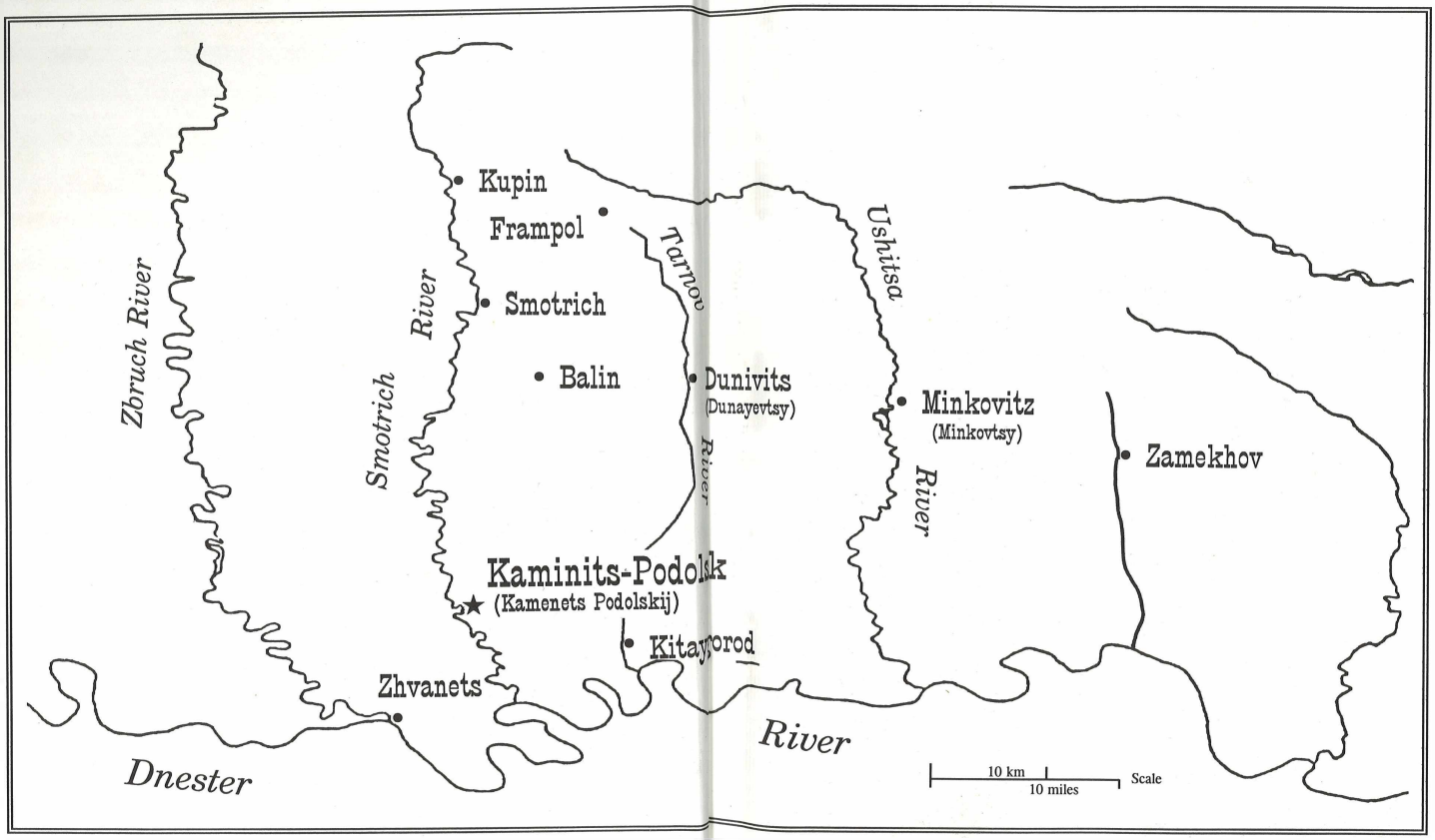
Kaminits-Podolsk & Its Environs



A Memorial Book of the Jewish Communities
in the Cities of Kaminits-Podolsk, Balin,
Dunivits, Zamekhov, Zhvanets, Minkovitz,
Smotrich, Frampol, Kupin and Kitaygorod
Annihilated by the Nazis in 1941

Translated from the Hebrew by Bonnie Schooler Sohn

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Translated from the Hebrew by Bonnie Schooler Sohn

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Translator's Introduction

The memorial book, *Kaminits-Podolsk u-sevivatah*, is a collection of essays and articles by Jews who emigrated from Kaminits-Podolsk and its environs to Eretz Yisrael (Land of Israel, Palestine) before the State of Israel was established and by those of the Kaminits-Podolsk areas who survived the Holocaust. It was published in 1965 in Tel Aviv and records briefly the history, geography, way of life, and the ideas and ideals of a segment of Ukrainian Jewry. The book contains personal narratives and eye-witness accounts of life at the beginning of the 20th century and documents some of the horror-filled events of the Holocaust. It is dedicated "to future generations as a precious legacy from their ancestors in the Diaspora."

Because my parents and seven siblings were fortunate enough to have come to the United States before the Holocaust, I was curious to know more about Kaminits-Podolsk. I grew up in a household where stories of life in *der alter heym* (in the old home) drifted down to me, and more than once I heard mention of the word pogrom or mention of a local landmark such as *die terkishe brik* (the Turkish bridge) *dos shilekhl* (the small synagogue) and the antics of the town's types such as Mottel, *der meshigener* (the crazy one), or Chayim, *der harbutter* (the hunchback).

Why did I choose to do a translation in addition to satisfying my personal curiosity? The growing general interest in genealogy and the particular, poignant interest of American Jews to trace their "roots" prompted me in this undertaking.

Not included in the translation are the photographs which were included in the original Hebrew text. The pages in the Hebrew version that contain photographs are listed in Appendix A. The Hebrew version, *Kaminits-Podolsk u-sevivatah*, is available for reference at libraries in a number of U.S. cities including:

Ann Arbor, Mich.	University of Michigan
Boston, Mass.	Boston Public Library
Cambridge, Mass.	Harvard University
Chicago, Ill.	Spertus College of Judaica
Cincinnati, Oh.	Hebrew Union College
Detroit, Mich.	Wayne State University
Ithaca, N.Y.	Cornell University
Los Angeles, Calif.	University of California
Los Angeles, Calif.	University of Southern California
New Haven, Conn.	Yale University
New York, N.Y.	New York Public Library
New York, N.Y.	Jewish Theological Seminary
New York, N.Y.	Yeshiva University
New York, N.Y.	YIVO Institute for Jewish Research
Portland, Ore.	Portland State University

Princeton, N.J.	Princeton University
Salt Lake City, Ut.	University of Utah
Waltham, Mass.	Brandeis University
Washington, D.C.	Library of Congress, Hebraic Section
Washington, D.C.	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

A book, in English, *Kamenetz-Podolsk; a memorial to a Jewish community annihilated by the Nazis in 1941,* edited by Leon S. Blatman, was published in 1966 by the American sponsors of the Kaminits-Podolsk memorial book. This book is available for reference at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York City and at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. This English book (133 pages), although based on the Hebrew memorial book here translated, includes supplemental information for the first 92 pages of the Hebrew memorial book and has illustrations and photographs of Kaminits-Podolsk and some of its former inhabitants. In Blatman's book, place names are romanized in various ways. Herein, Kaminits-Podolsk is spelled as noted and in its shortened form, Kaminits.

Non-English words or terms, except for titles and names of organizations cited in italics, are explained in the glossary. Bracketed words or phrases indicate supplied information. Words or terms found in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica,* corrected edition, [1972] or in *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language,* second unabridged edition, 1959, are not italicized.

Transliteration does not conform with any single system, because the language in which a term or word was pronounced within the context of the translation may differ from the pronunciation in the printed Hebrew. For example, the Hebrew letter *sadhe* (צ), pronounced *ts*, is sometimes romanized with the English letter *z*. The Hebrew letter *pe* (פּ), with a *daghesh* (a point placed in a consonant), is sounded *p*; without the *daghesh* (פ), it is sounded *f*. Names starting with the Hebrew letter *shin* (שׁ) may be romanized as *sh* or *sch*. The Russian alphabet does not contain an *H* sound; a name beginning with an *H* in usually changed to a *G*—Horodenka may be cited as Gorodenka.

A name index in this book includes names listed in the Commemorative Memorial Tablets on pages 253–63 of the original Hebrew book. Some of the memorial tablets are accompanied by photographs. There is also a place-name index in this book. Not included in the indexes are names of historical world figures, names of well-known literary figures, and names of countries.

References used in this book include:

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Encyclopaedia Judaica. Corrected ed. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1972.

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United States Board on Geographic Names. *Official standard names, approved by the United States Board on Geographic Names.* Washington, 1971.

Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language. 2nd ed., unabridged, 1959.

Many thanks to the staff of the Hebraic Section and of the Geography and Map Reading Room of the Library of Congress for their gracious assistance; to my husband, Dr. Israel Gregory Sohn, for his persistent patience, perpetual editing, and helpful suggestions; and to Dr. Vivian Eden, Jerusalem. Also to Gary and Ruth Mokotoff of Avotaynu Foundation who brought my manuscript to book form.

Thanks, too, to all those whose curiosity, like mine, prompted them to learn a bit more of who they are and how their forebears lived, and—unfortunately, too sadly for some—succumbed to a cruel and merciless death.

Bonnie S. Sohn
Chevy Chase, Maryland
September, 1998 / Tishri, 5759

About the translator

Bonnie Schooler Sohn was a cataloger and librarian for the Smithsonian Institution libraries for more than 20 years. She assisted in the preparation of a bibliography of the copyrighted manuscripts in the Marwick collection of Yiddish Plays at the Library of Congress. Other translations from Yiddish to English include *Dankere*, by H. Ehrlich. She is a graduate of Hunter College and lives in Maryland.

Preface

When the shocking news reached our country about the Jewish communities in Europe at the end of World War II—among them Kaminits-Podolsk and its environs—several people who had emigrated from that region thought of compiling a memorial book.

In 1946 the *Irgun Yots'ei Kaminits-Podolsk u-sevivatah* (Organization of the Emigrants of Kaminits-Podolsk and Its Environs) was founded for this purpose. However, because of the death of the two principal initiators, I. Goldman and B.Z. Shtekelis, and because of the passage of time, the activities of this organization ceased. In due course, there were other attempts to issue a memorial book, but the indifference and inertia of the emigrants delayed the beginning of this work. In the summer of 1961, at a general meeting of the Irgun, the organization's activities, under the leadership of the late Matityahu Siegel, were taken up again by other emigrants from Kaminits-Podolsk. At the organization's general meeting an editorial committee, an advisory board, and three editors were chosen. Because of the lack of interest by many emigrants from these communities to contribute either written material or financial support, the preparation of this book took almost three years.

Thanks are due to those who contributed essays to this book and to those who took an active part in its preparation through organization and fund raising. Thanks also to the management of the Israel Publishing House and its workers who incorporated much work and effort in the printing of this book, the owners of Ha-Zinkografiyah ha-Yisra'elit who prepared the printing blocks for the book, and to the members of the editorial board who spared no time and energy in preparing this book without receiving payment and were so dedicated in completing this important project.

[signed] Irgun Yots'ei Kaminits-Podolsk ve-ha-Sevivah

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In view of the sacred national obligation thrust upon our generation to preserve the memory of the Jewish communities in the European Diaspora that were destroyed by the Nazis during World War II, we, also, through this book, have come to fulfill our obligation to the cities of our birth in Kaminits-Podolsk and its environs—communities completely destroyed and erased from the face of the earth during the Holocaust.

Russian Jewry, including the Jewry of Podolia, played an important and long-lasting role in creating the identity of our people in the last decades; it has contributed much to the Jewish revival and renaissance in the Land of our Fathers. As an inseparable part of Russian Jewry, the communities of Kaminits-Podolsk and its environs participated in these accomplishments. Many of the individuals were well-known personalities from the rank and file of the various national movements that developed during those generations. In this memorial book, which we bequeath them as a precious legacy from their ancestors in the Diaspora, future generations will find a faithful reflection of this cooperative venture. The contents of the book are based primarily on the description of the Jewish communities, their history and way of life, their institutions and people, as well as events during the time of the Holocaust. The book is divided into ten parts, according to ten communities, city by city, with data for each one abstracted and summarized from statistics available before World War II. Let us remember that, except for the short biographical tributes found in "Personalities", the essays and articles in this memorial book were authored by persons in a corner of the Ukrainian Diaspora where they had lived and worked. What they have to say is based on irrefutable evidence from a recent past that has changed and is no more, and it is a reliable source for future historians.

We regret that it was difficult for us to include in this book the other cities and towns of Kaminits-Podolsk because of a lack of material. All endeavors to obtain material requested from their inhabitants were in vain. Let us hope that eventually they, too, will come forward to fill the gap with an additional volume.

Finally, we wish to thank all those who supported this work materially and spiritually and, thus, made possible an everlasting memory of those sacred martyred communities, of the cities of our origin. May they all be blessed.

Tel Aviv, April 1965
The Editors

Podolia

A.R. [Abraham Rosen]

I

Location: Podolia province is located on 36,910 square versts in the northwest part of European Russia. It borders on Galicia and is separated from it by the Zbruch River. It is a level area slanting southwestward and is dissected by the tributaries of the Dnester River (415 versts on the border of Bessarabia) and its channels: Zbruch, Smotrich, Ushitsa, Lyadova, Morava, and others; and the Bug River (508 versts) and its channels: Vuzhik, Ikvah, Rov, Snivodah, Sinyukha, and others.

Natural Resources: The soil of Podolia is black and very fertile. There are lime deposits in some places in the south. There are also quarries for building stone, lithographic stone, gypsum, and phosphates. The climate is moderate (the average annual temperature in the city of Kaminits-Podolsk is +8.6°C [47.48°F]).

Population: Based on statistics of the period reflecting the stable conditions prior to the disruptions caused by World War I, there were 3,544,000 inhabitants of which 247,000 were urban dwellers. Excluding the Polish districts, it had the highest population density (96 persons per each square verst) of all the districts in European Russia. Eighty-one percent of the inhabitants were Ukrainians, the rest Jews (12 percent), Russians, Poles, Moldavians, and others. It consisted of 17 cities and 120 towns.

Agricultural Resources: Grains, potatoes, beets, flax, tobacco, cotton, fruits, vegetables, cattle-raising; 293 factories for processing of sugar, flour, brandy and cloth.

Trading activities: Wheat, oats, flour, sugar, hides, brandy, and textiles. In 1905, exports (wheat and eggs) amounted to 3,037 rubles; imports (wood products) to 899 rubles.

Transport: Railroads (1,123 versts) and a fleet of freighters on the Dnester.

Schools: There were 2,168, including nine secondary schools with a total of 166,000 students. The province is divided into 12 districts with Kaminits-Podolsk as its capital city.

II

Podolia province dates back to ancient times. According to the Father of History, Herodotus, various peoples lived there before the 5th century BCE. After Adrianus, the Roman Emperor, conquered Germany and Romania, this region also fell under his rule. For about 500 years after, various barbaric tribes ruled in Podolia. At the beginning of the 6th century CE, the Slavic tribes drove them out and settled there.

From the 14th century until the second division of Poland between Russia and Prussia in 1793, Podolia alternately came under the rule of Lithuania,

Poland, Russia, and Turkey. In 1793 this region, as well as other regions of Poland, came under the full sovereignty of Russia.

III

There are differences of opinion regarding the origins of the first Jewish settlers in Podolia. Some historians claim that Jews came to Podolia from Russia and Poland having migrated there from western Europe. Others believe that they were expelled from Spain and came to Podolia from the land of the Khazars and from the Crimean Peninsula or from the principality of Kiev, after being expelled during the reign of Vladimir Monomach in 1120.

There is also no unanimity of opinion regarding the time of the first Jewish settlement in Podolia. There is clear evidence, however, that at the beginning of the 12th century, there was already a prosperous Jewish settlement engaged in trading, renting, and commerce. During the Thirty Year War (1618–48), the population was augmented by many German Jews, among whom were distinguished families of Torah scholars and learned men.

While Podolia was under the rule of the princes of Lithuania and Poland, the Jews enjoyed certain privileges. Their economic and civic situation was better than that of the Jews in the other districts. The study of Torah was widespread. It was at this time that the rabbis of Nemirov, Tulchin, Bar, and Medzhibozh became famous.

The situation changed for the worse, however, with the outbreak in 1648 of the Cossack rebellion in Ukraine towards their Polish occupiers. Not only were civic and government privileges adversely affected, but also religious freedom and traditions. It was particularly bad during the time of hetman Bogdan Chmielnicki who poured out his wrath on Jewish citizens who had trade and land-leasing connections with the Polish landowners. With raging destruction, the Cossack bands fell upon the Jewish communities of Podolia, and, like beasts of prey, they mercilessly tortured, massacred, and murdered men and women, young and old. Whole communities were laid waste, and of all the Jewish population in Podolia only a tenth remained. Many were forced to convert or were imprisoned and subsequently ransomed by their brethren in the Diaspora.

These conditions of a life of terror and atrocities and the fear of death by the sword of the enemy provided fertile ground among the populace for superstition and the belief in miracles and supernatural redemption. This was during the time of Shabbetai Zevi, when the belief that he was the Messiah spread through all the corners of the Diaspora, including Podolia. This powerful Messianic movement, surging primarily in the years 1676–1700, inspired hope in the hearts of the oppressed masses. But the bitter disillusionment that followed on the heels of this movement did not bypass Podolia and violently shook the lives of its Jewish inhabitants.

The bad times grew even worse when the successors of Shabbetai Zevi, Jacob Frank, and his followers arrived in Podolia in 1757. As a result of their currying favor with the Bishop of Kaminits-Podolsk, the latter instigated a public religious disputation between them and the rabbis who had excommunicated them. This ended with the imposition of a heavy fine on the Jews and the confiscation of all Talmudic books in the province, which were publicly burned in the market place of Kaminits in 1758.

However, as a panacea for the trials of the downtrodden, desperate people, Hasidism arose in the middle of the 18th century. It was popularized, and its doctrine was spread by Israel Ben Eliezer Ba'al Shem Tov (the Besht), a native of the Podolia town of Okop. This belief that grew and developed in Podolia, particularly among the common people, spread and intensified until it swiftly became a complete way of life embracing all segments of the Jewish people, and, despite the schisms among the various hasidic sects and the opposition of the rabbis, it paved the way for the dispersed Jewish people as a national movement rich in dimension and content.

The *Haskalah* (Enlightenment) movement, which originated among the Jews of Western Europe (Berlin Haskalah), also took root in Podolia. It threw down the "Chinese wall" that surrounded the closed, locked-off Jewish streets and introduced there the spirit of the new times. Among the Jewish literati of the Haskalah may be counted some sons of Podolia, among them were Isaac Satanow, writer and philosopher; Menahem Mendel Lapin, writer and translator; Ben-Ammi (Mordekhai Rabinovich), Russian author; and others.

Following the Haskalah, in the middle of the 19th century, Zionist organizations of various persuasions were formed, which prepared the new generation for redemption. The old *heder* (religious school), with its exclusive emphasis on Holy Writ, gave way to the new Hebrew school that gave its students a national Zionistic education and prepared them for a new life in the Land of our Fathers. Indeed, many of them did emigrate to the Land and contributed to its development. Podolia Jewry participated in the new Hebrew literature that arose with the Zionist movement. It contributed writers, poets, and philosophers, among them M.J. Berdyczewski, Yehezkel Kaufmann, Eliezer Steinman, Zevi Scharfstein, S.L. Blank, Abraham Rosen, Mordecai Mikhaeli, M. Poznansky, David Vogel, Yitzchak Schneour, Sh. Shpan, B. Krivo [?], A. Ashman, and others.

Indeed, in the healthy body of Russian Jewry, Podolia Jewry was a live and vigorous limb that contributed much of itself to the whole nation. With the Nazi destruction of our people in the Diaspora, it, too, was almost completely wiped out from the face of the earth. What a pity, a great pity, for a large and important Jewish community that was and is no more.

Kaminits-Podolsk

More or less reliable authoritative sources about Kaminits-Podolsk date back to the 14th century during the Gedymin reign in Lithuania. From the 14th century to the end of the 18th century, the rule of the city was taken over from the Lithuanians by the Poles. The Turks subsequently took over, and finally, with the division of Poland, it was annexed to Russia in 1793.

The first noted documentation of Jews in Kaminits-Podolsk dates back to the year 1447. When it was annexed to Russia, Emperor Paul (1754–1801) issued a special order permitting the Jews to live in Kaminits, a privilege denied them during the reign of the previous ruler. As a result, the Jewish settlement grew and spread in Kaminits and its environs, and the Jewish population once again gained a recognized position in the economic life of the area.

Although the Jews living there were an important factor in the economic development of the city, their enemies could not come to terms with the fact that the Jews benefited from equal rights and the privilege of living in the city. In 1832 the head of the city requested that the central rulers forbid the Jews to live in Kaminits-Podolsk. The council of ministers, however, rejected the proposal and decided to allow the Jews to retain the right to live in the city and, thus, benefit from the possession of real estate and the maintenance of their existing homes. They were not allowed to build new homes and stores, except in new parts of the city. The Jews were, therefore, forced to settle on Russian and Polish *folvarkim* (farms) and to build their homes there. In 1843 the government was forbidden to accept immovable property as security.

In 1793 the city had a population of 40,134 of which approximately 32% were Ukrainians, 50.8 % Jews, and 16% Poles. At the end of World War I there were an estimated 60,000 inhabitants, half of them Jews.

Y.A. Bar-Levi Weissman

Kaminits-Podolsk

The City and Its Economy

Topography and Geography

The city is situated 16 versts west of the large Dnester River that separates Podolia from Bessarabia. At the end of World War I in 1917, Bessarabia was taken over by Romania, and this river formed a natural border between two estranged and hostile countries. The city was also close to the border that was between Russia and Eastern Galicia. The city itself is built on a high peak of the Carpathian Mountains. The quiet waters of the Smotrich River that surrounds it on three sides and gives it the appearance of a peninsula, flows into the Dnester River. On the other side of the city, the topography consists of hills and slopes, particularly in the central portion where on wide expanses the rocks are thrust upwards from the black fertile earth. The suburbs were built on these cliffs: Novy Plan (the new city), Polski Folvarik (the Polish suburb), Russki Folvarik (the Russian suburb), the Podzamche, Zinkowits, and the Karvasar.

Transportation between the city and the suburbs was via three bridges: The "new" bridge (built during the 1870s) that connected the city with the Novy Plan; the second bridge that led from the city to the Polski Folvarik; and the third bridge, the "Turkish Bridge" (built by the Turks in the last quarter of the 17th century) that connected the city with the Podzamche.

The suburb of Podzamche was named for the castle (in Russian and Polish—Zamok) that was built by the Turks at the end of the bridge. In addition to these three bridges, roads and side paths led from the city to the suburbs. The third bridge, across the noisy, raging torrent of the Smotrich, connected Zinkowits with the Russki Folvarik.

The Karvasar suburb, that during the Polish reign used to be an independent township—the first ghetto in Kaminits—was spread on the river's bank near Zinkowits. Into this ghetto, the non-native Jews of the area were forced to enter at sundown and remain until the next morning. According to the 1847 census, there were 752 Jews in Karvasar, and according to the census of the year 1897, there were 720 in the general population of 1,264. When Kaminits-Podolsk was proclaimed a district capital, it expanded its borders and absorbed this small township of Karvasar that became a suburb of the city of Kaminits.

In general, the streets of the city were uphill and downhill, and only the main streets extended in straight lines to a broad expanse and square in the center. On the four sides of the square there were two- or three-story buildings, the upper stories used as living quarters, the lower stories as shops and small businesses. In the middle of the square, there were tall buildings, among them the city police station. A tall, wooden tower on the

roof of the police station, topped by a parapet, served as a watchtower in all directions. The city clock was also on this tower.

On the two sides of the block of houses in the middle of the square, there were two wooded areas that were used as rest areas for pedestrians, as playgrounds for children, and as a meeting place for various speechmakers and tradesmen. In addition to these areas, there were also two large city gardens, Old and New. The former was within the city and extended via the slopes of the hill at the side of the Smotrich from the governor's square up to the Podzamche. This was the older of the two gardens. The second garden, the new one, was much larger and covered a wide, expansive area on the grounds of the Novy Plan between the New bridge and the Polski Folvarik on the left—a distance of about a kilometer. If you stood on the slope in this garden in the evening hours, you could see the city in all its beauty as it winked at you with its lights from the homes and from the lanterns of the street. This view was enchanting, and it seemed that the Master of the Universe had spread the veil of stars not only in the heavens but also on earth. The beauty of the city left a deep, unforgettable impression even in the hearts of those who were not native sons, but who only had occasion to visit there. Among them I recall two writers and philosophers, Hayyim Greenberg and Shemarya Gorelik, who marveled at the picturesque landscape and delightful nooks that they found in Kaminits-Podolsk.

Worthy of mention was the Dorozhka, a path in the garden of the Novy Plan which extended from the right side of the bridge to the Russki Folvarik. This path won the hearts and love of many of the inhabitants, especially the young people who spent time in camaraderie into the late hours of the night. Not a few romances took shape there, and many love affairs flourished as a result of meetings on this path.

Population

In the last quarter of the 19th century, the city was considered one of the twelve districts of the Podolia province. Geographically it was close to the eastern Galician border. To the east was the city of Novaya Ushitsa, and to the northwest was Proskurov.

As a result of the "wandering of nations" (Germans, Poles, Lithuanians, Tatars, Turks, Ukrainians, etc.) from western to eastern Europe there arose in Podolia layer upon layer of various peoples who settled on the land as farmers, and in the cities and towns as craftsmen and tradesmen. The proportion of nationalities varied from place to place. The population in Podolia, mostly in the western cities close to Galicia (Ushitsa, Yampol, Mogilev, Proskurov, and Kaminits-Podolsk), was a mixture of Poles, Ukrainians, Jews, Germans, Armenians, and others. In the cities and towns, the Jews were in the majority; in the villages, the Ukrainians; and on the landed properties, the Poles. With respect to religion, the population was a mixture of Jews, Greek Orthodox, Catholics, and Lutherans. The Germans

were not a large part of the population and were spread throughout the district. Only in Dunivits was there a significant concentration of Germans.

In Kaminits-Podolsk itself, the population consisted of Jews, Ukrainians, Poles, and Germans. The Jews comprised 50% of the general population. During the time of Chmielnicki's attacks on Kaminits there was a concentration of more than 10,000 families. This number fluctuated because the city was a fortified one, and many fleeing Jews sought refuge there.

Exact figures for the general and Jewish populations in Kaminits were available only from the beginning of the 19th century. According to the 1847 census, there was a population of 4,629 Jews in Kaminits; in 1893 the number reached 13,886 among the general population of 36,951 (Greek Orthodox, 18,211; Catholics, 4,150; others, 494). According to the 1897 census, in Kaminits, there were 16,211 Jews who comprised 40% of the general population. Twenty years later, the Jewish population increased in the city. The population was estimated to have increased to 60,000 by the end of World War I, half of them Jews. The growth of the Jewish population was due in part to a natural increase and in part to the refugees who were expelled from the towns close to the Galician borders in 1915–16 by the Jew-hater Nikolay Nikolaevitch, the commander of the czar's army. The Revolutions of February and October 1917, the changing police departments and governments, the rulership of the various local and foreign troops (Ukrainians, Bolsheviks, Poles, Czechs, etc.) caused the Jewish population to flee from oppression and distress, either by means of local migration within Russia and Ukraine or by way of legal or illegal emigration out of the country (to Palestine, North America, South America, etc.). As a result of this, there was a decrease in the Jewish population of Kaminits. There was a population of only 33,172 in 1923, 50% of whom were Jews; in 1926, there were only 31,000 inhabitants (Jews and Ukrainians). For whatever reason, the registrar does not mention the Poles.

The last census, not official and inaccurate, the "blood census," was executed by the Hitlerian murderers (may their names be wiped out) at the beginning of the month of Elul (end of August) 1941, when they exterminated about 10,000 Jews of Kaminits and its adjoining towns, as well as about 6,000 Jews who were brought from Western and Eastern Europe (Hungary, Bulgaria, Holland, and Romania). May the Lord avenge their blood.

Commerce

There were no railroads in Kaminits that linked the city with other parts of Russia or with the cultural centers of the very large empire until 1915. The only means of transportation connecting the city with the world at large were very primitive, and, in order to reach the nearest train station, the city's inhabitants had to use wagons in the summer and sleighs in the winter.

Of course, the lack of a railroad connecting Kaminits with the other parts

of the realm was a troublesome factor for the city. Its merchants who traveled to Warsaw or Moscow, to Riga or Odessa, to Nizhni-Novgorod or to Kiev—to market fairs or to business meetings—struggled hard with the problem of transport, because transport by horses was very expensive. There were two companies that dealt in the delivery of merchandise and freight. One was the Russian Transportation and Insurance Association, under the leadership of H. Shabati, a native of Berdichev; the other, the South-Western Bureau for Transportation, under the leadership of Messrs. Avraham Berenson and Menahem-Moshe Lichtman. These two companies maintained large warehouses that stored the goods brought from afar for the merchants; the recipients could claim their wares after paying fees for transport, insurance, and storage. These companies would help the merchants with loans using the stored merchandise as security, thus enabling the merchants to support themselves during the slack seasons. The merchants who were not able to bring their goods from distant places were helped by means of the annual fair in Yarmolinits, 60 versts from Kaminits, during the months of June, July, and August. The fair drew many suppliers, factory owners, or their agents from all over Russia. At the fair, the agricultural products of Podolia and the factory products from the manufacturing centers of Russia and Poland were bought and sold.

Industry

There was no developed industry in our city because of the lack of a railroad and its geographic location at the extreme southwestern part of Russia. There was only light industry primarily intended for the local market—a brewery run by the Kleiderman family, a tobacco processing plant, factories for the making of cigarettes, two factories for bottling mineral water, two cotton mills, a large flour mill, and miscellaneous smaller enterprises. The Krupp (German) factory that produced metal casts and machine frames was considered heavy industry.

Government and Public Institutions

The city served as the administrative center of the district and the region. It contained the provincial courts, the state treasury, the office of the tax overseer, the district management, and the office of the district chief, as well as educational institutions (four gymnasiums, a secondary technical school, a Russian theological seminary), cultural institutions (a theater, etc.), and medical institutions. Two army units and their commanders were also stationed in the city.

Trades and Crafts

As in all the cities of the Pale, the trades and crafts were principally in the hands of the Jews in Kaminits-Podolsk. Documentation of statistics on trades and crafts was first started in the year 1847. In the Jewish

population, there were, at that time, 370 wholesalers. In addition there were also retailers. In agriculture, 759 individuals (2,278 family members); in the clothing trade, 270 individuals (740 family members); agents, 119 (370 family members); in general merchandising, 123 (392 family members)—a total of 1,750 individuals (6,300 family members). In crafts, the Jews held first place: In tailoring—713 individuals (1,562 family members); in food preparation—115 individuals (397 family members); in metalwork (tinware, frames etc.)—108 individuals (227 family members). There are no figures from that period for other categories of craftsmen (carpenters, engravers, painters, watchmakers, smelters, shoemakers, etc.). It can be estimated that among those there were close to 500 individuals (approximately 2,000 family members).

Miscellaneous Occupations

According to the same census, 679 individuals (131 men, 548 women) were engaged in administrative posts, service jobs, and non-professional occupations; in professional occupations, 190 (253 family members); pensioners, 304 (612 family members).

All these employees worked for the population in the city and surrounding areas. The administrators, the teachers, the clergy, the police, the gendarmery, and the army, also the farmers and the landowners, constituted a host of customers from whom the Jews could earn a fair living. Jews from the outskirts of Kaminits or Ushitsa areas would frequently come to Kaminits to conduct their business, be it for trading or banking purposes or for official business. All this made necessary the maintenance of hotels and inns, most of which were run by Jews.

Banks

Three large banks played a big part in the development of the city's economy: the Government Bank, Union Bank, and the Russian Bank of Trade and Industry. Jewish merchants were represented on the boards of directors of the banks. These representatives were not elected but were occasionally invited by the banks' directors to join and participate. The managers obtained from them the knowledge regarding the economic situation in the city and the economic status of those applying for credit.

Primarily it was the big merchants or the landowners and institution heads who benefited from the banks, not the shopkeeper, the small businessman, the craftsman, or the teacher. These people, therefore, turned to private moneylenders who granted loans at high interest, and the borrowers never succeeded in becoming debt free. In the community at large the awareness grew that it was necessary to seek cheaper sources of credit and to save every penny for the sake of economy. Two mutual credit institutions that played a big role in the economic development of the city were organized.

Cooperative Banks

The first society to be organized, the Cooperative Mutual Credit Society, consisted primarily of landowners, high officials, and big merchants, Jews as well as Christians. And even if this society did not close its doors to the common folk of all nationalities—because according to ordinances it was forbidden to discriminate—nevertheless, the financial politics of the leadership sought to limit the scope of credit grants to the ordinary Jew, despite the fact that among the council members there were some select Jews. Even more keenly felt was the striving of the privileged classes to exclude others and retain for themselves the choice official positions of the institution. In command of this institution, the officers of which numbered more than ten, there was not a single Jew. This was due to the anti-Semitic attitude of the head accountant, Biletski (a Pole), who was supported by the Christian leadership. Only after the death of the anti-Semitic Biletski, and especially at the outbreak of World War I, when some of the Christian officials were mobilized into the army, was there the opportunity for the Jews to come into the ranks of the officials.

When large segments of the population were convinced that the above-mentioned cooperative society was not serving the ordinary Jew, they organized a second mutual credit society that opened its doors to shopkeepers, craftsmen, and lesser officials of the city and its environs. The members of the leadership and board, as well as the officers in command, were all Jews. The society embraced a large number of members from all segments of the population, Jews as well as Christians. In general, it can be noted that there were improved relations between the nationalities in the day-to-day business matters, and that expressed itself in the expansion of the societies.

Insurance Companies

In our city, where there were private insurance companies with central offices in St. Petersburg and Moscow, the agencies in Kaminits were headed exclusively by Jews. But there were many people who could not afford the fees of private companies, and it was necessary to provide for families in this category in cases of need. In 1912 the Mutual Aid Society in the Event of Death was established. This society served as an example of good relations among all segments of the population, and Jews and Christians were chosen for its investigating committee.

Spiritual and Cultural Life

Writers

As mentioned above, the population in Kaminits was a mixture of nationalities, but at all times the Jews constituted 40–50% of the population. Until the second half of the 19th century, the language of conversation by

Jews was Yiddish only. The 1847 census documented that out of a Jewish population of 16,112, only 99 did not speak Yiddish. By the end of the century, due to the growth of the Jewish population, they also knew other languages. According to the statistical data of that period, 24% knew Russian, and an additional 14% knew other languages.

In the 60s and 70s of the previous century, the writers Shalom Jacob Abramowitsch (Mendele Mokher Seforim) and A.B. Gottlober lived and worked in Kaminits. He, who was later to be known as Baron David Guenzburg, was born there in 1857, as were Fishel Schneersohn and Menahem Poznansky. From a later generation, to be noted are the teacher and writer Sh. Shpan, a native of Yarmolinits who received his general education in our city and studied at the university founded under the Ukrainian rule; the teacher and writer, Aharon Ashman; and the teacher and poet, Abraham Rosen.

Hasidism and the Frankists

Because of its location near the Galician and Walachia-Moldavia borders, Kaminits was exposed to the attacks and wars of its near and distant neighbors and also to their cultural influences. The 17th and 18th centuries were the most difficult for the Jews of Podolia in general and for the Jews of Kaminits in particular. The slaughter in 1657 and 1658 at the hands of Chmielnicki's troops, the wars between the Poles and the Turks that resulted in the capture of the city by the Turks, and its domination under their rule during the years 1672–99 greatly terrified the Jews and weakened their economic condition. Nevertheless, the circle of economic relationships broadened, and the Jews of Podolia had commercial dealings as far as Constantinople and Smyrna. Some of them sent their sons to be educated by the Sephardic rabbis. They were influenced by the followers of the false messiah, Shabbetai Zevi, and the teachings of the Frankists. This sect gained a stronghold in the towns close to the border: Lantskorun, Satanov, and others. Quite understandably the rabbis and God-fearing folk, who could not come to terms with new doctrines that embraced seeds of Christianity and captivated the weak-spirited Jewish followers, started to persecute the sect. The persecuted found refuge with the Polish leadership and the Catholic priesthood, and finally the rabbis were forced to succumb to the demand of Cardinal Dembowski to engage in public debate with the Frankists. This debate resulted in the 1757 burning in Kaminits of about 1,000 sacred books of the six orders of the Mishnah..

Approximately at that time, the Hasidic movement was developing. This movement, founded and popularized by Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, was growing; it originated almost within the gates of our city (the Besht was born in the town of Okup near Kaminits) and had many supporters and followers. After the death of the Besht and his first pupils, there was a proliferation of rebbes' courts on both sides of the border. There were also, among the Jews

of our city, those who traveled to their rebbes on the other side of the borders, and there were rebbes who, from time to time, came to their disciples in Kaminits. They opposed Hasidism or were rather indifferent to it, and they practiced their religion according to their disciples in Kaminits.

The majority of the Jewish population were *Misnaggedim* to the traditional customs. The liturgy was according to the Sephardic formulation because of the influence of the Spanish Jews who migrated to eastern Europe and came into contact with the Judaism of Poland, Austria, and Hungary, as explained by Professor Balaban in his book, *Toledot ha-tenu'ah ha-Frankit* (History of the Frankist Movement)

The New Era

With the annexation of Podolia to the Russian Empire at the end of the 18th century, the cultural life of the Jewish settlement also changed. Under the new conditions, the Jews had limited civil rights regarding living in the villages, land acquisition, and *numerus clausus* (restrictive quotas) in the secondary and high schools. Jews were forbidden to settle in towns outside the Pale of Settlement. Nevertheless, new cultural breezes were blowing, and the ideas of this new era also influenced Russian Jewry. The Jews of Kaminits-Podolsk, as well as those of other cities, were not satisfied with the traditional education of their children in the heder and in the yeshivah and started to send their sons to the general public schools, secondary schools, and universities. After the sons, the daughters had their turn.

This resulted in a great increase in the number of Jews who knew Russian and other languages. The Jewish inhabitants were exposed to the culture and literature of Russia and other countries in western Europe. The influence of the diverse social movements in the various countries and among the Jews penetrated the society. The daily life of the Jews of Kaminits took on a new image and a different coloring. The younger generation digressed from the traditional way of life. Despite that, there was no evidence of a sudden rupture in the wall of traditional Judaism (public display of the desecration of the Sabbath and the like) until the 1917 Revolution.

Hibbat Zion and Political Zionism

The notable influence of national awakening in our city expressed itself first in the Hovevei Zion movement and later in the Zionist Movement. The head of Hovevei Zion was the lawyer, David Schleifer, who in his time had been among the founders of the BILU movement in Kharkov. For various reasons, he did not make *aliyah* (immigration) to Israel together with his comrades, but remained as a lawyer in our city.

Hovevei Zion members in Kaminits not only collected membership dues but obtained monetary contributions from *pushkes* (collection boxes). They were also responsive to the general problems of the movement and

participated in the meetings and general conferences of the Odessa committee.

With the publication of *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) by Dr. Benjamin Ze'ev Herzl and the convocation of the first Zionist Congress in Basle, many of the members of Hovevei Zion, including those in Kaminits, joined the Zionist movement. From among these groups, David Schleifer organized the first circle of the Zionist Organization in the city.

Through such circles, many members were added to the movement, including women (Benot Zion) from the middle class, intellectuals, and youths, and in the years 1904–05 there were six circles of the Zionist Organization in our city. It was incumbent upon the general committee of the city, composed of representatives of all the circles, to form an additional circle in the Polish suburb, particularly among the local youth. Most successful was the third circle, the majority of whose members were enlightened intellectuals conversant in Hebrew, budding literary personalities, 20 to 25 years old, from families of more or less stable economic status. They were outstanding in their accomplishments and activism.

The influence of David Schleifer was very evident in all the circles. He was the main spokesman of the Zionist Organization as well as of Jewish communal concerns in the city. It was he who castigated the intelligentsia, because they perceived their world in the pursuit of professional gain and personal pleasure. They, with few exceptions, were enveloped with the spirit of assimilation. Some of them regarded Schleifer as someone not normal, who, in spite of his reputation as an expert lawyer in the field of civil law, dedicated himself to Zionist work and other public affairs. In this work for the Zionist ideology, Schleifer was aided by another equally dedicated Zionist, Israel Goldman, who served for many years as the secretary of the Zionist Organization in our city.

As is known, the basic effort of the leadership to foster the development of the Zionist movement was carried out by means of delegations. The Zionist movement of Kaminits-Podolsk, as well as the other organizations in the Podolia and Bessarabia provinces, mostly from Khotin, was under the aegis of such a delegation. One delegate was Jacob Bernstein-Kogan who lived in Kishinev. However, it was apparently impossible to conduct the work from the center in Kishinev, so Kaminits was chosen as the suitable place for this, and the first regional committee was formed in 1902. Among the Zionist founders were Dr. Sh. Bendarsky, Dr. J. Bernstein-Kogan, and Menahem Sheinkin. Of the 24 committee members, Kaminits was represented by eight, headed by D. Schleifer, the lawyer, and Mark Nudelman.

Kaminits-Podolsk also sent its delegates to other Zionist congresses and meetings. At the second meeting of the Russian Zionists in Minsk in 1902, D. Schleifer participated as a delegate from Kaminits; at the third meeting

in Helsingfors (1906), Yisro'el Drachler represented Kaminits. He was also the delegate to the fourth meeting in the Hague (1907) and to the 8th Zionist Congress there in the same year. Yisro'el Drachler and Israel Goldman represented Kaminits at the 9th Zionist Congress in Hamburg in 1909.

The First 20th of Tammuz

Forever etched in my memory is the sad, brusque day when the news of Herzl's death struck, when I was 15 years old. The city of Jewish Kaminits, encompassing its various circles and classes, orthodox and free thinkers, Zionists and non-Zionists, were all shrouded in deep mourning. On that day, a mourners' gathering was proclaimed for the afternoon and evening prayer services at the Tailors' Synagogue, the largest and grandest in the city. The news of Dr. Herzl's death and the announcement of the gathering quickly spread to all corners of the city and its environs, and long before the appointed time of the services, crowds began to stream into Purlasky Street where the synagogue was located. To this assembly came not only Zionists but also Jews of every class and opinion—Zionists as well as anti-Zionists. Many came from the ranks of the intelligentsia who until now had sneered at the dreams of the Zionists. Local officials also attended. I don't remember whether the Zionist Organization had announced a no work day and the closing of shops, but during the hours of the gathering all work places and commercial offices were closed as a sign of mourning, and the streets of the city were empty. Many people stood outside, because the large hall of the synagogue was too small to accommodate everyone.

The Uganda Polemic and the First Revolution in Russia

The big controversy in the Zionist movement regarding the question of Uganda vs. Eretz Yisrael found its expression even in Kaminits. Those favoring the territorialist idea, however, were few. The majority of those in the Zionist movement in our city remained steadfast to Eretz Yisrael and supported the concept of a Zionist Zion.

