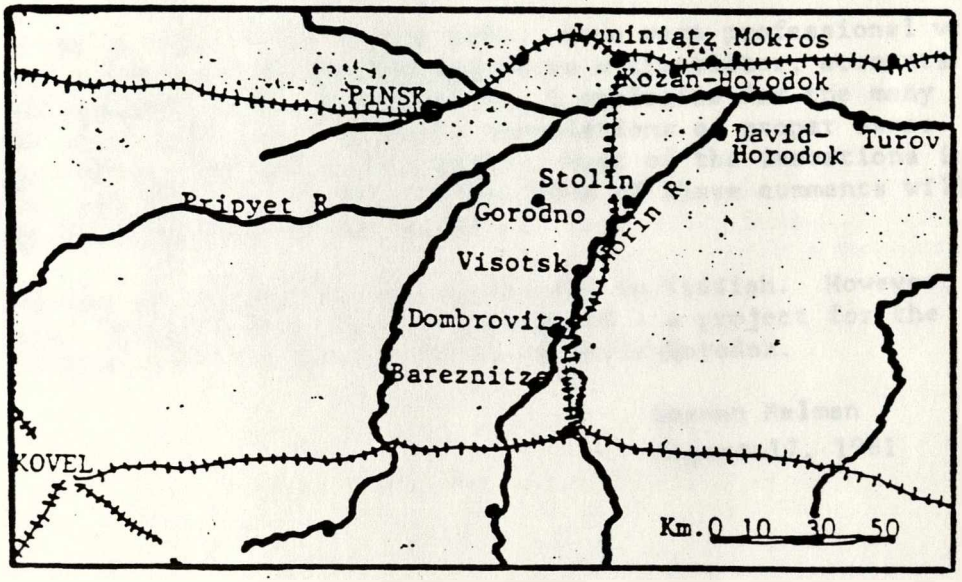
David Horodoker

Memorial BOOK

MEMORIAL BOOK

OF

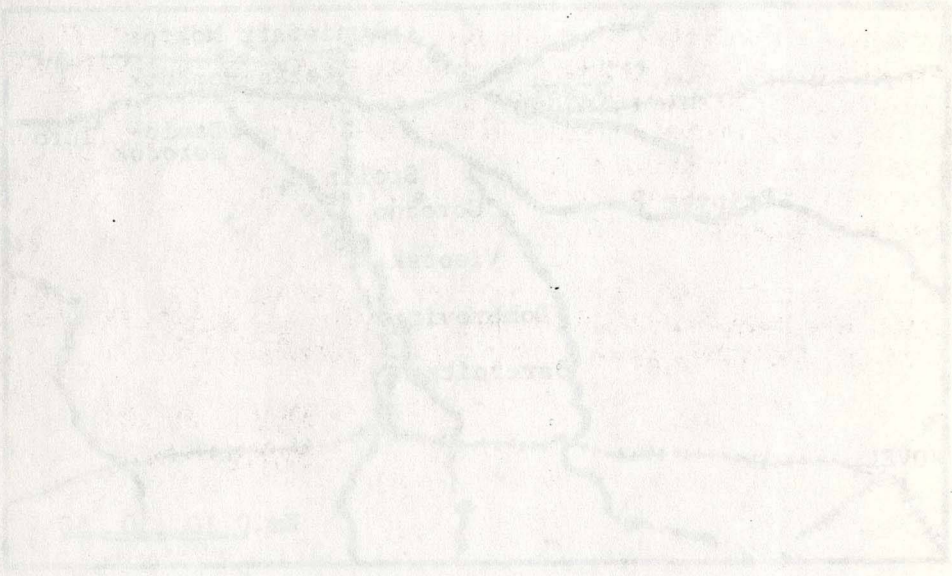
DAVID-HORODOK



Translated from the Yiddish and Part of the Hebrew Original

17th of Av, 5741 - August 17, 1981

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Translator's Note

The 17th of Av, 5741 is the fortieth anniverary of the destruction of the Jews of David-Horodok. On that day in 1941, 3000 Jewish men were murdered, and their women and children were driven out, most of them dying within the year.

For many of the survivors who were wise enough or fortunate enough to escape the holocaust, the painful memory has dimmed. For their children, grand-children and great grand-children, there is no memory - only the name of a town from where the old folks came - impossible to find on the map.

The Memorial Book of David-Horodok was published in Hebrew and Yiddish in 1957. This translation has a double purpose: to teach the English-speaking descendants of the David-Horodokers about their roots and to revive the memory of the tragic martyrdom of our relatives and friends.

Many authors contributed to the book. None were professional writers. This, coupled with my own amateur status as a translator, accounts for the uneven quality of this translation. I apologize for the many inaccurate and inconsistent phonetic translations of proper names. This was in part due to the multi-authorship. Most of the insertions in parentheses are mine. I am afraid that some of these comments will insult the intelligence of the reader.

Much of the Hebrew original is duplicated in Yiddish. However, some is not, and this has not been translated - a project for the future, perhaps for another descendant of David-Horodok.

Norman Helman
August 17, 1981

Anna & Spielberg.

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Fortunate is he and blessed shall he be,
Who will perpetuate your tears,
Holy, two thousand year old tears.
(H. N. Bialik, I Wish to Cry)

Oh that my head were waters,
And my eyes a fountain of tears,
That I might weep day and night
For the slain of the daughter of my people.
(Jeremiah 8:23)

Forward

In this book we are together with the holy memory of our dear David-Horodok sisters and brothers who were cruelly murdered by the Nazis.

Let this book serve as a holy permanent memorial for the lives that were cut off without mercy. At the same time let this book be an unforgetable mark of Cain on the brows of those who, like wild beasts, spilled the innocent blood of men, women, children, the aged, and the sick - peaceful and defenseless Jews.

* * *

In this book we have made an attempt to revive and relive the town's business and work-activities as well as to give a picture of the effervescent sparkling life in all its forms and in all its epochs.

Future generations will find in this book, as well as in all memorial books, a reflection of Jewish life in the eastern Europian diaspora in the period before the terrible holocaust.

This book does not pretend to reflect the entire many-sided colorful Jewish life in David-Horodok. In fact, it contains only a small part of the original David-Horodok reality.

Our town was not uniquely different from all other Jewish towns in pre-war Poland; but for those who were born in David-Horodok and for those who spent their youth and a great part of their lives there, this town is an inexhaustible source of unforgettable experiences, of memories and stories, What once was, is gone forever.

* * *

We want to sufficiently emphasize that our town is one of the few communities whose chief murderers amongst the indigenous Belorussian population, the Horodtchukas, were arrested and imprisoned thanks to the untiring self-sacrificing efforts of our compatriot Aharon Dov Moravtchik.

* * *

Fifteen years have passed since the tragic horrible day of the 17th of Av, 5711, the day of the mass murder in our town. The wound has not healed, nor will it ever be healed.

The only thing that we could do to perpetuate the memory of the martyrs was to write this memorial. Therefore, let this memorial send its heart-rending cry to the heavens for all generations.

This memorial book is a product of the collective efforts of our survivors in Israel and the various countries of the diaspora. The descriptions were written by Jews who never were and do not pretend to be writers. That is the special merit of this book which is an expression of unassuming simplicity.

Congratulations to all in Israel and elsewhere who wrote their recollections, gathered documents and photographs, devoted time, energy and effort, obtained the necessary funds and helped the editors fulfill the holy mission imposed on them.

The Editors

* * *

We extend our gratitude and acknowledge all those who helped us publish the memorial book to commemorate the martyrs of David-Horodok and vicinity.

-The David-Horodok Women's Organization of Detroit and Mrs. Hana Spielberg-Granadier who was responsible for a large share of the group's accomplishments.

-The David-Horodok Organization of New York and Mr. Yakov Kitai who accomplished a great deal in gathering material and collecting money for the book.

-Our friends Itzhak Zeldin-Eden, Yosef Lipshitz and Yakov Moor (Kopel Moravtchik), who participated in writing, editing, translating and correcting the book.

-All of those who devoted time and effort so that the book could be published.

-Let this book be a source of contemplation, both in detail and in general, for the entire surviving David-Horodoker family, both in sadness and in suffering.

Let this accomplishment, this book to commemorate the David-Horodoker martyrs, represent a permanent memorial until the last generation.

Committee for David-Horodok and Vicinity in Israel

The History of David-Horodok

Forward

I have been assigned the task to write a narrative history and give a picture of our town David-Horodok in general and of its Jewish population in particular.

I am not a writer and certainly not a historian. I have no pretensions to either. Therefore, I do not know how successfully I can describe the historical facts correctly and in their proper order.

For this book I have used the materials from the YIVO Letters, the History of Lithuanian Jews by S.A. Bershadski, The Settling of Jews in Lithuania and Poland in the Past, Until the End of the Eighteenth Century by I Shipair, and the anthology 1000 Years of Pinsk.

Unfortunately, we were separated from the materials and archives which would have given us a more accurate and clearer picture of David-Horodok.

The history of the town in the last 70-80 years was derived from the recollections of our town elders, supported by my own memories, and also from all those who could add and contribute something.

I have attempted, as much as possible, to report only facts and data, avoiding judgments. I have also attempted to verify these facts.

I am certain that this work is not an exhaustive one. Possibly certain important events will not be reflected in this work. It could be that certain moments should have been described in greater detail, and others abridged. For these flaws, I beg the pardon of my dear readers and compatriots.

I have written this work with reverence and a trembling heart. I consider it my holy duty to perpetuate on paper the history of our town - how our ancestors lived for hundreds of years, built their homes, raised their families, practiced their customs and habits, experienced times of joy and sorrow, and finally tragically perished along with the great majority of European Jewry at the blood soaked hands of the murderous Nazis.

I believe that I would not commit the sin of local patriotism if I venture to say that David-Horodok was an unusual town that was distinct from surrounding cities and towns.

It was a town in which the Jews were pious but not fanatic, and were concerned with both Jewish and general education. The Jews were not ashamed to do any sort of work, but they considered it a disgrace to be ignorant.

It was a town that was Zionistic throughout, with an organized and productive youth who studied and aspired to education and knowledge.

It was the only town in the entire diaspora where, in the pre-war years, the youth spoke Hebrew exclusively between themselves, with the adults, and even with the gentile servants.

It was a town that possessed one of the best Tarbus (culture) schools in Poland, many cultural institutions and organizations, and libraries with avid readers. All public readings and lectures were presented at fully packed halls.

It is painful to write of all this in the past tense, knowing that it has all disappeared and perished in such a tragic manner.

Therefore, my dear compatriots, let me offer you this work as a small modest memorial to our martyrs.

* * *

The General History of David-Horodok

We have no clear idea as to when or how the town was established, nor when the Jewish community began. This chapter will deal with what little historical data is available, with the geography of the region, and with the naming of the town as based on current evidence.

David-Horodok is in the heart of Polesye by the Horin River, 10 kilometers before the Horin spills into the Pripyet River. The Pripyet River is 570 kilometers long, and it connects Volhynia with Polesye. As a result, Volhynia and Polesye are linked with the Ukraine on one side and Lithuania on the other side.

Returning to the question as to when David-Horodok was founded, we must get help from the general history of Polesye which will enlighten us a little. The first historical reference to Polesye is in the year 988. The Chronicles of Sudzdaler Farayaslov describes the portion of Russia that was divided between the sons of Vladimir the Great. It says that one of his sons, Sviata-. folk, acquired Pinsk, Turov and their surrounding villages.

In 1005, a church center was established in Turov and vicinity. Pinsk was included in this Turov diocese.

In those days, all Russian towns were periodically attacked by the Tatars. In 1185, one such Tatar attack so completely destroyed Turov that it never regained its former eminence.

In 1240, the Tatars devastated the entire region to the east of the Horin and the Pripyet. All of the inhabitants fled to the other side of the river and gathered mainly at Pinsk where Michael the Tchernikov duke concentrated the remnants of his army together with the dukes of Volhynia.

The Tatars stayed in Polesye for a long period of time. They developed the area, and they were responsible for the establishment of David-Horodok. They also built the hill by the riverside which served as a fortress. In later years, a Greek Orthodox church was built on this hill. That this was indeed an artificial hill was proven by excavations in 1936-37 which found a variety of implements and graves under the hill.

Where does the name David-Horodok come from? There are numerous legends. One says that it is the name of a duke's child, David. The second legend, a Polish one, that the Roman Ovidius was exiled to the region of the Black Sea, and the town where he died was named after him. A third legend says that the name David is widespread mong the Tatars, and they gave it the name David-Horodok.*

To this day there is a remnant of the Tatar race amongst the inhabitants of David-Horodok who are called Horodtchukas. They are distinguished from the neighboring gentiles by their broad Tataric nose, their clear brown coloration, and by their body build.

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*Translator's note: The author assumes that we know that Gorodok or Horodok means "small town" in Russian.

David-Horodok was established and developed by the Tatars at the end of the 11th Century or the beginning of the 12th Century.

The first historical reference to David-Horodok is from the year 1400, in regard to the treaty between the ruler and the Lithuanian Grand Duke Vitos who became recognized as the independent ruler of Lithuania. In the treaty papers it mentions that Pinsk, David-Horodok and Lodmir (Vladimir Volinsk) were transferred from Vitos to the Staradubian Duke Sigismund Kastutovitch.

This shows that in those days David-Horodok was an important town. From then on, David-Horodok was linked to the Pinsk duchy which in that time included all of Polesye.

In the 15th Century, David-Horodok went over to Duke Uri Samionovitch Alshanski who was the governor of the Lithuanian grand duchy for the Polish King Cassimer Yogalo.

After the death of Duke Uri, the governor of the grand duchy became Ivan Sviatoslovitch, and after his death the Pinsk duchy reverted for a short time to the Polish crown.

In 1427, Duchess Marya became the ruler of the Pinsk duchy. She ruled with her son Vasily until 1495. After Vasily's death, his sister Alena ruled with her husband Fyodor.

In 1521, Baron Fyodor died, and the Pinsk duchy then went over to King Sigismund I. On October 8, 1523, this king gave his wife Vana Sfartza the Pinsk region including Klatzk, David-Horodok and Rahatchan.

During the era of Vana Sfartza, she developed Polesye. She brought in Polish colonists and gave them free land to settle. She cleaned out the rivers and dug canals. She levied a special tax on the inhabitants of Pinsk for the purpose of creating a permanent communication link between Pinsk, Noval and David-Horodok.

In 1556, Queen Vana Sfartza left Poland, ending her rule over the Pinsk duchy.

The Polish king and the Lithuanian grand-duke Sigismund August took over the region, abolished the Pinsk duchy which then became united with Komsk, Zjob, and Boroditch, and they were annexed to the Lithuanian duchy.

1569 was a turning point in the affairs between Poland and Lithuania. In that year, during the reign of the Lublin National Assembly, a loose confederation was created between Poland and Lithuania. This union opened the doors for Polish immigration into Lithuania. Polish culture, especially the Catholic clergy, permeated the entire area. There was a twofold purpose: to Polonize the Russian region, and to convert them to the Roman Catholic faith.

With the support of the Roman Catholic King Sigismund III, the Catholic clergy took to their task with great fervor. Nothing kept them from their work. They destroyed Greed Orthodox churches and monasteries. They let all the people know that as Roman Catholics they could do anything, but as Greek Orthodox they would have no rest or safety.

In order to ease the conversion of the Greek Orthodox people to Catholicism, the so-called Uniate church was created which was supposed to be a bridge between the two churches. The Uniates allowed the Greek Orthodox church to use their own ceremonies, their own language and many of their own rites, and most important, they recognized the pope as the head of their church. As an example that illustrates vividly the fight between the two churches, take the story of the marketplace and shops in David-Horodok. It is a fact that in the spot where the marketplace and its shops stood, there was once a Greek Orthodox cemetery. So how did there come to be a marketplace with shops? Who permitted it? It is only understandable within the context of the fight between the two churches; it being permitted through the Catholic authority in order to wipe out the traces of the Greek Orthodox property.

When the energetic priest Yokniavitch came to David-Horodok, he immediately began to repair the injustice which had been done to the Greek Orthodox church, and in the middle of the marketplace he built a church which stands to this day.

The fight between the Greek Orthodox church on one hand and the Roman Catholics on the other hand, was a very bitter one, and it remained strongly ingrained in the memories of both sides.

We felt the remnants of this even in most recent times. After World War I, when David-Horodok had gone over to Poland, once again the Uniate was brought up, which hadn't been heard of during the Czar's times. The Greek Orthodox priests began to feel less secure both in their rule over the masses and with their possessions. Quietly the war between the churches resumed.

This war would have taken sharper forms had the Poles not been afraid that this would be oil for the wheels of the communist propagandists in the vicinity. At this time David-Horodok was 30 kilometers from the Polish-Soviet border.

Interesting to note that in the religious controversy between the Greek Orthodox and Catholic churches, the Jews quietly supported the latter.

The era of the Lublin Union brought great changes in Polesye in political, religious and economic life.

In 1648, there were great and bloody happenings in the region of Polesye. The Cossack uprising under the leadership of Bogdan Chmielnitzki did not overlook Polesye.

The Polish kindom never had full control over its eastern provinces. The reasons for this are many and varied, for example, the character of the colonists that were brought there. For the most part those who came had left their homes for political, social or religious refuge; or they were seeking an easy livlihood or were simply criminals.

The rebels were not alone in their fight. They were joined by the oppressed peasant masses who wanted to throw off the yoke of the hated nobility. This rebellion was taken up in Polesye.

The years of the Cossack rebellion were inscribed with bloody letters in Jewish history. The years 1648 and 1649 were years of destruction and devastation for eastern European Jewry.

There is no clear knowledge as to how the Jewish community of David-Horodok survived the destruction. There is however evidence that the David-Horodok community took a loan in order to rebuild the devastated town institutions.

Concerning this, there is some accurate information regarding the part played by the David-Horodoker Christians in the Cossack uprising. In the history of Pinsk, it is told that the greatest destruction occured with the attack of the Cossacks, Tatars and the peasants from David-Horodok and Turov. Three times, it is told, Pinsk suffered from the Cossack uprising, but the greatest destruction occured when the David-Horodok Christians participated. The Jewish community in Pinsk was almost extinguished completely.

In 1707, the Swedes appeared in Polesye. However, because of difficulties with lines of communication, they did not stay very long in Polesye. They even began building bridges over the rivers, but they quickly stopped and left the area.

The elders of David-Horodok tell the following story. Once three Swedish soldiers came to David-Horodok on patrol. They went into a whiskey distillery and began drinking from the huge casks standing there. One of them became so drunk that he fell into a cask of whiskey, and he drowned. The local populance was afraid of the vengeance of the Swedish army, and they hid for three months in the surrounding forest. The Swedes, however, did not come because they soon left Polesye altogether.

In 1793, Poland was divided a second time, and David-Horodok remained part of Russia until 1920. From 1920 until September 1939, David-Horodok belonged to Poland. The Red army entered David-Horodok on September 19, 1939. In July 1941, David-Horodok was taken by Hitler's armies, and in 1944, David-Horodok was reunited with Russia.

The Christian Population

As previously mentioned, the David-Horodok Christians, the so-called Horodtchukas were exceptional in all of Polesye.

The typical person from Polesye had a mild character, phlegmatic and pessimistic. In contrast, the Horodtchuk was far from mild, feisty and energetic, more sturdily built and taller. The Christians of the nearby village of Alpin also had a reputation, having stemmed from Lithuanian forebears and never having assimilated with the surrounding people.

The narrowmindedness and hatred that the Horodtchukas had for the surrounding peasants was no less than they had for the Jews. It is interesting to note that they never married outsiders. They went on business throughout the country, but for marriage they came home to David-Horodok. Because of this, for years they did not assimilate and remained the direct descendants of the founders of David-Horodok with Cossack-Tatar blood flowing in their veins.

Their Cossack-Tatar heritage was also noted in the way they made a living. They were not farmers and had no desire for working the land. The gardens

that their women worked were for personal use only. If there was any surplus, the wife would sell the produce at the market, and the money would belong to her. In general, the Horodtchukas, with the exception of a small number of merchants and artisans, had no stable occupation. They did everything. For the most part, their occupation depended on the season of the year. They were fishermen. They were great experts in forestry. Winter they finished wood products and in spring they prepared and hauled the wood that they had worked on during the winter in the surrounding forests to the river banks. They were experts on water, good navigators of steamships, berlinas (a type of riverboat), and rafts which they would take from Danzig all the way to the other end of the Dnieper River.

In the last years before World War II, as the surrounding forests became smaller, they worked farther away. In David-Horodok, there were special brokers who interceded between the lumber dealers and the boatmen, and they would assign the workers to the merchants.

They were good builders, painters, masons, shipbuilders of various sizes and especially good shoemakers. They were also skilled merchants.

Most of the Horodtchukas in spring would travel to fairs selling seeds, summer selling ice cream throughout the land, autumn dealing in red berries, mushrooms and boots, and winter they were occupied at home with shoemaking.

It is noteworthy that they always avoided dealing with middlemen. In shoemaking they would prepare their own raw material, and in the worst case they would purchase their materials from the first hand. They would also go to the fairs throughout Poland to sell their own wares.

The same is true in the meat and wurst business. They went to the local villages to buy meat, prepared it themselves and sold it themselves. The Horodtchukas had the wurst business in all the larger train stations in Poland.

This was a specific people. They wandered throughout Russia before World War I, and between the two wars, throughout Poland. Nowhere did they assimilate. One could recognize them anywhere because of their unique clothing, speech and mannerisms.

Since the time of Czarist Russia, they had a higher social-political status than the neighboring peasants, and this enabled them to improve themselves somewhat. They were strongly given over to Czarist Russia and were called monarchists.

After the 1905 revolution, there was a Black Hundred organization founded. It was a reactionery terrorist group which had the responsibility of supporting the Czar against the revolution. They also established a strong and tight Black Hundred organization in David-Horodok, and it existed until 1917. On a certain sunday, they even attempted a pogrom. Thanks to the self-defense organization of the Jewish youth in particular and the entire Jewish population in general, and also because of the opposition of the magistrate Avtchinkov who had business dealings with Jews, they came out with only a few wounded.

Their monarchist reputation remained with the Horodtchukas even after the 1917 revolution. A portrait of the Czar continued to hang in many houses. They were lukewarm to Kerenski's uprising, and they were outspoken opponents

of the Bolshevik revolution.

At the first opportunity, they set up an armed resistance against the Red army. At that time the Jews also helped, and they paid dearly for it, as will be described in a later chapter. In the district headquarters of the Bolshevik authorities, the Christian people of David-Horodok were considered a counterrevolutionery element.

During the 20 year reign of the Polish power in David-Horodok (1920-1939), the Horodtchuka economy was strengthened, but this did not drive them to assimilation despite the fact that the Polish authorities did not allow them to open a Russian school, and their children were compelled to learn in Polish schools. However, they kept their Belorussian language and Greek Orthodox faith. They would teach their children the Russian alphabet in their homes. When the Bolsheviks returned to David-Horodok on September 19, 1939, they were met with the hateful looks and enmity of the Horodtchukas. With few exceptions, they did not become members of the Communist party and did not take part in political life. They were very disappointed that instead of the nearby Nazi regime, the Bolsheviks had taken over.

Once more, as the Bolshevik regime became established and began requisitioning and nationalizing everything, their hate for the regime grew and they waited for Hitler even more. This was demonstrated at the election which occured in western Belorussia for the national assembly which was supposed to confirm the annexation of western Belorussia to eastern Belorussia. They threw slips into the ballot boxes with the following written on them: "Death to the Communists and Jews", "Down with the Bolsheviks" and "Long live Hitler".

More than once, they threatened the Jews that when Hitler came, they would settle accounts with them.

They kept their word. In the beginning of July, 1941, when the Bolsheviks retreated from David-Horodok and Hitler's forces marched into town, the Horodtchukas were the first in all Europe to assist the Germans in undertaking an "action". On the 17th of Av, 5710, they murdered all of the men in the town.

The entire time of the German occupation, they served Hitler faithfully, and they in turn enjoyed the full trust of the Nazi authorities.

When in 1944, the Red army freed David-Horodok from the murderous Nazi occupation, they found not a single living Jew in the town. They also did not find any of the gentile leaders of the town. They had left with the retreating German army.

* * *

The Jewish Community in David-Horodok

It is difficult to answer the question as to when the Jewish community of David-Horodok was founded. There is not a single remaining historical document that would clarify the question. The records of the community,

even if they had survived, would not have enlightened us much, because it was only 200 years old, and there exists much prior knowledge of the Jewish community in David-Horodok.

To establish approximately when a Jewish community was founded in our vicinity, we must consult the history of the Jews of Lithuania and follow the settling of the Jewish communities.

In S.A. Bershadski's overview of the history of Lithuanian Jewry which was published in 1883 in Petersburg and in I. Shapiro's History of the Jews of Poland Until the End of the 18th Century which was published in 1914 in Moscow*, it shows that the years 1500-1550 were a period of growth for the Jewish community in Lithuania. In those days, many new communities were founded, and the existing ones were expanded.

The stream of Jewish immigration was from west to east. Thus, the first Jewish communities were in the western part of Lithuania. It is clear that, for example, Grodno, Brisk, Lotzek and Vladimir-Volinsk came before David-Horodok, Luminiatz, Staline and others.

IIt should be noted that the community of Vladimir-Volinsk was established in 1388, and David-Horodok together with Vladimir-Volinsk were part of the Staradubian duchy in those days. It is not definite that there was a Jewish community in David-Horodok at that time.

The immigration stream to Lithuania was even stronger at the beginning of the 16th century due to the flight of the Jews from Germany.

The new Jewish communities in Lithuania were founded in the following manner: around each larger community there would arise smaller settlements. In such fashion the Jews pressed ever further into Lithuania. Jewish historians are of the opinion that if you look at a map of old Lithuania, you can pinpoint which Jewish settlements were older. The older settlements are in western Lithuania, and the younger settlements are in eastern Lithuania.

In conclusion, we cannot reckon on an organized Jewish community in David-Horodok before there was one in Pinsk.

An organized Jewish community was created in Pinsk in 1506. That would mean that an organized Jewish community in David-Horodok came later. That doesn't rule out the possibility of some isolated Jews in David-Horodok before that time.

In those days, Jews would drive through the entire land on business. Besides this, they leased monopolies for whiskey making, salt merchanting, innkeeping and tax collecting. It is possible therefore, that in David-Horodok, which had all the modern conveniences since 1190, that Jews lived there long before the establishment of an organized Jewish community.

The first accurate historical knowledge concerning the David-Horodok

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* A current reference source in English is: The Jews of Poland by Bernard D. Weinryb, Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1973.

Jewish community is from 1667. In that year, the Pinsk community took a loan from the Lahishin church for its own needs and for the needs of the surrounding communities. As collateral for the loan, they collected goods from the surrounding Jewish communities, amongst which is mentioned David-Horodok.

This occured after Bogden Chmielnitzki's uprising which destroyed the entire Jewish community of eastern Europe. Those who had fled, returned to their destroyed homes. The poverty and distress were great. Everything had to be set up anew, and there was no available money-broker. They therefore had to go to their gentile neighbors for help. The gentiles came to the Jews, and loaned them money, not out of charitable feelings, but rather out of pure commercial calculation. They made very good business from these loans. They took as gaurantees the studyhouses, the bathhouses and even the cemeteries. More than once, for not paying the interest on time, they would tear apart the studyhouse or not allow a burial in the cemetery. Besides that, the law assured the rights of the lender. For not paying a debt, there were severe penalties, even death.

In the Lithuanian court records of those times, there are a great number of death sentences given to individuals, to groups and even to entire Jewish communities. This shows the great poverty of the Jewish communities in those times. In truth, the death sentences often remained on paper because there was a large gap between the handing out of a death sentence and its execution. The Polish authority in those days was riddled with anarchy. Its power to act was paralyzed, and rebellion against the authorities was a daily occurence. The Jews also did this, but only as individuals. The community debts had to be paid.

In the realm of these debts, there was great friction and controversy between the small communities and the large communities. They could never agree among themselves as to how much each community had to pay. There were religious court suits at the "Council of the Four Lands", and the disputes even resounded in the government courts. This situation changed abruptly with the Cossack uprising. The prestige of the central government authority was greatly diminished. The hardship of the small towns was immense, and they were in no position to contribute their share to the central communities since they didn't even have the ability to rebuild their own ruined communities.

Then the fight intensified between the small communities against the large communities with the purpose of getting rid of their guardianship. In the vicinity of Pinsk, the following communities began fighting: David-Horodok, Turov, Staline, Slotzik and Drahitzin.

The controversy was prolonged and very severe. The central government stood on the side of the large communities, because it wanted to be paid in a centralized manner. The Lithuanian war minister gave an order that the military should aid the large communities in collecting taxes from the recalcitrant small communities. However, the soldiers were of no help. The frequent religious court decisions were also of no avail because of the weakness of the central power which was caused by the separatist strivings of the Polish nobility and especially because of the new confederation adopted by the central assembly in 1764 which cancelled the general tax on Jewish communities, and replaced it with an individual tax of two gulden per head (beginning with one year old children). Thus,

the large communities lost the battle, and the small communities became independent.

Concerning the new tax system in Poland-Lithuania, there was a census taken of the Jewish people, giving us some idea of the number of Jews in that time.

The census was taken in 1766, and here are the results (excluding children less than one year of age) in the following towns:

David-Horodok	-	408 people
Turov	-	316
Haradne	-	109
Staline	-	408
Yanave	-	422
Drahitzin	-	510

We must accept these numbers with some reservation because, for purposes of taxation, the number is not entirely correct. Either the Jews gave smaller numbers in order to pay less tax or the officials gave larger numbers in order to collect more tax. To show that the tally was not correct, we can use the second census which was taken in 1784. The second census gives us a completely different picture:

David-Horodok	-	386 people
Turov	-	319
Haradne	-	47
Staline	-	207
Yanave	-	261
Drahitzin	-	248

It is unlikely that the number of Jewish people in all the towns would decline in a span of 18 years. This is an indication of the incipient decline of the Polish kingdom, and the officials did not carry out their jobs carefully, not believing themselves in the usefulness of the census.

In general, the last years of the Polish reign were difficult for the Jews of Lithuania. The central authority was weak and demoralized; the taxes great; the local noblemen dominated, each in his own way; the Jewish communities tore at each other; and rivalries arose between Jewish merchants. All of this impoverished the masses, and the distress was great.

In that time, two things occured that had a great influence on the lives of Lithuanian Jews. The first occurence was of a general political character which had an indirect effect on the lives of Lithuanian Jews, namely that in 1793, Poland was divided a second time, and the region went over to Russia. This brought a tremendous change in the economic and cultural life of the Jews in Lithuania. The second occurence was of an inner Jewish-religious significance - the founding of the Hasidic movement.

The Hasidic movement began to develop strongly at the end of the 18th century. It embraced great masses. It came as a result of the poverty of the Jewish masses on one side, and from the inner Jewish reaction from the second side. This was also a protest against the severe hand of the community ring-leaders and the powerful.

The new Torah resonated in the hearts of the poor village Jews, tenant workers and merchants.

It is interesting that the Hasidic movement did not have a great influence

in David-Horodok. David-Horodok was not affected by the nearness of Pinsk, wherein Rabbi Levi Itzhak (of Berditchev) resided for awhile as well as the eminent Rabbi Aharon the Great of blessed memory. Pinsk was the scene of a controversy between the hasidim and the misnagdim (rationalists). David-Horodok did not participate in the controversy.

Staline, Sjalbin and Dambrovitz came to help the hasidim of Pinsk in the fight against Rabbi Avigdor who stood at the forefront of the battle against the hasidim. They forbade Rabbi Avigdor to visit their communities. David-Horodok did not forbid him.

It seems that David-Horodok was strongly under the influence of the Vilna Gaon who stood at the head of the fight against the hasidim. In David-Horodok, even in modern times, the religious would observe the anniversary of the death of the Vilna Gaon, and many had his picture hanging in their homes.

In general, David-Horodok was greatly influenced by Lithuanian Jewry, and the struggle concerning the rabbis was greater in David-Horodok than in all the surrounding towns.

From this, one should not conclude that there were no hasidim at all in David-Horodok. There were also hasidim there. Of the five studyhouses in David-Horodok, one was hasidic, the so-called shtibel. The relative number was not great, and they did not have a great influence.

