akin to 'the

selling of Joseph.' I used this opportunity to leave the area that I knew so well, and all my comrades, and to go off to distant and unfamiliar places. My new comrades gave me clean clothing, and invited me to eat with them. When I reached their camp, I encountered familiar faces: the three Wolansky brothers, scions of my city. They were very happy to see me. I went on many missions with the youngest of them, Avra'sheh, which he will describe in a later chapter. This was an elite paratroop unit, and we would deploy 4-5 people at a time, going through the swamps. We went along with Wolansky. The water from the swamp would get into his mouth, until we get there. there were no Jews in this unit, all of them were either Russians or Ukrainians.

In time, the Igor command assessed our commitment and strong will to go out on missions, and to prove ourselves. I always volunteered to go out at night on missions of sabotage. We went out in threes, two with the explosives – Wolansky and I, and a third to do the camouflage. At the outset, the people were reluctant to accompany us. 'Who knows what these Jews know about sabotage?' they said. They were very skilled, but after a number of missions, they willingly came along.

Planes from Moscow used to arrive at our camp, and we had radio contact with them. The planes parachuted down supplies and weaponry to us. We would light bonfires to signal the planes with regard to our location. The Germans did not manage to ever ambush the planes. When we saw Germans milling about the area, we would notify them by communication not to come, that the danger was close by. An instance occurred when a non-combat plane crashed. It was caught in the high branches of the trees and burned. There were four who were killed in it, one wounded (a Jew) and someone from the person from the Kirghiz.
One day, we received an order to cease carrying out the partisan missions, and to move in the direction of Sluck, for a meeting with the Red Army, that was moving forward. We set out on foot and in wagons. An accordion was played out of great joy. Between Sluck and Bobruisk, there was an emotional meeting between the men of the Red Army, and hundreds of partisans. Shouts of joy and hurrahs were heard from all sides.

The organization and sorting out of the partisans started anew. Many were immediately sent to the front. One of the army officers, a Jew named Nikolai Bilmus heard my name 'Roitman' and asked, 'Are you Jewish? Come, there are other Jews here.' He transferred all of us to a course in attacking tanks with mortar fire. The course went on for about a month. We were given the rank of sergeant, and sent to the front, under General Zhukov, the commander of the Byelorussian front. I was a member of the 498th Battalion, division 99. We drew close to Warsaw. There we were held up until we received the order to move towards Berlin.

The entire way to Berlin was filled with heavy fighting. The Germans fought for every hilltop and every bridge. We progressed in the face of daily fighting, and on occasions, fighting face-to face. Many of us were killed, but in the end, we reached Berlin!

The Germans continued to fight, even in the center of the city. In the streets of Berlin, I saw one man, with a large Star of David on his back. This was a Jew who had hidden himself for the entire duration of the war , and now, exposed himself for all to see with a Star of David on his back. He followed me and asked, 'Are you Jewish?' He would not leave me, and proposed a liaison with people who would get me to the Land of Israel. I did not want to leave my comrades behind. I returned to my battalion, which, in the meantime, had moved on to Dresden, and from there to Leipzig. I served as an instructor and expert in the artillery corps. One day, against my wishes, I received an order to run a canteen for the soldiers. In the meantime, I created a connection with my fellow city residents who were in Lodz. My friend Rozh'keh was there also. I requested a furlough from the army, in order to travel and locate relatives. I received a two month furlough. I reached Lodz, and there, I joined up with my friends, in their organized journey to the Land of Israel through Bavaria and France, on the refugee ship 'Negba' – and I reached the Holy Land.

From the Bunker to a Paratroop Unit

By Abraham Wolensky

During the first period of the ghetto, our entire family lived together in our house, our parents, and eight children.

Our entire family survived the first aktion. We hid ourselves in a well-camouflaged bunker that was beneath the floors of the house. We heard the voices of the Germans, as they moved about in the house, saying: 'There is no one here.' the first *aktion*, called 'The Slaughter' in Yiddish, lasted for one day.

On the following day, we returned to our work. My two older brothers and I worked at a soda factory that, up until the war, had belonged to our family. After that, the enterprise was shut down, and we went over to work at a similar operation that belonged to the Svjacicky family, outside the ghetto on the Ulanska Street.

The second *aktion* commenced without warning, on the day after Yom Kippur. We were all at home. My two sisters, Sarah'leh and Trein'eleh, who worked at the hospital, were loaded onto a truck, as if they were being taken to work. However, they were being taken with the intent of never coming back. My younger brother, Yaakov-Getz'l (we called him Getz'l) had previously been seized and sent to work at a Oshmiany camp near Vilna. He was only twelve years old, but looked older, was a large, and strapping. After some time, we found out that all the inmates of that camp had been taken out and murdered.

Unlike the first one, the second *aktion* lasted for a whole week. My mother encouraged us, and urged us to flee, and save ourselves. On the second day of the *aktion*, my two brothers and I made a decision to leave for the forests and join the partisans. I was not hesitant in going out into the forests, because their various paths and byways were familiar to me. I was a member of the *Betar* youth group, and a frequent participant in hikes to the camps of the area. As is still the case to this day, I have a good sense of direction. With the fall of darkness, six of us left, heading in the direction of the village of Grabowiec. At night, we saw a heavy movement of police beside the village, and we also heard a hail of gunfire. We quickly grasped that we were heading right into the extermination process of the killing fields there.

We immediately reversed ourselves, and headed for the Jewish cemetery, on the other side of the city, but in that time, dawn began to break.

There were carpentry works in that area, in which tens of Jews worked, among which was someone that we knew, Mr. Abramowicz. This workplace was outside the ghetto. We entered the workplace, and let Abramowicz know of our intentions. He told us to wait until all the other workers in that location would return to the ghetto, and that we could then join up with them. For the entire period, that the *aktion* was being implemented, the workers remained on the job, and we along with them. It was only after a week, when the killing stopped, and we no longer heard any gunfire, did all of us return to the ghetto, under Byelorussian police guard.

We again returned to work at the soda factory. There were about six of us Jews who worked there, among them Svjacicky, who was a member of the *Judenrat.* With his knowledge, we decided that we would build an underground bunker there, well provisioned, with electricity, so that we could hide there until the war was over, when the central objective was to bring over our family members from inside the ghetto.

We took a gentile Byelorussian into our confidence, whose name was Jozef Nackewicz, who was loyal to Svjacicky, because he had worked for him a long time. He was left-wing, and he hated the Germans. Jozef was delegated the task of gathering provisions during periods of need, and to serve as a liaison with the external world. We had no weapons.

One day, Svjacicky notified us that he would be unable to conceal himself in the bunker. As a man of the community, and a member of the *Judenrat*, he had an obligation to return to the ghetto. The Germans had let it be known, that if anyone of the members of the *Judenrat* goes missing, the entire population of the ghetto will pay with their lives. He and his wife returned to the ghetto. Before this, he sent off his little son, Moshe'leh, to his father in Brisk, out of the belief that somehow, the little boy will be able to save himself there. This did not turn out to be the case, but his daughter Chava, who had been sent by her father to live on the Aryan side of Warsaw, she did manage to survive, and today lives in Israel (as Chava Strich).

We were still returning to the ghetto at night to lodge with our families, but we always waited for a column, or a group, of Jews, that were returning to the ghetto under police guard.

One day, we waited and waited, but not a single person came. We remained behind, to sleep the night at the workplace, because it was forbidden to be outside of the ghetto without an escort. The following morning, we went up onto the rook for the workplace, and we saw that the ghetto was encircled by soldiers and police. It was clear that an *'aktion'* was about to commence. this was the third *aktion*, of December 1942.

We immediately notified Jozef that we were going down into our hideaway, and we dispatched him to the ghetto to see if it were possible for him to bring our families to us. He returned after noon, and brought our little sister Mir'ehleh, aged nine. My mother had sent her to us. In a similar manner, Shmuel Nussbaum reached us, the brother-in-law of Svjacicky.

We descended into the bunker and hid there for five months. During the day, Jozef looked after getting us provisions, and during the night, we came out to get a breath of fresh air.

This same Jozef had a step-brother named Kola, who was in the Byelorussian police force. We do not know if he deduced that a group of Jews were hiding at the workplace, or there was some other reason, but one day, Jozef arrived and said that we must vacate this location, because the situation had become perilous. Having no choice, in May 1943, we left our hideout, and went out to find refuge in the forests. We had decided to go out of the bunker in pairs, at various intervals of time, in order not to attract any attention. We were dressed as woodsmen, carrying axes and saws. Our sister went with another woman, again, in order not to arouse suspicion. It was more natural that a little girl would be walking with a woman than with a man. We had set it up to rendezvous at the Jewish cemetery. We exited in the dead of the night, and everyone got to the rendezvous point except for the two women. We re-traced our steps back to the factory to look for them either there, or along the way. It was completely bare there, with no trace of the woman or the girl. Jozef did not know what to tells about their fate. Perhaps they had decided to return to the ghetto? When I returned to Baranovich after its liberation, I looked for some sort of answer to this riddle. How did my little sister vanish? Many thoughts coursed through my mind, and one of them was that perhaps Jozef or his brother the policeman felt that if they will grab the two women, they won't have to endure the torture, and maybe they will reveal where, or with whom they hid them, and perhaps those involved in this decided to shut them up forever.

On that same day in May, when we left the bunker, we struggled with ourselves a great deal, and after delays, we decided to continue on into the forest, to the partisans.

We reached the village of Zavineya where there was a group of partisans that had come to take food from the resisting farmers. When we saw them, we immediately said 'We are Jews,' and they ordered us to raise our hands, and to get down on the ground. They took our good clothes, and gave us their garments full of lice, and said: 'We don't need you, go find yourselves another group of partisans.'