The Zionist movement barely recovered from the Uganda controversy when the first Russian Revolution broke out in October 1905. Czar Nicholas II issued a manifesto proclaiming a constitution that would enable the people, through representatives, to participate in the leadership of the matters of state at the first Russian Parliament, the Duma. The Jewish population hung many hopes on this new alignment that occurred in the land, and together with the rest of the populace, was happy with the change and looked forward to better times. The happiness, however, was short-lived. Almost the day after the proclamation of the manifesto, there erupted riots and pogroms organized by the Black Hundred under the aegis of the police, and the Jews were chosen as the scapegoat. For two or three days, pogroms were perpetrated in many cities and towns. Jewish property was destroyed

and many Jews were victimized. In Kaminits there was a mobilization of rioters from among the peasants in the suburbs augmented by the *katsops* who had been brought in especially from the central regions of Russia. Although the pogrom in Kaminits resulted in broken window panes and in the pillage of some market stands, there were no casualties; the Jews locked themselves in their houses until the wrath passed.

The Political Bourse

The Socialist parties that had operated secretly came out in the open and began to spread some written, but mostly oral, propaganda among all segments of the population, primarily among the youth and working classes. In order not to have to rent special halls as meeting places, the parties designated meeting places in the streets in the evening hours when the workers had finished their day's work. The party propagandists cornered the workers on their way home and conducted indoctrinating talks with them, expounding on the principles of the party's program, its ideals, and the democratic privileges stated in the party's constitution. The meeting place was known as the *birzhe* (bourse).

The parties active in the *birzhe* were Social Democrats, Socialist-Revolutionists, Anarchists, and the *Po'alei-Zion*. Each party had its bourse on one of the four streets of the city's central plaza.

Beginnings of Ze'irei Zion

At that time, young people from the workers' ranks and students got together and organized themselves. They sought in Zionism not only the realization of a Jewish state, but also a state built on social justice. It was, at this time, that an emissary from Odessa came to our city—a slender, dark-haired young man with deep piercing eyes, dressed in a black shirt and belt. Although only about 18 or 19 years of age, he made a big impression on all who met him. This young man was Hayyim Greenberg.

Hayyim Greenberg came to lecture on Hebrew culture and literature. He did not, however, distance himself from the political problems and would honorably stand in spirited and exhaustive debate with the opponents of Zionism. The strength of his enlightening and convincing speeches (he spoke in Russian), his dignified appearance, and the manner of his clear, logical debate captivated his audiences, particularly the youth. With that visit Hayyim Greenberg planted the nucleus of the *Ze'irei Zion* movement in our city.

Between Two Revolutions, 1905–1917

Work in the Present

After the Russian Zionist convention in November 1906 in Helsingfors, Finland, the matter of "Work in the Present" of the Helsingfors Program was adopted; once again Yisro'el Drachler participated as an emissary of the Zionist cause in Kaminits, and Zionist activity increased in our city. The National Bank was founded, special attention was given to the support of the S.L. Blovstein School for Girls, and the Jewish Club was organized. The objective of the Club was to attract the assimilating intelligentsia to the national movement and to the pursuit of nationalism. Many cultural activities were pursued by this Club, among which was the creation of a library of 3,000 volumes in Russian, Yiddish, and Hebrew. The Zionist Organization improved the Talmud Torah in Polski Folvarik that up until 1905–06 was operated under very poor conditions. A new curriculum that included the teaching of the Russian language, mathematics, and also vocational instruction in the crafts was established. Disadvantaged children were provided with clothing and shoes. The Zionists also concerned themselves with the improvement of the institution of *hakhnasat orchim* (bringing in guests) and its expansion.

Zionist activities in our city flowed into two channels: The usual Zionist work of educating the people in national Zionism that included fund-raising for the institutions and the movement, as well as the involvement in the functions of the local public institutions.

A central committee, to function in Vilna, was chosen at the Helsingfors Conference. For Kaminits in particular and for Podolia in general, however, there was also a definitive relationship with the Odessa center headed by M.M. Ussishkin. In 1907 the well-known author and Zionist publicist, A.M. Borochov (Borchiyahu), was sent from Odessa to Kaminits to organize, at a conference of the Podolia Zionists, an active center for the whole Podolia province. David Schleifer, Israel Goldman, and Yisro'el Drachler from Kaminits; Menashe Altman from Balta; Sholem Altman from Zhvanets; Zvee Isserzon from Vinnitsa; and Yosef Blank from Dunivits were chosen as the provincial committee.

The committee plunged into work and energized all the branches of the Zionist movement in Podolia. The ties with the two centers, Vilna and Odessa, left their imprints and helped very much to raise the level of work and propaganda. Kaminits was the hub of various activities, mostly cultural ones; the year 1908 was one rich in cultural events there. In the summer of that year, the noted authors Shimon Frug and Leib Jaffe visited our city, and their participation in two literary evenings in our city attracted many Zionists and also other Jews from the rural towns. At the behest of the central committee in Vilna, one of its members, Daniel Pasmanik, visited Kaminits. At the end of summer that same year, the author Shemarya

Gorelik, a member of the editorial board of Dos YIddishe Folk in Vilna, came to our city. Members of the Bund and Po'alei Zion wanted to come visit him, mainly because of his lectures on literary topics, not only because he was a Zionist speaker.

All the activities of the visiting personalities were arranged with permission and under the auspices of the local authority (the police). In order to disguise the purpose for which the visitors came, non-controversial topics were chosen for their lectures. Concurrently, secret sessions with the Zionists of Kaminits and its environs took place at which organizational problems and matters of day-to-day activities were considered.

One bright day of the intermediate days of Passover in April 1909, gendarmes appeared, apparently instigated by an informer from the ranks of the "enemies of Zion", at the home of the secretary of the Provincial Committee, Israel Goldman, and thoroughly searched and confiscated all the material relating to the activities of the Zionist committee of the province. I. Goldman was summoned to the office of the gendarmery and was required to translate into Russian all the material that was taken from him at the time of the search. It took a year to complete the translation, and contrary to the understanding of the gendarmery that the matter was to be closed, the investigator of the District Court found it necessary to press charges against the committee. The trial took place in the District Court in Kaminits in the summer of 1911, and thanks to the defense of the local lawyer, D. Schleifer, all the committee members were exonerated.

Due to the battle of the languages between Hebrew and Yiddish being waged at that time in the Jewish street, Ze'ev Jabotinsky, reputed to be a brilliant orator and talented publicist, was invited to lecture in our city. His lecture in the auditorium of the city theater on "Language and Jewish Culture" drew such a crowd that many had to remain outside. At the conclusion of the first lecture, representatives of the Bund and Po'alei Zion and other leftist parties were invited to come to the stage to debate with the lecturer. The effective argument of the lecturer in favor of Hebrew, however, deterred them, and not a single one of them dared ask to speak. They did not attend the second lecture that Jabotinsky gave on the same topic. The leftist parties accused the Zionists of having purposely invited the gendarmery and the secret police in order to catch in their net those representatives of the proletariat who got up to debate with Jabotinsky. These accusations, however, fell on fallow ground, and the Zionists and Hebraists were the victors.

Among the other projects worthy of note were the two Purim festivals within the framework of Erez Israel Week that proved very successful; the coffers grew fuller for the Zionist cause in our city.

Beginning of World War I

Because our city was close to the Austria-Hungary border, Kaminits was the first to experience the war and its horrors. It was August 5, 1914, when the city received official news that the Austrian army had crossed the border, was already on Russian territory, and was getting close to Kaminits. The imminent danger was sensed; the enemy began to bomb the city, thinking that a Russian army was there. The bombings continued with brief breaks. That day the Austrian soldiers entered, mostly Hungarian troops, and thronged the main streets of the city.

In line with the hostile activities of the retreating Russian army, a penalty of 300,000 rubles or its equivalent was imposed on the city to provide certain amounts of various foodstuffs and necessities for the army. The army demanded this by 9 o'clock of the following morning; otherwise it would continue with its attack upon the city. The Polish mayor and two prominent Jews were held hostage until the fulfillment of the demand.

The city inhabitants were worried all night for fear that the necessary sum would not be collected, and, when they saw in the morning that the hostages had not yet been freed, many of them began to flee the city. After a few days, the city's captors left and the Cossacks came in. It was on the Sabbath when the Jews were leaving the synagogues, the Cossacks greeted them with curses and whippings. After venting their wrath upon the Jews, the Cossacks continued on their way to cross the border to Galicia. Life in the city resumed its normal course, and the refugees began to return.

New Faces

The inhabitants of the cities close to the border and the front suffered the most. Many left the places where they had lived for many generations and emigrated to other places. This gave rise to a considerable stream of refugees who sought help from the central Jewish institutions in Kaminits: YEKOPO, OZE, ORT, and others. The leftist parties, the anti-Zionists, were in the leadership of these institutions. The top men and the majority of those sent to the refugee center were of "theirs" [anti-Zionists]. Eliyahu Guminer, a lawyer from Vilna, a member of the Zionist Socialists, a strong, skilled organizer and a dynamic speaker, but withal a distinguished anti-Zionist, was sent as a representative. He appeared in Kaminits in 1915 in the midst of the war, and his influence extended to many cities and towns in the districts of Kaminits and Ushitsa. Since he had economic clout, he also tried to have the say. As a party man, he strove to increase and magnify the strengths of the leftists in our city in order to create for himself influential public support. And indeed, all the anti-Zionist powers in the city rallied around him: Po'alei Zion, the Bund, and Folkspartei, that in general did not have in their ranks a large number of members and sympathizers, but all of them were involved with the fighting spirit for the cause of the Yiddish language.

Most prominent as anti-Zionists were Ya'akov Kreiz, who acquired the nationalistic aura as a popular activist of the Folkspartei, and Yisro'el Drachler (brother of Sarah Drachler, a casualty in the defense of Tel-Hai), who in the past had represented the Zionist organization in committees and congresses. He was a professional Hebrew teacher, who adopted the Yiddishist doctrines, joined the Po'alei Zion, and became their leading spokesman. As a sincere public figure, a man of quiet disposition and pleasant manner towards everyone, he was accepted by all circles, including his friends in the Zionist movement. Sh. Bograd and Feivush Morgenstern stood out among the few Bund members. Moshe Sister (now Dr. M. Sister, Bible researcher and lecturer at the Kibbutzim Seminar in Israel) made public appearances on party platforms together with his friend, E. Guminer.

In the Zionist camp, too, there appeared new, fresh blood. When the expulsion of the Jews from Zhvanets on the Austrian border was decreed by the head commander of the Russian army, Nikolai Nikolaevich, the majority of the banished came to nearby Kaminits. The Zhvanets people quickly involved themselves in the economic, social, and cultural life of their new home and injected a flow of fresh blood into the life of the Jewish community. Outstanding were those from the younger generation who had grown up and been educated in the atmosphere of Hebrew and Zionism, and they continued their activities in Kaminits. The connecting link and spokesman for all cultural activity was a young man from Zhvanets, Yehoshua Saltzman (Malachi), or, as he was called then, Shaike Saltzman, a student at the Herzliah Gimnazye in Tel Aviv who had come home for his annual vacation, and because of the war could not return to Israel. This Y. Saltzman, of warm temperament and a talented polemicist as a national speaker, was particularly notable in the years after the Revolution of 1917, when he stood on public platforms to debate against the anti-Zionist parties. He was also originator of the idea of *Ha-mitnaddevim ba-Am* (national volunteers), an organization of He-Halutz, and responsible for the organization of the circle of young people who gathered around him in the Bet ha-Am. It was from the midst of these vigorous young people who clung to the idea of the pioneering spirit, together with the pioneers of the city of Priluki, that there arose the nucleus of those who founded the collective settlement in Kiryat Anavim near Jerusalem.

It was, however, not only those from the younger generation who were ousted from Zhvanets that became rooted in the life of the Jewish population in Kaminits. Also some of the elders among them, headed by the veteran public worker, Sholem Altman, took an active part in the life of our community.

At that time, too, there arose the pre-eminence of Meir (Munye) Zak who later, under the name of Meir Haezrachi, was the general manager of the main office of the Keren Kayemet (Jewish National Fund) in Jerusalem. He was outstanding as a talented Zionist speaker and was one of the few who remained all his life in the ranks of the General Zionists.

In the public arena at that time, there were young supporters of Ze'irei Zion. They were Zalman Pratkin (native of Priluki), known in Israel as Zalman Porat, leader of the agricultural co-operative and active in the formation of Aliyah Bet; the teacher and author Aharon Ashman (native of Balin); Mendel Goldstein, graduate of the law faculty and excelling in the powers of his speech and pen; Yisro'el Bashirovker (native of Lantskorun), Hebrew teacher known in Israel under the name of Bar-Shira, lawyer and law lecturer at the Tel Aviv branch of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem; Ya'akov Sharir, chief of the security company Zion in Israel and head of the Association of Security Companies in Israel; Y.A. Weissman (now Bar-Levi), the lone Yiddishist in the Zionist camp and in the Ze'irei Zion party in Kaminits; and Eti-Hadassah Lerner (native of Zhvanets), a kindergarten teacher of refined and intelligent character.

The first non-Zionist religious party, Ahdut Israel, also took shape. It amalgamated and united all the religious circles in the city, members of synagogues, and houses of study under the leadership of Leib Kleiderman, owner of a brewery.

Education and Culture

In the last years of the war (1915–17), the struggle between Zionism and its opponents grew, not only because of abstract ideological values, but also because of the financial support rendered by the central aid institutions. The monies were designated for material needs, for educational projects, and for maintenance of kindergartens, schools, and various cultural activities.

In the years 1900–02, two preparatory schools were instituted in our city. One of them lasted three or four years; the other, S.L. Blovstein Girls' School, built in 1902, lasted until around 1916.

Two Hebrew schools, *Tushiah* and *Moledet*, were organized in our city at the end of World War I, under the auspices of the local *ha-Tarbut*. The teachers Aharon Ashman, Abraham Rosenzweig (Rosen), Yisro'el Bashirovker (Bar-Shira), Hayyim Schreiberman (Sarig), and others were active in Hebrew education. Two Hebrew kindergartens, led by the kindergarten teachers Eti-Hadassah Lerner and Bat-Sheva Het [sic Hen], were also organized.

Bet ha-Am and Kadimah

The last three years before the February Revolution were outstanding because of the heightened cultural activity, especially among the youth. Each group worked according to its abilities and attainments. In addition to the two above-mentioned Hebrew schools that were nurtured with love and dedication by its teachers and principals, the leftist factions organized Yiddish schools. The mature and maturing generation of the youth also branched out on its own and created two important organizations, *Bet ha-Am* and *Kadimah*.

Bet ha-Am was a community center opened in one of the houses on

Dulgaya Street, and evening classes for 15 to 18 year old youths were conducted in Hebrew language, Hebrew literature, and history. Lectures and debates on contemporary issues and the future of the Jewish nation were presented.

The Jewish student body, pupils of the Russian *gimnazyes*, found their niche in *Kadimah* which was established the 25th of Nisan 1916. Here, too, the orientation was national Zionist, and, although the meetings and lectures were conducted in Russian, Hebrew was taught in this group. With the February Revolution of 1917, *Kadimah* identified itself with and participated in all the Zionist activities of the city. One of the initiators and organizers of *Kadimah* was the young man Yisro'el Brandman, a violinist and child genius in the field of music. He came from a musical family and was a student at the conservatory in Petrograd. His older brother Ya'akov, a cellist, and his sister Edah (now Bromberg), a pianist, were active in this group. In March 1917 they organized a choir and orchestra also called *Kadimah*. This group in its new form was fostered not only by its founder, Yisro'el Brandman, but also by the broad Jewish masses of the city. In the turbulent and stormy years of 1918–20, *Kadimah* appeared on concert stages of whatever regime of the time (Bolshevik, Ukrainian, Polish), and also gave a special concert June 27, 1920, in honor of the Joint Distribution Committee delegation composed of Prof. I. Friedlaender, Max Fine, and others.

In November 1920, with the renewal of the Bolshevik regime in the city, the activity of *Kadimah* ceased; the majority of its members left Kaminits and emigrated to Israel. In Israel *Kadimah* gave two more concerts: One with the participation of the *Gedud ha-Avodah* in Petah-Tikvah, and one in Jaffa. Those members of *Kadimah* who remained in Kaminits organized themselves into a professional music group and appeared in concert at the beginning of 1921. The group disbanded after someone informed on them to the Bolshevik regime and slandered them as being counterrevolutionary.

Troubled Times

Regime Changes and Pogroms

According to the book of E. Guminer, *A Kapitel Ukra'ine*, there were sixteen regime changes in Proskurov during the first years of the 1917 Revolution. The same thing occurred in Kaminits. Of course, the entire citizenry suffered, the Jews particularly. The various mobilizations under the leadership of various adventurers and bullies, who cared little for human life, created a constant fear of pogroms; this was not a vain fear. Wave after wave of atrocities passed over the Ukrainian Jews, and in our area the cities and town were struck: Dunivits, Orinin, Zhvanchik, Verbovtsy, Murovanyye, Kurilovtsy, Yarmolinits, Solobkovits, Kitaygorod, Kopaygorod, Shatava, and other settlements. This wave did not bypass our city of Kaminits and reached there on the eve of the Shavuot holiday (June 1919). The pogrom

lasted three days during which Petlyura's Haidamacks plundered the Jews. They were helped by the locals who exploited the opportunity to rob Jewish property. Seventy-two Jews were killed in these pogroms.

The life of fear and pogroms influenced in no small way the deterioration of the economic and cultural situation of the Jewish inhabitants. Because of the regime changes, currency was devaluated and the masses were impoverished, roads were closed, and trade and business decreased. Nevertheless, these years were a heightened time of political and public activity on the part of all the Jewish parties and groups.

The Ukrainian rule, on its side, recognized the authority of the Jewish population to organize its community life on a democratic basis. In Kaminits the committee of the kehillah and its council was elected in a democratic manner according to the spirit of the time and government regulations; they conducted all the matters of the Jewish community in the city. The kehillah committee was also addressed by the community activists of the neighboring towns when they were in need of help.

Self Defense and Chomsky's Trial

After the pogrom in Kishenev in the spring of 1903, a number of young Zionists, intellectuals, and sons of leading citizens began to collect money to purchase light ammunition (guns). They learned the martial arts as amateurs and emerged as a body that obligated itself to the goal of self-defense. The light pogrom of October 1905 in Kaminits after the first Revolution reminded the Jewish youth in the city that they could not remain safe and secure. The small group of young Jewish Zionists then decided to increase their number by including workers, porters, butchers, and blacksmiths in matters of defense. However, years passed and fortunately there was no need for self-defense. Those who headed the organization grew older and dispersed to various places, and the city was left without defense.

The security situation brought about by the successive regime changes of the years 1918–19 dictated the creation of a self-help defense organization, and the inhabitants, particularly the Jews, organized a night watch in every home. Later, with authority of the city, a citizens' watch was organized, even though not all the participants were experienced or proficient in the use of arms.

One day at the end of May 1919, the head of the Bolshevik Revkom announced to the Jewish citizens' watch that bands of Haidamacks carrying out a pogrom were in Orinin near Kaminits and were carrying out a pogrom there. He advised the Jewish population to mobilize their youth and prepare itself for the defense of the Jews of Orinin as well as of the Jews of Kaminits. The Jews of Orinin also called for help. Immediately a call went out among the Jewish youth of Kaminits to volunteer, without regard to party affiliation or ideology, to help the Jews of Orinin. The number of volunteers reached 80 or 90, supplemented by some soldiers of the Red

Army headed by two captains who possessed one field gun.

The troops barely reached eight versts from Kaminits when it was attacked with gunfire. The volunteers were ordered to spread out and fall to the ground. The battle ensued between the Jewish youth, who were not accustomed to arms, and the Ukrainian army, experienced in battle and outnumbering the defenders. So, in this critical and desperate situation the Jewish volunteers changed from defense to attack and routed the Haidamacks. Results of the battle were 60 fallen Haidamacks, not including the number of wounded taken by the retreating Ukrainians, and on the Jewish side two fallen, one of whom was Avraham Kurman (a member of *Ze'irei Zion*) and three wounded.

When the victorious volunteers returned to Kaminits, it became clear that the intentions of the Bolsheviks in sending the young Jews to Orinin was to use them as cannon fodder, so that they, the Bolsheviks, could gain time to evacuate the city. In a few hours, the city was emptied of the Bolsheviks who fled eastward.

It was clear to the Kaminits Jews that the Ukrainian army would not pass there in silence after what had befallen it at the hands of the Jewish youth. The Haidamacks would want revenge on the Jewish population. Indeed, the Haidamacks executed a pogrom in Kaminits at the beginning of June 1919.

Many of the Jews fled from the city to other places, among them Alexander (Shura) Chomsky, deputy-commander of the citizens' watch who had participated in the Orinin journey as commander of the volunteers. Two weeks after he returned to Kaminits, he was stopped by Petlyura's secret police and accused of being at the head of armed Jews in the Red Army that had fought in the Orinin front against the Ukrainians, and the matter was given over to a military court.

The trial was conducted behind closed doors. Defending the accused was his brother-in-law, M. Alter, an excellent and very talented lawyer. Among the witnesses appearing in the defense were select public figures of the city—Jews, Ukrainians, and Poles. But all the witnesses in his defense were not successful, and he was sentenced to death for his "crimes." As often happens in such cases, for whatever reason, the sentence was not immediately executed but was debated for a long time. In the meantime, the defense tried to get a pardon from the Petlyura regime or to have the sentence commuted in order to clarify the matter once again. The government circles did recognize Chomsky's innocence, but came up against the opposition of the army that sought revenge.

Finally, the government won, and Chomsky was freed. The city in general and the Jews in particular breathed a sigh of relief.

Help from American Jews

Echoes of the terrible pogroms reached abroad. Because the distressed Ukrainian Jewry was cut off from the larger world, the communities that

suffered the most from the pogroms could hope for little help from the local sources of aid, because they too were cut off from the centers in Petrograd and Kiev. Very limited aid was extended by the Jewish ministry of the Ukrainian government, because even this government moved from place to place and communication with it was unstable at best.

The committee of the *kehillah* (Jewish community) in Kaminits, the largest in the province, was the one addressed for help by the smaller towns of the neighboring districts, and the *kehillah* responded as best it could. Because the committee's finances were very limited, it was with great difficulty that it could maintain its institutions and satisfy the needs of the local populations.

It was at that time that the first emissaries of the Joint Distribution Committee reached Bessarabia which was then under Romanian rule. Zelig Shochetman (now Z. Aligon) came from Kishinev to Kaminits in order to set up a people's committee that would concern itself with distributing the help dispensed by the Joint. Because the committee had increased its majority from the inclusion of members of the parties of *Ahdut*, General Zionists, and *Ze'irei Zion*, the minority leftist parties established a separate, parallel committee. In the month of January 1920, the first delegate of the Joint, Mr. Becker, came from Bucharest with a large sum of money for relief, but only on condition that the two committees unite, and, in the wake of this, a new, all-inclusive committee was formed. The large sums of money supplied by the Joint made it possible for the committee to extend material and spiritual help to the pogrom victims in all the surrounding communities.

In February 1920, under the Polish regime in Kaminits, an emissary of the Joint came from Warsaw. After the Poles left and the Ukrainians re-entered Kaminits, Joint emissaries came—Max Fine and Judge Fisher from Chicago, as well as Prof. I. Friedlaender, Moshe Katz, and Dr. Lev.

On one of his trips to the Jewish settlements, Dr. Friedlaender and his colleagues were detained in the town of Yarmolinits; on the 19th day of Tammuz 1920, they were killed by patrols of the Red Army who thought they were Polish soldiers.

When the news of the mishap in Warsaw reached America, help from the Jews of the United States ceased. The central committee in Kaminits, nevertheless, continued its work for some time. When the Bolsheviks returned to the city in November 1920, they confiscated all the monies they found in the hands of the central committee, and all the supplies in the committee's warehouses were distributed among the Red Army soldiers and the area farmers. The committee dispersed and its work was dissolved.

Lights in the Dark

Those three years of the second Russian Revolution (1917–20) were years

of confusion and despair, years of distress and constant fear of the future. Our city, however, did have some good days, and one of them was San Remo day.

On April 24, 1920, the peace conference in San Remo confirmed the legal right of the Jews to Eretz Yisrael, and the Balfour Declaration was included as a section in the peace contract between the great powers and Turkey. When the news reached Kaminits, about two weeks later, it was decided to celebrate the occasion with great public acclaim, and on the 12th of May there were many festive celebrations as well as a people's parade through the main streets of the city. The city was decorated with flags and flowers, posters, and pictures of world Zionist leaders: Dr. Herzl, Nahum Sokolov, Dr. Weizmann, and others. Delegations from neighboring communities and resident Jewish soldiers of the Polish army participated in the parade.

Towards evening there was a large public gathering in the people's hall. The auditorium was decorated with blue-and-white flags, and honored guests were seated on the platform. Among them were Prof. Ugiyenko, Deputy Head Minister; Jewish Minister, P. Krasny; the mayor and his deputy; representatives of the *Zemstvo*; university professors; editors of daily newspapers; and representatives of western European governments.

The holiday spirit of San Remo, however, did not last long. In September of the same year, the Ukrainians returned to Kaminits, and in November the Bolsheviks captured the town for the third and last time.

He-Halutz

The *He-Halutz* movement that embraced many youth of the Jewish communities in Russia also attracted the youth in our city. Among the members of *He-Halutz* were representatives from a local organization of national volunteers whose members were drawn from the ranks of the general Zionists and the *Ze'irei Zion*.

In order to acquire practical agricultural experience, some of these young people left their parents' homes and traveled to settlements in the district of Kherson to work with Jewish farmers. Others went to Odessa for instruction in the study of agriculture prior to its practical application, under the tutorship of the well-known agronomist, A. Sussman. Here pioneers from other cities, among them from the city of Priluki, also worked. Some of them affiliated with the pioneers of Kaminits, and together they founded, near Jerusalem, the collective settlement of Kiryat Anavim.

Some of the *halutzim* (pioneers) of our city who did not go to Kherson or Odessa for training received, free of charge, a parcel of land from a local inhabitant, Pinchas Ochsman, and established an agricultural training farm there. The local community and the sympathizers of *He-Halutz* among the Zionists supported them with funds for the necessary farm equipment and subsidized them until the next crop; this life prepared them as members of the Kiryat Anavim settlement.

On the Path of Suffering

The Poles ruled Kaminits up to September 1920, and after them came the Ukrainians headed by Petlyura. Petlyura's regime lasted less than three months, and in November the city was conquered by the Bolsheviks who have remained there to this day. Even before the Bolsheviks came, there was a public announcement by the city's commandant that all owners of passports which testified that the holders were natives of Bessarabia or past inhabitants thereof would be permitted to return and take their possessions with them. The returnees would reach the town of Zhvanets, be received by a Romanian army officer, and be transferred by way of the Dnester River to Khotin. Not a few exploited this legal opportunity to cross the border to Bessarabia. There were also many who stole across the border to get there via the same Dnester River by putting themselves and their possessions into the hands of smugglers, and not a few of them were lowered into the deep waters of the river by these "rescuers."

Another group of escapees from the Petlyura regime and then from the Bolshevik regime took another course through Bessarabia. They, too, were compelled to steal past the border in the dark of night. These two countries, Bessarabia and Galicia, served many escapees as intermediate stops only; for others the places were considered second homelands where they would at last find peace and security. Then the war came, and after that the Holocaust with the brutal hand of the Jewish people's enemy, Hitler (may his name be blotted out), reached them, too.

All the Jews of Kaminits could not or did not want to flee from the city. Many remained there under the Bolshevik regime and adjusted themselves to its authority. Some went to live in other cities of Russia where they were not recognized and not known for their bourgeois and petit-bourgeois past.

Annihilation and Destruction

When Hitler's soldiers arrived in 1941, the Jews of Kaminits and its environs were imprisoned in the ghetto by the Nazis, together with about 6,000 more Jews from Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Belgium, and Holland who were brought in by the murderers and annihilated in the suburb of Podzamche on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th days of Elul (27, 28, 29 August) 1941. May the Lord avenge their blood!

That's how it was, and that's how the Kaminits community passed away. The city was destroyed and laid waste, partly because of the effects of the last war and more so because of the non-Jewish population which plundered all the Jewish property that remained after the annihilation.

Are there still Jews in Kaminits? It is not possible to answer that with certainty. The Soviet rulers do not permit foreigners to visit the city, and only a few sometimes succeed in penetrating there. It is estimated that Jews at present in the city number about fifty families (?). They are mainly elderly citizens no longer able to work who live on their pensions from the

government.

Four or five years ago one of its natives visited the city and found it greatly destroyed; in the summer of 1963, a young woman (now in Colombia) from the city visited Kaminits and looked for her parents' house, but all her efforts were in vain. The street where that house and also the large synagogues and the houses of study stood completely destroyed; only ruins of the Tailors' Synagogue and the two study houses of the shoemakers and of the *Kovei itim le-Torah* (those who fix regular times for Torah study) remained—forever, for generations to come, a grim reminder of the abhorrent atrocities.

Abraham Rosen

The Hebrew Renaissance in Kaminits

The years 1917–21 were thriving, flourishing years for the Zionist movement and for Hebrew culture in Kaminits-Podolsk. Until that time the impact of those events was hardly noticed in the district. The activities in the neighboring cities to effectuate the goals of national rebirth established Kaminits as an important place. Kaminits, as a capital city, was the seat of government institutions and their officials; many of the Jews earned their livelihoods as lawyers, middlemen, agents, and inn keepers. Trade and business did not extend beyond the borders of each town in the district, and Jewish industry was practically non-existent. One thing differentiated it for the better from the surrounding cities. In spite of entrance limitations imposed upon Jews, there were governmental secondary schools that attracted many people of the neighboring towns. In contrast with that, Hebrew elementary education in Kaminits was neglected and declining to no small extent; besides the antiquated *heder* (religious school) and the yeshivah, there was not even one modern institution patterned after the preparatory schools or Hebrew schools that for a few years had already been instituted and operating in some neighboring cities, as for example in Zhvanets, Dunivits, Kupin, and others.

With the outbreak of the 1917 Revolution, a new spirit hovered over the Jewish community in Kaminits, thanks to the stirrings of a national awakening beating in the hearts of all the Jews at that time. Thanks also to the Jewish students who streamed in from the area to the modern cultural institutions of culture in Kaminits, because the doors were then opened to them as well. The Zionist movements grew and developed. Various Zionist clubs were organized, among them *Ze'irei Zion, Po'alei Zion, He-Halutz*, and *Tarbut*. Hebrew schools and kindergartens were established, as well as Hebrew evening classes, a library, a choir, and a community center. The renaissance made waves in the complacent lives of the community. Many of the old and dying community institutions were revived, and their activities renewed. For example, a committee of the Jewish community was formed that included representatives from all the political parties in the city, and the institutions, under its supervision, were set up on a democratic basis.

Leading in the cultural activity were the two noteworthy Hebrew schools, *Tushiah*, under the auspices of the local Tarbut headed by the Zionist activist, Sholem Altman (who died in the collective settlement of Kiryat Anavim near Jerusalem), and the *Moledet* school in the new city quarter of Novy Plan, organized and conducted by a group of local young people. In the *Tushiah* school, there were four classrooms with about 140 boys and girls. The curriculum included *Tanach* (Bible), *haggada*, Hebrew and its grammar, and Jewish history, as well as Russian history taught in that

language. The Hebrew lessons were taught in the Sephardic pronunciation according to the convention used in all the schools of *Tarbut;* Hebrew was taught in that language, and in one of the classes there was even an experiment to teach arithmetic in Hebrew. From time to time, the pupils of a school would present children's festivals or plays in one of the public auditoriums, and this made great publicity for the renaissance of the Hebrew language. In the school located in the Novy Plan, there were three classrooms with about 80 boys and girls.

The curriculum was similar to the one at *Tushiah*, and there, too, Hebrew was taught in the Sephardic pronunciation. The funds for the two schools came primarily from the tuition fees, and the municipality also supported them. In the spring of 1920, the *Yevsektsiya* took over the *Tushiah* school, dismissed the Hebrew teacher and replaced him with a Yiddish teacher. Three months later, however, when the Soviet regime was displaced by the Ukrainian army, the Hebrew teacher returned to his post—to his Hebrew program. Worth mentioning is the fact that the pupils were opposed to the Yiddish program, and many of them chose to leave the school rather than submit to the demands of the *Yevsektsiya.*

A second significant center for the movement of national revival was the *Bet ha-am* and the Hebrew evening lessons affiliated with it. *Bet ha-am* consisted of three spacious rooms and a large auditorium located on one of the streets populated by Jews, and it served as a center for all the Zionist activities in the city. It was here that the gatherings and sessions, the festivals, and lectures took place, and it was here that the various activities were organized by the Jewish youth groups to spread the Zionist idea among the masses. The crowning glory of all these activities, however, were the Hebrew lessons that occurred during that whole period. Here, 15- and 16-year-old boys and girls from various strata of society, among them apprentices and pupils of technical schools, were given instruction in Hebrew. The curriculum consisted of *Tanach*, Hebrew language and literature, and Jewish history. Generally, there were two or three classes with 50–60 pupils. Tuition fees were minimal, and those without means were exempt. Some of the graduates became members of the local *He-Halutz* group, *Ha-Mitnadvim ba-Am*, headed by Yehoshua Saltzman (Malachi), member of the Kiryat Anavim settlement, and then went to Eretz Yisrael. Within a short time, *Bet ha-am* became the nucleus for the revival of the Hebrew language in the city, so soon the ringing sounds of the current Hebrew language were heard within its walls. A new Jewish generation imbued with strength and courage to meet the challenge of a great future of building a nation and a land was being forged there.

A literary circle called *Bimatenu* was organized in *Bet ha-am*. It included among its members the institution's teachers and activists. Among the other regular activities of this circle (lectures, parties, etc.) was the publication of a literary journal that, because of lack of sufficient funds, was printed in

limited issues by Shapirograph. Various questions and matters (among them an essay on self-defense), songs, stories, and dispatches from field correspondents were submitted. Among the journal contributors were the authors Sh. Shpan (at that time a student of a secondary school) and two teachers, A. Ashman and the writer of these lines.

An amateur theater group was organized in affiliation with *Bet ha-am*. The aim of this company was to produce modern literary plays in Yiddish and in Hebrew. Plays of Asch, Hirschbein, Dymov, Chirikov, and others were presented. The repertoire of the troupe included presentations in the outlying areas, but because of the difficulties of transport and the poor conditions of the roads wrought by the quick succession of regimes, only a single branch of this activity was successfully realized in a neighboring town (Lantskorun).

Functioning as an independent entity was the chorus, *Kadimah*. This chorus was led by the brothers Ya'akov and Yisro'el Brandman (the latter still conductor of the workers' chorus in Tel Aviv) who received their musical education in Petrograd and later dedicated themselves to the development of Jewish music in Kaminits. In addition to its own concerts and its participation in all the Zionist festivals and parties, every Friday evening *Kadimah* would present in its clubhouse a program of Jewish national music for the Kabbalat Shabbat. In the days of the first Soviet regime in the city, the whole chorus was mobilized to sing at the Bolshevist propaganda gatherings, and this mobilization exempted it from manual labor which was at that time imposed on the inhabitants.

A professional teachers' union, *Ha-Moreh*, was organized in the city in 1920. It was considered a branch of the national union of Hebrew teachers in Russia and as a section of the Ukrainian teachers' organization in Podolia. Its first priority was to improve the material status of the teacher, particularly those engaged in private instruction. In order to achieve this, it opened a co-operative store for its members. The city was in a very difficult economic situation, because food commodities were extremely limited and sold at inflated prices. Only the co-operative establishments received supplies at cheaper prices. The *Ha-Moreh* co-operative saved some teachers' families from actual starvation.

The increasing and continuous activities of the Hebrew renaissance in Kaminits branched out into various directions, so that all the accomplishments were sufficiently important and duly recognized in the field of Hebrew education and culture. The sleepy, backward provincial city influenced the sons and daughters of Podolia to a very great degree towards the progress of the Zionist movement; all this was done without benefit of outside directives and guidance, without emissaries and directors from central high places, but only by dint of the self-determined forces of the local youth. When the Soviet's swinging ax, however, reached the Zionist movement in the city, it chopped down the tender, fresh bough of the

rebirth, and the Hebrew cultural institutions nurtured through the efforts of its Zionist movement were liquidated one by one.

A few years after the above-mentioned period, 1917–21, with the sacred flame of the revival of Hebrew language and culture still smoldering, young men and women risked dangerous consequences by studying Hebrew in small groups and in strict secrecy. Finally, the last of the sputtering embers in the heap of ashes died, too.

Sarah Reznik-Gluzman

The Blovstein School for Girls

Fifty years have passed since I finished studying at the public Blovstein School for Girls in Kaminits, and, on the occasion of this jubilee, I would like to recall some details about it. I spent six years of my youth there. There was no other school like it. I think of the blissful, happy years of contentment together with all my friends who shared the students' bench with me. Particularly for me, because I was a fatherless orphan, I experienced much understanding and consideration on the part of my distinguished teachers and educators. Now, when I recall the memories of those days, I am filled not only with appreciation of their ability to establish as our goal the acquisition of the body of knowledge dispensed in school, but also for marking out a path of lofty ideals.

I was accepted to the first preparatory course when I was seven years old. My older sister, two years my senior, had already been through the first class. It was a six-year program. The institution could serve as a model and symbol of quality in the educational, social, and humanities spheres and in the values of Judaism and Zionism.

Girls from all strata of the Jewish population in our city attended the school. The tuition was scaled: the rich and well-to-do paid three rubles a month, the middle-income families two rubles, and those of lesser means one ruble. It is worthy of note that a pupil was never sent home because of non-payment of fees. The dress code was uniform—a white jumper and blue blouse; for festive occasions and holidays, a white blouse. This modest apparel maintained equality; it did not arouse feelings of envy among the poorer girls.

In the school, we learned Hebrew, history, the principal prayers, Russian language and literature, German, general geography, arithmetic, sewing, and embroidery.

I remember well our Hebrew and history teacher, Reb Pinchas Hasid, a man of standing, refined, and a dedicated Zionist. When he spoke with great enthusiasm about Eretz Yisrael, tears would flow from his eyes, and he would become very emotional and deeply moved. We were, of course, very much influenced by his teaching that implanted in us the love and yearning for the Land of our Fathers.

The mathematics and German teacher was Sofia Levovna, daughter of the school's founder, Lev Blovstein. She was also the principal of the school. Sofia Levovna was a sensitive, idealistic woman whose language of instruction was, according to governmental decree, Russian. The then-accepted form of addressing a teacher in Russian was through the designation of the given name and the father's name, as for example: Sofia Levovna, Anna Iskovna, etc. The pupils were called by their family names only. In addition to Sofia Levovna, the institution organized a capable

committee that concerned itself primarily with the day-to-day administrative details. Members of this committee were the lawyer David Schleifer (chairman), Mrs. Schleifer, Mrs. Warhaftig, and Mrs. Goldentraster. In addition to caring for the maintenance of the institution, the committee also planned for its general direction.

The government supervisor in charge of public schools would visit the school frequently. Because we were not adhering to the prescribed curriculum and not using the recommended texts of the official program, the visit of the supervisor would always arouse fear in the teaching staff as well as in the pupils. The teachers tried to broaden our scope of knowledge by acquainting us with more progressive available texts not necessarily approved or recognized by the authorities. We had to be on guard, therefore, and when the supervisor visited, we had to use the required texts, so we took them out and put them on top of the desks.

In 1908 two prominent national poets visited our city, Shimon Frug and Leib Jaffe. The purpose of their coming to Kaminits was to arouse the national awareness and to strengthen in our city and its environs the recognition of Zionism. In connection with this event, the local Zionist organization formed a mixed choir of boys from the Talmud Torah and girls from our school.

Mr. Menashe Brandman, conductor of the choir and orchestra of the opera theater in our city, conducted the choir. The theater's fine interior created an intimate atmosphere for the audience. It was in this theater that the poets appeared. They read aloud from their works, and the choir sang songs from its repertoire of Zionist songs of the first *aliyah* and the second *aliyah*.

Y. Bernstein

From the Past

Most of what is here recorded is limited specifically to the life of Torah and Hasidism in Kaminits as we remember it and from hearsay.

"Kaminits-Podolsk, a splendid community, mother city of Jewish people who are God fearing and esteem His Name, pursue righteousness and perform acts of loving kindness; they are noble leaders and rulers dispensing food to the poor, walking in the path of righteousness and pursue God's justness."

This is the description of a characteristic image of this holy community of 50–80 years ago, as expressed by my grandfather Gedaliah in the introduction to his book, *[Sefer] va'ad ḥakhamim* (Warsaw, 1900); it was like that for the period after.

A splendid community, abounding in a life of Torah and piety and a Jewish ethical way of life in the sacred communities of the Jewish nation handed down from generation to generation. A mother city of the Jewish people.

Rabbis

There is scant historical material regarding the distant past of the community. What is known from the period of two hundred years ago is the outbreak of the disputation with the Frankists and Bishop Dembowski in Kaminits in 1757 and the consequent burning of the Talmud on Rosh Chodesh Kislev 1758. Among the rabbis who participated in the disputation there is no mention of the rabbi of Kaminits (even though in *Otsar Yisrael* by Eisenstein there is mention of Reb Yosef of Kaminits, but that is apparently an error and should be Kremenets). Seventy years later, the seat of the rabbinate in Kaminits was occupied by Rabbi Yitzchak Meizlisch, father of Dov-Ber Meizlisch.

Among the rabbis who stood at the head of the community about 60–90 years ago, there comes to mind the names of Rabbi Zalman Lerner who was called Reb Zalmanyu in our town, and, as he was considered a holy person, his name was always mentioned with awe and admiration; and Rabbi Dov-Berish Eliash (grandfather of Dr. Mordecai Eliash, first Israeli ambassador to London) and his brother, Alexander Eliash (of the notables of Jerusalem) who was known as a scholar distinguished in Torah study.

The seat of the rabbinate in Kaminits was held for a long time by the learned Hasidic rabbi, Abraham David Wahrmann, author of *Da'at Kedoshim*, who was known as the Rabbi of Buchach in Galicia and a disciple of the Hasidic rabbis, Levi Isaac of Berdichev and Moses Leib of Sasov. He did not continue in this rabbinate, and he returned to Buchach. I later learned from my father, that the reason he returned to Buchach was that Buchach was a much more scholarly place than Kaminits.

Kaminits, nevertheless, also had its share of scholars and experts in all the disciplines of Torah. The point of agreement among all the scholars was that Torah study was the spiritual essence of their daily lives. There were also committed Jews who set aside fixed times for participation in a group to study Gemara or Mishnah or other Talmudic works or to look into the weekly portion of the Bible. There were those who observed the daily religious rituals and quoted fluently from the sages of the Midrash and Talmud.

For about 60 years, until 1900, the seat of the rabbinate in Kaminits was occupied by Reb Yisro'el Gutman, a descendant of the Ba'al Shem Tov, and Reb Pinchas of Korets. He was a Hasid of Husyatin, a "half-rabbi," so to speak, in manner and behavior, possessed of a refined and spiritual countenance. He was bright and sharp witted, and he loved to mingle sociably with the people. He went to the United States where he died.

I remember well the name of an individual in our city whom everyone called Reb Hershele Hasid, and indeed he was aptly named—a righteous and pious man in action and in deed. I heard from my father that, in addition to his piety and righteousness, he was a distinguished scholar of both the Babylonian and the Jerusalem Talmud and other religious tracts. His wisdom was abundant; his good deeds many.

Among the learned men in our city was my grandfather, the above-mentioned Reb Gedaliah. He was the grandson of the well-known Hasidic rabbi, Gedaliah of Lunietz, applauded for his teachings, a disciple of the Besht and the Maggid of Mezhirech. As noted by my grandfather, Gedaliah of Lunietz was a "well-noted transmitter, among scholars and holy men of the Most High, of permanent decisions handed down from generation to generation." My grandfather published in his later years, when he was blind, his book *Va'ad ḥakhamim*.