* * *

The Economic Structure of Jewish David-Horodok

We have no certain knowledge of the economic structure of the David-Horodok Jews in the first years of the Jewish settlement there. In order to clarify the question, we must use the material of the surrounding towns and from the general economic structure of Lithuanian Jewry. We must remember that the Lithuanian government opened the gates for Jewish immigration from Germany, not out of humane feelings, but because this accorded with their policy which visualized in the Jewish immigration an element that would revitalize and activate the stagnant economy of the country.

They therefore gave the Jews many rights. Jews were considered freemen (not royal servants such as the peasants) along with the nobility and the landowners. For killing or wounding a Jew, the penalty was death. One could not interfere with their prayers, nor could one call them to court or make them pay debts on the Sabbath. They were allowed to deal in whatever they wanted, and they were free to move throughout all of Lithuania.

In old Lithuania, the government did not collect its own taxes. They gave the job to tax farmers. Understandably, Jews were the tax farmers.

In almost every town and village, Jews leased the following functions: collecting taxes, whiskey monopoly, beer and mead - both wholesale and retail, salt monopoly, the official weights, inns and toll booths.

This last was a tax which each merchant had to pay before he could sell his goods. This tax was called mita. The merchants had to drive along the roads where the toll booths were.

That was how the Jews of that era made a living. In all liklihood that is also how the David-Horodok Jews subsisted.

David-Horodok Jews also had probably begun dealing in wooden articles such as joinery, material for ship building, potash,and tar which were plentiful in the region.

Jews also took to farming and cattle raising. Until modern times, David-Horodok Jews were accustomed to keeping one or more cows. Jews also took up gardening.

Because of strong restrictions by the ruling guilds, as well as their strict religious character, there were no Jewish artisans in those days. Only after the Cossack rebellion, when a large part of the land was destroyed and there was a great shortage of craftsmen, King John Kasimir in 1669 permitted the Jews to organize their own guild. Then for the first time the Jews, who were ruined by the Cossack rebellion, began to learn crafts.

It should be mentioned that the standard of living was very low in those days. They were poorly clothed. Boots were only worn on the Sabbath and in winter. In summer they went barefoot. They would go through mud in sacks. The clothing was made of canvas. Meat was eaten only on the Sabbath, and sometimes not then either.

2. Business in the 19th Century until World War I

After the Napoleonic war, there was an improvement in economic development for Polesye. Victorious Russia became the great power of Europe, and began gradually rebuilding the land, especially South Russia. The Ukraine developed a great movement to build new colonies, a fleet of ships for the Black Sea, and railroad lines. The nearest source of timber for all this construction was Polesye. A broad-based business developed with the Ukraine. This of course affected David-Horodok which lay by the Horin River and in the center of the forest region. In the second half of the 19th century, there developed in David-Horodok a merchant class for lumber production and so-called watermen.

The David-Horodok lumber merchants were, with few exceptions, not wealthy, but they and the so-called watermen

together caused a marked improvement in the merchant business. Lumber dealing was not simple. It required much knowledge and skill. Buying the raw material required expert examination of the quality, and making a precise calculation of how to work the wood, transportation, etc.

The watermen used the so-called berlinas or berlinchikas which were the chief means of communication on water.

In bygone days they used badiaks which were wide heavy boats. However, they were not very convenient, and by the middle of the 19th Century they were no longer used. They were replaced by barges and berlinas.

The barges were usually open and had the following dimensions: 15-19 sajen (one sajen equals seven feet) long, 7-8 arshin (one arshin equals about one meter) wide and 24-28 virshak (one virshak equals almost three inches) high. They carried a load of about 4-5000 pood (one pood equals about 36 pounds), that is 80 tons. The barges were mostly used for carrying firewood and boards.

The berlinas were covered and very large: 17-20 sajin long, 3 sajin wide,and 2 arshin high. They were divided into three or four sections in which they transported a variey of goods. Such a berlina required as many as 18 workers plus a captain.

In spring, they were mostly loaded with firewood or other wood material, and went downstream as far as Kiev and in recent times as far as Yakaterinoslav. A trip from David-Horodok to Kiev would take, in normal circumstances, two weeks. In the summer, the berlinas would work at the banks of the Dnieper for hauling various loads from one point to another.

In the fall season, they would load up with a variety of food items from the rich Ukraine, or with salt, and go up-stream to David-Horodok. The return trip would take about 40 days. Not uncommonly, winter would come early, and they were forced to remain somewhere along the route. In such a case, they were understandably far from their source of income.

This was not an easy business. One was separated from home 8-9 months of the year. One was dependent on weather conditions, such as winds, water depth in the rivers, etc. The business required great skill and knowledge.

Until World War I, this business was a major source of income for the towns along the banks of the rivers. This was a multi-faceted business with brokers, agents and ware-houses.

The larger merchants bought the material and sold the products, while the smaller businessmen earned their incomes through transport.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning the family Bregman of David-Horodok which had at the end of the 19th century a large business. The Bregmans owned many of their own berlinas, and from time to time would make deals with outsiders to transport merchandise for them. They had warehouses in many places. Later they had their own steamship called the Montefiore. They had agents all along the way from Pinsk to Yakaterinoslav who would buy and sell for them, hire workers for them, procure food for the workers, and also determine the prices of produce, sugar, salt, etc. They would also investigate the condition of wood reserves in the Ukraine.

This was a large firm with wide-ranging interests and thereby enjoying boundless credit and trust.

The water business created a shipbuilding industry in David-Horodok from which many Jews and Christians earned their livlihood.

The class of wood merchants and water-men had a strong effect on the development of the town and especially of the youth. The elders endeavored to give their children not only a Jewish education, but also a broad secular education as was required for their businesses.

As a result of the extension and development of the water commerce and lumber business in Polesye in general and David-Horodok specifically, a Jewish community was founded in Nirtcha at the beginning of the 19th century.

Nirtcha is situated at the confluence of the Horin and Pripyet Rivers, and it is 12 kilometers from David-Horodok. The water communication between David-Horodok and the Ukraine, between Pinsk and the Ukraine, between Pinsk and David-Horodok, as well as the water link on the return trips had to pass this particular point. In those days, when business between Polesye and the Ukraine began to develop and water was the cheapest and sole means of communication, Nirtcha became important from a commercial point of view. It was a place that could give a large number of families sustenance.

Just after Napoleon's defeat in 1812, when Russia began to heal the wounds of the war, when they began feverishly building and developing, and when commerce began developing, in those days the Jewish community of Nirtcha was founded.

It was a unique community. It was begun by the one family of Joseph Maravtchik, and in the scarcely 100 years of the existence of the Nirtcha community, it expanded and attained

a population of 100 at the time of the dissolution of the Jewish community. These included sons and daughters, daughters-in-law, sons-in-law, grandchildren and great grandchildren of the same Yosel Maravtchik.

The Maravtchiks ran a unique business in Nirtcha, employing both peasants and merchants. Their existence was based on horticulture which they worked themselves, fishing, raising cattle, and especially in dealing with lumber and wooden articles. They themselves would haul firewood by transport ships to Kiev. They would provide food for the workers on the steamships, rafts and berlinas. They also prepared food for the travelers on passenger steamships.

The inhabitants of Nirtcha were examples of hardy plain folks. They had daily contact with the Jews of David-Horodok, and, thanks to contact with a variety of business people, they were not ignorant villagers. They brought for the children the very best teachers who incidentally were quite willing to go there.

The land which they occupied and worked belonged to the Duke Radziwell. They paid him rent.

As mentioned, the community of Nirtcha existed for almost 100 years. In 1906, this community was liquidated, and all the inhabitants of Nirtcha moved to David-Horodok.

The cause of the liquidation of the Jewish community of Nirtcha is as follows: The Duke Radziwell chose that place to build a sawmill. He was certain that, at such an important communication point, he would make a good business. The extraordinary efforts of the Nirtcha Jews to annul the decree were of no avail. They received compensation from the Duke and with great bitterness left the place where they had lived and earned a respectable livlihood for almost 100 years.

At first it was a great tragedy for these Jews. They had to start building anew in the town, seeking a means of existence. Later they were very pleased with the change. They became involved in the town. They bought houses with the compensation money. In 1914, when the first world war broke out, they would of necessity had to flee anyway and naturally without compensation.

The duke had not made a good exchange because the sawmill did not develop, and he had to close it.

Shops were an important part of David-Horodok life. Having a Christian population which purchased everything it needed (the Horodtchukas were mostly merchants and laborers), and having a large number of surrounding villages - there was room for many shops in the town. In time, a large shop-

keeper class developed in town. In truth, few became rich, and without the help of the bank and credit unions, most would not have been able to exist.

The competition between the shops was considerable. In such a manner they persevered, more or less.

Many families in David-Horodok earned a living in the meat business. The town was surrounded by farm country, many grassy meadows for pasture, and the vicinity was rich in herds of cattle and oxen. The butchers of David-Horodok would buy these cows and oxen both for the town's needs as well as for export, especially to Warsaw.

Amongst the David-Horodok butchers were some bigger merchants who would travel to the Ukraine, mainly in the Paltav region, purchase shipments of cattle and send them to Warsaw. It is of interest that these shipments, along with their attendants, went the entire way on foot.

This was a risky business because there were no standardized prices. The prices depended on the supply and the bidding of the Warsaw merchants. Not infrequently the profit on half the transport sold on a certain day would barely cover the loss on the sale of the second half of the transport on the following day.

The great majority of the butchers were not involved in business dealing. They earned their bread with great difficulty. Three to four days in the week, they would go around the local villages to try and buy something. Bringing it home was also not easy, and selling it involved intense rivalry between the butchers, and, not infrequently, an animal was found to be unclean.

The meat business brought much money and contributed greatly to the economy of the area and especially for the peasants. It also created the basis for the tanning industry which wrought the great quantities of hides in the region. From the processed hides, the shoemakers of David-Horodok produced boots for the entire region.

The meat business also produced tallow which was used to manufacture soap and candles.

The fish industry was very important in David-Horodok. It was a source of income both for the Christians who were the fishermen and for the merchants. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the fish merchants did not bother with selling fish on the spot. That was done by the fishermen themselves, the Christians. The fish merchants would buy up the surplus of fish which the town was not capable of consuming, and they sent it to Warsaw.

There were six or seven merchants who would bargain for the right to purchase fish from Radziwell's lakes. The Christians would catch the fish there, and the Jewish merchants would send them to Warsaw. This was not an easy business, but it was profitable.

In David-Horodok there were a large group of drivers who would go throughout the land with their wagons from David-Horodok to Pinsk, Minsk, Vilna, Brody and Odessa.

As in other towns, they were organized in David-Horodok into a "company", and they worked in partnerships. Along with other Polesye teamsters, they participated in the fast that they decreed at the opening of the Polesye railroad line in 1888.

Incidentally, it is important to emphasize that the development of the railroads bypassed David-Horodok to this day. To this day, the town has no rail connection. The nearest train station is at Lakve on one side, 25 kilometers from David-Horodok, and on the other side Horin-Staline, over 30 kilometers from David Horodok.

In 1898, a group of five drivers organized and purchased a small steamboat called "Vienna" which shuttled back and forth between David-Horodok and Nirtcha, delivering David-Horodok passengers to the large steamships shuttling between Pinsk and Kiev. Not all the drivers were trustworthy enough for this business, and most of them abandoned the partnership. The first years, the drivers who purchased the steamboat continued to work with horses in the winter. Gradually the business developed; they sent another steamboat to Staline and Gorine; and they completely abandoned their previous vocation. Later Pinsk Jews joined the partnership, and a steamboat link was established between Pinsk and David-Horodok.

World War I did not disturb the steamboaters, and afterwards, when David-Horodok went over to Poland, they succeeded in returning the steamboats which were left in the Russian rivers.

After the war, when the Ukraine was shut off due to the new Soviet-Polish border, the development possibilities became somewhat reduced, and there remained only the cruise routes of David-Horodok - Staline and David-Horodok - Pinsk. The existence of the steamboaters was secured by these two routes.

After the world war, as automotive transportation developed, a larger group of teamsters organized, purchased a auto, and began plying over the route between David-Horodok and Gorine. This time however, the venture was unsuccessful.

The two reasons for this were the rapid deterioration of the auto because of the poor Polesye roads, and the huge taxes imposed by the government.

The David-Horodok teamsters were well organized. They were divided into two groups. One group, which worked in the town, transported the wares arriving on the steamboats to the businesses and warehouses, and the second group would travel to the train stations at Lakve and Staline, and in the winter they would also travel to Pinsk. They all worked in partnership, and they would divide up their earnings each week.

It was not an easy way to earn a living, but, with few exceptions, it was a respectable trade, and a few of them were well-to-do.

Craftsmen

David-Horodok was a town with many craftsmen who worked independently. There was no special item produced that was characteristic of David-Horodok. However, having a population of 10,000 souls and many surrounding villages, there was room for a variety of tradesmen who earned a respectable livlihood working for the populace.

The major trades of the David-Horodok craftsmen were as follows:

Tailors who were divided into two categories: those who worked for the Christian population on order or prepared finished products for shipment to the fairs in the town and the nearby villages, and those who fashioned finer things for the Jewish population.

Shoemakers, who worked only for the Jews and for a few Christians. The Christian populace was provided with boots chiefly by Christian shoemakers who sold their products not only to the local Christians but also throughout the entire land.

Blacksmiths and locksmiths who worked mainly for the peasant farmers. They would repair wagons, forge plows and axes, and make a variety of other tools for construction work in the town.

The greatest number of craftsmen were in construction work. These were: architects, carpenters, bricklayers, glaziers, painters and roofers.

Jews also found work in ship-building. However, the majority of ship-builders were Christian.

There were a few who had two trades, one in summer and one in winter.

These were the trades in David-Horodok until the outbreak of World War I.

There were a number of strata amongst the tradesmen. There were some who were quite well-to-do, others who barely had enough to exist, and the great majority who led a modest but secure and respectable living.

The Villages Around David-Horodok

David-Horodok was surrounded by many villages populated by Jews until World War I. These Jews existed from working and dealing with the local peasant populace. It is not certain how long these villages were in existence. We have historical knowledge concerning only two of these villages, that is Alshon whcih was founded by Duke Uri Alshanski who ruled in Pinsk from 1447 io 1492, and Alpin which was named after a Lithuanian boyer (aristocratic landowner) who ruled in Polesye in 1341.

Jews began to settle in these villages after the freeing of the peasants. In general, the village Jews led an unassuming life. Their living standards were not much higher than the local peasant populace. The Jews' main concern was to satisfy the religious and educational needs of their children. Even with the smallest number of families, the village Jews would make every effort to keep a teacher for the children.

Some sent their children to learn in town. For a time before the outbreak of World War I, the number of Jews in the villages bagan to diminish. The youth did not want to remain in the village. They were impressed by the town. The outbreak of World War I accelerated the tempo of migration of Jews from village to town.

The Jewish population was completely dissolved in the following villages: Nirtcha, Chvarsk, Holatz, Liadetz, Bekaisk, Great Arli and Viallamitch. Jews remained in the following villages: Alshon, Ramla, Karamsk, Little Arli, Samihostitch, Tarablitch, Azdamitch, Malishav, Karatitch, Talmatchav, Ludka, Kalk and Kapun. Understandably, their number was somewhat diminished after World War I.

There was hardly any change in the number of Jews in Alpin which was considered a suburb of David-Horodok. The village Rublye had a Jewish population like that of a small town. Just before World War I there were 80 families with a rabbi and two study-houses. There was an organized and Zionistic youth movement. The Pioneer Organization was very strong there, and the first Pioneer Organization convention in Polesye was held in Rublye in 1924. The youth, seeing no future in the village, began leaving. The largest number made aliyah to Israel. Thanks to this, there is now in Israel a reasonably large number of Rublye Jews.

The above description of the economic structure of David-Horodok until World War I shows us that the town did not have any really wealthy men among the merchants nor any really poor among the laborers. In general, living standards were not high, and their demands not very great.

Summer in the town was quiet. The majority of the Christians were occupied in the fields, and the Jewish merchants were on the rivers. The tradesmen would work in the villages. In such a manner, the town was at a standstill in the summer.

In the fall things began to liven up. The fairs would begin. The peasants would bring their surplus produce into town, and purchase their needs for the winter. The berlinas would arrive from the Ukraine with flour, salt and a variety of food articles which they sold in and around the town. The lumber merchants and watermen would arrive in order to confirm the arrangements of prior years, and to acquire new business. The Christian townspeople would also come before winter and buy supplies. Winter was for them the season of marriage. All of this revived the town and its business. If the winter was normal and the byways (both water and land) established in the right time, the lumber industry would be strongly revived, and it was a great source of income for the town.

That is the way David-Horodok carried on a normal existence until the outbreak of World War I which shook up the well established living patterns.

David-Horodok in the Years of World War I

The outbreak of World War I had an unusually severe effect on the town. The mobilizatinn, which called up a large part of the population, the cry of those families separated by the mobilization, the new martial laws, the requisitioning of numerous wagons and horses for the needs of war- were all indications that it was taking on an ominous character. "Experts" were predicting that the war would not last more than two or three months, but everyone was nevertheless upset.

The effect wzs particularly oppressive because, since the times of Chmielnitzki, the town could remember no war. The Swedish bypassed David-Horodok. Napoleon's armies never saw David-Horodok; people in the town scarcely heard of the Russian-Turkish war; and the same is true in the time of the Russian-Japanese war.

At first, after those mobilized had gone off for military training, the town did not feel the effect of war so strongly. Only later, when the Russians had begun wreaking destruction on the Galician front, was the entire horror of war felt.

The head-commander Nikolai Nikoliovitch gave an order that the Jews in the provinces of Suvalik, Lublin and Chelm must leave their homes in 24 hours. Hungry, naked and unfortunate refugees fled through David-Horodok. Looking on helplessly at the Jewish refugees had a shocking effect on the David-Horodok Jews. Understandably, an assistance committee was immediately organized, and the entire Jewish population received the refugees wholeheartedly. They accomodated them in schools and private houses, and provided them with clothing and food.

At the same same time, evacuated Germans began passing through David-Horodok from the region of Volin. These had been driven back by military force. They came to David-Horodok with their own wagons, and from there they took boats on the river deeper into Russia. Waiting for the boats, they loitered on the banks of the river in the town. This resulted in epidemics of disease which spread to the townspeople.

People began to show up who were fleeing from Brisk and Pinsk. Some David-Horodok Jews began looking around for evacuation routes. The Slonimer Rebbe and a few other families actually left. Many families bought horses and wagons from the retreating Germans and prepared for departure. Others drove to Pinsk with the purposeful intention of staying with the Germans so as to avoid being mobilized into the military.

The front came even closer. Panic increased. Cossacks appeared in the town. They took down the bells from the churches so that they wouldn't fall into the hands of the Germans. At night, cannon shelling could be heard. However, the Germans, having taken Pinsk on September 16, 1916, stayed there. Subsequently, almost a month passed, and the front had not moved. As the fall rains and mud came, they began to realize in David-Horodok that the front would not move during the winter, and they gradually began to adjust to the situation.

This was not greeted happily by the David-Horodok evacuees. These Jews, who had bought horses and wagons from the German refugees in order to have something to evacuate with, sold them back. They became accustomed to the nearness of the front. The presence of military garrisons in the town gave a fresh source of income. They had profitable dealings with them, and the economic situation improved considerably.

This situation continued for over a year until early 1917 when the Kerenski revolution broke out.

Even the remote areas far from the center of David-Horodok felt the new refreshing winds that began blowing in distant Petersburg. From mouth to mouth, in the stillness, with eyes gleaming expectantly, the rumors were spread that the hated czarist regime was toppling. Jews silently prayed that it should be true. Then came the information that some duke had poisoned Rasputin in Petersburg, and that the royal court was turbulent. One waited from day to day for fresh news. No-one yet believed that the dream would come true. Was it possible that entrenched hundreds of years old czarism could come apart? Was this not an empty dream?

Then came surprising news. The uncensored Russian newspaper that came to town reported that Czar Nicolai had abdicated his throne in favor of his son.

It was not to be believed. One was afraid to talk of it aloud for fear that it might turn out to be a lie. Then something happened in town which showed everyone that the previous information was correct. The royal representative in town, Avtchenikov, went out into the marketplace, and, in front of everyone, he tore off the epaulets from his uniform.

It is impossible to describe the great joy that encompassed all of Russia. Understandably, the rejoicing was even more among the Jews who freely opened the gates of their towns and offices for all citizens. The first honeymoon of the Russian revolution in the beginning of 1917 gave reason to believe that they were standing on the threshold of a new epoch of equality, friendship and brotherliness between the common people and the landowners, and that, under the wings of this revolution, there could freely develop in greater Russia the economies and cultures of the numerous national minorities.

There was great enthusiasm and tremendous rejoicing as they waited to celebrate the international workers holiday- the first of May in David-Horodok.

May 1, 1917 in David-Horodok

The preparations for the holiday were in full swing. A first of May committee was established jointly between jews and Christians. A special delegation was sent out to the Hussar cavalry regiment, which was stationed not far from David-Horodok, in order to invite them with their orchestra for the holiday. The plan envisioned that the orchestra would play La Marseillaise and Hatikvah at the celebration. However, it turned out that the orchestra did not have the music for either of the two hymns. The musician Velvel Krapal came to the rescue. He wrote out the notes for Hatikvah. Thanks to the help of the old 1905 revolutionaries, the notes of La Marseillaise were also put together. In truth, that which the orchestra then played was not very similar to La Marseillaise. However, the proper feeling was there, and everyone understood that it was supposed to be La Marseillaise.

The day of the first of May was a full holiday in town, and everyone participated.

The first demonstration occured in church. Jews, who would usually pass the hill on which the church stood with a certain anxiety, went inside freely with red flags. There the ceremony was led by a Christian, Misha Tukin. Thanks to the revolution, he was freed from prison where he was serving a fifteen year term.

Leaving the church, a small incident occured. An old peasant woman stood on the small bridge leading to the church and screamed: "Enjoy yourselves; enjoy yourselves; you will yet seek and beg our father Nikolai that he come and restore order for you." Needless to say, they quickly took her away and had a good laugh.

From the church, they went on to the synagogue. There the demonstration encountered Rabbi Ravinski with torah scrolls. He invited the general and the officers inside. The orchestra played the Marseillaise and Hatikvah. The rabbi gave a sermon, and he pledged, among other things in the name of the Jewish people, that together with all the peoples of Russia, they would wage war against the outside enemy until final victory. He added that all the

youth who had not volunteered to serve in the military of Nikolai's regime would now willingly go into the army.

After the street demonstration, there followed a reception for the officers. They prepared lunch and, after eating, there was dancing to the sound of the military orchestra.

For the first time in the history of David-Horodok, Jewish girls danced with Russian officers.

In the evening there was a solemn convocation. In the name of the Jews, Anshel Zeitchik appeared. He was not a David-Horodoker, but he happened to be there as a guest of his relatives. He gave an inspired talk concerning the great friendship and brotherliness between peoples which the revolution had engendered. He then kissed the gentile Yasif Anashka who stood next to him. This made a tremendous impression on all the onlookers. Many people wept with joy.

May 1, 1917 was the happist day in the entire history f the Jewish community in David-Horodok. The dream was being realized that "the wolf would dwell with the lamb" - actually the time of the Messiah.

Who would have believed then, that in 25,years, in the early autumn of 1941, that same Yasif Anashka and all the Horodtchukas who were onlookers at that meeting, would take sadistic joy and pleasure in sending to the slaughter their Jewish neighbors with whom they had lived for hundreds of years.

In those days, there was a strong development of Zionistic and communal activities in David-Horodok. This will be described in another chapter. It should be mentioned that economic conditions had improved somewhat. Jews could move about freely, and there was no job shortage.

The honeymoon of the revolution quickly passed and grey reality arrived. The front had not moved. The war had become sickening and ugly. All of Kerenski's offensives had failed. The people were tired and wanted no more war. The army was becoming increasingly demoralized. Soldiers appeared in town and began selling revolvers, rifles and even machine guns. The Bolsheviks drove out the constituent assembly and seized power.

The situation in the town became unstable. There was no firm power in David-Horodok, and, in the meantime, everything was done by the system of the prior regime.

In the autumn of 1918, The Germans entered the town. They united David-Horodok to the Ukraine. This did not cause any significant change in the economy of David-Horodok because the town was already economically bound to Kiev and the Ukraine. They felt a little more secure with the Germans, and they began to do business with them, making some good deals. The German rule over David-Horodok did not last long. A revolution had broken out in Germany, and the German military began leaving the Ukraine.

In the Ukraine, there appeared Patlura and his bands, and pogroms began against the Jews. However, the Patluravians bypassed David-Horodok. Indeed, one day a group of Dombrovitz gentiles, who called themselves Patluravians, showed up in town, but then they quickly left.

The town remained without governing authority. Train communication became irregular and dangerous. Many David-Horodokers were stranded in various Ukrainian towns and were unable to return home. All business came to a standstill, and there was no available work.

Lakve, on one side, was occupied by the Germans. Staline, on the other side was occupied by the Patluravians. Only David-Horodok was without a government. The town affairs were managed at the municipal court with the aid of several policemen.

It should be noted that there were no assaults or thefts in the town. The municipal affairs were concerned with straightening out land disputes between the peasants, recording land sales, giving out birth certificates, marriage contracts or divorce decrees for the Christians. The Jews took care of all these formalities with the rabbi.

Characteristic of the times was an original punishment which the court authority of those days imposed on a David-Horodoker Jew named Berl Eisenberg for not obeying the law. They caught him driving illegal whiskey. In those unsettled times, even that law was obeyed in David-Horodok. The punishment was as follows: they hung the kettles in which he distilled the whiskey on his shoulders, and a town gentile named Adam Pavuk went in front beating on a drum as they led him through all the streets of the town to the laughter of all the residents.

In this manner the town led a quiet existence, a calm island in a stormy sea of war. The affairs between Jews and Christians in the town were peaceful and normal.

This calm did not last long. The Bolshevik military forces captured Lachve and Luniniatz, and then something occured that shocked and interrupted the idyll of David-Horodok. The leaders of the town, both Christian and Jewish, then made a blunder for which the town paid dearly both in human and material sacrifices.

The Punishment Expedition

The Bolshevik military detachment in Luniniatz sent out a group of soldiers into the surrounding area to requisition food for the troops. They also came to David-Horodok. In Visake, four kilometers from David-Horodok, there were herds of cattle belonging to the landlords which the Bolsheviks wanted to requisition.

Until today it is impossible to understand what provoked the Horodtchukas to set up resistance against the Bolsheviks, and, even more unbelievable, why the Jews then stood along side the resistance.

It is, however, a fact that they organized a defense. They went to the priest and convinced him that he should ring the church bells and persuade the gentiles to join the resistance and not allow the removal of the cattle herds from the town.

The rationale for the resistance was as follows: if they would allow the removal of the landlord's cattle today, then tomorrow private cattle would also be taken.

The Jews, and especially their youth, helped organize the resistance. With joint effort they actually succeeded in their opposition and prevented the removal of the cattle. Some shots were exchanged by the two sides, and, as a result, one of the Christian members from Ravkom named Dennis was killed, and one soldier was wounded.

They foresaw that the Bolshevik military power would react on learning of the events. There was a warlike mood. They removed the bridge on the road to Chuvarsk, erected barricades, and they waited for the enemy. At the same time, they sent a delegation to Staline where the Patlurovians were stationed and asked them for help. However, the Patlurovians could give no help since they themselves were preparing to retreat.

The author of this chapter and his brother were in Luniniatz at that time, running a restaurant. They were acquainted with the staff that had sent the squad of soldiers to requisition the cattle. The staff knew that the brothers

were from David-Horodok, and they came to inquire as to what sort of town it was.

They could not understand what reason the Jews had to oppose the Bolsheviks. In those days it really was madness. Indeed the Bolsheviks had ruined the economy of the Jewish middle class, but they were also the only ones who fought against antisemitism and against all the gangs that carried out anti-Jewish pogroms. In those days there were thousands of Jews who joined the Red Army in order to fight against these gangs.

The staff in Luniniatz was manned by some very competent students from Great Russia who had no feelings of antisemitism. There were also Jews on the staff. Thanks to these Jews, the town came out reasonably well. Under the circumstances there could have been many more casualties.

They sent a strong disciplinary detachment of soldiers with cannon to David-Horodok. Understandably, the town quickly surrendered, and the youth fled. The punitive expedition entered the city. The soldiers were given free rein to take anything they wanted except naturally not to lay hands on the people. That was the exclusive right of the commandant and the political commisar who happened to be a Jew.

Three David-Horodoker residents were executed by the punitive expedition in proportion to the population - two Christians and one Jew, Baytzl Yudovitch. Besides this, they emptied out the town. They took out everything that was movable. At that time there were large food reserves in town that had been brought in from the Ukraine over the summer. This was all requisitioned. They even took good shoes right off people's feet. The David-Horodoker people were forced to take all their requisitioned things themselves to the trains at Lakve and Luniniatz.

The destruction was great, especially the needless sacrifice of B. Yudovitch who was a well known personage, the victim of a foolish poorly conceived action which was not in the interest of the Jews.

The death sentence was carried out in the Christian cemetery, and that is where they buried B. Yudovitch. A few weeks later in Luniniatz, the author extracted permission from the military to bury the martyr in a Jewish cemetery.

This is how David-Horodok paid for trying to resist the authorities. After this episode, the town was put on the blacklist of the Bolsheviks, and the Horodtchukas became the deadly enemies of the Bolshevik regime.

The Bolshevik authority was strengthened in the region. However, the economic situation deteriorated. The town was impoverished. There were no business opportunities and no work. People began suffering from hunger. They went out to the villages to swap clothing for food. The peasants would accept only gold as currency. A pood of grain was acquired with the greatest difficulty.

At that time they began organizing cooperatives. They acquired parcels of land, and they planted it themselves with rye and potatoes. There was no lack of land.

The Bolshevik authority then declared a mobilization. It was rumored that the Poles were not far away, and therefore no-one wanted to be far from home. In order not to go into the military, one could volunteer for forest labor in Siankavitch. This work freed one from military service. Hundreds of David-Horodoker youth volunteered for this work in which they produced firewood for the trains.

However, in one month the Bolsheviks evacuated, and the Poles entered David-Horodok.

1920-1921: David-Horodok Passes from Hand to Hand

With feelings of dread and fear, the David-Horodok Jews received the Poles. Rumors regarding the behavior of the Polish military, particularly the Holertchikas, towards the Jews and the prior reports of a pogrom in Lemberg, gave them reason to be very worried. The sad and shocking news arrived that the Poles had groundlessly shot 35 innocent young Jews in Pinsk. Even though under the Bolsheviks life was very difficult and they were half-starved, they looked toward their new future with dread.

The Poles entered David-Horodok. The Jews could barely look up at them. The regime of the town was very harsh. First of all, they condemned to death a Jew named Krapivkin who was the head of the town's professional union under the Bolsheviks. People were seized for forced labor. Organizational and Zionist activities ceased. Fear enveloped the entire town.

A little later the regime became somewhat milder. They had begun to receive protests from America regarding the persecution of Jews. Morgenthau came to Pinsk on a fact-finding mission, and an investigating commision arrived. The persecution diminished for awhile.

David-Horodokers began to accustom themselves to the new life. The frontier was more distant - as far as Kiev. It became possible to communicate with Pinsk. They slowly began to do business. The chief item of trade was salt. With this item

they determined the worth of all other articles of trade. One pood of salt was exchanged for three poods of rye.

A link was established with America. Delegates came with help. The "giant" became active. An American committee was formed which distributed goods and clothing to the poor. Prior to Pesach, the committee received flour for making matza, and the matza was then distributed to the people. The schools were opened. Organizational life began to develop. An orphanage was established. However, this did not last long. In the early summer of 1921, the air was once again filled with powder. The Poles suffered a stunning defeat near Kiev and began a rapid retreat.

Then began nightmare filled days for the Jews of David-Horodok. Day and night for two consecutive weeks, retreating groups of Polish soldiers passed through the town. People were afraid to go into the streets. Eventually the Poles burned down the bridge and were left on the other side of the river. That was the worst day. In the course of that day, the Polish soldiers would cross over the river to loot the houses. Things finally quieted down at nightfall. The Bolsheviks had arrived at the outskirts of town, and they entered David-Horodok the following morning.