We continued, and when we were on the road to the village of Tohowiec, that was a village under the aegis of partisans, emissaries from the commander Nikolski reached us, and they too said 'we don't need you. Continue on to the Polesia swamps.' The villagers in the area told us, that in the Pinsk area there is a family camp under the command of an officer named Bobrov, a Jew from Pinsk, and he would take us in. We wandered about the swamps for about a week, until we reached the Bobrov camp. There were about fifty men and women there, among them, a number of young people. These were Jews from the vicinity around Pinsk and Mott'leh. There, I also encountered people from my city. After having been in the Bobrov camp for about ten days, the commander Igor arrived, he being in charge of the 'Desantist' paratroopers, who had put in command of this entire area.

His division was well supplied, and in continuous contact with Moscow. He personally was a very strict man, and rigorous. It was not only once that he sentenced partisans to death for infractions that were only suspected.

When Igor arrived at the Bobrov camp, a mustering was executed in his honor. He looked at me and said: ' I am taking you to me.' I don't know where I got the courage, mixed in with no small amount of nerve to say: 'I have two brothers here, and I cannot go without them.' He looked at me slightly startled. I could have paid for this with my life, but he said: Good, you will be in a fighting unit, and your brothers can work in supply, and provisioning of the battalion.'

We were looked upon with respect in the Bobrov camp. It was considered to be a great honor to be part of commander Igor's group, to be among the '*Igorniks,*'

As soon as we reached our new camp, we received new clothing, and the satin undergarments of paratroopers. There was an elderly Jewish tailor there, from Pinsk, who looked after the clothing needs of the partisans.

There were three groups in the camp. Two would go to carry out missions, and one would always be in camp, resting up, and standing guard. The main part of our missions was to sabotage and attack trains. With some speed, my comrade, Noah Roitman arrived from Baranovich. At the outset, the members of the group were not quick to go out with us on these missions of sabotage. They had the feeling that we Jews will not know how to properly make use of the explosives involved, and accidentally blow them up by mistake. However, after a number of these missions, when they saw the competence with which we handled the ammunition and dynamite, we were like one with them.

We would go out as a division of thirty men, spreading out through the swamps and forests of Polesia. There were occasions when we went through swamp up to our necks, with rifles held above our heads.

The trains that we attacked contained military supplies and German troops. I had an anti-tank machine gun, and I always aimed it at the train locomotive. When the locomotive was blown up, they would send for a second locomotive, to bring the train cars back. We would then blow up the second locomotive. In the meantime, German soldiers would arrive and open fire into the forest, but they never entered the forest themselves, and we would evacuate the area, continuing our activities according to the plans set out by our command.

The surrounding villages provided us with food, in accordance with schedule specified by the partisans, including meat, bread, potatoes, milk and its derivative dairy products.

In the meantime, the Red Army began to make westward progress. We, the partisans, got closer and closer to the trains of the retreating German army. The Red Army had already crossed the principal roads past Pinsk, and we received an order to move in the direction of Sluck and Bobruisk. In a grove, there was a fateful encounter, and the re-ordering and training of the partisans began. The officer in charge of taking a census was a Jewish officer from Odessa named Nikolai Bilmus. After all of his family had been seized in Odessa, he was very happy to encounter other Jews. He was our age, about twenty some odd years old. A friendship developed between us, literally, like a fraternal order. First of all he sent us to a sergeant's course in artillery. He always invited us to his house for conversations and meals. We concluded that after the war, we would all travel together to Palestine–the Land of Israel. In the same fashion, that we were all 'brothers' to Rozh'keh, Noah Roitman's girlfriend, who in the meantime, had returned to Baranovich from the forests. Bilmus even traveled to Baranovich for purposes of making her acquaintance, and visiting her. We let the army command know that we were her brothers, to assure that the army had an address for purposes of notification of nearest kin in the event of someone being wounded or, God forbid, killed. There was no other way, because there was not a single person left from any of our families. It was therefore, to our greatest sorrow, that after some time, Rozh'keh received notification that Bilmus himself had fallen in battle on the road to Berlin.

After a period of instruction, all of us were sent to the front. Noah Roitman and my brother Eliyahu were in one detachment, and my brother Simcha and I in another. I was sent to the Warsaw front. The battle for Warsaw began on January 15. After three days, I was seriously wounded in both my legs. After spending some time in several hospitals, and undergoing a number of operations, I was discharged from the army. I was given a letter, indicating that in every city and settlement, the army should extend help to me, and to offer me assistance.

Despite the fact that I knew not a single person from my family remained in Baranovich, I traveled to the city where I was born. On my way there, I cried like a child, for having to return to the house of my family, in which not a single person was waiting for me. From Baranovich, I traveled to Lodz. there I met up with Rozh'keh and additional friends.

She had received a letter from my brother Eliyahu, who was to be found in Prague, in Czechoslovakia. I wrote to him, asking that he travel immediately to come to Lodz, and he did this. Noah also reached there. Together, the four of us – Rosh'keh, Noah, my brother Eliyahu and myself, embarked on a long journey by road and sea, in refugee ships, to the Land of Israel.

Here in The Land, my brother Simcha was waiting for me, who had gotten here earlier on the ship 'La Spezia,' and my sister Shifra, who had made *aliyah* before the war.

Chapter III - After the War

The Campaign Against the War Criminals

By Dr. Elchanan (Khonya) Narkonsky

Page 210: *Dr. Elchanan Narkonsky and Hirsch Mukasey, Wroclaw, Poland*

On the eve of the outbreak of The Second World War, August 31, 1939, I was drafted into the Polish Army as an officer in the medical detachment. I was inducted into the detachment of General Krok-Paszkowski[18] (a resident of Baranovich), that took up a position on the northwest border of Poland beside the city of Mlawa. On September 1, 1939, the Germans attacked us. Against our battalion, which was a cavalry battalion, came tanks and armored vehicles. In the midst of bitter fighting, we began to retreat. The Poles were brave soldiers, good riders, and well-trained in face-to-face combat, but not of this could stand in their favor, in the face of so well-armored an enemy. The entire division was captured on September 8, which included our [sic: medical] unit in its entirety, beside Tomaszow-Lubelski. The regular soldiers were set free, but the officers – and I among them – were detained, and locked up in a giant tobacco warehouse (this was a tobacco processing region). In the first roll call, in this '*Stalag*,' an S. S. officer faced us and asked, 'Are there any Jews among you?' Everyone responded as one, saying 'There are no Jews among us.' I was the only Jew, but I decided not to respond [sic: affirmatively] to the question. He asked a second time. Despite the fact that I stood in the first row, directly across from the interrogator, I continued being silent. The companion to the S. S. officer, that was standing by his side, then explained to him that the Poles did not recruit academic Jews into the army, and did not make a place for them in officers' school. There was a great deal of truth to this, because there was a very tiny percentage of Jewish graduates, with a diploma, that were drafted into the Polish Army. Towards nightfall, we were again locked into the storage facility, under the guard of two stalwarts, armed with automatic rifles, that we had previously known to be in the Polish army. In the small hours of the night, we decided to kill these two stalwarts, and escape. One was killed quietly, using the 'skill' of one of the imprisoned officers. The second succeeded in fleeing. We got control of the open doorway, and with all deliberate speed, we sped ahead to cross the front lines, that was only a few kilometers away. We heard the reports, and saw the flash of the gunfire We ran for all we were worth through the tobacco fields, under a rain of gunfire from the Germans that were pursuing us.

Only part of us succeeded in reaching the Polish lines. First, we were detained by the Polish military police, who turned us over to the commander of the front. We were received with contempt regarding the fact that our division had been captured, but immediately on the next day, we were assigned to the retreating fighting forces. We were in a state of continuous retreat, until we reached the outskirts of the city of Zamość. In the meantime, the German armor was stranded without gasoline. However, the absence of the gasoline did not impede their rapid advance at the front. Their armored cars and tanks could not move, and at that point the Poles had the upper hand in battle. The latter fought with bravery and heroism. Many victims fell on both sides. The sides of the roads became filled with the bodies of those killed, and wounded. Many of the officers in my battalion were hit, and it fell to me to assume command, even though I had no combat experience. After

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[18] This would appear to have been the Polish 45th Infantry Division, under the command of General Henryk Krok-Paszkowski

a battle beside the village of Wysoki[19], (beside Zamość) we retreated in the direction of Wolhynia (Ukraine), in order to be able to continue fighting. We had no radio or telephone, and we did not know what was happening, even a short distance from us. The intelligence that we gathered from the surrounding villages was sharply encouraging, 'The Russians are coming.' We decided to divide ourselves up into divisions. I took 27 captured German prisoners with me, and at the head of this division, I reached the city of Tyszowce. The sergeant of the division proposed that we execute the prisoners, however, it became clear that there were no S. S. troops among them, and I did not agree to take part in the execution of these prisoners.

The city of Tyszowce was without a controlling authority. The Poles had fled, and the Soviets had not yet arrived. I found a field hospital set up in a local school building. The hospital was full of severely wounded, neglected, and exuding a fetid odor, lacking doctors, medics or nurses. I recruited two doctors from the local citizenry, one Jewish and one Polish, along with several volunteer Polish women, and we began to attend the sick. On the following morning, a Russian scouting unit arrived. Its soldiers burst into my room, took away my weapons, and brought me to a neighboring village, which served as an assembly point for those captured, especially officers. To our dismay, the Russians freed those German officers that we had taken prisoner. As you can understand, we did not know about the secret agreement that had been consummated by the foreign ministers Molotov and Ribbentrop, that transformed the two nations into allies, and that is why they liberated the German prisoners, In a like manner, they also freed the Polish soldiers.

They transferred the officers on foot to Chelm, and from there, to Lublin. From Lublin, a group of the prisoners were sent off to the east, to Smolensk, and they loaded us onto cattle cars.