Family members who succeeded my grandfather Gedaliah in the occupation as ritual slaughterer in Kaminits were my father, Yehoshua-Eliyahu—the husband of Gedaliah's niece, Rivka, my mother. Succeeding Gedaliah was his son-in-law, Avraham Richter, who married Miriam, Gedaliah's daughter by his second wife. Avraham, Miriam, and their daughter Chaya (Chayke) as well as her husband and children were annihilated by the Nazi murderers in Kaminits—may the Lord avenge their blood!

Synagogues and Houses of Study, Prayer Texts, and Mode of Life

Community life was marked with the seal of Torah and tradition, and life was centered in the synagogues and houses of study. There was even a street distinctively named Shulgas (street of the synagogues). On this street was the Great Synagogue, the main synagogue of the city. The *eruv* was established, and here the Rabbi held forth on *Shabbat ha-Gadol* and on *Shabbat-Shuvah*. Next to it, on the downslope of the street, to the left of the

Turkish castle, was the Smotrich *bet midrash*. To the right of the Turkish castle, adjoining each other were the Tailors' Synagogue, the most beautiful synagogue of the city, outstanding for the splendor of its Holy Ark; the Shoemakers' Synagogue; and, at the bottom of the slope, was the *bet midrash* of the group of *Kovei itim le-Torah*.

The large concentration of houses of study and small synagogues was located on Dulgaya Street (Yotkegas)—the street of the butcher shops that was near the Shulgas. There were the Sadgura *kloyz*, the *kloyz* of Gedaliah Heller (Zinkover *kloyz*), the *kloyz* of Reb Yitzchak the blacksmith, the *kloyz* of Reb Moshe Yoine Rubinstein (Boyaner *kloyz*), the Stambulski Synagogue, the *bet midrash* of Reb Naftali Rabinovitch (Reb Naftaltsi's *shilekhl*), the Axelrod synagogue, the pallbearers' synagogue, the Ashkenazi synagogue, and the blacksmiths' synagogue. On the other side of the street were the synagogue of the Husyatin Hasidim, the Chortkov Hasidim, the Vaislovitch Synagogue, and the Mermelstein Synagogue. To the list of synagogues in the center of the city there should be added the Rabinovits synagogue and the Sheindlis synagogue.

There were also large and small synagogues in other parts of the city—in the Novy Plan, in the Polish suburb, in Karvasar, in Zinkowits, on the Podzamche, and in other places.

The prayer texts in all the synagogues were according to the hasidic *nusah Sepharad*, except for the synagogue of the Ashkenazim. On the Sabbaths of the *arba parshiot* and on *Shabbat ha-gadol* it was customary to recite the *yozerot*. The *yozerot* were also said in the prayers of the three pilgrimage festivals, and many liturgical hymns were recited on the High Holidays.

On the three pilgrimage festivals, the three *megilloth* of Song of Songs, Ruth, and Ecclesiastes would be read—not from the parchment and without the blessings. The *haftarah* on Sabbaths and on holidays was recited in unison by the whole congregation with the *maftir*, and the *maftir* would chant the blessings solo.

In the last years before World War I, there was already a great laxity in the traditional way of life, and the cracks increased within the walls of religious life. There was a decrease in the number of the traditional one-room religious schools, and the number of youths attending a *kloyz* decreased (except for the Yeshivah students). Many of the well-to-do sent their sons and daughters to the general public schools. The young men, dressed in uniforms with shining buttons, who had distanced themselves from the traditional religious life, would come to services on the holidays, particularly on the High Holidays, and glance into the *mahzor* like a "rooster among humans," and the liturgy was like a closed book to them. Nevertheless, the life of the community was grounded in the walls of tradition that was reflected in every detail of its way of life.

Zaddikim and the Hasidim

Kaminits, for the most part, was a city of Hasidim. I don't remember the names of the distinguished *Misnaggedim*, except for the name of a Litvak, a well-to-do personage, Reb Sha'ul Pines. Those who were more non-Hasidim than *Misnaggedim* were dubbed *ba'alei-batim* by the Hasidim.

The Hasidim were generally divided into two camps. One was that of Ruzhin, Boyan, Sadgura, Chortkov, and Husyatin; the other that of Zinkov, Medzhibozh, and Kopitchinets. The rabbis of the House of Ruzhin and their courts were situated across the border, in Galicia that was in Austria, and their Hasidim would journey to them; the rabbis in Zinkov and Medzhibozh would come visit their Hasidim. In Kaminits itself, there was Reb Naftali, mentioned above, but he had scarcely any followers in the city. In addition there were also followers from the Chernobyl dynasty. From time to time, there also came descendants who did not have a Hasidic community and did not practice the customs of the followers, but who came in the name of their fathers. The rabbis would set tables in one of the synagogues on Saturday nights or at the third supper meal, and, in addition to their Hasidim, other rabbis, ritual slaughterers, and dignitaries would come to the tables.

During the week, many people came to the rabbis' quarters to be sanctified and blessed and to obtain dispensations. Multitudes thronged at the doors of the rabbi of Kopitchinets in Galicia, I.M. Heschel, the son-in-law of the Hasidic rabbi of Husyatin, who was well known as a miracle worker. The Hasidic rabbi, Menahem Nahum Friedmann (of Itzkani), son-in-law of the Hasidic rabbi of Chortkov, also visited Kaminits.

A unique event was the visit of the Hasidic rabbi, Abraham Jacob Friedmann (of Sadgura), to Zhvanets, near Kaminits, in the year 1913. Since the time of the imprisonment of the Ruzhiner and his escape to Sadgura, his descendants were not permitted to come to Russia; the visit in Zhvanets was unusual and limited only to that town. In view of that circumstance, many of the Hasidim from Kaminits went to Zhvanets, some for the Sabbath, some during the week. This Hasidic rabbi went to Israel when Vienna was in the hands of the Nazis, settled in Tel Aviv, and died there a few years ago. The brothers, Reb Pinchas'l and Reb Moshele, the Hasidic rabbis of the house of Zinkov, would visit Kaminits, as did the Hasidic rabbis, Reb Yisrulinyu and Reb Abraham Jacob of Sadgura.

Of the Hasidic way of life in our city, I recall particularly the customs and manners of the Boyan Hasidim which were similar to those of the other Ruzhin houses. They used to travel to the rabbi, and the journey was fraught with many hardships. It was not easy to obtain a passport to leave the country, and they would try to get a temporary permit that would enable them to leave and return to Russia and to go to Austria. In those days, Jews observed the stricture of not letting themselves be photographed, but, in order to be able to travel to the rabbi, they were compelled to violate the restriction.

At that time, there was as yet no railway transportation in Kaminits, and the Hasidim had to journey by horse and wagon to Larga and from there continue by train, even though it wasn't express. Finally, after wearying wanderings, they reached their yearned for destination—and it was all worth it.

They would travel at fixed times, mostly for holidays, returning not only with the words of wisdom that they heard from the mouths of the rabbis, but also with new melodies composed by the court cantor, Pinchas Spektor, a pupil of Nissi Belzer (Nissan Spivak). He was a talented composer, and his works were renowned in the Hasidic world; his *Yedid nefesh*, in particular, became famous and widely known. His melodies were of two kinds: compositions for the Sabbath hymns, prayers, and liturgical poetry; and melodies for *fraylikhs* for singing and dancing. His works were sung in choral unison while at the table, and then the *fraylikhs* followed. The melodies were marketable and became widespread throughout all the Hasidic circles. They were an integral part of the worship service that elevated the soul to spiritual heights.

The Hasidim would get together in camaraderie on weekdays, on days set aside for joyous celebration in honor of *zaddikim*. They sipped brandy and munched on egg cookies, would bless a *le-hayyim*, and talk about the *zaddikim* and their teachings. On the Sabbath, after services, they would go for *kiddush* to the home of one of the group, and, savoring the real delights of the Sabbath, they would sing the Sabbath songs to the melodies composed by Pinye and others.

Pleasant and inspiring were the gatherings on the cold, wintry, Sabbath nights; outside, the whiteness of the snow and the sharp, piercing cold, the dazzling white Sabbath; indoors, heart-warming pleasure and melody—in the room and in the soul. In togetherness they relished the sweetness of the conversational musings of the *zaddikim*, their manners, and sayings. The *zemirot*, haunting, longing tunes in an aura of holiness and spiritual elation offered hours of satisfying pleasure, "a taste of the world to come."

Specially etched in memory of the Boyan Hasidim is Reb Alter Rubinstein, one of the rich and famous of the city, son-in-law of Gur-Arye Horenstein of Radomyshl, from a long-standing, famous Hasidic family that had Torah and greatness rolled into one. An embodiment of "silk and velvet," clever and witty, of handsome bearing and a good conversationalist, he wore, as was the mode of Hasidim, a silk caftan and a velour hat on Sabbaths and holidays. Thus adorned in his Hasidic garb, he would carry the *etrog* and palm branch from his house in the Novy Plan to his Boyan *kloyz* on Potchtovka Street. Noble and generous, he freely dispensed alms, performed many pious deeds, and his home was open to those in need of respite. With joyous revelry, the Hasidim would come to his home on holidays, particularly on Simhat Torah and Purim. Needless to say, these visitations wrought havoc on the rooms and the splendid furnishings, the costly drapes and hangings—but did it matter? In general, at those times of heightened

spirits, restraints were gone, and the nobleman was not differentiated from the poor man. With hands on the shoulders of their companions, they would break into dance, and in the whirl of the dance I once saw one of the Hasidim, Reb Shalom Nissenholz, embrace Reb Alter Rubinstein and lovingly exclaim, "*Ah Alternyu.*"

Reb Shalom Nissenholz was one of a kind. It is told that, in his later years, he journeyed by foot to Sadgura and then continued to Boyan, and there was no one comparable to him in degree of righteousness. When he was tipsy, he would sing the Cossack songs in their language. Once, when he was in such a state and was seen heading home in the wrong direction, he was asked, "Where are you going, Reb Shalom?"—"*Priyamu do Boyanu*" ("Straight to Boyan"), he replied.

Another typical example of one of his sayings is:

"When our righteous Messiah comes, may he come quickly in our day, we will receive him with song and melody, with drum and dance, joyous and jubilant for the redemption of Israel and—we will continue on the journey to our holy Rabbi, may he live long and happily."

Similarly, I heard from Yosef Cohen about someone else in that group. In one of the gatherings that took place during the difficult years of World War I, the Boyan Hasidim sat around and discussed the redemption and the longing for the coming of the Messiah that would liberate Israel from its troubles and atrocities. Reb Avraham Sofer, a scribe, when he spoke his turn, spoke thus: "I—I don't know. I wouldn't recognize the Messiah, but the Rebbe I know, and it is *him* I want to see."

Tiferet Israel Yeshivah

Before World War I, as stated above, the youth of the Hasidic courts virtually disappeared, and the number of pupils in the traditional *heders* dwindled. At the same time, there were the beginnings of the organization of a yeshivah in Proskurov under the leadership of Reb Shmuel Zusye Bloch of Lithuania; it didn't materialize there, but it grew and flourished in Kaminits. The honorable, God-fearing men girded themselves to strengthen the Torah and its teachings, and in 1908-09 the Tiferet Israel Yeshivah was established. Its founders and leaders were the brothers Shmuel and Avraham Breitman, and the head of the yeshivah was the above-mentioned Shmuel Zusye Bloch. The Breitman brothers, Chortkov Hasidim, were well-to-do, from a distinguished family, and were honorable personages. Shmuel was a powerful and vigorous character and conducted the affairs of the yeshivah with strength and energy—and with success. Not too many people of the city sent their sons to the yeshivah, but before long it became famous, and students flocked to it from cities and towns near and far.

After Shmuel Zusye Bloch was appointed to the rabbinate of Orinin near Kaminits, my teacher and rabbi, Yechiel Mikhal Tribukh-Margalit, was invited to be head of the yeshivah. After he emigrated to Israel, he served

as rabbi in Neveh-Sha'anan and as a member of the rabbinate in Haifa.

The curriculum included beginning Gemara, the study of Gemara and *Tosafot*, exegetic theory, and eventually also *Poskim*. Beginning Gemara was taught by Reb Moshe Hirsh Banvilman, who endeared himself to his pupils because of his sincerity, his honesty, his straightforwardness, and his dedication to educational principles.

The class of advanced pupils that had covered Gemara and *Tosafot* and had gone on to independent study were instructed by the *mashgiach* Reb David Stern who was brought to the yeshivah from Poland. He was a vigorous and attractive man. At once hot-tempered and easy-going, he would extract obedience from his pupils and, at the same time, would inspire them and lead them into a cordial and spirited discussion. He would spice his talks with endearing parables and characterizations. The advanced pupils received instruction from the head of the yeshivah and, combining theory with practice, studied Gemara, *Poskim*, and *Tosafot*. The head of the yeshivah, Rabbi Margolis, published his interpretations in his book, *Me'irat Einayim*. While studying *Hullin*, the pupils went to the city slaughter house to observe in practice the laws of ritual slaughtering, investigative proof, and other details concerning kashrut. Exceptionally outstanding in the group of older students was Reb Shlomo Feingold, called Shlomo Gaon because of his sharpness and profundity, his clear logic, and straight thinking.

The place of study for all those attending the yeshivah was in the *bet midrash* of *Kov'ei itim le-Torah*. They studied diligently and zealously far into the night. There were those who arose before dawn and studied until it was time for prayer. On six evenings of the week study continued until dawn. When there was a night of study in *Kov'ei itim*, at its conclusion, the pupils would buy, for a half kopek, in the courtyard at the corner of Shulgas and Yotkegas, a glass of warm milk from Rachel, wife of the scribe Raphael Sofer. On such nights in the Boyan *kloyz*, the wife of the furrier, Reb Nachum Hellek of this *kloyz*, would prepare coffee for the yeshivah boys and serve them tasty cookies fresh from the oven.

Among the yeshivah boys who lived outside the city, there were those who ate daily at the homes of the richer Jews; and there were others whose parents made other provisions for them.

On half-holidays [minor holidays] and during vacation, festivals were arranged for the pupils. For Tu bi-shevat the city notables were invited, the holiday fruits were distributed, and speeches and sermons were delivered. Most joyous were the Purim parties at the home of Reb Shmuel Breitman.

The yeshivah was called Tiferet Israel in honor of the *zaddik*, Reb Israel of Ruzhin, and it was a Hasidic yeshivah in substance and direction. A charitable association was formed that collected monies for journeying to the rabbis. When the Hasidic rabbi from Sadgura was invited to Zhvanets, as mentioned above, many yeshivah boys went on holiday there.

In general, the yeshivah continued to progress and develop, and all the expectations for its continuance were promising. With the advent of World War I, however, it was shaken to its foundations; its pupils dispersed, enrollment diminished, and the yeshivah continued with great difficulty until its ultimate closing.

Religious Pioneers

There was no religious Zionist organization in Kaminits, and, in the Hasidic community, there was even antagonism towards Zionism. But Zion and Jerusalem were in the hearts of all. Those who, for many generations, had longed for redemption did what they could. Even before World War I, the seeds of religious Zionism had already been sown among the yeshivah youth, and with the large spurt of Zionism at the beginning of the Russian Revolution, these seeds sprouted, grew, and also bore fruit.

It was then a time of great turbulence and stirring in the Jewish community throughout the breadth of Russia, and it did not skip our city. The religious youth in Kaminits were in touch with the religious organizations that were organized in the large, central cities: *Nezah Israel* in Petrograd; *Masoret ve-Herut* in Moscow, and *Ahdut Israel* in Kiev. The latter was the closest one, and at its head were Reb Solomon Aronson, Reb Levi Grossman, and, may they be destined for a long life, Reb Shlomo Yitzchaki Zevin, Reb Ya'akov Berman, and others.

At that time, Reb Berman was a distinguished name in Ukraine, not only as a spokesman and religious leader, but also as an outstanding and successful orator in the debates between the Zionist factions and the Bund. He was once invited to visit Kaminits, and many tickets for his public lecture had already been sold, but because of the poor road conditions in those days, the visit was rendered impossible. Meanwhile, the civil war intensified, and the riots and confusion increased throughout the country. Regimes rose and fell, and the first to bear the atrocities of this utter confusion were the Jews, wherever they lived.

Regardless of all this, Zionist activity continued and, in many places, *He-Halutz* clubs were organized. A training farm was founded where members of *He-Halutz* prepared themselves for agricultural work. The writer of this article was, for a time, among the trainees at this farm, but, because of problems with the kashrut of the food, could not stay there. Then the idea was proposed for the formation of a group consisting solely of religious pioneers. Despite the difficulties of establishing ties outside the country, a letter exchange was created with the central *Mizrachi* in Poland headed by Rabbi Isaac Nissenbaum in Warsaw, but nothing was achieved. In the meantime, in the summer of 1919, Israel Friedlaender, visited our city as an emissary of the Joint Distribution Committee. The writer of these lines met this guest at the home of the Kleiderman Family who had invited him with regard to the group of religious pioneers. At the end of the meeting, Prof.

Friedlaender took a letter from *He-Halutz ha-Mizrachi* in Kaminits to transmit to *Ha-Mizrachi* organization in America. The next day Prof. Friedlaender was murdered by the Ukrainian murderers when he was touring in neighboring Yarmolinits—May the Lord avenge his blood!

A short time after that, several youths from this group crossed the border to eastern Galicia—with the aim of emigrating to Eretz Yisrael. Here they were in association with *Ha-Mizrachi* centers in Poland and Galicia and staunchly sought to fulfill their objective. In the meantime, the atrocities broke out in Jaffa in 1921, and immigration was halted until its resumption in the winter of 1922. Finally, after a year of hardships and wanderings, the youths arrived in Tel Aviv on the 22nd day of Shevat 1922.

General Events

This occurred on the "honeymoon" of the Revolution in the summer of 1917, on Lag ba-Omer. At that time the Russian army stood in a general offensive on the front, and the head staff of General Brusilov was quartered in Kaminits. On that glorious spring day, there was a Zionist parade on the main streets of the city. Girls dressed in white marched; school children marched with the vigor of youth on their faces and the songs of Zion on their lips; thousands marched carrying Zionist banners atop which waved Zionist blue-and-white flags.

When the parade passed before the palace of the General Staff, General Brusilov came out, a military band played *Hatikvah*, and the head of the great Russian army stood and saluted in honor of the Zionist hymn and flag. Among the Gentiles who watched the parade one could be heard saying to another, "It's the end of the world! The Jews are going to Palestine."

Everyone who remembered the period of Czar Nicholas and his expulsion of the Jews at the hands of Commander-in-Chief Nikolai Nikolaevich, a recent event, stood open-mouthed and surprised at this phenomenon. We were as if in a dream. The beginning of the millennium.... "And the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb...."

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The honeymoon did not last, and all too quickly the dreams and the aspirations vanished—humanity's and Jewry's. The October Revolution came and with it the civil war. Utter confusion reigned throughout the country, and Jewish communities were covered with torrents of blood. The evil did not skip Kaminits, and on Shavuot 1919, Petlyura's men attacked the Jews there; about 80 people were murdered. There were pogroms in Kaminits, its environs, and in other Ukrainian cities. Petlyura's men from here, Denikin's troops from there, and other riotous bands vented their wrath on the Jews. Sword, slaughter, and destruction. The wolves had not changed their nature.

The sun shone again. From San Remo came the gladdening and

refreshing tidings of the confirmation of the British Mandate of the Balfour Declaration to effect the establishment of a Jewish national homeland in Eretz Yisrael. The Poles were then ruling in the city, and it was a time of relative peace. To proclaim the happy news, Rabbi Yisro'el Gutman gave the order to assemble in synagogues and houses of study, to light candles as was done on joyous celebrations, and to recite Hallel without the benediction. To this day, there is before my eyes the image of my teacher and rabbi, Reb Moshe Hirsch, who with reverence and love, in trembling sanctity, lit the candles and recited Hallel in the small Husyatin *kloyz*, his face glowing with the feeling of redemption .

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Once again, a regime goes and comes—and Petlyura's men return to the city; at the peak of Yom Kippur 1920, the whole Jewish congregation, men, women, and children, emerge from their synagogues and houses of study and are led by Rabbi Gutman carrying a Torah scroll to the governor's square—to welcome Petlyura's troops as they entered from the Podzamche, and the Jewish women strewed flowers in the path of the murderers....

Well, this time the wolves did not tear flesh...and the congregation returned quietly to conclude the fast day, but the full depth of the abyss of degradation and the horrors of a life of exile and misfortune struck fear of future terrors in their hearts—and shortly thereafter the terrors did come....

Ben-Zion Fendler

Religious Life in the Days of the Soviets

World War I and the Revolution that followed completely changed the way of life in Russia, and the changes in government intensified the cracks in the walls of world Jewry. As in all areas controlled by the Bolsheviks, in our region, too, edicts prohibited Torah study and the learning of Hebrew; decrees were passed regarding the observance of the Sabbath, *kashrut* laws, and traditions that smacked of religion. In everyday life, there was no evidence of Judaism. Thus, it appeared on the surface; but secretly, it was an entirely different matter. Many Jews observed all the sacred tenets of Judaism, and in secret, hidden places they diligently observed the commandments of the Law. In Kaminits, at that time, there were people from various circles, among them craftsmen and unskilled laborers, who during the many years of the Soviet reign had not eaten meat, because they did not want to defile themselves by eating forbidden foods, but they were nonetheless strict in observing the commandments in every detail.

All the synagogues were open until the year 1936, many of them bustling with multitudes of worshippers. The Kaminits *Yevsektsiya* tolerated their activities and did not persecute and terrorize the religious Jews, as was the case in other places. The head of the *Yevsektsiya* was an ardent Communist, but he was somewhat benevolent towards the religious Jews. He claimed that the conditions of life in the province would suffice to end all the old ways and that there was no need to inaugurate special measures towards that end. Thanks to this attitude, synagogue attendance was not banned until the summer of 1936. In that year, the great clampdown came, and, in one fell swoop, all the synagogues were closed, with the exception of the Gedaliah Heller Synagogue. On the last Sabbath of Elul 1936, before I emigrated to Eretz Yisrael, I worshipped there. It was impossible to crowd into the synagogue. The courtyard was full, and many people stood in the neighboring streets with the hope that they could hear the service.

There was no *mikveh* in the entire area. One had existed for some years at the Sarah Leah bathhouse. When that was destroyed, a room was rented from a Gentile guard on the ground floor at the city gate, and a hole was dug there for a *mikveh*. Because he was actually putting his life at risk, the owner of this dwelling received a nice price. Thus, the Jews would sneak in to immerse themselves in this dugout without being detected by the militia who lived on the upper stories. From all the environs, near and far, many came to Kaminits to immerse themselves in this ritual bath.

Even in the most trying and difficult times, many Jews studied Torah. In the summer of 1936, a few months before I left Kaminits, the synagogues had not yet been banned, and I found Jews praying in the Gedaliah Synagogue at dusk. Between the afternoon and evening prayers, many sat and studied Mishnah, *Ein-Ya'akov,* and *Mishnah Berurah*. After the evening

prayers, there was even a lesson in Gemara with many participants. Similarly, there was also Torah study in some other synagogues. With the banning of the synagogues in the month of Av 1936, the Jews began to pray secretly in *minyans* in private homes.

Israel Goldman

"Stealing" of the Torah Scrolls

It happened many years ago in Kaminits at the time the *Yevsektsiya* in Soviet Russia decreed religious persecution. The synagogues had been seized to be used as meeting places and for storage of sacred objects, mostly Torah scrolls that were exported for sale.

The grandest and most beautiful of the 60 houses of prayer and small synagogues in the city was the Tailors' Synagogue, remarkable for its wide, high Holy Ark ornamented with silver and gold and decorated with pictures of animals and birds, fruits, and flowers and all kinds of musical instruments—the glorious work of the artists. In this magnificent Holy Ark, on all of its three levels, were more than one hundred Torah scrolls. When this synagogue was confiscated and converted into the city's workers' center, and it was prohibited to sell the scrolls abroad, the honorary officers of the synagogue—who happened to be artisans—did a daring thing and "stole" 30 Torah scrolls and secretly and devotedly transferred them, with great risk to their lives, to a hiding place in the cellar of a private home. No one knew, of course, about this hiding place, and, from time to time, the thieves entered the cellar to check on the scrolls and furtively guarded them for days and years.

At the end of the war, the Soviets left the city and the Nazis came in with their troops from Romania and Galicia with the resulting terror. The city was completely plundered and destroyed. The majority of the Jews were led into the neighboring forest for slaughter. A few managed to escape to the nearby villages and reached the outermost parts of Siberia. When the war ended, some of them succeeded in returning to their ruined and destroyed city.

The same lot befell the neighboring towns surrounding Kaminits; destruction and ruin everywhere. A majority of the Jewish settlers were killed; some fled and survived. A few returned, broken and crushed by the desolation of their towns, and made every effort to renew their lives; their prime concern was to establish a *minyan* for prayer, without having the use of any sacred objects, not even a Torah scroll.

It happened that, among the returnees to Kaminits, there was one of the trustees of the former Tailors' Synagogue who had participated in the "stealing" of the Torah scrolls and remembered the event. This Jew, together with a number of other Jews, went into that same cellar and withdrew the sacred treasure from its hiding place—all 30 of the Torah scrolls intact, as though they had been deposited there only the day before yesterday. Everyone viewed the matter as a miracle from heaven.

From these Torah scrolls, gifts were sent to the neighboring towns—one or two scrolls to each and every town.

Y.A. Bar-Levi

The Orinin Journey

The years 1918–19 were years of cruel tribulations for the Jews of Ukraine. The political and military regimes that changed like flashes of lightning from section to section were not stable. Conquering military forces (Austrians, Germans, Poles, and Czechs), under the command of the western coalition against the Russian Bolsheviks, came in rapid succession one after the other. In addition, the war and enmity prevailed increasingly between the Russian Bolshevik forces and the Ukrainian national forces (the hetman, Petlyura).

In the turmoil of those days, the Jewish population became the scapegoat upon whose head was heaped all the blows, and the anger and the wrath of the Ukrainian peasants mobs were wrought in the wildest of the wild pogroms on the Jews. The outbreak of the pogroms in the Ukraine that cost us 100,000 victims is all too well remembered to this day. Most of the pogroms were generated in the southwest portion of the Ukraine bordering on Galicia, and the Jews of this section of the province of Kaminits (Proskurov, Felsztyn, etc.) suffered more both materially and spiritually than did those in other sections.

Even in those days of fury, the Jews knew how to stand their ground by showing signs of bravery and teaching a lesson to the besieging and destructive enemy. I would like to recount one such act of bravery.

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On the border of Podolia and Galicia, 17 versts west of the city of Kaminits, then the capital city of the frequently changing regimes, on the River Zbruch, there was a small town (there was, but is no more)—Orinin, inhabited by less than one hundred families. When the Red Army gained on the Petlyura forces in the spring of 1919, the latter crossed the Zbruch and entered Galicia. Here they found a place to rest and were supported by the Entente; with this financial and military aid, they reorganized themselves and returned to Ukraine. Of course, the small town of Orinin was the first prey they came upon on their path. For three days and three nights, Petlyura's bands rampaged wildly there, plundering, robbing, and murdering people. Almost the entire Jewish population was about to be destroyed by them.

Under these conditions, some young people took their lives in their hands. In the dark of the Sabbath night of 24 Iyar 1919, they left the besieged city and, via side paths, reached Kaminits to call for help. There were very few Red Army forces in Kaminits, and the Ukrainians were aware of this. They also knew that if they would finish off Orinin, the road to Kaminits (which then numbered 60–70 thousand inhabitants) would also be open to them. Their immediate goal was to capture it, from the standpoint of that city's

strategic and political situation, as the future settlement of the Petlyura regime.

The young men turned to the influential leaders of the Jewish business people and to the *Revkom*, the local Bolshevik rulers, and they asked for quick and urgent help, saying, "If you don't save us, the danger will be hanging over you, too." Not much time remained to arouse them and to reckon with the situation, when a call arose, "On to Orinin!"

In the blink of an eye, all the able-bodied males from among the Jewish youth to whom the honor of their nation was at stake gathered. Political differences were forgotten, and they all assembled, beginning with the Zionists and ending with the Bolsheviks, on that very same Saturday night, the 24th of Iyar 1919, on the Governor's Square—all those who felt in their hearts that they could not sit back with folded hands and that it was necessary to rescue the town. These were not military people knowledgeable in waging war, but young men who didn't know how to hold a gun in their hands.

After midnight they left the city in a transport bearing a load of 50–60 men equipped with a small amount of firearms and one cannon, and they were joined by 90 young people under the leadership of an able commander. The troops barely reached the regions towards which they were heading when an order was issued: "Descend from the cars and disperse on the ground."

At the same moment, a strong barrage of firing was heard from the enemy's troops, numbering 1,200. A few of the Jewish youth who, as mentioned, had never held a gun, and now armed only with primitive defense implements, were terrified by the Ukrainians and began a crawling retreat. A brave and persuasive man addressed the group and said:

> Comrades, there is no place to which to withdraw; if we return, we shall be lost together with those whom we leave behind. Our path of victory lies only in advancing towards the enemy.

This call was influential in inspiring a spirit of renewed courage.

Meanwhile, the firing of the one and only cannon in the group's possession had succeeded in revealing the hiding place of the enemy's forces, attacking those who were shooting from the arms-bearing vehicles, and it also succeeded in silencing them. The new situation was exploited by the alert commander who turned to his comrades with the call:

> Forward, comrades! Death to the murderers!

And the miracle happened: The hatred towards the murderers who threatened Orinin, also the awareness that the fate of Orinin as well as the other towns depended on Kaminits, together with the bitterness which had been mounting in their hearts for many months, turned into a pressing and energetic force; with extraordinary enthusiasm they pounced upon the enemy and went from the position of defending themselves to the offensive position of attacking the enemy.

The Haidamacks of Petlyura did not withstand the battle. They retreated in panic, leaving behind their large store of weapons, cannons, machine guns, and their field kitchen. Some knelt before the Jewish youths and pleaded for their lives. The answer was—a bullet or a bayonet. Sixty of the Haidamacks fell in battle, and the rest dispersed, fleeing in every direction. On the Jewish side, there was one fatality (Avner Kurman—a member of *Ze'irei Zion*) and two men who suffered minor injuries.

When the group continued on its way towards Orinin and approached the town, all the inhabitants emerged from their hiding places and with joy and tears of gratitude welcomed their saviors. Not a one of them could understand how it happened, that just a few could stand up against so many, and from their lips were issued the words, "A miracle happened here...."

Indeed, it was a miracle of Jewish heroism; one of the many which we here in our Land had witnessed.

Shabbetai Kaplan

Types and Personalities

Kaminits, a city whose Jewish inhabitants were a typical segment of Russian Jewry, was also a province of Russia. It consisted of a thin stratum of wealthy people and a thicker one of middle class and poor. These people were by nature the silent, anonymous ones whose expression was through the intelligentsia. There was an elite in Kaminits, but not an elite by virtue of rising to that position, as in our day, but a humble, gentle elite channeling downwards toward the masses; they were not from the upper classes, but from those who bent over to uplift the people. There were also those who were not considered intelligentsia, who were not at all intellectuals, but they were men of stature whose talents were acquired at houses of study. They were distinctive personalities. A large gallery of types is brought to mind in recalling the inhabitants of the city, images of more than fifty years ago, from the time before the Revolution and after it.

The new post office street, the Potchtovka, was the heart of the city and its spiritual center. The bookstores were here. On one side was the Banvilman Brothers' store, and my parents' store was opposite. The former served as a meeting place for the Bund, the latter for devotees of the Hebrew language and for Zionists; the common bond among them being fellow townsmen. During the Christmas holidays, when the frost reigned outside, the political minded and those seeking a better tomorrow would gather around a bowl of steaming potatoes and discuss world matters, literary news, and predictions for the future. Serious matters would be treated with jocularity, and, when spirits were heightened from partaking of the steaming potatoes and the warm drink, someone would take a small book from his pocket and read a Shalom Aleichem story, the subject of which might be the Pale of Settlement or vague allusions to the Japanese war. The pleasantries would include their barbed sarcasm pointed towards *Fonye-Ganef* (the Czar), the tyrannical, harsh, and stupid ruler. With laughter and mockery, the longings for redemption would flare up—be it for those whose liberation would be in this land of the Diaspora or for those in the future of the renewed Eretz Yisrael, in the world to be.

That's how it was—before the Revolution. After—it was as if the city were inundated with a powerful stream that had burst the locked dams. Those in hiding emerged into the streets. The silent ones spoke out. No longer were there hushed conversations behind closed doors; instead there were loud and lofty voices of song and melody reverberating in open clubhouses and under the heavens, in town squares, and from those promenading on the Dorozhka, the narrow path.

New faces appeared, among them those who until now had been hiding in the city, as well as those who came from a distance, from the small towns of the environs and from the metropolises. Kaminits was engulfed in strong

spirits; a socialistic Jewish spirit on the one hand and a spirit of Zionism on the other hand, with varying shades in between taken from each of them to blend into the fusion.

Herewith, remembrances of some of the personalities of our city:

Moshe Kitay. Short, thin, skin and bones with a furrowed brow, he was an old bachelor and chronically unemployed. How did he earn his livelihood? Apparently, from private lessons that he gave or didn't give. He survived on hunger, living on the grace of one clubhouse or another, or walking through the city square joining news seekers like himself, and he mingled with them. He was full of stories that poured forth from his mouth, and his ears feasted on tales. His voice was thin, and his laughter was like the intermittent chirpings of birds. This dwarf-like figure was a repository of folklore. He would add to his storehouse everything that reached his ears, and he shared it with many. He was always a welcome visitor who came and went. He would denounce the Czarist regime, the Jew-haters, the enemies of Zion. He would decry vainglorious matters and drown their rottenness in the stuttering spittle that burst forth from his mouth. He would slaughter them with his double-edged sarcasm. With the coming of the Revolution, his life was interrupted. His armor, his vehemence, changed its form to another, to speeches from platforms in open, public debates.

Dr. Knofing. A Doctor of Philology, he was a notable figure on the Kaminits scene. He was tall, broad boned and potbellied. His belly was a dreamy belly, fantasizing good and satisfying foods, which, according to appearances, were the sacrificial offerings on his plate. After the Revolution, he became an activist for the Zionist cause. In a unique mannerism of speech, he prolonged every word in his mouth before uttering it, as though he had to cool it, and the voice emerged muffled and drumlike. Dr. Knofing! His whole bearing proclaimed: Dr. Knofing!

Dr. Mendel Goldstein. Every speech of his was a work of art. His utterances, in addition to being heard, were also visual delights. He had the aspect of a visionary dreamer, and his listeners dreamed along with him. His Russian was colorful and imaginative. As the time for his immigration to Eretz Yisrael approached, he was drawn to the charms of poetry: "And behold the ships borne on the surface of the Mediterranean waters plunging their way onto the shores of Palestine!" The audience sat fascinated, captivated by the web of his lyrical language, precisely, exquisitely expressed. When he finished and other speakers followed, it was as though you had fallen from the azure skies to the ashiness of earth.

Altogether different was **Nachman Yakir** or, as he was called, Chaver Nachman (Comrade Nachman). He was a member of *Po'alei Zion*, a worker who had not acquired his education in his youth, but had sought it later. He was an avid Yiddishist. I don't know whether he initially dubbed himself *Trayster* (Yiddish for "Nachman" [one who consoles]) or whether the name was just affixed to him. Either way, the name Trayster was popular and

stuck to Nachman. Chaver Nachman was dedicated to the cause of *Po'alei Zion* with heart and soul, and this zealousness drove him to miss no opportunity to spread his doctrines. There was simply no gathering where his cause was not heard. He was of a melancholy nature, sported a mustache, and worry wrinkles furrowed his face. He walked with a cane, and he slung it on his arm when he spoke. He lectured on Socialism and Marxism. He lacked the power of forceful expression, spoke simply but assuredly, and constantly pegged his words to great authorities: Marx, Borochov, and others.... Chaver Nachman was liked because of his honesty.

Everyone knew that he was not an intellect and that literary fine points were beyond him. In the heat of a discussion, his opponents would sometimes grasp at this weakness. Once, when he mentioned Marx, someone in the audience asked,

"Have you read Marx?"

"I have already begun to read him," he answered, "but I haven't finished...."

The listeners would accept his answers with a gracious, forgiving smile. There was no doubt that Chaver Nachman was very aware of Marx and certainly exploited every opportunity to mention his name. Everyone knew that Nachman was not a flowery person, and the honesty of his replies made up for the simple approach and lack of a sophisticated delivery for the subject under discussion. But occasionally, when anyone taxed his patience, he could retort tartly.

"Nachman, does *Po'alei Zion* have a program?" he was once jeeringly asked.

"Yes, we have many programs. May you have as many plagues as we have programs!"

Chaver Nachman had his day on May 1st. *Po'alei Zion* was a small party and, in the general parade, only a handful of people. At the head of this small contingent, Chaver Nachman would march upright, with great seriousness, holding the flag aloft as though it were the tablets of the Decalogue.

Kaminits was a miniature metropolis, a magnet for the youth of the surrounding towns who came there to study, to seek a niche for themselves in the world. Many who gathered there left their imprint and even attained high esteem. A life force for Kaminits was the town of Zhvanets that gave Kaminits the late **Shaikele Saltzman**, the tribune, and a member of the *Irgun*, Sholem Altman.

Sholem Altman was a serious person, strict with himself as well as with others; he was not easy going. His strength lay in deeds, not in words, but in the arena of opponents, the Jewish Socialists versus the Zionists, and in the raising of the flag as a banner of the sufferings of the revolutionists under the czar, Altman did not spare his words and spoke up. The tenor of his words:

"We, too, were involved in the Siberian prisons! We, too, were exiled to the *taiga* (a region of Siberia)!"

These words carried a personal connotation. Sholem Altman had been banished from his town of Zhvanets because of his Zionist activity. His utterances were distinct and to the point, sounding as though the initial letters were honed by a sharp instrument. His bushy mustache gave him the appearance of someone extraordinary. He looked like a *starusta* with feet planted firmly on the ground, a symbol of national pride. With integrity and decisiveness he served as a secretary of the Zionist Organization and as an activist in the Jewish community. Everyone, his followers as well as his adversaries, respected him.

Shaikele the Tribune was the opposite of Altman. He was short and slight with an oval-shaped body, but his tongue—a brandishing sword! He could stand up to the arguing parties and was equal to them. It should be remembered that at that time the popular fighting weapon was the debate. A gathering of any party was open to disputants, not as is the custom here, with a single speaker or a concert soloist, where one just sits and listens! The speaker would open the session, debaters would follow, and the audience would respond with applause, with interruptions or with resolutions. A meeting without a resolution was simply not a meeting! At times the debaters succeeded in turning the issue upside down; a meeting of the Bund would turn into a Zionist meeting, and vice versa. The weights of the scales went up and down with the debate. Shaikele would ensnare the audience by detailing the fine threads of Jewish tradition and, with the knowledge acquired in his childhood, would hurl comparisons and subdue his great opponents, just as David had brought down Goliath. The political assemblies during the Revolution were fascinating in their dynamism, from the point of view of their popularity and their diversity.

Among the leaders of the parties in the city were those of the Bund and the *Faraynigte*, emigres from Lithuania whose Yiddish language was fluent and juicy, and they brought with them many proverbs and tales. The speakers were not public speakers with memorized talks; their speeches were replete with the sarcasm of a desert in the Garden of Eden. There was ongoing competitive rhetoric, ongoing spiciness. The warring factions emerged either beaten or victorious. But the audience emerged much richer for the experience.

Shaikele, who had been an outstanding student at the Tel Aviv *Gimnazye*, came to settle in Kaminits and had an additional, direct staging platform—evening lessons on Dulgaya Street, where hundreds of young people, mostly young women, gathered in a welcoming nucleus for the development of a Zionistic atmosphere. Two persons prevailed on this platform: **Abraham Rosenzweig** (now Rosen) and **Shaikele Saltzman**, the former in the study of the Bible, the latter in Hebrew language studies. Later, these two were joined by **Aharon Ashman**. After the lessons, the

students would go for a promenade on the nature path in Kaminits. They would converse in Hebrew, sing Zionist songs and fantasize about Eretz Yisrael, have visions about agriculture, about being those who brought forth bread from the earth, of being farmers or, in the parlance of the day, colonists.

Many persons were included in the gallery of popular activists of Kaminits; those who distinguished themselves on the platform and those who worked in the rank and file. Among the first was **Munye Zak** (the late M. Haezrachi) whose command of the Russian language was scintillating. **Moshe Sister**, a member of *Faraynigte*, currently lecturing on the Bible at the Seminar Hakibbutzim, was one who spoke bitterly against the visionary Zionists, and, like Buntshe Shweig, rebuked them, "... and a buttered roll is bad?"—as if to ask, "Why are you playing in the clouds, building castles in Spain?"

Another dynamic Jew in Kaminits was **Akiva Kahana**, an eloquent person, independent, a fighter, and humorist, who belonged to no party or, to be more exact, was a party unto himself. He was also a sharp-penned journalist and wrote in *Podolskiy Kray*. I recall an answer to a Letter to the Editor which was signed *Komit*, and its form of expression suggested that it was Akiva Kahana.

"What does *Komit* mean?" he was asked.

"The translation in initials (an acronym) of a verse from the Small Song of Songs," he answered.

There were two newspapers published in Kaminits, *Podolskiya Izvestiyah* and *Podolskiy Kray*. Editor of the first was [D.?] Fuchs. He was a short man and walked with a strut.

The rank-and-file activists also expressed themselves in special activities, in the organizing of festivals, and in the dissemination of election propaganda. For the commemoration of Palestine Week, they pressed the whole city into service. On street corners, tables were set up and spread with Zionist leaflets for the popularization of the Zionist cause. Ribbons were attached to every lapel. The main attraction in this project was Aharon Ashman (now the author and playwright) who sported an Arabic *kaffia* on his head in the manner of a swarthy-skinned Bedouin, symbol of Eretz Yisrael.

That was Kaminits in the first years of the Revolution, stirring and dynamic years. The awareness embraced all the youth circles and the young adults. Students formed clubs: *Kadimah* for the younger ones, *Ha-Tehiyyah* for the older ones. The Brandman Choir came into being and was instrumental in spreading Hebrew songs and musical culture. The dramatic club, *Ha-Zamir*, was also formed, which produced plays in Yiddish and English. For a definite period, Kaminits was renowned for the informative, well-delivered lectures of Alexander Hoshin, one of the leaders of *Po'alei Zion* who was involved with our city and stayed there for some time. He was

incarcerated and died in prison.

Much later, when the honeymoon of the Revolution came to an end, the meetings grew fewer, and the activity centered on deeds. Two pioneer training farms were established. The pioneers planted wheat, spelt, and potatoes, proudly swinging their scythes in the standing corn. Girls would take turns in going to the farm to cook meals. Boys would volunteer to dig potatoes.

The atmosphere continued to grow troubled. Regime followed regime and fears and anxieties pervaded the city. The seriousness of the matter pointed up the necessity for self defense. There were rumors of pogroms in Proskurov and Felsztyn. On the holiday of Shavuot, the Haidamacks waged pogroms in Kaminits, and 80 Jews were slaughtered. How could this pogrom compare to the one in Proskurov and Felstyn? A trifling one, indeed! Nevertheless, one week later, the Jews resumed their everyday activities. The shops re-opened, the nature path was once again alive with the sounds of people, and on Saturday nights the Potchtovka Street was full of strolling couples.

Several days after the pogrom, the Petlyura nationalists sent a Jewish emissary to the community to raise funds for their ruler. The community was called for a meeting in the synagogue. The emissary was a self-assured fellow, and he addressed his audience in a polished manner. The tenor of his speech created the atmosphere for the solicitation of contributions.