The Jewish population greeted the new authority with mixed feelings. On the one hand, they were glad to be rid of the Polish authority which had revealed its anti-semitic character in the short span of its rule. They were particularly pleased that the tension of the past month had finally ended. However, on the other hand, the advent of the Red Army meant that David-Horodok was now cut off from the rest of the world. The link to America was broken, and the way was blocked to Eretz Israel where many of the youth had planned to immigrate.

Food provisions, which had been sufficient under Polish rule, seemed to disappear overnight. The situation became difficult. Business came to a standstill, and there was no work available. Authority was in military hands. They began organizing cooperatives, but, in the meantime, most of the time was spent in meetings, assemblies and concerts. What would they say in David-Horodok? "They are poor and happy."

However, before long and before one could look around, there came news of the Red Army defeat near Warsaw. Things again became unsettled. The Red Army began a rapid retreat. There was tremendous chaos.

The Jewish populace became terrified when they heard that amongst the first detachments of the advancing Polish army were the Balakovtzes. This was a Russian military group from the "White" army under the leadership of General Bulak Balakovitch which fought alongside the Polish military against the Red Army.

Retreating with Polish military from Kiev, they became infamous for the terrible massacres that they committed on the Jewish population of Volin.

The Bolsheviks retreated from David-Horodok during the intermediate days of Succos, 1921, and a detachment of Bulak Balakovitch's troops entered the town on the night of Hoshana Rabba.

There was great terror. The youngsters and particularly the women hid themselves, and no-one wanted to go out in the street. A few of the bolder ones who tried to go outside quickly returned indoors terrified. The Balakovtzes were adorned with plumed hats embroidered with deaths-heads, and they ran about the streets like greedy beasts. The first ones to be assaulted were Rabbi Dudle and Motle the shopkeeper who had gone early Shmini Atzeres morning to pray at the synagogue. Afterwards they began to pillage the houses and beat up the Jews.

By noon, a larger number of troops had arrived in town, and they were quartered in Jewish homes. The Jews catered to them, hoping that they would prevent the other soldiers from entering and looting them. In many houses, that was the case. There were other homes, however, where the soldier would initially look around to see what was in the house, and, on departure, he would either himself or send other soldiers to remove all the valuables.

The last night that they were in town before going to the front was particularly severe. There were many casualties that night. Several women were raped and many Jewish homes pillaged.

The few weeks with the Balakovtzes in town were a terrible nightmare for the Jewish populace. They tried to associate themselves with the Polish military authority, but the few Polish officers in town either would not or could not help.

In those weeks the situation would change from time to time. Several times military detachments passed through David-Horodok who were former Red army soldiers that had been captured by the Poles. They had willingly enlisted in Balakavitch's army for the sole purpose of returning home. These detachments were well behaved.

The staff of Balakavitch's army, with Bulak Balakavitch at the head, passed through David-Horodok. When the David-Horodoker Jews complained to him about the behavior of his soldiers, he replied that he had ordered that civilians should not be harmed, but that he could not be held responsible in this town where there were many Jewish communists who were the foes of the soldiers.

When the last remnants of Balakovitch's army had left town and the Polish troops were supposed to enter, they thought that the nightmare was over. Unfortunately, it was destined that the David-Horodoker Jews would have to endure a death threat which they would only commute by paying a large ransom.

When the last of Balakavitch's army had left David-Horodok, a small detachment of their cavalry returned, rode over to Rabbi Ravinski and arrested him along with several more Jews. They demanded a payment of 100,000 rubles within two hours. If not, they would shoot everyone. The rabbi was freed so that he could collect the money and valuables.

It was horrible to see how the rabbi had to go over the streets with two sacks hanging from either side and pleading with tears that everyone should give as much as he could. The Jews began bringing golden rings, chains, watches and whatever they had. With this they were ransomed from the hands of the bandits.

The David-Horodoker Jews later experienced a special boost in their morale. The Balakovtzes, having advanced further, suffered a defeat, and were forced to retreat. However, at that time the Riga peace treaty was signed, and the Polish-Soviet border was established between Turov and David-Horodok. At the border the Poles disarmed the retreating Balakovtzes. Without weapons they passed through David-Horodok on the way to concentration camps. The Jews went out into the streets especially to laugh and mock at those bandits.

With that ended the sorrowful chapter of that gang which had caused hundreds of Jewish casualties, and had economically ruined thousands of Jewish families.

Under Polish Rule (1921-1939)

After the Riga treaty, David-Horodok was situated within the borders of Poland. The border passed through the town of Malishov, 20 kilometers from town. The economic situation was very difficult. The town had been pillaged by the Balakovtzes and had been impoverished by the war. The Poles instituted a severe martial law in the town. No-one was allowed on the streets after eight o'clock in the evening. It was forbidden to leave town without a special permit. Because of the newness of the border, the movements of the people were restricted. The town had been torn away from the Ukraine with which it was economically bound. Because of the conditions of martial law, it was difficult to adapt to the new life.

After about half a year, the regime became more lenient, and life became somewhat easier. They could move more freely, and it was easier to get about. The "giant" began its relief activities. Delegates came from America who, among other things, brought help from American relatives for David-Horodoker inhabitants. They also helped in the immigration process for those families whose fathers and husbands had already preceded them to America.

There began a great stream of immigration. After surviving the horrors,of the war, they did not want to remain in David-Horodok. At first the immigration stream went to America. Afterwards, when it was more difficult to get into America, they went to Canada, Cuba and Argentina. They went wherever they were allowed. A pioneer group was also formed to immigrate to Eretz Israel. However, because of events in Eretz Israel in 1921, the aliya was halted, and the group remained in David-Horodok.

The economic situation gradually began to improve. The Polish mark became devaluated, and goods became more expensive from day to day. Almost everyone began business dealing. Shops grew like mushrooms after a rain. They began to earn "millions".

That is the way things were until there was stabilization of the Polish currency. The worthless marks could not be exchanged for full-valued Polish zloti. The orgy was over. All the new merchants were forced out of business, and it became difficult to earn a groschen. To this was added the well known tax system of the then Polish finance minister Grobski, who levied on the Jewish merchants and craftsmen an impossibly high tax which impoverished them.

In the meantime, organizational and political life developed in the town. They established political parties, youth movements, cultural societies and charitable institutions. The Jewish people of David-Horodok, and especially the youth, threw themselves into these tasks with fiery zeal and exceptional devotion. They established a Habrew Tarbus (culture) public school which in time became one of the best in Poland. They established banks such as the Public Bank and the Merchant's Bank. They developed an excellent orphans' committee which gave rise to multi-faceted activities. They founded libraries, sports clubs, drama circles, etc. However, we will not dwell anymore on all these institutions, as we will describe them in more detail in later chapters.

After the Pilsudski upheaval, conditions began to stabilize. The Jews led a more or less quiet existence. They could earn a livlihood from commerce and handicrafts. However, life was monotonous and uninteresting.

Hitler's coming to power in Germany served to intensify the anti-semitism in Poland. In Polish towns, there were pogroms against Jews. They began beating Jewish students. There was instituted the new infamous avshem politics (boycott policy) in economic life. This policy was to boycott Jewish businessmen, shops, handcraftsmen and factories. In David-Horodok, several Poles were imported to open up shops and compete with the Jews. The air was saturated with primitive anti-semitism. Yet this anti-semitism was not expressed in as vivid a form in David-Horodok as it was in other Polish towns. This is explained by the fact that the Poles constituted only 5-10 percent of the population in David-Horodok, while the remaining 90-95 percent were Jews and Belorussians, the Horodtchukas, who also felt abused by the Polish authority. Despite the calm in the town, the Jews felt quite alarmed.

The conditions of the youth seemed particularly hopeless. Those who could, took every possible way out of town. Most of them made aliya to Eretz Israel. The majority of the town's youth could not make aliya because of immigration restrictions, and they saw no way to get themselves out.

The Jews waited for better times, not knowing and not believing that they would ever come. They were embittered and full of hate for the anti-semitic Polish authority.

Meanwhile, the danger of a Polish-German war approached with giant steps. After Hitler's friendship gesture to Poland, and with his poisoning the atmosphere in Poland with the spirit of anti-semitism, he diverted the attention of the Poles away from the true danger that was approaching them. He then began to make his territorial demands in Poland.

The danger of war came closer from day to day, hour to hour and minute to minute. The Jews felt like they were living under a black cloud. They forgot their previous score with the Poles. They put themselves in the service of the Polish government in order to fight hand in hand against the common enemy.

On September 1, 1939, Friday morning, Hitler's troops invaded Poland. The Jewish people of Poland, amongst them the Jews of David-Horodok, stood and fought the Nazi enemy.

The sad ending of the Jewish community in David-Horodok approached.

We will now interrupt the chronologic narrative of events in David-Horodok and take it up again at the end of this work. Now we will return to describe the political, organizational and cultural institutions in the town in the time between the two world wars.

Political, Cultural and Organizatonal Institutions in David-Horodok

The Zionist Movement

David-Horodok was pro-Zionist since the times of the Hoveve Zion (Lovers of Zion). As mentioned previously, the town was under the influence of Lithuanian Jewry. The haskala (enlightenment) movement came to David-Horodok from there at the end of the 19th century. The Zionist movement also came from there.

Peretz Smolenskin"s Wanderer Through Life and Abraham Mapu's Love of Zion and The Guilt of Samaria adorned the shelves of David-Horodoker households along side the Talmud.

They read the Hebrew press in David-Horodok. They collected and bound The Dawn. Nahum Sokolov's Friday evening articles were not only read but also studied. They also tried to educate the younger generation in the spirit of Zionism. For that purpose, they brought the best teachers to David-Horodok who introduced classes where they taught Hebrew by speaking Hebrew. After World War I, there were youth circles in which they spoke Hebrew exclusively. In 1915, the youth of David-Horodok took the initiative and arranged an illegal memorial service for Dr. Herzl.

Keren Kayemes (Jewish National Fund) stamps were sold at David-Horodok weddings as soon as they came out. Shimon Laichtman and Shlomo Razman would come to every wedding and sell these stamps.

The eve of Yom Kipur they would sit in every synagogue with a collection plate for the National Fund. Whoever donated 25 kopecks had his name inscribed in a special book. The Slonimer Rebbe used to donate a ruble.

Because of the war and the czarist regime, it was difficult to develop diversified Zionist activities. However, under various pretexts, they would hold assemblies and celebrations on a variety of Zionist themes.

Vigorous Zionistic activity began after the Kerenski revolution in February, 1917. It was as if they had been in a lethargic sleep of latent energy, and they wanted to make up the lost years of inactivity by throwing themselves into Zionist activities with wholehearted zeal and energy, filled with the hope and belief in the great possibilities that the Russian revolution promised for the Jewish people. The entire population of the town became involved in organizational and political activity. It was a disgrace not to be associated with a party. It was as if they forgot their worries about livlihood and existence in their preoccupation with party work.

With all their zeal, they threw themselves into the election campaign for the constituent assembly that was taking place in Russia. They set up the Jewish communal organization, opened a large Hebrew school, founded a library, established cooperatives, and they were active in every realm of town and community life.

Organizational life quieted down when the Bolsheviks seized power. However, as soon as the Germans entered David-Horodok, Zionist activities resumed. At that time, news arrived of the Balfour Declaration which encouraged Zionist activities even more.

However, this did not last long. The Germans retreated; the Bolshevils re-entered; and once again all the Zionist work came to a halt.

Following the stormy period of the Polish-Bolshevik war and after a civil government was installed, there was renewed intensification of Zionist activities.

The first visit from the Keren Hayesod (Foundation Fund of the Zionist Organization) representative Dr. Haimzun in 1923, was transformed into a magnificent demonstration for Zionism. The campaign for the Keren Hayesod was conducted by the entire Jewish population of David-Horodok. There was not a single Jewish family, even the poorest, which did not support the Keren Hayesod.

The visit by the Jewish National Fund representative, Y. Manuch from Degania, made an even stronger impression. The town was ruled by a complete holiday atmosphere. No small thing, a delegate from Israel! People were curious to have a look at him. They wanted to see what a real Jewish farmer looked like. An extraordinary enthusiasm had seized the inhabitants of the town. The Jews in David-Horodok were then simply breathing in the air of Israel. The visit of Y. Manuch had strengthened the Jewish spirit and consciousness. This was the first direct contact with a Jewish farmer from Israel, and it gave feelings of courage, national pride and self-worth to the Jews of David-Horodok.

Through the visit of Y. Manuch, a "troop" of the Keren Kayemes was organized in town. It existed until the outbreak of World War II, and it conducted widely ramified activities for the Keren Kayemes. They gathered Zionists from all directions, young and old.

At that time, they had begun aliya to Israel. The pioneers that left David-Horodok included entire families, such as A.Y. Shafer, Noah Granadier, A. Turkenitch, A. Shostokovski, L. Dushnik, D. Rimar, A. Lakovski, S. Mastair, Z. Pyne and others.

With the onset of normal organizational life in David-Horodok, the political parties became active in the town. The first to renew their activity were the General Zionists and Ze'irei Zion (young Zionists). These were the principal parties in town during the entire span between the two wars. They were the most influential, had the largest memberships and were the most active.

When the General Zionists renewed their activity, they zealously threw themselves into multi-faceted enlightenment activities. They worked for the Keren Hayesod and the Keren Kayemes. They opened a new library which was not used during the Polish-Bolshevik war. They held frequent meetings and lectures. They assisted in the rise of the Tarbus schools in David-Horodok and later also founded their youth movement Hashomer Hale'umi (National Watchmen), later called Hano'ar Hazioni (The Zionist Youth). The General Zionists took an active part in the various election campaigns in town, such as: election for the sejm, town council election, Jewish community council election, Zionist congress election, etc. For a short period of time there was a training kibbutz of the Hano'ar Hazioni in the town. This was run by a youth group from outside David-Horodok who had to spend their training period in David-Horodok. This training kibbutz did not last long, scarcely the one year of 1934, because of a job shortage in the town. The youth from this kibbutz went away to train in kibbutzim in other towns, and there they waited for approval to make aliya.

The General Zionists recruited mainly the well-to-do homeowners. The artisans, handcraftsmen, laborers and especially the youth constituted the bulk of the Ze'irei Zion party.

The Ze'irei Zion, just as the General Zionists, renewed their activities and regained their feet once normal living conditions were established.

The Ze'irei Zion was a party of the youth right from the onset, that is, its activists as well as its general membership were all young people between 18 and 25 years of age. This gave their work a dynamism which was felt in every campaign.

Full of youthful zeal and temperament, full of self-confidence and youthful idealism, they threw themselves into party work, and they strove to encompass ever widening circles, not allowing any realm of organizational life to pass without their influence and involvement.

Lectures, assemblies, elections, night classes, Keren Kayemes work, conferences, etc. - were their daily bread. The local was filled every evening with members who were ready to do any sort of work that they were given. The Ze'irei Zion really developed a nice diversified group for all realms of organizational life.

The Ze'irei Zion had great success in conducting a "tool" campaign in David Horodok. This was the first great demonstration on behalf of the workers of Israel, and all gladly gave tools for the laborers of Israel.

An especially selected commission of Ze'irei Zion took on the task of helping the pioneers who came out of the Soviet Union.

Through the initiative of the Ze'irei Zion, the activities of the orphans' committee was renewed.

In 1923 the Ze'irei Zion founded the Hahalutz (Pioneer), and in 1924 they established a training kibbutz in Lisavitch.

In 1925 the Po'alei Zion (Zionist Workers) founded a library named after I. L. Peretz which developed very well both in number of worthwhile books and in number of readers. In the last few years before World War II, it was the only active library in the town.

The youth organization of the Po'alei Zion was Freiheit (Freedom). It was established by the party in 1926, and it developed a nice educational function for the youth, helping to teach vocational trades. At the same time they brought many of the youth to aliya.

In 1931, the party organized the town handcraftsmen into a group called Ha'oved (The Worker). Many members of Ha'oved made aliya to Israel.

Unfortunately, the activities of the Po'alei Zion were sharply curtailed in the few years before the onset of World War II because of the current reactionary fascist government. As an example, in the last kehila (Jewish assembly) election in 1937, the list of Po'alei Zion candidates was cancelled.

The most important Zionist work amongst the religious people of David-Horodok was done through the Mizrachi (or Merkaz Ruhani or Spiritual Center) and the Hapo'el Hamizrachi (Workers of the Spiritual Center). In 1925 the Hapo'el Hamizrachi founded a training kibbutz in Dabrin, and most of the members made aliya to Israel. Mizrachi and Hapo'el Hamizrachi took an active part in working for the Keren Kayemes and the Keren Hayesod.

In 1935, a party called Hatachad (The Union) was established in David-Horodok. However, with the aliya of its founding fathers to Israel, the group ceased to exist.

Besides the above mentioned youth movements of Freiheit and Hano'ar Hazioni, there were two other active Zionist youth movements in David-Horodok: Hashomer Hatzair (Young Watchman) and Betar (abbreviation for Berit Trumpeldor or Covenant of Trumpeldor, the Revisionist Youth Movement).

The Hashomer Hatzair was established in the town in 1927. They did a good job of educating the youth of the town. At the same time, they were active in all aspects of Keren Kayemes work. They were involved in the League of Workers for Eretz Israel, and they took part in all of its activities. The Hashomer Hatzair sent many members for training, and most of them succeeded in making aliya.

Betar was founded in David-Horodok in 1929. They also sent their members for training, and most of them made aliya.

As already mentioned, David-Horodok was an absolutely Zionist town. There was no Bund (General Jewish Workers Union in Lithuania, Poland and Russia) in the town during the period between the two world wars.

As a result of the reactionary and anti-semitic policies of the Polish regime and the bad economic and helpless situation of the Jewish youth, there developed a small group of Communists in David-Horodok. Their number probably never even reached ten. They had no influence in town. The group was completely dissolved after a few of them were arrested. Some of those who were freed from jail, later went to Eretz Israel. The others remained in David-Horodok but refrained completely from Communistic activities. When the Soviets first came into David-Horodok in 1939, they became involved again as Communist activists, and they caused considerable trouble for the Zionist concerns. As a result of their denunciations to the N.K.G.B., many of the town Zionists were arrested.

2. The Socialist Movement in David-Horodok in 1905

Unfortunately we have no material to enlighten us about the year 1905 in David-Horodok. We have no alternative but to draw on the memories of people who had not even taken an active part in the happenings of that stormy epoch.

From these memoirs we learn that in 1905 a small group of the Bund was organized in David-Horodok under the leadership of the well-known A. Litvak, A Bundist who was rumoured to have been banished to David-Horodok.

There was also a group of Socialist Territorialists. Concerning this group, we even have a historical reference. In the American Forvairts (The Jewish American Forward), a picture was printed of 20 members of the David-Horodoker Socialist Territorialists (the picture is printed in our memorial book). The Po'alei Zion party also existed in David-Horodok at that time.

According to the stories, all of these socialistic movements were embraced by a great number of the youth. For a certain period, they were the rulers of the town. They had developed a self-defence organization and had weapons. They demanded a 12 hour work day. The laborers themselves did not want that "little" work, but the revolutionaries would come and force them away from their work. There were cases where the children revolutionaries would come to their employer parents and take away the last workers. Aside from this, the revolutionaries were occupied with education and self-instruction.

With the downfall of the revolution, all these organizations dissipated in David-Horodok. Some individuals were arrested and sent away. Many fled to America. The remainder left town during the period of danger.

In reference to this, it should be noted that after the Kerenski revolution of 1917, left over members of Po'alei Zion re-established their organization. All the old revolutionaries again became very active and devotedly participated in the work. They tried to organize all the workers and sympathizers, and they were very active.

Their activity was widely diversified: organizing readings, night classes, drama circles, a library, cooperatives and managing the professional movement.

In those days the town was divided in two - the General Zionists and the Po'alei Zion. At the election of the constituent assembly in Russia, the General Zionists received 120 more votes than the Po'alei Zion, 740 to 620.

With the turnover of David-Horodok to the Bolsheviks, the situation changed. A few of the Po'alei Zion leaders joined the Bolsheviks. The great majority of the leaders along with the entire membership did not follow them. They died off politically. From the entire powerful Po'alei Zion organization of those days, there remains only memories.

3. Cultural Institutions.

As indicated in a previous chapter, David-Horodok was culturally under the influence of Lithuanian Jewry. The Haskalah (enlightenment) movement had permeated the town in the last century through the boys who had gone to Lithuanian yeshivas and especially through the Jewish merchants of David-Horodok who encountered in their travels the new winds blowing in the larger Jewish centers. They were also the ones who felt that their practices required that they give their children a broader, more general education than that given by the cheders and yeshivas.

To that purpose, I. Shaffer, I. Lipschitz and others brought the reknowned I.S. Adler to teach in David-Horodok. He introduced a new instructional system, and he laid the foundation for a modern and Zionistic education.

The other teachers in town attempted to adapt to the new times, and they began to teach Hebrew in Hebrew. These included S. Laichtman, S. Zagaradski and Y. Begun who were not the most eminent of the Jewish instructors, but they were teachers who felt that they had a nationalistic and Zionist mission to educate a new Jewish generation. They were the carriers of Zionism in those days.

The elders also tried to open a high school in town. This was eventually opened as a government school. That was the town school in the Russian language which did a good job in helping the youth get into the intermediate and higher institutions and thereby acquire a higher education.

After the February revolution in 1917, a Hebrew school was opened in David-Horodok under the directorship of the teacher Maniavitch. With the assistance of the teachers I. Zaldin, R. Shaffer, I. Kashtan and I. Margolin, the school was established at a very high level. The school fulfilled a double purpose. It taught the children, and, at the same time, it was a center for Zionist activities and national consciousness.

The Hebrew school existed until 1920. During the stormy war years when David-Horodok was passed from hand to hand, it was impossible to carry on a normal educational system.

After the Polish-Bolshevik war, when normal life was restored in the town, the first concern was to set up the school. In 1924, a Hebrew Tarbus (culture) school was founded anew under the direction of R. Mishalov.

There is not enough space in this book to fully detail the blessed activities of this Tarbus school in David-Horodok. It started with three classes, and in time a seven class folks-school, one of the best in Poland. Until its closing in 1940, there were eleven ceremonies which graduated hundreds of children.

It was not easy to strengthen the Tarbus school to a point where it could stand safely on its own feet. The school did not get any subsidy from the government or the municipal agencies. The various expenses of the school proper were laid on the shoulders of the parents of the students. The teaching personnel existed only on their wages from tuition. Remembering the grave poverty that ruled the town, we then begin to understand the great difficulties with which the school struggled every moment. It was a credit to the remarkable commitment of a group of concerned individuals in the town, to the loyalty of the teaching staff and to the national consciousness of the parents.

The parents were almost 100 per cent in sending their children to the Tarbus school despite the fact that they had to pay tuition, when at the town Polish government school they would not have had to pay a groschen. These three factors, the concerned group, the teaching staff and the parents are responsible for the existence and thriving of the Tarbus school.

The second director of the school, the teacher Avresha Olshanski, elevated the school to such a high level that it became one of the best Tarbus schools in all of Poland. After finishing the Tarbus seminar in Vilna, he first as teacher and later as director devoted his entire energy and time to the school, leading it from year to year higher and higher. He was the one who in 1931 founded the Bnei Yehudah (Sons of Judah) of David-Horodok, the Hebrew speaking youth of Poland.

Afterwards the movement spread to other cities and towns in Poland, but nowhere was it treated more earnestly than in David-Horodok.

It is worthwhile dwelling briefly on the Bnei Yehudah movement in David-Horodok. It was begun through the initiative of the director of the school, Avresha Olshanski. He persuaded several school children that pupils of a Hebrew school who plan on aliya to Eretz Israel ought to speak Hebrew not only in class but also at home and in the streets among themselves, with their parents, brothers, sisters, neighbors, friends, and, in a word, with everyone. From a small group of children, the movement spread to all the school children.

A child who had joined the Bnei Yehudah movement was obligated to speak only Hebrew at home, in the street or in the shop where he would buy a note pad or a book. A Bnei Yehudah would always speak Hebrew to a Jewish companion. Understandably, at first it was very difficult for the parents who did not understand Hebrew, and it would often tax their interest long before the parents, the shopkeepers and the grownups in the street began not only to understand Hebrew, but also began answering in Hebrew.

Christian servants in Jewish homes also began to understand and speak Hebrew. Newborn children were taught Hebrew from the beginning.

Once David-Horodok was visited by Yosef Baratz. Before he came to town, he had heard the wonder of the "Tel-Aviv of Polesye" as David-Horodok was called because of the spoken Hebrew. He could not believe that it was really true. To demonstrate to him that it was true, they took him out into the street. When he happened to meet a child, he would, address the child in Yiddish, expecting that the reply would also be in Yiddish. No matter how many children he met, everyone replied in Hebrew.

A child who belonged to Bnei Yehudah always got a "5" (very good) for his grade in Hebrew class, no matter how bright he was otherwise.

At first, the children organized a special intelligence unit whose task it was to verify that the new members of the Bnei Yehudah were keeping to their oaths to speak Hebrew exclusively. The intelligence officer would sneak into the new member's home and lay under a bed for hours in order to ascertain that the member was keeping his oath.

The Tarbus school existed until the onset of World War II. When the Soviets entered David-Horodok in the end of September, instruction th the school began once again but the language was Yiddish, not Hebrew.

An unforgettable moment occured at the beginning of that school year. The director Abrasha Olshanski was forced, under the dictate of a Communist activist who was himself a graduate of that school, to assemble all of the children. Sobbing spasmodically, he announced that the school would no longer teach Hebrew, only Yiddish. The Communist activist then gave a lecture that the children had been duped in the past. He wanted to convince them that their Hebrew language was the language of the Jewish counter-revolutionaries.

Abrasha Olshanski until then had been the devoted and faithful father of the school, but now he could no longer bear teaching there. He could not ethically tolerate the change. He and his wife, who was also a teacher, moved to Bialystok where they found employment as instructors. There, in Bialystok, he, his wife and children met their death at the hands of the Nazi murderers.

Through the initiative of the same A. Olshanski, a course in Tanach (bible) was initiated. It went under the title of "Every Day a Chapter of Tanach". This course was intended for the grown-ups in David-Horodok. These lectures were extremely popular. The course was attended mostly by the grown-up youth and the adults. The lectures would pack the large hall in the school. The people who attended the lectures were from all social levels and from all political directions, both religious and freethinkers.

Teachers with a variety of beliefs taught the Tanach. A rabbi would teach and give an overall religious interpretation in his lecture. A maskil (adherent of the Haskalah) would lecture, explaining the chapter with the use of the new exegetical methods. There was a lecture from a member of the free atheistic circles who interpreted the Tanach from a purely historical-cultural viewpoint.

It was most interesting that each lecturer's special point of view was listened to with tolerance and patience.

These lectures began in 1937 and continued until the beginning of World War II.

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In 1927 the Mizrachi initiated a religious Yavne folks-school. This school did not exist for long, closing after only two years.

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Besides the folks-schools, there existed in David-Horodok well organized libraries.

The teacher S. Zagarodski organized a library for children and school youngsters even before 1905.

In 1917 the Zionist organizations in town founded a library which developed very nicely. Unfortunately it was not active during World War I.

Following World War I, the libraries in David-Horodok developed vigorously. In 1925 the Po'alei Zion founded a library named for I. L. Peretz. In the last years before World War II, this was the only active library for adults in the town.

There was a large library for the students at the Tarbus school.

Publications with Zionist and literary themes always had a wide audience.

There was also self-education groups in town, sponsored by the various parties and youth movements.

* * *

David-Horodok also had a long-standing amateur drama group which would give performances from time to time. There had long been an inclination towards theater and acting in David-Horodok. Even in the time of of the 1905 revolution, such amateurs as I. Afiganden, I. Gottlieb and Helman would excel in readings from the masterpieces of Shalom Aleichem, Peretz, Bialik, Frishman, etc.

Later a group of amateur artists was trained, and they gave two or three performances each year for the Jewish populace.

After the 1917 Russian revolution and later, after the Polish-Russian war, the drama circle developed somewhat more. Fresh forces arrived, and they would give a serious performance from time to time. The proceeds of the performances were for various charitable purposes. At times they would use a percentage of the revenues for a variety of purposes.

In praise of the drama circle, it must be said that the amateurs had little interest in how to divide the money. They were only interested in artistic success.

In 1936 another youthful amateur group was founded. They gave several successful performances. Unfortuneatly, the outbreak of World War II ended the activities of both drama groups.

It should also be mentioned that the children of the Tarbus school would give a successful annual performance under the leadership of their teacher.

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David-Horodok also had a sport club Hako'ah (The Strong) which developed a very good football team. The football team competed for a couple of years, but it was disbanded after their best players made aliya to Eretz Israel.

4. The Orphanage.

David-Horodok was ruined and impoverished after World War I. The "giant", which had begun its aide activity throughout Poland, also opened a branch in David-Horodok. One of the "giant's" most important accomplishments was the founding of an orphanage in the town.

There were many orphans in town. There were 32 orphan children up to age 14 who were kept in the orphanage which was founded in a comfortable dwelling with three bedrooms, a large dining room which doubled as a lecture hall, and large courtyard where the children played a variety of games. The orphanage was supplied with a good inventory such as comfortable beds, good bedcovers and a sufficient quantity of food and clothing. The food was good, and the children were well fed and appeared healthy.

The entire maintenance of this house was paid for by the "giant". The local people could be of no assistence except for supplying teachers who worked without pay.

That was the situation until the Bolsheviks recaptured David-Horodok during the Polish-Bolshevik war. Then there was a radical change. The management of the orphanage was transferred to a branch of the social service organization of Revkom. They gave much advise but little practical help. There were no food reserves in town. The children became hungry and began to scatter.

When the Bolsheviks left town, they evacuated the entire inventory of the orphanage despite the protests of the David-Horodoker Jews.

After the Polish-Bolshevik war, all efforts to re-establish the orphanage were unfortunately unsuccessful. Instead, an orphans committee was founded which undertook to place the orphans in homes.

The chief priority was to enable them to learn a trade. Through the committee's efforts, the orphans were well cared for in private homes.

The money to support the work of the committee was raised by selling flowers ("flower days"), special campaigns, and proceeds from performances of the drama circle. The main reason that the committee was able to exist was due to the support it received from the David-Horodoker Women's Committee of Detroit.

This support was achieved through Itzhak-Leib Zager who had personal family ties with America. Thanks to his concern, the committee received regular support from America throughout its existence.

The orphans committee existed throughout the period of Polish rule in David-Horodok. In 1939, when David-Horodok was taken by the Bolsheviks, the orphans committee was closed along with all other institutions.

5. Bank and Credit Institutions.

In David-Horodok, as in all other Jewish communities, credit was a common problem. There were always Jews who needed cash - for business purposes, for a child's wedding, to build a house, or because of misfortune.

In bygone days, there were the so-called usurers (The Yiddish word is vachernik because payment was due each week (vach)) who would loan money on a pledge and for considerable interest. Each Friday the debtor would have to bring the usurer both the principal and the interest. The usurer was usually an influential Jew with considerable authority in the community. If the principal and interest were not paid on time, he would not hesitate to keep a pledge which might have been as much as ten times more valuable than the borrowed money. Understandably, going to the usurer was a last resort when there was no other way out.

When loan and savings offices began developing in Russia, one such office opened in David-Horodok, and later a second office also. These two offices had the same purpose but had different names. One was named after the bookkeeper - Shlomo Razman's Office, and the other was named after the bookkeeper - Pinye Sheinboim's Office. Many merchants had accounts in both offices.

The offices enjoyed the complete faith of the populace and were entrusted with their savings. As a result, the offices had enough cash for loans to those needing them.

In 1909 the larger businessmen in David-Horodok founded a Merchants Bank under the management of Noah Grushkin. The bookkeeper was Meir Alpiner. The bank developed very well.

With the outbreak of World War I, all the financial institutions failed.

After World War I, when David-Horodok went over to the Poles and normal life had resumed, another Merchants Bank was formed in 1923 under ther management of M. Kviatni, and a Peoples Bank was founded in 1924 under the management of S. Papish.

These banks developed very well, and they were a significant factor in the economic life of the town.

There was also a charity office in David-Horodok which gave free loans to small businessmen and handworkers.

The charity office was managed by a committee headed by I. Gottlieb. This committee would control the requests and set the amounts of the loans.

6. The Firefighters.

One of the most useful institutions in town was the fire department which was 99% Jewish.