As food, we were given a loaf of bread, a half head of sugar, and two salted fish, without any water. It appears that they gave us the salted fish in order to intensify our thirst, and to abuse us. Along the entire length of the rail lines, and in the stations in the cities, many people waited for the return of their relatives from the army, and the front. The train in which I was riding, passed through the station at Baranovich. Through the window shutters of the cattle car, in which we were being transported, I saw my brother Itz'l. I called out to him. He saw me, and immediately turned to the military guard, and asked for me to be released. This request was 'sweetened' by the offer of a wristwatch. the soldier took me out of the train, but conveyed both of us to the emissary in command, and told him that he had received an under-the-table gift of a watch, on condition that I be set free. The commander was very moved by the honesty of the soldier, and as a reward, he permitted him to keep the watch. They released by brother, but I was returned to the train, where I was placed in jail cell, and made to lie on the floor, with a soldier putting the point of his rifle into my back. My brother rushed to inform our parents, that I was to be found on a train heading in the direction of Smolensk. My mother ran, pleading with Rubinczyk, the Jewish militia commander in the city. He was a communist of long standing, who, during the time of the Polish régime, was under arrest for his communist activities. With the arrival of the Soviets in1939, his star rose, and he was given the appointment of militia commander. Rubinczyk, wh knew me from lectures that I had given on matters pertaining to health, at a variety of labor institutions in the city, responded to my mothers plea, and turned to the central division secretary, a man named Tur, and the latter promised to work at getting me released. However, by the time that his helped arrived, the train had already moved on to the east. The telephone intervention by Tur, along the entire length of the railroad line, retarded my movement in one of the stations near Smolensk. I was returned, under guard, to Baranovich. There, my parents, and Rubinczyk were waiting for me, who was decked out in his full military regalia. In this

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[19] The village of Wysoki is nearly 100 miles from Zamość. Consequently, it is likely that the writer refers to the village of Wychody, which is about two miles outside of Zamość towards Szczebrzeszyn.

way, I was saved from the fate of thousands of Polish officers, who were sent off this way, and who afterwards, were taken out and massacred in the Katyn Forest, beside Smolensk. I was released in Baranovich, and returned to the bosom of my family, and to my work as a doctor in the city of Rovno.

With the passage of a year and nine months, on June 22, 1941, the Germans made a surprise attack against Soviet Russia, their prior ally. In the operation known by its code name, '*Barbarossa,*' a panicked evacuation began by the residents of the western districts of Byelorussia and the Ukraine. My family and I got on board horse-drawn wagons, and fled, in the direction of Kiev, ahead of the rapidly advancing German forces. In Kiev, we succeeded in getting on a train of refugees, and we wandered off into the wide expanse of inner Russia, through train stations without number, until we reached Kazakhstan. As a complete surprise, I ran into my brother, Fyvel, in Kazakhstan, face-to-face. Among the millions of refugees, that were wandering through the Russian expanse, such a meeting, with one of my own brothers (we were eight children in our household), was surely within the ambit of being a miracle. Both of us could not believe our eyes. After spending a short time together, I continued to travel to Siberia, though I remained in contact with my brother Fyvel until the end of the war, and as you can understand, also afterwards. I will not detail all of my tribulations and wanderings in Asiatic Russia during the war, this is not relevant to the subject of my memoirs here.

After the war, I left with the repatriation of Polish refugees, in which most of the refugees that I traveled with were Jews. On my way to Poland, I stopped off in my home city of Baranovich. I stood speechless beside the mass graves, and beside the killing pits of the Jews of the city, among whom were my immediate family, my parents, brothers and sisters. It was unbearably difficult to see all the houses of the Jews, standing on their hillocks, and everything inside of them, furniture, clothing, sometimes even the pictures on the walls, in the hands of the surviving gentiles, who in some instances were even accomplices to the murders that took place. In the marketplace, prayer shawls were being sold as head kerchiefs, and the scrolls and wrappings of Torahs were being sold as insoles for the Byelorussian villagers. The hats of the Hasidim (the *shtrymels*) were being sold throughout all of Russia. After each *aktion*, gentile peasants would descend, like a flock of predatory birds, on the spoils in the Jewish houses, and plunder for everything that came to hand. The Germans had promised the Jewish assets to the Byelorussians. For themselves, they reserved works of art and jewelry, which they sent back to Germany. All of the possessions that belonged to the Jews, remained in the hands of the local Byelorussian populace. I paid a visit to the [sic: Jewish] cemetery, where there was a mass grave of those martyred in one of the *aktionen*. At that time, the headstones were still in place, among them, the grave of my grandfather, watched over by a Byelorussian watchman.

I could not remain under these new conditions, with all of these horrible memories in my city, now empty of Jews. I stayed there for only ten days. For the entire ten days, I asked and researched the question of what and how it had happened, how could such a travesty take place under the full glare of the sun? Is it possible that this will simply pass, without any punishment, without vengeance being exacted? I came to the general conclusion, that I will hunt down the guilty and bring them to justice.

I began with researching details, in which I was assisted by a number of people, Jews and gentiles. Rubinczyk, the former commandant of the local militia, returned to Baranovich from the heart of Russia, where he had fled to at the beginning of the period of German occupation in 1941. He connected me to a profusion of sources. With the return of the Soviets in 1944, he returned to Baranovich, and remained there until his death in 1989. He was one of the 'Last of the Mohicans' of the original Jews of Baranovich, who remained to live in the city. One Jew, by the name of Nahum Wolochwiansky, who came on a visit from Moscow, to look for any survivors from his family, also was one who helped me a great deal. In a similar fashion, I was assisted in my research by a Pole, by the name of Stanislaw Jakubowski, who was a postal clerk by occupation, from

Ljahavičy, from a noble Polish family that had lost its possessions. Before the war, he had married a Jewish woman, and during the German occupation, he hid her and her children, because both she and her children were considered Jews, and their fate was sealed by Nazi edict.

From what Jakubowski and others had to tell, the names of the Nazi war criminals, who were active in the vicinity, surfaced. the Germans - Amelung and Jorn; The Lithuanian - Gurneiwiec, and many Byelorussians: Bobko, Kalko, Senko, Diro, Golub, Pysczynski, Sienkiewicz and others, a collection of vermin – those who committed crimes against humanity; participants in mass murder, the torture of innocent people, Jews, Poles, and Soviet partisans.

Amelung was the head of the S. D. in Baranovich, and his deputy, Bobko was the head of the concentration camp and death camp at Koldichevo, beside Baranovich. Kalko was the head of the Byelorussian police in the city. They were Byelorussian police of various rank. In 1944, when the German retreat began all along the entire eastern front, and the Red Army drew near the city, The German, Amelung, head of the S. D. fled westward to Germany, where his trail vanished. to the extent that is known to me, he was never captured. A trip to Germany, for purposes of searching for war criminals was burdened with many difficulties, and there was nobody searching for him specifically. to our chagrin, the majority of those who were accomplices, police, civilian officials, etc., succeeded in escaping together with their masters, to Germany, where they found refuge in refugee camps put up for them as 'displaced persons,' as it were, who were suffering because of their anti-Soviet sympathies. In time, it was made as easy as possible for them to reach the countries of North and South America.

Gurneiwiec as well, the deputy to Amelung, left the city. Originally, he was a Lithuanian named Josephus Gurnewicius who volunteered for the S. D. in the city of Kovno (Kaunas), the Lithuanian capital. After a period in which he underwent training, he was sent to Baranovich, where he married a pretty Polish girl named Lala, the daughter of the former Chairman of the Polish Socialist Party in the city. He adopted the Polish name Jozef Gurneiwiec. In the Baranovich ghetto, he rapidly acquired a set of nicknames, such as 'Bloody Jozef' and 'The Bloodthirsty One,' and also 'Pretty-Boy Jozef,' because he was handsome. With the oncoming of the Red Army, he fled to the west along with the family of his wife, in a train car full of the spoils taken from Jews. However, he did not get as far as Germany, as did his superior, Amelung, but like many Poles from the eastern provinces (today it is Western Byelorussia), he traveled to Silesia. Jakubowski's Polish friends whispered that Gurneiwiec's father-in-law , the 'Socialist,' had promised to protect him from all assaults, if he would only remain in Poland. It is told that a letter was received from the son-in-law in Wolow, a small town near Wroclaw. My decision pointed me to pursue him in Lower Silesia, and to track down this war criminal, especially since I had found out that 'Bloodthirsty Jozef' had killed my brother Yitzhak (Itz'l) with his own hands. During one of the aktionen, Jozef had found my brother, with two other Jewish boys, in a bunker, in Rogoznicky's flour mill, on the Pocztowa Street. He brought them to the statue of the Unknown Soldier, and shot them there.

Wroclaw (Breslau) was a city that had a German population, until 1944. During the time of the war, the city was destroyed by allied bombing from the air. With the approach of the Red Army, the German residents left, fleeing before the Russians. The city was transformed into a focal point for refuge, for all of those whose house had been destroyed during the war –many were from Poland, and there were gentiles among them who were trying to hide from the vengeance of anti-Nazi laws. they took up residence in the areas that had been taken back from the Germans, such as Silesia, Eastern Prussia, and the Baltic coast, where they would not be recognized or identified.