When the rumor reached them about the Haidamacks' penetration of Orinin, a troop of young men, who had received some weapons from the Revkom, banded together and went to greet them. The Haidamacks were thrust back, and the whole troop returned, except for one casualty, Avner Kurman, who fell in battle.

When the *aliyah* became possible, the first group of pioneers from Kaminits left for Eretz Yisrael; they were the founders of Kiryat Anavim. That morning was like a holiday in the city. Many people followed the wagons to the Podzamche, and from there the pioneers dispersed in various directions—some to Galicia, some to Bessarabia, stealing across the border during the night. The reserves were depleted bit by bit. After them, the growing anxieties of the next generation curbed the flow of the exodus.

Kaminits was hurled from ruler to ruler, but the Petlyura regime stayed there a long time. The city served them as a temporary capital city. It was also the location of the ministries for Jewish affairs within the confines of the National and Personal Autonomy of the Ukrainian Republic. The Minister Pinchas Krasny, of the Folkspartei, was not involved with the communal affairs of the city—the importance of his office being to photograph the past, to help pogrom victims, keep accounts of the pogroms, and to send memoranda.

Our courtyard also faced Dulgaya Street, the market street. Mornings, when the children were still in bed, we could hear the singsong chant of one

of the first vendors, the pastry seller, extolling in Yiddish the fresh egg bagels he was selling.

His image stands before my eyes. His distinctive beard, long and pointed; the melody drawn out and trilled as though the pastry were being savored, teasing the palate. He led the parade of the vendors.

Among the vendors each morning was **Froyika-with-the-cymbals** and Nette-with-the-flute. Froyika was dark haired and sported a beard. He was a happy person, bringing joy with him as he accompanied his singing with the cymbals. The children would follow him, and he would take delight in them. That was his hobby, also his occupation—service to humanity. He would carry out slop buckets or waste baskets from the houses, and for this he would get some bread or a dish of porridge—service in exchange for goods. But that was not the case. There were other motivating forces. He simply loved to serve humanity, to help women carry their baskets, and he derived special satisfaction in helping a poor family, an old or sick woman. My father used to say of him, "This Froyika—a philosophical soul nestles in him; he is a Diogenes of sorts."

The women in the upper stories would eagerly await his arrival. They would ask, "Has Froyika already come by? Have you seen Froyika?" And Froyika would carry the slop pails from the upper floor with dignity and assurance. He never got excited and did not get angry. He was always at peace with himself. Froyika knew his own worth, and those who extolled him were many. Who acclaimed him most? The children who followed and befriended him.

"Who is a *mensch*?" he would ask loudly, and the children would answer in chorus, "Froyika!"

"When a load has to be carried, who is called upon to do it?"

"Froyika!"

"If a decent, honest person is needed, who is invited?

"Froyika!"

"Who is a *mensch*?"

"Froyika!"

Perhaps, in his asking "Who is a *mensch*?" there was an intended demonstration, a demonstration against the inhumanity of others who pose as cultured people but who distance themselves from simple humane deeds. It embraced also the viewpoint of the workingman who supports humane values. And so, Froyika was truly a *mensch*; he did not exalt himself in vain.

Nette-with-the-flute was different from Froyika. He had a round moon-shaped face, was cleanshaven, and his chest, thrust out before him like a belly, was a storehouse of bread. Every piece of bread that he received he would stick in there. The flute was no flute—a flute of all flutes; it was nothing but a reed or stick that he would play between his lips pressing them together and puffing out his cheeks. As payment, he would receive a penny or its equivalent and would thrust it into his bosom.

Isak was a tragic, crazy person, a cripple on crutches with outstretched palm. He was a romantic, and he spoke constantly of princesses and baronesses. He would cast his eyes on pretty girls and cite documentary evidence that they were destined for him by Divine Providence. When he was pressed with the question, "Why don't you marry one of the maidens?" he would claim that the mothers were at fault. Because the mothers were in love with him, this prevented him from loving their daughters. If, only for a day, the mothers would be detained in a shop by themselves, then he would have a chance.

Children would walk behind him, heckling the "lame one," and making him angry. When he could no longer bear the teasing, he would raise one of the crutches and chase the children away. Isak met his death in the atrocities that occurred during the Shavuot holiday. The Haidamacks cut him up with swords, and a part of the landscape of Kaminits disappeared.

There was another unusual person called *stranno tchelovek* (odd person). He was thin and tall; that was not enough for him, and he stretched himself out some more. With pliant walking stick in hand and a brimmed straw hat on his head, he would stride tall and straight on the paths of the public gardens and entertain far-fetched romantic fantasies. He was smartly and meticulously attired, and, whenever he passed a show window, he would tarry, peep into the mirrored reflection, pat his coiffure, and straighten his hat.

Altogether different from the above-described personages was **Simeon**. The former communicated and mingled with people; Simeon was a misanthrope who shunned society and was hounded by it. In his black gabardine, hands folded behind him, he would scurry through the streets cursing, "May the Sheol swallow you! May the darkness grab you!"

The children would provoke him, repeating his curses, and he would run after them and hit them with his fist. The critical point of his madness was money—he was money mad. Paranoiac with fear that people were conspiring to steal his money, he would shout [in Yiddish], "*Dus beitele? A makeh*!" ("The money pouch? A plague on you!")

In order to make him angry, mimicking him, the children would in turn purposely yell, "*Dus beitele?*" This happened again and again. He viewed each and every one of the townspeople as his enemy, and he cursed them.

"Simeon, why do you curse me?" they would ask. "I haven't cursed you."

"If you haven't cursed me today, you will curse me tomorrow," he would reply.

There were other unusual types, but these were the most noteworthy.

H. Sarig

Ze'irei Zion During the 1917 Revolution

In the last years before the 1917 Revolution, the Zionist youth movement, *Ze'irei Zion*, flourished under the banner of labor as an independent workers' organization. The movement preached the love of labor and that a life of work was the most important part of life and called it the "religion of work." The founders and leaders of this movement were A.D. Gordon, Josef Vitkin, and others who paved the way, demonstrating and setting an example for a simple, fulfilling way of life. The movement strove to form a just society in the ethical sense of the word. Its aim was the creation of a working people in Eretz Yisrael.

In the cities and towns of Russia, *Ze'irei Zion* clubs were formed, and they constituted a stronghold of support for the Zionist movement. The youth and the workers were attracted to the cause. The movement saw in them the inherent element needed for activity and organization.

At the end of World War I and with the outbreak of the 1917 Revolution, *Ze'irei Zion* became an independent Labor Zionist Party that functioned in many aspects of the life in the community. In Kaminits, too, there was a *Ze'irei Zion* organization of a few hundred members drawn from the youth and working segments of the population, and it was the most popular active political body among the Jews.

The *Ze'irei Zion* organization dedicated itself primarily to educational activities; it participated in the work of the *kehillah* committee, directed the work of *He-Halutz*, organized the immigration to Eretz Yisrael, and also worked in the organization of the *Haganah*. The young pioneers who were planning to emigrate prepared themselves for agricultural or vocational training in order to help them adapt to the life of a worker and to life in a communal settlement. Heading the local branch were Y. Shrayar, Chairman, and H. Sarig (Schreiberman), Secretary.

In 1920 there was a conference of representatives of all the branches of *Ze'irei Zion* of the cities and towns of Podolia, and a district committee was formed headed by Z. Pratkin (Porat). At that time, Eliezer Kaplan, chief of the Central Committee of the All-Russia *Ze'irei Zion* also visited the local organization. In the wake of the Revolution, transport and communication came to a halt, and all the activities of the movement were conducted locally.

Shmuel F. Barzin

Children Fight for the Hebrew Language

The active group of *Ha-Shomer Ha-Zair* in Kaminits engaged in Zionist work projects among school children. In time its influence grew, and it succeeded in recruiting many members for its movement. The dedication of the boys and girls was boundless.

In 1925 something happened that distressed the Jewish inhabitants very much. One of the members was not accepted to the high school, because he belonged to *Ha-Shomer Ha-Za'ir*. He was so affected by it that he became ill with an incurable nervous disease, developed encephalitis, and died. The Jews of the city were grievously shaken by this, because they saw him as a victim of the regime's stubbornness. Throngs of Jews attended the funeral. From the Zionist organizations alone, about 2,000 people followed the bier. We wanted to include the pupils of the school that the deceased had attended, and the school officials had even suggested that the funeral be a state funeral with a red flag in the lead, and that instead of *El male rahamim*, "The International" be sung. Of course, the terms were not acceptable. The pupils were forbidden to attend the funeral. They, however, mobilized themselves into action. The majority of the pupils were members of *Ha-Shomer Ha-Za'ir*.

The spontaneous protest that erupted against the Soviet school authorities' antagonism aided and abetted the movement into a daring political action. At that time, there were vigorous restrictions on the study and teaching of the Hebrew language, and it became necessary to publicize the Jewish community's dissatisfaction with the banning of our national language. The *Ze'irei Zion* clubs, the *Tarbut* association, and the executive leadership of *Ha-Shomer Ha-Za'ir* decided to present a petition, signed by many children to the government authorities, requesting permission for the study and teaching of Hebrew in the school.

Ha-Shomer Ha-Za'ir took upon itself the responsibility of carrying out this project. It issued a public announcement to the youth and school pupils wherein it set forth the unique problem of the use and study of the Hebrew language, which was not the case for other minority languages. It called upon the Jewish youth to demand the return of their inalienable right to use and study their national language—Hebrew. The announcement was circulated to all parts of the city. When the children came to school the following morning, they found the announcement on their desks. It was also circulated to the youths of the neighboring towns. It had been decided that the petition be drafted by the children, that it be signed by pupils only up to the age of 14, and that the contents include a request to open a Hebrew school and to grant permission for the study of Hebrew. The project was hailed with great enthusiasm by the pupils. The signing of the petition began. Throughout the whole activity, the strength of *Ha-Shomer Ha-Za'ir*

was very evident. In Kaminits alone, about 2,000 signatures were collected to which were appended given name, family name, and name of city. Arrangements were also made to obtain signatures in the neighboring towns.

This large undertaking involving many children aroused much Zionistic activity. As a result of this project, *Ha-Shomer Ha-Za'ir* succeeded in increasing its ranks. The executive body saw fit to present all *Ha-Shomer Ha-Za'ir* branches with a blue-and-white flag as a token of outstanding service in the petition project. It was a time of spirited elation when a representative of the executive body presented the Zionist flag to a local youth at an illegal gathering place outside the city.

The petition signed by thousands of young boys and girls in Podolia was dispatched in two copies—one to the central ruling bodies in the Ukraine and the second to the rulership in Podolia. The *Yevsektsiya*, of course, launched an investigation, and many of the petition signers were summoned by the GPU (secret police) and were urged to withdraw their signatures. This was used as a means of pressure on the children; it frightened them by threatening them with expulsion from school or imprisonment. When it failed to force its will on the children, the Gestapo turned to the parents and commanded them to influence the children. This, too, was to no avail. The children did not give in to the demands of the Gestapo, and they also acted on their own to gather additional signatures to the petition for the legalization of Hebrew studies. These signatures were only another public demonstration, because the petition had already reached the authorities.

The general Soviet press did not react to the petition at all. Only the Yiddish journal *Shtern*, printed in Kharkov, published a cartoon of a typical *melamed* with a small child at his side, saying to the child, "Do write little one, I want to learn Hebrew." From this we inferred that the petition had fallen into the hands of the *Yevsektsiya* and its fate was decreed.

The Young People's Struggle for Hebrew Studies

In 1926 the *Yevsektsiya* was at the height of its national efforts to popularize Yiddish as the language of study for Jewish children. It opened a network of Yiddish schools and contrived all sorts of cunning to compel Jewish children to attend these schools. It even increased its activity of imprisoning teachers of Hebrew, a language it considered to be counter-revolutionary and clerical.

At that time, in Dunivits, a circular was received from the district branch of *Ha-Shomer Ha-Za'ir* and from the district committee of the Zionist youth organization with instructions for dispatching a petition to the Soviet government to permit the study of Hebrew. Two copies were to be made, with legible signatures of given and family name.

The committee of the local branch delegated one of its members to carry out this activity. There were some children who put themselves at risk. It was a difficult matter. On the one hand, they had to beware of the GPU (secret police); on the other hand, the parents who, understandably, were not concerned with the restrictions against the Hebrew language, were nevertheless very fearful of the leadership.

On the memorial day for Taurus Shevchenko, there was a question-and-answer event. One of the pupils invited the delegate who would be responsible for arranging the collection of signatures to attend. It was previously agreed that the delegate would be asked the question, "What is Zionism?" and so it was. He, in turn, answered this question. Briefly, he explained what it was, pointing out its relationship to the Hebrew language. He pointed out that Taurus Shevchenko was recognized as a Ukrainian national poet, and his language was permitted, whereas the language of our national poet, Hayyim Nahman Bialik, was forbidden because the *Yevsektsiya* willed it so. If it were to be known that Hebrew was actually permitted in Moscow, perhaps by a long shot, if the petition were to be dispatched to Moscow requesting the recognition of Hebrew as a language of instruction on the same basis as were other languages in Russia, the government might respond favorably to this request.

Apparently these words made a great impression on the pupils, and one of them, Zhitomirski, went from pupil to pupil to get signatures on the petition. More than one hundred signatures were obtained that evening. (The boy did not remain for long at the school, because, after a while, he was expelled.) Nevertheless, we were regarded with great contempt in the Yiddish school which was completely under the domination of the *Yevsektsiya*. In spite of all, we gathered several hundred signatures in a short period of time.

In 1926 there was a census, and among the questions asked was what

languages the citizens used. We waged a large-scale propaganda program among the population suggesting that they mention Hebrew. Many vehemently requested that it be recorded that they knew Hebrew, but the officials were ordered not to register that language.

In various ways, we tried to impart to the youth a desire for learning Hebrew. We arranged evening classes for groups of two or three children. We also organized a bookmobile. With our influence there was an increase in the number of parents who taught their children Hebrew, even though they faced the danger of imprisonment.

Chayah Gelman-Tissenbaum

Underground Zionist Youth

The *Zofim* troop in our city was simply called "The Scout Organization" in order that it be regarded only as such by the authorities, but the boys and girls knew very well what and who they were. They were the underground Zionist youth.

On the 20th day of Tammuz, there was a hike into the forest which was attended by the older members who gave lectures on Zionist topics, particularly on current events. Of course, they arrived individually and at specifically spaced intervals to avoid arousing suspicion or being detected.

On the way to the forest, the troop would march through the city streets to the rhythm of the drummer, the late Yitzchak Boharov, singing a workers' song, *Yah chai-li-li a-ma-li-li*. Leading the troop was its commander, Izhak Gelman. To the spectators on the sidelines watching the scouts, it was known that this was a Zionist Pioneer youth group. As a friend of the commander at that time, I remember how difficult that post was. As far as the authorities were concerned, we were a form of cadets.

The Sports Director of General Education was also the leader of our troop. He knew the whole truth about us. He was a Gentile who, apparently, did not look with much favor upon the government authorities.

Many members of the troop were caught and were exiled to Siberia. A few of them are now in Israel, and a number of them ended up in the Diaspora. Also, the troop's commander and some of his friends were imprisoned in Vinnitsa after a Zionist convention, after having served part of their term in the cellar prison in Kaminits. The court acquitted them, and they all returned to Kaminits.

Moshe Deutsch

The Ghetto in Kaminits-Podolsk

In the second half of the month of July 1941, exactly a month after Nazi Germany had attacked the Soviet Union, there appeared at my home in Tarasova (Hungary) two Hungarian gendarmes who ordered my wife and me to be ready within ten minutes to go with them. They commanded us to take enough food for a number of days.

We had been hearing of the transport of Jews from Budapest and other cities in Hungary, but we didn't know to where they were being taken. In Budapest, an office had been set up to check the legality of the transport of non-citizens.

From my home, they led me, my wife, and daughter to the courtyard of the Secretariat, and we stayed until evening, during which time hundreds of women, children, and elderly people were brought there. There were few young men, because they had for some time been mobilized for internment at labor camps. From this courtyard, we were transferred for overnight lodging to a school.

The next day, they let my wife and daughter go, but I was brought to the railway station along with other captives. There we boarded the transport coach. After wandering on winding roads, we reached Yasinya, and the gendarmes who led us there commanded us to sit on our traveling bags. We waited about an hour until a representative from the office set up to help Budapest Jewry addressed us, saying, "Anyone who has a legitimate certificate of Hungarian citizenship is requested to submit it to me. I accept no other document."

There were among us two Jews, one a native of Transnistra—a handsome man with a long, white beard—and the other, a native of Poland, who submitted the requested certificates to the official. They were taken off the transport and were sent back home.

A Concentration Camp

From the train station in Yasinya, a Hungarian soldier led us along the train tracks to the town of Havashaliya and conducted us into a barb wired camp in the center of which the making of planks was going on. Thousands of hungry men, women, and children were concentrated here.

True, the office helping the Jews and the community in Yasinya did its best to feed the captives, but the meager portions did not satisfy their hunger. The overall condition in this camp was frightful and horrible; especially during the nights, the children's crying and the moaning and groaning of the elderly were unbearable.

Exodus to an Unknown Destination

During the day, 15–20 army transport cars came, and the camp inmates

were loaded into them and brought to an unknown destination. There were rumors that some of the Jews were being settled at the homes of farmers who, following the outbreak of the war, had abandoned their homes and joined the army. There were other rumors that the Jews were being murdered in Galicia, and their bodies were thrown into the Dnester.

Our turn came.

One Sabbath eve, at the end of the month of July, we were put on transports and brought to an unknown place. We passed the Hungarian-Polish border that had been captured by the Germans. That evening we reached Borshchev in Galicia. In Jewish homes, the Sabbath candles were already lit, and we prayed to be able to join these Jews who looked at us with fear and pity. But the transports did not halt.

In the late hours, we arrived at the fortress in Kaminits. We were taken down from the transports and commanded to remain at our places while the Hungarian gendarmes stood watch over us all night. At dawn the men were ushered into a nearby church, and the gendarmes closed the doors on us. They took us out, one by one, and commanded us to raise our hands as they searched our pockets and robbed us of our money, coins, and watches. Then we heard the command:

"Now forward march; anyone who dares to turn back—a bullet to his head!"

In Kaminits-Podolsk

Our caravan started to climb the ascent of the street that was on the Podzamche. I came upon a Jew and greeted him with a "*Gut Shabbos* (Good Sabbath)," and he responded, "*Gut Shabbos.*"

"Are you Jews from Hungary?" asked the Jew.

"Yes, we are Jews from Hungary."

"Woe unto us! What happened? How did you get here?"

"We have no answer for you, Reb Yid. War is war. Tell us, Reb Yid, can we perhaps stay overnight with you?"

"I'm very sorry; I already have some Jews from Hungary, but in the kindergarten not far from here, you'll be able to find shelter."

With the directions the Jew had given us, we reached the kindergarten, and there we found some Jews who had been driven out of Hungary. They were sitting at small tables. The Jews were humming *zemirot*: "*Yom zeh mekhubad mekol yomim.*" (This day is honored above all other days.)

We went out to the center of the old city, and there I came upon hundreds of deported Jews, among them some acquaintances. From one of them I heard that there would be a meeting in one of the local buildings and that it might be worth my while to participate.

The Meeting and Its Outcome

The auditorium where the meeting took place was filled to overflowing.

At this meeting, three committees were chosen—one to take up matters with the German military command, the second with the Hungarian military command, and the third to look after local matters. The next day they reported that only one of their members had succeeded in contacting the German command. He was told the following:

"The Jews wanted war—and here it is in all its brutality. It is for them to bear all the consequences."

The Old City as a Ghetto

For about a week we were allowed to go about freely. There were few local people, Jews and Ukrainians, with whom we mingled. Very slowly, one by one, they emerged from their hiding places. The local Jews regarded the presence of the Hungarian Jews as a good sign, and they helped us as much as possible. When we went to the nearby villages to buy food, the Ukrainians, the *muzhiks*, and the small proprietors showed some understanding of our problems and declined to receive payment for the provisions we obtained from them.

One day the Germans commanded us to organize a Judenrat within 24 hours, and notices were posted in the city streets ordering all the Jews of Kaminits-Podolsk and its environs to appear in the old city that was designated as a ghetto. Here all Jews above the age of ten were ordered to affix a ribbon with a blue *magen david* on the left arm and not to leave the confines of the ghetto. Any dealings with the German command was to be effected only through the Judenrat; anyone violating these orders would meet instant death.

The Germans promised to meet the needs of the ghetto inhabitants at cheap prices, but, except for a few hundred kilograms of rationed flour, we received nothing. The head of every family contributed three rubles to the Judenrat fund to finance the purchases.

As a sub-committee of the Judenrat, we were permitted to go to market at specified times to buy provisions, but we did not succeed in getting more than one wagonload of cucumbers and one wagonload of cabbages. Only once did the three members of the local Judenrat succeed in buying 200 kilograms of meat.

Occasionally, area farmers would come to the ghetto to take some Jews to work for them in order to get, on the Jews' accounts, bread from the bakeries. The work that we were assigned was not at all necessary.

Compulsory Labor

Every day the German army conscripted people, particularly women, for all sorts of work outside the ghetto, and they received food as payment for their work. The women shared the rations with their families. In the ghetto, many men and children were sick from hunger. Children stretched out their hands begging for alms, but even with the coins they collected there was

nothing to buy.

One day a Hungarian officer approached us and asked for ten carpenters and painters to repair road signs. Only carpenters were available, and I alone undertook sign painting. And so we left for work.

Before we finished the job, an officer came into the shop and asked for a volunteer to go out to the front the following day, August 25th [1941] to repair some signs. Additional painters were needed. No one uttered a sound. The officer said that each volunteer would be under his protection and would be eligible for all the rations and services extended to soldiers. I volunteered.

At dawn, August 25, 1941, I left in a transport with an officer and four soldiers in the direction of Vinnitsa and Gaisin. During the journey, I became friendly with the officer and a soldier; they agreed to liberate the Hungarian Jews from the ghetto for a reasonable fee. I took upon myself the responsibility for delivering the ransom.

The ghetto contained tens of thousands of local Jews, 6,000 Hungarian deportees and 2,000 Bessarabian Jews. Many local Jews had escaped with the retreat of the Red Army.

On our way, we passed Dunivits, Proskurov, Mogilev-Podolsk, Vinnitsa, Gaisin, and other towns. In all these places, I saw frightened Jews. In Gaisin the Hungarian officer told the German officer that I was a sign painter. He wrote his address on a piece of paper and gave it to the German so that I could be returned to the Hungarian in case he needed a painter. After seven days, when we finished painting the signs, we returned to Kaminits.

Liquidation of the Ghetto

On August 29th, on our way back to Kaminits, a Hungarian soldier got into our car and told us that 13,000 Jews were killed in Kaminits. The officer did not want to believe this, declaring it scare tactics. The soldier said that he heard it from his commanding officer who had just returned from Kaminits.

In the afternoon of the same day, we reached the city and were detained in the Hungarian barracks. On the streets not a soul was seen. The soldiers told us that the Jews were wiped out. They ordered me to hide until the Gestapo left the area. I hid out in the railroad car for seven days.

After some time elapsed, a Hungarian engineer came. He was sent to me by the above-mentioned officer who helped me escape. The engineer told me what had happened since I had left the city. "On the outskirts of the city, near the excavations for tanks, two additional large pits were dug. The Hungarian Jews were led to believe that they would be taken home; actually, they were brought to these pits and were ordered to strip. Platforms had been erected at the rims of the pits. The Jews were ordered to climb the platforms and face away from the pits. Machine guns were pointed at them. In this manner the Jews met their demise. Two soldiers

from Subcarpathia refused to shoot on command, because they did not want to raise their guns to women and children. What fate befell them for such disobedience I do not know."

The Flight

The engineer left the car and went out to organize my escape, but before he could return, the officer appeared and said with great alarm, "Run for your life, because it is known in the barracks that a Jew is hiding here. Flee for your life!" At my request, the officer gave me the address of the same officer of Gaisin who had asked me to work for him.

That evening I found lodgings in the attic of a farm on the Podzamche. I didn't close an eye all night because of nervous tension, fear, and the barking dogs who wailed dreadfully. The scent of the victims' blood reached their nostrils, and they, the dogs of Kaminits, were the only mourners for the victims. The next day I reached Orinin and learned from a Jewish child that 2,000 Hungarian Jews had been slaughtered in this town, even though the local Jews were spared.

On the back of the paper with the address of the German officer, I wrote in German, in Gothic script, a note: "Dear Sir, as promised, I am sending you the man you requested, and he will do his job faithfully to your satisfaction. Respectfully yours."

I signed it illegibly and dated it. On my way, I spoke only Ukrainian. Close to the Russian-Polish border near the Zbruch River I met two German guards. I showed them the letter that I had forged, and they let me through to the border.

Continuing, I reached the town of Skala in Galicia and from there I went to Borshchev. At both places, I met some Jews; one Borshchever advised me not to go into a Jewish home. In this manner, I went through the towns of Tluste, Gorodenka, Kolomyya, Delyatin, Yaremcha, Niklovitsi, and Tatarow. In all these towns, I saw Jews dragging their belongings to ghettos.

In Lublinitz the militia detained me, the letter in my hand notwithstanding, and led me to the German command headquarters on the Polish-Hungarian border. They saw no reason to detain me, and an officer took me to the Hungarian border guards and tried to persuade them to let me cross into Hungary.

The Hungarians, however, ordered me back. I was compelled to return to the village and was held captive by the militia. Somehow, by a miracle, several Hungarian Jews and I managed to escape and reach Hungary.

Personalities

David Schleifer

On Shemini-Azeret 1921, one of the revered Zionist activists, the lawyer, David ben Shabbetai Schleifer of Kaminits-Podolsk, fell victim to Denikin's soldiers in Kiev. He departed from us at a time of such unrest that even his closest friends and relatives could not extend him the last honors and hardly mourned him properly. We neglected to honor the memory of one of the best and most important Zionists who gave his lifeblood on the altar of our national work.

David Schleifer was born in Kaminits-Podolsk in 1863 to poor, but somewhat enlightened, parents. He was graduated from the local secondary school and was accepted at the university in Kharkov to study law. As a student, he suffered many deprivations, because he had to support himself. For almost all his time as a student, he had to live on bread and herring. Despite the adverse conditions of his material life, he dedicated himself to the BILU movement and was one of its members who prepared himself to emigrate to Eretz Yisrael, despite the depressing tidings from there after the first group left in 1882. In the meantime, he completed his studies at the university, came to Kaminits, married, and began to work in his profession. After a short time, he became known in the city and its environs as an authority in civil law. Jews from the whole district flocked to him for advice and for defense of their various cases.

After the First Zionist Congress, he devoted himself to Zionist ideology. This later became his life work. He organized the first Zionist club for the intelligentsia of his city—and shortly after that a club for the middle class sector, for the enlightened youth, for middle class women, for liberal young women. A central committee of all club representatives was chosen, and he stood at its head.

He was not outstanding as a speaker, but there was a logic in his speeches, sound and reflective. His words came from the heart with abounding enthusiasm, and he made a very strong impression on his listeners. He excelled particularly as a wonderful organizer. He never relaxed, feeling always that he was not fulfilling his obligations towards the Zionist idea, so he proceeded to organize Zionist work in the provincial towns. With the approval of the central Zionist committee, a conference was called of all the Zionists of Podolia. The conference chose a district committee delegated to direct and be in charge of the whole district. David Schleifer headed that committee, and, within a short time, he succeeded in more than doubling the strength of the movement.

The Kaminits authorities had confidence in Schleifer, and, because of that, Zionist activity was pursued almost wholly within legal bounds. He was able, without undue difficulties, to arrange regional and district

meetings. In Kaminits proper, there were meetings, lectures, or evening entertainments every week.

On the agenda of the city's Zionist center there was the problem of an anti-Semitic play, *Kontrabandistim,* that the city wanted to produce as a benefit for the city's youth. The chief of police knew what was being done in our ranks with regard to this matter and came to this meeting, participated in the discussions, and finally took it upon himself to be the mediator between the Zionists and the theater—and the play was withdrawn from the repertoire.

The intensive amount of work publicly pursued in Kaminits and its environs was not, however, to the liking of another regime. One day in 1910, the gendarmes searched my home and confiscated all the documents, lists, letters, accounts, addresses, etc. After many investigations, they put them into the hands of the regional court, and it became necessary now to make a case of this matter. Because it was not possible to disregard in silence all that material, proven in black and white, of the existence in the district of an unregulated, strong, organized agency with a regional, national, and world center ... not even David Schleifer could resolve the situation in this instance. He tried primarily to have the central agencies and the organizations in the outlying villages released from the situation. In this matter, he was able to help things a long way. First of all, he paid tribute to the legal investigator with a gift (200 rubles), and if the gentleman happened to be an investigator of important matters, he would accept the gift graciously. In 1911 Schleifer delivered an impassioned Zionist speech in court and all the committee members were acquitted.

After the Zionists' spectacular trial in the court, Schleifer wanted to avenge his enemies and antagonists who thought that the Zionist movement in Kaminits and its environs had come to its end, along with Schleifer's greatness. To counteract this, a large masquerade ball was arranged to benefit the Palestine Committee in Odessa. A fair was set up featuring products from Eretz Yisrael. Among those who attended the fair were the top officials of the city, Jews as well as Christians, as well as many people from the neighboring cities. The outstanding success of this fair was such that David Schleifer, a few days later, was compelled to say "*Hadderan*" (let us repeat!), and the ball was also a great success the second time around.

Schleifer participated in the community work of the city in addition to his Zionist activity. From the revenues realized from food taxes, he founded a Hebrew school that included vocational classes. He was also instrumental in organizing a Hebrew Club—the only club in the entire district with such a name—with a library of 3,000 volumes in Judaica. Schleifer was director of these institutions. He was well known not only as a Zionist, but also as a general community activist.

His Zionist ardor reached its peak in an hour of gladness. Anyone who witnessed him enjoying a Zionist celebration had never seen a happier man.

On such occasions, he would sometimes forget his obligations to the government as a lawyer, and at times he was in a dangerous position because of such transgressions.

I remember a happening on Simhat Torah in the small town of Orinin near Kaminits. In a private home, we had arranged a *minyan* for the benefit of the Jewish National Fund. During the Torah reading a coach approached the house, and sitting in it were David Schleifer and an investigator. Schleifer left the investigator sitting in the coach, and he came into the *minyan*. We honored the guest with an *aliyah*, and we thought he would then hasten to proceed on his way. He waited until the conclusion of the Torah reading, delivered a Zionist speech, and after *musaf* joined us in the blessing over the wine and the customary singing and dancing. That, however, was not enough for him. It was necessary to bring the Sefer Torah to the synagogue, and there the Zionists of Orinin were circling around the whole town, singing and dancing. Schleifer went in the lead and directed the singing, and following him were all the Zionists, and after them, the whole town, men, women, and children; and the *goy* was sitting by himself in the coach, waiting....

A happening of a different sort occurred in Dunivits (30 km from Kaminits). In this town, there was a raging conflict of opinion between the old Zionists and the new, and the Zionist cause suffered much on account of this. The district committee that wanted to put an end to this argument came to Dunivits for a special session convened to resolve the conflict. Schleifer, together with the investigator, had been scheduled by the regional court to go to a neighboring town, and when they came to Dunivits, they stopped to rest a while. Schleifer left the investigator at the inn to attend, for a short while, the local Zionists' meeting. The sessions continued for two days and two nights, and he completely forgot about the court investigator and the government investigation.

David Schleifer was a delegate to various Zionist congresses and meetings. After each event, it was as though his youth were renewed. As many times as he decided to visit Eretz Yisrael, he could not bring himself to visit there as a Zionist or simply as a tourist. He always dreamed of connecting his travel to a practical Zionist deed. In 1908 he was about to organize a group of 50 young men and women from Podolia and to establish for them a cooperative settlement. One day I found him poring intently over a map of Eretz Yisrael, and, when he told me the details of the program, he showed me on the map the place designated for the settlement (near Moza). Not a man of words, but of deeds, he set to work. He put out a call about this matter to all the Zionist clubs in Podolia, met with our central organizations (the major committee and sub-committee, the central committee, the Jewish National Fund, and the Odessa committee) as well as with individual philanthropists and with people experienced in matters of settlements and cooperatives. He was already dreaming of the happiest day of his life when

he would accompany the group migrating to Eretz Yisrael. Our institutions, however, found that the time was not yet ripe for such an undertaking.

It is noteworthy that at the place Schleifer considered 20 years ago as the site for the settlement, there is now the settlement of Kiryat Anavim, 90% of whose members are emigrants from Podolia and the majority of those are from Kaminits proper.

Schleifer also nursed another idea. He contacted a photographer in Kaminits to travel to Eretz Yisrael in order to photograph the life of the Jews in the cities and settlements and afterwards to tour Russian cities with the a photographic exhibit as propaganda for the Zionist cause. This project never materialized either.

When Schleifer saw that all his dreams of travel to Eretz Yisrael could not be realized, he decided to go simply as a tourist. In 1912, when his only daughter finished her course of studies in Switzerland, he wanted to indulge himself and his family and take a tour of Eretz Yisrael. No sooner said than done. He put his affairs in order, got a passport, and everything was ready for the journey. Nevertheless, because of some unforeseen turn of events, his journey to Eretz Yisrael was deferred once again.

At the outbreak of World War I, when the Austrian armies entered Kaminits and demanded contributions of large sums of money within 24 hours, Schleifer and other city activists were ordered to go from door to door all night to collect money or valuables. A few days after that, when the Russian armies had driven out the Austrians and began to take revenge on the Jews because of the contributions (despite the proclamation of Franz Josef to return all the monies and goods to their owners), David Schleifer decided to leave Kaminits.

At that time, Czar Nicholas visited Kaminits as one of the places from which to view the war, and the local town arranged a festive welcome for him through delegations of Christians, Catholics, and Jews. The Jewish community requested David Schleifer to lead the Jewish delegation. It had been decided that there would be no speeches for the czar. There was already widespread slandering of the Jews and accusations that they were spies for Germany, etc. Such defamation had caused the Jews to be driven out from the neighboring towns to the border, and an incident occurred similar to the one in Kutno. Schleifer could not bear up under this pain with absolute silence, and, when he proffered bread and salt to the czar, he addressed him with these words:

> If Your Imperial Majesty does not believe in such action as happened in Kutno, please accept bread and salt from the Jewish inhabitants.

The czar extended a hand to him and said, "I accept."

A few days later, Schleifer left Kaminits, and from then on began the odyssey of wanderings for him and his family from Kaminits to Vinnitsa, then to Yekaterinoslav, to Kiev, back to Kaminits and to Yekaterinoslav until the war ended. At the beginning of the Revolution, he returned to

Kaminits, and, even though he found there a strong Zionist organization, particularly of young men and women, he could not feel at ease in a city that had become a haven for the Petlyurists. He decided to settle in Kiev where he was appointed, through the efforts of the Zionists, to a post in civil law and where he also found a wide berth for community and Zionist activity. Kiev had developed at that time into an important Zionist community center, and the local Zionists recognized and appreciated his accomplishments. He was chosen to be the deputy-chairman of the first Jewish democratic *kehillah*, to be a member of the central city committee, and also a member of the Jewish National Assembly. He published articles in the Yiddish newspaper, *Telegraf*, issued in Kiev at that time, and also in *Haolam* and in *Al ha-mishmar*.

With the change in regimes, David Schleifer became unemployed, and, together with other refugee Zionists and those affected by the war and revolution, suffered poverty and deprivation. He grew more depressed each day, and the man who was always full of life and enthusiasm, hopes and dreams, fell into the depths of despair.

When Denikin's men entered Kiev and started to mistreat the Jews, Schleifer could in no way hide in an attic or a cellar. He went out to the courtyard to try to influence the wild, brutal soldiers. He no sooner appeared in the yard when they shot him, and he fell to the ground bespattered with his blood.

Israel Goldman

Israel Goldman was born the 3rd day of Heshvan 1880 in Orinin near Kaminits to Reb Yishayahu Goldman, a ritual slaughterer. He received a traditional education in *heder* and yeshivah, as was customary in those days. At a young age, he went to live with his grandfather in Kaminits and continued his religious studies. During that time, he developed and matured from his exposure to the Yiddish and Hebrew literature of the *Haskalah*. He left religion and got caught up in the spirit of the new era and the Zionist idea. When he grew older, he studied Russian and was licensed as a teacher.

Talented as a writer, he began to write poems and stories in Yiddish and a collection of his poems with the title *Id'eal un leben* was published in Vilna. During that time, he was involved in Zionist community work in Kaminits and the towns of the district.

Goldman was a well-liked individual and quickly distinguished himself in the Zionist movement. The leader of the movement in Kaminits, D. Schleifer, offered him the secretaryship of the Zionist Organization in the Podolia region. He knew how to respond to his opponents and to stand his ground on opposing views regarding any premise of his adversaries.

Although he was absorbed and very much involved in policy decisions and Zionist community activities, he began to publish articles in newspapers, and, in the course of time, he became a distinguished journalist who could accurately depict the life and problems of the Podolia Jews. For many years,

he served as a regular contributor to the Odessa newspaper, *Gut Morgen*, and was also a contributor of articles in Russian to the local Kaminits newspapers.

When the migration of Russian Jews to North and South America increased and the I.C.A. [Jewish Colonization Office] opened an information office in Kaminits, Goldman was appointed secretary; after a while he became its director. Thanks to his caring personal relationships with the emigrés, he became endeared to them. They saw in him a friend ready to help with heart and soul. Because he was close to their trials and tribulations, he could give expression to their problems in his articles in *Gut Morgen*.

Before the outbreak of World War I, he went to Kiev and was there appointed secretary of the regional Jewish National Fund. In 1917, after the February Revolution, he was appointed a member of the Jewish National Assembly and officiated as deputy head of the Jewish *kehillah* in Kiev.

When the regime fell into the hands of the Bolsheviks, the Zionist movement of Ukraine went underground to continue its work illegally. In 1922 he was imprisoned for two years together with some other members of the illegal committee. In 1925 when there was an easing on the part of the government officials towards the prisoners of Zion by their expulsion of Jews from Russia, Goldman chose go to Eretz Yisrael.

When he reached Eretz Yisrael, he once again dedicated himself to community work and, together with A. Mazeh, undertook the organizing of *Berit-Rishonim* and served as its secretary with the same spirited attitude evident in all his work. He considered his main objective the creation of a permanent bond, through an exchange of letters, between him and the Ukrainian Jews on the affirmation of the homeland and the life of the Jews behind the Iron Curtain. The letters served as a source of support and encouragement for the struggling Zionists in the Diaspora. The letters were published in most of the newspapers in Eretz Yisrael.

At the end of World War II, with the horrible news of the Nazi holocaust that had befallen the Jews of Europe, including those in Kaminits, Goldman initiated the organizing of *Ha-Irgun shel Yotsei Kaminits-Podolsk u-sevivatah* and dedicated much of his energy and time to it.

Y.A. Bar-Levi (Weissman)

Zalman Porat (Pratkin)

A native of Priluki in Ukraine, Porat came to our town as an adult at the beginning of the Revolution and immediately became active in Zionist community work as a member of *Ze'irei Zion*. His abilities and his good relationships with people soon put him in the first ranks of the movement. With the spread of the Revolution and the change of regimes, he was given to much wrangling with the authorities and with his antagonists among the Jews.

Since Porat was an accomplished linguist and very adept in human

relations, he was favored by the Jewish *kehillah* above anyone else in the other parties at the time when the Ministry of Jewish Affairs in the Ukraine was headed by Pinchas Krasny. Porat was a skilled organizer and a prudent executive. He was among the initiators of the first consumer cooperative in our locality and was its director.

When the Bolsheviks entered Kaminits for the second time, Porat was forced, as were our other friends, to leave the city and cross the border. Here, too, he quickly found a place for his Zionist work in Kishinev, and, for many years, he was actively engaged in work for the *Keren Hayesod* in Bessarabia and Romania. He learned the Romanian language very quickly, and this enabled him to work for the *Keren Hayesod* among the Jews of Romania. In Kishinev he wrote in Jewish newspapers and was among the contributors to *Unzer Tsayt*.

Porat emigrated to Eretz Yisrael 25 years ago and began to work for the development of agricultural cooperatives as basic adjuncts of agricultural centers; he continued this work until the day he died.

Y.A. Weissman

Balin

Balin was a small town, 15 kilometers from Kaminits-Podolsk. It had a Jewish population of about 100 families who derived their livelihoods mainly from small businesses and crafts. In the town were a synagogue, *heders*, a modern Hebrew school, a Zionist club, and a poorhouse. After World War I, five persons from the town made *aliyah*.

A. Ashman

The Hero of My Town

My native town—50–60 homes among Ukrainian villages of fields, gardens, and forests—how do I remember you?

You boasted no measure of greatness—learned men, famous rabbis, well-known cantors; you did not produce renowned artists. You harbored the traditional way of life of a small community within the Pale of Settlement: Jews, common folk who dealt in petty trade, and Jews who were shopkeepers. And the craftsmen—tailors and cobblers—earned a living by sewing furs and boots for the local farmers. Weddings and visits of the Hasidic rabbis were the only events that revived the spirit and brought, in their wake, outpourings of excitement and enthusiasm.

There was, however, one exceptional thing about Balin, the like of which was not to be found in any of the other neighboring towns and villages. Balin was privileged to have as one of its inhabitants a Jewish hero, a wonderful hero who appeared to be a direct descendant of the legendary heroes of yore whose images charmed countless generations.

I will, therefore, relate what I remember about the person and deeds of this hero and let this memory stand as a tombstone on the grave of my town—a small community wiped out in the blood bath and the destruction.

Yisro'el Nette's was his name (his father's name must have been Nette or Natan), of less than medium height, broad shouldered, solid, strong, muscular, quick, and alert. Although his face revealed an impudent and drawn expression, his eyes projected sparks of laughter and mischief. He had five or six children; he lived in the outskirts of the city in a rented house of an old, Gentile woman who stemmed from a distinguished, now impoverished, Polish family. This house was different from the other houses of the town inasmuch as it had a very large yard surrounded by a wooden fence, many planks of which were now askew, black, and rotted. In the yard, there were a few fruit trees; a large stable; a small, broken hut; and a deep dry well.

Yisro'el did not have a steady occupation, and, from time to time, he tried various means of earning a living. He was a tailor, then a hatter, and finally—when I was grown and became aware of him—a wheat merchant. In those years, many people were drawn to the trading of wheat. They would wander from village to village in small wagons harnessed to one or two horses and buy the yield of the farmers' fields.

Yisro'el Nette's went into partnership with Shmuel, the ragdealer, and they became merchants. Their shaky wagon resembled a large bird cage to which wheels were attached, and the horses were dubbed "dying cats" by the townspeople. Yisro'el himself, a witty jester and always the joker, would say that, at the top of a hill, he and Shmuel would load the horses onto the

wagon and would push it over the top until it reached the bottom.

A wondrous happening is told about the town—how Yisro'el Nette's succeeded in saving himself and his partner from the hands of robbers who lived in the large forest near the village of Tsegova and wrought terror on the surrounding area. Armed with axes, the robbers once ran after the two merchants who were travelling in their wagon. It was a summer's day at twilight when the sun had already set. The "cats" harnessed to the wagon could not escape with their drivers as the distance between the wagons and the robbers got smaller and smaller. Yisro'el then restrained the horses, positioned himself in a firm stance, and drew from his pants pocket a hand scale used to weigh small bundles. He boldly pointed the object towards the pursuers and said, "Desist. Away with you, or I shoot—one, two...."