David-Horodok, like all small towns, was composed of houses built out of wood and with thatched roofs. These often fell prey to fires. Fire, the unbidden and undesired guest, would pay a visit almost every summer and cause considerable distress. Homes were burned as a result of a variety of mishaps; carelessness withfires, setting out a hot pressing iron, going out at night to the stable with a torch, throwing away unextinguished cigarettes, children playing with fire, and arson.

Fire was a nightmare for the masses. Summer was the most beautiful and the most interesting time in the life of the town. However, it was often spoiled by the frequent fires.

In many homes they would pack up the valuables in summer, and carry them away to one of the town's few brick houses which were fireproof. An alternative was to keep the valuables at home in packs which would be easy to remove in case of fire.

In order to fight this plague, even in former times a firefighters brigade was established. The town administration then built a large station to hold the equipment and the

water buckets. The town administrator levied a special chimney tax with which to finance the building of the station. The insurance companies also helped pay the expenditures.

Almost all the Jewish youth were enrolled in the firefighters brigade. They considered it a civic obligation to belong to the firefighters. Even though the Christian populace was in the greatest danger because of their thatched roof houses, only three or four were enrolled as firefighters.

In summertime the firefighters would periodically hold drills. In the olden days this was quite an event in the life of the town. Masai, the station watchman, would go around all the streets with a special bugle to signal that the firefighters should come out to the drill. The firefighters would put on their special uniforms and gather at the station which was in the center of the town. After a few calisthenic exercises, one of them was secretly sent out into the streets to pick out a house which was supposedly burning. He would then give a signal, and they would begin "extinguishing"the house. The firefighters would pick the house of someone against whom they bore a grudge. After the drill, the firefighters would have a beer.

After World war I, the firefighters brigade expanded. The town council allocated more money to enlarge the inventory and to teach the firefighters better techniques of extinguishing and especially containing the spread of fires. However, when a fire broke out during a wind or in the vicinity of thatched roofs, the firefighters were unable to localize the fire. That is what happened in 1936 when a fire broke out in mid-day in the Christian part of town. One third of the town, along with the Greek Orthodox church on the hill, was burned down.

In the last years before World War II, the town administration directed the firefighters. The management remained in the hands of Jews. The most active managers were I. Yudovitch and M. Rimar.

7. The Municipal Government.

The David-Horodok populace had the status of town citizens (called miatchonas with more political rights than the typical peasants) since the time of the Czars. They would vote every three years for a town council consisting of three people: an elder (starosta) and two assistants. One of the assistants was a Jew. The election would take place as follows: each street voted for a representative, and the street representatives would then vote for the elder and his two assistants.

This election process was far from democratic, and those who wanted to be elected took advantage of family ties, neighbors

8. The Kehilla.

Unfortunately, we have no reference sources on the activities of the Jewish Kehilla in David-Horodok. There are no remaining books or documents, either from the past or from the last years before the holocaust.

There was an organized Jewish kehilla in David-Horodok just as in all Polish-Lithuanian cities and towns. Until the last partition of Poland, the David-Horodok kehilla was linked to the Pinsk Great Kehilla, and they paid taxes to Pinsk.

We do not know how the kehilla was organized and when it became independent under the czarist authority.

We know only of certain sources of revenue for the kehilla, for example: the karavka (a special tax) on meat, the selling of yeast which the kehilla gave as an exclusive concession to the rabbis, and the hevrei-kedisha (burial society) which was supervised by the kehilla. The hevrei-kedisha was a well organized closed institution in which membership would pass by inheritance from father to son.

The first world war abolished everything, and the various kehilla affairs were taken over haphazardly by individuals. One would take care of the bath-house and the mikve (ritual bath); another with the poorhouse; and still another with the cemetery.

The old cemetery lay at the edge of the Horin River, and the water would often wash away parts of this cemetery. Every year they would have to spend money to repair the holy ground. The expenses were covered by the hevrei-kedisha who had their own special source of revenue.

There was no official town rabbi in David-Horodok. There were several rabbis in town, about four or five in number, each supported by his own circle which had given him his rabbinical chair. From time to time there were conflicts between the various sides, especially when it came to dividing rabbinical funds which flowed in from general sources.

In 1917, after the Kerenski revolution, the first democratic election to the Jewish kehilla was held in David-Horodok through the initiative of the zionist organizations. However, this kehilla could not accomplish anything because of the Bolshevik revolution and the disruptive transfer from power to power in war-time.

In the first years of the Polish reign in David-Horodok, after the Polish-Bolshevik war, there was no Jewish kehilla in the town. The nominated town-council representatives served as semi-official agents of the kehilla. These were Moshe Lachovski, Shlomo Katzman and Moshe-Yehuda Lipshitz.

and good friends. With the Christians, a little whiskey helped. That is the way things were until the revolution of February, 1917. Then the town-council was enlarged. However, as a result of the stormy revolutionary times and the frequent changeover of ruling powers, these elections were also not very democratic. When the Bolsheviks appeared in town, they appointed a revolutionary committee (revkom), and the Poles appointed the town-council. During the entire period that the Poles appointed the town-council, the Jewish representatives were always the same: M. Lokovski, M.I. Lipshitz and S. Katzman.

The appointed town-council managed the town until 1928. In that year elections for town-council were held throughout Poland, and naturally in David-Horodok also.

That was the very first democratic election for town-council in the history of David-Horodok. The Jews took an active part in the election, and it was a vigorously fought campaign. Eight Jews were elected, representing 40 per cent of the town-council. They were Dr. Schalkver, M.I. Lipshitz, M. Lokovski, I. Yudovitch, R. Mishalov, S. Reznick, H. Tsipin and I. Lipshitz.

The Jews' hope that they could use the town treasury to support the Jewish institutions was shattered. Every proposal suggested by the Jews to give financial aid to the Tarbus school, the Jewish libraries, or even the orphan-committee, were rejected by the Christian representatives and the one Pole who was the chief representative.

The only Jewish operated institution that received a subsidy from the town-council was the fire department. This was because it served the Christian populace as well.

The town-council did finance the Polish public schools in town, paved the main road, and built the power station in 1929, providing light in the houses until 12 midnight.

When the term of office ended for the town-council, new elections were not held. The reactionary movement had strengthened in Poland, and the government was not interested in new elections. The result was that an agreement was reached without an election, and a new town-council took office with only six Jews: Dr. Schalkver, I. Yudovitch, M. Kviatni, D. Riemar, M. Lokovski and S. Mishalov.

By then the town-council had no power because the actual town authority was the district administrator in Staline.

During the scant two years (end of 1939 to June, 1941) of the Soviet rule in David-Horodok, there was no elected town-council. It was run by appointed Bolsheviks sent by the Communist party.

As a result of a Polish government decree, elections were held for the Jewish kehillas in 1928. However, the election ordinances were quite reactionary. Only those over age 25 had voting rights, and those over 30 had only a passive right. Women had no voice at all. The jurisdiction of the kehilla was severely restricted so that it had no responsibilities except for rabbinical matters, the bathhouse and the cemetery.

In David-Horodok, where there was a relatively large number of rabbis, the kehilla elections provoked great controversies to the point of mutual denunciations which resulted in voiding of individual votes and even entire lists. These elections were no credit to the David-Horodoker Jewish population. The meetings of the kehilla were also a place for quarreling. There was a particularly severe quarrel over the choosing of a chief rabbi for the town. There were two kehilla elections during the period of Polish rule: the first in 1928 with the election of Meir Moravtchik as its head, and the second in 1936 with the election of Kaplinski as its head.

Years of Turbulence and Death

1. The Eve of War

What will be? Will the efforts of the world's statesmen avert war? Will the great world powers such as England, the Soviet Union, America and France not succeed in curbing the Hitleristic appetite, or will the world really be flung into a dreadful slaughter?

These questions traveled from mouth to mouth in the early summer months of 1939.

The tension grew from day to day. The situation became more strained from minute to minute. The air smelled of gun powder.

Here there shines a ray of hope, and everyone walks around with optimistic smiles on their faces; and just as suddenly the sky clouds over, and the people walk around worried and gloomy all over again.

What will be? - the David-Horodokers ask one another. They listen to the radio day and night, clasping at information from the entire world. They search for a ray of hope, but the next day invariably demonstrates the increasing hopelessness of the situation.

Presently there is a breakdown in the talks between the Soviet Union and the western powers, and then comes the astounding information regarding the Ribbentrof-Molotov treaty.

A mobilization was declared in Poland. The question that occupied people's minds was not whether there would be a war, of that they were sure; they asked only when it would break out. One waited with fear and dread of that unfortunate day. Who knows what that day would bring with it?

2. The Polish-German War

Friday, September 1, 1939. The announcement came over the radio like thunder. At dawn, the Nazi military forces had crossed the German-Polish border, and attacked Poland without a prior declaration of war.

David-Horodoker Jews could not sit still in their homes. Where ever one turned there were groups of people with questioning looks and worried faces, talking about the great misfortune.

Intuition predicted that the outcome would not be good. Who knows? Who knows how it will end?

The town was proclaimed on war status. At night all windows were to be shaded so that no light could be seen from outside. The electric street lamps were no longer lit. Darkness ruled the street in the evening, just like the darkness in Jewish hearts both night and day.

Economic life in the town died down immediately. They soon began to have shortages of products, the first being salt and matches.

One day passed and then another. There was no pleasing news from the front. The Polish army was retreating. Entire armies were surrounded by the German military forces. Rumors spread of betrayal by Polish military leaders. There were reports of extraordinary espionage involving highly-placed Polish personalities. Despite the boasting of Polish radio, one felt that the decayed demoralized card-house was collapsing.

One sought a ray of hope, waiting impatiently for England and France to honor their pledges and come to the aid of the Polish army.

September 3, 1939. Everyone's face lightens. A ray of light and hope appears. England and France declare war against Germany. Everyone imagines that now the situation will change. From now on the Germany military will suffer defeats. Unfortunately, these hopes vanish. The murderous Nazi hordes advance, and the Polish military is crushed. Soon Warsaw is surrounded; then the Germans are in Bialystok, Grodno and Brisk. Hundreds of Jewish refugees begin to arrive in town. They describe the horrors of the war. They fear the day when the Germans will enter David-Horodok. The heart portends evil.

What will be? From where will salvation come? How can we save ourselves? September 17, 1939. Rumors begin circulating that the Red army has crossed the Soviet-Polish border in order to free the western region of White Russia and the Ukraine.

Is this really true or is it, perish the thought, only a rumor? Every Jew wants with his entire being for the news to be true. They were afraid to talk of it too loudly while the Polish authority was still in town. They waited impatienlly for the day that the Red army would march into David-Horodok.

No small matter. They would at the same time be rid of the hated anti-semitic fascist Polish government as well as avert the great danger of a certain death under the rule of the Nazi murderers.

The Poles began leaving David-Horodok, retreating towards the west, certain that the Red army was advancing from the east.

On the night of September 18 until the 19th, the Polish military detachments that were stationed at the Polish-Soviet border began to withdraw.

The Jews of David-Horodok did not sleep the entire night. They were afraid of acts of vengeance by the Polish detachments on the Jewish population. Fortunely the Poles retreated without causing any harm to the Jews.

At the dawn of September 19, after all their detachments had crossed the Horin River which divided the town in two, the Poles tore down the bridge, and they set up barricades on the other side of the river. Right behind them came the assault forces of the Red army. At the river there was a brief exchange of fire between the two sides. One Red army man was shot to death and another wounded. The Poles quickly retreated. A Soviet sapper detachment quickly set up a pontoon bridge over the river, and the Red army troops continued on their way.

3. Under Soviet Rule (September, 1939 - June, 1941).

Without question, September 19, 1939 was the happiest day in the lives of the David-Horodoker Jews in the course of the last several years. After the shooting between the Poles and the Red army detachments had ended, the entire Jewish population (and not only the Jews) came out in the streets with happy smiling faces, and they received the Red army detachments who had unceasingly attacked from east to west.

Young and old, small and large, man and wife - all stood on the sidewalk of the main street through which passed the army troops. With smiling faces and waving hands, they greeted the Red army men. The Red army men, in turn, greeted the inhabitants in a friendly manner.

One is reminded of how a high officer, who was at the head of a detachment, noticed the elderly Velvel Raishkes who stood with the others on the sidewalk. He called to him with the following: "Nada zhit staritchak, nada zhit!" (we must live old man, we must live).

What an enthusiastic response these few words brought. That day everyone was simply intoxicated with joy and happiness.

In the afternoon, a meeting was held under the free sky, and the representatives of the Red army made speeches in which they pledged a free and blissful life for the inhabitants of the freed regions of West White Russia and West Ukraine. "Oppression, people-hatred and poverty will no longer be the destiny of the freed brotherly people of West Ukraine and West White Russia. From henceforth they will enjoy a favored status, freedom, brotherhood, love, and they will work under the rays of the sun of the greater folk-leader comrade Stalin." That was the quintessence of the speeches which were held at that meeting.

Understandably, the chief celebrants, who acted as if they were the hosts, were the few Jewish communists in town who were joined by several miatchanes of David-Horodok.

All day, until late at night, everyone stayed in the streets conversing with the Red army men about how the Poles had suppressed the national minorities and especially the Jews.

They were astonished at the approachability and simplicity of the Red army men. They were impressed by their thoughtfulness and sympathetic expressions, and they were thus even more encouraged by their promises and reassurances that from then on, the Jews would no longer know of such trouble.

On the night of September 19, 1939, the Jews of David-Horodok slept peacefully, blissfully and full of hope for a bright future.

The first weeks of life under the Soviet authority began in David-Horodok.

By edict, all the businesses were re-opened, and people began besieging them, trying to stock up on clothing, footwear, produce, etc.

Especially conspicuous was the attitude of the vastatshnikas which was the name given to the arriving Soviet citizens. They went from shop to shop, buying everything they laid their eyes on, paying whatever price was asked. They would come away from the shops with large bundles.

At first it was thought that they didn't bargain because they were accustomed to the fixed prices of the government stores. However, no-one could understand why they bought so much. Gradually it became apparent that they could not obtain these things at home. This brought on an even greater buying spree.

The Polish zloti became of equal value to the Soviet ruble so that the zloti was not annulled and remained as currency.

The town authority was in the hands of local Communist activists. The Soviets allowed them to run things in the first few months.

About 6-7 Jewish and 3-4 Christian Communist activists dominated the town during the course of the first few months.

These few Communist activists inscribed a sad chapter in the history of the town, on the one hand because of their denunciation to the NKGB (Soviet security organization) and subsequent arrest of the majority of the Zionist workers in town, and on the other hand because of their inciting the majority of the Horodtchukas against the entire Jewish population.

In the meantime, there were many meetings, entertainment evenings and theater performances, and the youth did not have a bad time.

As a result of the large stream of refugees from greater Poland, the Jewish population of the town swelled, reaching about 7-8000.

Slowly the holiday mood dissipated, and people began to think about a livlihood, especially since the reserve supplies were depleted prematurely.

There were no fixed Soviet undertakings or bureaus as yet, and there were no jobs either. So people began bartering.

Both Jews and Christians began trading. Everything was an item of trade: salt, cigarettes, matches, produce, clothing, shoes, etc.

There was a unique trade in Polish zloti. Inasmuch as the zloti was also currency in the part of Poland occupied by the Germans and was then worth more than the ruble, here they would exchange two or three rubles for each zloti on the black-market, and then they would smuggle the zloti to the German side. The refugees from greater Poland were particularly adept at this business. They would themselves smuggle back and forth across the Soviet-German border.

The situation of almost free trade existed until the end of 1939.

In the meantime, the Soviets arrested and exiled several Polish families who had not escaped in time with the Polish army. A Jewish family from a border village was also exiled, and a till-then Christian Communist activist was arrested.

Over ten Jewish youngsters from town secretly left David-Horodok and reached Vilna which the Soviets had ceded to Lithuania. Their goal was to go from there to Eretz Israel.

In November 1939, there were two conferences in Bialystok and Lemberg, attended by elected deputies of west Belorussia and west Ukraine. They decided to turn to the Vairkavni-Soviet (the highest chamber of deputies) with the request to officially annex the regions of west Belorussia and west Ukraine to the Soviet Union.

They prepared for over a month to arrange these elections, with meetings, assemblies and entertainment evenings. Special propagandists taught the people the Soviet constitution. The elections arrived with great pomp and a holiday atmosphere.

David-Horodok elected two deputies to the Bialystok (Belorussia) conference, a Jew and a Christian. Understandably, they were Communist activists who were appointed by the Soviet authority.

These were the first elections in David-Horodok during the Soviet reign. Already at these elections, one saw the enmity of the Horodtchukas for the Communist authorities and the wild blind hatred for the Jewish populace of David-Horodok.

Counting the ballots later, they found notes with the following inscriptions: "Down with the Soviet rule"; "Death to the Bolsheviks and the Jews"; "Long live Hitler"; etc.

Gradually the Soviets began to arrange and organize a normal life in the Soviet manner. All the local Communist activists who had run the town until then, were replaced by imported Soviet citizens.

The town president, the police chief, the leaders of the various economic, cultural and societal institutions were all replaced by vastatchnikas. Also the other more-or-less responsible posts were occupied by Soviet citizens.

The heretofore local Communist town leaders were then employed in second rank posts, and they were used by the NKGB to give information about each and every inhabitant.

These local Communist activists willingly took on this "honorable" mission, transforming into simple informers, devising false accusations against their victims.

The first result of their calumny was the dismissal of certain people from their posts because of their social origin. Naturally the Jews were the first in line to be affected along with a few rich Horodtchukas who were not overlooked. This action was called "nationalization". The larger businesses and enterprises such as tanneries, the sawmill, flour mills, etc., were nationalized. The finat diel (financial department) took these over and the Jewish Communist activists managed the work with great zeal.

Understandably the nationalized Horodtchukas figured that the Jews were most to blame for this, and hate for the Jews grew from day to day. They would say that a day would come when they would "pay back" the Jews in full.

However, life in town began to normalize. All three tanneries in town united and a single large tannery was created, employing over one hundred workers. Next to the tannery, a shoe factory was founded, employing over one hundred and fifty shoe workers.

The saw mill with its building enterprises which previously had belonged to Mocha Rimar, was enlarged and employed over 400 workers. Various cooperatives were organized. All the various Soviet organizations and institutions began to function. A full-blooded and intensive life began to pulse in the economic domain.

There was also an intensification of work in the field of culture.

The schools resumed their classes. Instead of the two previous Polish public schools, two intermediate schools were organized, one in the Belorussian language and the other in Russian. The Hebrew Tarbus school was transformed into a Yiddish-speaking school.

All the existing libraries in David-Horodok were united, following which, all exceptional books were confiscated and replaced solely by Soviet publications in Russian, Belorussian and a few in the Yiddish language.

For the first time in the history of David-Horodok, a hospital was established with a special maternity ward. Women no longer had to give birth at home, but instead had a well organized hospital with careful medical supervision.

For the first time in the history of David-Horodok, there was also established a permanent movie theater in which the newest films were shown every evening. Needless to say, the theater was packed every night.

They were proceeding to build a large modern-designed culture-house with halls for lectures, performances, recreation, etc.

The majority of the David-Horodoker inhabitants settled down to work. A bare minimum took to speculation.

In order to frighten speculators, they arranged a show-trial for the David-Horodoker Herzl Zipin who was caught speculating with wurst, and he was sentenced to four years in prison. This sentence made a strong impression on the town's inhabitants.

However, life flowed on as the Jews began to adapt to the new regime, not looking at the shortages in produce, clothing and footwear.

The situation was calm and more or less normal until summer of 1940 when there was a political arrest.

Yosef Yudovitch was arrested. He was the son of Baytzl Yudovitch who was shot along with two Christian citizens at the time of the Bolshevik revolution during the punishment expedition. This first political arrest shook up the Jewish population of David-Horodok, and it forecast eventual further arrests.

Many people were then called by the NKGB for "a talk". Later these people never said what the conversation was about.

Shortly after the detention of Yosef Yudovitch, also arrested was Lazar Rankin, the owner of a tannery that was nationalized by the Soviet government. Immediately after him, they arrested Yanye (Yosef) Baruhin, a revisionist worker.

The mood of the Jews was very depressed. They understood that the NKGB used not only the local Communist activists but also other disguised local agents and informants who gave them information concerning every single town inhabitant.

In reality, there were those in town, including also upstanding and elderly Jews who worked along with the NKGB, giving them information and carrying out their assignments.

In order to solicit these informants, the NKGB use the following device: they would call in someone who was above suspicion, who was subject to become an informer, reckon up his former sins, and propose that he be rehabilitated by working with them for a period of time. In case of refusal, he was told that he must suffer for his sins and be arrested. Understandably, without thinking of the outcome of this conversation, the summoned individual would have to sign an oath that no-one, not even his closest, must know about what the NKGB had discussed with him.

Unfortunately, there were those who surrendered to the threats and accepted the proposed "work". Thus there were amongst the informers people of various ages, political hues and social strata.

No-one knew for sure who was working with the NKGB, and therefore everyone was suspected of being a possible agent. This mutual suspicion resulted in the fear of speaking a word in front of others.

The culmination of these political arrests came on the night of February 10, 1941 when ten workers were arrested. They were Haim Barantchuk, Yasha Yudovitch, Berl Rimar and Shia Cantor who were leaders of the General Zionists; Schmuel Tchatchik, Arke Lipshitz, Kapl Moravtchik and Mandl Kravtchik who were Po'alei Zion workers; and Berl Kaftan, one of the most capable of the till-then Communist activists who was charged with working for the Polish security organization.

These arrests had a shocking effect on the David-Horodoker Jews. No-one was sure of his safety. The still-free Zionist workers anticipated further arrests and waited fearfully for their turn. There was a mood of panic in town.

People would avoid passing the building containing the NKGB bureaus. This building cast terror in the inhabitants. Who knew how many more victims it would swallow up?

Gloom and dread befell everyone. Several Zionist workers left the town and moved to other places where no-one knew them. People stopped attending organizations. Everyone spent the after-work time in the narrow circle of his family.

During this time, several Horodtchukas were also arrested.

The outcome of the political arrests of the thirteen David-Horodoker Jews is as follows: Five men, Shmuel Tchatchik, Yosef Yudevitch, Artchik Moravtchik, Mandl Kravtchik and Kapl Moravtchik (now Yakov Moor) are now in Israel. Shia Cantor is in Poland, Kaftan is in America. Lazar Rankin escaped from the prisoner transport deep in Russia. He returned to David-Horodok where he was killed with all the David-Horodoker Jews. Five men, Haim Barantchuk, Yanye Baruhin, Yashe Yudovitch, Arke Pipshitz and Berl Rimar starved to death in the various Soviet prison camps. Honor their memory!

* * *

Despite the fear and dread, there were no further political arrests or exiles until just before the German-Soviet war.

As things began to quiet down, a new mood of alarm emerged, far more horrible than detention by the NKGB. Rumors began to spread about the eventual possibility of war between Germany and the Soviet Union.

The fear of this eventuality was unusually intense. The town's Christian population, the Horodtchukas, became self-confident and waited impatiently for the day when the Germans marched into town. It became apparent that they were preparing for vengeance.

There then began the movement of large Red army detachments from east to west, giving the impression that war was approaching with giant steps.

Just before the outbreak of war, several Jewish families were arrested and exiled.

On June 22, 1941, Hitler's hordes treacherously attacked the Soviet Union without a declaration of war, and thereby began the sad horrible end of the Jews of David-Horodok.

Destruction and Holocaust

There was great panic. The Jews were frightened to death. The Horodtchukas were confident. The Soviet authorities in town were agitated.

The town's youth were quickly mobilized. However, not everyone was taken into the army. Those who had unacceptable social status were later released.

German airplanes appeared ovdr the town, and, although they dropped no bombs, they created a terrible panic.

The German troops continued onward with immense power. The Red army retreated in disarray and confusion. The Soviet town leaders began evacuating.

Hundreds of Jewish youth and entire families fled to the previous Soviet-Polish border with the goal of evacuating to Russia in order to escape the murderous hands of the Nazis.

Unfortunately, they encountered a strong Soviet guard at the old border who only let those with special permits to pass. The remainder were not allow d to cross over, and they were forced to return to David-Horodok. The Soviet town authorities were also sent back with orders to remain until the last minute.

The Germans had already captured Pinsk, Luniniatz, Lakve and Mikoshavitch; but they had not yet been in David-Horodok. The town was in fact without a government. David-Horodok was not captured bacause it was not near a railroad line or highway. The Horodtchukas could not wait until the Germans came on their own, and they sent a delegation led by the feldsher (medical worker) Maraiko to the German military authority in Pinsk, requesting that the Germans speed up their arrival in town. They thereby declared the willingness of the Horodtchukas to work along with Germans. They wished to make a quick end to the Jewish population of David-Horodok.

The delegation returned pleased with the "positive" results which they had achieved.

After the return of the delegation, the rumor was spread that the Red army had begun assaulting and repelling the Germans. The delegation was terrified, and they fled back to Pinsk. Unfortunately, in a couple of days, the news was proven false, and the delegation returned to the town accompanied by the Germans.

That same day, the Horodtchukas, led by the above mentioned Maraiko, the brothers Tonio and Liovo Kosorev, Kulogo, Yavplov and others, arranged a meeting under the open sky in honor of the "great historic day".

The Germans gave over the civil authority into the hands of the Horodtchukas, appointing Maraiko as town mayor and Liovo Kosorev as commander of the civil police. The Jews were ordered to wear stars of David.

On the 16th of Av, 570[illegible], an order was delivered that at six o'clock the next morning all Jewish men over age 14 were to gather at the marketplace opposite the Catholic church, taking shovels with them. It was implied that they would take them to work.

Early next morning, the Jews began assembling at the marketplace which was surrounded by armed German SS troops and many Horodtchukas.

After all had gathered, the Horodtchukas spread around town checking for holdouts.

The brothers Issur and Hershl Gurvitch, who were found in a hiding place, had their eyes gouged out while being taken to the marketplace.

All those gathered at the marketplace were led away on foot by a strongly armed SS detachment, accompanied by hundreds of Horodtchukas, to Hinavsk, a village seven kilometers from David-Horodok. There the graves had already been prepared.

Surrounded on all sides by artillery and machine guns, every single man was shot to death.

The cries and screaming of the unfortunate victims carried through the air and reached as far as David-Horodok.

The gathered Horodtchukas fulfilled a triple mission: they made sure that no-one fled from the field. They removed the gold rings, watches, clothing, shoes, boots and even tore out gold teeth. Finally, they carried out the job of throwing the victims into the graves, not looking to see if they were really dead or still half-living.

Only two children succeeded in escaping unnoticed from that frightful slaughter. Wandering through the fields, they joined a partisan group and thus survived.

* * *

In town the second part of the frightful tragedy took place. After the men were led out of town to the slaughter, the women and small children were ordered to leave David Horodok within an hour.

The few men who had succeeded in hiding out and did not go out to the "work", among them Rabbi Moshele, Haim Moravtchik and others, changed into women's clothing, and they went along with all the women and children. However, there were Horodtchukas at the bridge checking for disguised men among the women.

All the disguised men were regognized by the Horodtchukas. They were brutally beaten, and then thrown from the bridge into the river.

Thus a group of several thousand women and children set out on a horrible path of wandering, not knowing where to go.

They wandered for two weeks over fields, roads and trails. Not one town would take them in, despite the efforts of the local Jews. Only a few dozen women and children succeeded in getting accomodations with relatives in the surrounding towns of Lakve, Staline and Luniniatz. The remainder wandered for two weeks, suffering hunger, cold and the hatred of the peasants who would beat and rape them.

During those two weeks, all the deserted Jewish homes with their possessions were pillaged. Many Jewish houses were dismantled by peasants from the surrounding villages, bringing them back in pieces to their own villages. The Horodtchukas moved into many of the houses.

After two weeks of wandering, the women and children returned to the gates of David-Horodok which "deigned" to receive them. It was understood that they were no longer permitted in their own homes ,and a ghetto was created for them on a few streets where there were gentile hovels.

This ghetto existed for a year. In the course of that year, more than half died rom epidemics, "accidental homicides" and starvation. Officially the ghetto inhabitants received 100 grams of bread per person per day, but, in fact, no bread at all was distributed at least two days a week.

After a year of extraordinary suffering and frightful existence, all those women and children still living, including three or four grown men such as Z.B. Velvl Kushner whom the Germans spared from the slaughter of the men because he was an expert in the repair of new machines, were led out on a certain day (unfortunately the date is unknown) to the same place where the men were murdered the previous year, and they were shot to death

Thus ended the close to 500 year existence of the Jewish community in David-Horodok.

* * *

During the three year Nazi occupation of David-Horodok, a partisan group paid almost daily "visits" in David-Horodok, causing much damage to the Germans and many headaches for the Horodtchukas.

The partisans burned almost all the Jewish houses in town so that the Horodtchukas would not benefit from Jewish possessions. They blew up the town's power station. From time to time they raided the town, killing both Germans and Horodtchukas. They kept the town under tension through the entire period.

In this partisan group, there was a Jewish girl (whose name and fate are unfortunately not known) who was distinguished by her extraordinary courage and daring. In every partisan raid, she was always the first to go in and the last to withdraw. With her heroic deeds, she threw terror into the Germans and the Horodtchukas, and at the same time gave courage to her partisan comrades.

* * *

In 1944 the Red army freed David-Horodok of the murderous Nazi occupation. Unfortunately, there was no longer a living Jew in the town.

A few dozen leaders of the Horodtchukas fled along with the German army.

Several of the Jews were saved because they were in the Soviet Union during the war: Hershl Korman and his two sons Nita and Motas, now in Israel; Itzl Nahmanovitch now in the USA; Mandl Krovtchik now in Israel and after the liberation visited David-Horodok, encountering a ravaged scorched town without one living Jew and an immense common grave where the tortured David-Horodok Jews rested.

In every Horodtchuka house they found Jewish furniture and possessions. In the marketplace, the Horodtchukas sold Jewish clothing with kaftans. The Horodtchuka women wore kerchiefs made of Jewish prayer shawls.

However, they all had nothing to say. They laid the entire guilt on the Germans and the escaped leaders of the Horodtchukas. They themselves "know nothing", "regretful", "was not in town then", "also suffered from the Germans", in a word: entirely innocent sheep - almost martyrs.

* * *

Today there is not one Jew in David-Horodok. The saving remnant is mostly in Israel. Several remained in the Soviet Union, some in Poland, and a few immigrated to America.

I. Lipshitz

From Childhood Years - David-Horodok 50 Years Ago

Motl Slotzki
New York

It is difficult to say how David-Horodok differed much from other small towns stuck in the deep marshes of Polesye. They had the same style houses, streets, schools, shops, marketplaces and the same livlihoods, troubles, cares and sorrows.

David-Horodok produced no famous men by whose merit a permanent light could be kindled in the history of Belorussian Jewry. Kaidonov was renowned for the Kaidonover Rebbe, Avraham Reizin. Staline had acquired a reputation with the Staliner Rebbe. However, David-Horodok had no such luck.

But for those born and raised in David-Horodoker, the town had a permanent charm. The miatchinas would say "Horodok solodok", a sweet town.

Even having departed as a youth, as did most David-Horodokers who now live in America, one still carries a longing in his heart for the old home.

No matter what different memories and impressions that each David-Horodoker brought with him from his childhood years, everyone carried an exceptional love and memory for the Horin River which flowed through the middle of town.

Not Yudovitch's wall, not the marketplace, the Olshoner Street, the marshes, the Alpiner Street, the Valamitcher Street, the school yard, nor the various streets and byways round about, not the hill but only the river will be the subject of the first encounter and greeting- "from which side of the river did you come from?"

Wherever destiny takes you, whether to hot desert sands or to the shores of the Pacific or Atlantic, if you were born and raised in David-Horodok, the river will follow you wherever you go the rest of your life and take a prominent place in your memories.

The Horin River is the true "woman of valor". She is the nourisher and supplier of almost the entire town. She makes many rich and others poor. For one it tears up his yard and cattle stall, and for another on the opposite shore, it deposits soil for an orchard and garden.

The river carries ships, barges, rafts and steamers. It fills the fishermen's nets with the finest fish. It breeds flocks of geese whose meat and fat feed the town's inhabitants, and whose down softens their bed covers.

How beautiful the river is in summertime. On its shores there is ceaseless activity, both day and night.

Here they build the magnificent ships. Piles of lumber go on ships to distant Prussia. The two small steamers Viun and Strakaza are going, one to Nirtcha and the other to Vidivar-Staline. The steamers are the pleasant intermediaries between David-Horodok and the outside world.