In Wroclaw, there was an old hospital that was 500 years old, in which there were 1500 beds. I began to work in the hospital as a doctor, with two assistants, one Jewish and one Polish. However, the main motivation that I saw in my work, was in the 'U. B.[20]' the Polish secret police' for apprehending the war criminals and their accomplices, and bringing them to justice. Upon my arrival in Wroclaw, I turned to the district attorney's office of the province, and told them of the purpose of my coming, and how I was a doctor and an officer in the Polish Army, and one of those sent to Katyn, (I was saved from the Katyn Massacre beside Smolensk, where over 10,000 Polish officers were murdered in 1941), and I was received in a respectful manner. The prosecutor in the office of the district attorney's office, a man named Polano, that Jozef had, at one point, been detained by the U. B., the testimony that had brought about his detention being that of a Polish teacher from Baranovich, who had taken up residence in Katowice. However, Jozef was freed by the court in Sosnowiec after several weeks, for lack of eye witness testimony. Polano complained that no people came to testify, because they feared him and his friends. He even showed me a Polish newspaper, that documented the short internment of Jozef. I made up my mind that I would not relent from pursuing him, until he was apprehended. From the information that I had gathered here and there, I learned that his family was living in Wolow, but he only visits them infrequently, and in secret. He works on a train, and most of the time he is on the move, traveling, and in addition to this, he is a member of the Polish underground, of the 'National Armed Forces,' (N. S. Z.[21]). this was an organization that fought the communist régime in Poland, and engaged in murdering Jews and communists.

I benefitted from the cooperation of Mali in the U. B. Many of the workers there were Jewish, in whose hearts there raged the fire for vengeance. Yet the Poles, also, wanted to see the war criminals punished, as well as the collaborators with the Germans, because Poland suffered terribly under the German occupation. My comrade, Jakubowski, the Pole from Baranovich, also got to Wroclaw, and continue to help me in my searches, and investigations. He was a man who was loyal to me, and together with this, he was an intermediary among the ranks of the Poles who were returning from the east. It is possible, that because of the less an careful move to this location, that the wife of 'Bloodthirsty Jozef' learned that I was attempting to pick up his trail. One day, Jakubowski came to me, and told me that Jozef's wife had turned to him and pleaded for him to influence me, that I abandon my intention to seize her husband and bring him to trial. In exchange for this, she offered me the sum of one million zlotys, a huge sum in those days. This proposal caused me rage and embarrassment simultaneously. I refused even to see her, because I feared I would kill her out of losing my own self-control.

Despite the intelligence that we had about Jozef, it proved difficult to seize him. He was a master of elusiveness. I was warned that he is dangerous, and was totally capable of killing me before I might succeed in capturing him. Following the counsel of the head of the U. B., I armed myself with a Browning automatic pistol, and I always carried it with me in the streets of the city, on entering my house, and in the hallway with the stairs. My finger was always pressed against the trigger. Incidentally, my wife knew nothing about what

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20 ***U**rzad **B**ezpieczenstwa*

21 **N**arodowe **S**iły **Z**brojne (English *National Armed Forces*, **NSZ**) was a Polish, anti-Soviet and anti-German paramilitary organization which was part of the Polish resistance movement in World War II, fighting the Nazi German occupation of Poland in the General Government, and later the Soviet puppet state known as the Polish People's Republic. It was associated with the pre-war National Democracy political camp.

I was doing at the U. B. I did not want to worry her. I would tell her that I needed to go early to the hospital, or that I had night duty.

One day, we received a piece of information, that in one of the villas in the expensive suburb of Oforow, that served as a residence for high ranking Germans, during the time of the German occupation, there is an N. S. Z. cell, where even Jozef is to be found according to the gatekeeper. I conveyed my desire to participate in an ambush of the villa. That night, a force numbering about 20 men went out to Oforow, and surrounded the house. We knocked on the door, and announced that 'We are the U. B.' And we demanded that the door be opened. As an answer, machine gun fire came out through the windows. The bullets whistled about us, yet Jozef, who was undoubtedly there, managed to elude us, and vanished once again. Several months went by. All that time, I stayed on his trail, but because I did not know him personally, I suspected that were I even to encounter him face-to-face, I would not recognize him, the prosecutor Polano and other people described him to me, and told me that a very prominent feature was a black wart on his upper lip. I once found out that a city landsman of mine, Herschel Mukasey, a resident of the Baranovich ghetto, had reached a DP camp near Warsaw, and knew Jozef by sight. He could help me in identifying him, and apprehending him. I immediately wrote to him, telling him that I am on the trail of this criminal. I asked him to come to me, and even live with me, to help in the apprehension of Gurneiwiec. Herschel responded with passion. The following day, I received a letter from him, telling me he was on the train coming to me.

In addition to my researches at the U. B. we began to reconnoiter the city, with our eyes and ears open. One day, the two of us were riding in electric train Number 1, and we were standing by the entrance to the first train car, and here, behind the train conductor, stood a man with a black wart on his upper lip.

Herschel turned slightly and whispered 'this is the man.' The two of us watched dispassionately until we reached the town square, and there, I told Herschel to debark and fetch the first policeman that he might encounter, and to tell him that we are holding a war criminal. I remained in the train car in order to keep an eye on him, and not permit him to disappear. Jozef id not recognize me, because I took care to remain dispassionate, and remained calm, even when he peered at me. My hand was placed over the trigger of the pistol for this entire time. In a matter of a few minutes, Herschel returned with a train policeman. I took out my U. B. credentials, and ordered the policeman to place Jozef under arrest. the latter turned ashen pale, and argued that there must be some mistake taking place. And while he was in the process of arguing with the one detaining him, the muttering began among the Polish passengers in the train; 'Again these Jews are assaulting a Pole...' I had no choice but to threaten him with my pistol, and to quickly get him off the train. We led him off in the direction of the U. B. offices that were in a building used by the *Gestapo* in the past. It is interesting that all of Wroclaw was destroyed by Allied bombing, but the *Gestapo* building, and the two prisons were not damaged. At the U. B. offices, Jozef fell to his knees and begged before me 'kill me immediately.' He knew the Gestapo well, and saw himself as his second running of the gauntlet. He preferred a quick death in place of the 'handling' he was anticipating that would be similar to the ones he caused to be visited on his victims. When I saw his face, I was almost driven to commit murder. It was with great difficulty that I held myself back from shooting him right then and there, because before my eyes, the faces of my family who were tortured, kept appearing before my eyes, especially my brother Yitzhak, who was killed at the hand of the man, now standing in front of me. Jozef began to talk. There was no tone of regret to be heard in his voice. Rather, it was the normal excuse of a war criminal, attempting to defend himself, by claiming he had no part in making decisions, and was just following orders. He told that he related to all people, treating Christians the same way he treated Jews. As an example, he told that he had killed a Roman Catholic priest, by using an iron rod which he inserted into his mouth, and through which he passed an electric current, and other stories like this. Among his many stories, he told that he had taken off the expensive fur coat from Yehoshua Izikson, the first

President of the *Judenrat*, before he killed him. 'The fur is to be found with my wife,' he told me. I ordered him to write to her, and instruct her to send the fur to me. Apart from this letter, Jozef was not given permission to write or receive any letters, and except for his defense attorney, he had no contact with the outside world. Once I had the fur in my possession, I turned to the elderly father of Izikson, the sole survivor of that entire richly branched family, of all his children and grandchildren. He was in Russia, where good people from Baranovich were taking care of him. After the war, along with other refugees, he had returned to France, and from there, on to the Land of Israel. I wrote to him, that I had his son's fur coat, and I wanted to transfer it to him. He replied to me by letter, in which he pleaded with me not to return the fur coat of his tortured son, because he heart would be broken all over again, anew, when he laid eyes on the jacket...

The investigation of Jozef continued for several months. I was interested in both widening and lengthening it, in order to have the means in my hand to assemble witnesses, and to prepare the case for the prosecution, so there would not be a recurrence of what had happened in the first trial, when he was released for lack of eye witness testimony. The interrogators from the U. B. did not spare him any beatings, and other silent treatments. He confessed to his crimes, and also informed on his criminal associates, on Bobko, Kalko and others. Immediately after the liberation from the German occupation, it was accepted to have short investigations of war criminals and summary execution by firing squad. Many collaborating Poles, were seized by the U. B., and did not emerge alive. In Jozef's case, the investigation continued on.

I brought in many Jewish witnesses, from all the ends of Poland, to Wroclaw. Most of the witnesses were Poles, as well as the few Jews who remained alive after their encounter with Jozef. In their time, many of them were accomplices to the Nazis. I warned them that I was aware of the entire truth, from the testimony of other Baranovich people who were interrogated, and if they lied, it will cause them to be brought before the bar of justice, where they will be tried, and receive their just punishment. I found out about a young Jewish woman who was a medical student, from the Liss family in Baranovich, whose father was murdered by Jozef in front of her own eyes. At that time she was residing in Gdansk (Danzig) with her two daughters. I invited her to testify. She was the only Jewish witness for the prosecution. Her testimony was vigorous, and forceful, and lasted for nearly three hours. Of the seven sentences to death that the criminal received, five can be directly attributed to her. Witnesses came from faraway places, from Gdansk, Jalna Gora, Walbzukh and Warsaw.

Barncewiz, a young Pole who was in the Polish Air Force, came from Warsaw to be of assistance, in giving his testimony. During the time when we were preparing for the trial, Jakubowski received many threats directed at me. I was threatened that I would be killed, if I continued with my investigation. I was neither frightened, nor was I deterred. I personally interrogated the witnesses and made sure to receive truthful testimony. Occasionally, I had to make use of threats of my own, in order to obtain reliable testimony. The trial lasted for three days, in accordance with al of the prevailing procedures. The family of the accused hired a Jewish defense attorney, by the name of Stanislaw Dumnayewsky. There was not a single Polish lawyer who would take the case. Dumnayewsky himself was a Holocaust survivor, but in exchange for a fee of one million zlotys, he agreed to defend the criminal, the murderer of his own people. I said to him: ' As a Jew, and Holocaust survivor, at the very least, limit yourself to defense, and don't do any more than is required of you in representing your client.' At the end of the hearing of all of the eye witness testimony, and after the defense attorney's summary, Jozef Gurneiwiec was sentenced to death seven times. He was taken by the police to prison. At that time, the prison did not possess separate vehicles for transporting dangerous prisoners, but rather they were open autos. Tens of police guarded the prisoner. Despite this, he managed to leap between his guards in one of the turns along the way, and fled into the wreckage of a rather large house, that had stood ruined since the days of the bombing of the city. He entered the cellar on the run, a cellar that resembled a labyrinth. the U. B. personnel immediately surrounded the house. It appeared that the criminal had managed

to escape from the law. the police said to me: 'Nu, Dr. Narkonsky, you will be the first to pay for the consequences of this judgement... for your own safety, we advise you to move, and come to live in our premises.' Suddenly, we heard a shot. One of the young officers, who had pursued Jozef into the cellar, ran into him, face-to-face. Jozef was stronger than this officer, and in the scuffle that ensued between them, he wrested the rifle from his hand. But the officer had other weaponry at hand – a pistol. He quickly fired the pistol and shot Jozef in the leg, and only after wounding him this way, was he able to overpower him. This time, he was put in irons, put back into the car, and thrown into a cell on the Death Row of the prison, where he lay, without receiving any medical attention for his wounded leg.