The brass of the hand scale and the iron of the hooked bar, upon which is hung a bundle to be weighed, shone brightly in the twilight. The scale was thrust forward, and before Yisro'el counted to three, the robbers jumped into the bushes and disappeared into the darkness of the forest.

Yisro'el was full of vitality and mischievous doings. On Simhat Torah and at receptions for a rebbe, he was in the lead of the revelers, singing and dancing without wearying, and he swept all the assembled after himself. He mingled with the youth of the city who loved him for the stories of his deeds. He was a storyteller of rare talent, recounting adventures of his travels and wanderings, weaving stories, and telling a story within a story. He charmed his audience, at times bringing his listeners to gales of laughter, at other times keeping them spellbound and staring in open-mouthed wonder, with the suspense he had aroused—and at the end, when he reached the climax of intrigue and danger, he would say, "And certainly, I would not be alive today were the story not a fabricated tale from beginning to end."

Twice Yisro'el saved the whole town from devastation and ruin. The first time was in 1905 at the time of the pogroms after the Russo-Japanese War. Many communities in the Pale of Settlement had already experienced their share of riots, and there was a disturbance in the vicinity of the town of Balin. One day—on a market day—the town was overrun with an unusually large number of peasants and their wagons, together with wives, sons, and daughters. It bode no good, because they had brought hardly anything to sell. The wagons were full of empty sacks that they hoped to fill with booty. They roved through the stores, annoying and provoking the shopkeepers and any other Jew who ran up against them. Then, in the center of the market place, on a pack of sacks piled high on one of the wagons, appeared speakers who urged the crowd to punish the *zhids* (Jews), "murderers of the Messiah and bloodsuckers of poor, innocent farmers".... The mob became inflamed and started to disperse amidst shrieks of raging fury—another instant, and the evil deeds would have begun.

At the same moment, Yisro'elik, Yisro'el Nette's, jumped onto the wagon of the speakers, raised his arm and called out loudly, "Farmers, respected husbandmen, listen to me!" The sight of the lone Jew who dared to appear in the midst of the excited crowd (all the Jewish townspeople were already hiding in their homes behind locked doors) struck the peasants dumb, and they grew silent.

Yisro'el continued, "Look, I am the only Jew standing among you. It is in your hands, naturally, to do away with me right now and to destroy the whole town. The people locked behind closed doors in their homes—the elderly, women, and children—will not stop you. But where are all the able-bodied youth? They are not in the town; they are organized and ready for this pogrom. They are spread among the neighboring villages, hiding, lying in wake, near your houses, storehouses, and granaries—each one armed with a bottle of kerosene and dry, old rags. The minute the cry of the ravaged town reaches their ears, fire will engulf your villages, rage from house to house, from storehouse to storehouse, from granary to granary. When you return with your loot, you will find only smoking firebrands. And now, the choice is yours. Do as you will!"

He jumped off the wagon and disappeared before the crowd could recover from its consternation. And when it did—it was overcome with panic and dispersed. Whips were lashed on horses' backs; the wagons struck up a clip-clop, colliding into each other in the great haste; and furiously extricating themselves, they bound off in every direction amidst shrieks of revilement and scorn. The marketplace was emptied, and the town was saved.

Yisro'el's second heroic deed occurred a few years later, and this time it was not only his dauntless spirit but also his feats of courageous strength. I was already a young man, but the incident is etched in my memory down to the very last detail. To a limited degree, I participated in it, even if only passively—as was the case with other youths like myself.

It was on a Sabbath day in late winter, the landscape still covered with a heavy blanket of snow, the sullen skies laden with dull grey clouds, the air moist. It was afternoon, the siesta hour of the Sabbath. A caravan of sleds carrying hewn stones appeared in the town. A sugar factory was being built in the village of Mikhova, and the rocks were being supplied by a quarry in the village of Zelenitsa. The road between the two villages passed though the outskirts of Balin. Why did the peasants who were transporting the stones stop in the town proper with a large caravan of 40 sleds and go through the town from its entrance to the point where the road resumes? The peasants—big, tough guys—tied the bags of fodder around the necks of the horses, and some of the peasants began to knock on the shutters of the closed shops, demanding that tobacco, matches, and food be sold to them. When there was no answer, they detached one shutter here, another one there, shouting and shrieking and pillaging the shops. A wild madness

passed quickly among the rest of the group, and cries of terror rose from the homes of the plundered shopkeepers.

At that time, I was with my elder brother, Yirmiyahu, at my Uncle Fishel's house. When we heard the screams, we burst out into the street; when we saw the rioting peasants, we immediately ran to Yisro'el Nette's. He was lying, sleeping peacefully, on the rim of the wide stove—a typical stove in a Ukrainian house.

"*Goyim* are rioting in our town!" we shouted.

He threw off the pelt with which he was covered and jumped agilely off the stove. He was not wearing his upper garments. He quickly donned a light winter coat, put on his fur hat, and drew an object from the table drawer. He had his back to us. We didn't see what the object was, and, even when he turned towards us, the hand that held it was thrust into a sleeve. (It later became clear that it was an iron, nail-studded glove worn on the palm of the hand.) He ran to the highest point of the town; we lagging behind him. We saw from afar that he was stopped at the kiosk of Moshe Tabachnik and was immediately surrounded by a thick circle of peasants who began beating him with the handles of the whips in their hands. It looked as though he had sunk and disappeared. But suddenly the ring broke up, the peasants, shaking and trembling, withdrew with wails and screams and began to flee when their faces and heads started bleeding. The doors of houses on both sides of the road began to open, and the encouraged householders stood at their thresholds and threw logs of wood from their woodpiles at the fleeing peasants.

"Fools!" Yisro'el shrieked. "Don't throw heavy pieces of wood! Do you want to furnish the *goyim* with better weapons than they have in their hands?"

He stood bareheaded (the fur hat had disappeared), his face and head covered with red, raw streaks from the beatings, but his mind was sharp and spirited.

"I am not asking you for help," he called jestingly. "I ask only that you run quickly in the heels of the fugitives and blot out the blood that was spilled on the snow."

There were many, large stains of blood near the kiosk, at the scene of the fight, and along the course of the flight. We ran and erased the stains by shuffling the soles of our shoes and by piling fresh snow from the sides onto the stains.

"And now, release the horses from the sleds and bring them into my courtyard," Yisro'el commanded. "I will not return the horses to them until they give me back my fur hat."

This order, too, was immediately carried out. Yisro'el's courtyard filled up with horses. The dismantled sleds stood outside, and the trounced drivers gathered at the church which was situated a short distance from the town.

They nursed their wounds and deliberated until evening. Then they sent a delegation to Yisro'el, begged his forgiveness, and returned his hat. After the drivers swallowed their pride, the caravan continued on its way.

After a few years, Yisro'el and his family relocated in London with relatives, and from then on we knew little about him. I heard that one of his sons visited Israel after it became a State, and he met with some emigrants from Balin who are there. He reported that his father was no longer alive, but I don't know whether he had died before or after World War II or whether he was killed during the Blitz in London.

Yisro'el Nette's will be remembered—the soul of light in the small town that gloried in his shadow, until Balin was overcome by the final mutilating shade from which there was no flight.

Personalities

Aharon Ashman

Ashman was born in 1896. He had a traditional elementary and secondary education and studied philology at the university in Kaminits. In that city, he taught Hebrew for a few years, and for two years (1919–20) he served as presiding officer of its Jewish community. He was also active in the Jewish self-defense organization and was one of the troops who went to the neighboring town of Orinin to fight against Petlyura's army which was about to invade Kaminits. In 1921 he went to Eretz Yisrael, and, in addition to teaching, he devoted himself to a literary career. He wrote stories and poems, translated about 30 operas and oratorios, and made a name for himself as a playwright dealing with biblical themes and with the history of the Land from its first agricultural settlements up to our day.

In his plays, he displayed the talent and natural sensitivity of a fine playwright who eschewed external affectations and sought to reveal the innermost conflicts of humankind. The plays, ten of them, were very successfully produced by the *Matate*, *Ohel*, and *Habimah* theater groups. *Habimah* put on *Mikhal bat Sha'ul*. His plays were presented in Paris at the International Festival; amateur and professional theater groups also produced them at various places in the country and elsewhere (the United States, France, Canada, and Argentina). Two of his plays, *Ha-Adamah ha-zot* and the *Mikhal bat Sha'ul* trilogy, won the Gubinska prize and the Zemach prize awarded by *Habimah*.

In addition to operas and operettas, Ashman also translated into Hebrew [from the Yiddish] Mendele Mokher Seforim's *Masot Binyamin ha-shelishi* and Shalom Aleichem's *Menakhem Mendel ba'al halomot.*

He also wrote texts and compiled anthologies. He served as chairman of the Israel Authors and Composers Association for several years, devoting much time in safeguarding the copyright privileges of authors.

A. Rosen

Dunivits

In Russian, Dunayevtsy, a city on the Tarnov River, 32 versts from Novaya Ushitsa and about 30 versts from Kaminits-Podolsk. During the Polish reign, in 1765, the town had a Jewish population of 1,129 with an additional 1,598 in its immediate environs. In 1775, after the reign of the Haidamacks, the number decreased to 884 in the town and 849 in the environs. In 1784 the total Jewish population was 748 in the town and 1,221 in the environs. Three years later, there was again a noted decrease to 568 in the town and 1,133 in the surroundings.

With the annexation of Podolia to the Russian Empire after the partition of Poland [1793] and the settlement of Germans in the town and its environs, there followed a period of progress and growth. The population increased to 11,000, and the Jewish population flourished. At the beginning of the 20th century, there were textile factories, a dye works, a flour mill, two hospitals, and public schools. In the area, there were many fruit orchards and also a small cattle ranch.

Abraham Rosen

Dunivits

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The city of Dunivits is situated on a slope of a ridge in the Carpathian Mountains, 40 kilometers from Kaminits. It is under the jurisdiction of Novaya Ushitsa. It consists of two parts—the Old City and the New City. The latter is spread out on both sides of the main highway that is the artery of transport and traffic between the Proskurov district and Kaminits-Podolsk; it joins the Old City via a broad avenue, the Main Street that runs through the whole city from one end to the other.

The Old City had two large markets (the market of stores and the animal market), a butchers' street, a tailors' street, a synagogues' street, and various other streets and alleys. The market of stores consisted mostly of wholesalers and retailers of groceries, haberdashery, textiles, footwear, housewares, building materials, and furniture. In the center of the city, there were about 40 wooden kiosks and small shops that sold notions, agricultural tools, food, and tobacco. Most of them had outside shutters used for hanging samples of the merchandise. Behind the kiosks and shops, the Gentile hog butchers had an area where they sold the wares that they had brought in their wagons.

On market days (usually every Tuesday), the stores were full of farmers who came from surrounding areas with produce to sell and to buy things they needed. Opposite the kiosks, there was a large open space crowded with small stands and workshops (tinsmiths, glaziers). The Gentile women from the outskirts and suburbs would display farm produce that they had brought to sell—garden and orchard produce and dairy products. Nearby, the peasants who had come from the interior of Russia set up their tent stalls primarily to sell icons and other Christian religious objects. The animal market, also very large, was used for the sale of cattle and fowl. Most days of the week it was empty and desolate, but on market days it was bustling with the noise of man and beast.

The houses in the Old City were either one or two stories high, and all were architecturally similar. The Catholic and the Greek Orthodox churches stood out prominently—the first, in the center of the market of stores and the second, at the top of Main Street. Their height and architectural distinctiveness were impressive. An ancient building three stories high with an arched passage stood on the border between the two markets and served as a common hall for many inhabitants. The Christians called it *ratush* (town hall, and it apparently was often used for this purpose). The inhabitants of the Old City, excluding the suburbs within its boundaries, were almost all Jews, except for a few hundred Gentiles (Poles and Ukrainians) who earned their living in the city but resided in the suburbs.

The New City was notable for its wide, clean streets and pretty houses

surrounded by gardens and orchards. It included in its center, in addition to a large market place, a Protestant church and a large German school. There was also a large, pleasant community garden that the Germans, the majority of its inhabitants and founders, had planted and set aside for their exclusive use. The importance of the New City was due to the approximately 50 textile factories that employed and supported, directly or indirectly, a large part of its population.

At the beginning of the 19th century, after Alexander I had negotiated the Holy Alliance with Austria and Prussia, many Germans relocated in Russia and established various industries there. According to the town elders, many of these immigrants, textile workers by trade, journeyed with their wives and children to Dunivits in dog-drawn wagons. They brought hand looms, opened small craft businesses, and started a textile industry. In the course of time, they bought steam-powered machines, established large factories, and transformed the depressed town at the edge of Podolia into the only important textile center in Ukraine that competed with the large industrial cities of Lodz and Bialystok.

In World War I, the government exiled most of the Germans to the interior of the country. The machines in the factories spewed out weapons and bullets, and the buildings were turned into barracks. Thus, the Dunivits Textiles Works that to a great extent had helped clothe the army ceased to exist; its absence was especially felt during the war. This influenced for the worse the general condition of the city that was becoming considerably impoverished.

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The population of Dunivits was 15,000; 11,000 were Jews and the remainder Ukrainians, Poles, and Germans. According to documentation in the district archives, there were 1,129 Jews in 1765, exclusive of the Jews in the surrounding villages who were also under the jurisdiction of Dunivits. When the Cossacks, under Bogdan Chmielnicki, attacked the Jewish settlements and wrought horrible atrocities upon them (the edicts of 1648–49) and after the massacre in Uman in 1768, many inhabitants fled the city, and only 484 Jews remained. After a while, the population increased to 5,000 Jewish families, among them 800 craftsmen, 200 shopkeepers, 296 grain merchants, 200 textile merchants, and the remainder peddlers and small businessmen.

As stated above, the industry that was instituted in the city changed its economy. Many Jews befriended the German manufacturers, learned the trade from them, and worked in their factories as weavers, dyers, wool shearers, and mechanics. They served as managers and suppliers who received wool and other raw materials from sources such as Bessarabia, Crimea, Caucasia, and even Australia. There were agents and merchants who distributed the textiles throughout the whole of Russia and acquired extended markets. During that time some Jewish-owned factories were

established, and a large part of the Old City's population participated in developing this enterprise and earned a livelihood from it.

In addition to those employed in this branch of industry, there were also business men and various craftsmen (tailors, shoemakers, furriers, hat makers, carpenters, blacksmiths, tinsmiths, goldsmiths, and watchmakers), merchants (particularly grain exporters), storekeepers, clerks, middlemen, insurance agents, and bankers. Compared to the surrounding towns, conditions in Dunivits were basically good.

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As is known, Podolia was the cradle of Hasidism and the place where it first developed. In Dunivits, too, this national movement struck deep roots and was an important place during its first days. Among the great *zaddikim* mentioned in Israel Loebel's *Sefer Vikku'ah* and in the literature for the period 1798–1800, the names of the greats among the notables were Reb Levi Isaac of Berdichev, Reb Wolf of Zhitomir, and Reb Isaiah of Dunivits [Spiro, Isaiah Naphtali Herz]. Reb Isaiah compiled a collection of sayings of the *maggid*, Dov Baer of Mezhirech, in his book, *Or Torah (Rimzei Torah)*. There was also Reb Pinchas of Dunivits, a student of Reb Joshua Heschel of Apta, who issued a book of Torah sayings entitled *Siftei zaddikim*.

Over time, as in every other place, there arose various sects, each of which put its faith in its own *zaddik* and found fault with the others—a fact that often led to disputes and even to fistfights. In Dunivits there were Sadgura, Husyatin, Chortkov, Zinkov, and other Hasidim. The Zinkov Hasidim split into two factions: those who became followers of Reb Moshe and those who followed his brother, Reb Pinchas. There was constant hostility between them. The following story is illustrative of the absolute devotion and faithfulness of the Hasidim to their *zaddikim*.

In 1838 two informers who used to harass the surrounding Jewish communities by complaining about them to the authorities were killed. It was told that one of them was thrown alive into the fiery furnace of the bath house in Dunivits and was burnt there. The authorities construed that murder to be a deed of the nearby communities and committed the community leaders to a military trial. Reb Israel of Ruzhin (Kiev district) had been suspected of inciting the murder and was, under heavy guard, being conducted to the sentencing. On the way, he was brought for overnight lodging to one of the houses in the courtyard of the Greek Orthodox church in Dunivits. What did the Hasidim of the town do? They donned shrouds and set up an ambush behind the tombstones of one of the cemeteries leading to Novaya Ushitsa. The next day, when the guards and their prisoner approached the area, the feigned corpses sprang up from their hiding places and fell upon the guards with shouts and wild shrieks, until, completely terrified, the guards abandoned the prisoner and fled for their lives. Then the *zaddik* was led in safe passage to the border of Austria

where he settled in Sadgura which is in Bukovina and established the Sadgura dynasty.

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There were three rebbes in Dunivits, and each of them had his coterie of supporters, who, so to speak, maintained him. In order to make up, even partially, for what was lacking in her household, the rebbe's wife had to resort to some small business, such as, for instance, the making and selling of preserves. At times the rebbes would have differences of opinion and squabble about various religious practices, causing fierce quarrels among their adherents. The matter of the *mikveh* stirred up just such a quarrel, with one rebbe declaring it not appropriate for use, whereas a second rebbe considered it ritually correct and permissible for use. The whole city was at odds for a year. Also, each rebbe employed a ritual slaughterer who adhered strictly to that rebbe's method of slaughtering. This, of course, also caused many schisms and conflicts among the various Hasidic sects in the town.

The communal affairs were conducted by synagogue officers whose budgets came from the taxes on meats and candles. In addition to a large public synagogue, there were smaller ones for craftsmen (tailors, shoemakers), a house of study and small synagogues for the various Hasidic sects, some community institutions such as a Talmud Torah for poor children, a hospital for the poor, a bath house, a committee for visiting the sick, a Mishnah study group, a group to say *Tehillim*, and a volunteer fire department. The fire department was organized 60 years ago, after a large fire had destroyed 20 homes. With funds received from the town and various other donations, it acquired the necessary equipment and also a large building to house the firefighting supplies. The building had a large hall used for meetings, lectures, and plays.

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The local textile works (Dunivits Textiles) brought all its dealers, merchants, salesmen and traveling agents in contact with the outside world and was an effective factor in the spread of enlightenment and culture in the city. In addition to the traditional teachers and *heders*, there were expert teachers of the Bible, Hebrew language and grammar, the language of the country, and general studies. Many sons of the well-to-do citizens succeeded in being accepted into the governmental secondary schools in Kaminits in order to complete their studies or to qualify for acceptance in universities.

Dunivits held a distinguished place when the Zionist movement spread among the Jews of Russia. The most enlightened Jews, later to be recognized as active Zionists, included Yosef Blank and Elya Rubinstein (both affiliated with Dunivits Textiles), Mordecai Rosen (contributor of articles to *Ha-Meliz*, *Ha-Zefira*, *Ha-Shilo'ah*, and later, in the United States,

to *Hadoar*). Others organized the first Zionist group in the city, *Dorshei Zion*, and initiated many undertakings in coordinating all aspects of the national revival. They organized an educational program of Zionist propaganda, recruiting members for the Zionist organization through the selling of *shekalim*, collected funds for the benefit of *Hovevei Zion* that was located in Odessa, and sold not a few shares of *Ozar Hityashvut ha-Yehudim* (Jewish Colonial Trust). The clubs sent representatives to the Zionist Congresses, and the ensuing public reports served even more to attract the population to the Zionist cause.

Education and the enlightenment in the city took on an outstanding national Zionist aura. As an undertaking of *Dorshei Zion*, a Hebrew school was established (the first in the city), and its curriculum included Hebrew and general studies.

Zionist influence flourished, particularly among the youth. Zionist youths imbued with a deep nationalistic feeling, saw as first priority the revival of their nation, land, and language. Even the spiritual Zionism movement of Ahad Ha-Am (Asher Ginzberg) gained many supporters, and the Zionist youth organization, *Ha-Tehiyya*, came under this banner. Even though there was a certain degree of rivalrous disputation between the two camps of Zionism, this merely served to heighten the energies of both for increased activity. Through the efforts of the youthful Zionist groups, several public and private schools were established, and the renewed Hebrew language was adopted by many. Hundreds of young people diligently read the new Hebrew literature and the Hebrew newspapers of that era, *Ha-Meliz, Ha-Zefira, Ha-Zeman, Ha-Zofeh*, and other journals. There were 35 subscribers to the monthly *Ha-Shilo'ah* in Dunivits, which, according to its editor, Dr. Joseph Klausner, was second only to Odessa (the place of its publication) in all of Russia. The readers of *Ha-Shilo'ah* far exceeded its numbers of subscribers.

In 1903 there was a large Zionist convention in Dunivits, and among the speakers was a delegate of the Zionist Organization, Menahem Sheinkin. The convention, which took place in a large hall attended by a large audience, made a deep impression on all the participants. Dunivits became famous as an important Zionist center. Indeed, the movement for national Zionist education that opened its door to all segments of the population yielded many praiseworthy results. For craftsmen, there were also Sabbath lessons that dealt with the portion of the week which emphasized the aspect of national freedom. In time, the city raised a whole generation of proud Jews, adherents of the idea of national salvation, among them the writers Dr. Yehezkel Kaufmann (author of *Golah ve-nekher* and *Toldot ha-emunah ha-yisra-elit*), Prof. Zevi Scharfstein (author and educator), S.L. Blank (novelist), M. Mikhaeli (children's author and educator), L.Y. Riklis (author and educator), and others.

Apart from the Zionist Organization, there were hardly any other political parties in the city. The *Poal'ei Zion* party used the name only by virtue of

its members stemming from the working class; it had no connection whatsoever to the world organization of that name.

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Until World War I, the relationships between the city's Jews and the rest of the population were fairly normal. It should be noted that a closeness developed between the Jews and the German industrialists in connection with their business relationships. Many of the latter even learned Yiddish and could write business forms in Yiddish.

In 1903, after the Kishinev pogroms, anti-Semitic stirrings were felt around Dunivits, and the company of firefighters, many of whom were young men, strong and stouthearted, took upon itself the responsibility of safeguarding the city. And, it happened on a fair day, when all the markets were filled with neighboring farmers and their wagons, that a dispute broke out in a Jewish saloon between two drunken *katsops* who were laborers on a road crew, and they cried out, "Strike the Jews!" (the common password for a pogrom). Instantly, the alarm signal of the firefighters was heard, and they appeared with their equipment and weapons and proved their strength. There arose a tumult and confusion, and the farmers, frightened at sight of the strong men wearing uniforms and copper hats, fled the city. After the incident, a court summons was issued to the head of the firefighters, but he was declared innocent, and the city was peaceful once again.

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With World War I, the conditions in the city changed for the worse. The destruction of the industry by the military authorities, Petlyura's pogroms that struck at many Jewish communities in Ukraine and did not bypass Dunivits, the changing regimes from 1917 on—all these factors caused the impoverishment of its material and spiritual strengths. Many Jews, particularly those of the younger generation, left and relocated in different countries. Some went to Palestine to participate in the upbuilding of the country. The Jewish community of Dunivits still maintained itself, however, albeit in an impoverished state until World War II, when it was overcome by the Nazi destruction. After many, many cruel edicts and ruthless maltreatments, after crowding multitudes into ghettos, the Final Solution came, as it did to other towns of Ukraine. Some of the Jews were shot and buried in the central market place, and many were transported to be killed outside the city and buried in one large common grave. Thus, the Jewish community of Dunivits, a mother city of the nation of Israel, known and praised for its traditional past, was destroyed.

Zevi Scharfstein

The City of My Birth

(From the book, *Dunivits ir moladeti*
published by the Dunivitser (Podolia) Aid Society of America)

Our town was not a noisy one, but life and movement flowed through it. Many came to buy or sell, and many traveled for reasons of trade and commerce. The person walking in the street, in most cases, had a goal in mind. The town also had a class of well-to-do people who did not pinch pennies, dressed and ate well. The Jews in our city had more sources of income than those of the Pale of Settlement. They supplied the German manufacturers with wool from Bessarabia, Crimea, Caucasia, and even from outside the country, from far-off Australia. They brought jute from Nizhni Novgorod and dyes from Lithuania and Germany. At the railroad station in Proskurov, they loaded heavy packs of goods and carted them with horses to our city. The Jews of our city were also traveling agents who passed through every city in Russia, throughout its breadth and length, from city to city, from region to region, to sell goods for profit for either factories or for themselves. They reached all corners of Russia, even into cold Siberia. When a stranger came to town, he was immediately recognized as such, and the townspeople soon struck up a conversation to hear what he had to say.

Negotiations with the cities of the large country broadened the horizons of the educated class in our city and encouraged them to further pursuits. The people of our city were not fanatics and did not stick to the old ways. They would dress in the modern fashion; don fashionable soft, straw hats; and use the fashionable pince-nez hung with silk ribbons to match their costumes. They read daily and weekly newspapers, Hebrew mostly, and sometimes Russian, and knew what was going on in the world. In their travels, they would come in contact with Jewish leaders and businessmen and discuss matters with them. In this way, our agents and salesmen were influenced by the various movements and social currents prevailing at that time. When they returned, they brought new ideas and talked about them. None of the young people in our town was forced to oppose the Haskalah, the study of Hebrew or general studies—because no one would think of dictating to them and meddling in their activities, and anyone who read the works of Mapu or Smolenskin did not have to do his reading secretly. Newspapers and books were available, and the parents, too, would eagerly peruse them. Even the rabbi, whose two sons were of the intelligentsia, did not prevent his sons from reading the new literature, and no one protested to the rabbi for letting them participate in the "depraved culture."

We had Hebrew teachers and teachers of general studies who prepared the younger generation for entrance to the *gimnazye*. There was hardly a son of good or literate Jewish parentage who did not read the new Jewish literature. One rarely saw a boy with *payot* and long robes. When Zionism

spread through Russia, our town was the center for all the surrounding area. It proclaimed the Zionist doctrines in the newspapers at every opportunity and publicized all shades of opinion. The town became renowned. The leaders of the movement considered it so exemplary that it was considered to be the Jerusalem of Podolia.

In a section of the New City there was a special neighborhood, somewhat distant and isolated, where the factories and homes of the German factory owners were built. The homes on the main avenue were those of the Russian managers and the well-to-do Jews. In the Old City, there was the market place and also the dwellings and stores of the shopkeepers, grain merchants, artisans, and middlemen. Few rich or well-to-do people lived in the Old City.

The factory buildings were in the German colony, and the owners, directors, and managers had their homes there. The neighborhood was splendid at that time. The buildings were not large, most of them only one story high, but they were solidly built, glistening in their whitewash, and immersed in the greenery of ornamental shrubs and fruit trees. In general, that neighborhood emitted an atmosphere of stable and secure people. The private homes were all detached, each with its own yard and plot, wide benches for resting, a fence and multi-colored flowers. The atmosphere was one of repose and relaxation. Through the polished glass of the windows one could see transparent curtains. If you happened to be there in the evening when the factories were closed, the calmness would embrace you. At times you could hear sounds of piano music or see a boy or girl riding a bicycle—a means of transportation not frequently seen in the rest of the population.

In my wanderings through those quiet streets, I would think about the Old City; its closely crowded little houses with their crooked, sagging walls ready to fall at any moment; its pack of troubles; its filth. I thought about the bareness of dirt floors.

It was not only the external cleanliness. The German community was organized and orderly. It had a public park where on holidays and summer evenings people could spend their time eating fat sausages and drinking beer, socializing, singing, and dancing. In our youth, we used to stand outside the gate at such events observing, somewhat mystified, what we saw within the gates. We saw strong, healthy men with their stout, buxom wives sitting at large, heavy wooden tables. They were eating fat sausages and drinking beer from large clay bowls; we heard their singing and witnessed their enjoyment in the pleasures of life. Where was the Jew, the family man, who in the evening could forget the day's worries, sit together with his wife, drink beer or wine, and open his mouth in song?

In the large Jewish community, there were hardly any public properties, except for the synagogues and houses of study, but those were in an extreme condition of neglect and not outstanding for their splendor. Even though the town boasted many enlightened people and extra-congregational merchant

guests, they did not have much influence in conducting the affairs of the city. The majority were lethargic concerning civic awareness. Who were the official communal leaders? The officers of the synagogues, Diaspora Jews, meek, provincial, not too courageous.

The Jewish community had a substantial income from the tax on meat—but part of it was squandered and part of it remained unused in the government treasury. When the synagogue officials had their annual meeting, it was held in the office of the chief of police. Then they remembered their humble needs—the leaking roof of the synagogue needed repair; the fence around the house of study was broken, and its slanting walls needed support beams; and other similar requests. Funds allotted for building repairs were minimal. The chief of police proposed granting large sums of money for general needs that did not fall into the domain of the particular needs of the Jewish community—the repair of roads, the construction of street lavatories, and other such projects. They were not concerned with such matters as educating poor children and providing health care for the poor.

The rabbis of the city—and there were three in my time—supported themselves with low salaries and were compelled to resort to extra means of income that yielded little revenue and much disgrace, as for instance by their wives making and selling preserves and having to accept gifts from richer householders for holidays such as Hanukkah and Purim.

Charitable establishments fared the worst. In the Talmud Torah for poor children, chaos prevailed; in the poorhouse, sick people lay in pain, malnourished, and with no medical care. The synagogue officials, who, for the most part, were not conversant in Russian and could not express their concerns in the language of the country, sat almost trembling before the officer, nodding their heads, and not daring to oppose his expenditure of funds.

Bit by bit, however, with the penetration of feelings of nationalism, social awareness was aroused, and there was open criticism of the synagogue officials and the honorable representatives of the town. Symbolic of this awareness was the establishment in the town of a volunteer fire brigade.

The association of firefighters in the German colony had a fully equipped station, long wagons with ladders, rubber hoses, huge water barrels, axes, and shattering tools. The firefighters were proficient in firefighting, because they would hold regular practice sessions; they would put out fires in the German Colony with great dispatch. When they donned their uniforms and copper hats and handled the large water hoses, panic lessened. However, when a fire broke out on a Jewish street and the bells signalled the call-up of the town's personnel, the firefighters would consider whether it was worth their while to go. They waited for instructions from their superiors to go to the rescue. When they finally resolved to leave the firehouse with their equipment to go to the fire, they did not hurry to perform their

duties—as though they enjoyed witnessing the loss of Jews' properties. The town's citizens were aware of this and complained about the wickedness, but it fell on deaf ears.

It was then that the conscience of the youth was aroused, and a determined young man, Chayim Hirsh Wissotzky, headed the group that founded a new firefighting corps which consisted of strong youths, the muscular athletic sons of the butchers, the tailors, the cobblers. They enlisted some Ukrainian youths, and, with the help of town revenues, built a large, spacious firehouse, bought all their equipment, and began training themselves in firefighting. From that time on, the Jews no longer needed to depend on the favors of the Germans. The firehouse in our town had a large hall used for meetings and community festivals, and the Jewish physician, Dr. Marmor, made every effort to see that the 3,000 rubles collected from the taxes on meat be expended for the maintenance of the building and for other necessities of the fighters.

The establishment of the brigade was the first evidence of improving community action in the town. After that, the Zionists, particularly the young people among them, began to pay attention to needed educational reforms—and did so. But that is a separate matter, a unique chapter in the history of the town.

Except for the merchants and agents who supplied raw materials to the factories and distributed the textiles to the cities, the rest of the population dealt mainly in petty trade. Except for the 20 or 25 large and medium-sized shops, the others were very small, measuring 4 feet by 4 feet, and some were wooden shacks set up in the market place. The invested capital was very small—two or three hundred rubles—but even that was not the storekeeper's, because the merchandise was obtained on credit. The other tradesmen were peddlers who kept their wares at home, hauled them to a bench or shelf in the market place every morning, and in the evening put the merchandise in sacks or baskets to take home.

Most days of the week the small shops were almost empty, with few and intermittent customers. The idle shopkeepers would sit in front of their stores and engage in random conversation with neighbors, middlemen, and passersby. When the initial heat of a conversation waned, boredom and yawns set in. These empty hours were devoted to town gossip, to the passing of judgment on situations concerning the townspeople: who was coming up in the world, and who was approaching bankruptcy; who was honest in his transactions, and who falsely tipped the scales; who was lucky enough to give his daughter in marriage to a proper suitor, and who had the misfortune of getting a fool or a ne'er-do-well for a son-in-law; who did not enjoy life because of his miserliness, and who aimlessly squandered his money; who gorged on delicacies, but sent his wife to seek welfare and health benefits; and similar idle gossip.

Because of the bad economic situation—many aspects of it manifest even

in our successful town—there was considerable competition. There were about 300 merchants who bought field crops from the farmers and sold it for a scanty profit to wholesalers who would export the wheat, the rye, and the spelt. On market days, the farmers would bring their wagons laden with all kinds of crops, vegetables, fruits, chickens, geese, swans, and eggs. There was a constant succession of wagons. The grain merchants would assemble and ask the farmer, "What did you bring? How much does it cost?" The farmer would scratch his forehead, ponder the matter, have difficulty in deciding how much to ask and whether to sell before he was approached by a second or third buyer and hear what that buyer would bid. What did the anxious merchants do? They beat their competitors by going on the road in the direction of the woods by which the farmers were approaching the town and offering to buy a farmer's wares even before the farmer entered the town. Such competition drove a second competitor to go even farther afield in order to outdistance the first competitor, and the third competitor did likewise. Thus, each tried to outsmart the other. And the farmer, who witnessed the ardor with which the Jew wanted the produce, grew suspicious, chased the buyer away, and continued his journey to town to see what price his wares could command there. If the merchant did succeed in buying a sack of rye or wheat, he would load the sack on his back and carry it until he could sell it to an agent for a pittance of a profit.

Our town had many artisans—about 800—of every kind of trade and occupation—tailors for men's and women's clothing, cobblers, carpenters, furriers, hatters, and leather workers; also barrel makers, tinsmiths, and goldsmiths. There were house painters and sign painters, watchmakers and silversmiths, bakers and cider brewers, and every other occupation for which there was a need. They were craftsmen, but not in the formal sense of the word. How did they learn their trade? Young apprentices were hired out to two masters, to an older craftsman and his wife. The apprentices would carry baskets home from market, sweep floors, carry out waste water and provide other such needed services, none of which advanced them in learning the necessary skills for the craft. Their masters and teachers were also not in the category of Bezalel ben Uri, and their work would not be classed as works of art. The demand for quality work was not widespread, because it was not much valued, nor could the majority of buyers afford to pay for it. Only the rich and well-to-do requested fitted and becoming dress. The community at large ignored it and did not feel deprived at the lack of style. The main thing was *takhlis*. A garment was sewn to cover nakedness and to provide warmth against the cold; shoes were fashioned to protect the feet and guard them from being stepped on and injured. What's so terrible, anyhow, about a garment that is a slightly larger size?

I remember that my father had a hatter's shop. We had one worker, Nette by name, a youth who ate at our table and lived in a room in our house. This young man was very particular about his dress. His work smock was

white and ironed, and, before he went to sleep, he would smooth out his trousers and hang them on a clothes rack so that they wouldn't get wrinkled. When he went out for a walk, neatly attired, he became an object of derision. "Just look at that ostentatious dandy! And if his trousers were creased, what would happen? Why all this bother?"

Apprentices and craftsmen were considered the merry ones of the city. A few learned their father's trade, fulfilling the maxim "Like father, like son." Many chose entirely different occupations. Every artisan was aware of the burdens he had to bear in his craft, and "the grass was always greener on the other side of the fence." The apprentices knew what faced them, what the future held for them when they were on their own and married, living in poverty. They decided to taste life to its fullest while they could. From the craft shops could be heard songs of joy and gladness—apprentices singing songs, sacred and secular, songs of love and mocking songs; young people telling jokes and jesting with each other; and laughter never left their lips the livelong day.

Those who were learning a trade did not hope for great things, but the road ahead was clear to them. Not so for the sons of the well-to-do. Few of them attended houses of study to learn Talmud, and the majority of them were engaged in the *Haskalah*; that is to say, they read the new Hebrew literature, learned the language of the country and the current news from their teachers, or they educated themselves during outings and discussions with their peers. A few prepared themselves for a definite profession such as pharmacy, medicine, or law, and the majority merely studied, for it was not seemly for the son of advantaged parents not to study. When a young man reached marriageable age, the marriage brokers would come to proposition the parents with a respectable match. When the contract was realized, the girl's father decided upon a price of a few hundred rubles for the dowry and promised sustenance for the bridegroom for a year or two, and even longer, until such time as the young married gentleman could find his independent way in life. The young couple married, and the dowry was deposited with a reputable person to earn interest.

But the haven and the honeymoon ended all too quickly. The wife's father had promised what he promised on the basis of his belief in the saying "He who gives life will also provide food" and waited for a miracle. The miracle didn't happen, and the saying was not confirmed. The young couple became a burden to the poor parents.

In the first days after the wedding, the newly married husband would dress meticulously and groom his hair, go to the *bet midrash*, meet with his friends for prayer, and then return home to the baked bread and the poured drink that awaited him. The mother- and father-in-law would extend every courtesy to him, but would keep to themselves the anxieties that beset them. But, poverty doesn't hide in the pots, and the time came for it to disclose itself, sooner or later; sighs and complaints about the troubled times burst

forth from the hearts of the parents and penetrated the heart of the young husband.

The bountiful provender offered in the early days grew increasingly less in quantity and more inferior in quality. The friendly bearing ceased with broad or veiled hints that he should not indulge himself at their expense. A piercing question then faced the young husband: What could he do? Untutored in the ways of the world, he didn't know to whom to turn. His options were few—to withdraw his money and lend it to small shopkeepers and merchants at a high interest—and perhaps to lose the capital, because there was no way of knowing whether he would ever be able to repay the loan? To go into partnership with a merchant who needed funds—and to lose? Whichever way he took would lead to loss. The end result was one more congregant who would fervently pray, "He who helps the poor, grant me salvation!"

A number of rich people earned a livelihood from businesses dealing with interest on loans. They would lend small sums of money, from 50 to a few hundred rubles, depending on the individual, and the borrower was obligated to repay the principal in fixed weekly installments, add the interest to it, and complete the full repayment within a year. Every Friday afternoon, men and women, old and young, would stream to the house of the lender to bring him the week's payment. The creditor would sit at a table in the street, count the notes and coins with the utmost concentration as though performing a religious rite, peer into his notebook, and enter the transaction. The creditors who charged interest on loans were very stingy. They hoarded coins, pinching and turning the pennies they earned through interest. There were those who denied themselves any of the good things in life. There was one creditor, though not considered to be among the ultra rich, whose body could not withstand the extreme frugality, and his soul expired from hunger.

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Relationships among neighbors and acquaintances were, for the most part, cordial. Men would meet in the synagogue or house of study and spend an hour in conversation discussing matters of local import and relating news of local or world events. In the winter, neighbors would drop in for a bit of conversation over a glass of tea. On the Sabbath, on holidays, and on Saturday nights, relatives and friends would visit each other. The festival of Hanukkah was a time of family feasts. The housewife would make doughnuts filled with grits or potatoes and top them with globs of fat, bring the good cherry wine up from the cellar, and invited neighbors or those who just dropped in would sit at the table in the lit and heated dining room and listen to the stories and the wondrous deeds of the Hasidim; spirits soared, the doughnuts kept coming, and the camaraderie increased.

In my younger days, around 1895, the custom of reading in groups was widespread. It was due to the influence of the national writer, Shalom

Aleichem, whose monologues and short stories were published in booklets that were sold at a very cheap price of five kopecks each. These booklets became popular among many thousands of people. I remember that these booklets were delivered in bundles of a hundred, people crowded to buy them, and they were all sold within a few days. The booklets were read at social gatherings in homes, and every humorous story, conversation, idiomatic expression, or controversial matter questioned by a young man or woman would evoke bursts of laughter, and the author was lauded with great praise.

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The way of life in our town was fixed and defined. The inhabitants followed one tradition. They stuck to customs without much deviating. The year was divided into weeks, the weeks into days. The most delightful day was the Sabbath, the day of pleasures; all other days of the week were subservient to it and of secondary importance. When the housewife went to market to buy a hen, even though it was on a Tuesday, she bought it not for a weekday meal, but for the Sabbath.

The high point of the Sabbath for the young people was the promenade. On Sabbath eve, after the meal, the young boys and girls, also courting couples attired in their best, would go walking on the paved road, which was the King's Highway. The young man's shirt collar glistened in its whiteness, and the colorful silk tie attracted the eye; he sported a pince-nez and a modish hat jauntily perched on his head. Every young woman, hair carefully combed and brushed, wore a white silk blouse and a faint hint of perfume wafted around her. The boys and girls would cluster into groups of three, four or five, and forge ahead to see what lay ahead, meet friends and acquaintances and inquire about each other's welfare, nodding pleasantly and lightheartedly. Soon they would become engaged in conversation of matters literary and philosophical. If it was a group of boys, they would discuss the latest poem, story, or essay that appeared in *Ha-Shilo'ah*. If girls then joined the group, the conversation would turn to a discussion of Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, and from them to Gorky, and the other new writers who offered their readers new world vistas and new types of characters.

The Sabbath eve promenade held second place to the one which took place on the evening of the Sabbath day. At that time, the paved road became a sea of promenaders. Not only were the young people out, but also the householders and their wives, and anybody with a breath of life in him could refresh his soul. Merchants and shopkeepers beset with cares and day-to-day worries; apprentices learning their trades; seamstresses bent all day over their machines, needles and threads; cooks and servants constantly exposed to the nagging of their masters—all of them cast off their daily troubles, facial furrows relaxed, and the clouds of worry lifted from their eyes. They strolled with a free and easy mind, reveling in friendship and love, feeling

the sparks of the joy of life.

A young man come-of-age—who for the first time was wearing a shirt with starched collar and a colorful silk tie would wonder whether the passersby would notice him and what he was wearing and know that he had come to establish his place among adults. A young woman of marriageable age with long a plaited braid adorned with ribbon, heart trembling, would probe the passing young men with her eyes to see which ones would notice her attentively. At every meaningful glance in her direction, she would be overcome with the pleasantest of feelings. Young married couples would show off their finest garments, and established householders settled in their ways would discuss town matters and economic conditions. The strollers crowded each other, groups going this way and that, elbowing each other, and every individual felt he was part of a whole, that the community was all-embracing, and he felt secure.

The young people, members of the new generation, were not overly meticulous in differentiating the sacred from the secular. They had not learned that the six weekdays were created to serve the Sabbath. They sought life's pleasures at every opportunity. A new baker had come to town and opened a shop in the New City—a shop, the likes of which could be found only in a big city; cakes of layers and layers of chocolate topped with egg custard and a cherry or strawberry stuck on top. There were youths who came there every evening to eat and enjoy themselves. They did it timidly, without ostentation; firstly, because it was an extravagance, and secondly, who could vouch for the kashrut of the cakes?

The young people would come at twilight, and from there go on a long walk, sometimes boys and girls together, to places outside of town. Parents would look the other way and condone the wickedness, but only on condition that the walking partner be a girl from a respectable family that befitted the young man's family standing in the community. If it happened to be a snowy, frosty day, a group of us would hire an ornate, spirited horse-drawn sleigh and go on a journey for an hour or two on the smooth snow of the King's Highway, the cold invigorating us, and we felt blissfully happy, enjoying life.