In the summer we swim and play in and around the river. We walk along the large wooden bridge. We run to greet the incoming steamer even if there is no-one that we are waiting for.

At night the town's youngsters strolled along the riverbank behind Mordechai Selig's orchard in Tchipovski Street; from there around the church hill, along the dirt path to the Kvuarsker windmill and on to the marshes.

We remember the town in its prosperous times. Famous for their wealth were such affluent men as Yudovitch, the Bragmans, Lipman Lodatzki, Aharon-Leib of Arli, Leibke Grushkin, Pesah Yashkes and many more. They were the "eastern wall" Jews of the "great" and "rich man's" synagogues.

The greatest imprint on David-Horodok was left by Yudovitch. He had done much traveling in the outside world, and he brought back European fashion to David-Horodok. He was less concerned with Europeanizing David-Horodok, as for example Peter the Great with Moscow, as he was interested in making improvements in the town.

I see before my eyes the two things that he built. Yudovitch's two-story brick building with the spread eagle wings on both sides contained walled shops on half the street, the Amalia Hotel and a large orchard surrounded by a brick wall which gave the building the appearance of a medieval baron's castle. A small bridge behind the orchard led to Zladayavka. Yudovitch also built the Great Synagogue in the school yard with great style and taste. It would have suited a German city rather than a town in the Polesye marshes. Yudovitch's masonry on the Alpiner Road produced bricks impressed with the letters "YU". The beautiful idyllic water mill, called the Alpiner mill, was an ideal model for a landscape painter. Lastly there was Yudovitch himself, a tall frame and a well-fed belly, his stern lordly face with cold sharp grey eyes. He had pointed thinly twisted whiskers which reminded people of the Baron Hirsch Ginsberg with his top hat and thick cane with a staghorn handle.

Yudovitch's time faded away, and the Bragmans emerged on the scene with the berlina business. The berlinas transported products from Polesye and Belorussia to the Ukraine and Great Russia, and from the banks of the Dnieper back to Polesye.

The Bragmans built their warehouses from David-Horodok to Kramantchug and Yakaterinoslov. The berlinas transported wheat flour from Kiev, Poltova and Karkov; sugar, salt, barley grain, oil, coal and many other products over the waters of the Pripyet and Dnieper until their very ends.

Their tugboat steamer Montefiore would visit the town once a year. In the fall, before winter froze the river, the steamboat would tow a long line of high bellied berlinas, and leave them for the winter on the banks of the Horin River opposite Mache Rimar's dock where they were built.

With the berlinas came the owners Yosel, Yankel and Motel Bragman. Their expensive skunk furs lined with cat skin gave a special dignity to the eastern wall of the Great Synagogue. Even the Slonimer rabbi

with his long red beard in his nook next to the ark, acquired a certain distinction with the arrival of the Bragmans.

Their time also passed and quickly faded. All that remained of them was the glory of Yosel Bragman's beautiful daughters. Golde Rayne, Shifra Sarke and, the prettiest of them all, Rivkele Bragman.

The subsequent tycoons who followed the Yudovitchs and the Bragmans, such as Leibke Grushkin, Pesah Yashkes, Lipman Liadetzki and a few lesser people, were already Jews whose possessions were no longer as lavish as their predecessors.

New winds began blowing over Russia, and they were also felt in our out-of-the-way town.

* * *

The turbulent months of the 1905 revolutionary upheaval pass through my mind like a kaleidoscope. The almost unlimited power of the wealthy disappeared. One then had to deal with the Eseravtzes, Iskravtzes and Bundavtzes.

After awhile, when the youth realized that they would never attain the right of direct and secret ballot, they resolved to leave the town. They began the great mass immigration to America after the Russian-Japanese war.

Except for Mordecai Loptshavon who would on no account leave David-Horodok, all the other "brothers and sisters" began leaving the town.

The town became impoverished, and, if not for the help of the sons and daughters in far-off America, they would have starved to death.

There were no longer heard the songs and laughter of the Jewish youth along the banks of the river on summer nights. The orphaned ships stood tied up at the river docks. As a boy or girl grows up, they go off to America.

An echo of the horrible pogroms which had raged through the length and breadth of the Jewish cities and towns in Russia, also reached David-Horodok. A Horodoker miatchene named Zuchter murdered with an axe an entire Jewish family of seven souls in the nearby village of Arli. The murder was carried out at night when everyone was sleeping. Terror fell on the town and the surrounding villages. Everyone prepared for pogroms, and the horrible murder was regarded as a "down payment".

I remember as if it were now,the frightful funeral: the wagons with the massacred bodies and the blood soaked bed clothes. That tragic night with the wagons and bodies is engraved in my memory to this day, like a horrible nightmare.

* * *

David-Horodok had many laborers, butchers, teamsters and - naturally- peddlers, shopkeepers, fishmongers, brokers and religious article dealers.

In those days the butcher carts stood in the middle of the market-place where the church now stands. The sticks fastened to the edges of the stands on which hung the carts made the marketplace similar to a garden of babbling.

Even now I can hear the clamor, cursing, screaming, the dull clang of the cleavers in the butcher stalls and the wild skirmishing of the dogs for a bone, a piece of meat or for first claim on a butcher stall.

The butchers would come into our house for the evening prayers. Instead of a towel or handkerchief, they would use the window curtains to wipe their hands. After they had finished praying and left the house, the curtains remained hanging like pressed-together horses tails. However, we couldn's complain too much because, had they wished to wipe themselves on the lapels of their kaftans or on the sleeves of their jackets, they would on no account have succeeded. Their hands, covered with fat and blood, would slide off their clothing and remain as wet as ever.

Saturday night they would come to our house in order to settle up the jointly owned merchandise that they would purchase and slaughter during the week.

The large black table in the dining room was covered with chalk marks of lines and circles. The corner of a half circle was erased with a finger,and a cat's ear placed above it. Such was the arithmetic which only the butchers understood. Often there would be a sudden shouting and dispute which would end in a fist fight. When they fought, they were not joking. They would try to hit each other on the full body, and more than one butcher came away from such a fight with a bruised chest and a nasty cough.

My father would buy the hides and the unkosher meat from the butchers, and send it to the regiment for the soldiers.

The teamsters were frequent visitors in our house. They would transport the hides and the meat to the ships, steamboats and the train at Lakve.

The teamsters were divided into groups. Each group had a monopoly on a certain route. Thus there were "Lakver" teamsters, "Staliner", "Turover" and "Pinsker" teamsters. One group would not trespass in another's territory. Besides these, there were "market teamsters". They would make deliveries from the wholesalers to the shops such as a sack of flour or a cask of gasoline, or they would transport a Jew to a neighboring village.

The town's butchers and teamsters were not what you would call "eastern wall sitters". For that reason, they were the only ones who were respected by the town and village gentiles.

If a gentile became drunk and unruly towards a Jew, whether in a tavern or in the marketplace, it was enough for Ezra the butcher to come over and lay his huge butcher hand on the nape of the gentile's neck, and all became quiet and peaceful.

At the time when they anticipated pogroms in town, the butchers and teamsters comprised the greatest part of the self-defense organization. The teamsters prepared themselves with cleavers, revolvers and lead pipes. They had resolved that in case of a pogrom, the gentiles would pay dearly for such an endeavor, and they would no longer start up with the Jews. The end result was that, despite the incitement of the priests, the gentiles did not venture to start a fight.

David-Horodok was rich in smiths who were divided into various categories. There were smiths who worked in ship building at Mahe Rimar's dock. They made skobkes, zhobkes, yarshes with heads like loaves of bread and shvaranes for the rudders. There were those who made bells for the horses, knives for the gentiles, knives for the house, cleavers, door handles, hinges and iron doors for walled stores and cellars. There were smiths who only worked with copper. I remember one of them, Eizel the smith. Besides his work at the forge, he was an oustanding bal tefilla (prayer leader). There were other smiths who would also belong to the burial society, and catch a drink of whiskey at a burial, which was almost a daily event in town. Even in normal times, the town had more funerals than marriages. Fortunately, David-Horodoker women understood the situation and tried to compensate for the losses. A David-Horodoker woman who had no more than a half-dozen children was considered barren.

The town carpenters would work with copperware. They would travel on the roads,and sell the copperwork chests to the peasants. However, most of the carpenters produced furniture, doors, windows and other household items.

In normal times, drillers and sawers worked at Mahe Rimar's dock, building barges. Other than this, they usually worked for the town only after a fire. Fires were frequent occurences in our town, and, if occasionally a fire was a little delayed, there were those who would "invite" this "guest".

Cobblers worked both for high style and for second-rate. There were those fancy shoemakers who worked with very expensive leathers, and others who worked with cowhide.

The tailors were also divided into categories. There were tailors for the wealthy and for the poor. There even those who hardly earned the grain to put in the water for barley soup. The poor tailors earned their livlihood by remaking the clothing of older people for youngsters, from women's garments to men's, etc.

There were hatmakers who sewed caps, one of whom I cannot forget until this day. Besides being a hatmaker, he served as the "town clock". When one heard Moshe the hatmaker's coughing as he came from the marketplace even before the cock had crowed, you knew that it was time for Jews to get

up for the first minyon.

The only Jewish packer in town was Elye, son of Aharon Moshe the doctor. The old father Aharon also helped work in the yard. They would make various containers, including long barrels in which they would pack red raspberries which the peasants would gather by the thousands of pounds in the forests of Polesye each fall season.

Masons and some cobblers had extra jobs to supplement their incomes. Thus several cobblers were at the same time the town musicians. The "musician of musicians" had to supplement his income by working as a barber and photographer. The clarinetist of the band was a mason. The small trumpet, the large trumpet and the drummer would make the shoes for the bride and groom before playing at their wedding. The drummer also helped to carry shalak mones (Purim gifts), act as caller, etc.

The watchmaker also was occupied with the production of galoshes. Once he was almost burned to death when the gasoline suddenly ignited.

David-Horodok was rich in rabbis and ritual slaughterers, almost as many as Mazir or even Pinsk. No town was more renowned than David-Horodok for starving so many rabbis. Why the rabbis picked just this town to conduct their fasts, God only knows.

Two of the ritual slaughterers were also cantors. The synagogue cantor Reb Shmarel prayed in the large Choir Synagogue with a choir that he trained, and Reb Leibe was the cantor at the Great Synagogue.

* * *

David-Horodok had its own dynasty of "good Jews" (euphemism for Hasidic rabbis). This was the family of the Alter Rav, Rabbi Israel Yoseph who had come from Volin, from Koretz.

The street around the Alter Rav's study house was occupied by his sons and daughters. They lived in want, but warmed themselves under the broad but cooling rays of the bygone star of their grandfather, the Alter Rav.

In contrast, there was joy and livliness in the Staliner shtibel. They still talk about when the Staliner Rebbe visited. Then even the misnagdim (scholastics who were anti-Hasidic) would go into their study houses on the side streets and stick close to the walls in fear of receiving a smack in the neck and throat from a tipsy Staliner hasid. At that time the Alter Rav's hasidim felt particularly abased and dejected.

David-Horodok was the capital for Rav Israel Yosef just as Staline was the capital for Rav Ahralan.

Rav Baruchl had his own study house and his own hasidim. Rav Baruchl's hasidim were not rich Jews. They were small shop owners and laborers, but they did not let their rabbi down. Indeed, looking at the stateliness of Rav Baruchl, his beautiful long grey beard, his intelligent large deep eyes, his patriarchal Abraham-like appearance, no town would have allowed such a personage to go hungry all seven days of the week.

* * *

Between Minha (afternoon prayer service) and Maariv (evening prayer service) in the Great Synagogue, the shadows would lengthen, and darkness settled in. One hardly notices the man standing at the podium. Only his voice is heard, with its own peculiar sad-sweet sounds filtering through the twilight. It is Yosl the butcher singing the Psalms.

Later, after the Maariv service, Berl the sexton teaches a portion of Talmud for the public. Then the eastern wall loses its privileged status. The wealthy, the merchants and the laborers mix together. Honor belongs to the one who can learn.

Indeed they all sat together, hand-in-hand, the aristocratic looking and affluent Pesah Yashke's, Yenkl Shashe Gitl's, Velvl Ester Haye's, Moshe Noah Leib's, along with the butchers Hertzl Pravik, Izik Leibele's, Getzl and the Jewish teamsters such as the two brothers Volf and Alter Artchik's.

It is summer. The Pinsk teamsters drive to Pinsk with their sleighs only in the winter-time when the steamboats are idle. The brothers Volf and Alter earn their summer livlihood pulling lumber out of the river at Shloma Feigele's dock where ships are built. The most they earn is 20 kopecks a day. In truth, this suffices only for sandy black bread, perhaps for a little barley to make soup or a piece of kishka. It was really a difficult and poor livlihood, but all was forgotten in the evening at the Talmud lesson; for then one was learning Torah!

The town of Slutzik took away Berl the sexton who became their yeshiva headmaster, and Rabbi Dudl took over the job of giving the public Talmud lesson.

Noah Pinhas taught Ein Yakov (a collection of legends in the Talmud) at the Alter Rav's studyhouse. The school teacher studied Bible and Rashi(biblical commentary)with the Jews at the culture school. Only in the Staliner shtibel did they revel, sing and dance because they "did not believe in sadness".

Soon the summer is over, and the High Holy Days approach. The sexton knocks at dawn, summoning people to arise and say Selihos (penitential prayers). I go with my father to the Nagid(rich man) Synagogue. At the podium stands Yenkl Yeshia's. His hoarse tearful voice begs, demands and pleads. The congregants repeat after him with tears pouring from their eyes. I look at the Holy Ark, and it seems

to me that the cover flutters as the Holy Spirit in the Ark cries and bewails the bitter lot of the people of Israel.

* * *

A very good Jew arrived in town from abroad. He was dressed aristocratically with a cape, a soft hat and a cane in hand. His handsome face was encircled by a broad black beard, and his black eyes made him look like Dr. Herzl.

That was Yashi Adler. He came from Krinki in the province of Grodno, and he opened a school in David-Horodok where he taught the children Hebrew-in-Hebrew.

Instead of the old familiar children's teacher with his whip, Adler typified the modern instructor who organized the school in the modern style - clean, neat and disciplined.

After a while, there arrived in town the "lame elephant"- Halfont. That was the real name given to the man who later became famous under his literary pseudonym A. Litvak.

With Halfont, the Bund arrived in town. Thanks to the Bund, David-Horodoker boys and girls became "brothers and sisters". Students arrived in town to deliver speeches. There were organized an illegal library, conspirational gatherings, and there developed rifts between the various doctrines of socialistic and nationalistic thought. In one word, things became very lively in our sleepy Polesyean town. Those were the years of the 1905 revolution.

On a cold wintry Sabbath, Halfont was taken away from us by sleigh, accompanied by a strong police guard to a distant prison or Siberia.

* * *

It is difficult to leave the town where one was born and raised. It is especially difficult to leave the beautiful river. This is where we played, bathed, floated in boats, slid on the ice, played pranks with friends for which we were spanked and poked by our fathers and teachers, and beaten by the gentiles in the daily wars that we waged with them.

It is still deeply engraved in our hearts for an entire lifetime.

Sabbath Evening
(Pictures of a Town)
by
Berl Neuman

The clock strikes twelve. The day is half gone. The sun is in mid-sky. The aroma of the pletzlach (flat rolls) and fresh bulkas (baked rolls) has long since dissipated with the wind.

A new odor now emanates from the chimneys. Like the music of a stringed instrument, the aroma rises to the sky, and the heavenly servants carry the "burnt offering" aloft on their wings to the Master of the World as a Sabbath gift. Thus the industrious housewives let the outside world taste the aroma of their cholent and noodle kugel.

Noah the blacksmith (he was a righteous Jew) had long since closed up his shop, and walked home at a rapid pace lest he be tardy in welcoming the Sabbath queen; as it says in the verse: "delay the end of the Sabbath and hasten its coming".

In the marketplace can be heard the clanging of locks and bolts. At half-closed doors the shopkeepers stand around, glancing up and down the empty marketplace, and one after another unhurriedly (perhaps another customer will come at the last moment) close up the shops.

When Nishka the proprietress begins to close her shop, Lipa the driver rubs his back on the wagon post, shrugs his shoulders to conclude his back-scratching, gives a broad resounding yawn, slowly climbs off the wagon, and his white skinny little horse, blind in one eye, barely drags its feet.

"Neigh" says he, and the horse seems to understand that the day of rest is also arriving for him, and he joyfully plods along.

First Lipa and then Izik "the goat" on one side, "the brilliant" and his son Itzel (both in one wagon) on the other side, overworked Jews with hunched shoulders and formalized outfits, separate themselves, one from the other. This is the way teamsters part, separating at the brick wall of the church on the way home for Sabbath.

On the other side of the marketplace, near Koplinski's apothecary, the esteemed drivers returning from their trip to Lakve begin to gather.

They represent an entirely different world. The horses are healthy, well-fed and large. The wagons are tall with containers in the rear filled with fragrant hay. They were outfitted with padded comfortable covered seats for the convenience of their passengers.

Arriving from the road, they stop to grab a quick chat.

Shaike "the Kaiser" begins to tell of the "wonders" of his trip as he pulls hard on the reigns of his horse which at that moment begins to whinney as if it understands the conversation.

"With my horse I don't have to be ashamed", says Benjamin the driver with a quiet voice, giving his horse a tickle under the belly with his whip. It appears that the horse is pleased with his owner's compliment, and he rears up and industriously digs a hole in the ground with his hind legs.

Asherke "the deaf", with his black playful horse "Pupike" which was tied with a rope, jumps down while holding up his pants. He does not hear the conversation but pokes his way into the middle, staring with a pair of jovial sparkling bright eyes. He shrugs his shoulders, pulls his right ear to the side and asks quietly, wanting to participate in the conversation: "Well? What? Are you talking about something"?

"Nothing, nothing"" says Yosl the blond with a muffled voice,"Leibke doesn't mean you; he means the horse".

The resounding laughter of the drivers reverberates through the half-deserted marketplace.

However, Asherke is not dismayed. He twists around, cracks his whip in the air, and laughs good-naturedly together with all the others.

The old David Tchesnok, who is a little late, comes along the road. He stops his horse and wagon awhile, and, without getting down from his wagon, he says with dignity: "Jews, it is already late. There is no time. It is already Sabbath eve. We must give our horses some oats and drive home".

Meanwhile, his horse takes advantage of the opportunity, raises his tail and empties his bowls. He swishes his tail right and left, driving away the flies, and he is ready to go into his stall for the Sabbath.

The drivers decide that it is definitely time to drive home when they see from a distance Shlomo Pinhas hurrying to the bath house with a pack of white linen under his arm.

There was a certain charm about the David-Horodoker bath house. I can see before my eyes the long building with red bricks, the high narrow windows with the small square bracketed panes.

In the first anteroom, a pile of branches lay prepared. The oven was heating up so as to warm the water in the steam-boiler which would convey the hot water through pipes into the two large casks which stood on high iron railings near the ceiling.

The dark corridor led into the first wardrobe room where, on the left side, stood a closet containing cubicles for the clothing. On the opposite side there were wooden benches for resting. From there a door led to the "thrashing bath".

The "thrashing bath" or, as others called it, the "sweat bath", constituted another world. The door opened with great difficulty because of two heavy stones bound to it with rope which held it back.

Not everyone could go in there because some could not tolerate the heat. Every once in awhile someone would pass out, and they would

pour a cask of cold water on him, and lead him by hand into the cold room where they would lay him on the cool concrete bench until he came to himself.

It is really no wonder. The thick steam was intermingled with the stench of dirty underwear hanging from sticks inserted in the overlying rafters. Not every heart could endure it.

Indeed this is the reason that such a frail Jew as Baruch "the planter" never experienced the zest of being steamed-out in the Jewish David-Horodoker "sweat-bath".

The only one who felt better there than at home was Moshe Mordechai Zelik's "the fat". The heat was never enough for him. When he got together with Maier Hershlin the butcher, then things really were spirited.

First Maier Hershl shouts in his husky voice: "throw on another bucket!" To pour a bucket of water on the boiling hot stones in the oven required great skill, and Moshe "the fat" was an expert.

One bucket after another, the heat increased. The steam could be cut with a knife,as it was thick enough to simply choke a person. At this point they both climb up to the highest step, and their work begins.

They raise and lower their branches to clear away the steam on all sides. One thrash and then another, and a third, a fifth and a tenth.

"Ah, ah, ah", cries one of them with great pleasure - "a little higher... there, there, there...harder...even harder...good...good...ah"!

Now the other one lies down, and the first one gives him a double measure.

Thus the two beaten Jews leave the "sweat-bath", red as beets, but healthy. "Oh was that a bath! Since I've been alive...."!

And where do Jews go after the "sweat-bath"? - to the mikve (ritual bath). In the mikve-room it was a little quieter. Only the screaming of the small children who had polluted the water disturbed the silence.

From the mikve-room a door led to another room which contained a row of white tubs which were intended for the gentry.

And now we see entering the mikve-room a tall broadboned Jew. This is Mordehai Leib "the general". He confidentally descends step by step until he remains standing in the middle of the mikve with the water reaching his chest. He puts his hands on his head, bends down, turns right and left in order to make circlets of waves which draw off the leaves still stuck to his body after the sweat-bath. He immerses himself three times; then gets up and stretches his entire length and straightens his long yellow beard.

After him comes the old Rabbi Wolf Hillel's with careful steps, bent over almost to the ground. Before he descends the last step, he covers his ears, nose and eyes with the fingers of both hands. When he leaves the last step, he stands in the water with his head barely visible. He is immersed as he stands. Nevertheless, he bends three times, and, barely catching his breath, he comes out cautiously wiping his face with one hand.

The day doesn't linger. Time flies. The bathhouse empties. The streets become filled with the Sabbath spirit.

Through the windows can be seen the gleam of the brass candlesticks and the covered hallahs on the clean white tableclothes.

Washed and outfitted with shining shoes, the small children wander about the streets peeling kernels which their mothers put in their pockets in honor of the Sabbath.

Girls with braided pigtails on their radiantly shampooed heads, show off to each other their pretty Sabbath clothes.

With white pressed shawls on their heads, the grandmothers go out on the porch to wait for Velvel Raishke's who walks along the streets with a stick in his hand, knocking on the shutters, and announcing that it is time to bless the candles.

The sun begins to set. The day departs, giving way for the town's heartfelt friday evening. From the synagogues, one can hear the melody of "Come, let us sing to the Lord; let us shout with joy to the Rock of our salvation..."

My Grandmother Told Me
(Memories)
by
Berl Neuman

Long Teves (December-January) evenings. Outside, the frost was burning cold. The windowpanes sprouted various snow-capped mountains and thick deep birch forests through which you could barely see the street.

In the house, by a small flickering kerosene lamp which threw shadows on the walls that children were afraid to look at because grandmother had said that one must not play with shadows because demons can give them nightmares, on such an evening grandmother sat on a short foot-stool next to the stove, surrounded by her grandchildren, and looked into the fire which danced cheerfully, throwing tongues of fire into the black soot-filled chimney. From time to time grandmother threw a long thin piece of kindling into the fire, causing it to crackle, throwing sparks onto the wooden floor which was grooved with shadows.

From time to time could be heard the scraping of feet on the white

frozen snow, slowly receding into the stillness of the night.

In such a dark idyllic silence, grandmother Bashe told her grandchildren that once...a long time ago...her grandmother had told her... that the Horin River had been far...very far away from the town... and year in and year out, the river with its ice floes slowly cut the banks, and,with the slow pace of generations, it neared the town...

And the grandchildren swallowed the enchanting tale word by word from grandmother's mouth..and little children's heads could not understand how the river could move.

The rectangular clock with its ancient flowered dial and long brass chains with heavy weights which propelled the shiny pendulum back and forth with its never tardy tick-tock...tick-tock, put the children to sleep in grandmother's lap, dreaming sweet dreams of water-fairies and with the question "how could it be..." on their lips.

* * *

The years fly, and children grow up in naive, content and quietly dignified simplicity. They grow up in streets where the puddles never dry out during the entire year, not having a chance to look, even through the smallest window, at the wide world, and not knowing what is going on out there.

It is really no wonder that we grown children could not imagine a taller person than Itzik of Nirtcha, a richer Jew than Mahe and a feebler man than Mʼltchik.

Could there be any more pious good-hearted Jewish woman in the world than Sarah Itka "the blind"?

Could there possibly be a better shmura-matza baker than Shmerl Beize's?

And where could you find such a hearty singer, psalm-reciter and hakofes-distributor than Avraham Yossel?

What town in the entire world possesses a better cantor and choirboys than Shmerl Lanski and his choir?

And who can compare to the piety of Malahel who never complained, enduring the torments of Job with a constant smile?

What Jewish community was blessed with such a saint as Rabbi Dudl?

Who else had the honor to taste the pleasure of a hasidic melody on a Sabbath afternoon at the rebbe's table when Yossl Kalouzshni would roll his eyes upward, and, with a thin voice, he would fill the air of the hassidic shtibl with Sabbath songs?

Who else could dance with such fervor at the rebbe's table than Shia?

Or does there exist anywhere a cleverer cobbler than Aizle "Tchuptchik" and a better tailor than Yossel "Pudrik"?

and more...and many many more Jews, of blessed memory!...

That is how "far" children looked and how very much they understood... happy, naive, hearty childhood years.

* * *

On spring days, when the sun would emerge from its wintry mantle of clouds,and warm up the winter-long cake of ice which had reached the open mouth of the street well; when the yellow icicles hanging from the straw roofs which were shaped by the winter into various artistic forms would begin dripping rapid drops into the container which would also serve as a sitting stool on summer nights - on such spring days, children with happy smiling faces would go out to the Horin River and watch how the river outgrows the banks and, with immense force, pulls hunks of ice which are split with a frightening noise and are drawn into a pile, one on top of another, later to slide off and disappear into the deep abyss only to later be propelled to the surface where they are eventually sliced by the ice-cutters which protect the bridge from destruction.

Also torn along by the powerful current were bones from the graves of the old cemetery and wooden beams which were ripped out from the foundations of houses along "Egypt Street", leaving the houses precariously close to toppling into the water.

The river tears at the high bank, making deeper and deeper inroads, and then the children understood Grandmother Bashe's story of the past... that once...a very long time ago... the river was far away... very far...

* * *

Were it not for the dark black Hitler-clouds which covered the skies of the Jewish communities, wiping them off the surface without leaving even a memory, then grandchildren in David-Horodok would still be telling their children today that once... a very long time ago... there was...

May G-d remember their sacred souls..!

* * *

Berl Neuman

Would you like to become acquainted with our town? Would you like to get some of its flavor?

In the books of Shalom Aleichem and Mendele-Mocher-Seforim, you will find a large part of what our town possessed.

After all, what didn't our town possess? Poor people, sextons, synagogue trustees and ordinary community workers; money-lenders, providers of orphans and ordinary benefactors; a poorhouse, a bathhouse, a ritual bath and above all...mud! A sea of mud! It seemed as if there was no spot in the entire world that was free of mud. Mud in the street, in the yard, on the sidewalk and mud right up to the house.

What wasn't done to try and get rid of the mud? In my time, I recall that they fixed the streets three times. And who doesn't remember how the gentiles would lay a thick cover of gravel along the length of the streets, and then overlay it with dirt? Do you think that it really helped? Forget it! (literally: A yesterday day!)

After all the gravel and dirt laying, when one had to cross the street, for example near Moshe Yude Lipshitz or Yudl Shatzki or Shimon Laichtman, it was truly deadly dangerous!

And if one of the residents was good-hearted enough to lay a couple of boards across the street, do you think it was already an easy matter (literally: torah noodles)? Now you cross with dry feet? That is not the way it begins, and that is not the way it ends. As soon as you put a foot on a board, it slides forward and sinks into the mud as the other end of the board rises up into the air, and you remain stuck in the mud with your shoes. You lose your composure, no longer regarding the presence or absence of a board, and you wade in the mud to get to the other side as quickly as possible. When you finally get to the other side, you look around to be sure that no-one is looking, and you anguish over your shoes and long trousers which are now covered with mud up to the knees.

Around Gittel Yonah's house, it was truly chaos! If you recall, her house was next to the marketplace. There, at the marketplace, all the David-Horodoker Jews ran in the morning, and there was really reason to run.

There were plenty of good things in the marketplace: pokers, water troughs, kneading troughs, shovels, tubs, pails, soaking dishes, shoes and boots - ask what not?

Today who talks about food? - whatever the mouth could desire! As, for example, Eizl "Luibitch" loved big fish... Mendl the "Brotzker" also would only indulge himself with small flat cakes - so he also ran to grab a pile of flat cakes.

Very early, at dawn, the two brothers Izak Beroshes and Shmuel Michl are already walking on the street. They are coming from the first minyon with their prayer shawls under their arms. Where do you suppose they are going? To the marketplace!

One buys a bundle of hay for his cow, and the other purchases a ball of plain thread to sew the clothing of the peasants.

Many Jews would often love to go to the marketplace and observe what

was being bought and sold, and perhaps they too would grab a bit of a bargain!

Just as an example, Moshe'le "twitch-lip" simply loved to go out with his cane and derive pleasure from everything; he always had plenty of time, blessed be the Name. Berl "pistol" also didn't mind such pleasures. In fact, when they met each other at the marketplace with empty stomachs, they would pick out a convenient strategic spot and trade witticisms, laughing at the world...

In such a manner, the entire town was there, some running and some walking.

Haye Leah Shmaiha's ran to sell fried goose skin and fat; Shashke Korman ran to sell fresh bagles; Nahe Sarinka's ran with a wagon of apples and Nahe Katz went with quick steps, perhaps to buy some boar bristles.

Just as in my father's vineyard, there flourished Simha the "Japanese", a broad shouldered and big-footed man with a pair of fisherman boots pulled up to the armpits, a rope tied around his coat from which hung two ends on either side like a hasid's gertl (belt worn during prayer) - he would whirl around the marketplace looking for a livlihood.
It seems that he had large lips while his nose was always a bit swollen and his speech was a little slurred. However, this didn't prevent him from carrying a sack of potatoes on his shoulders for someone, or Fagel Baytzl's basket into her house. In truth, he was cut out to be a teamster, but he had never acquired a horse.

* * *

God forbid, I am not consumed with jealousy, but the women had it better than everyone. First of all, a Horodoker Jew loved his wife, and, secondly, she did not work hard.

A sack of potatoes, a cask of cabbage and berries, and a keg of sour pickles with dill were stored in the cellar; millet, beans, barley, buckwheat groats - everyone kept a supply; a kneading trough of bread was good for an entire week... Milk? What David-Hordoker Jew did not have his own cow in a stall? Well, besides bringing in an armload of wood, heating up the oven, warming up the food and sweeping the house, there was nothing to do. There was plenty of time to stand at the window and look at who was passing by in the street.

Mother stands at one window; daughter stands at another window; and they gossip about the street.

If the cantor passes with a few people, the daughter says: "you see mother, someone is probably having a bris"; Yossel the smith with his patched eye passes by - "mother, who died?" If they saw a policeman approaching from a distance, they both disappear, mother and daughter, quickly away

from the windows, rushing out the back door with brooms in hand, and they begin -whether they need to or not - sweeping the street, because they are sure that he is coming to give them a citation.

There passes Elia Yafa's with a charity box, shivering from the cold.

Israel "the lazy", a hat-maker by trade, carries a pair of hides to cut out warm jackets for the gentiles for winter. He drags himself along, bent over like a barrel.

Moshe'l Lazer's springs along continually shrugging his shoulders. He snorts and spits and talks to himself.

Velvel Kushner strides along with his long legs, raising his head high. He hardly says good morning to anyone. He carries his fiddle along, and goes to entertain Rivele Yudovitch with a concert.

Then Sarah-Leah "the bride" passes by with a large pack under her shawl. She walks carefully, step by step, as if she were counting her footsteps. Her son Zelig follows her. He walks straight as a string on a violin, as if he had swallowed a stick. He doesn't bend at all. You could put a glass of water on his head.

And so they pass, young and old, men and women, idlers and workmen. Moshele Menahem's with a tool box and saw in his hands; Shlomke Ben-Zion's carries a suit to take measurements on someone; David Beilke's hurries to the steamboat, and the old "boy" has already put on his black winter overcoat with the yellow wornout skunk skin collar which dates back to Chmielnitzki's times, sidling along with his hands pushed into his sleeves,and shaking his head.