Page 220: *The Criminal, Jozef Gurneiwiec, apprehended by Polish security forces, after he attempted to escape, immediately after he was sentenced.*

Taken by Dr. Narkonsky

Page 221 (Top): *An Invitation to Dr. Narkonsky to come to Court, in the matter of the trial of Gurneiwiec.*

Page 222 (Bottom): *A Newspaper Headline: 'Mr. Jozef,' 27.11.47*
The Hangman from Baranovich is Hanged

On the following day, I received a letter from the prosecutor, that I was to be prepared, in a substantive way, to participate in the implementation of the sentence, which was scheduled for 26.11.47. This was merely two days after sentence was passed. Jozef was taken to the gallows with his leg bandaged, in the wake of his being wounded, and he was suffering from fever, and pain from the filth, but was fully aware, and he recognized me and said: 'Now your vengeance will reach its climax.' I promised him in one of my interrogations, that I would be present at his hanging, and indeed, now that had come to pass. But this chapter had not yet run to its conclusion. The gallows stood in the center of the prison yard. On its bottom, was a moveable platform, operated by an electric switch. The hangman was masked (I knew who it was), and he put the noose around the neck of the criminal, and pressed the button. Night was beginning to fal. The sentenced individual fell into a pit. After five minutes, I peered into the pit, and to my dismay, I noted that he was still alive. I drew near to him, and noted that the noose was bent over his chin, and not his throat. I turned to the hangman and said: 'You do not know your craft,' and the hangman took off the noose, and put it around the throat of the criminal. When a number of minutes had gone by, I confirmed his death. His body was not turned over to his family, but burned on a dung heap.

The local Polish papers were full of descriptions of this trial, as was the case with other war criminals.

Newspaper Excerpts

(Sources turned over to Yad VaShem in Jerusalem)

Excerpt from the Polish Newspaper "Western Daily"

Dated 4/5/47 in Wroclaw (Translated from Polish).

'In one factory, Jozef murdered 20 workers suspected of being members of the underground. On one occasion, he hung 11 partisans at the liberty memorial. He abusively assaulted women and children, and devised various bizarre tortures for them. In interrogating the accused, Narkonsky was assisted by Hirsch Mukasey, who was also a Jew from Baranovich. In addition to war crimes, Jozef continued to be active in the illegal underground, whose objective was to bring down the presently sitting government in the country of Poland. Using he contacts through the auspices of the Sztarna family, he developed a relationship with a member of the underground named Baran, and gave him a pistol, with the knowledge that he would use it to engage in armed robbery for the purpose of obtaining money for the activities of the underground. Baran was captured during an attempted robbery assault against the house of Dr. Szwarba in Wroclaw, and was sentenced to life imprisonment. The conspirator, Eugenia Sztarna, was sentenced to seven years in prison.'

Excerpt from the Polish Newspaper '*Slowo Polskaya*'

Dated 20/10/47 (Translated from Polish).

'Jozef was active in the years 1941 - 1944. At first he worked as a translator, being fluent in the languages, Polish, German, Lithuanian and Russian. However, in reality, he was the one who organized the Baranovich ghetto. He rose in the ranks to become an officer of the S. S. At the same time, he took up residence in a lavish villa, furnished with furniture taken away from the homes of Jews. He took part of this in the '*aktion*' of the killing of the Jews of Haradzišča, where 2,000 Jews were killed. In a like fashion, he participated in the killing of Jews in a number of towns near Baranovich: Njasviz, Kleck, Stoubcy.

The first aktion in the Baranovich ghetto commenced on March 4, 1942, in which there were more than twenty thousand people. 'The man of blood' ran from house to house, extracting people from their hiding places, and shooting them. Fifteen witnesses give testimony and verify his crimes as an executioner, and an accomplice to the Germans, in great detail.'

Excerpt from the Newspaper, '*Niederschlesia*'

By A. Ber (Yitzhak Turkov)
(Brother of the well-known actor, Turkov)

[Dated] 5/10/47 (Translated from Yiddish)

'For an extended period of time, Jozef managed to elude the hand of the law and justice. He even tried his luck after he was sentenced to death, in his attempt to leap out of the car that was taking him to prison. But in this case, luck did not shine on him, his end being – on the gallows. It is possibly that we would not tarry at great

length over the details of the incident. There are thousands of 'Jozefs' still walking around free. Many of them are in the process of achieving prominence in the eyes of the Americans and the British, who, with the help of such 'Jozefs,' who bathed themselves in Jewish blood, want to 'rehabilitate Germany.' We give special prominence to this incident, to underscore the role of the witness who helped bring Jozef to stand before the gallows. This is a man of substance, in his professional life, searching for traces of the murderer, exposing him, and turning him over to the institutions of the law, gathering the evidence about all of his criminal acts, finding the witnesses, and becoming the informal prosecutor on behalf of 30,000 exterminated Jews. He stems from the Baranovich Jewish community, this is Dr. Narkonsky of Wroclaw. It is clear, that his effort in bringing Jozef, the murderer of our fellow Jews, to the gallows, cannot heal our wounds, but the essence of the matter is, that in the curse of dealing with our day-to-day concerns and issues, these wounds sometimes can be forgotten. The 'Jozefs' place their hopes in such forgetfulness. Accordingly, it is important to emphasize, and also to bless the dedication and commitment of Dr. Narkonsky, and those like him, who resist such forgetfulness. They are not only avengers, they arouse and stimulate our conscience, and the conscience of the world.'

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Jozef was hanged, but many of his comrades till walk around free. During the course of the interrogations, Jozef told me a great deal, and gave me material that helped me get on their trail. I continued with my investigations, and even though I was the director of the hospital, my work at the U. B. was more important to me. I would get there early in the morning, and pursue each and every piece of news, every bit of information, or rumor, about war criminals that were being sought, and especially the ones from the Baranovich district.

The Trial of Dr. Prawko

One morning, a pleasant woman appeared in my office, wiping a tear from her eyes, and introduced herself, 'I am *Doktorowa* (the wife of Doctor) Prawko, a 'colleague' of yours from Baranovich. I did not know Dr. Prawko, because he was younger than I. the woman continued to speak and told me that she was the daughter of a Russian Orthodox priest, and that her husband was also the son of a priest. These priests were friends, and accordingly so were their children. Her husband, a good man, that could not harm even a fly, was friendly to Jews. At this point, a red light went off in me. Many war criminals would aver that they had Jewish friends, and saved many Jews from death.

Dr. Prawko worked in the Baranovich hospital, and was engaged in his professional work, which was humanitarian, according to her description. After the war, he worked as an ordinary doctor, a gynecologist, in Zylonka beside Warsaw, however, he fell victim to malign accusations on the part of Poles, and currently is in prison. She heard that I am investigating war criminals, and is turning to me for help in vindicating her husband, who is innocent of wrongdoing. I told her that I do not know her husband, despite the fact that we came from the same city, and are members of the same profession. I required about two weeks time to investigate the subject in a fundamental way, and after that, I will give her an answer. I immediately wrote to Israel, to Dr. Zelig Levinbook, informing him that Dr. Prawko was imprisoned, under the accusation of being an accomplice to the work of the Nazis, and I required testimony concerning his conduct during the time of the German occupation. I received an answer in about two weeks. To my surprise, in place of a letter, I received a package full of testimonials, with the address of the sender being in Polish script, from Allenby Street in Tel-Aviv, and it was to her that Dr. Zelig Levinbook turned, Dr. Leon Berkowicz, and another Jewish man whose name I no longer remember. They provided tangible evidence, which I transcribed, and sent to the court in Warsaw, where the trial was being conducted. I was taken aback by the testimony, because I