In this way, we handled the confusion of fusing the old with the new. The old ways determined a fixed way of life, but at the threshold stood a new way of life that would stealthily penetrate the house and find itself a place. The antagonism was not great, there was no defined break from the past, and there was no rebellion. The young men lived harmoniously with their parents, fulfilled the commandments of donning phylacteries and saying their daily prayers, attended synagogue on the Sabbath and festival days, and conformed to all the Jewish customs, even the lesser ones, and were respected by one and all. In preparation for Yom Kippur they would even swing a cock around their heads three times and recite: "... this cock shall meet death, but I shall find a long and pleasant life of peace," and laugh

lightheartedly. They were not anguished as were the yeshivah students who emerged into the "evil" world plagued by the conflicts facing them regarding the sanctity of prayer. Parents would witness their sons engaging in secular studies. The sons would shorten their long coats and their sidelocks and sometimes even cut off the corners of their beards. The parents would see their sons go out walking with girls and not hinder them from doing it. These were new times and such were its demands. Despite all, the *Haskalah* was the crowning glory of the new generation, the Russian language was used in daily life and in commerce, and the young man so involved was the pride and joy of his parents.

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As far as the physical stature of the inhabitants of our town was concerned, particularly those of the adults and the elderly, it was generally the type of that of the Diaspora Jew—exhausted, thin, frail, with bowed mien. There were two reasons for this: many of them worked at home or were shopkeepers, or studied constantly, or were business men—sedentary occupations which called for a lot of sitting, as for example, tailors and cobblers, who had very little occasion to be in the fresh air.

Sports activities were unheard of. The young child would compete in running races with his friends, play with sticks—hurl a stick at a small twig resting on two stones at a distance without missing the mark—swim in the river during the summer, and skate on the ice in the winter. But even such childhood play was considered sinful, a waste of time with no practical benefit. When a respectable Jew walked by and saw a child at play, he was compelled to fulfill his obligation of chastising the child, "You are a child of the Bible. Why should you spend your time with such vain trivialities." When a youth started to study Gemara—and he began when he was six or seven years old—everyone who exerted any control over him began to be strict and watch him closely. Such constant supervision by so many people had the effect of making the child feel guilty for participating in a useless activity such as play. When the children grew older, they felt like sinners; when they experienced the feelings of adolescence, they would lower their eyes and avert glances, so they would not be seen by an adult.

As the youth advanced in years, he became more serious, recognizing the obligation that his efforts were to be poured into study, and his deeds were to be turned towards practical pursuits. Following marriage, the truly troubled times set in—worry wrinkles furrowed the face, and the mind was in constant turmoil with crushing thoughts of how to make a living. When the heavy load of maintaining a household grew worse, the young husband grew depressed, and, within a short while, the mark of poverty left its imprint on face and body and turned him into a broken Jew.

Despite all obstacles, the youthful years developed nicely. One led an active life and enjoyed doing what he had to. The good mother would keep a watchful eye on son and daughter to see that they ate and drank well;

good friends made life a little sweeter with games and laughter and on occasion with great happiness. After the age of 20, however, came the critical year, and the fine, healthy young man was overwhelmed with the prospect of compulsory military service—unless he was an only son or crippled and incapable of serving in the military.

At that time, people did not seek methods of birth control. Sons were considered a blessing, not a curse, and fortunate was the mother who had many sons. But she did not want her sons to be conscripted; it would mean three years of service during which time sons would be separated from their parents, their study, their work, their affairs, and their learning of the proper skills for their chosen way of life. Why should the young man serve in the Russian army? Because of trust in the Russian regime? Because of the new evil edicts heaped upon Jews almost daily? For the restrictions dictating where they could live and what occupations they could pursue? For the quotas in schools? What would the young Jewish man do in the army? He would find himself among Jew-hating sons of peasants who abused him, and he would humble himself before officers. The unavailability of kosher food was also a problem. To defile oneself by eating pig and other foul, non-kosher foods was loathsome to both parents and sons.

The parents and sons, therefore, sought ways to dodge the compulsory draft. There were various means to effect this. Several months prior to conscription young men would band together in groups in order to fast. They would reduce their food intake, and for the foods that they did eat, they chose those that would cause diarrhea; they slept little, spending whole nights in the houses of study or at a friend's house without any rest, in order to become thin and lose body weight. After a few weeks of such deprivation and self-affliction, faces grew pale and waxen. The shrunken young man became depressed; his walk became unsteady. If, however, such a weak young man was not completely exempt after being tested, he was given a year's deferment; and at year's end he was re-examined. It was only in the third year, when indeed it was determined that he was too weak, and hopelessly so, that he was released. For three years, the young man afflicted himself with so much deprivation that he undermined his health for the rest of his life. He was released to a spoiled stomach and weakened nerves and was exposed to various illnesses because of his enervated condition. Such a "fortunate" one got married and entered life as a broken vessel.

Utterly horrible were the conditions of those who inflicted defects upon themselves. There were certain specialists who could create defects in healthy bodies. There were some who put certain medicinal eye drops into the eye that would cause a disease affecting the sight. There were others who injected sharp medicines into the ear drum which caused a draining abscess, and the least bit of wind would bring about an ear infection. Others would dislocate a leg at the knee, which would render a young man lame and cause him to limp.

Still another specialist would sever tendons in an arm and sew them together at the joint, so that the young man could not stretch his arm. And there was yet another who prescribed to candidates for the army medicinal drafts that caused the eyes and faces of those who drank the potions to appear as though they were struck with jaundice and other sorts of defects and diseases. To be sure, the specialist promised that the disability would be temporary and that after a short while the patient would be cured and hearing would return. The dislocated leg would heal and straight walking would ensue. The tendons in the arm would be extended, and the hand would once again be able to grasp, to work. The jaundiced one would regain normal color—but the promises were not always realized. I knew many such unfortunates—the son of a teacher in our town whose shortened arm never regained its normal length; he, too, had no choice but to engage in teaching as a means of livelihood; one of my relatives became deaf because of the poisonous drops injected into his ear.

The army doctors and the examining personnel were well aware of all these ruses, but they looked the other way. The majority of those inducted into the army were sons of mechanics and poor people who were not afraid of such service; they were from working class people who were accustomed to hard work, and they were willing to serve in the army. They hoped that they would be able to eat to their hearts' content, that the government would furnish them with good clothing, and that they would have a few hours of leisure at the end of the day to spend as they wished. But their numbers were few; many of the Jewish youths sought to avoid serving a hostile government. Such efforts served only to increase the number of weak and disabled people.

The members of the Jewish communities in the cities, not in touch with nature, were looked upon as weak persons afraid of every dog and other living creatures. All the Gentiles who lived in the suburbs had dogs to guard their yards and to keep strangers from entering, but a Jew did not raise a dog in his house. A child who would play with a dog and pet the animal was considered naughty and was chastised and ordered to desist from such wicked behavior. The Jew was always afraid when he saw a dog approaching, his heart would skip a beat, and he would seek ways to escape the bad beast and save his soul. The village farmer, therefore, and also the city Gentile considered the Jew a weak, cowardly being and did not hesitate to torment him.

Nevertheless, among the Jews there were also strong and powerful men who were not afraid to confront an enemy. There were those who in their occupations used big and bulky tools; they were carpenters, sawyers, woodcutters, and wagon drivers accustomed to the outdoors who knew their way around and knew how to wield a whip to master a horse. Butchers, in particular, were renowned for their brute strength. On their blocks, they cleaved the hind parts of cows and bulls with axes; they clutched knives and

meat choppers without shedding a drop of blood on their fingers; they did not become weak hearted and fall away in a faint. When there was danger of a disturbance created by a quarrel between a peasant and a Jew in the marketplace, when the Jew accused the peasant of robbery and the matter was brought to the point of a fistfight, or when the peasant accused the Jew of fraud and the dispute grew inflammatory, the peasants who had come to market that day intervened on behalf of the peasant and began beating the Jews, and Jewish shopkeepers hurried to bolt their shops and close the shutters—it was then that the butchers, each and every one of them, husky and strong of limb, emerged from their shops armed with sharp axes, and when they raised their implements above the heads of those preparing to fight, the peasants thought better of it and dispersed. The community was spared from bloodshed.

S.L. Blank

A Mother City

(Excerpted from *Sefer Scharfstein* published in New York, 1944)

The city of my birth, Dunivits, in Ukraine, was divided into two parts—the New City and the Old City.

Many years ago, a number of respectable German families settled in the New City of Dunivits and established a textile factory (Dunivits Textiles). They built for themselves charming stone houses and planted gardens and greenhouses. The men were strong and able, and the women were fat and buxom. Their sons and daughters rode ponies and participated in many sport activities. On Sundays and holidays they would go out in carts harnessed to powerful horses. They had a firefighting company which served to some extent as a police force.

There the streets were paved, and order and cleanliness prevailed. As you approached the city, you could see from a distance the splendor of the church completely surrounded by greenery and two rows of stately oaks casting their shadows on it. On the broad, green velvety meadow young, blonde, blue-eyed boys and girls were at play. Framing the church were lovely houses shining in their whiteness, and fierce dogs lay stretched out at the entrances to ward off strangers. This was a typical German colony, with all its good manners, orderly ways, and institutions. The tall smoke stacks of the factories on the main street and its arteries spewed out their smoke against the blue skies. The majority of the weavers and mechanics were Germans.

Some of our Jewish brethren were also there—textile merchants, middlemen, agents, voyageurs, so to speak. There were Jews who held prominent places in the community and to whom people turned for advice. Among them were readers of *Ha-Meliz, Ha-Zofeh*, and *Ha-Shiloah*, community activists, and Zionists. Their homes were prosperous and imbued with the spirit of the time. Their horseback-riding, charming daughters played piano and spoke Russian and German. Their sons attended the state universities, and they had good relationships with the German industrialists. It is said that many German industrialists learned to write Yiddish in typical Yiddish style: "To my dear, honored friend," and "Peace be unto Israel."

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Similar to the situation in all cities and towns, the system of Jewish education was based on the *heder*; the best one in its time was the one under the tutelage of the elementary school teacher by name of Hirsh Eggel [Hebrew word for calf]. Why was he called Eggel? He was short and thin, and his belly reached his teeth. It was told that he would, with his head, gore children who were lagging behind in their studies. He would have

before him a pot full of steaming potatoes that he would swallow whole, skin and all, and at the same time continue with the lesson, not hesitating even then, in his unique way, to reprimand an inattentive child. This school began with the teaching of the Hebrew alphabet and ended with a little *Hummash*. The teacher taught not only the reading of the prayer book by rote, but also the *Targum Onkeles*. He was still teaching even after having reached the age of 80. It was not vain self-esteem when he boasted of the number of pupils who had come under his tutelage, among them the rabbi as well as the bath attendant. This house of learning, a building of broken clay, was on the street of the synagogues on a slope of a hill strewn with thorns, nettles, and weeds and harbored all sorts of insects and creeping things. On clear, summer days the school children would play there or sing a psalm to the Holy One to make it rain for their benefit.

From Hirsh Eggel, the boy passed on to *Hummash* and Gemara. I remember one teacher who was of a poetic nature, handsome, with a short, black beard and piercing dark eyes that bespoke a hidden love of life, and he favored beauty, neatness, and order. When teaching a Hanukkah lesson he would draw colored pictures to illustrate Hanukkah and give them to the pupils. For the Shavuot festival, he would make paper cutouts to paste on windows. He had a vivid imagination; he would regale the children with stories and legends from *Sefer ha-Yashar* and other sources. The pupils loved their teacher, and they loved to learn. His knowledge of the Talmud was minimal, and he had to study with a Torah scholar greater than himself in order to prepare his lessons.

Then he studied under enlightened teachers. One of them was Efraim Lyunansky from Yarmolinits who came to our city to find a post for himself, and he acquired students from among the well-to-do. He taught them Scripture, Gemara, and grammar, as well as contemporary literature and the writing of compositions in a rhetorical style. The more rhetorical and interpretive a composition, the more praiseworthy it was. This teacher read Yiddish novels. Where did he get them? There was a Jew in our town by name of Avraham Bletter Yid [Yiddish for Newspaper Jew] who, according to my late grandfather, Mendele Mokher Seforim, had enough hair on his beard and earlocks to suffice for a dozen men, and the hem of his caftan was full of the residue of the pomegranates that he had consumed all year. This Avraham Bletter Yid would get newspapers and novels and lend them out for a small fee. It was from him that Efraim Lyunansky rented the novels and read them with great pleasure.

The *heder* of Shammai Weissman is worthy of note. Weissman was a distinguished teacher who loved the new Hebrew literature and was an outstanding Zionist dreamer, a capable person with good literary style. He had all the qualifications of a good teacher. Many Hebrew writers from our city were his students, among them the author and great educator, Zevi Scharfstein, and the Hebrew poet, Abraham Rosenzweig, now Rosen. In his

small, neat home, a study group of well-to-do 18-year olds convened. Some were bridegrooms and others soon-to-be bridegrooms. They studied *Tanakh*, Talmud, and read the *Haskalah* literature. They had to learn the Minor Prophets and many of the Psalms by heart, as well as the poems of Adam ha-Kohen [Abraham Dov Lebensohn], Mikhal [Micah Joseph Lebensohn], and Judah Leib Gordon. This Shammai Weissman was inclined towards research and the study of philosophy. Consequently, he inculcated them with the Amoraic portion of the Talmud and *Tosaphoth* (annotations of the Talmud); with Maimonides' *Guide to the Perplexed*; without *ovot ha-Levavot* (Duties of the Hearts), by Bahya, Ben Jospeh ibn Paquda, and 11th century moral philosopher; as well as with essays on philosophy and research in the Hebrew literary miscellany. Shammai Weissman was a frequent contributor of articles on contemporary issues to *Ha-Meliz,* but they were never published, except in a series of articles, *Hidushei Torah*, which was issued from time to time in a scholarly journal, *Ha-Pisgah*. In his desk there were piles of articles written on long, yellow writing tablets in a clear hand.

At that time, the Zionist youth movement in our city established a free school in our city, that, in addition to Hebrew, Tanach, and history, also offered general studies. The majority of the teachers were volunteers, sons of the well-to-do and teachers-in-training who considered it their sacred duty to spread the ideals of Zionism and the *Haskalah* among the people. This educational institution, the majority of whose pupils were young women, had a great impact on the city and created a spirit of revival and excitement in the Old City. It was akin to a renaissance, with here and there the sounds of the Hebrew language ringing from the mouths of the younger generation, from the sons and daughters of the tailors' street and the butchers' street. This aroused, understandably, some slanderous reactions among the other teachers who were afraid of losing their livelihood, and there was much backbiting and jealousy. The dedicated supporters of the institution, and those who believed in it, were craftsmen who remained aloof from the petty disparagements; representing them were Hirsh Kolashnik and Itsik, the bookbinder, the Eldad and Medad in the camp.

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The Jewish youth in our town! They comprised an active and exciting movement made up of the sons of the poor and of the rich and mighty of the New City—all infused with the national and Zionist spirit; general Zionists, *Zeir'ei Zion, Po'alei Zion*, sympathizers; scholars, those of literary bent who would champion any cause; those who spoke Hebrew.

A common spirit moved both parts of the city—a dedication to all that was dear and sacred for our nation. And among the families in our city—glory to them and their nation—were the Blanks (not my family), the Scharfstein family, the Tsipi family, and others who contributed many works in the humanities which touched upon all aspects of life of our people. And there were two houses of study in our city devoted to the study of

Torah, Hebrew literature, and Zionism.

At the head of one *bet midrash* was M. Rosen, author of *Mikhtavim mi-Rusiya*, that appeared in *Hadoar*. His house was a meeting place for the young people of God-fearing, religious Jews: Avraham and Zusye, sons of Reb Shevach, the local Rabbi, who became teachers; Levi Riklis, the well-known educator and author in Israel; Mordecai Mikhaeli, educator and writer; the poet Abraham Rozenzweig-Rosen; and the writer of these lines. M. Rosen was the guiding spirit in his house of study, a scholar and an ardent Zionist, a Jew to the very marrow of his bones. He was the one who opened the discussion, conducted it, and served as arbitrator of arguments, whether it was about a new poem by Bialik, an essay by Ahad ha-Am, or a new story—all served as topics for lively discussion.

I see live before my eyes those delightful young people, full of pride with their hopes and desires, dreamers of Zion who came to the house of study of M. Rosen to taste "stolen bread" not known in the world of their fathers. Many of them were sons of the Sadgura and Chortkov Hasidim who attended services at the Sadgura synagogue. The cream and select of society of the Old City and the New City prayed in the Sadgura synagogue in our city. The synagogue boasted three distinguished scholars, Reb Shevach, Yisro'el Ha-Shachor, and Hershel Hannah Rozeh's (father of the writer of these lines). It was there that Hasidim and men of good deeds would assemble, entranced in body and soul, for joyous revelry in honor of Bar Yohai with song and dance. There the God fearing would enthrone in praise the Master of the Universe with sacred melody; it was there that the Torah scholars and the intellectuals would hold discourses on Ibn Ezra. And it was there, in the anteroom, during the Torah reading, that the young writer, Zevi Scharfstein, and his friend, the late Ya'akov Wasserman, a renowned Hebrew educator, representatives of their house of learning, would converse and argue with representatives of the *bet midrash* on issues in Zionism and literature. Names such as Borochov, Syrkin, Herzl, Nordau, Bialik, Gordon, Ahad Ha-Am, Tchernichowsky, and Brenner would ring through the air.

Those Sabbaths, those holidays, those festivals—how blessedly welcome they were!

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The Talmud Torah in our city was neglected, and the Zionists took it upon themselves to restore and maintain it. Then Jacob Fichmann was brought in as teacher, and a new era began in our city—the Fichmann era. The poet taught not only the children but also the young people who had literary aspirations. Around him all the young people who were passionately interested in the new authors gathered in order to pursue a writing career in poetry, literature, or journalism. He, Fichmann, the young lyrical poet, the benevolent critic, would instruct them in literary style, review books, encourage and strengthen the fainthearted and the timid.

There was a Jew in our town called Velvel Brieftreger (Velvel the

mailman). Why was his name Brieftreger? He would receive the mail, sort, and deliver the letters personally; there was not a name of any Jew in our town that was not known to him, even of those who lived in the pauper's dwellings near the asylum for the aged and sick. He was a tall, thin man with a brown beard, quiet and reserved. He would enter the house with a soft greeting, moisten the tip of his thumb with his mouth, gently ruffle through the pack of mail, hand the recipient what was his, receive as a fee for service a penny or two, according to the donor's and the letter's value. He would toss the coins into his coat pocket, kiss the mezuzah, and leave murmuring a blessing.

The home of this mail carrier was a meeting place for the youth of our town. Until Velvel arrived with the post, Jacob Fichmann would read his poetry to an audience of his admirers and pass judgement on authors and literature. He would come early and sit and read the *Ha-Meliz* and *Ha-Zofeh* newspapers.

At that time, a fire brigade was established in our city, and at its head stood [Chayim] Hirsh Wissotzky, an enterprising youth full of life. Every good, able-bodied young man was part of the fire brigade, especially those from the butchers' street and the tailors' street. Truth to tell, could we depend on the German firefighters? Were they the only ones, may their names be wiped out, obligated to put out the frequent fires rampant in the Old City and its suburbs? Could not the Jewish youth be capable of doing the same? That was not the only thing they could do. They built and set up an impressive two-story building and installed all the necessary implements and furnishings, even two very large barrels filled with water that were manned and available for immediate use when needed. Whoever had not witnessed our uniformed fire brigade in shining copper hats putting out fire has never seen such a sterling piece of action; while waiting for the German firefighters to arrive, the fire was already being extinguished. Let it not be said that the firehouse was established primarily to extinguish fires in the Jewish population. On the top story, there was a spacious room designated and used for all sorts of gatherings, even as a theater to present the wandering stars of the late Shalom Aleichem who enchanted the Jews of the Old City with such plays *Ha-Machashefah* and *Shnay Kunilemel* and filled their ears with song and melody.

Oh, the firehouse in our town!

And do not think lightly of the above-mentioned Ya'akov Wasserman. A few years later, after marrying and having a family, he settled down and became famous as an excellent Hebrew educator. He headed the teachers' institute in Odessa in the days of Mendele Mokher Seforim, Bialik, and Ussishkin. When he was a young man, he would curl his hair. He was exceedingly handsome, and the ladies were captivated by him. He did not dress in the manner of the local fashion; he wore a frock coat and his shoes were always shined. He was an ardent young man, possessed of many

talents. He would enchant his listeners with his sharp, fiery speeches. It was an exciting time with the clashing Zionist ideologies, the languages controversy, the revival of the national language and literature; a time to do something for our nation, to enlighten the lower classes in our city. So what did Ya'akovke (fondly nicknamed so) do? He got together a troupe of actors to develop the taste of common folk in drama.

Who made up this troupe? The sons of the well-to-do and the daughters of the rich; pretty, slender maidens who spoke Russian and German and were willing to descend from their heights, from the New City to the Old City, to play the piano in their carefree, leisure time and to share their bounty of beauty, charm, and culture. What was the first production? "Uriel Acosta." Ya'akovke played the lead—Uriel Acosta.

Oh, who can gauge the impression of this play on our city!

Those days will be remembered.

Jacob Fichmann

My Stay in Dunivits

One day I happened to meet Joseph Blank, a pleasant person and an active Zionist in Dunivits, a city of trade and industry. I liked him, and that was enough for me to accept his offer of a position as a teacher in his city. Here I would have something to do. I had never been a very industrious person, but I hated idleness. My native city, at the beginning of the century, was a dull place. My friends had dispersed, and remaining there were only two or three stragglers, literary personalities who were disappointedly downhearted with their work and creative experiences. It was too difficult for them to strike out as beginners to strive for success. It was sort of a warning to me: Don't get stuck in this dreariness! It may not have been a totally conscious decision to go to Dunivits, which paid well and was a gateway to Warsaw.

I left Belz right after Pesach. I remember sitting in the train as it approached the Podolia city in which I was to teach, and I heard a priest relating in a jesting and mocking manner about the pogrom of the Jews in Kishinev. It was from him that I first became aware of the terrifying pogroms, and it was from witnessing the priest's ugly contemptible rejoicing at the calamity that the hooliganism of the Russians was first revealed to me in all its ugliness and repulsiveness. "They had it coming to them!" concluded the Christian pastor who wore a large crucifix on his chest; not one of the listeners objected to the slander.

This conversation shocked me very much. I was naive. From the Russian poets and the Russian literature that I had read, I had grown to like the Russian villages and the Russian people in general, and here I was seeing them eye to eye, sitting among them! I felt relieved when I left their unbelievably stupid company. It was only when I was sitting in the coach that was taking me through Kaminits-Podolsk to my destination that I was struck with the thought that what was happening here was happening in all of Russia and that it was an introductory omen of what was yet to happen.

We were delayed in Kaminits for a short while. A strange tranquility engulfed this pretty-roofed city that apparently did not yet know about the dreadful catastrophe. There, a great fear was still hovering in the woods and alleys. Here, the sun shone and the acacia blossomed. The city's charm amazed me, with its secluded site, far off the highway, surrounded by green meadows and cornfields. And when I remembered that at one time Mendele lived here, that Gottlober lived here, I felt as though their spirit still hovered over the neat, quiet, peaceful streets; I prayed that Dunivits would find as much favor in my eyes as this city.

Before evening I arrived at Dunivits. The city, I am sorry to say, did not especially charm me. Nevertheless, its people were very pleasant and friendly during my whole stay there. In this city, I became aware of the

younger generation that was different from that of my city. I got to know those who became dear friends, friends of Hebrew literature who were steadfastly in its vanguard. I felt particularly close to the family of Joseph Blank (a member of this family, according to Shelomo Hillel's biography, was the short-story writer, S.L. Blank, who, as a native of Bessarabia, (convincingly portrayed its way of life). I taught Hebrew to his charming daughters who are now in Israel.

Dunivits was a relatively short sojourn during my wanderings, but I will always remember it as a good interlude. The city, if you don't settle there for too long a time, is a blessing to its inhabitants. Here you can make friends. Here you can observe Jewish life at close range, and in this city it is quite likely that I appreciated the Jewish way of life more so than I would have in my native city. It was indeed a very typical Jewish city. It counted prominent personalities among its inhabitants, and I clearly remember several, as though I had left them yesterday. Here was something exciting, tempestuous. He who cannot recall Dunivits during the days of the Uganda Scheme, cannot know the zealously fanatical devotion towards Herzl, and the city's dedication to the Zionist organization. The impact that Hasidism had in Podolia with its belief in the rebbe as God's messenger found expression in just such a rebbe-like transfiguration that Dunivits attributed to Herzl. In no way was Herzl to be criticized! I, too, had the same opinion of what Herzl meant to the Jewish masses as an extraordinary person, a redeemer.

Some of the city's young people befriended me after I had published several poems in *Ha-Dor*, and I walked with them in the reddish twilight on the road to Yarmolinits and talked and dreamed. From among them I remember Zevi Scharfstein, a bright-eyed young man who at that time already disclosed a budding literary talent. His articles in *Ha-Meliz*, signed Even Hidah, were published frequently. There was, it appears, no topic he could not touch upon, and he had a clear style. It was amazing to me that a small-town young man could be such a keenly perceptive person. He was conversant with all the literary trends, with all the problem issues of the times, while I was still wholly absorbed in poetry. We formed a close bond of friendship for the rest of our lives. It was he who published in *Ha-Yarden* the first critical review of my poetry—with kindness and understanding. There were few compassionate critics of poetry in those days. How fortunate that the man, who throughout his lifetime was concerned with problems of education (and who also wrote an important book on the history of education), should be responsive to poetry, which is the true key to understanding the soul of a child.

I became close with other kindred souls who gladdened the monotonous life in that city for the short time I spent there. I recall Ya'akov Wasserman, a sharp-witted, brilliant pedagogue and active Zionist. He was a member of the Blank family, a nice young man who would be waiting for me at the

entrance of my home in order to accompany me for a short while on my daily evening walks. There were few others for whom I felt the same fondness. He died in the springtime of his life (in the October 1905 pogroms in Proskurov). To this day I miss him sorely.

Shlomo Rosen

My Native City of Dunivits

(From the book *Dunivits Ir moladeti* by Zevi Scharfstein
Published by the members of the Dunivitser Aid Society in America)

Many years have passed since I left our home in Dunivits. Some of us were fortunate enough to rise on the ladder of success socially and economically; others were prepared to wrestle with fate, to live in New York, the largest city in the world, in material pleasure and luxury. The memory of our hometown, however, lives in the hearts of all of us. We cannot forget the quiet, unpretentious city. Before the Shoah, about two thousand working Jews filled the city's streets. On weekdays there was the hustle and bustle of merchants, shopkeepers, and craftsmen. Should, however, a stranger be there at such a time and form the impression that the Jews were occupied only with the cares of earning a living and the daily strife for survival, he would be grossly mistaken. Indeed, they were, some more than others and each in his own way, fulfilling the verse, "By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread." But in each of them beat a warm Jewish heart, and a single spirit encircled them—a spirit of learning and good deeds—each according to his own measure of attainment.

In the same manner that the Jews of Dunivits put their minds to business and work, so did they put their hearts to dream and to the creation of worthy spiritual values. They aspired always to instill in their children a love of learning. Sitting in their small shops all day, they would long for a different world, a good and glorious one, for the rebirth of their people in the Land of their Fathers and the renaissance of the Hebrew language.

In Beryl Scharfstein's store, which was filled with every variety of goods and constantly humming with the din of customers, his son, Zevi, sat hidden in a corner thinking of methods to reform the new Hebrew education. When my grandfather's store was full of merchants and their bills, my late father, Mordekhai Royzen, would be sitting in a hidden corner or in another room busily writing articles to submit to *Ha-Shiloah*, *Ha-Zefirah*, and *Ha-Zeman*. Abraham Rosenzweig (A. Rosen) found the treasures of poetry in Dunivits, and, in the course of time, made a name for himself as a Hebrew poet in Israel.

The small, modest house on the street of the butchers gave us the well-known short story writer, S.L. Blank. If anyone thinks that Dunivits did not offer an atmosphere conducive to art or painting, he is mistaken. Dunivits gave us the talented painter, Brantse Blank, and the esteemed sculptress, Deutschmann, daughter of Shalom ben Aharon and sister of our active community worker, Yitzchak Deutschmann. An artist or a poet could draw inspiration from Dunivits. The city boasted pretty young women of unique Jewish charm and radiance.

Our city was divided into two parts, the Old City and the New City, and

into various sections of special streets, the synagogue street, the mill street, the butchers' street, the tailors' street, etc. These were located in the Old City which differed from the New City not only in its appearance, but also in the composition of its inhabitants. In the old part of the city, a feeling of true democracy prevailed. All who lived there perceived themselves as brothers and sisters, members of an extended family, and the feeling of brotherhood prevailed. Among the more affluent, who lived in the new part, there was a decidedly lesser feeling of family. These were respected Jews—but somewhat aloof and reserved. They sometimes did not permit their children to play with the children of the Old City. Nevertheless, despite the blemishes of haughtiness and superiority discerned here and there, our city, the old part and the new part, generally glowed with the traditional Jewish life of which we were all proud. The unforgettable, beloved streets and alleys stand before my eyes: the trading center (*torgovitsye*), the street of shops, the shacks, the butchers' street, the synagogue street, the *kloyz* of the Zinkov Hasidim, the *bet midrash* with never a break the livelong day of study and prayer—one minyan ending and another beginning. I see in my mind's eye the synagogue and feel to this day the awe that struck the children's hearts when, passing by there in the stillness of the night, they would whisper among themselves about the praying corpses standing there inside wrapped in prayer shawls....

Images flow, one after the other.

Here I am, entering the *kloyz* of the Sadgura Hasidim and see before me the holy, revered, peaceful presence of Reb Yisrulikel Reb Arki's, his bright, wise eyes and endearing smile illuminating his hoary face. I see him wrapped in a large *tallit* that covered his silk gaberdine which glistened in a blaze of color as he walked between the lectern and the Holy Ark. He prayed devoutly, repeating each word five or six times with expressions of love and respect.

There is the market place, the center of small and large shops, the kiosks, the tinsmiths, the place of business of Nachman Kantor, Itsi Frizman's store full of ready-made clothing for the Gentiles, my grandfather's store for groceries and kerosene, the ironwork store of Simchah Yossel Meirtse's. Beryl Scharfstein's variety store where you could find needles, hats, fiddles, hammers, and saws as well as prayer books and Bibles. Here also was the small shop of Feivel's wife, where for one kopeck you could buy a slice of herring.

Hannah Leibl'les house on the butchers' street was a special place in our city, where we young people could get excellent meals. For one kopeck we could buy a slice of liver or half of a roasted chicken leg. The merchants, men of means, surreptitiously wandered over there in order to get a tasty meal, fresh bread, gefilte fish, roasted liver etc. which the restaurant owner would serve to them with a greeting of "hearty appetite!"

Here I see before my eyes the tailor, Yehudele of Frampol, a short, jolly

man always singing and joking. On summer days, through the open doors and windows of his house, the strains of the workers' song to the accompaniment of the clicking scissors would fill the air. Striding into the market place is Yankel the bath attendant, tall, scowling, with a basket of fresh loaves of bread from which emanated the aroma of cumin. I see the few taverns, Jewish owned, and I see the *goyim*, who would leave their church on their holidays, head directly to the taverns, leave behind their small change, and emerge drunk once again and looking for brawls....

The wonderful winter nights in Dunivits! We, the pupils, returning home from *heder* with lanterns in our hands and song and melody on our lips. The singsong voices, on the bright summer days, coming through the windows of the houses of the teachers, Aizikel, Eli Ya'akov, Yitzchak Meir Hirsh's, and others are still ringing in my ears.

What happened to the dear Jews of Dunivits! They were shattered and destroyed! Only their good deeds remain etched in our hearts, the good deeds of our martyrs; only the memories of our childhood remain. Who would have thought that this city steeped in Judaism for generations and generations would one day be wiped off the face of God's earth? It was the Master Race that wrought the Final Solution. The Jew, nevertheless, came back to life and is building the State of Israel.

B. Blank-Bokser

The Way of Life in Our City

"Where are you from?" I would be asked in the countries and cities where I happened to live during the course of my life. I would reply that I came from a place where on cold, wintry nights when some mothers were cozily tucking their children into neat, clean beds, there were other poor children suffering from cold and hunger. It was customary to give old clothes and shoes to the poor and to mend a torn garment before passing it on. It was the custom, too, to invite a guest to the Sabbath meal; also, to set aside for the poor some bread dough and challah dough. Dunivits people looked up, not down, and to harbor feelings of envy was not allowed. When a rich man married off a son or a daughter, he would arrange a feast for the poor; without it, the celebration would not be complete. A poor, nursing mother would be given linen, a chicken, and a jar of preserves. When a poor girl reached marriageable age, the townspeople would collect offerings for the dowry and wedding expenses. Mothers would tell us that come the Messiah, all holidays, except Purim, would be abolished, because Purim is the sole holiday dedicated to the giving of charity and sending gifts to the poor. Each individual felt that it was incumbent upon himself to help his fellow man in time of need.

I remember my Aunt Riva, who considered the giving of charity the most important thing in her life, was once sorely offended by her husband who, while sitting at a meal, objected to her giving a gulden to a poor man. She arose angrily from the table, walked into the kitchen, and said, "If I cannot give charity with a full hand, why should I sit at the table of the master of the house?"

The synagogue manager's wife, Blimelle, was always calling at the homes of donors, and, in the basket behind her house, she would stow away secret items for the poor: fat, sugar, preserves, linen, and clothing.

Pesya, daughter of Chayim Avrum, took upon herself a singular mission of secret alms giving. She would put a silk kerchief on her head, don holiday clothes, visit her charitable cronies, and, conspiringly, whisperingly, share with them the reason for her visit; and after getting the offering, she would kiss the *mezuzah* and leave with a great smile of satisfaction.

There were occasions when, even on weekdays, town dignitaries would don their Sabbath gaberdines in order to solicit contributions for a victim of a fire or for an impoverished person. Teachers would grant free tuition to poor children. It was not only material need that was of concern in our city. Many teachers dedicated their free time, without remuneration, to spreading learning and enlightenment among the youth of the poorer class. I believe it is unnecessary to remind us, heirs of these noble-minded figures who educated us with such spirit, of the calamity that threatened our people and annihilated our kin, deeds unparalleled in the history of mankind. In

this country, there are many mothers who do not allow themselves to embrace their children when they think about the bereft parents who lost their children in the Shoah.

M. B.

The Institutions in Our City

In our city, located 50 kilometers from the Austrian border, rights of settlement were granted only to Jews born in that area, according to the laws of the czarist regime. Those born outside the Pale who tried to settle there were punished and expelled. Because of its special geographic location, Dunivits became an important place in trade and industry.

At the beginning of the 19th century, a group of German and Austrian immigrants settled in this city. These immigrants were poor when they arrived. They reached our city in dog-drawn carts, but they nevertheless brought weaving machines with them. In the course of time, beginning with these weaving machines, 35 textile factories and two factories for making steel were developed. Because of this industrial development, many Jews began to stream in from places far and near beyond the pale. The czarist police pursued these Jews who had no property rights, and many were liable to be expelled from the city. A struggle ensued between the Jews and the police. Participating in this conflict was Yonah Bokser. As a private lawyer, he fought against such threatened deportation. The struggle was long and difficult. It was only after many years that Jews were exempt from the restrictions of the Pale and the sentencing of Jews ceased.

Because of his active participation in such activities of the city, Bokser's life was frequently threatened with the terror of deportation and imprisonment. As previously mentioned, the German immigrants enjoyed economic prosperity. Many of them grew rich, and this booming success attracted many of their native acquaintances to Dunivits. A large German colony developed. They established their community life: they founded a German school, an Evangelical church, a meeting hall for their gatherings, and even their own firefighting company. Their contact with the other Christian inhabitants was minimal. Even though their association with the Jews was centered mostly in the economic arena, in other areas the Germans manifested a latent anti-Semitism, and at times it was quite blatant.

All the inhabitants of the city, except the Jews, were allowed entrance to the public park that surrounded the firehouse. Only for certain festivities were Jews permitted to buy entry tickets. The German firefighters were supposed to come to the help of all the inhabitants of the city in case of a fire. For these services they received a fixed sum of money from Novaya Ushitsa. The Jewish community also contributed to the German firefighters from its budget. The Germans would contrive ways to raise funds, among which was the practice of conducting firefighting drills. For this purpose, they would select the house of a well-to-do Jew, attach their ladders to it, climb up to the roof, and with their hammers break the wooden shingles, sprinkle jets of water on the walls, and cause much damage to the house. In

order to avoid such drills, the homeowners would contribute to the firefighters' cause. Nevertheless, when a fire broke out in a house in the Jewish Quarter, the firefighters did not hurry to extinguish the fire. It once happened that a fire broke out in an overcrowded section of the Jewish Quarter. The firefighters reached the place after a long delay, and more than 20 houses went up in smoke. Many families were left without a roof over their heads. This disaster spurred the Jewish community to action. Thanks to the initiative of Yonah Bokser, Eli Rubinstein, Yosef Blank, and others, a Jewish firefighters group was instituted in the city, in which the Jewish youth and other respected Jews participated. Within a short time, this firefighting group became a communal cause that attracted various groups from the city's Jewish population. In the course of time, this association also took upon itself to act as a self-defense unit. After the Kishinev pogrom began, an active fermentation of anti-Semitism began in all the cities and towns of the pale. The Jews of Dunivits sent a delegation to the governor of the capital city of Kaminits-Podolsk. The city's active leaders who wanted to request the governor to take strong, deterring measures against the rioters participated in this delegation. The governor, however, did not want to receive the delegation, and they returned without even vague promises from him. The members of the delegation came to the decision that they could rely only on themselves; that is, on the organized young firefighters. The opportunity for an encounter came all too quickly. One fine day, when the marketplace was crowded with the neighboring farmers, the men of the Black Hundred incited the farmers to destroy the merchandise in the Jewish kiosks.

Uniformed firefighters wearing copper hats and equipped with all sorts of tools and implements appeared at the place where the pogrom started. The rioters became alarmed and started to withdraw and flee, and the city was saved. This incident served for many years to spare Dunivits from pogroms during Petlyura's time. This rescue incident, however, carried with it a big price. The Black Hundred did not sit by idly and let that incident go by unnoticed. They perverted the riots of that day in the marketplace into a viciously harsh petition to the governor of the province to dissolve the Jewish firefighters association. The German colony offered open and covert help to the Black Hundred.

Some of the leaders of the firefighters association, such as Dr. Marmor, did not remain in prison too long. An appeal was lodged in court against the dissolution order and, in addition to the local lawyer, the Zionist attorney Schleifer from Kaminits-Podolsk and the well-known advocate, A. Gruzenberg, from Petersburg appeared in this trial. The trial lasted about two years and resulted once again in the formation of a new firefighters association. It is worthy of note that the founders of the firefighters group were also instrumental in establishing the first savings and loan fund of its kind in the region. The main promoters were Yisro'el Rabinowitz, Chayim

Meir Rosenblatt, Chayim Schneider, Yonah Bokser, Yosef Blank, Aharon Perlmutter, and others.

The objective of the fund was to extend credit cheaply to small business men and merchants. The institution raised, in great measure, the economic status of the lower classes and those of small means and won the confidence of the population. The Jews of the city also brought their savings to this fund. This institution lasted until the end of 1914 when World War I broke out.

Fayge Tochner

Our City in the Years 1920–1935

After the Petlyura riots in 1919 and after the regime had changed twice, the Bolsheviks captured Dunivits on October 15, 1920. The invading army lacked material, and, as soon as the Bolsheviks entered the city, they started taking from the inhabitants everything they could lay their hands on. Normal life in the city came to a halt, shopkeepers did not open their shops, and farmers did not bring their produce to the market, because they, too, had heard the rumors about the confiscations and the takings perpetrated by the soldiers.

The city people made every effort to carry on with the minimum of essential services. Intercity communication was disrupted; the post, telephone, and telegraph did not function; newspapers were not delivered; and the few people who wanted to travel from place to place could do so only because the roads were still open, but they had to hire a special transport. In this manner, some of the inhabitants were able to leave the city and even Russia. Thanks to the fact that the Polish border was only 50 kilometers from our city, it was possible to cross it without too much difficulty. Many of our people crossed the border to Galicia and from there dispersed to all corners of the earth; some of them went to Eretz Yisrael. A few months later, the border was closed completely, inter-city movement was limited; and even to travel to Kaminits, which was close to Dunivits, a special permit was needed. With the closing of the roads, a period of systematic searches began on the pretext that they were looking for weapons, and they took practically everything that came to hand, particularly watches. The tune changed after a few months—instead of weapons, they looked for merchandise. The inhabitants hid everything, but the soldiers found the merchandise because of the very thorough searches that they conducted each night and every day in a different place. All the found goods were confiscated, the owners were arrested and brought before a military court, often with an imminent sentence of death and speedy execution. This era was called "The Period of Militant Communism."

After the confiscation of goods came the period of excesses. It was a horrible time. During the day you would wish for the evening, and at night you prayed for morning. The oppression and the searches wrought havoc on nerves. All strata of society suffered, but more so the richer class, because it was in constant fear of searches, confiscation of property, imprisonment, and death. Craftsmen feared unemployment, and the poor always suffered. When a Jew awoke in the morning, he immediately heard the news of the night, even without the media of newspaper and radio, as though an information bureau had distributed the news of destruction and imprisonment.

The only way to get necessary food was through exchange. People

resorted to the primitive method of barter. In most cases, women and children would walk to neighboring villages carrying whatever could be exchanged for food. This continued for about two years.

In October 1922, the NEP (New Economic Policy) was established, and it signified a period of light in an era of darkness. Once again free trade was permitted, and the situation improved to a limited degree. Commerce and manufacturing began to develop, and everybody went back to work and earned a living. Part of the population, a very small part, even grew rich, but in becoming rich they may have brought trouble upon themselves. Because a majority of them were Zionists, were it not for the NEP, many of them might have emigrated to Palestine. It was always thought that the NEP was a disaster for the Jews of Russia. At the end of 1926, it was sensed that the impact of the NEP was beginning to diminish and that its days were numbered. In 1927 this era was all over and done with. The theory that led to the liquidation of the NEP was the imposition of such a large income tax that it brought in its wake the confiscation of all the capital accumulated by the merchants and businessmen. By the beginning of 1928, not a single private enterprise remained. The few survivors associated themselves with factories that were organized as cooperatives. During the time that the NEP was functioning, the owners equipped their factories with modern machines and laid in a stock of raw materials that was later available for confiscation. During the NEP period, factory owners were imprisoned and exiled to Siberia for periods of three to five years. A decree called "The Minus Law" was imposed on those exiles who succeeded in surviving the hard labor and difficult living conditions and finally returned. This decree imposed conditions similar to those encountered in Siberia by the following restrictions: the returning prisoner was not permitted to return to his previous residence; he could not live within 100 kilometers of Moscow, Leningrad, Kharkov, and Kiev; he could not live within a 100 kilometer radius of an industrial center or of a border. As a result of such directives, it was almost impossible to find a place to settle and begin a new life. During the time that the head of the household was in exile, his family existed in the city under very difficult conditions. The houses occupied by such families were transferred to governmental ownership, and the function of the office in charge was to inspect and supervise all such properties. Such families lived in wretched and distressed parts of the city and waited for the discharge of the father or husband. If and when he returned, they all took the wanderer's staff in hand and set out to begin life anew.

Life was pleasant enough during the NEP era; because when one feels prosperous, the past is sometimes forgotten, and little thought is given to the future. People bought items that were previously not within their reach, such as jewels, fur coats, and silverware, which became readily accessible.

On December 31, 1928, a catastrophic law was imposed throughout the length and breadth of Russia, and this night was called *Leil ha-zahav*

(Golden night). Government officials went from house to house and confiscated jewels, silverware, and furs. They even removed rings from fingers and earrings from women's ears, taking with them everything made of gold. *Leil ha-zahav* brought a drastic end to the NEP era.