Understandably, there was something to say about each one: Haim-Yankl "the honey strainer" is too short; Issur Gurvitch is too tall; Abrahaml Levine is too fat; and Shmuel "the patchmaker" is too thin.

It was a unique and beloved occupation to stand at the window, and it wasn't bad even standing there for hours.

Occasionally the window-watchers would be saddened by the sight of Dr. Shalkaver running past with hurried strides. Probably someone is good and sick.

In all we had only one doctor in town. What do you think? We had enough. First of all, God had bestowed him with strong legs - so he was always running in order to satisfy everyone; and, secondly, everyone knew what to do for their sick.

If one of us became sick, we knew that the first thing was to withhold food.

If he became weaker and feverish, the second step was to place an ice bag on his head.

As the patient became even weaker from hunger and properly chilled from the ice cap, then the neighbors would mix in with their advice, that we must apply leeches - that was step number three.

After the leeches had sucked up the last drop of blood, and the angel of death was already standing at the head of the bed, we would then run to the synagogue, and knock on the holy ark, and beg for mercy.

Afterwards, they would run to the doctor, and ask him to save the moribund patient.

Nevertheless, Horodoker Jews were generally healthy and satisfied.

Most of the illness was caused by the "evil eye". We had a special "doctor" for this - Feigl the blacksmith. She would continually talk and spit, snort and spit, and her incantations really helped. Not only that: if someone had a swelling on the eye, a sty or some other such sore, Feigl the blacksmith would lick it with her tongue, and her lick would really help. Nowadays who talks about exorcising a rose? For that, there was no-one like her.

Whether it helped or not, the important thing is that they believed it would help. Horodoker Jews were believers!

Did not Horodoker mothers believe that there was a kind-hearted Sarah sent down by heaven to protect the Jewish woman in childbirth and her newborn infant? And really why should one not believe it? It is clearly written in the Yiddish bible!

And one also believed in the devils camp, Heaven protect us, that would try by various means and tricks to entrap the child in sin. Indeed, there were Horodoker Jewish mothers who would routinely distribute goodies to small schoolchildren in order to encourage them to say their nightly prayers without fail. In addition, they would hang placards containing psalms on each window and door in order to prevent the entrance of imps and evil spirits.

Horodoker Jews believed in everything except for one thing. They did not believe that there could come a time when beasts in the form of people would rise up against them and ruthlessly murder them.

Good-natured, naive, friendly Jewish mothers and fathers, children and old folks, merchants, artisans, laborers and toilers!

With "I believe" on their lips, they were led to the mass-slaughter.

How great is the calamity when we must write of them in the past tense.

David-Horodok Until the War

Itzhak Nahmanovitch

David-Horodok was a small town, a small island of culture in the black and remote sea of Polesye. Near to God and far from people,

getting there was no easy matter. With the wagon from the train station, it was a 25 kilometer journey over muddy roads, or with the steamboat from Pinsk in the summer, it was a 14-18 hour voyage through the wild dream-like forests and swamps of Polesye.

A new arrival would notice nothing special. Small houses cling to the mother earth as if they wanted to unite with her. Incidentally, there was a street popularly called "Egypt Street" where the houses were sunk halfway into the ground.

Outwardly, the town had nothing to recommend it. But when one of its own people looked at it, an inhabitant who had experienced the local way of life, the sweet kernel under the external gray husk, the life of the small houses with their cares and joys, appealed to him with a special zest.

In general, David-Horodok was a unique and interesting town. There were about 18,000 inhabitants of which about 7000-8000 were Jews and the remainder Belorussian with a small number of Poles.

A hundred years would go by with many assaults and battles with various gangs who would pass, and the life of the town did not change. In general, the relationship between the inhabitants was not bad. During World War I, when Balakavitch and his band entered town, the Belorussians saved the Jews from death, hiding them in their own homes. The solidarity of the people was also demonstrated when the Red army arrived and wanted to requisition the cattle of the Polish landowners. The Jews and Belorussians opposed this, and they set up armed resistance. The town was then visited by a punishment expedition which shot to death the most distinguished people in town. This is how Baitzl Yudovitch, of blessed memory, was killed. Later, when the first Poles came into town, also "fine young men", the Polish inhabitants hid many Jews.

Thus many years passed. Lands were wiped out; regimes changed; but in David-Horodok life flowed on without alteration.

Calm reigned - a pleasant calm. Even the "gods" lived at ease... next to the church stood the Jewish synagogues and study-houses, and all was normal.

If there were positive qualities in Jewish community life, these were found in David-Horodok.

Politically active but with ethical content, all parties and organizations were permeated with feelings of brotherhood. The Mizrahist and the Communist would meet in the synagogue on Yom Kipur. There were no great "leaders" - all were equal; young and old stuck to their jobs. Everyone knew his place. It is truly a shame that Shalom Aleichem was never there because he could have found as many original folk themes as in Kasrilevke (Shalom Aleichem's fictional prototype of a shtetl). Each and every individual was unique. Each one was a living Noah Pandre (heroic fictional character penned by Zalman Schneour) with many similar examples such as Abraml "the bastard",

Shia "the emperor", David "the brilliant", Yud "the scholar", etc., etc.

Simple, unassuming, poor but always cheerful, each with his own wit and mannerisms, one could write a book about them.

One cannot overemphasize their uniqueness and modesty; the most pious wore no earlocks or kaftan; the most intelligent spoke the mother-tongue. There were two valuable libraries with the newest books which were read after a hard day's work. Work and culture went hand in hand.

An exemplary youth was brought up in the excellently organized Tarbus school - all in the Hebrew language.

After the eight classes of the school, many of the graduates went elsewhere for higher education. In Pinsk and Vilna, some 100 David-Horodoker youth went to intermediate and high schools. That is the way it was until the war.

3. Rabbis and Community Leaders

The Horodoker Dynasty

From the book On Hassidism by Dr. Rabinovitz (to be published)

About the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was founded an independent hassidic dynasty in David-Horodok which is near Pinsk and even nearer to Staline. Its adherents were known in the vicinity of Pinsk as "Horodoker hassidim" (to distinguish them from those of Rabbi Menahem Mendl of Vitebsk who went by the same name). This was the smallest branch of the hassidic dynasties in Polesye, and it had a small circle of hassidim in David-Horodok, Lakve, Luniniatz, Pinsk and Kozanhorodok. Just as the Labashier hassidim found their place west of Pinsk, between Pinsk and Kobrin, so did the small group of Horodoker hassidim east of Pinsk, between Pinsk and Lakve. The founder of the dynasty was Rav Wolf who was called by his hassidim Rav Wolftsi (Ginsburg), a son of the tsadik Rav Shmuel Halevi of Kashivke, a town in Volin not far from the well-known hassidic center of Nasvizh. Rav Schmuel was a close friend of the renowned tsadik of Volin, Rav Mordehai of Nasvizh. This can be seen from a letter written by Rav Asher of Staline sometime between 1802 and 1826 indicating that both tzadikim were on friendly terms and were in-laws. There is no information as to how Rav Wolf founded an independent dynasty in the center of the Karlin realm. The only hassidic source that mentions Rav Wolf refers to him as Av Bet Din (head of the rabbinic court). It is also popularly believed that Rav Wolf was first designated as a rabbi in David-Horodok, and later, probably because of his lineage, he became a rebbe (hassidic designation of their rabbi). Details of his personality, life and the exact year of his death are not known. There are various popular legends regarding his death which testify to his popularity and authority. The legacy of his rabbinical seat went to his son Rav David. It appears that he had no great influence. For example, Rav David is not mentioned in the short family biography kept by hassidic sources. Subsequently,

Rav David's son, Rav Israel Yosef Halevi, became a central figure in the small hassidic branch, and he was their rebbe until the end of the nineteenth century. He was a renowned scholar, and he led his small congregation of Jews autocratically. Both his fellow townsmen and those from surrounding areas regarded him with great respect. In contrast to the Barazner hassidim who were mostly common rabble, his hassidim included many aristocrats, even some from misnagid (rationalists who were usually antagonists of hassidim) homes. For example, when he would journey to the Horodoker synagogue in Pinsk, his "table" would be visited by the then Hashuber rebbe, Rav Motis, the community heads, cultural leaders and others. Rav Israel Yosef had personal dealings with the renowned tsadik of Volin, Rav Itzhak of Nasvizh. From the letters which Rav Israel Yosef wrote to him (in 1856, 1861 and 1864), one can see his spiritual dependence on Rav Itzhak of Nasvizh. With the expression: "I pray and implore that his holiness (Rav Itzhak) not forget us in the future...so that I may rest peacefully in my house.." He refers undoubtedly to the controversy between his hassidim and the Staliner hassidim who regarded the Horodoker hassidim as inferior. The liturgical melodies in his Horodok synagogue which was called "the rebbe's studyhouse" were similar to the liturgy in Volin. Rav Israel Yosef died in 1899, and a common tomb enclosed his grave along with the graves of his father and grandfather in the Horodoker cemetery. His descendents had a certain renown such as his grandson Rav Itzhak who died in 1908. Rav Itzhak's grandson, Rav Aharon, belonged to the last generation of the dynasty. He occupied the position of rebbe in the neighboring town of Luniniatz. A second grandson, the last Horodoker rebbe, Rav Moshe, was a student at the yeshivas of Volozhin and Lida and a gifted preacher. He was close to the Zionist movement and was held in great esteem by all. He died a martyr at the hands of the Nazis. Of the writings of the Horodoker tzadikim, nothing remains except the few letters mentioned above. The establishment of a dynasty probably resulted from choosing the son of a hassidic tzadik as rabbi who then became both rabbi and rebbe together. This is similar to the manner in which the Libasheier dynasty was established. The small branch of Horodoker hassidim were bound together solely by the personalities of the tzadikim Rav Wolf and Rav Israel Yosef who enlarged the small number of hassidim in that narrow corner of Polesye. They remained the only disciples of the hassidic movement

Itzhak Leib Zager

There stands in front of my eyes the small studyhouse on the "synagogue court" in which I. L. Zager was raised and lived.

A loving warmth would permeate you as you entered this little house. His simple parents would receive you with a permanent smile on their lips.

The peacefulness, quiet and cleanliness; the love of the people would make you forget that you were in a small lowly house. You would get the feeling of spaciousness.

His father, a blacksmith, was a scholar like many other laborers in David-Horodok, and he sent his only son to the yeshivah.

He became instilled with the Zionist ideal along with his fellow yeshivah students such as P. Nuvak, S. Reznick and others. When they organized the first group of the Ze'irei Zion movement in David-Horodok, I. L. Zager proceeded to join them. His boundless devotion and enthusiastic activities soon put him at the head of the movement which he led until the last day of his life.

I.L. Zager's activities in town were not limited only to the idealistic Ze'irei Zion movement and later the Poalei Zion party. There was hardly a social institution in the town in which he was not an active leader. In such manner he devoted much time and energy to the public library named after I. L. Peretz of which he was one of the founders. The Keren Kayemes fund, the charity boxes and especially the orphans' committees were able to exist until the last moment thanks to his ties with America and the trust they had in him.

I. L. Zager did his communal work with no expectation of reward. His honesty was renowned throughout the town. Characteristically, in all the institutions where he was active, they gave him the office of treasurer. Everyone had complete trust in his notebook where he would inscribe with tiny Rashi script (biblical commentator who invented his own Hebrew script) the revenues and debits of those institutions.

I. L. Zager knew everyone in town, and everyone knew him. People would confide in him, and they would come to ask him for help. He would manage the free loan funds, and he was always ready to help when he was convinced that the involved individual was in a critical situation. He always knew who was really needy and who not. He was not a talker but a doer.

When in 1938 there was a local election in town, the natural candidate for community leader was I. L. Zager. The Poalei Zion party and the artisans went to the polls with a joint list at the top of which was I. L. Zager. His popularity in town insured the victory of that list in the balloting. Everyone wanted to see him head of the community. Unfortunately, certain circles paid off the proper people and the list was invalidated on the basis of the infamous paragraph 20, with the resultant embitterment and displeasure of the great majority of the Jewish population.

In the last years, he worked on steamships as agent of his brother-in-law in America. Even here he was the treasurer to the great satisfaction of the partners.

He died at his work. He drowned while swimming in Nirtcha on Sabbath, August 1, 1939. His death caused great sadness throughout the town.

Immediately, a funeral committee was organized by all the political parties and communal institutions. The funeral took place on the next day, sunday, August 2, with a large procession composed of the entire

Jewish population of the town. At the synagogue court, eulogies were given by representatives of all the parties and communal institutions. His grave was in the same section as all the departed greats of that generation in our town.

The organizational funeral committee selected three people who devised a plan to perpetuate his name by building in his name a house for the orphans committee and the I. L. Peretz public library.

At the end of the thirty day mourning period, on September 2, 1939, they proclaimed the campaign to accomplish this goal.

Unfortunately, the outbreak of World War II on September 1, 1939 nullified all their plans, and they were not even able to erect a stone over his grave.

Perhaps it is symbolic that such a pure honest soul was not contaminated by the murderous nazis and local criminal hands.

I. Lipshitz and S. Zazik

4. Eve of the War

M. Rappaport

My Visit to David-Horodok on the Eve of the Outbreak of the Second World War

I had a great longing to again see my town; visit my parents, relatives and friends; again stroll the streets and byways in the town of my birth; and meet face to face all those with whom I was raised, educated, and worked many long years.

I had the opportunity just before the outbreak of World War II when I was visiting Poland.

It was at the end of August, 1939. All of Europe was permeated with terror and fear of the approaching war. Polish Jewry was especially filled with anxiety and dread. No-one knew what the next day would bring. The military censors were very strict, and the Jewish press was barely able to inform with hints between the lines what might happen. No-one's heart could have predicted how near was the holocaust and how complete the calamity which was approaching.

We obtained more details at the English consulate in Warsaw including a stern warning that we must leave Poland within 24 hours. These instructions came as an unexpected blow.

I asked myself what to do - to return without seeing my home, my parents, my friends and acquantances, or to go the dangerous path and realize my dream to see all those that I love and treasure.

I decided on the perilous course, and I ventured to spend a few

hours at home.

It was dark when I arrived in David-Horodok; I left before dawn.

I will never forget those few hours when my parents' house suddenly became the focal point for all the David-Horodoker Jews. Some came to greet a relative or friend; others came to hear news of the land (Israel). We all felt as if the floor was burning under our feet, and a bitter lament was heard from all assembled: what next? How does one escape and where?

I recall how every face beamed hearing a living greeting from the land, concerning our efforts and struggles, concerning the light and shadows that go along together, concerning ambitious construction work, everything that was being created in our land. In my conversation, there was a touch of reproach to all those whose place should have been with us in our land but who, unfortunately, had made shortsighted miscalculations which decided their fate.

It was a night of watching. Everyone talked and everyone asked, beginning with Rabbi Shpira of blessed memory, a devoted and faithful Zionist worker who lived to see the land, and ending with many others. Every little detail interested them: the economic situation, current events, etc.

It was very difficult for me to answer all the questions. The excitement finally subsided when I promised to take part in a meeting the following day when I would discuss all the questions in greater breadth and depth. Unfortunately, this meeting did not take place, just as the best dreams and aspirations of my dear countrymen were never realized. The meeting did not occur because I received a telegram at that moment from my wife and from my home authority which said briefly and simply: "because of the strained situation, return immediately."

* * *

There is no solace or compensation for the great calamity, for the killing of all these industrious people, toilers, people of religion and culture, of initiative and boundless devotion to Judaism and Zionism. They were cut off like young twigs by the foreign murderous hands.

The only consolation is the living monument which was established in our land - in Israel - the hundreds of families of David-Horodoker Jews who were saved with their wives and children and who well up in full-blooded life in all the corners of our land. They work, create, and serve together with all Israel citizens, like a living sturdy wall for the renewed state.

My Last Days in David-Horodok

M. Shuri Ami

The Soviet occupation force had divided the inhabitants into three

classes:

1. The trustworthy class. Ex-communists in whom there were found no deviations, and those others who openly declared their sympathy for the Bolshevik authority with no-one denouncing them.

2. The enemies of the regime, the wealthy and the Zionist activists.

3. Ordinary inhabitants who would require prolonged re-education with the hope that they would become future citizens of the Soviet Union.

The majority of the David-Horodoker population belonged to the second and third categories. People in the second category who had not been denounced and had not been the subject of an official or unofficial complaint, were automatically transferred to the third category.

In the months of March and April 1941, hundreds of young people were mobilized into "work battalions", and most were sent to construct evacuation centers near the borders of Belorussia, as for example in Kabrin and Bialystok. I belonged to the Kabrin group.

On June 20, a Jewish lad happened to stand watch at one o'clock at night. He was five minutes late. Quickly the commander of the detachment, a Soviet citizen named Gur, alerted the entire detachment and rebuked the lad publicly: "Traitor! If the war broke out tomorrow would you still be sleeping? In three days you will stand trial."

In 48 hours, the German-Russian War flared up.

Air raids and artillery shelling accompanied us on our way back home. I tried to always be with other David-Horodokers. The confusion was great. We were given contradictory orders. Wherever we turned, there were Germans. We could not retreat during daylight, and we were forced to lay in the forests and swamps, and run at night. We had only one goal: home.

On June 26, 1941, friday evening, I arrived in David-Horodok with my unforgetable friend Moshe Shecter, David's son, and Volf the newspaper salesman's grandson. I did not recognize the town. What David-Horodoker does not recall the hours before the Sabbath. The shopkeepers rush to close their shops and the laborers end their work. The Sabbath candles are lit on all sides, and everyone goes to the prayer-house with the children. And now it is like the eve of Tisha B'Av. It is pitch black in the streets, and on the face of every Jew is the dread of the approaching Germans.

We were soon surrounded by familiar faces, and before we could change our filthy clothes, we had to answer all of their questions. They had thought that the entire mobilized group had fallen. The following day, on the Sabbath, others began arriving.

My family was no longer at home. It turned out that they had fled

to the Russian border along with a few dozen other families. The following day, on saturday night, they returned because they were forbidden to cross the border.

The town filled up with refugees from surrounding towns. The fear was intense. The gentiles taunted us: "Jews, your time has passed! The Soviets are leaving here."

Confusion reigned everywhere. One day the masses were mobilized, and the next day they were all set free because of a lack of communications. The last mobilized group was sent on June 28 to Minsk.

We friends met to decide on where to go next, and the opinions were divided. Moshe Shecter was among those who decided to stay. Itzhak Galman and I decided to go. We informed our families and our former companions of the Zionist youth whose attitudes had not been swayed. The majority refused to go.

On July 6, the last Soviet officials left town. With no prearrangement, we 20 boys and girls found ourselfs on Alshiner Street. Along the way we met several other youth who did not want to join us, saying that "the Germans are no worse than the Russians. We will also adjust to the new regime."

When we reached the border, the guards refused to let us pass. No argument would help. Several became demoralized. Itzhak Galman, Miriam Frenkl, Zirel Bagun and Shoshana Eizenberg returned home.

One of our group who was born in a border village, agreed to lead us by back-roads and cross the border at night. Barely men, we went to the south of Malishov. At night we encountered an armed patrol which happened to contain former officials from our town. The patrol commander was Raklin who had been the Communist party secretary in David-Horodok. He wanted us to understand that he would agree to give us a place near his camp, and he promised that he would give us a solution in the morning if he could get weapons for us.

It was a night of horror. We could see fires in our town in the distance. The Germans had already been there and had begun plundering.

In the morning, the droshke returned from Turov with the partisans. We were soon called to the commander. "I could not get any weapons", he said, "but you may pass. The matter has been arranged with the commander of the border guards."

We rushed forward, and we did not encounter a single living soldier.

Hearing the German advance, they all ran away. Within sight of Turov, we could see in the distance a truck coming towards us, loaded with soldiers and machine guns. We did not know if they were Russians or Germans. There was a cemetery to the left. We hid amongst the grave stones. After the truck had passed, we set forward again. By nightfall, we had arrived in Turov, on genuine Soviet soil.

5. The Last Days and the Last Hours

On July 5, 1941, the Germans entered David-Horodok. Several weeks before the capture of the town, local Christians headed by Maraiko, Kulaga and Latun, may their names be blotted out, succeeded in creating the impression that the town Jews were waiting for the Red army to return. As a result, the Christians received permission from the S.S. headquarters in Pinsk to handle the Jews at their own discretion.

On August 16, at 4 o'clock in the morning, all the Jewish quarters were surrounded. All Jewish men and children eight years of age and older were brought naked and barefoot to the concentration point in the courtyard of the Catholic church - and from there to their last journey.

Yakov, Aba Gartzulin's son, the only Jew who had been forewarned by a Christian of the fate of those who were being sent away, tried to escape. A murderer's bullet stopped him, and he died on the spot. All roads were blocked, and there was no possibility of escape.

From the concentration point, the Jews were sent to two common graves which had been previously prepared.

When the Jews came to the ditches, they were instructed to undress and climb down into the ditches where they were shot to death with machine guns.

A group of Jews was spared from the murder, and they were used to sort the fallen bodies in the trenches. Afterwards they were also murdered. After the murder, the trenches were filled in by the local people who took part in the killing.

Only a few managed to hide out by various means, but eventually they too met the same horrible fate.

Nahman Yanush, Yosle's son, Itche the milkman's grandson, succeeded in escaping through the village of Baroshnye, and he reached Staline. He hid in their ghetto for a year until he was killed along with the Jews of Staline.

Yakov Litman, Kalushin's son, Moshe Alaynik's grandson, hid for several days until a Christian informed on him. They dragged him to the gestapo, and tortured him until he was finally relieved with a bullet.

Rabbi Aharon Slomianski, who had been hidden several days by a Christian, was forced to leave his hiding place because the Christian was afraid they would kill him for hiding a Jew. Having no other alternatives, Rabbi Aharon decided to return home. As he crossed the bridge, gentiles grabbed him and threw him into the river. He drowned immediately. Thanks to his wife Rachel, who exerted super-human efforts, he was buried in the Jewish cemetery.

Simha, Moshe Aharon Mishalay's son, hid for two weeks in his cellar, but the Christian servant gave him over to the gentiles. They dragged him out of the cellar, and they murdered him in his house in front of

his wife and children.

Issar, Nisan Gurvitch's son, hid in a clothing closet. The local citizens found him, pulled him out and dragged him into the marketplace. They beat him and tortured him viciously, and put out his eyes. His inhuman screaming was heard from one end of the town to the other. He pleaded with the murderers to end his life.

Rabbi Kahas, Rabbi Sander Balahusher's son, and Rabbi Moshe, Rabbi Avraham Baruhin the Karamsker's son, hid until 1943 in a nearby village with a Christian peasant. They dreamt that Rabbi Moshele, the Staliner rabbi, was yet living. They crawled out of their hiding place, and they went off to Staline. Gentiles killed them along the way.

Reuven, Haim Kalushnye's son, hid in his yard. The gentiles found him, killed him, and threw him into the outdoor privy.

Baruch Yossel, Moshe Katzman's son, and his two sons hid out somewhere. They had nothing to eat, and so they presented themselves to the gestapo. There they were told that the gestapo had no liquidation decree concerning them, and they could go where they wished. However, the local citizens beat them to death with sticks in the marketplace.

Itzhak, the son of Shloma the Azdamitcher, remained living thanks to a Christian who hid him after he promised to marry her. When the Red army returned, he fulfilled his promise.

* * *

After the mass-murder, on a cold and rainy autumn day, they also drove the women and children out of the town. The local citizens chased after them for several kilometers with shouting: "Get out! We don't need you!"

Amongst the women, there were several men who were dressed in women's clothes. One of these was Rabbi Moshe, Rabbi Velvele Ginzberg's son. The local citizens, who were examining the faces of the refugees, recognized him. They pulled him out and murdered him.

Leah Vigdar's, Rabbi Moshe Kalushne's wife, no longer had the strength to go on with the exiles, and she sat down next to Haim Baruhin's house. She was killed on the spot.

Haye, Rabbi Asher Yudavitch's daughter, seeing what was happening, picked up her child and jumped with him into the Horin River.

Faygele, Baytzl Yudavitch's wife, Rivka, Motle Bregman's wife, and her daughters remained almost to the end. But as soon as they had given up all their gold and silver, they were chased to the Alshiner bridge, and they were murdered there.

A portion of the exiles arrived at the ghettos of Lakve, Staline and Visotzke. They had drunk their cups of bitterness, and they were liquidated along with all the Jews of those ghettos.

Three weeks after the women were driven from town, they were allowed to return, into a newly created ghetto which existed for one year. Afterwards, they were sent to the same place where the men had been killed, and there they were murdered.

Described by Bas-Sheva Kushner and Gunm Pilavin.

Itzhak Nahmanovitch

The year 1939 arrived. The town was taken by the Soviets. Many Jewish refugees from western Poland then formed a home in David-Horodok.

In 1940, they began arresting and exiling Zionists and others. The town shuddered. The mood was strained. Still there was the motto: "All for one and one for all."

Then July 6, 1941 arrived. The town was captured by Hitler's troops. Many Jews wanted to save themselves in Russia, but the NKVD and the border guards would not let them pass, and so they were forced to remain under Nazi rule.

Then began the horror, and then was shown the murderous face of the Belorussians. They began catching Jews in the streets and forcing them to do labor.

Many of Hitler's troops passed through the streets of the town heading east. A few days later they returned because of the bad roads, intending to find another path through the marshes. In town it was rumoured that the Germans had been driven back by the Red army. This was exploited by the newly proclaimed mayor, the villainous feldsher (paramedic) Ivan Maraiko who went to gestapo headquarters in Pinsk and reported that the Jews were spreading the rumors and that they, the Jews, were attacking the German army. This vile calumny brought on the bloody 17th of Av of 1941, about one month after the Germans had captured the town. In the beginning of August, about 50 SS murderers arrived unexpectedly. At 4 o'clock in the morning they surrounded the town and later began their bloody work with the help of the local Belorussian underworld who had enlisted as police. Anticipating abundant booty, they began driving together all the Jewish men. They gathered everyone at the court of the church and accompanied them with frightful beatings with sticks and guns.

There they were forced to remain on their knees with their hands upraised for an hour until all the houses were searched. Whoever was found hiding was shot to death on the spot. That was the fate of the brothers Issur and Hershl Gurvitch, two healthy sturdy young men who were pulled out of a hiding place. As they were led away, their ribs were broken and their eyes gouged out.

After all the men were assembled, they were arranged in columns and led out of town. No-one knew where they were going. They presumed that they were being led to work. However, the question was quickly answered.

Three kilometers beyond the town on the Alshiner road on a hill of sand, the peasants had prepared a freshly dug trench. It was already too late to consider resistance. Besides, in 1941, there had not yet been any mass murders of Jews, so that quiet respectable decent people could not believe that such a thing could occur. But it did happen... the last word belonged to the machine guns... and then, with a last breath, each sent a curse...

A policeman tried to pull the ring off the hand of Lazer Rankin, thinking that he was already dead. But the latter was able to raise himself up and spat in the murderer's face. With a curse on his lips, he fell dead.

So did the mother earth take in and hide you in eternal rest.

Honor to your memory, my brothers!

For your unassuming, difficult but decent lives, the "civilized" world has rewarded you with a "quick death."

* * *

That same afternoon, after the murderers had completed their "little job", they again went to "work".

All the remaining women and children received an order that they were to immediately leave town.

In this particular "holy" work, the entire Christian population took part. Young and old, all like wild specters, they went to the Jewish houses with sticks, and they drove out the housewives and children with beatings, expecting to rob them of their possessions.

They drove them out of town with beatings and verbal abuse. "Despised Jews", raged the aroused looting crowd. Many of them stood at the bridge, checking each Jewish woman to see if they could find a man disguised in women's clothing.

In such fashion they discovered several men in women's clothes, including Rabbi Moshele, Berl Migdalavitch and others who were beaten viciously by the wild mob, and then shot to death. The women and children were accompanied with beatings until they reached the outskirts.

The unfortunates went as far as the first village Karamsk after which they strayed through the fields, hungry, beaten, exhausted, many of them pregnant, sick and old women with suckling babies, torn away from their husbands and fathers, desolate and forsaken in a land of wild animals. One of the better peasants would occasionally give a piece of bread or a potato.

Some of them went to new towns such as Staline, Lakve, Visotzk and others. There they shared the bitter fate of those Jewish inhabitants. The remainder strayed and wandered over the dirty muddy roads of Polesye. There was the constant danger of encountering further mental humiliation and physical abuse.

Autumn arrived with its damp cold weather. Many women and children died along the roads. Every bush and tree along the way knew of their suffering.

Finally, at the end of autumn, they were allowed back into David-Horodok where a ghetto had been created for them. Life in this ghetto was appalling.

The entire population of the ghetto received ten kilos of bread per day, and most of them had to work for the German army. They were forced to do a variety of jobs.

Many working women and children were overcome by hunger and inhuman conditions, and they died. Those that remained hardly resembled human beings.

They were isolated, swollen with hunger, encircled by barbed wire in a small part of a filthy quarter, guarded by the murderous police which was headed by a creature with a rotten soul - Liava Kasarov, may his name be blotted out. He worshipped many gods... but he was particularly attracted to "shiny buttons" for whom this beast in the form of a person was prepared to do anything.

So the ghetto existed until the eve of Rosh Hashona in 1942. On that day, the ghetto was liquidated.

All the women and children - the number was no longer very great, no more than 1600 souls - accompanied by beatings from the police as well as a special group of SS horsemen, were driven to the same trench on the Alshiner hill. There everyone was stripped naked and shot to death.

Once again mother earth opened her arms and received for the men their wives and children.

Thus was the innocent Jewish David-Horodok taken from the earth and ceased to exist.

The abandoned homes were taken possession by their "new owners", but not for long. For later, when large partisan bands began operating in the vicinity, they assaulted the town a few times and burned most of the Jewish houses.

* * *

I came to David-Horodok in August, 1944. I found mounds overgrown with grass in place of the houses. Instead of joyous laughter and childish playful screaming, places that once beckoned with the glow of their homely warmth, now presented a fierce and frightening picture.

Every remaining house, every tree that stood like a solitary wounded limb - cries, screams, laments and anxiously asks: where are the grey respectable old folks who would rest in our shade? Where has the happy laughter fled, tender feelings, the curlyheaded children? Why is all that was beautiful and loving gone? And many many more whys?

No answer comes. I cannot find it. From dentist Edel's house to the church hill - not one remaining house, only wild grass... mounds and grass.

Someone appeared... moving about like a wild apparition...he doesn't look me in the eyes...with dirty bare feet in a good black pullover with silk lapels...he doesn't speak...no-one here talks now...they know nothing...they did hear about something,but they don't remember exactly...

What's the use of talking? It is better to be quiet in a cemetery...

A woman sells second-hand children's clothes in the marketplace. The woman keeps silent, but the clothing cries, cries with pitiful tears...

I come to the holiest place for me in the entire world- to the mass grave. A smooth sandy field... four years later, four long years after fire and blood. Years of homesickness close by; for finally coming to the home which was so near... where are the loving mother's arms? Where are the coveted friendly faces - gleaming with pleasure at each encounter?... no-one kisses... no-one shakes my hand... I stand shattered, dismayed and waiting... but in vain... in this small arid field, a town is hidden... no markers, no monument tablets, no inscriptions, no flowers - a strange heartrending silence.

It remains a secret of nature, how much human beauty and dignity, how much love and friendship, how much creative initiative and talent was so cruelly, murderously and prematurely transported to eternal rest. Here thousands of women, man and children released their pure souls, and under the noise of the murderers' machine guns they sounded their last protest - a curse - a curse on the "culture" and the heads of the murderers as well as on the leaders and presidents, socialists and democrats, in uniforms and in dress coats... a curse on the heads of those who traveled to Munich, London, Paris or Moscow in white gloves, selling children's souls and trading with the blood and flesh of innocent people.

* * *

The 17th of Av! Today is the sad day of your downfall, my David-

Horodok! Your life was unassuming and full of service, and perhaps that is why you were "rewarded" with a quick demise. You went like a pioneer to the sacrifice on the altar of the people. The number of your fortuitously spared sons is small. There are approximately 100 men who are now widely separated. In bitter spirit we kneel and bow our heads in deep sorrow for you, our beloved unforgettable David-Horodok.