suspected that Prawko was no saint, as his wife made him out to be. Among the many details supplied, there was one that was particularly terrifying. During one of the 'aktionen,' a number of Jewish doctors, that had worked at the hospital, hid themselves, among the excrement waste receptacles, among them Reuven Salutsky, his brother, the engineer, Lejzor Salutsky, and some other physicians. They paid money to the attendant, to cover them in excrement, and not to reveal where they were. The attendant took the money, and immediately afterwards, notified the director of the hospital, Dr. Prawko, about the people who were hiding. The latter went over to the waste bin, and moved the excrement aside, that covered the Jewish doctors, and turned to them abusively, saying: 'you are despicable Jews, and you have found a refuge here with us! Your place is somewhere else.' He ordered the attendant to contact the *Gestapo*, indicating that they should come, and take way those who were trying to hide out. As can be understood, they were taken out to be executed. this was just one of the things that Prawko did. It was known to everyone, that, along with another doctor, by the name of Neumik, he was an accomplice to the Germans. These two Byelorussian doctors, would bring jewelry, with pieces of human flesh attached to them, from ears and finger, that had been removed from Jewish victims, to the jeweler Pszakwic. After the war, Neumik disappeared as if the earth had swallowed him up. I searched without success. I concentrated on the Prawko trial. I found out that the name of the prosecutor in Warsaw was Bitensky. the name sounded familiar to me, and it became clear that he was also from my city, a young Jewish man from Baranovich. The prosecutor Bitensky, the son of a tailor, had graduated from the law faculty in Vilna, and since that time, as always, he was a communist. I got in touch with him immediately, and I presented to him with the matter of Prawko. In this trial, I participated only as an observer. After all, I did not interrogate him, nor was I w witness to what he had done. A row of witnesses appeared. This time as well, as was the case in the Gurneiwiec trial, Dr. Baroncewicz testified, who had lived in the city during the occupation period. One of the witnesses was the jeweler Pszakwic. He had received, from the Germans, the jewelry store and the equipment of Dobrowkin, a Jewish jeweler and watchmaker. I looked upon Pszakwic with suspicion. He had accumulated a substantial fortune during the occupation period, and accordingly, he was a model of what it meant to be a German collaborator. My personal role in the trial was to prepare the testimony, and organize the trial, that included discussions with the prosecutor, on the one side, and with the defendants and their counsel on the other. However, we needed Pszakwic's testimony. I positioned him as a sort of 'state witness,' and I warned him that if he did not tell the truth, his own blood would be on his head. Pszakwic testified, that Prawko would bring him a great deal of jewelry, and from these, he made gold ingots. He went out of Baranovich in a train car, supplied by the Germans, with a great deal of booty. Mrs. Liss also appeared to give testimony, this being the same Mrs. Liss who testified at the Gurneiwiec trial, the scourge, in Wroclaw. On the basis of the testimony, Prawko received a sentence of 15 years of hard labor in the coal mines. He did not receive the death sentence, because even though he participated in the German undertakings, he personally did not kill any people. fifteen years of hard labor in the coal mines is a severe enough punishment in its own right, and not many emerge from such an ordeal alive.

The Criminal Kalko

Another war criminal, about whom I worked in compiling evidence against, was Kalko. He was a murderer with the appearance of some malign animal. He was a Byelorussian from Swicilowicz, who was sent by the Nazis to an officer's course in Minsk, and he returned from there to become head of the Byelorussian police of the city.

Regarding Kalko's Deeds taken from Newspapers

From '*Slowo Polskaya*'

From the 27/10/48 Edition in Wroclaw
(Translated from Polish)

'Two war criminals were captured. Mikolaj Kalko, who had taken up residence in Lowak, and Mikhail Zalwa from Wroclaw...' 'Kalko was the head of the guards at the Koldichevo camp beside Baranovich. From 1943, until the entry of the Red Army into the area, approximately thirty thousand Soviet prisoners of war were exterminated. In the period of 1941 - 1943, Mikhail Zalwa worked in agricultural properties in Germany, becoming an accomplice in the work of the Gestapo.' Kalko's trial was short. It lasted for three days, from morning till night. He confessed to everything, but he pleaded not to be sent back to Baranovich. Alongside every branch of the U. B. there was a representative of the Soviet N.K.V.D. War criminals that had worked in the Russian sector, were taken to the location of where they committed their crimes. It was there that an additional trial took place, and the sentence was carried out. As understood, all of Kalko's pleading didn't help him, and he was sent to Baranovich, and there, he was taken out to be executed.'

Criminals Against Humanity from the Koldichevo Camp

From 'The Workers' News' 11May 1956
(Translated from Polish)

'Koldichevo was a Hitlerist extermination camp, 18 km from Baranovich, beside Haradzišča, a place where, between the years 1942 - 1944, more than twenty thousand people, Jews, Soviet partisans, Polish doctors, priests, and lawyers, were murdered. The Koldichevo camp will remain etched in the memory of all those who experienced the Gehenna of the German occupation in the cities and towns of the Baranovich district. In history, the name of this place will be remembered, with obloquy, among the places where the 'murder of a people' was implemented, against the Jewish people, as a tragic place of torture and death, of victims, innocent of any wrongdoing.

Immediately after the liberation, in the year 1944, a special national investigation commission went out to this location, from the Soviet Union. In the camp, an enormous mass grave was found, in the configuration of the letter 'T,' 35 meters long, and 3 meters deep. In it, the bodies of men, women and children were found. In the course of the excavation, the bodies of 500 adults and 14 children were disinterred. The adults were shot in the back of the head, at the time that their hands were tied with barbed wire. The children were pushed into the pit while they were still alive and covered with earth. Close by, on a parcel -- that the local populace calls Lazy – a crematorium was found. Additional mass graves were found beside it, on which trees had been planted, and were growing. Pits and graves were found in many locations throughout the Baranovich district To our great pain, not many [sic :living] witnesses remained. The leaders of this Hitlerist camp made an effort not to leave any traces behind...'

War Criminals from Koldichevo, Bobko and Others

From 'The Workers' News' 3/12/1957
(Translated from Polish)

'From the trial proceedings in court, it was established by eye witness accounts, that in 1942, Bobko was

appointed to build the Koldichevo camp, which at the time, was considered as a camp dedicated [housing] Poles and Jews who were forced laborers. He was appointed by the S. D., in accordance with the decision of the official in charge in Baranovich, the German Amelung. His deputy was Leiusz. At the time that the pursuit of the local populace intensified, Poles and Jews, the labor camp was transformed into a death camp. In the verification of the guilt of the accused, the court relied on witnesses who knew Bobko, Warnik, and Leiusz very well, even before the war, and afterwards, as the command of the camp guard.'

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'In a hall that was filled from end-to -end, a trial was conducted against a Byelorussian national, Victor Diro, who was captured inside Polish territory. Diro was accused of war crimes, in the Koldichevo extermination camp, in which he was a junior officer of the camp guard. Diro was sentenced to death. A short time after Diro's trial, the security forces arrested another person in Lodz, named Golub. He, too, was one of the guards at the Koldichevo camp, and served under the leadership of the 'Senior Commander' Bobko. Diro received a punishment commensurate with his crimes.'

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During this very period, when trials were going on in Poland against the war criminals from the Koldichevo camp, the Soviet security forces succeeded to arrest and imprison several of the guards of the camp in the Baranovich district, that had heretofore managed to conceal themselves, in isolated shacks in the depths of the forest. In a like fashion, several members of the Byelorussian police were arrested who were members of the '*Schutzmannschaft*.' Among those detained was Leonid Sienkewicz, Bobko's deputy. An eye witness to many of the crimes told that he saw Bobko and Warnik shooting and killing 100 Jews from Baranovich. After all of the testimony was given, and they returned to Bobko's name, he was accused of the entire list of war crimes, according to the special decision of the decision of the government of the Soviet Union. One person, named Peisczni, gave testimony before the Soviet prosecutor, that already in the year 1941, Bobko was a member of the police, and together with the Germans, and detachments of Lithuanian nationals, went into the forests, around Baranovich and Haradzišča, and there, shot groups of Jews. Bobko, the Byelorussian was the commandant of the Koldichevo camp. It was he who gave the orders that people were to be shot to death, and even personally shot people completely innocent of any wrongdoing. He stood at the head of a detachment that engaged ion pursuit of Soviet partisans. He participated in the liquidation of the ghettos at Baranovich, Njasviz, and Moucadz'.

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All these facts were established by the court, on the basis on the testimony of reliable people who were detained at the former camp, or were residents of the area. During the trial, the accused confessed. Bobko confessed to having arranged *selektionen*, and that he was present when people were taken out for execution. Warnik confessed that he killed a woman in the camp kitchen. The accused justified themselves, by stating they were enlisted to do this by force, by the Byelorussian police, and afterwards by the S. S. where they received orders from the Germans to guard the Koldichevo camp and to participate in taking people out for execution.

A long time after many war criminals were seized and tried, Bobko still walked about free. His comrades offered testimony that in the winter of 1944, he was transferred from Koldichevo to Wilejka. There, he was the head of Unit 13, known infamously as the dregs of the S. S. and Byelorussian forces. On February 28, 1956, members of the security forces detained a man named Stepan Bokowski, who was suspected as having complicity in the acts of murder in the Koldichevo extermination camp. He immediately admitted that his name was not Stepan Bokowski, but rather, Sergei Bobko. Similarly, he admitted that he was, indeed, the head of the 'labor' camp (according to his words), in Koldichevo. For 12 years, he had managed to hide from the law, and thanks to his name change, succeeded, along with his wife and two children.

Bobko admitted his guilt, but only in a partial manner; it is true that the German Amelung recruited him, in promising him to be head of the city of Baranovich, back then, to serve in the S. D., and tasked him to organize a 'labor' camp, and to this end, he selected the tract of Koldichevo. True, he was the officer and wore a German army uniform, and took part in the killings of the Jewish ghetto of Baranovich, Njasviz, and Moucadz'. And he even participated in the pursuit of Soviet partisans in the Naliboki forests. His unit did not have an important role in these pursuits, according to him, because the unit reached the Neman River, but was unable to cross it, not having any boats. It is not correct that he had participated in personally in the murder of the Jewish populace and Soviet partisans. This was what Bobko's first confession was like, before the officers of the U. B. in Wroclaw, after several days of interrogation by the district prosecutor in Wroclaw. From the line of questioning, it became clear to Bobko that there existed a large body of evidence that proved his guilt. The evidence was based on the testimony of war criminals that had been caught before this time. He attempted to deny these charges, and said that he didn't remember names and dates, and does not recognize people named Diro or Golub. However, it was remembered that in the year 1943, according to the German Jorn, he killed a Jew who was trying to escape from the camp. The removal to execution was public. To his mind, this was a mercy killing, because the hapless victim had been wounded by the camp guards during the attempted escape. Bobko also 'remembered' that orders were given to shoot at people who attempted to escape during this period, when the Baranovich ghetto was being liquidated. He personally did not see the deed, but afterwards, he saw 'several bodies.' In order to prove that what he was saying was true, Bobko referenced Dr. Levinbook, who, in the years 1942 - 1943, was the camp doctor, and now was living in Tel-Aviv. He had submitted testimony to the Polish Consulate in Tel-Aviv, verifying that he was, indeed, the camp doctor, and knew Bobko well as a cruel executioner, that caused the death of many innocent people. In was in this way, that the testimony of Stepan Bokowski-Sergei Bobko was brought to light. The issue remained as to what was the nature of Bobko's deeds, from the year 1944 onwards, from the time that he left the Koldichevo camp, and traveled in the direction of Wilejka, where he participated in the murder of the populace in that area, and in the liquidation associated with the Warsaw uprising. After this, he retreated along with the Germans, and even fought against the Soviet army in the Wroclaw area. Was Bobko in this battalion at the time? As of today, Bobko is in prison in Wroclaw, awaiting the continuation of his trial.'