A new period began in 1929 when people were given government jobs, either because they chose to work in the government or because they were compelled to. This period could be characterized as a transitional one from trade to labor and to clerical work. A merchant or anyone suspected of being a merchant or a factory owner was denied the right to vote. Persons denied suffrage were not eligible for any government job or work. Employment could be obtained only through the Labor Office that did not register anyone who did not have the right to vote. In order to escape from the trap of the vicious circle, a merchant was forced to learn a trade. It was not only important to find a job because one had to earn a living, but also to have a certificate of length of service in order to gain the desired right to vote.

Because this was the first year that the crops were confiscated by the government, when the harvest season drew near, the government had to meet the quota of necessary workers. Stations were opened for the delivery of the grain crops, and clerks were recruited from the Labor Office. The work proceeded with such lightning speed that they had to work day and night. After the grain crops came the potato harvest, followed by the sugar beet harvest. Sugar beets were transported to sugar factories. By the end of 1929, there were many among our population who had certificates documenting six months of work. During the year many managed to acquire all sorts of documents and statistics; they worked a month here, a month there, and they could add certificate to certificate and increase the number of months of desired service. Everybody hoped to be able to accumulate the requisite minimum of months.

The tempo of work was so intense that personal life was generally neglected, and family life was disrupted as a result of the hard work. My husband worked at the Dunivits railroad station, and weeks passed with no word from him. I wondered how he was and once traveled to visit him at night. I found that he was working to the late hours of the night, and his beard had grown. I much feared that he had been imprisoned. He quietly told me that they worked endlessly day and night and there was no time to shave. It was at such a tempo and under such living conditions that people worked from two to three years until they received suffrage rights. In the course of time they were accepted into the union.

I am reminded of a story that of itself is saddening enough, but it clearly shows the intense desire for a government job. In the winter of 1932–33 the Russian government had a trade agreement with Germany, and among other goods it sold feathers. My husband was then a clerk in the Exports Bureau. Once, when I returned home from work, he told me that he had invited all the *shochetim* of our town to our home that evening. They came,

and my husband told them that they could, under certain conditions, all become government officials. They could open a slaughter house for fowl, something that up to now had never existed legally. The slaughter house would be furnished with the most modern equipment; the money received for slaughtering would be theirs. The government would buy the feathers from the *shochetim*, and in addition they would receive a token salary. This exchange was to be made public by the *shochetim* (via a notice in the newspaper) that they would renounce any fulfillment of religious obligations; that is to say—they would cease to serve as cantors, *mohelim*, and honorary officers at the synagogue, and they would not conduct wedding ceremonies. It was a very difficult decision for these respected Jews. If they did not agree, they would be unemployed and lack a means of livelihood, but, if they agreed, it would help them economically. It was not easy for such people to renounce their positions in religious life, and it was particularly hard for them to concede on the matter of circumcisions. They requested 24 hours to consider the matter before giving their answer.

The next day their answer was affirmative. I sat down, documented their declarations, and they affixed their signatures. More than once I have recalled the expressions on the faces of these five Jews as they took the pen from my hand to sign. In spite of the solemn declaration, not one of them refused when called upon to comply with the commandment of entering a child into the covenant with Abraham, our father. In most instances, the ceremony took place in the presence of the grandmother and mother, without the father. Grandma stole the infant, as it were, without the parents' knowledge, and, if the matter was discovered, she carried the blame; the infant's parents brought her to trial for the crime of stealing the infant. The baby's father never participated in the ceremony—for fear of being expelled from the Party.

Men between the ages of 25–45 lived under these oppressive conditions accompanied by constant fear. Younger people studied to qualify for a trade or profession. There was a public school, and attendance was compulsory. When children graduated from public school, the government would provide them with the necessary education to learn a trade. Talented sons from among the workers attended an intermediate vocational school. Near each factory there was a school where classes were conducted for four hours of study and four hours of work. The young men were about 18 years old when they finished such a school A graduate from such an intermediate school could, if he was the son of a privileged person, enter the university. In contrast, a young man, no matter how capable, could not go to a higher school of learning if he was from the underprivileged class.

Such young men went to work in the mines because after a year of such labor they were granted the rights of suffrage. Young women left the city for other kinds of work, sometimes the most difficult. For these young people who attained suffrage the *numerus clausus* (restrictive quotas) invoked,

because admission was granted first to sons of Party members, then to youths of collective farms, and finally to Jews. Even after they began their studies, and even with the help each month with some rubles from their parents, some students, in addition to a diploma, would succumb to an illness. The son of one of the teachers, for example, had received no help from his father and completed his medical studies. After a short while, however, he died from tuberculosis which he had brought with him from his studies.

An operation in which I was privileged to participate is worthy of note. In the winter of 1932–33 regulations were publicized regarding the carrying out of voting procedures. Voting was organized so that each labor union voted separately on a different date. On the decided date for my work group, we were notified to get dressed and go down to the parade grounds for our marching orders. When I arrived I found that all my co-workers were lined up, as was the band. We were arranged like an army for drill exercises. We numbered more than a thousand people and were arranged in groups of four. The band began to play, and the procession moved forward in an organized march. Despite the fact that none of us knew the purpose of our marching or where we were heading, nobody dared to ask.

Finally we arrived at a theater located in the city garden of the German section. After we were all seated, the stage curtain parted revealing five seated leaders. One of them stood up and said: "Comrades, I want to explain to you the purpose for which we are assembled here today." He continued to explain that we were about to vote for the democratic government of the Russian people. He took a piece of paper from his pocket and read from it the names of individuals that the Party Committee had investigated and found worthy of being elected; we could trust the committee.... After that he continued to say that anyone opposed to voting for these people should raise his hand. Of course, no one did. The speaker waited a moment and then announced, in a ceremonial voice, that there was no opposition. He ordered us and the band to fall into formation. The band struck up once again, and, in groups of four, we returned to work. Many of us understood for the first time the exact interpretation of the word "democracy." I was not the only one to hide the tears of shame and humiliation that we felt, because we saw ourselves as a flock of sheep submitting to the shepherd's rod.

Conditions for those between 60 and 70 years were the most difficult. Some of the elderly were supported by their children, and others lived off the gradual sale of their belongings. But almost all lived a very impoverished life and waited for death.... Those in their early sixties were entitled to work, but the prospects of finding a job were slim. Those physically strong enough could qualify as night watchmen in government warehouses. Anyone who didn't work, as noted above, was deprived of the right of suffrage, and this applied also to the aged; those not having the right to vote could not

continue to live in their homes which had become government property. For them it was a period of continuous displacement.

Most of those between the ages of 45 to 60 maintained themselves by selling their belongings. The years passed and the stock of household articles steadily diminished. Only very few in that age bracket managed to eke out an ordered life.

The Sabbath, or, truth to tell, the desecration of the Sabbath, was a very painful problem. Because they refused to work on the Sabbath and on holidays, Jews were fired during a purge in the governmental administrative staff, and then there was great poverty.

On many a morning, on my way to work, I would encounter a Jew with a *tallit* under his arm, and this signified to me that it was a Sabbath or a holiday. We would look at each other shamefacedly, even if for different reasons: I, because he was going to pray, whereas I was going to work; he, because he was unemployed. There were those who said it was better to die from hunger than to work on the Sabbath. Once I heard a Jew say to his friend, "It is good that your wife is able to work, but what can I do if my wife is sick?" Neither of them had children. The wife of the first man was the breadwinner.

As is known, all religious holidays were annulled, and only two fixed holidays of the year were declared. These were Day of the Revolution celebrated November 7th and 8th and International Workers Day celebrated May 1st. At that time, too, there was no established day of rest, except for certain days of the calendar: the 6th, 12th, 18th, 24th, and 30th of each month. Each of the official holidays was celebrated for three days. November 6th was a rest day, and the 7th and 8th were the festival days.

To make the people feel in a holiday mood, large sums were allotted to each project in order to finance parties and to bestow honors upon workers and their families. A certain woman was the principal arranger at such festivities, and it was up to her to manage the festivities (that is, to be the cook). She was always flattered when told that her borsht was tasty. I remember an anecdote about arranging those festivals. A million rubles was allocated for the celebration of one of the holidays, but only on condition that the person who undertook the arrangements must do it in such a manner that everyone would rejoice and remember it forever. Nobody wanted to obligate himself to such a difficult task.

In the winter of 1932–33, the economic conditions were growing increasingly bad. The cold was very bitter, and it was difficult to get food and heating fuel. We all suffered. On the eve of Passover, the Torgassen were opened, and conditions improved slightly. Torgassen was the name of government stores that were selling goods in exchange for dollars and gold. It was generally possible to obtain in these stores items that were not seen in the markets.

We began to receive checks from abroad. The atmosphere changed with

the opening of these stores, because, in the years 1928–29, everyone who was discovered to have dollars was exiled to Siberia without a trial; here, one fine day when the Torgassen stores were opened, everything became kosher. Anyone who still had a buried coin dug it up and exchanged it for commodities.

In our city there were three official schools: Ukrainian, Polish, and Yiddish. We sent our children to the Ukrainian, because the matter of religion was not mentioned in that school, while at the Yiddish school, everything was done to exorcise religion from the children's hearts by denigrating any idea of religious observance in the eyes of the children. The administration of the Yiddish school did many infuriating things; e.g., on the eve of Passover, they would have a party for the children and, of course, give them bread to eat; or, on Yom Kippur eve, instead of Kol Nidre they prepared a meal and drinks for the children. On Yom Kippur day, we had to work, and the children went to school. In the Ukrainian school, no one paid attention whether a child ate or not, whereas in the Yiddish school they inspected all the children to see whether they had brought food, and the child whose bag had no food was immediately sent home to bring some. (On other days they didn't care whether the children ate or not.) With the dissolution of the NEP, it was clear that the merchants had money. As mentioned above, the end was very drastic, and many merchants were divested of their property and even of their furniture in exchange for the exorbitant income tax. The confiscated goods were sold at low prices that never covered the tax; and on those who had no property another tax was levied. This debt was never rescinded, resulting in the imposition of sentences of many long years of imprisonment. There was no prison in Dunivits, so prisoners were sent to Kaminits. Those prisoners who were capable of working to the satisfaction of the authorities were released after serving two-thirds of their term. There were all sorts of workshops in the prison, and prisoners worked with all their strength in order to obtain an early release.

In spite of all the high taxes, there were a few people who could pay all their debts and still have money to buy dollars and gold that they buried in the ground. Of course, all this was known by our fellow Jews who worked in the office of the GPU (secret police). One fine day, the secret service began to summon people to the office and demanded that they hand over the foreign currency and gold in their possession, because the country was finding itself in financial trouble and needed the currency in order to purchase commodities from abroad. They continued to persuade the population by telling the people that it was better for the country to use the money instead of it being hoarded. These explanations reached only the attentive ears of some professors in Kiev, but were not heeded by the masses.

In the small towns, the explanation was less intelligent and more

persuasive, because the secret service came at night, imprisoned the people, and began to explain to them. People were thrown into a jail and unbelievably tortured. The torments were applied scientifically. First of all, the housing was ideal, because more than a hundred prisoners were incarcerated in a cell that normally held 20. The crowded conditions were such that the prisoners had to remain standing until they fell upon each other. The door of the cell was opened only once a day to allow for bodily functions. Machines that whirred noisily 24 hours a day were located outside the cells. Some of the prisoners simply went insane; some almost died from weakness, and some died. Eventually each prisoner gave up his money; it was only a question of time. There were those who stood their ground for one day, and there were those who kept their secret for as long as six weeks; not a single person held out for longer. If the investigator happened to be a Jew, the situation became more complicated because the Jews resorted to various ruses; for example: during the questioning of a prisoner, the prisoner was queried about family members, even about those of previous generations. After learning the details, the investigator came to the prisoner's wife and gave her the message that her husband said to give up all the money; and as convincing proof he would mention the anniversary day of a death, names of family members, family history, and other such details.

In 1933 there was a famine, and people fell dead in the streets. The famine was not due to a crop failure but to the political situation. Apparently all the grain had been exported. At that time, you could not get things that only a short while ago were available in the Torgassen. I received only occasionally a kilo and 100 grams of bread a day for myself and my two children. We were compelled to take from our home the silverware and rings that remained to exchange for whatever food was available. With my own eyes, I saw women who had a dentist remove the gold from their teeth, so that they could buy food.

Once I happened to enter the house of newcomers to town and noticed that they were eating soup with wooden spoons. It was obvious that I was looking at the spoons. The man in the house said to me, "You are looking at them? Our spoons have been in the Torgassen for quite some time, and I wish I had some more." For the poor people who had never owned silver or gold, it was not possible to benefit from the Torgassen offerings, and indeed many of the starvation victims were from this segment of the population.

We left Dunivits on October 27, 1935. The last few days before our departure were very emotional and full of excitement. The news of our departure for Eretz Yisrael was spread with winged speed and within a few hours was known throughout the city. An endless procession began to stream toward our house in order to bid us farewell and to relay greetings to their relatives there. We willingly accepted all these missions.

Abraham Rosen

Memorial

I was burned with my brothers in the death ovens,
Wicked hands strewed our ashes to fertilize fields,
Yet a monument was built with all due respect
To Anonymous, may his memory be blessed.

The wind will caress the tombstone's two eyes
Until in the dark pupils *pay-nun* shines.
Two limbs carved by the stonecutter's hands
Like a father's tender embrace of a child.

Yet none can decipher the monument's spirit.
Who is the martyr, nameless and timeless?
Each day the sun shines upon my hidden soul
Without ever revealing when, who, and whence.

[Hebrew text page 142 has a photograph of a monument for the Dunivits victims with caption: Everlasting Memorial to the Martyrs of our Town]

This memorial was constructed above a cave into which the German fascists threw—on the Sabbath, the 15th of Iyyar 1942 (May 2,1942)—three thousand of our brethren, live men, women and children, the young and the old, babies and nursing infants; and blocked up the cave so there was no chance of escape until the victims were either asphyxiated or died of hunger. The cries and the anguished moans and groans from below the ground were heard from afar for a number of weeks.

"And as you tread on this place you shall remember the martyred souls of those who were annihilated for the Sanctification of the Holy Name by brutal and violent deaths, and you shall say: May their souls be bound in the bonds of life. Amen."

(Copied from the verso of the photograph sent to us by our townsman, Meir Pechersky).

Personalities

Prof. Yehezkel Kaufmann

Yehezkel Kaufmann was born in 1889 to pious, observant Jews. His father was a linen merchant, and, as was the custom, he sent his son to a *heder*. When the boy was older he studied Talmud and *Posekim*. In addition, with a private teacher he learned Hebrew grammar and some contemporary Hebrew literature. Even as a young man he was inclined to write compositions. His first published essay in *Ha-Shilo'ah* was on Ahad Ha-Am (Asher Ginzberg). When the family relocated in Odessa, Kaufmann attended the yeshivah of Rav Za'ir (Chaim Tchernowitz) and attended lectures delivered by Bialik and Klausner. At this school, he first became aware of the concept of Biblical criticism and was particularly impressed even though he did not fully agree with the contents of the lectures. Meanwhile, he started to study general science and then went to Berne, Switzerland, where he studied philosophy, history, Bible, and Semitic languages. There he earned a PhD degree. From Berne he went to Berlin to continue philosophical studies. He dedicated his work to Judaic and Biblical research.

In 1919 Kaufmann went to Eretz Yisrael and taught Bible at the Re'ali School in Haifa. After a while he was invited to lecture at the University in Jerusalem where he was appointed Professor of Bible. He served in this capacity until 1957. Kaufmann published his Judaic studies in almost all the Hebrew periodicals of his day, and he was twice awarded the Bialik Prize. Kaufmann became famous primarily because of two books: *Golah ve-Nekhar* and *Toledot ha-Emunah ha-Yisra'elit*. *Golah ve-Nekhar* presents Kaufmann's basic views on the philosophy of history in general and particularly that of the Jewish people, emphasizing their uniqueness. In his opinion, the factor of religion was the only reason for the uniqueness and the unity of the Israelites. His major book, *Toledot ha-Emunah ha-Yisra'elit*, was an original, creative study. This monumental work redeemed the science of Jewish Biblical studies that until then had been dominated by Christian or Jewish scholars influenced by non-Jewish researchers. The Wellhausen school of thought claimed that the Jewish faith developed from paganistic idolatry prominent at that time. Based on his own research, Kaufmann demonstrated that this theory was fundamentally incorrect and that the concept of monotheism is solely Judaic and that it developed exclusive of paganism. The originality of this doctrine in Biblical studies together with his own research methods strengthened his position.

In his later years, he wrote commentaries on the Early Prophets, and he published commentaries on the Book of Joshua and the Book of Judges. He was a scholar who studied the existence of Israel from its beginnings as a nation. He reflected on the spiritual beginnings of its nationality in order to

explain its cultural beginnings. He realized his mission in life by probing deeply into the spiritual treasures of the nation.

Dr. M.Z. Sola

Prof. Zevi Scharfstein

The literary works of Zevi Scharfstein are rich and varied. There is no problem in the field of education that cannot find clarification in his numerous writings. His teaching is explicit and concise. He expresses his ideas clearly in order to clarify a point, albeit in a condensed manner. There is no statement without its related application, and no rule unsupported by a logical theory. Much credit should be given to Zevi Scharfstein for his innovative contributions to the growth of our culture. At the forefront of his work was his sincere and serious regard for the children of the Diaspora and his concern to produce suitable educational texts for them, which inaugurated much needed studies in that field. His books were appreciated in the Diaspora by teachers and pupils alike, and they gained widespread use.

He was also among the first, it seems, to produce Hebrew language texts for more mature students. While still in Galicia, before he came to the United States, he and the late Raphael Soferman were joint authors of such a work. He was the first to explain the principles of language instruction in his book, *Darkhe limud leshonenu*. In *Darkhe limud ha-Tanakh*, he was among the first to set forth the principles and practices of Biblical studies.

He was the first to formulate and explain the problems inherent in other aspects of educational literature, primarily in the revival of Hebrew in the Diaspora and its use as a spoken language; the first among the enlightened intellectuals of our city for whom Hebrew was a fluent, functional language. His eloquent mastery of the language influenced many others, near and far, to adopt the revival of spoken Hebrew. Thus, our small city, in a significant way, became known for its influence on Zionist ideology.

L.I. Riklis

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Zevi Scharfstein was the personification of the educator par excellence. He was not merely a specialist in his profession. He considered the field of education to be his personal, national humanitarian mission. Ideas and principles applied to education are contained even in those of his writings which are not directly about education because of the characteristically unique quality that stemmed from genuine love and from the poetry within him. The educational objectives in his writings, often unintentionally, are enveloped in poetic cogitations, in an aura of ethical heights and deep religious feeling. Overall, the essence of love is discernible. It was a threefold love: of humanity in general, of the nation of Israel, of Jewish culture. From this stemmed the humanistic thread that runs through all he proposed—an all-embracing spectrum of humanism which recognizes the problems of the

People of Israel as a problem that coexists with the problems of humanity in general.

Zevi Scharfstein was a prodigious writer. In addition to many educational texts used worldwide, he was also the author of many basic books such as *Toldoth ha-hinukh be-Yisrael* and *Ha-hinukh be-Erets Yisrael*, which deserve a prominent place on the shelves of any educational institution. His autobiographical works are a delight. These works belong in the realm of fine literature; his humanism is expressed in them.

Ya'akov Churgin

S.L. Blank

S.L. Blank lived in Dunivits for the first 18 years of his life; after that time, he spent 14 years in Bessarabia and 40 years in the United States. Most of his stories are based on his life and experiences during the 14 years in Bessarabia; even in his descriptions of American Jews, he reverted to the Jews of Bessarabia.

He was a son of nature, rooted in nature and living with nature. In the villages and towns of Bessarabia, where he was a teacher, he found what his soul sought most: the fields, the trees and the streams, the open spaces, the flocks of sheep, and the shepherd who was part of the landscape. He was a poet of the landscape and its creatures, a poet of nature in all its aspects.

Blank did not find his world in Dunivits, where, as in other cities, the inhabitants were primarily peddlers, shopkeepers, agents, and yeshivah students. Most of the Jews there were cut off from nature. It was somewhat different in Bessarabia where part of the Jewish population lived in villages, close to the land, breathing its air and actually living off it with the labor of their own hands. Blank preferred them. He described the people—as he saw them—with his artistic eye.

Bessarabia had some renowned Hebrew authors such as Judah Steinberg and S. Ben-Zion (Simhah Alter Gutmann) who lived most of their lives in Bessarabia, but the types of characters they depicted were similar to those in other districts. Blank, however, did not portray such people. His works do not concentrate on peddlers, shopkeepers, middlemen, scholars, and the intelligentsia. When they are mentioned, it is only peripherally.

Blank chose to depict the shepherd and the tillers of the soil. Even as an American, a city dweller from Bessarabia, he would long for the earth and created a small farm for himself that would include an open field, a chicken coop, and a cow shed. As a son of nature, attuned to its changes, Blank described both of its aspects—its serenity and beauty as well as its tempestuousness and destructive powers. *Zon*, *Moshavah*, *Adamah*, *Nahalah*—these creative works highlighted the exalted calm and the tranquil peacefulness of nature, its magic enchantment, and also the turbulent changes of the landscape. Living creatures are part of the landscape. The dog, the cow, the cat, the calf, the bird, and the chick—all caught his eye and captured his heart. He was perhaps the first author in

the Diaspora for whom the dog was a friend, a close friend, as portrayed by the dog, Turik, in the poetic story, *Havah*.

It was a great pleasure for him to depict, with great charm, the peace that prevailed in wide open spaces, the abundance of the earth that nurtured its creatures. In the book, *Zon*, he began by describing a small plot of land that Boaz rented to raise flocks. Boaz started with five ewes and a dog to watch them. The scenes are pastoral, and the whole atmosphere projects an aura of tranquil contentment. When Boaz sees the flock nibbling the grass, he says to them, "Eat, my dear ones, and enjoy your grazing." When he sees them drinking water at the stream, he softly whispers, "Drink, lovely creatures." And the shepherd pipes on a flute the Hymn of Unity in the wilderness and thinks about his young, beloved wife. And the Sabbath in the home of this shepherd, a simple man who cannot read the prayer book, is drawn as a day of sublime pleasure. The book is wholly idyllic, a picturesque description of a way of life similar to that depicted in Knut Hamsun's "Growth of the Soil."

Except for Mapu and Buki ben Yagli (Judah Leib Benjamin Katzenelson) who preceded him, the story *Zon* and the other stories of this genre, *Moshavah, Nahalah*, *Adamah* are the only ones in our literature that are based on the poetry of the earth. Not even in Eretz Yisrael, where the religion of work was established and the pioneers dedicated their lives to make the desert bloom, was such an idyll generated.

Blank's *Boaz* was at one with nature, a child drawing sustenance from Mother Earth. The *halutzim* were city dwellers, cultured individuals who did not regard the earth as belonging to its creatures; from their viewpoint of history, they reached the general conclusion that the land was the basis of survival and through labor the Nation of Israel would be reborn.

There is also the other side of nature—its tempestuous and exciting outbursts and the inner, seething turmoil of the soul. Tempests and earthquakes and torrential rains are described in his works. The thunder and lightning and the explosive turbulence of leaves and branches and uprooted trees—all the images of nature bursting its bounds—are all drawn with strong strokes. In like manner, *Boaz* evinced the torments of his soul, the eruption of carnal desires, the fear of vengeance, murderous feelings, and the thirst for blood.

Because Jewish types were usually not portrayed as stormy souls with outbreaks of passion—prone to use knives and guns—Blank reverted to Negroes, Italians, and Romanians—Romanians during the time of the Jewish pogroms. These characterizations are replete with wicked evil and flair. By developing climaxes to reach a very high point, he compels us to believe in such outbursts, that they are part of life and are inescapable consequences of life's perplexities.

Ish, ishah ve-kof (Man, woman and monkey) is a delightful story about a wicked Italian man who fights with his young, healthy wife who had

deceived him, and he is about to choke her, when the wife shoots him with a bullet. The book *Bi-she'at herum* portrays the epitome of sadistic and murderous deeds of the Romanians and the brutality they perpetrated upon the Jews—their victims. In the story, *Sonim* (Enemies), the reader senses the heavy, troubled atmosphere prevalent in Moldavian villages. The scene of the fight by the Jewish young man who had just returned from war to defend the honor of his mother and his betrothed is a masterpiece of literature. The description of the youth's attacking his enemy, *Aksono Harumani* (Aksono, the Romanian), is a great artistic achievement. Blank wrote much about the immigrants in Philadelphia and its environs. He portrayed the changes that came to the newcomers because of their desire to adapt or because they were compelled to adapt in order to climb the ladder of success. The portrayals were written from a sociological point of view, and, in the future, whoever might want to write about changes in the life of the immigrants, the first and second generations in America, how they worked themselves up from being craftsmen or lowly peddlers to be shopkeepers, and from there to amassing fortunes and conforming to the way of life of an individual within a society—that person will find what he is seeking in Blank's works.

Zevi Scharfstein

Abraham Rosen (Rosenzweig)

I first saw his name mentioned in one of the last issues of *Ha-Tekufah*. His poetry made a great impression on me. I recall that there was something new in his mode of expression, something fresh and original. I marveled at the true, precise expression, utterly devoid of flowery language usually found in a poem, more so in our Hebrew poetry. And entwined with this—simple charm and sincerity.

The mood in his poetry is one of nostalgia, yearnings of a forsaken child in the big world, "yearnings soft and delicate as gossamer." He still remembers his doleful parents, his grandmother knitting socks; fields ablaze with corn, wildflowers and greenery; the gurgling of the stream, like the babble of schoolchildren on holiday; poppies and sunflowers—scenes of the Ukrainian landscape.

He was a son of the village, and the village determines his frame of reference. When he wandered out into the big world, he found himself in a metropolis, lost in the city, captive and forlorn. He turns from its stronghold back to nature and to the perfection to be found there. He bemoans man's shortcomings when he is confined within city walls. It happens that in his longings for nature the village poet envisions: "To earth and to God will we return, and somewhere Paradise awaits us." This is a refined, simple and humane expression of his life's prayer.

From this stance of prayer he gives us the tender poetry of his native land. He sings to us tunefully: "Do you hear the sound in the valley?" And

he concludes: "From afar the echo still lingers—is that my voice still trembling?" Or the poem, *Irumah ve-harukhat-holot* (Bare and scorched sands) in which he speaks to his country:

Behold,
A hut sits on the horizon,
Do you know why?
A resting place, at evening, for man,

A shelter for a lamb.
At dawn, light streaks through the lathes.
Inscribed is my fate
In the footsteps of your earth.

Could the poet project himself into the realities of life among the *halutzim*? No one who has not actually participated in their life can feel and express their sentiments as he did.

And with the sprouting of the first blossoms,
The rejuvenated leaves,
I hide my face with cries of joy:
The seeds I planted, my country's offspring.

The enchantment of the poet's homeland reveals itself in the poem, *Ba-aviv* (In the Spring) as he walks in the meadow: "The stroller meditates: / Who is rooted in the landscape? / To the treetops to Yavneh in the heavens of blue / He raises his eyes / Bliss abounds."

A hint of Spring—and also a hint of Love (*ahavah*). Among his radiant musings of Spring and Love, he tells us, there is a pretty maiden forever brightening the path of his life: "Spring, valley and forest. Light and skies of blue. On hilltops paths meander hither and yon. A charming girl runs in the field like a raging storm." He, the young poet, pursues her:

Suddenly, lightning ignites the fire in her eyes,
Gushing, rolling waves seize her heart.
Like golden bells her red lips quiver.
The girl is crying—and I, I love, I love.

This last verse, simple and beautiful, reveals to us the concept of love in a manner not found in longer, greater love poems.

Dr. Simon Ginzburg

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Abraham Rosen's first encouraging steps into Hebrew poetry brought him into the distinguished literary venue of that time—to *Ha-Tekufah* edited by Ya'akov Cahan. Later we saw his poems in the periodicals of *Moznayim* and *Gilyonot*, *Davar* and *Haaretz*; *Bustenai*, and *Ha-Po'el ha-Za'ir*. He also published several books of lyric and epic poetry.

Twenty-five years ago the poet Abraham Rosen migrated to Palestine and his initial encounter with the homeland brought to the fore his cherished visions of antiquity. His early poems were woven from threads of imagination, dream, and adoration. In the light of the morning when he first set foot on the sands of Jaffa's shore, it was for him a golden dream. Tel Aviv appeared to him as a princess, "dreaming of blue ocean and sky." When he ventured out onto the paths of the homeland and his eyes beheld the bordering high mountains, he felt that "the origin of the world still lies deep within them and that thousands of generations are spinning the dream." The sounds of his land heard in the valley appear to him in a dream as soft as silk, and he felt all this stirring in his soul. He was totally immersed in all its delights, the light and the panorama of the land, and his spirit feared the advent of the dream's end. A dream, however, does not last forever, and the hour of awakening arrives. The poet saw the peace of the homeland as a living force, and despite its bareness and scorched sands, he believed that the future will bring flowering blossoms.

The longer the poet stayed in the land, the more his poetry absorbed basic reality. Reality replaced the dream, and his poetry was about bare earth, about horse and plough, about asphalt paths, and about honest hard-working people. Abraham Rosen thus passed from poems overwhelmed with dreamy pleasurable overtones of the homeland to the poetry of reality. He also wrote about suffering and terror, and the bloody riots, in a muted voice, without raging tones. Each chosen word of his poetry—the war, the Shoah—is full of pain.

The scenes of the homeland, Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, villages and settlements, work and building, mothers and children—all of them revealing the ups and downs of life—resonate in Rosen's poems, but the centrality of his poetry is his unique lyricism, a polished idiom free of superfluous glitter and resounding rhetoric. In his *Shir Ha-Yihud* (Hymn of Unity), he lets us peer into his lyrics, his meditations, his feelings, his muted grief, his loneliness, the conciliation that surfaces from the inner glow. The poet knows there is no companion in a dream, and he must travel the way alone. But the paths are many, branching to the heights, to the depths, to the grave. It is, therefore, good to draw from the depths of life, even if he withdraws from it all. Often does it happen that the footsteps in the path of life are erased and disappear, yet we are anxious to march forward. Our poet does indeed know that the dream, albeit a vain one, is better than awakening and that in the passage to the mundane, it is good to wish for a miracle, because the window to the morrow is open and through it we can see *Zaharurei-ha-merhav* (radiant vistas).

A polarity is evident in Rosen's lyrical poems; on one hand there are the unplumbed, sorrowful depths of human existence; on the other, the peaceful conciliation of the heart. His creative talents scintillate, too, in his epic poetry and folk legends. We see not only a professional control of the

material, but also the cadence of a vibrant national poetry.

Natan Goren

Mordecai Mikhaeli

Mordecai Mikhaeli (Frizent) was born in 1894. His father was an impoverished merchant, but, as a learned and observant Jew, he wanted to give his son a traditional religious education. The family lived for a few years in a village near the city, and young Mordecai spent most days of the week at his grandmother's house and attended a *heder*. On Fridays he would return to his father's house, and on Sundays, when he did not have the fare—and that happened often—he would walk approximately eight kilometers into the city in order not to miss his studies.

His father's circumstances declined completely when Mordecai turned 15, and he was forced to give up his studies in the *heder*. He immersed himself instead, under the tutelage of a teacher who took no fee, in reading the new Hebrew literature and diligently studying the Pentateuch and the legends in *Ein-Ya'akov*. These studies influenced his creativity, and he began to write imaginative legends and even succeeded in publishing some of them in children's journals. Thus, with the help of his friends, he edited *Ba-ginah*, an anthology of children's literature.

The Zionist atmosphere in which he matured and worked during his formative years implanted in him a strong desire for a life of Hebrew culture in the Land of the Fathers, and, when he was 20 years old, he immigrated to Eretz Yisrael. There he felt as though he had returned home, and the conflict between dream and reality vanished. Eretz Yisrael for which he was yearning received him with love, and he was happy there in spite of the many hardships. Upon completing his studies at the Teachers' College and at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, he became a teacher at the Tahkemoni school. His literary creativity flourished over the years, and he wrote many children's stories and legends that were outstanding for their originality and unique Biblical style. He died in 1957 in his beloved city of Jerusalem, which he never left from the day he arrived there.

A.R.

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I met Mikhaeli in Jerusalem. He had come there as a youth to study in the Teachers' College established by Ezra. In this institution, his nationalistic feelings were intensified; his love of Torah in general, and of the culture of the Land in particular, grew deeper. Add to this the spirit of the Eternal City and a measure of his natural talent and thinking—and you have a general outline of the nature of Mikhaeli's spiritual being. A particularly delicate, almost effeminate modesty enveloped him. His soul recoiled from any ugliness, from any crude and coarse language.

At the University, he devoted himself to the study of history and

literature, and he even published some monographs. What gave him the most gratification was the world of *aggadah*. This was a world of wonder, of miracles, of supernatural happenings that he transformed into logical reality, into moral legitimacy. A legend by Mikhaeli is not merely a matter of pleasing entertainment, of diversion, of funny tricks. It is full of earnest emotionality. Another basic trait inherent in it is that it is not abstract, imaginary only, and without roots, but originates from a real being and a Jewish way of life. Its most important element is not religion and tradition, nevertheless, it has the flavor of Jewishness steeped in Jewish atmosphere and simple Jewish life.

Mikhaeli used his particular flair for language and style in creating the legends. It was not the everyday, common language, but the language of antiquity with the unadorned, simple charm inherent in it. The pure, biblical language—without rhetoric and embellishment—was the most suitable and basically fitting for the contents of his legends.

Sh. Shpan

Yosef Blank

One of the most prominent figures in the communal, national, and cultural life in Dunivits was the late Yosef Blank. He was a multi-faceted, many-sided person, a dreamer and a realist, a learned scholar and a man of action. Gifted with a charming personality, he attracted the strengths of all sectors to the stream of national revival.

It was not only the Zionist ideology that nurtured his national pride, vision, and hope; not only the *Hovevei Zion* movement with its central committee in Odessa that found in him one of its most enthusiastic activists. In the field of education and culture in Dunivits, he played a very prominent role.

Not only the members of *B'nai Zion* but also the youthful supporters of radical Zionism came to listen to his reports of the two Zionist Congresses he attended. He was a fine speaker, graced with a keen sense of humor and a refined irony. His deep personal involvement, his dreams of Zion, and the conviction with which he worked on the behalf of youth made a lasting impression on them.

He was the promoter of Hebrew education in the city. From Belz in Bessarabia, he brought the poet Jacob Fichmann, who for two years taught Hebrew to the children of the city. From Kurland he invited Dr. Knofing, the somewhat eccentric educator who served as a teacher in a modern *heder* that was instituted at that time. In the management of this *heder* designated for the children of the richer Jews, and in the Talmud Torah for children of the less well-to-do, Yosef Blank was one of the most active managers.

The problem of Hebrew or Russian, the spirited controversy that raged at that time, or even the problem of Hebrew or Yiddish, did not bother him.

Hebrew or Yiddish? Did it matter all that much? He loved them both, as twins born to the same parents. Because he was versed in ancient history and because he was an avid reader of the new Hebrew literature, he was at the same time very impressed with the contemporary creative Yiddish literature. The first renditions of Rosowsky's songs took place in Blank's home where he sang with his children, accompanied by violin played by his oldest son.

All the Hebrew books published by *Tushiyyah*, *Ahi'asaf*, and *Moriah* were intershelved with the Yiddish works of Sholem Aleichem, Mendele, and Peretz. He had the journals, *Ha-Shilo'ah*, *Ha-Zofeh*, and *Ha-Zefirah* in his house, along with the newspapers, *Haynt* and *Moment* from Warsaw, and *Gut Morgen* published in Odessa, a publication to which he contributed. His Zionist and cultural activities were not limited to Dunivits. In the cities and towns of Bessarabia, where he would often travel to conduct business, he was active for many years.

He instituted clubs, organized meeting places for young people, and inspired all sectors of the population with his enthusiasm and sincere national pride for the cause of Zionism.

The saying, "He doesn't practice what he preaches," did not apply to him. He influenced his children with his sincere belief in the renaissance of the Jewish people, and he did all in his power to educate his children to be free and proud Jews. When in 1913 he decided to send his two young daughters to Palestine to work as pioneers and at the same time to continue their studies, he was reproached by his sister for sending children of such tender age to a land so far away. He retorted, "Children, you say? I am sending adults."

More than once his extensive Zionist activities caused him much friction with the czarist regime. As is known, the Zionist movement was considered to be an illegal political organization, and Zionist work was conducted under the disguise of a committee of *Hovevei Zion* in Odessa, a legal organization. It happened, however, that the whole committee was caught in the home of David Schleifer, the attorney in Kaminits-Podolsk, and the members were called to trial for being active in an illegal organization. This occurred during the dark reactionary days of the short spring of 1905, and all the committee members were sentenced to a prison term of three to six months. But, a miracle happened: the investigating judge was a liberal person, a close friend of the lawyer Schleifer, and the trial ended favorably. Yosef Blank visited Palestine in 1914 for the first time and settled there in 1925. In 1926 he traveled to Czernowitz to visit his son and died suddenly in Dornah-Vatrah in Bukovina.

N. Avi-Hayyim

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I had heard much in my youth about the Zionist activity of Yosef Blank. His fame preceded him in the towns of Podolia and Bessarabia. He was

known as an outstanding propagandist, and he had a strong influence on the Zionist youth. I was a young girl when I left my town of Brichany in 1904 and went to study in Belz, the capital city of Bessarabia. I came to the home of Itah and Yisro'el Steinberg (brother of the author Judah Steinberg). Their home was a meeting place for Zionist youth. I, an ardent Zionist since my younger days, started some community work together with some of my friends. We formed a Zionist club, and the meetings took place mostly in Steinberg's home. There, too, Yosef Blank's name was mentioned more than once.

One evening as I sat in the room, a man about 45 years old, tall, handsome, with a black beard that enhanced his good looks approached me and introduced himself. "Yosef Blank," he said, and indicated that he would like to chat with me a bit. And with this our acquaintance began.

Whenever he would come to Belz on business, he would come to see me. He also worked with our club. Under his guidance we became involved in cultural work and arranged meetings on the subject of political Zionism and the practical work in Eretz Yisrael. After the lectures we had group singing and sang the songs of the Land. The relationship with the Land grew ever stronger and stronger. Yosef Blank took a firm stand on the collecting of monies for the *Keren Kayemet*, which was not an easy thing to do in face of the strong opposition towards Zionism in many segments of the population. Yosef Blank always guided me with advice and action. I learned much from my talks with him, and they are etched in my memory. I was, of course, not the only one among the Zionist youth whom Yosef Blank met with and activated. Such meetings with an individual were an interesting development in those days, and there was much merit in them.

In 1905 I returned to my parents' home. It was on the eve of the Revolution and the days of pogroms. Jewish youth in Russia and in our town, too, came under the influence of Marxist Socialism. There were stormy debates between the Marxists and the Zionists. Both sides would invite noted speakers to address the groups. Speakers on all aspects of Socialist Zionism, principally from the *Po'alei Zion* of Eretz Yisrael, came to our club. We had debates with outsiders, but even within our camp all was not rosy. The split between the Zion Zionists and the territorialists continued to deepen.

Yosef Blank frequently visited me at home. He stressed the importance of studying the development of Jewish history. Without a deep, basic knowledge of national history, it is impossible to understand the bond between us and Eretz Yisrael. The days of the Seventh Congress were approaching, the first one after Herzl's death, the one that was to decide: Zion or Uganda. Excitement soared. Yosef Blank's feverish activity began. He came to us frequently, gathered up the members of the club, and remonstrated that only Eretz Yisrael would solve the problem of a national homeland for the Nation of Israel.

He was a good speaker, his diction was clear, he spoke with the fiery vigor of a young man, and also influenced the territorialists in our club. Despite the fact that we were under the shield of the *Po'alei Zion* we chose him as a delegate to the Congress.

I remember that I once had to confer with him on an urgent matter regarding the elections to the Congress. I went to his hotel and was shown to his room. I found him standing in *tallit* and *tephillin* praying. With a motion of his hand, he invited me to take a seat, and he continued with his prayers. When he finished, we discussed the matter that brought me there.

In 1907–08 I was studying in Odessa and was already working with the *Po'alei Zion*. Blank came to Odessa on matters regarding the Zionist movement. We met, and from our conversations I realized that his views on general Zionism had not changed. Nevertheless, he supported me in my work. All roads led to Zion, he said. The friendship between us held fast.

We met several times in Eretz Yisrael, and I had the impression that there, too, he was active in the Zionist Party. In 1926 he went to Czernowitz, and there he died.

Esther Hen

Avraham Lerner

A wonderful character, humble and characteristically honorable. Outwardly, he was unpretentious and simple, of the people; inwardly, he had the traits and characteristics of a person of merit.

A typical Jewish community in a Ukrainian city with all its inherent *galut* troubles grew around him. His education began with the traditional upbringing in the home of his father, a local rabbi. The beginning of his formal education, the study of the Talmud and all its subjects that he acquired from early childhood on and was totally immersed in, and his later education, the original Hebrew philosophy of the Middle Ages and the period of Enlightenment of the new Hebrew literature, all this was achieved under very difficult conditions, with no teacher, with no help or support from the outside. From the depths of his soul and the core of his being, he yearned diligently for Torah and learning. From there he forged ahead with all his might and made great strides to achieve his desired goals.

He was fulfilled in soul and spirit; he did not experience the heart-rending strife that afflicted his generation. He remained a delicate fledgling, secure under the wings of the Divine Guidance.

The crowning glory of his life and deeds on earth, however, was his educational work in the field of Zionism along the lines propounded by Ahad ha-Am, who alone was instrumental in guiding him in the right direction, *Al parashat derakhim* (At the crossroads), which he pursued his entire life.

While he was still a boy in his father's house, he absorbed a great deal of learning from the Gemara, *Posekim*, and *Tosafot*; after that he feasted on the fruits of the new Hebrew thinking and creativity. When he reached

maturity, he started to give private lessons and had quite a few students of Hebrew and Hebrew literature in his city (among them, the writer of these lines). Because of his close touch with young people, he could recognize and appreciate their latent, refreshing strength for the cause of Zionism. Together with some of his friends he organized the Zionist youth club, *Ha-Tehiyya*, that made a great impression in the annals of the history of Zionism in Ukraine.

Because of his frail health, he was forced to stop teaching, and, after he came to Palestine, he served for several years as secretary of the Teachers' Association. Despite the problems of absorption, he became very fond of the country, and he endeared himself to all his friends and acquaintances with his pleasant way of speaking and his gracious manners. The horrible and devastating events that struck the Jewish community during the days of World War I caused his death while he was still in the prime of his life.

Abraham Rosen

Mordekhai (Mottel) Royzen

I already knew him when I was young. He was short, moved and spoke quickly, and had dreamy eyes. He was a wholesale wheat merchant, and, on market days in our city, you could see him dressed in old, dusty clothes at his warehouse weighing the sacks of wheat that the peddlers would buy from the farmers and bring to him to sell. His trading ventures were in general not a rose-strewn path. Even in years of a thriving economy, he was not too successful. If occasionally he chanced upon a good year, those that followed swallowed all the accrued benefits.

Mottel was not a practical man. He was unaware of the realities of life with its drawbacks and flaws, with all the cheating and exploitation. He did not know the meandering struggling of human nature, the extortion, and the stealing. He was wholly a man of the spirit who fashioned his way of life outside the mundane, daily realities and saw his life primarily in the vision of his heart and his imagination.