Dear martyrs! Mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers as well as your beloved children! The 17th of Av is engrained deep into my heart, never to be forgotten. On that day, no smile is seen and joy vanishes from the heart. My mind burns with the realization of helplessness and the lost opportunity for a full revenge.

Rest forever my dear ones.

May your holy memory be forever.

(Editors note: Itzak (Etzl) Nahmanovitch was in the Soviet Union during World War II. Immediately after the war's end, he visited David-Horodok as a Red army soldier, and he saw the destruction of the town with his own eyes. He now lives in the United States of America. The above description was written in 1946, on the fifth anniversary of the destruction of David-Horodok Jewry. At that time he was visiting the German concentration camps, and in September, 1946, he published in the Yiddish paper "A Home". We re-publish this description with small deletions.)

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Reported by Meier Hershl Korman

Bas-Sheva Lin, Meier-Eliyahu Kushner's red-headed daughter was the only one of all the David-Horodokers who I found in David-Horodok - returning from Russia after Rosh Hashona 5705.

The water carrier, who had worked for me for four years, did not recognize me. Her house was filled with Jewish goods.

The water carrier sent me to a second gentile who had taken possession of Litman Nahmanovitch's house. The gentile told me that the David-Horodoker gentiles had received awards from the German authorities for their part in killing and exterminating the Jewish population.

On the following day, I requested a home from the local authorities, and when they suggested that I live in a Jewish house, I rejected the idea, and I requested permission to live in my former butcher shop.

My request was rejected. Not knowing this, I fixed up my butcher shop as a home. Later the authorities helped me to set up a food shop.

Later, Noah, the son of Bezalel Yudavitch, came to David-Horodok. He had been wounded and went on crutches. He received material and medical help from the Soviets, and he helped me personally.

Later on, Zev, son of Shalom Lakovski, and Moshe, son of Israel Reznick, returned to Horodok.

The first Jewish victim in David-Horodok was Meir Eliyahu Kushner who had lived in Raditch. After they had driven him out of his house, the Horodtchukas attacked him and murdered him in the marketplace in the middle of the day.

The second victim was Zev Grunye Kunda, a grandson of Velvel the blacksmith. The gentiles murdered him on Alshiner Street next to Shloma Fleishman's house.

On the 17th of Av 5701, the Jewish men were concentrated in front of the church, and they were sent from there to a place where the Horodtchukas had prepared a common grave.

It is very difficult to imagine the brutal acts and the savage atrocities that the Horodtchukas carried out against the Jews in the last minutes before they murdered them.

They stripped the clothes off of the victims, smashed heads, cut off limbs and slaughtered with whatever came to hand: sticks, stones, iron bars and guns. Afterwards they threw them into the trenches and buried them alive. Three days after the mass-murder, the ground still stirred.

The leader of the pogrom was the feldsher Ivan Moraiko who made a special trip to Pinsk in order to bring back the SS.

Before traveling to Pinsk, he gathered gold and silver from Jews who entrusted him to hide their valuables.

After the "action", the gentiles began searching for Jews in hiding. The first to be discovered was Avraham Slutzki the driver, and next was Mendl the Bratzker's son who had hidden in the garden amongst the beans. They were both immediately murdered.

Reuven Kalushni hid in the closet of his gentile neighbor Markovitch. He was murdered on the spot and remained there.

Baruch Katzman and his two sons were found and killed by Dmitri Puzik.

Issur son of Nisson Gurvitch had his eyes gouged out by the Horodt-chukas and his limbs severed one by one.

Yehoshua Zager of Turi, who had hidden in an oven, was pulled out and murdered.

Aharon Lomianski was thrown into the Horin River. Thanks to the efforts of his wife Rachel, he was pulled out by hired gentiles and merited burial in the Jewish cemetery.

My two children Bracha and Baruch who, thanks to a gentile woman, had fled to the Dubinitz forest, were returned to town by the gentiles and were cut to pieces in the middle of the marketplace. My son Yakov succeeded in escaping.

Simha Mishalov hid four months in his own cellar. His gentile maid fed him the entire four months. She then informed on him, and he was murdered on Grablia Street. Before his soul returned to God, he was heard to cry out: "Scoundrels, what are you doing?"

A son of Berl Shutz, who was dressed like a woman, was recognized by the gentiles and murdered by them.

After the men had been slaughtered, the Jewish women of David-Horodok were driven out of town. A portion died along the way. The remnant that later returned to Horodok, was murdered by the gentiles one year later, and they were thrown into the same trenches as the men.

The daughter of Rabbi Moshele became a partisan in the Visotzki forest. She fell in battle.

Golde Rachel, Meir Eliyahu Kushner's wife, hid in the shrine in the village of Koramsk where she was later killed.

Shmuel Katzman, a son of Leibl Katzman, and his sister moved about in the forest of Arli for four months. The gentiles caught them there and hacked them to pieces.

Nishka, Haim Kirshner's wife, along with three other women, hid themselves in a stable, and that is where they were killed.

Leah, Moshe Kalushne's wife, was killed by the gentiles on the Grebliye bridge. The gentiles planned to kill me. One night a representative of the gentiles came to kill me. I began screaming, and the police soon came and saved me.

At last I could no longer stay in David-Horodok because of the hatred of the gentiles, and I ran away from there.

6. Partisan Stories

Haim Hochman

1. Colonel Satanovski.

We find ourselves in the vicinity of the village Kripna, not far from Pinsk, in thick forests.

We have been prepared for many days to move to another spot, but meanwhile we do not move.

Where are we moving, and, most important, what are we waiting for? This apparently is the commander's secret.

Our woman officer, for whom I am the driver, tells me the deepest secret, that we are waiting for an airplane coming here from Moscow with important people. They should have been here four days ago, and no-one knows why they are late.

What has happened? Did they meet with some misfortune?

A few hours after the lady officer told me this story, our detachment began to move out.

We traveled the entire night, and by day we remained in a large thick forest containing deep mud.

This was our provisional headquarters and residence.

We received the order to set up cabins, and although it was already late autumn (a month after Succas, 1943), we were not allowed to light a fire.

The officer, husband of the lady officer with her child, came to our wagon and told us that the parachutists had finally arrived, but they had met with misfortune. Three of them died on their way to join the detachment. A peasant from the village of Tarablitch had betrayed them.

The forest in which our detachment now stood, was near the large village of Karatzke-Valya. The population of the village was friendly to the partisans, and headquarters gave permission to light fires during the day for cooking and baking.

That same day there was an assembly, and the commander of the detachment, Colonel Satanovski, gave the partisans and the refugees instructions concerning their behavior.

The chief directive was that, with the exception of those partisans who were sent on terrorist actions against the Germans, no-one was to leave the area. Whoever disobeyed the command would be shot on the spot, without a trial.

Before finishing these instructions, he turned to the assembly: "Comrades, whoever comes from or is familiar with the region of David-Horodok, Staline and Turov, let him report to me in my headquarters after the assembly."

I went into staff headquarters and reported to the commander that I knew David-Horodok well, as well as a little of the vicinity.

"Tell me comrade Hochman, do you know where the villages of Azdamitch, Tarablitch and Karatitch are located?"

"Yes", I answer.

He asks me to stand aside, and he interrogates the second partisan who had entered headquarters right after me.

"Where are you from comrade?"

"From the village Buktcha", answers the partisan. "It is far from David-Horodok, but we peasants often went there, and that is why I know the region."

"Why did you join our detachment?" - continued the commander in his line of questioning.

"Because I want to fight the Germans", was the partisan's answer.

"Listen, comrade!", as the commander turned to the partisan, "perhaps there is a Jew in our detachment who knows you?"

"Not in our detachment", again replied the partisan, "but there are Jews in Fyodorov's detachment nearby, who know me from home. Ask them about me."

Quickly contact was made with Fyodorov's detachment, and the answer returned that the partisan was a fine upstanding man and that there was no danger of his being a traitor.

After a brief interval, there came 10 young men into the commander's headquarters. They were strong jovial partisans. Later German battle uniforms were brought in. All the partisans, except for me, took off their partisan clothes and donned the sparkling new German battle uniforms. They even did not forget to put crosses on their necks. One of the partisans put on the uniform of a German officer. He was one of the ten who had come from Moscow, and he had perfect command of the German language.

All the weapons - rifles, machine guns and grenades - with which these "Germans" were armed, were German-made. Even the cigarettes were German.

I dressed up in traditional Jewish clothes, concealing a revolver and several hand grenades.

The "German officer" gave me the following directions:

"In case we encounter Germans or police along the way, we will say that we caught you hiding out in the forest. After we beat you up (signs of the beating were immediately provided. They cut one of my fingers and smeared the blood on my face and hair), you are taking us to the place where many other Jews are hidden."

The commander ordered us not to leave headquarters, and not to show ourselves to anyone.

Halfway through the night, we are ready for our journey.

The "German officer" turns to us with the following words:

"Comrade partisans!

"A short time ago we were boarding an airplane in Moscow to come and join your partisan detachment. Along with the pilot, we were thirteen men.

"Near the Pripyet River, not far from Mikashevitch, we were chased and shot at by German airplanes. When our plane was set on fire, we jumped out with our parachutes. Luckily, we all landed safely near the village of Tarablitch. After we searched and found each other, we went into a peasant's hut in the village, and we asked him for the way to the hamlet of Mairlin. The peasant showed us the way, assuring us that there were no Germans or police in the entire region. While we were checking the route

with our map, it turned out that the peasant was at that moment informing on us. We started along the road, thanking and blessing the peasant and his family.

"In half an hour, we were accosted by men who called out "Halt; put your hands up"; they began to shout at us.

"Three of our comrades were killed on the spot.

"We immediately opened fire, and we heard the screaming and groaning from the wounded on their side.

"With that ended the clash in the small forest. Crawling on all fours, we tried to reach a different large forest. Along the way, we stumbled on a body who was choking with pain caused by one of our bullets. He was wounded in both feet. This wounded policeman irately cursed the peasant Karp who had awakened the police from sleep and chased after the partisans along with them.

"We choked the policeman to death", continued the "German officer", "and, after several days of wandering through swamps and forests, we reached your detachment, exhausted."

"Now", proposed the "officer", "we are going to bring that peasant back here.

"We must take revenge against such a cowardly dog!

"In truth, there are more important targets for our partisans", noted the "officer", "our entire energy must be concentrated against the accursed Germans, but we are consumed with resentment and anger, that one of our own peasants, flesh of our flesh, spilled the blood of his own brothers and betrayed his own people to the German murderers like a servile dog.

"We will bring him back here to the detachment. We will bring him back here dead or alive, that traitor-murderer, so that partisan blood will not be spilled wantonly."

Following these words of our group leader, we set out on our way.

For three nights we wandered through forests, swamps and fields until we arrived at the village of Karatitch.

After our "Germans" found out that there were only five policemen in the village, we all went into the police station.

Our "officer" informed the policemen that his group was specially selected to effect the liquidation of the remaining Jews who were hiding in the forests.

Pointing to me, the "officer" said that this captured Jew would show us the place where many Jews were hiding.

In order to undertake such a holy task, they would have to mobilize the police of Karatitch, Tarablitch and Azdamitch.

After all the policemen of Karatitch had been mustered together, we all went to Tarablitch.

In the Tarablitch police station, which was in a private house, all the Tarablitch policemen were assembled, including the peasant Karp.

Two policemen were dispatched by the "officer" to Azdamitch with orders to return with that village's police.

The "officer" talked Russian amongst the policemen, and he scolded them for their lack of vigilance.

"It appears", he roared with a thundering voice, "how is it possible that within 10 kilometers or so from your posts, that there could be so many Jews still hidden? No small thing - so many Jews", he repeated.

Concluding his talk to the police, he turned to his "German" comrades, and talked to them in the German language.

The "Germans" answered from time to time with a "yes", "good", "all in order" - they didn't know any other German words.

The policeman began to reply, saying that it was not their fault that there were still a few living Jews hidden here or there. Each one of them had done his utmost to exterminate the hated Jews. They hadn't rested day or night, searching in every corner, catching women, children and men, murdering all without mercy.

Then they described a litany of gruesome acts which each one had performed. Each story was more horrible and appalling than the preceding.

In such manner, listening to these vile tales of murder, we passed the time. The night was dark and cloudy, but it was coming to an end.

We partisans shivered; the ground was burning under our feet. We were anxious to get back into the forest before they found out that we were partisans. Everyone held his weapon tightly in his hand. Everyone was restless and impatient.

Only the "officer", the oldest of the group, was calm and in no hurry. He alone was smoking, and he offered cigarettes, German cigarettes, to all the police. He listened patiently to all of their horror stories, kept company with them, and, at the same time, he threw in "innocent" questions: "Well, and what have you been doing about partisans? You eat, drink and sleep, and you don't catch any partisans? Shame on you!"

Then the peasant Karp spoke. He told how approximately 10 days previously he delivered a group of partisans into the hands of the police.

"Unfortunately", he said, "there were not enough police, and only three partisans were killed while the others managed to escape into the forest. Four policemen fell in this battle.

"As for myself", boasted the peasant Karp, I barely escaped with my life.

I hid in a ditch, and laid there until the partisans had left."

"For this deed of mine", he explained, "I received a beautiful reward from the town commandant in David-Horodok: two milk-cows and much clothing from the dead Jews."

Outside, daylight appeared. The peasant woman was already up, and her children were beginning to awaken. The peasant woman took a pot of soup out of the oven, and she and the children began to eat.

I stretched out my hand to the woman, and begged her for a little soup. She poured a full bowl of warm soup and gave it to me.

Just as I began to eat, the eldest of the group, the "German officer", came over to me, pulled the bowl out of my hands and said: "Did the good woman give this to you? In that case, eat!" Having finished speaking, he poured the entire bowl of soup over my head.

The "Germans" and policemen responded to this "heroic" act with shrill laughter. There was indescribable joy and cheer. All were pleased with this "brilliant" occurence.

Abruptly we heard the sound of voices outside. The door swung open and the two messengers entered along with the eight policemen from Azdamitch.

The policemen greeted each other joyfully. They shook hands, chatted and eventually told the story of how the "German group leader" had poured the bowl of soup over my head.

I sat in a corner, covered from head to foot with the remains of the flour and potato soup. My face and hands were streaked with blood, and I made myself cry...

Our group leader, the "officer", whispered secretive orders to the police commanders and the peasant Karp...

The peasants of the village, learning that we were going on such a holy mission, to catch Jews, brought us considerable food such as eggs, butter, pork, bread, and a considerable number of whiskey flasks.

The "officer" ordered us to begin our journey.

Each man quickly packed a share of the food into his rucksack and began walking along the road which led to the right of the woods of the village Kalk.

We went through thick forests of small trees. Along the way, the police asked me about the hidden Jews. They were interested to know if there were any rich ones and if there were any young women. They were greatly encouraged and pleased by my answers. I told them that they would find everything there: much money, gold, jewels and especially young beautiful women...

After marching three hours, our "officer" told us to stop. "We must", he said, "have a rest and a bite to eat."

All the weapons were stacked together in piles of three. We sat down and began to feast.

They ate and drank whiskey without end, and, "out of the goodness of their hearts", they even gave me plenty to eat.

Meanwhile, the "officer" took out a map and showed the already half-drunk policemen the place where they would find the Jews with their cabins. Naturally, this place was very very near...

Encouraged that they were very close to their goal, and imagining the "juicy morsel" that awaited them, the policemen again renewed their drinking...

At the end of the repast, the policemen laid down to rest on one side, and all the "Germans" on the opposite side.

The peasant Karp and a completely inebriated policeman were sent to guard me and the weapons...

In a few minutes, all the police fell into a deep sleep.

The "Germans" quickly awoke from their "sleep"; they took up the loaded guns; and in seconds all the policemen were shot to death. Only one person was "spared", the peasant Karp.

He was to be brought back alive to the detachment in order to hand him over to the parachutists whose three companions were killed through Karp's treachery.

On the tenth day we returned to our detachment. The same day that we returned, Karp was hung.

Searching his belongings, we found a pocket watch with a hebrew inscription. The inscription read: "In memory of the wedding of Dov Farber." This watch was a wedding gift to Berl Farber from his father-in-law.

* * *

The detachment commander Satanovski was happy at our return. He received us joyfully, and he said that he had a premonition that our mission would succeed.

He said that our group leader, the "officer", was "one of our best and cleverest sons of Russia. He knows ten languages, including a perfect German; he is an able diplomat and well-qualified for such missions."

"Yet", said commander Satanovski, "during the entire ten days that you were away, I was restless and could not sleep. Who knows; war is war and anything can happen!"

"Friends", ended our commander, "you are tired from the strain and from

the journey. Each of you gets three days furlough. However, I am also giving you the following order: No-one is to know where you've been and what you've done. For disobeying this order, you will receive the severest war-time punishment."

2. Rosh Hashana of 1943 in the Partisan Detachment

The Polish partisan detachment "Kastiushke", which numbered about 300 Poles and 8 Jews, was in the vicinity of the large village of Multshitch (about 80 kilometers from Pinsk), in large thick forests and deep swamps.

The detachment had under its protection a camp of relatives consisting of about one hundred Polish families who had fled the slaughters caused by the Ukrainians. There were also a number of Jewish souls in the camp, unfortunate remnants of the tens of thousands of Jews who were cruelly murdered by the Germans along with the Ukrainians and Belorussians.

I was appointed by the staff to act as driver for the families of the partisan fighters.

The detachment wouldn't stay in one place for very long. We would often change locations in the forests.

On the eve of Rosh Hashana 1943, a camp Jew came to the commander of the detachment with a request that they be allowed to hold communal services on the following day in a nearby barn in the forest.

The commander was a young healthy and handsome man who spoke and wrote Polish well, and who had arrived by airplane from Moscow a month earlier with the ten other Polish parachutists.

The commander spoke little and was unusually stern. No-one had yet seen a smile on his handsome face. His orders to the partisans as well as to the camp refugees were always brief and curt. He had traitors and informers shot without mercy. We Jews began to notice a good streak in his character as soon as he arrived at the detachment. That is, he ordered that his food and kitchen overseers should not abuse anyone by lessening their food rations so that the Jewish refugees would receive just as much as the Polish and Russian refugees.

On the morning of Rosh Hashana, the commander sent for the Jews who had asked him for permission on the previous day to pray together in congregation He answered with a smile that had not been seen on his face since his arrival:

"If you think that your god will help you as a result of your prayers, then go entreat him. "My god", said he holding his weapon against his heart, "is my gun and my grenades. The German murderers understand that language better, and it reaches them faster. Your pleas and prayers reach your god just about as much as they reach the Germans. But pray, and entreat your god as much as your hearts desire. I have no right to hinder your religious feel Pray as much as you like, but let it be quiet."

All the Jews, except for the Jewish partisans on duty, came to pray. Ther was only one tallis and one mahzor which a Platnitzer Jew had taken along wit

him when he fled from the slaughter. He wrapped himself in the tallis and prayed while the others - the remnant of tens of thousands of Jews who were murdered, slaughtered and buried alive - were choked in tears, pounding their heads against the walls and sobbing in violent spasms.

Human words are too poor to describe these heartrending scenes, when close to thirty unfortunate Jews - men, women and children - desolate, lonely and orphaned - vented their tears and their rage over their great misfortune.

Many Polish refugees from the camp and partisans from the detachment gathered around the barn. Many of them cried along with the Jews.

Who knows what was oppressing them? Perhaps they were regreting what role they may have had in helping the Germans kill the parents, husbands, wives and children of these Jews that were praying here now.

When the cantor, a good singer with a hearty voice and a pained heart, began saying the Hinini ha-oni prayer, the tears literally flooded the barn.

At that moment, the detachment commander, Colonel Satanovski, came riding up quickly on his horse. He requested a short intermission in the prayers, and, seated on his horse, he said the following:

"Comrades! Why are you crying? We are still alive; so what is there to cry about? The Germans are retreating thanks to the severe beatings rendered by the brave Red army on all fronts. It won't be long before Russian soldiers will be strolling the streets of Berlin, over the entire accursed German land and over the dead bodies of the German murderers. The day of vengeance is near! However, our partisan situation today is not better, but somewhat worse than before. We must increase our vigilance. The German will be hard to displace. We and all the other courageous partisan detachments have destroyed all the bridges and railway lines. The Germans find themselves in a desperate situation. They know that the partisans are now their greatest danger. Therefore, they have dispatched special divisions to destroy us. Also from the west, from Germany, they have sent out German divisions to help. We are in the middle. However, all the roads are blocked. For the time being, they cannot get to us. Every night, large Russian partisan groups are dropped off by airplane. They are mining the roads in the path of the retreating Germans. They are being torn to pieces in the fields and in the forests. As long as we don't fight them in open battle - the brave Russian army is doing that with great success - we can avoid great casualties. Whether all of us who are here will survive, is hard to know. Perhaps we can hope.

"The Germans have burned down everything from Pinsk to Mazir and Zhitomar. We have a directive from the highest command in Moscow to destroy without mercy all German followers and traitors. In my refugee camp, we uncovered an entire family of German spies. Over ten of my dear partisan lads were killed because of them. Tonight, the entire family of eight will be hung. Although only the daughter was actually guilty, but the entire cowardly family knew about her treachery. Let us hope that we will endure all hardships. Long live the Red army!"

After finishing his speech, the commander turned to the cantor wrapped in his tallis, and he said the following: "Listen now, continue your prayers. Say what you were saying before I came to the barn."

The cantor covered his head with his old shredded tallis, leaned his thin dried hands against the eastern wall of the barn, and he began to tearfully intone the words of Hinini ha'oni.

The commander got off his horse, smoked a cigarette, leaned his left shoulder against his horse, looked the entire time in the direction of the forest, and, with quiet attention, he listened to the sad tearful melody.

I noticed that tears were in his eyes...

* * *

The war was over. I returned to my home town and encountered destruction and a huge mass grave. All was lost.

I was sent to Ravne where there was a job opportunity.

In the administrative office of the town commandant, I met a man dressed in a handsome black suit with carefully combed hair. He was conversing with the commandant.

I could not take my eyes off of him. I had seen that man somewhere before, and I couldn't remember where. The man noticed that I was looking at him with special interest, and he abruptly asked me:

"Don't you recognize me comrade?"

"Well, my friend", he said, "if you don't remember, it doesn't matter. It is not necessary, my friend. Everything evil must belong to the past, to history."

When he left the administrative office, the town commandant of Ravne asked me: "Citizen Hochman, were you in his Polish detachment called Kastiushka during the war?"

I didn't let him go any further: "Yes, yes, that's right! He is the commander of my detachment, the Polish colonel Satanovski!"

"No, no", interrupted the Ravne town commandant, "no, not the Pole Satanovski, but the courageous hero of the Soviet Union, organizer of all the Polish partisan units on Soviet soil, who is now decorated with all the highest medals by comrade Stalin himself and who is now a frequent guest, along with all the other distinguished personalities, in the Kremlin - a colonel and heroic partisan, the Jew Moshe Satanovski!"

Miriam Bragman Tells of her Partisan Activities

In mid-July 1941, towards the end of the week, when the Germans had been in David-Horodok for several days, a rumor spread that the Russians were returning. The Germans retreated along with their town helpers.

The Murderer A. Maraiko, who stood at the head of the local authorities, fled to Pinsk with his cohorts. When they asked him why he abandoned the town without an organized management, he replied that he had fled because of shooting from the Jews and Russians. Sunday the Germans returned, bringing the murderer and his henchmen with them.

They soon ordered the Jews to wear a blue star of David on a white band on their sleeves. That same day they took the men "to work" beyond the town. Several hours later, we heard shooting from the direction that the men had gone. Who and what, no-one knew. We hid our father in the cellar, and when the gentiles entered to look for men, we created an uproar to divert their attention.

That same night, in a pouring rain, I suddenly heard crying. I saw through the window women and children with sacks on their backs.

In reply to my question, they told me that all the Jews were being driven across the bridge and out of town. My father quickly put on women's clothes, and we all stood together in the crowd: my mother, my father, my sister Faigele and I. Along the road we were encountered by a gentile who was inspecting the crowd, and he recognized father. Words were of no avail. He returned with him to the town.

The rain poured. The women and children were brought to a manor alongside the river on the way to Staline. They assured us that they would return us home just as soon as they had completed their search for weapons in our houses. Meanwhile, the gentiles from the vicinity arrived, and they began to plunder and grab whatever came to hand. One of them struggled with me, threatening me with a knife if I wouldn't give him my coat. However, I did not give it to him, and he left.

At night the murderer Maraiko came and took away Rivka, Yossel Yudavitch's wife; her two daughters, Molle and Yentl; Leah, Elya Bragman's daughter; and Malke the pharmacist, Yashe Yudavitch's wife. He also wanted to take my sister Faigele. "Why should she have to suffer here", he said. But I refused to part with her under any conditions.

In the morning, Vanke and a band of cohorts drove us off the manor towards Staline. They shot into the air, pushed and chased us. The older ones could not hold up and fell along the way. When we were not far from Staline, they turned us back toward David-Horodok.

One kindly gentile who had known my maternal grandfather, Hertzl Luria the timber merchant, took us away to his farm at the time that the others were returning to David-Horodok. I learned later that they were crammed into a ghetto in the town which they had surrounded with barbed wire.

According to his plan, Faigele and I would work in the field and mother would stay in the house.

He treated us very well. However, two days later, when he went with us into the field, a neighbor from the village passed us.

"Now that you've been seen, you can no longer remain with me", said the gentile, "because my life is also now in jeopardy." He brought us to some relatives on another farm, and he went alone to Staline to get yellow patches which was his usual routine.

When he returned, he drove us in his wagon through the forests near Staline where he let us off. He took our belongings in his wagon and transported them to Staline. We walked the rest of the way to Staline. The gentile refused to take any gift or money from us.

In Staline, we hid several days with Ester Blizshovsko, but our goal was Sarne. My aunt, my mother's sister, lived there. We walked to Dombrovitz, and we drove from there to Sarne by wagon. We stayed in Sarne five months until they established a ghetto in the Jewish quarter. It is noteworthy that certain Sarne gentiles did not want to leave the border region of the ghetto. Most of the Jews survived in the ghetto by selling their belongings and utensils. We did not want our aunt to have to support us, so we moved to other lodgings which were provided by the communal committee.

There were several David-Horodokers with us in the ghetto: Golde Finkelstein and her mother Yently, Zelda Finkelstein and her daughter Sara, and Haike Finkelstein with her two daughters, Manie and Rive.

Golde Finkelstein had her personal problem to add to the general woe. During the days of the holocaust, she gave birth to a daughter on her twelfth wedding anniversary.

All the Jews were required to register on two separate occasions over a six month period. At the second registration they established a ghetto for recently arrived Jews from Dambrovitz and the surrounding region. Then the killing began. Every day, five hundred men were transported to the trenches which had been prepared in the forest outside of town.

When our transport arrived at the spot, we all began running away from the trenches towards a hill over near Sarne - a splendid target for the German guns.

My sister Faigele was wounded. While running I heard a voice: "Run daughter!" To this day I don't know if that was my mother's voice. In any case, I never saw her again.

We came to a stream, and I washed Faigele's foot. We spent the entire night alone in the forest, terrified by horrible visions. In the morning we discovered a small house in the forest, and we went inside. Faigele's foot had become swollen, and so she laid down and quickly fell asleep. I went outside to look around and to try and find some Jews. When I

returned to get Faigele, people in the house told me that she had gone with the shepherds. Later, I learned from the village teacher that Faigele had been dragged into the woods and forced to lay on the ground while they drove back and forth over her with a bicycle until, with terrible pain and suffering, she gave up her pure innocent soul.

I went off on the pathway crying bitterly until I finally dropped off into an exhausted sleep. A gentile awoke me, brought me into the forest, and succeeded in finding me a hiding place. Early next morning I set off walking again until a wagon stopped and gave me a ride to a nearby farm. I went into a house and asked for a drink. I found two Jews there. After I ate and drank, the Jews showed me the road and warned me to hide away from wagons. I went on, but suddenly I heard the sound of an approaching wagon. I quickly hid in the bushes. To my great terror, the wagon stopped near my hiding place. My soul nearly left my body before I realized that the wagon contained my friends from the farm. They drove me in their wagon to the family of a Jewish doctor who lived in the forest. I stayed with them for a month. At night, we would go to the gentile houses to beg for food, even a dry crust of bread. The trees served as hiding places during the night.

One gentile woman treated me very kindly and invited me into her home once a week. There I would wash my hair. She gave me a cooking pot and some salt, a very scarce commodity.

The pot had two advantages. One was that I could eat warm cooked food after wandering for weeks through the cold forest. Most important was that potatoes, which were half-burned when roasted over a fire, could now be eaten entirely without any waste.

Another gentile woman hid me in the forest when the Germans appeared once. Afterwards she brought me back to my friends. One night, while we were warming ourselves by a fire that we lit in the forest, a man with a gun suddenly appeared and said: "I am a partisan. We have a wounded man." By the light of the flames he examined each one of us until he came next to me and stared at me. Suddenly we heard a shot and a cry: "Get going!"

Everyone ran away, but one by one they returned. The doctor called his daughters to come back, saying that they would "take care of him" if they would not return. Afterwards they all searched for me, calling me by name again and again, but I laid the entire night hidden in the bushes. In the morning, I returned to the group. The doctor praised me and said: "you were smart not to come..."

That is how things were for several months until the outlaws, whose leader was Bandero and who called themselves "Banderovtzes", began catching Jews. At that time the partisans showed up. I begged them to take me with them, but they refused. Then I said to them: "finish me off if you won't honor my wish."

Finally they consented. At the beginning, I worked for several months in the medicine section, accompanying the wounded in wagons and nursing them. Later, when I had proven myself courageous and bold, I was assigned to the information service. My job was to go to the villages, find out

the number of German soldiers in each place, how many weapons they possessed and where their commander was located. When I brought back the accurate information, the partisans would attack each place and destroy it.

There was a landing strip built near Zhitomar where the Soviets landed airplanes of the Red army, evacuating our severely wounded and providing us with supplies and weapons.

The airplanes would come at night, and we would light fires to guide them in their landing. Once an enemy airplane circled overhead. Thinking it was one of ours, we lit the fires. The airplane veered off and headed towards Kiev. A few hours later it returned and gave us a "present" of bombs.

In one of our raids, we overran the village of Amiltshana near Zhitomar. The retreating Germans were convinced that they were opposing soldiers of the Red army. While we held the village, we ate and drank ceaselessly. We followed the system of "take from this one and give to the next one." We would take from one person and then repay him with what we took from the next person.

One of my jobs was observation. Once, while I was sitting at my post, I didn't notice that our people had left the area, and the Germans were coming up. However, I wasn't abandoned. A horse and rider were sent to retrieve me, and we succeeded in escaping in the last minute before the Germans marched in.

This was only one of the many miracles that happened to me.

After we had extricated ourselves from Amiltshana, I was again assigned as an observer. About a kilometer away from me, deep in the forest, our people were stationed with a cannon. I was to warn them when the enemy approached.

To lose a cannon was for us a far greater tragedy than to lose one of our people, and I was no exception. Suddenly I heard the sound of horses' hooves.

"Halt", I shouted. "Who's there?", and I whispered the password. My situation was intolerable. Whoever did not carry out his duty, even when guiltless, the penalty was death. With my luck, they were our men. In recognition, I was given a medal.

One night we were riding our horses near a train station. We watched over our horses as if they were our own eyes because they were our most important means of communication. We handled them properly, as best we could. When we saw that their strength was exhausted, we would confiscate fresher and stronger horses along the way.

At crossroads we would separate and ride in various directions back and forth in order to confuse the enemy. At that time that we passed the train station, I became separated from my unit in order to change my horse. When I returned, no-one was there. Indeed I had acquired a fresh horse, and I had a gun. But I was alone.

I wandered for a week without seeing a single soul. I was so weary that

the gun became too much of a burden for me, and I parted with it as a "friend". On the eighth day, I came to a village. I entered a cabin and asked the residents if they had seen horses and riders in the vicinity.

"Yes, yes! I saw them", answered the man of the house. "Sit a while. Relax. I'll come right back."

I decided that he was a village official, and I used the moment of his departure to get out of there. I left my horse and all my belongings.

Later I went into several houses and ordered the residents to give me food and to do me no harm if they didn't want to deal with the partisans who were coming after me.

At last I went into a small house and again asked if they had seen horses and riders in the region. After I had promised a proper reward, the resident went with me to show the way. On the tenth day of my wandering, I was re-united with my people.