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One policeman named Leiusz, along with other police, brought the inmates to execution a short time before the liberation of the camp by the Soviet army. At the same time, there was not a person to direct Leiusz in what to do, and did not give him any order to investigate whether the inmates had been taken out for execution. In his zeal, he consulted the roster of the inmates, and found that one was missing. He brought the rest of the police together, and found the detainee who had attempted to hide himself, and they killed him. Among the others who testified at Bobko's trial was Julian Tarlowsky, an inmate of the camp in the past, having been in the camp for three months, and recognized the malign nature of the place, feeling the lash of Bobko's cruelty, and that of his accomplices, on his own hide. As an example; Every night, one of the prisoners was designated as a guard for his area, and was responsible to report to the official guard in the Byelorussian language. One time, an elderly, frail man was on guard, who in no way, had mastered the required regulations in Byelorussian. Bobko arrived while being drunk. The words of the elderly man did not please him. He ripped open the face of the man, using the whip in his hand, on striking him over, and over. On one occasion, a witness saw that two trucks full of people had arrived, adults and children. They were thrown off the trucks. In less than an hour, they were loaded up again, with the hands of the adults bound. The children were thrown into the center of the trucks like stacks of wood. the camp guards, with spades in their hands for digging, escorted the trucks.

The women of the camp were in great danger. Attempts were made to bring them clothing and food. Tarlowsky's wife, who brought him clothing to the extent she could get anything, Warnik confined within the camp. She succeeded in escaping. A different woman, who also had brought her imprisoned husband food, was seized, together with her husband, and shot to death. The witness Tarlowsky was both emotional and nervous, with his lip trembling, and tears in his eyes. The nightmare of those months, despite the passage of so many years, had not been erased from his memory. One witness, Daniel Schwamm, was a Byelorussian partisan. his unit was beside Koldichevo. both the name and deeds of Bobko were known to the partisans, and they were pleased to teach him a lesson and kill him. The command of the unit had sentenced him to death [sic: in absentia], although it was not possible to penetrate the camp. It was suspected, that in such an awesome attempt, the entire unit would be wiped out. However, there were rumors that they had attempted , as it were, to influence Bobko through his father, a resident of the area, that he should join the partisans. It is correct that attempts were made to influence people not to participate in the agenda of the Germans, and that rather, they should join the partisans, but this did not work in Bobko's case. The direction of this criminal was not to the 'ranks of the partisans' but rather to the ranks of the dead... in this trial against three accused: Bobko, Warnik and Leiusz,12 witnesses did not appear for no reason that was satisfactory, and with no justification [for their absence]. The prosecutor demanded that they be made to appear, in accordance with the law. In a like manner, the prosecutor demanded this of the reading in of the testimony, that were submitted to the court of the State of Israel. The defense objected on procedural grounds. his line of reasoning was, that there is no treaty between Poland and Israel on matters of law. The prosecution did not accept this argument, and the Israeli testimony was accepted with its full force. The testimony form Israel was that of Dr. Zelig Levinbook, and Dr. Leon Berkowicz, two doctors from Baranovich. By the end of the trial, the guilt of the three accused had been proven. They took part in the murder of innocent people, in the ranks of the Germans, participated in *selektionen*, organized the taking our of people to be executed, guarding those sentenced to death, 'so they not escape,' and in conveying people to their death.'

From 'The Workers' News' 3/12/1957, Wroclaw

(Translated from Polish)

Page 231: *The War Criminals: From the Left, Bobko, Kukhta, Karalewicz, Sienkewicz*

Picture Taken from the Baranovich Archive

'The District Court, headed by the Judge, Czieslaw Wilsucki, and the judges, Teofil Kowalczyk, and Tadeusz Znaiewski, announced their judgement against Bobko, Warnik and Leiusz. The court issued a sentence of death, and the permanent revocation of their citizenship rights. The accused, Bobko and Warnik received their sentences in relative calmness. Only at the time that the reading,, and pronouncement of the sentence took place, was Leiusz overcome, and he fainted, while Warnik covered his face with his hands. Only Bobko sat for this entire time, erect, with his head held up. After sentence was pronounced, the three were sent off to Baranovich, for a repeat trial, and to be taken out for execution.'

Endnote

In Wroclaw, which served as a way station for many Jews on their way to the Holy Land, Jewish refugees milled about, who had returned from Russia, and those who had survived the concentration and death camps, and that very few that had saved themselves by being hidden by gentiles. Almost at every step, I ran into children, who had Jewish eyes, but were in the company of adult gentiles. These were Jewish children, who were turned over by their parents, prior to their own final departure to the death camps, to gentile neighbors or friends, in order that they be saved. These children were seen especially on Catholic holidays and on Sundays, when the 'adoptive parents' were punctilious in taking them to churches. There were isolated instances of Righteous Among the Peoples of the Earth, who saved Jewish children and afterwards turned them over to relatives, or Jewish institutions. The Bishop Szeptycki, one of those Righteous Among the Peoples of the Earth, ordered his priests to save Jewish children at all costs, and to conceal them in monasteries. The priests fulfilled his order, and zealously guarded the names of the parents and relatives, with the intent of turning them over to their families after the war. After the liberation by the Russians, the priests were directed to turn the children over to orphanages run by the state., where they were not educated in the spirit of the Christian religion. However, the régime did not raise any objection to giving the children back to their Jewish families, although, to our great sorrow, only very few of these remained alive to insist on taking them back into the bosom of Judaism.

In the hospital where I worked, thee was a large maternity ward. Many of the delivering mothers were single Polish women, who had children whose fathers were soldiers, from the Red Army, as well as the German army. More frequently than not, these mothers would leave the hospital, and leave their children behind. The welfare department of the city was not equipped to gather and give shelter, to all of these abandoned infants, either in children's homes or orphanages. The director of the welfare department placed the burden on me, to place the children up for adoption to the best of my judgement. Formalities were expedited in a swift manner. When the matter became known publicly, they turned to me, among others, also Jews who had lost their families in the Holocaust, and wanted to adopt children. Many of them made *aliyah* to the Land of Israel. In the city, there was an agency called 'The Youth *Aliyah*,' headed by an individual named Feldenkreis, that dealt with abandoned Jewish children, and organized their *aliyah* to Israel. I had a substantive connection with the 'Youth Aliyah,' and it was not only once, that I escorted families and the adopted children as far as the Czech Carpathian [Mountains], on their way to Austria or Germany. The children that traveled, without adoptive parents, were taken in, by-and-large, by the kibbutzim. Entire groups of Jewish refugees passed through Wroclaw on their way to the Land of Israel, or to the West. Among them, could be counted those who left my city, Baranovich, and its environs. I helped them to whatever extent I could, whether in my capacity as a physician, or as a worker in the U. B. security office. I also cooperated in my work with the emissaries from the Holy Land, from the standpoint of implementation. I assisted them in getting medical help for free, from the hospital that looked after the sick – who were pending *olim*. We also procured the appropriate 'documents' for them. Having strong ties to the Israeli officers in Warsaw, with the officer Barzilai, and the secretary Dagon ,I was designated by them as a doctor, who was responsible for all matters, pertaining to *aliyah*, in Lower Silesia.

During the 11 years of my stay in Wroclaw, I was privileged to see 11 war criminal receive the punishment that was due to them, death by hanging, or imprisonment in Russia, where they had carried out their crimes.

During this entire time, I was in contact with my sister, and my relatives and friends in Israel. My two brothers, Fyvel and Leon, made *aliyah* from Soviet Russia by way of Poland. The nature of my position did not permit me to leave Poland, and I waited for the right moment. That time arrived when the head of the

country at that time, [Wladyslaw] Gomulka, decided to permit the *aliyah* of the remnant of Jews from Poland to Israel. That *aliyah* acquired the nickname of the 'Gomulka *aliyah*,' by the émigrés from Poland. The Pole, Jakubowski, who was loyal to me, joined this wave of immigration. His Jewish wife had influenced him to make *aliyah* to Israel.

I made aliyah in the year 1957 with my family, my wife and child. Not a trace of any member of my profusely branched family remained on Polish soil. I turned over the material used in the Gurneiwiec trial, which I had worked so hard to compile, to to Yad VaShem.

Epilogue

By Dr. Leon Berkowicz

My dear friends,

We are still too close to the Holocaust, and because of this, we cannot comprehend the magnitude of our calamity.

For me. this is, not history and nor will it ever be for me. This is a part of me, and I do not want to forget this, I cannot! Even it causes me pain, I owe some of this agony to the deceased. I will continue to remember, and it will not matter how painful the memories are. This is my sacred obligation to the martyrs!

I am filled with rage, when the Poles say, 'But we too, lost three million people!' And the Russians lost twenty million people in The Second World War. The facts are correct, but it means little. For the Russians and the Poles this was ten percent of their population, terrifying enough, in its own right, but for us, for the Jews of Poland, this was ninety-five percent of the people. Most of the Russians and Poles were killed in combat, while our people were put to death by gas, man, woman and child. For our dead, there are no graves. We were victims of an ideology, whose core purpose was the extermination of all Jews. A bureaucratic structure was created, whose sole purpose was to exterminate a people, using the possible means. In 1903, a pogrom was carried out in Kishinev, in the course of which, forty-nine Jews were killed. forty nine!

I could not fall asleep that night, in which, as a lad, I read Bialik's poem, 'In the City of Slaughter.' Six million Jews were killed in the Holocaust! A satanic agenda was created, whose effect was to inflame the latent enmity of the local populace, to such a level, that this very populace aided the Germans with ardor, in their satanic agenda for our elimination, and we were degraded and abused at first, and exterminated much later on.

Frequently the question comes up; why did we not defend ourselves, why did we not rebel and kill? The question is simple, but not so the answer. It is understood that their were several uprisings in the ghettos, and a number of rebellions in the camps, but they were modest, and much too late.

It is worth understanding why this was the case, and I will attempt to shed some light on several facts. When you stand against a powerful and cruel force, that is impervious to all feelings of compassion, that harbors only the thought to exterminate you, and when there is no place to run to, you are suppressed and made to capitulate. You do not think of rebellion, but rather hope for a quick death.

When I was surrounded by Ukrainians in the prison in Lvov, when the slaughter was continuing all around,

with no end in sight, I did not plead for salvation, but for a quick death. When the Jews reached Auschwitz in sealed cattle cars, after five - ten days of Hell, without food or water, without air to breathe, they encountered troops of the S. S. on debarking, with their dogs, ready to leap, to wound and to maim. Even if they knew about the gas chambers (many of them did not know), even if they breathed in the choking stench of the bodies being burned, it was enough to see the murderous countenances of the Ukrainians, their satanic smiles, and the rifles they had aimed at the ready, to know that not one of them, or their children, could hope for salvation.

The mothers hugged their children, and the old people, and quietly went their last way, '*die letzteh veg.*' The strong adults, were left to live temporarily, were sent to an energy-sapping labor, that inflicted wounds on them, and in a short while, they lost all of their strength. Their will to live simply flagged, with every eruption of the terrifying cloud of smoke that issued forth from the smokestacks of the crematoria, a harbinger of no good. When you are weak and hungry, with a number tattooed on your arm, your head shaven, and wearing wooden shoes, in an area that is unfamiliar to you, a menacing local population – you don't think about escape. You become ossified, struck dumb, and aligned with your fate.

In the first days of the war, hundred of thousands of Russian soldiers fell into German hands, and only rarely did they show any resistance. The unexpected blow was so strong, so uncompromising, to the point that their very will was broken. Strong and robust young men, who had gone through military training, and had a very strong love for their Motherland, simply folded under the devastating assault. As a result of this, when they were incarcerated in prisoner-of-war camps, under frightful conditions of hunger, beatings and periodic degradations, the resistance should have come from them, and forward. They had neither the strength nor the will to fight (out of five million prisoners-of-war, only one million survived alive). We stood against a mighty and intimidating satanic force, with no hope of being saved, not a spark of possible rescue. In the ghetto, it was easier to die than to live.

The Germans and the police trapped the Jews in the cities, and the peasants combed the villages and their surroundings. The word of the day was: ' On Sunday, we go to church, and on Monday we go to kill Jews!'

The hate, that had been pent up for centuries, burst out with a viciousness that has no peer in all the annals of history.

The pogrom carried out by Chmielnicki three centuries before (in 1648) extracted one hundred thousand victims. During the ensuing generations, we though of this as the avatar of all pogroms. From the '*Umschlagplatz*[22]' in Warsaw, over four times that number were sent to the gas chambers. Auschwitz by itself, slaughtered more than thirty times as many living people. The thirst for our blood can only be compared to the lust for our possessions. Nothing was cheaper than the life of a Jew. Nothing was more attractive than a Jew's clothing.

If you are subjected to the stepwise process of de-humanization (isolation, hunger, physical and emotional torture), you are not thinking about engaging in a fight, but rather, how to depart this depraved world, in the fastest way possible.

Despite all this, despite all of the difficulties that we were not given to overcome, there were uprisings, and instances of heroism in the ghettos.

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[22] The gathering point.

For me, and for many others, there was no question of survival, but only the desire to die a death with dignity. Saving your life was not the issue, but rather, taking the life of a German with you.

The Holocaust was – a wellspring of earth-shaking, in a measure that was unnatural. It was a happening without precedent, and liberated the beast within Man, in all its cunning and cruelty. Evil ruled in everything! There was no pity, no compassion.

There is nothing that can be used to compare to what *Amalek* wreaked upon us.

Testimony from the Present

After Yitzhak Szklar

Baranovich 1990[23]

Jewish Baranovich – up to the Second World War, a city that possessed an vibrant Jewish community, institutions of education and charity, synagogues, Yeshivas and Jewish schools – no longer exists.

Only an occasional family remains living there, from the native Jewish families of the city. Despite this, about 2,000 Jews live there, who reached there from various places in the Soviet Union, but there is not a trace of those Jews who established the Jewish community in the city.

Since to time of the Nazi German conquest, only mass graves remain, with no indication of what they are, and without grave stones. The memorial marker, over the mass grave of the 3,000 Jews who were the victims of the first *aktion*, that took place in March of 1942,has been taken down – a monument that was erected by Jewish partisans, beside the 'Green Bridge' after their liberation from the forests. The remains of the bodies and bones of the victims of the slaughter were taken off to some unknown location.

The memorial tablet and monument, placed over the mass grave of the 6,000 victims of the second *aktion*, of September 1942, has been taken down. In its place, a military camp has been erected. On the surface of the ground there, there is no trace of the killing pits, and the enormous mass graves.

The old Jewish cemetery of the city has been razed, and its grave stones plundered, in order to be used as building material, by the gentiles of the vicinity, and also to construct a road. The names written on these stones are still clearly legible to the naked eye. Over a mass grave – beside the old cemetery – the mass grave of the victims of the third aktion of December 1942 – has been paved over by a road. No trace remains of the generations of Jews that were buried in that place, up to The Second World War.

To commemorate the Holocaust, only a single memorial stands on its hillock in the heart of the city, beside the 'Green Bridge' on the Stolpce-Minsk Road. There, 3,000 Jews from Czechoslovakia were murdered, who were brought there by the Germans, and shot.

The monument was erected by the government of the Soviet Union in the year 1969. At the unveiling

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[23] Editor's Footnote: Excerpt by Nechama Zukerman

ceremony, representatives of the government of Czechoslovakia participated. On it, there is no mention of 'Jews,' but rather 'Citizens of Czechoslovakia' that were murdered by the Nazis.

In the design of the monument, there is a bell, that rings with each breeze that wafts through it, and sends out reverberations, of its sorrowful tolling, to the distances.

Baranovich, that city and 'Mother in Israel,' was swallowed up in the Holocaust than descended on the Jewish people, in the murder of a nation, implemented by the Germans and their accomplices, in the years 1941 - 1945, during the period of The Second World war.

And the world saw this, and remained silent.

Page 238 (Top): *A Memorial placed to a group of Czech Jews, who were brought to Baranovich in 1942,and murdered close to the 'Green Bridge,' on the Stolpce-Minsk Road.*

(Bottom): *A close-up of part of the [Czech] Memorial*

Page 239 (Top): *The old Jewish cemetery in Baranovich, before The Second World War.*

(Bottom): *Location of a mass grave of part of the victims of the Third Aktion, beside the old Jewish cemetery, which was razed during, or after, The Second World War.*

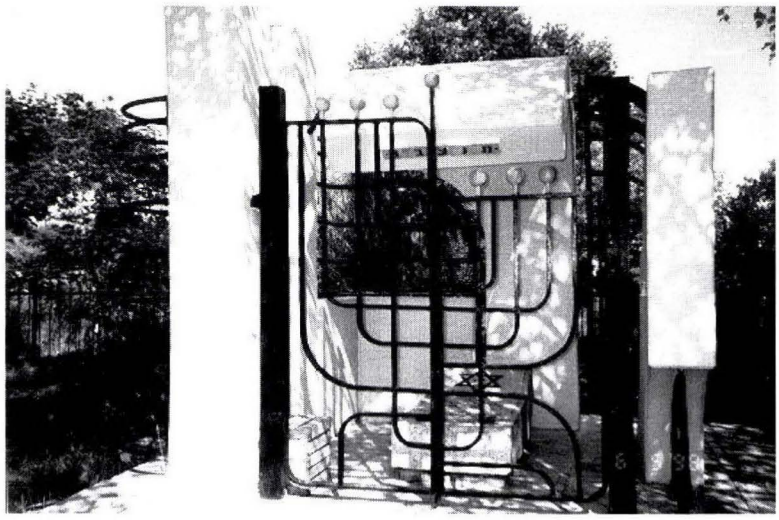
Photographed by Yitzhak Szklar

Page 240: *At Yad VaShem, in the 'Valley of the Destroyed Communities,' monuments were erected to memorialize the communities exterminated in the Holocaust, among them being Baranovich, and the surrounding cities.*

A Baranovich Memorial

The following illustrations are of a Baranovich Memorial created by various members of the Zukerman family, as part of their commitment to preserve the memory of their community that once was, but is no more.

The construction of the monument was supervised by Matityahu Zukerman (husband of Nechama) and his son, Gad. The actual design pages of the memorial were designed by Benjamin Barak Zukerman, an architect, who is the son of Haim Zukerman, a nephew to Gad, and a grandson of Matityahu.



The epitaph on the gravestone bears the following legend, in both Hebrew and Russian:



Here Lies Buried
The Skeletal Remains
Of 12000
Baranovich Jews Gathered
Into the Killing Fields
Who Were Murdered at the Hands of
The Germans and Their Accomplices
And Exterminated in the Holocaust
In the Year 5703 1942