Once we were surrounded by the Germans, and they shot at us from all sides. Our situation was hopeless, and we began to say farewell to each other. A portion of us succeeded in breaking through the enemy's line and escaped, leaving the wounded behind. We were soon given the order to turn back and rescue the wounded. Many fell in the renewed skirmish. Many of our people also died at Brod, especially a number of Jews from Dombrovitz.

The enemy had a widespread espionage network. Not infrequently we would arrive at a certain place and come under attack by enemy airplanes. We would always withdraw in the direction taken by the enemy airplanes.

In Lemberg we came in contact with the Red army. I was appointed head-nurse for a transport of wounded and typhus victims to the rear area. A number of them were laying on the ground. I fulfilled this function for the Red army for one week. That same week we dug a grave for a partisan who had survived many battles but died in an accident. I said a short eulogy over his grave. After that, I resolved to leave the partisans and do something for myself. At the time we captured Amiltshana, I became a close friend of one of the village girls. Now that the region had been cleared of the enemy, I came to her house. We were joined by several wagoners and young people who were going the same way. My girlfriend's house had remained intact, and her family unharmed. I was there scarcely a month until I began working in the office of a large sawmill. I had to change my residence, but I returned each sunday to spend time with my companions.

So I spent several months until I heard the news that Pinsk had been liberated. I decided to return home. I procured a passport and traveled to Sarne. I wanted to continue on my way to David-Horodok, but I met friends in Sarne who wouldn't let me go because "there is not even the memory of a Jew there." Reluctantly I remained in Sarne and took up the offer to work as a clerk for the commisar of the military stationed in

Sarne. The NKVD also offered me a job which I refused. A short time later, when I was ordered to the front with my military unit, I decided to remain with the NKVD.

I was awarded the rank of an officer, and I was quartered next to the residence of the commisar. Before I started working, I was given the longest detailed questionnaire I had ever seen. I kept that job for several months. During that period there were still marauding bands who pillaged and staged pogroms.

The NKVD uniform protected me. I was also saved by the fact that I often appeared together with the commisar, just the two of us, and each such appearance had a powerful impression on everyone, especially those who planned to harm me.

My closeness to the public prosecutor also enabled me to arrest several gentiles who I recognized as murderers of Jews.

On a certain day, I decided to travel to Amiltshana for a farewell visit. Since I could not afford to travel on my salary, I was forced to sell paper at a high price to cover my travel expenses. However, I was caught and arrested.

An NKVD employee who was arrested for a similar crime, was punished by taking twenty five percent off of his wages until he had completed his obligation. I was freed after much effort, and a report was sent concerning me to Sarne. When I returned to Sarne, I again enjoyed the commisar's trust, and he never deducted a groshen from my wages.

The transports of supplies and troops all passed through Sarne which also served as a military camp. When a troop train would stop, I would put two or three bottles of whiskey in my rucksack and go to the station to trade with the soldiers for clothing which was plentiful on the trains. Once I came there, and the railroad NKVD policemen surrounded the train and started a search. Before they searched me, I succeeded in getting rid of the whiskey. When they brought me to my commisar, I feigned ignorance, saying that I was there as an NKVD officer.

A half-month later, I requested a release from the NKVD and an emigration permit. My commisar reminded me of my arrest. Nevertheless, he sent me with a letter, whose contents I do not know until today, to the commisar of Ravne.

The guards would not let me see him, and they tried to get rid of me with various excuses. I would not be put off, and I went in.

He read the letter and sent me back with another sealed letter whose contents were also unknown to me.

I gave this letter to the commisar of Sarne, and all the obstacles in my path were set aside.

I drove to freedom.

The Horrible Ghetto Slaughter in Rublye, David-Horodok and Staline
A Letter to Detroit

Michael Nosantchuk of Rublye describes the horrible events in a letter to his brother Berl Nosantchuk of Windsor. The letter-writer escaped from Rublye, joined the anti-nazi partisans and later joined the Red army. The letter was published in The Forward by Yakov Nosantchuk of Detroit.

The letter-writer is the only one of his family that was saved and one of the few survivors of Rublye, David-Horodok and Staline. He escaped in the midst of the slaughter as if by a miracle, and he joined the ranks of the partisans. Later he joined the Red army.

Mr Yakov Nosantchuk gave us two letters to publish. The first letter gives us a general overview of the conditions that the Red army soldier endured, and the second letter describes the details of the horrible slaughter.

He writes in the first letter:

"Today is the happiest day of my life. That is how I feel, reading a letter written in my brother's hand. How many days and nights did I think of only one thing, that you should only know of the dark fate that had overtaken us. Escaping from the dark ghetto, from the murderous hands of the Germans, wandering around in the mud, swamps, woods and marshes alone and forlorn, worse off than a dog, I had only one thought - how can I let my brothers and sisters know? Will someone in my family even know of my death, of what I endured? More than once I wanted to end my life. But remembering you, I encouraged myself. I kept up my hope and, with all my strength, I endured everything. My only aspiration was to get hold of a gun and take revenge. It was not easy for me to decide to join a partisan detachment. From the detachment, I went on to join the Red army. I was in Lithuania, Latvia, later in the front lines outside of Warsaw, and I ended in the darkness of Berlin. I took revenge for our innocent spilled blood. But the great wound will not heal."

In the second letter, written five days later (January 15, 1946), the writer gives the following details of the bloody slaughter:

"In 1941, around the 16th of Av (I remember it was a sunday), the horrible slaughter occured in David-Horodok. With the pretext that they were being sent to work, everyone was gathered outside of Horodok and shot to death.

"I was in Rublye at that time, unaware of anything. I had a passion for fishing, and so I went out to the river. Yakov, our Golde's husband, sat at home around the table with his fellow hasidim. I called for him to come with me. But he only joked that he would come later with a wagon to get the fish. I went alone.

"Around five o'clock in the afternoon, I heard guns shooting, one after another. I settled deeper in the bushes and waited until someone came from the village. The first to announce the bitter news was the shameless Marko.

Just two hours earlier, everything was peaceful. Everyone sat at his work, whether at the forge or at sewing. Suddenly everyone was dead, including Yakov. A short time ago he was telling jokes, and now he lays dead. Why? Fifty three martyrs were murdered with Hanale's father and Gitle's husband among them.

"Before he died, Yakov said a few words. They had taken them out bound together in groups of three into barns, and there they shot them. Soon came the realization that all were gone in Horodok as well.

"I managed to get away unnoticed to Avdai in Haresha. The murderers soon realized that I was not amongst the bodies, and they began searching for me. However, Avdai knew how to hide me. In Staline, the black SS were not yet active. They had seized only David-Horodok. In Rublye, the perpetrators were local gentiles. I received a message from our Moshe Haim, may he rest in peace, that I should come to Staline. I went there. The unfortunate women of Horodok and Rublye had been driven out of the villages of Harisha, and they were robbed of their belongings before their eyes. The gentile Nikolai Pusiks pulled Yakov's boots off the feet of Haye, our Golde's daughter. (Later I saw him while with the partisans, and we killed him.) The unfortunates then wandered through the Brezno forest. Nowhere would anyone let them in.

"They created a communal organization in Staline, and, with much money and sacrifice, they worked to allow the unfortunates to enter Staline.

"On the second day of Rosh Hashona, I sat with our brother Moshe Haim. Suddenly two thugs burst into the house and took Moshe'le away for ever. Three days later we learned that they had tortured him to death. They had stuck him with prods and tore pieces from him. On the second day of Rosh Hashona, 1941, at 12 midnight, he gave up his holy soul in a Staline jail. I found his body six months later, and I buried him wrapped in his talis, near Aunt Golde's grave.

"Liave, covered with tears, said the graveside kaddish. Zelig Fishman was with me. He helped me. The face of our holy brother was already decomposed, but I recognized him anyway. Frumke, Ganye, Haye and Rachel also came running to help. We made the funeral without the knowledge of the Germans.

"After Moshele's death, I began a different life. I became a part of a family of orphans and widows. I would look at the children, especially Aviva'le, and my heart would nearly break. Aunt Golde held out well, but then the light began to go out. At Hanuka she breathed her last in our house. All the Rublye widows wept for her. We made a quiet funeral because the Germans forbade funerals.

"But we didn't have much time to think of the dead. The great burden of all the orphans and widows fell on me. I turned in every direction trying to keep them from starving. We had a minyon in our house. Father, may he rest in peace, would say kaddish with Liave. The first kaddish was for the Rublye martyrs, next for our brothers, then for Aunt Golde. Father would say little, just bite his lips and keep silent. Often he would scold

the women when they began crying, and then he would begin to shed tears. I was forced to play the role of a hero, but at the same time shed my own tears.

"One could not appear on the street after seven o'clock in the evening. We would sit behind closed shutters. Often Ganye and her children would come through the garden, and we would sit together. Not infrequently we would talk about you, whether you knew what was happening here and what you would think when you found out.

"Thus we sat in the house the entire winter.

"On the eve of Pesach, 1942, they drove Ganye out of her house, and then us too. At that time Zelig Fishman, may he rest in peace, gave us considerable aid. Then there began rumors that they would make a ghetto in Staline. How many trials could we endure? How many tribulations? They were flaying our skins.

"By the eve of Shavuos, they had completed encircling the ghetto with a fence of 15 wires, one post every two or three meters.

"We received the order to move to the ghetto. It is impossible to describe the picture. Everyone carried what they could - one must live - father, may he rest in peace, took his cane and went into the ghetto. We were assigned a small room - myself, Golde's Shia, cousin Yakov's five year old son Michalke and our parents. Not far from us was Ganye with her children and Frumke.

"In the ghetto it was forbidden to take anything in or out. The death rate reached twelve a day. People became swollen. I would look at mother's feet, and I would shudder. We talked of nothing but eating. We found ways of smuggling food into the ghetto. Then came the terrible knowledge that they were shooting all the Jews. We couldn't believe it. What does it mean? How could they? Small children? Old people? It cannot be!

"Until the black day came on the eve of Rosh Hashona, 1942, there had been 7000 souls in Staline, and all were killed. The graves were prepared. They first stripped naked, then were forced to lie down in the graves and then shot in rows.

"I will never forget the last night in the ghetto. I stayed with mother until three o'clock. We kissed and kissed, cried and cried - your photographs pressed to our hearts, we said our farewell to you. Father recited the confessional prayer. Mother bathed and put on clean clothes, preparing for her death. She then drove me out of the house: 'Go away from us! You will survive. Hide yourself. Don't stay with us! Perhaps you will be able to avenge us and tell of our fate.'

"At that moment I didn't believe mother's words: how can I survive when we are surrounded on all sides? I went away with the idea that our parents' last minutes would be easier if they thought I had survived.

"So I left the dearest and most treasured, forever. A thousand times I cursed that moment when I left. I often wished that I had lain down

with them and embraced them, as all the martyrs did before they died.

"I stayed in a cellar with Valyen Malatchnik for 18 days after the slaughter in the ghetto. I thought of everything, looking for ways to get out. My heart told me that if I could only get out of the ghetto, I would know how to get along. I tried to get Valyen to go along with me. However, at that time his wife was also alive and in hiding. Others who were still alive included Bela Malatchnick, Nissl, their daughter Bashele, Shalom Durtzin with his wife and child. Their family was still intact, and I was already an orphan. I would meet them at night and try to convince them to try to find a way to escape with me. They decided to wait for a miracle, and they remained there.

"I began to search for a way out by myself. On the 18th night after the slaughter, I groped around in the dark ghetto - doors, windows, all broken. All the houses were vacant, and I thought I had stumbled over the dead body of a martyr, and my hair shuddered. I had only one thought - life, life! How to get out of there?

At that moment, I encountered another living person. I quickly went over to him. I thought that he was another unfortunate like myself, trying to find a way out. How shocked I was to see a tall gentile standing before me - the biggest thief in Staline (he now sits in jail), and he led me out of the ghetto.

"Valyen, Bela, Nissl, Shalom - they were found and shot to death several days after my escape.

"Then I began to live my golden days - a lone survivor in the world, wandering about. I owe gratitude to Saltis Avdain, Kvadok and Lavonin Malak Mamonovitch - they helped me out until I could fend for myself, that is to say, I joined a partisan detachment. I will not describe my further experiences - they are not important.

"I believe that what I have written will give you a more-or-less clear picture of what happened to us.

"We have with us here from Rublye Avraham Shulman the Levi's two sons. They are longing for their Aunt Edel Shulman in New York, and they do not have her address. If you can, dear brother, find out her address from the Rublye people, and let her know about the two boys. Let her write to them to my address."

* * *

My Small Revenge for the Heinous Crime
(A Chapter from my Memoirs)

by
Aharon Moravtchik

May, 1946.

The transport that drove the repatriots (Polish citizens who spent World War II in the Red army), including me, to the Polish People's Republic stopped at Klatzk, a small town in Lower Silesia. There we all had to climb out and begin to build a new life.

Should I anchor myself here, or search for a more central town?

Was it more important to be here or in a large city? Naturally I was lonesome and forelorn, without a relative, a helper or a friend. I decided to settle where fate had led me, and I stayed in that town.

I had in my possession the list of names of the David-Horodoker murderers which I succeeded in acquiring while riding in the transport.

From time to time I took out the list and read through the names of the murderers who had killed the Jews of David-Horodok. There was the name of the father of sinners, the most to blame and chief murderer - the feldsher Ivan Maraiko, may his name be blotted out, and after him his trusted accomplices: the lawyer Ivgeny Yavplov and his wife Marusya, Kasarev and his three sons, Siamyon Kulaga and his son Grigory, Damyon Maraiko, Staraiko, Hantshl, Krim Levkovski, Polukoshka, Kazalovski, Gritzkavitch and more and more, may their names and memories be blotted out.

They are probably even now going about,these murderers, free as can be in the Polish People's Republic, and they are comfortably enjoying themselves with the robbed possessions of the Jews.

That thought would not leave me alone. I resolved that I must find and unmask them at any cost. Jewish blood must not be spilled wantonly! I must be the blood-avenger for my David-Horodoker brothers and sisters.

A few weeks after my arrival in Poland, the Kaltzer pogrom broke out.

Turmoil seized the survivors, and the Jews began a mass exodus from the country whose soil had absorbed the blood of millions of guiltless Jewish victims and was still not sated.

It was "natural" for me to be carried along by the great stream of survivors. My friends tried to convince me to go. However, a hidden power would not let me leave the place.

I stayed to search for the murderers despite the fact that many of my friends thought that it was a "madness" in me.

* * *

I decided to get a job in the district ministry where they had offered me a responsible post. In a short time I had won the trust of the director himself.

The ministry director was a middle-aged man with authentic Polish mustache and whiskers. He was easy-going and direct. Every word that came from his mouth was first considered, weighed and measured. His relations with people, as well as his general appearance, was sympathetic. The man was highly honorable, a devout communist and an outspoken idealist. His pure Aryan outward appearance, his authentic Polish family name, his wonderful Polish literate speech and his pure Polish accent all indicated that here was a Pole of many generations. It is interesting to note that later, and under different circumstances with this "authentic Pole", I found out that he was a good-hearted Jew.

One morning the director invited me into his office, and he requested that I travel with an expert to Breslau to purchase a taxi for the ministry. He added discreetly: "I know that you are a Jew, and I am sure that you will carry out this mission successfully".

I thanked the director for his confidence in me, and I willingly accepted the mission, hoping, without any foundation for it, that I might find traces of the David-Horodoker murderers in that large city.

* * *

I carried out my mission in Breslau, purchasing the taxi and its necessary accessories, and I had to wait another three days so that I could take everything together back to Klatzk.

I decided to utilize those three days to search for traces of the murderers.

Wandering through the streets of Breslau, I chanced to run into my friend Avraham Moshe Greenberg, a Jew from Lamzshe who was now the community leader in our new town.

He told me that his object was to purchase poultry in Breslau for the kaporas ceremony for the Jews of Klatzk. He suggested that I come along with him and help him buy the poultry. I took up his proposition with pleasure, thus becoming a partner in a good deed.

We went to the marketplace which was filled with thousands of people and hundreds of kiosks with their proprietors.

I recalled the time when there were millions of Jews in Poland, and I imagined that same marketplace filled with Jewish merchants and peddlers, without whom it would have been impossible to conceive of such a market day. Who would have believed, I thought, that this all had disappeared so quickly?

Walking at Greenberg's side and absorbed in my thoughts, the unbelievable suddenly occured: a gentile, who was selling herring at his

stand, began staring at me. Instinctively our eyes met. Abruptly he asked me in Russian: "Are you a compatriot"? A few seconds later he added: "Are you Moravtchik"?

I was startled as if by an electric shock when I unexpectedly heard my family name spoken in the Russian language in a foreign city amongst strangers. I thought I was dreaming or that I was hearing a voice from another world.

Fortunately I did not lose my presence of mind, and I quickly reasoned that this person might have something to do with David-Horodok, and perhaps he was one of those I was seeking.

"And who are you?" - I asked him in Russian.

Instead of a reply, the unknown person began to draw back and stammer: "Excuse me. Perhaps I made a mistake. I didn't mean you".

"Say who you are", I began to shout nervously, "just now you called me by my name. You certainly know me from before",

A crowd of people gathered. My agitation grew from moment to moment as I continued to demand that he tell me who he was.

The unknown man remained silent. He bowed his head as if he were searching for something on the ground. He realized that he had given himself away.

"Militia, militia", I began shouting in a shrill voice which I myself did not recognize.

In a few minutes, two militia-men arrived. I explained to them that I suspected that person of collaborating with the German occupation forces during the war and participation in the extermination of the Jews of David-Horodok.

The militia-men ordered the gentile to lock his stall, and they took us both to the police station. After inspecting his documents, it became apparent that he was one of the David-Horodoker citizens whose name figured in the murderous regime.

At the time of the first inquest which was made on the spot in my presence, the murderer turned to me and said: "Moravtchik, who are you arresting? I had an unimportant position with the Germans. Why don't you arrest Ivan Maraiko who was mayor of David-Horodok under the Germans? He was responsible for the killing of all the David-Horodoker Jews,and, despite that, he is now a free man in Warsaw".

Thus I was set on the trail of the chief murderer Maraiko, and I understood that this beginning would eventually lead to the arrest

of all the remaining murderers who were on Polish soil. I do no. exaggerate to say that this day was the happiest day of my life since the beginning of the war in 1939.

I had lived to see the fruition of my dedicated work. I was proud of my achievement even though I knew that the vengeance would not return my dear David-Horodoker brothers and sisters to life.

At the same time, I took stock of the situation and realized that the basic groundwork would have to be done first, and that it would not be easy.

My resolution to carry out the holy work to the end became even firmer, and the beginning gave me the courage, strength and enduring vigor to continue my efforts to find the remaining murderers.

* * *

The feldsher Ivan Maraiko, who had many Jewish clientele, had immediately put himself in the service of the Germans, and he was appointed by them town mayor.

From the first day, a terror campaign was waged against the Jewish inhabitants.

One of the most valuable men in town, the dentist Itzhak Edel, was shot with his son Gedaliahu on that day.

Aharon Slomionski, a respected hasidic Jew, was thrown from the bridge into the Horin River.

Simha Misholov and Motl Kviatni hid themselves with their "good friend" Ivan Maraiko who took plenty of gold and silver for his services. A few days later, Ivan Maraiko drove them out of hiding, ordering the citizenry to kill them. Simha Misholov was killed before his own house in front of his wife and children.

The Finkelstein family, who were valued by the citizenry - especially the Christian shoemakers, were murdered along with all the other Jews despite their having paid a huge ransom and despite the pleas of the Christian shoemakers to the authorities to let them live as "good Jews".

Rabbi Moshele demonstrated unusual courage and selflessness on behalf of his community. Every day he would come to intercede with the murderer Ivan Maraiko and try to effect the repeal of the decrees against the Jews. Finally, he was driven to the slaughter along with all the other men. Wrapped in his tallis and tefilin, he gave a sermon to the doomed Jews before he was killed with them.

Barush Yosef Katzman and his sons managed to avoid the execution by hiding in a barn. They had provided themselves with food for two weeks,

and they hoped that they could escape into the forest.

Two weeks later, when the food had run out, they came out of hiding. Afraid to go to the local gentiles for help, they went straight to German headquarters which was in Yudovitch's house.

They explained to the Germans how they had managed to hide, and they pleaded with the Germans to spare their lives.

To their great surprise, they received the following reply from the Germans which was characteristic of German "precision":

"We received the command to kill the Jews on August 10. Since that deadline has passed and we have no further orders, we will do you no harm, and you are free".

As soon as Katzman and his sons went out of German headquarters, they ran into the drunkard and murderer Elia Stavro (Stadnik) on the street. He took an iron bar and murdered them on the spot.

It is interesting that, the same night of the murder, he went berserk, set his own house on fire, and was burned alive.

Ezra Solomionek also hid from the slaughter. A couple of days later, his neighbor Yasip Dubok (Matusiavitch) discovered him and murdered him.

The "most important" work of the murderer Maraiko was his provocations against the David-Horodoker Jews, that is, against his patients from whom he had earned a living all of his life.

He and his accomplices had hidden iron bars, axes and several revolvers in the large synagogue, and he then reported to the German headquarters in Luniniatz that they had "uncovered" a weapons arsenal in the synagogue with which the Jews were planning an uprising against the Germans.

On the basis of the provocation, the Germans ordered that all the Jewish men of David-Horodok be killed.

Over 3000 Jews, all the men over age 14, were murdered on August 10. They were buried in large mass-graves which had been prepared ahead of time along the road between Hinovsk and Alshon.

In the last moment before the horrible slaughter, Maraiko pretended to intercede, letting it be known that he was working on the Germans to allow the Jews to ransom their lives with money or valuables.

Many of the unfortunate victims believed him, and they led the murderers to where they had hidden gold, silver and other valuables.

After several crates were filled with Jewish belongings, the Jews were led back to the place of execution where they were killed along

with all the others.

Maraiko personally took part in the killing, shooting the Jews with a revolver.

It is said that the cries of the unfortunate victims were heard many kilometers away. The covered mass graves were seen to move for three days because many of the Jews had been buried while still alive.

The women and children remaining in town were driven out of town by the murderers on the night after the mass-murder. They were not allowed to take anything with them. There were cases where women were driven out of their homes in their nightgowns.

After driving the women and children out, the local citizens and peasants from the surrounding villages plundered all the Jewish belongings left behind.

* * *

The arrested David-Horodoker citizen did not know the current Warsaw address of Ivan Maraiko. Finding him would not be an easy task. I traveled to Warsaw several times to search for him. Unfortunately, my efforts were not crowned with success. I had almost given up the idea of finding him. However, as luck would have it, on one of my trips to Warsaw I met a Jewish secret agent (Yehudah Spivak-Singer, now in Israel) on the train. On learning of my mission, he took upon himself the task of finding Maraiko.

After long efforts and searching, he finally found him in a small town near Warsaw where he was working as a doctor using a falsified diploma. Maraiko had grown a beard so as not to be recognized.

I was overwhelmed with joy when I received the telegram from Spivak-Singer with the happy news of Maraiko's arrest.

A short time later, his wife Darya came to me in Klatzk (to this day I am puzzled by how she got my address) to beg for mercy, forgiveness and pardon.

My encounter with her was rich with dramatic moments:

"Get out of my house, murderess. I don't want to see you, and I don't want to hear about your husband", I said to her, spitting in her face.

"I will not take offence because I was expecting such a reception", she replied, adding at the same time that it was worth it if only I would listen to what she had to say.

At that moment the idea occured to me that maybe it really was worthwhile, to restrain myself despite my aversion, for the sake of the benefit which I might derive from my listening to the murderess. Perhaps that way I could get her to give me the addresses of

the other murderers.

I told her to go down and wait for me in the street. I did not want to have that defiled person in my home.

Her entire conversation was an attempt to whitewash her husband of all sins, and thereby to convince me to drop my charges against him.

Among other things, she told me that her son Misha had returned to Poland from England after the war (he was an officer on the Polish ship Pilsudski during the Polish-German war, which was sunk in battle), and he brought back with him a very charming Jewish woman who he had married in England and whom Darye loved like her own daughter. Later I established that the information was unfortunately correct, that a Jewish woman had married the son of the murderer of the David-Horodoker Jews.

She contended that her husband, "unfortunately", had no choice, and he was forced to take the post of David-Horodoker town mayor by the Germans.

Acting as mayor, "naturally" he tried to find ways and means of revoking the decrees against the Jews.

In general he, Ivan Maraiko, was "completely innocent", though he was forced to carry out the orders of Ivgeny Yavplov who was appointed district commissioner by the Germans.

My patient listening encouraged her, and, in the course of the conversation, she let me know that she understood that I was in difficult material circumstances, and that, as old friends, they were prepared to help me.

Her impertinent proposal so upset me that I began to shout, and I spat in her face again as I started to go back into my residence.

She began to run after me with apologies, pleading with me that I should listen to her again.

In the meantime, I reminded myself that I had not yet accomplished my purpose in this conversation. I had not a single address of the remaining murderers, and so I remained listening to her again.

The conversation lasted six hours. They were six painful hours for me because I did not forget for a single second that I was conversing with a beast in human form, whose hands had dipped in the blood of thousands of my dear brothers and sisters, including my beloved wife and my four dear little children.

Yet the entire effort had been worth while because I came away from the conversation knowing the place of residence of Iveny Yavplov and his sadistic criminal wife Marusya.

* * *

Before the outbreak of the Soviet-German war, the murderer Ivgeny

Yavplov was arrested by the Soviet authorities for his white guard past, and he was put in prison in Brisk.

When the war between Germany and Russia broke out, the Russians evacuated the prisoners in special transports deep into Russia. He and Lazer Rankin escaped the transport. A few days later, after their arrival in David-Horodok, Lazer Rankin was killed by the local citizens by order of his prison mate, the same Yavplov.

Arriving in David-Horodok, Yavplov immediately placed himself in the service of the Germans who appointed him district commissioner.

In revenge for his arrest by an NKVD officer who happened to be Jewish, he determined to kill all the Jews in town. His wife, the sadistic murderess Marusya, right after her husband's arrest threatened in my presence that "there will come a day when I'll take revenge on the Jews because a Jew arrested my husband." Both Yavplov and his wife Marusya fulfilled their pledges.

In a letter sent to me in Poland by Mikle Stollman-Russman and her daughter Nina from Detroit, there is a precise description of the ruthless acts of Ivan Maraiko, Ivgeny Yavplov and his wife Marusya.

Marusya particularly "stood out" because of her sadism. She murdered Yakov Gartzulin by herself when she found him hiding. She threw living Jewish children into the Horin River.

The arrest of the Yavplovs was accomplished with great difficulty. Sensing that the ground was burning under their feet, they fled the town of Zialano-Gora where they had lived, and for weeks they hid as fishermen in a small secluded village.

Secret agents watched their house in Zialano-Gora, and at long last they were arrested.

At the time of the inquiry, a hoard of gold, silver and valuables was found and confiscated from them. Of course this was all stolen from the David-Horodoker Jews. Amongst other things in their possession, there was a photograph of my two children Sara'le and Itzhak'l with a Polish inscription. This was written by my little girl in her childish handwriting to their daughter Zosye who had been her girlfriend before the war. In the seven year period before the outbreak of World War II, Yavplov and I had worked together in a bureau for pleas, translations and other office work.

The murderess Marusya wanted to use this photograph to show me what dear friends we had been, indicated by her having kept the picture with her the entire time without destroying it, and she tried to work on me to cancel their arrest.

She also told me that she knew that the Christian Alexandra Agradzinska had hidden a Jewish girl, and she had not informed on her to the authorites.

However, when I took out the material in my possession which detailed her and her husband's "fine activities", the murderess said not a word.

My turn had come to immigrate to Israel. Unfortunately I could no longer delay my departure.

With pain in my heart I was forced to tear myself away from my personal involvement and leave the finishing work to the Polish security organization.

Before I left Poland, I visited the secret police in Warsaw where I knew that all the arrested murderers were detained and were awaiting extradition to David-Horodok (which was now in the Soviet Union) where they were to be prosecuted at the site of their crimes.

The investigating magistrate Meier Piantkovski offered to take me into the prison or to bring the murderer Ivan Maraiko into his chamber so that I could confront him. I did not avail myself of the opportunity, not wanting to look at his murderous face. In truth, there are times that I regret not taking advantage of that opportunity to see that murderer at the time he was suffering punishment for his sins.

At the same trip to Warsaw, I paid a visit to the Soviet embassy, and they promised me their full support in handling the case.

I would like to take the opportunity to stress the unusual interest taken in the case by the Central Committee of Polish Jews in Warsaw, who provided legal (they supplied two lawyers to assist) and financial support.

I would also like to bring into the open a fact that shines a ray of light in the vast darkness that encompassed David-Horodok. A Christian with a noble spirit, Alexandra Agradzinska, was the only one in town to hide, at risk of her own life, a Jewish girl named Golde Kuzniatz (now in Haifa) through the entire time of the German occupation.

This fact is particularly noteworthy because all of the other Christians of David-Horodok, without exception, were crueler than the Germans toward the Jews. Alexandra Agradzinska was the only bright spot in the vast black blot that was the tragic David-Horodoker reality of those times.

I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation and thanks. Mrs. Agradzinska still lives in Poland. In gratitude, I have sent her the gift of a crate of oranges from Israel.

* * *

After my arrival in Israel, I proceeded with the case. I got in touch with the Polish embassy in Tel-Aviv, and I received verbal and written clarificiations from them.

At my request, the Warsaw prosecutor sent a number of affidavit forms to a court in Tel-Aviv in order to get the testimony of witnesses that were now living in Israel. In 1953 the testimony

And I? I began looking at the photograph, and I could not take my eyes away from my dear children. I recalled that I had lost my entire family, my wife, my four children, my parents, brothers and sisters, the entire Jewish community of my home town, all those who had been and had died so tragically. I looked and cried, cried and looked, a torrent of tears flowing unceasingly from my eyes.

After a while I found out that the murderess Marusya was trying to fool the investigating judge by pretending that she was gravely ill, hoping to get a medical release.

I immediately traveled to Zialano-Gora and showed the prosecutor the letter from Mrs. Mile Stollman-Russman and her daughter Nina which detailed the sadistic activities of the murderess Marusya Yavplov.

The prosecutor was so overcome and moved that in my presence he ordered the arrest of the "invalid", declaring that there was no place on free soil in the Polish People's Republic for such contemptible people.

In the course of the investigation, the Yavplovs revealed the residence of the murderer Levkovski from the village of Samihostitch.

When I arrived at Zgazshaletz and turned to the secret police to secure Levkovski's arrest, the commandant, who happened to be a Jew, was on furlough. When he was informed by telephone of my mission, he canceled his furlough, and he returned to personally expedite and assist me in my task.

In such a manner, one murderer implicated the next, and, in a short time, they arrested Krim, Damyon Maraiko, Babka and others.

Understandably, each arrest was a story in itself, filled with dramatic moments, enormous efforts, with searching and traveling, and even with personal danger.

It is interesting to note that the Polish security police warned me to be careful because my life was in danger. They told me not to go out alone at night, not to open my door until I was certain who was on the other side, not to go amongst strangers, etc.

I paid no attention to their warnings as I energetically carried out my holy work.

The Polish security police appropriately valued my achievements, and, in gratitude, they sent me a letter of appreciation which gave me a certain moral satisfaction for my untiring holy work. Understandably, my greatest satisfaction came from the arrest of the murderers.

From unofficial sources I learned that Maraiko's daughter Ella was later arrested. She had worked with the Germans as an interpretor. Also arrested were his two sons-in-law Vaitavitch and Vialavaiski, who were officers in the pre-war Polish army, and his son Misha with his Jewish wife from England. Misha had taken a high position in the Polish security ministry.

* * *

was taken in Tel-Aviv, and then the documents were returned to I saw.

In August 1954, I revisited the Polish embassy. I feel it necessary to relate to my countrymen their answers to my questions.

I was told: "All of the arrested criminals are confined. How many murderers were arrested, where they are confined and whether they have stood trial yet - we cannot give you answers to these questions yet".

As compensation for these evasive answers, I received the following promise: "Patience, dear sir - a day will come when you will know everything".

Unfortunately, at the time of this writing, that promise has not yet been fulfilled.

*

Translators note: I am making an effort to trace the results of the trials. Thusfar I am unsuccessful, but my efforts are continuing.

If any reader of this translation has any knowledge as to the outcome of these trials, I would greatly appreciate their contacting me.

N.H.