He was also a literary man. When he came home from the marketplace bereft of feeling and impoverished of thought, he cast off his shabby, dusty clothes, all the cares and worries; and, as a Hebrew intellectual and outstanding scholar, he donned his special garment of feeling and read avidly, studiously pursuing what he could learn from books. His library started with the best in Hebrew literature, beginning with the classics of Hebrew poetry and philosophy of the Middle Ages and included the collections of the *Haskalah*, the periodicals *Ha-Shilo'ah* and *Ha-Dor*, the poetry of Judah Leib Gordon and Bialik, the publications of *Achiasaf* and *Tushiyyah*.

He was not the only one who benefited from his library. The young students in the city gorged themselves with the delicious taste of the best of Hebrew literature, because his house was a meeting place for us, and we

felt at home in it. He treated us like his children, and, with his good judgment and wisdom, he guided us on the paths of Hebrew culture and renaissance. He would encourage the first steps of aspiring authors (among them, M. Mikhaeli, S.L. Blank, and the writer of these lines), and he himself occasionally published articles and essays in Hebrew newspapers.

The Zionist movement, particularly as espoused by Ahad ha-Am, as well as the rebirth of the Hebrew language, inspired this man from their very beginnings, and at all times they were the basic aspirations of his personal life; he lived by them day and night, with total dedication of body and soul. I remember, when I was young, seeing him one Sabbath day in the Sadgura synagogue during the morning prayers wrapped in his *tallit*. While the congregation and the cantor were chanting the *Pesukei de-Zimra* (Recitation Verses), I heard him recite, from memory, in a pleasing voice Bialik's *Ha-Matmid* with fervor. It was a scene of the radiance which envelops a devout, spirited Hasid in his moments of divine inspiration.

During the Russian Revolution he came with his family to the United States where he was a bookseller of Hebrew books. Despite the trials and tribulations of orienting himself to life in a new place, he did not stop weaving his dreams of all that was good and beautiful in the new Judaism. Even in his later years he dared to complain against the injustice of the Russian revolutionary regime that so cruelly oppressed the Jews in Russia and mercilessly restricted the Jewish people with harsh edicts. This he accomplished primarily by a series of articles published in *Hadoar* under the caption, *Mikhtavim me-Russiyya* (Letters from Russia). These letters opened the eyes of American Jewry to the realities of what was happening behind the Iron Curtain.

This was the man in his youth and in his old age, a fighter and a dreamer; honest and true to his nation and to his spirit until the end of his days.

Abraham Rosen

Zamekhov

During the Polish regime the town belonged to the district of Letichev in the province of Podolia. In 1765 the Jewish population in the town and its environs was 505 people.

In 1784 it had 547, and in 1817 it numbered 518 (in Zamekhov proper, 258 people).

With the annexation of Podolia to Russia the town belonged to the Ushitsa district. In 1847 the Jews numbered 958, and according to the population census there were 895 Jews in the general population of 2,217 inhabitants.

Ya'akov Haezri

Zamekhov

Zamekhov was a small, poor town with a population of about 1,000 Jews. Among them were men versed in Torah. The artisans and the general populace revered them and learned from them how to conduct their lives.

There were, of course, Hasidim in town—primarily from the Friedmann family, Sadgura, Boyan, Chortkov, and Husyatin. Almost every year the Hasidim would steal over the border to Galicia for the holidays in order to get inspiration from their rebbes and would return home joyous and refreshed with a new Hasidic melody and the rebbe's words of Torah wisdom. On the Sabbath the Hasidim would gather in one of their homes for *kiddush* and would extol in song and praise the virtues of the rebbe. On Hanukkah they would celebrate the completion of the six orders of the Mishnah and also mark the anniversary of the Ruzhiner Rebbe's death. The other Jews in the city were associated with one of the rebbes of the neighboring town of Korolove, Reb Yechielik of the Zinkov family, who would visit the town once a year.

There were no formally organized institutions in the town. The Jewish inhabitants took care of their poor in sundry ways: secret almsgiving, visiting the sick, hospitality and lodging for the indigent, interest-free loans to the poor, dowries collected for a poor bride. The Jews gave their unlimited time and efforts to accomplish these services.

The synagogue served also as a house of study, where there was Torah study every evening. For the simple folk there was reading in *Ein Ya'akov* (collection of legends and homilies from the Talmud). There was another ancient synagogue built of wood, and it was considered a place of special sanctity.

Education in the town was accomplished mostly by *heders* with teachers for beginners and teachers for Gemara. Beginning in 1917–18, kindergartens, public schools, and evening classes for adults were instituted.

There was some sporadic emigration to the United States. A few Jews went to Palestine. There was in the city a Zionist youth group and, opposing it, a group of Bundists, who were mostly from the ranks of the artisans and their apprentices. The Zionist group grew stronger and many young people joined *Ze'irei Zion* and other such clubs during the 1917 Revolution.

During World War I the young men were mobilized, leaving their families in dire circumstances. Generally, the town did not suffer from the impact of the war, perhaps because it was far from the field of combat.

Anti-Semitism on the part of the Gentiles in the area was not felt to any great degree. Relations and trade between Jews and Gentiles were quite good at all times. A *shabbes goy* was hired to perform chores forbidden for Jews to do on the Sabbath. During the 1917 Revolution, some of the Jewish members of the local REVKOM were killed by Petlyura's troops. After the

Revolution, the economic situation of the Jews worsened. Jewish life began to deteriorate because of the difficult economic conditions and the exodus of the city's young people. During the period of changing regimes following the Revolution, Petlyura's bands and others invaded the town with cruel pogroms. Many local *goyim* also joined them in plunder, destruction, and murder.

During the rules of Denikin and Petlyura, Denikin's troops destroyed houses and plundered what remained from the pogroms of Petlyura's bands. It must be noted that there were instances of Jews being courageously helped and rescued by Gentiles during the pogroms. Only a few local Jews succeeded in fleeing to the town of Novaya Ushitsa. The rioters burned the synagogues, so the orthodox Jews used private homes for congregational prayers.

When the Soviets entered the city, the Jews rejoiced. However, the economic conditions deteriorated in the small community, and the few inhabitants who remained in the town suffered from hunger. Were it not for the help sent by their sons and daughters who had managed to flee to the United States or to Palestine, their parents would have starved to death.

A self-defense group that had very little ammunition had been formed before the Germans entered the town. The Germans, however, forced the inhabitants to surrender whatever arms they had. In the period of the NEP (New Economic Policy), economic conditions in our town improved slightly, but not to the point where those who remained could have survived without the outside help.

During the Soviet regime, the town was left barren of its young people, with no apparent resources for the continued existence of Hebrew culture. The Nazis drove the Jews to the outskirts of Zamekhov where they were commanded to dig a communal grave before they were shot.

Zhvanets

A town on the banks of the Dnester River, 16 versts from the provincial city of Kaminits-Podolsk. Its existence was known since the 15th century. In 1653 the Haidamack troops besieged the Polish army of King Casimir, and a peace treaty was made between Bogdan Chmielnicki and the Polish king.

On June 22, 1769, the Jews in Zhvanets once again suffered due to the fighting that broke out between the Russian army and the 2,500 Polish rebel troops stationed in Zhvanets and the neighboring town of Okop. The battle ended with the defeat of the rebels.

The Jewish population in Zhvanets in 1765 was 1,134 with an additional 4,335 in the environs. As a result of the above-mentioned political events and principally because of the war, the number of Jews decreased to 395 in the town and to 126 in the environs. By 1784 the Jewish population had increased to 617, but it never reached the number of the previous years.

Because of the town's location on the banks of the Dnester, Zhvanets again began to develop. The river was instrumental in establishing intercity trade, especially in lumber and the manufacture of furniture.

There was a pharmacy in the town, also a synagogue and four houses of study, two schools for boys, two schools for girls, and one coeducational school. During the Czarist regime in 1847, the Jewish population numbered 1,619, and according to the census of 1897, among the general population of 5,005 there were 3,353 Jews—or 67% of the inhabitants.

A.D. Steuss

The Self-Defense Group in Zhvanets

The town of Zhvanets is located on the north bank of the Dnester River; on the south, Zhvanets shared a border with Romanian Bessarabia; on the west, it was separated by the Zbruch River from Galicia that was then ruled by the Poles.

It was in 1904 or 1905, when I was still a young boy in the second or third grade of the Hebrew public school, that I learned about a self-defense group being organized in Zhvanets. As children we were always curious to know whatever matters adults sought to keep from us by discussing them in whispers. During that time and its aftermath, an organization of extreme rightist reactionaries played an important role in perpetrating atrocities against the Jews. The clergy, in their church sermons on Sundays, helped in instigating such activities. The ignorant masses considered the clergy the emissaries of Jesus and the czar. The organization was well known throughout Russia, particularly within the Pale of Jewish settlements. Its members inflamed the masses with the slogan "Kill the Jews and save Russia." The czar appointed the majority of the Russian officials from this group. The local branch of this organization set up a consumer's cooperative in the city and surrounding villages in order to create a community base for its operations and also to drive the Jews out of business. They purposely set up the cooperative in the center of the Jewish shops and persuaded the Gentiles not to purchase anything from the Jewish shops, thus depriving the Jews of their livelihoods. These persuasions were couched with propaganda and provocation against the Jews, the enemies of Russia and the czar and the cause of all the troubles in Russia. This was a ruinous and destructive action under the pretext of cooperation and party propaganda hostile to the Jews.

The cooperative did not last long. It closed after the fury of the pogroms passed, not because it competed with the Jewish trade, but because it could not achieve its main goal—to perpetrate friction among the Jews. The main organizer of the riots was a popular teacher in the Christian elementary school, and the whole Christian population gathered around him—the farmers, the middle class, the Ukrainian intelligentsia. Those days were dark days for the Jews. Winter was beginning to be felt, and the dark clouds that hung in the sky added to the sense of insecurity and to the fear of the future.

We heard about a self-defense group being organized, about training with light weapons, and about gatherings in the woods near the town; and that the Jewish population had obtained pikes as defense weapons for all those who did not know how to use firearms.

The feverish preparations to confront pogroms actively and not to be as cattle led to slaughter were done in an outstanding manner. The fixed day of the approaching riots was known in advance, because the farmers who

came to town began to threaten in a very revealing manner that on such and such a day they would pogrom against the Jews. I remember seeing a farmer, wounded and bleeding, being transported home, clenching his fists to the accompaniment of threatening outcries. This happened two or three days before the appointed day, and afterwards at home I heard that on the town's market square this farmer and others began threatening and vilifying Jews; several townspeople approached them and started hitting them. The Jews took hold of the farmer by the scruff of his neck and hurled him with all their might face down into a pile of gravel; his face became covered with wounds and blood. All the farmers tried to flee while this was happening, and, within an hour, the town was emptied of farmers. The townspeople warned the inhabitants of the neighboring village and threatened them that the moment the riots began all four sides of the village would be ignited. The main point was that the Jews were prepared to return enemy fire and to squelch incipient riots. There was a rumor afloat among the farmers that the Jews had ready ammunition to use against the rioters on the day of the pogrom.

It is safe to assume that during the events preceding the mobilization of the Jews, the self-defense group had demonstrated its ability to prevent riots and to stand its ground in maintaining its rights. It was clear that the hate group that incited the peasants to execute pogroms did so not out of a sense of patriotism or love of the czar, but because of the hatred of Jews.

In 1918 the town was at its worst as far as security was concerned. Regimes changed frequently. The Germans retreated from Kiev; then the Poles advanced and retreated. After that, the Ukrainians and the Bolsheviks came and went interchangeably, and between changes various army forces wrought their havoc or merely plundered. The Jews were constantly between the hammer and anvil, and it became imperative to form a self-defense group in order to guard the Jewish population that was caught in a net of fear and helplessness.

At that time an additional problem arose. There was an uprising initiated by the Ukrainian government in the villages of the district of Khotin next to Bessarabia. This uprising was suppressed by Romanian artillery fire on the rebelling villages. The villagers fled from the fury and flames of the artillery fire, and, together with their families and the few their possessions they could salvage, they crossed the Dnester and found refuge in our town of Zhvanets until the danger was past. It was again necessary to organize a self-defense group because of the riots in Ukraine, the great massacre in Proskurov, and the riots and killings in Felsztyn. The contrived provocation by the Ukrainians was reason enough for the rioting that caused a revolt in favor of the Bolsheviks and resulted in the slaughter of 400 Jewish victims.

We, the youth, knew all about these happenings. There were, however, adults who hesitated to accept the idea of self-defense, reasoning: "It is liable to arouse the ire of the Christian population and the authorities." The young people had nothing to begin with—no firearms and no money to

purchase them. It was also necessary to obtain legal permission from the government for the self-defense unit of Jews to be organized. On the basis of the Ukrainian government's regulation regarding the existence of an independent Jewish organization, I, as secretary of the local Jewish *kehillah*, approached the district's official for permission to organize a self-defense unit. The answer was not long in coming, because we had neither arms nor ammunition. With the characteristic lack of any support from the authorities, the answer left no doubt in our minds. From the formal point of view—they did not give us permission to organize a self-defense unit, because we had no weapons. From our point of view, we could solve that problem ourselves and obtain weapons through our own means.

We began by secretly breaking into the warehouse of the police and taking guns from among some unregistered ones that were there. Secondly, we sold a portion of the guns to the self-defense organization in Kaminits. Since the Kaminits defense organization paid for the guns, it turned out that we got free guns and money to purchase ammunition. In this way, we amassed a few dozen guns and were able to provide arms to the members of the defense unit, most of whom were young. Some of us knew how to use guns, and we taught the untrained. At that time, there happened to be an increase in the number of robberies and incidents of plunder on the highways and in the town. Our activity had almost immediate results—the robberies and plunder of the Jewish population ceased entirely, but were concentrated among the Christian population.

The sight of our armed young men patrolling the streets instilled a sense of security in the Jews. Among the Gentiles, however, rumors began circulating that we had machine guns and cannons. Of course, there was no basis of truth in the rumors, but we made no attempt to deny them.

Once again, as had been the case 15 years earlier, there were three incidents in town that proved that the mere existence of a self-defense unit was enough to deter pogroms and that there was no need to resort to firearms nor to rely on the defense unit.

The first incident occurred in the spring when the Romanian government announced amnesty for the refugees and permitted them to return to their wasted and desolate villages. The masses in wagons, with their livestock and families, crossed the Dnester River which was near Zhvanets in order to return to their homes. The beaches swarmed with adults, children, and infants waiting to cross the river. The bridge over the Dnester had been shattered by the Romanians, and, since the river was rising from the melting snows in the Carpathians, the passage was sluggishly conducted over several days. It was a raging, excited crowd of people impatiently waiting for a turn to cross. There were many among them, however, who were apprehensive about returning and preferred to stay in the town.

Yet from the days of the czars and even in peaceful times, there were families of professional robbers who went about inflicting fear upon travelers carrying monies and mail, and they were constantly on the lookout

for police and armed militia. They, too, were aware that there was an armed Jewish defense unit, and they refrained from inciting any acts of fear and terror. One drunk robber got hold of a Jewish driver, took over the wagon, drove the wagon into the town and shot his pistol into the air. We didn't know whether this was merely the act of a prankster or a provocation designed to scare us. I remember that I, with another member of the community, happened to be collecting funds for a cultural or economic project, and I saw the paling and frightened face of the driver and that a riot was brewing in the air. I mobilized some members of the defense unit who started to run after the drunkard and eventually caught him. They took him down from the wagon, took his pistol, and beat him until he was bleeding. Then they transferred him to a transit camp at the Dnieper River in order to send him back to Bessarabia.

He was a strong, healthy man, and, during the whole length of the kilometer which led to the river, he was beaten. Bleeding profusely from his wounds until we reached the camp, he kept pleading for mercy—kill him, crucify him, but don't deliver him into the hands of the Romanians. He cried out imploringly to the seething crowd to come to his aid and rescue him. The crowd began to yell on his behalf. We, of course, did not want to incite the wrath of the mob, so we handed him over to the police.

The second incident occurred at the beginning of autumn. One evening a small unit of armed cavalry appeared and sought lodging at one of the inns. In the unit were two cavalrymen, natives of the town, whom everybody knew. The leader of the unit called the Jewish *starusta* of the community and presented him with an ultimatum—bring food to the men, bring fodder for their animals, and bring 5,000 rubles in ready cash, all this to be done within five minutes, and if not—the town will be destroyed.

Scared and quaking with fear and helplessness, the *starusta* came to me because I was the secretary of the town. I told him I would get it all together and give it to them. I went to the local police station. The officer of the station was not there. Only one policeman was in attendance. He told me that he was not empowered and had no authority to do anything or even to approach the district authorities. When I asked for arms, he answered that he had none. I sensed the danger that we were now facing and what was liable to happen.

Two policemen, natives of the place, were in charge of monitoring departures and entrances. Primarily, they were charged to travel to the neighboring villages in order to exhort the farmers to come on a designated day to plunder and to participate in the killings. This propaganda and the organizing of the villagers would necessarily take a few days, and, in the meantime, they inflicted fear in order to deter any show of resistance. The duty of the other town rioters was to conduct random strikes against inhabitants and homes and to spread fright and horror among the Jews.

There were shots heard in the hushed darkness of night, sounds aimed to frighten and also to kill; the knocking on doors and the cries for help; the

wailing and weeping that pierced terror into the calm of night; and the individual murders that came to became known only the following morning—the fear of all such happenings that rendered the population helpless and caused them to hide behind closed doors—spurred the Jews into action.

I assembled the members of the self-defense unit, organized them into teams, and assigned them to appointed places. Each group was to be responsible for its area, making the rounds on the streets of the assigned beat. It was our night of watching, and, on that first night, nothing happened. Apparently the soldiers, weary from their journey, fell asleep. I was making my rounds when the owner of the inn came out and told me that the unit's soldiers were asleep and that I could unload their arms and confiscate their horses, because they had not even appointed a watch, so certain were they of their success. Of course I did not comply with his proposal that did not seem acceptable to me. We proceeded to plan our activities for the following day and night. We stayed awake all night, and, when the sun came up, we dispersed, each of us to our own home for a bit of rest, with instructions how to act and where to convene in case rioting began.

At nine o'clock the following morning, one of the townspeople woke me and told me that when the soldiers got up in the morning, the commander once again called in the town's elder and addressed him with the same terms as the previous evening—food for the soldiers, fodder for the horses, and a sum of 5,000 rubles, all to be forthcoming within five minutes. If not, the town would be destroyed. The *starusta* went out to collect the demanded sum, and as he was slowly making the collection, a policeman approached one of the local soldiers and whispered in his ear that there was a self-defense unit here that was on watch in the town all night. Not many moments passed; the soldiers did not want to eat, did not want to get either the fodder or the money, but immediately saddled their horses, retreated hastily in panic, and fled from the town.

The third incident occurred in the winter of the same year. At the end of the fall season, with the onset of snow and frost, a rather strange person appeared in town. He was a short, thin man wearing a red blouse, the color indicating that he may have been a Bolshevik, and at that time the Ukrainian regime was not overly tolerant of the Bolshevist police. We wondered why the local authorities paid no attention to his presence, tolerated him, and completely ignored him.

For several weeks he wandered around town, and we didn't know what he was doing and who had sent him here. He would appear on the streets, disappear for a while, and then reappear. Once we learned of his chance encounter with one of the Hebrew teachers with whom he discussed politics, and an argument broke out about the Bolshevist police, and when the teacher did not agree with his premises and views, the stranger suddenly exclaimed, "Yes, you are a nationalist, a counterrevolutionary" and he went

away. From this we knew that he considered himself a Communist.

It was a wintry evening. The town was covered with frost, and snow fell unceasingly. It grew colder and colder. Everything froze from the intense cold. A member of the defense unit appeared at my house and informed me that a Gentile wanted to speak to the person responsible for the defense unit. I went outside. He introduced himself as a revolutionary, a Bolshevik, and said that he had heard that there was a self-defense unit. His plan was to execute an uprising against the Ukrainian police, and he proposed that the self-defense unit participate with him in this activity. I gave him an evasive answer, because I was obligated to bring the issue before the committee of the self-defense unit for the committee to decide. I also added the fact that the unit was not a political organ; its sole aim was to defend Jews of whatever political party or social stratum.

At our second meeting, my answer was that it was not within the jurisdiction of the committee to make a decision on such an issue without convening a general meeting to get the opinion of the members. I asked him a question: why had he chosen our town, so remote from the seat of government, and what made him think that with its limited means it could undertake such a grave activity? He replied that there were many uprising forces armed to the hilt ready to create a divided regime. We said that we could support him only by functioning as guardians of the town, which was no small matter; he surprisingly withdrew his suggestion of the defense unit's participation in his project and was satisfied with the fact that the defense unit would give him its ammunition so that he could arm his troops. He proposed that we visit a unit of the rebels that was quartered in our town in order to dispel our doubts, and he led us through dark alleys to a two-story building at the edge of town. We went inside. By the light of a small oil lantern we saw some unkempt persons in tatters, barefoot, wandering about. They were unshaven and unshorn, with long matted hair and gloomy countenances. They did not look like soldiers or military men, and we saw no arms. The inside of the building did not look like a barracks or a temporary quarters for troops. The rooms were in total disarray. The people slept on beds made from unplaned wooden boards or wandered about aimlessly. We soon saw that they were the refugees from Bessarabia. The next day they disappeared from the city, and we did not see them any more.

Michael Tennen

The Talmud Torah in Zhvanets

The Talmud Torah in Zhvanets was not merely an educational institution. It was the basis of change for the whole educational system throughout Podolia. Following its pattern, many schools were established which followed the Zhvanets method. Each school was instituted with the help of the teachers and administrators of the Talmud Torah in Zhvanets. It even influenced the traditional one-room schools such as the one of Reb Hirsh-Wolf in our town.

One bright day Reb Hirsh-Wolf announced that we would soon be getting a distinguished teacher of grammar and Jewish history. Not much time elapsed before the promised teacher, Mordecai-Wolf Bernstein, appeared. The tables of the traditional school were replaced by desks like those in the Talmud Torah

The pupils ranged in age from 6 to 15 years, and, in a period of eight years, it became a full-fledged elementary school with the first years of a secondary school. Examinations were given once every two years, between Purim and Pesach. Who of us does not remember the two weeks of tests? We viewed the test days as the ten days of repentance. There were, of course, the diligent students who were sure of passing the tests, but there were also those who had sinned all year and were obligated to expiate all their sins. At night you could see them poring over their books and studying for their tests by the light of a small oil lamp.

The Days of Awe drew near. The largest room of the Talmud Torah had been converted to an examination hall. Part of it was partitioned off for the examiners, the parents, and the guests. The tests began at the end of the Sabbath and continued for a week. Each pupil received his ratings, and they were the determining factor for his promotion to the higher class. Those who excelled received prizes. The tests were a big event in the town, not only for the students, but also for their parents who were present. The nervous strain on the parents was greater than it was on the students. With trembling hearts they would try to read from the faces of the examiners the fate of their sons or daughters.

Yosef Saltzman

The First Lesson in the Russian Language

I left Zhvanets, my native city where I spent my youth, 35 years ago. To this day I recall vividly the pathways that led to the Dnester River—to swim in the summer and to skate on the ice in the winter. It seems as though it was just yesterday that I left. I see the Talmud Torah; the seesaws; the tall pole that each of us wanted to climb; the two buildings, the old and the new; and the well-lit classrooms.

The teacher of my class was Reb Alter. Who does not remember him with his long, white beard and his serious shining eyes—the teacher who taught *ivrit be-ivrit*—and did so very successfully. One bright morning, he informed us that we would begin to learn Russian. Our teacher would be Mr. Falk. Our classroom was on the lower floor. We were told that after the lunch period we were to go to the upstairs room to learn Russian. In the meantime, a boy from Falk's class came to prepare us on how to greet the Russian teacher. He asked us, "How will we greet the teacher?" We all answered in chorus, "*Shalom, Adoni ha-moreh* (How do you do, Mr. Teacher)!" The boy exclaimed angrily, "Not like that, not like that! That's not the way! You must say *Dozdravstvoyet Gospodin Utchitel.*" We confusedly stammered and stuttered, but we could not pronounce the difficult Russian words. In view of this trial, the boy feared that we would never learn Russian. The prudent Alter casually remarked, "Well, it's not so terrible; it won't stop them from making a living." The boy finally calmed down and smilingly began practicing with us the manner of greeting the teacher.

We went home for lunch, and, when we returned with faces washed and hair combed, we were ready and prepared to welcome to be initiated to the Russian language. When Reb Alter saw us, he sighed deeply and said, "When we face a goy we are obligated to be immersed and washed, but to study *Hummash* and Rashi, it is permissible to do it with a dirty face."

At 2:30 we went out to the schoolyard. The same boy who had coached us arranged us into two lines. We stood and chatted amongst ourselves, when suddenly we heard a Russian outcry, "*Molchot* (Silence)!" We didn't know the meaning of the word, but we all stopped talking and once again we repeated, one after the other, the Russian greeting to the teacher. This time it appeared that the boy was satisfied with us. We went up to the classroom. It was clean and bright, the desks neat. We were quaking, holding our breath and expectantly waiting for the teacher. And here enters the teacher, Falk; a dark, slender person smiling graciously and says: "*Shalom*, children!" We rise hastily and at the boy's command signal: "*Dozdravstvoyet Gospodin Utchitel.*" This is how we began to learn and to speak Russian.

Ze'ev Feller

The Struggle with the Smugglers

Zhvanets is situated on the Russian side of the Dnester River; the opposite side of the river is in Bessarabia. The source of the town's subsistence was due to the fact that it was the only direct, long waterway for shipping lumber from Galicia, Austria, to Odessa via many intermediary stops. The town was only a few kilometers from the Austrian border. The long, bordering shore was populated by villages where Jews were forbidden to live. This border opened up a supplemental livelihood to the one of stealing across the border. There were various individuals who benefited from this, among them Gentile revolutionaries, Jews fleeing from pogroms, and deserters from military service. These two sources of livelihood developed two kinds of trade and consequently two types of tradesmen—the authorized traffic on the Dnester, and the secret traffic across the border that was accompanied by extortion and danger to life.

With all the troubles that befell the Jews of czarist Russia, after the harrowing experiences during the Revolution, the attacks upon them by the various regimes, the pogroms in general and the Kishinev pogrom in particular, the town of Zhvanets became full of refugees and those who were seeking to cross the border. Every evening there were crowds of people, men, women, and children with their belongings, loading their wagons. The horses made their way to this or that village, transported by a hired Gentile who was familiar with the roads of the border in the darkness of night. In his hands lay the fate of the fleeing persons for good or evil, for life or death. True, this Gentile was not the one who actually determined the fate of the persons who were stealing across the border. It was the conspired connections of the "border stealers" with the Gentile and with the officials responsible for guarding the border who sealed their fate: Was everything arranged and paid for? Namely, was it a safe night for stealing across the border or was it not? More than once one could see, in the early hours of the morning, loaded wagons returning with dead refugees who, for one reason or another, had been killed on the way. Those were heartbreaking, atrocious scenes; but there was no one to protest, and no one against whom to protest. It was unbridled havoc without any measure of responsibility or law; because there was a consolidated cadre of smugglers among the Jews who became rich and robbed and plundered hand in glove together with the border authorities and the Gentiles who engaged in such activities. This cadre of individuals and whole families controlled the town and terrorized it.

In spite of this, Zhvanets was a town of the *Haskalah*. It had two schools for Hebrew studies and general studies based on *ivrit be-ivrit* as the language of instruction. There was a Zionist club that functioned fearlessly and openly. Boys and girls were conversant in Hebrew and steeped themselves in the study of Hebrew literature. Debates between Zionists and

non-Zionists were conducted publicly in town meetings. The town had an organized self-defense unit on the ready in case of pogroms or riots, and more than once such happenings were squelched thanks to this unit. There are known instances where even Gentiles supported its members or gave them a helping hand. The curriculum of the Hebrew school in Zhvanets was brought forth as an exemplary model by the delegation of the Zionist Congress that dealt with matters of education and culture.

There were, however, those enlightened leaders, namely the intelligentsia, who poured out their wrath on the smugglers. The intelligentsia requested that a modicum of law and order be instituted for the commerce at the border, which had developed on the heels of the czarist persecutions, to assure the safety of the refugees and their belongings. It was necessary to discuss this matter openly and publicly. A series of articles in a Russian newspaper reprimanding the czarist regime harshly for what was happening in the town was published by a very capable, intelligent, and sharp-witted Gentile activist. It was then that the Jews started beating each other. The smugglers, among whom were educated, cultured youths, did not sit by idly, but began a slanderous assault on the Zionist intelligentsia and its activities. The conflict between the two sides grew stronger; the slanderous condemnations on the one hand and the memoranda of the intelligentsia on the other. And the result? The leaders of the intelligentsia were exiled to Siberia, and, in the circle of contrabandists, there was joy and jubilation. Evil had overpowered good in the corrupt regime.

V. Rosenblatt

The Tilers' Strike

On the riverbank, in dilapidated shacks with shingled roofs, the tilers manufactured wooden roof tiles. They worked happily, singing loudly so that the girls walking on the path to the river would hear the romantic singing and see the zest for life apparent in the tilers. The tilers of Zhvanets, about 20 in number, were like an extended family; there were fathers and sons, uncles, and cousins. They worked hard and earned little—but their joy did not drain out. They worked for three rubles a week. After much thought and deliberation, they decided to do something to improve their economic condition.

They called a big meeting, and Mottik Shtarker was the principal speaker; he was intelligent, a good speaker, and he explained, "If you want to get something, you have to fight for it. It is necessary to organize a trade union." The tilers did his bidding. Each worker paid one ruble; they chose a committee and they submitted their demands to the contractors: twenty more kopeks for each additional 1,000 tiles and recognition of the trade union. It was also decided if the contractors would not agree to the demands, a strike would be called. One bright Sunday in 1907 a strike was called. The contractors did not consent to their demands.

The storekeepers, Yisro'el Cooper, Shimon Berman, Sholem Weingarten, and others, were very angry. "How can brothers and sons strike against their fathers?" they argued. "My mother chased me from the house, because I was striking against my father."

All these outcries, however, did not frighten us. The workers were hopeful and were confident of victory. They assigned pickets to discourage strike breakers. The factories stood empty. The strike was beginning to be crowned with glory.

The bosses also organized. Itsik Leviche's and Bubik Shtarker were the leaders. Bubik was the brother of Mottik, the strike's leader. Bubik was a short young man with whiskers constantly sprouting on his smiling, shrewd face. He and Itsik were the ones who negotiated with the workers.

The strike lasted four weeks. Apparently all was going well—pickets, meetings, accounts. But nothing happened. A stalemate. The bosses laughed. The strikers began to grumble; there were whisperings, suspicions. It was then they decided to consult with Pinye Altman, son of Sholem Altman, a powerful young man and a great speaker, with the proposition that he take on the leadership of the strike. But the first sparks in favor of the strike were beginning to die. The tilers lost faith in their leaders. Everyone was suspicious of everybody else, and, when Pinye let drop the suspicion that Mottik Shtarker was passing on information to his brother Bubik, leader of the bosses, the disputes increased among the strikers. It was clear that under such conditions it was folly even to dream of victory. It was decided to go back to work and to wait for more favorable times.

So ended the unfortunate strike of the tilers.

Karl Blank

My Visit to Zhvanets in 1934

Summer 1934. It is already not the same town through which all those who had gone to Bessarabia and Galicia had passed. Zhvanets was separated from Russia, and Galicia was annexed to Poland as a result of World War I. Romania and Poland did not have friendly relations with Russia. The Dnester River served as a partition between two different worlds.

For the whole length of the Dnester, from Sakovits to Odessa there were only two points where legal entry was permitted. Zhvanets was not one of them. There was a very strict watch; passage was particularly difficult. There was only one exit to Zhvanets, and that was through Kaminits. Even this passage was fraught with difficulties; non-Zhvanets residents had to obtain special travel permits from the military police. The sole exception was the cart with two horses driven by Nette, the water drawer. Occasionally there would also be a carriage maker transporting travelers. From time to time there would be a truck that transported people as far as the railroad station in Kaminits.

As one enters Zhvanets from Kaminits, one sees the first house on the left, the school that had been converted to a *kolkhoz*. This was the center of a new class of society among Jews, those who worked the soil. Here I saw fairly well-to-do Jews walking around barefoot, as though they were born farmers. It was a very poor farmers' cooperative which lacked the necessary equipment and horses for growth and development. This *kolkhoz* employed more Jews than any other cooperative in town. When one left the settlement, one saw only Russian residences. In the marketplace, too, one saw the difference and tremendous change between the then and the now. Most of the shops were closed. Others were occupied by either the cooperatives or craftsmen. There was only one cooperative store. There were no longer any market fairs, because farmers were forbidden to sell their wares in the market. Only occasionally did I see a farm woman at the door of the Boyaner *kloyz* selling fruits and greens.

The greater part of the Jewish population consisted of aging persons and children. The young people had wandered off to Kiev, Kharkov, and other cities. There was a nursery school in town where children were fed, because their parents were working in the *kolkhoz*. In the summer months, the Jewish school was closed. In some homes, one could find Yiddish textbooks, and children of ages 12–14 could engage one in discussions of political economy and the condition of the worker in America.

Town matters were conducted by the local Jewish Soviet headed by a Jew from Dunivits. As far as religious observance was concerned, it did not exist. The Great Synagogue was destroyed. It was only to the Sadgura *kloyz* that the Jews went to pray. In the *kolkhoz* the Sabbath was a work day.

Sometimes a movie came to town, and the Soviet man used a central meeting place for the people of the town. In the summertime, the sons and daughters would return to the town from the big cities to refresh themselves with the fresh air and sun. There were hardly any changes in the contents of the homes. The same poor furnishings, the same dishes. Gas lanterns supplied light. Only government buildings had electricity. Soldiers lived in many of the houses, and the relations between the townspeople and the soldiers were fairly good.

The houses looked, from the outside, as though they had aged many years ago. Their joy and pride had gone from them; it seemed as though they were mourning for the young sons and daughters who had left them. One could see, in the streets, the sale of pigs that were raised by Jews. The quiet of the night was broken only by the sounds of the crows and the frogs. The stars glistened brightly, as though begging that the peace of Zhvanets not be disturbed.

Personalities

Sholem Altman

Altman was born the 17th day of Kislev 1865 in the town of Rukshin in Bessarabia. His father was a pious Jew, a devout disciple of the Hasidic Sadgura rabbi. Young Sholem received a traditional education and learned Torah from the distinguished scholars of the neighboring town of Khotin, three parasangs from the village.

The father, naturally, wanted Sholem to follow in his footsteps, but the young man entered the garden of the *Haskalah* and became a heretic. Sholem married a woman in the neighboring town of Zhvanets at a young age. He remained in his father-in-law's house for two years, as was the custom in those days, and he studied and read much. Then, in the same town, Altman opened a dry goods store, a business in which his wife had experience as a salesperson since her younger days, and he continued to study the literature of the Haskalah.

Altman's sympathy to the *Hibbat Zion* movement came to him apparently through the literature and newspapers of those days. He became an ardent Zionist. His friends and family considered him obsessed with love for Eretz Yisrael and his devotion to the activities for its rebirth. In 1890, when Sholem was 25 years old, he migrated to Eretz Yisrael as a worker in Rishon Le-Zion and as one of the founders of Rehovot. He became fast friends with Moshe Smilansky and shared a room with him. Materially he was not too well off, but he decided nevertheless to go to Russia in order to bring his family back with him. Unfortunately, he was forced to return by himself after he participated in the conference of the *Hovevei Zion* in Odessa. He stayed in Palestine until 1895 and once again returned to Zhvanets. He returned not in despair, but with an ever stronger love for Eretz Yisrael and what it stood for. From then on Sholem Altman devoted himself exclusively to work for the Zionist cause.

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To begin with Altman founded a school in the town. The local Hasidim fussed and fumed, called meetings, sought advice on how to undo what he had wrought, heaped curses upon him, sent special emissaries to the Hasidic master rabbis in Galicia petitioning them to revoke the wickedness of the decision. But Sholem Altman, strong minded and stubborn to boot, did not retract and did not pay any attention to the reactions of the Hasidim. In 1895 he founded a school called Talmud Torah, and he was its sole teacher, principal, and administrator. The institution developed day by day and its reputation spread throughout the region. Many parents from other towns sent their children to be schooled and educated in Zhvanets. This school served as a training college for Zionism. Indeed, many Zionists and activists

who later distinguished themselves in the field of Zionism and community work throughout all of Russia and beyond emerged from this school.

At the beginning of World War I, all the Jews of the border towns were driven out. Zhvanets, among the richer towns, became impoverished and was laid waste. When Altman returned from exile, he settled in Kaminits, a distance of 1.7 parasangs from Zhvanets. He returned depressed and crushed, because of the unfortunate death of his only son, Pinchas Altman, of blessed memory. Pinchas was an ardent Zionist, capable and very talented. He had been studying at the American College in Beirut, but because of his father's exile Pinchas was forced to abandon his studies and work as secretary of the Herzlia Hebrew Gimnazye in Tel Aviv. During the war he was banished to Astrakhan as a Russian subject, caught cold, became ill with consumption, and died in 1917 at the age of 29.

The intense Zionist activity going on during the revolution in Russia in general and in Kaminits in particular aroused the dedicated and devout veteran Zionist to overcome his grief and sorrow, and Sholem steeped himself in the work with the same fervor as before. He was the deputy and treasurer on behalf of the Joint Distribution Committee for the victims of the pogroms in Ukraine. He was a member of the town board, member and treasurer of the democratic community, and a delegate of the committee of the Ukrainian communities that met in Kiev. Twice a week he would visit his town of Zhvanets and help the activists in their work.

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In 1920 Altman migrated to Eretz Yisrael and settled in Jerusalem. He was secretary of the Talpiyyot Quarter, and after that he was principal of the School for the Blind. For a short time he also worked in Tel Aviv as a clerk in an ice factory, but he yearned for Jerusalem and he returned there. On Sabbath eves he would go to the Western Wall to welcome the Sabbath.

The founders of Kiryat Anavim—those who migrated from Zhvanets and Kaminits—his students and his erstwhile supporters in his Zionist activities were grateful for his past kindness and built him a little house in Kiryat Anavim; a few years later he came to live there, and they took care of all his needs. When his second wife, the sister of Dr. Wortsmann, died, he was lonely and alone, despite the fact that all the members of the settlement and their families related to him most kindly with respect and love, like devoted children to a dear and beloved father.

Sholem did not sit in Kiryat Anavim with folded hands. He spent a few hours a day tending, with exemplary energy and devotion, the trees and flowers that surrounded his pretty house. He also took care of the settlement's library collection that consisted of a few thousand volumes. The library was called *Sifriat Sholem* (Sholem Library) in honor of Sholem Altman and his past activities.

Sh. Altman saw to it that a native of the town, Dr. Yecheskiel Wortsmann, at that time a student in Berne, was designated as a delegate

to attend the first Zionist Congress. Soon two Zionist clubs were organized in Zhvanets—*B'nai Zion* and *Benot Zion* and another school for girls under Altman's supervision. He was never completely satisfied with his accomplishments and constantly demanded from himself and others more and more achievements.

Altman was a member of the district Zionist committee from the time of its inception in Kaminits in 1900, and in 1911 he, with the committee, sat on trial for illegal activities in the prisoner's dock in the district court of Kaminits. Here are recalled the members of the committee who participated in the transgression: David Schleifer, the advocate; Joseph Blank; Menashe Altman; Israel Drachler; Zvee Isserzon; and the writer of these lines.

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Sh. Altman and I were delegates to the Ninth Zionist Congress in Hamburg in 1909; he from Zhvanets, I from Kaminits. We traveled together, and I remember a typical episode. On the morning of the day of departure I came to his house, as we had arranged, to travel to the train in a short while. Shalom Altman, however, did not rush. In order to use every occasion to sell some Zionist goods, especially such an event as the departure of delegates to a Zionist Congress, he had assembled all the boys and girls in the schoolyard in the presence of many parents and exhorted them with an ardent speech. The children responded with the singing of *Hatikvah* and escorted him with cheers.

All the town's inhabitants, young and old, respected and loved Sholem, including the Hasidim, who in the course of time became reconciled with his activities and held him in great esteem. Only one small group of contrabandists, members of the underworld, hated him, because he had his hand in everything and was opposed to their activities. They informed on him to the authorities, which resulted in his exile for five years. Even in exile he did not remain inactive; through his good deeds, he won the admiration of the inhabitants of Astrakhan and was chosen in 1917 as delegate to the Zionist Congress in Petrograd from that city.

Israel Goldman

My Teacher, Reb Alter

Many years have passed since I was fated to find myself in the position of a subordinate to this dear, distinguished man, to dwell within his sphere, to be and work near him. He was a man of good will who was tolerant of other people's viewpoints and knowledge; he was most gracious to his friends, relatives, and pupils. After World War I, when the town was devastated, I worked with him for a short while in the Talmud Torah in Zhvanets. The town's inhabitants started to return and repair the damage, and the few pupils who returned crowded into a renovated building.

Reb Alter was an orthodox Jew who taught *Tanakh* and Talmud in the

school that raised many scholars. He could relate in a restrained, patient manner to his co-workers who were mostly freethinkers and actually antagonistic towards his religious viewpoints. His students esteemed and honored him, treating him with love and respect. A special fondness reached out to him from his associates.

H. Sarig

Yehoshua (Shaike) Malachi (Saltzman)

One of the founders of Kiryat Anavim, one of its shapers, a zealous fighter for its form of existence is etched in my memory. Yehoshua Malachi was the only remaining son of his parents who were very solicitous of his health and well being. He grew up under favorable material conditions and was an active, sociable, alert youth. Zionist ideology quickly struck roots in Zhvanets, his native town, and he adopted it. His parents decided that he should be educated in the Herzlia Hebrew Gimnazye in Tel Aviv, the first *gimnazye* dedicated to the doctrines of the Haskalah. They made many sacrifices to do this for their only son.

With the advent of World War I, Yehoshua and others were driven out of Palestine. When Yehoshua returned to his parents' home in Zhvanets, he became totally embroiled in Zionism. "A minimum of two years service by the people to the Land" was an idea that occurred to him before it was voiced by M. Ussishkin. He participated in the *Ze'irei Zion* convention in Moscow. It was a time to act, to prepare, to organize the youth, to indulge intelligently and forcefully in polemics with other factions, to make speeches, to inspire, to broaden the scope of his activities in Kaminits-Podolsk and its environs, to adopt the language, and to get ready to emigrate.

The creature comforts of his parents' home and the concerns about his health were over and done with! Yehoshua's parents were not pleased with his lifestyle, but he paid no heed to them. He would come home late at night. Shaike became a *halutz* and went with a youth group from Kaminits and Zhvanets to Crimea. There they worked, preparing themselves to migrate to the Judaean Hills; they cleared away stones, built terraces, lived in huts, and lo and behold!—a small quantity of water and flowers were climbing on the huts. On behalf of the Keren Kayemet, the group worked in afforestation. Yehoshua planted trees and vegetables, and, all the time, he ran to see if they had struck roots. There was no limit to his joy.

The reality was hard work, an extreme reduction in the standard of living, patched clothing, no excessive luxuries; one could get along with a large spoon, without knives and teaspoons. Yehoshua was fanatically zealous, obsessed with the idea of the rebuilding of the Land, and he accepted everything without grumbling. He wrote articles in support of the idea. With elated spirit and always vigilant, he saw himself in the center of life, creative. The hardest and dirtiest work was to Yehoshua the most

fulfilling. The past had changed and should be forgotten. It became necessary to toe the line, to be among the realizers of Zionism with heart and soul. After work there was a Hebrew lesson to a new comrade, and then to the library where he spent much time. He watched over the library like the apple of his eye; he sat in at meetings until dawn. Malachi never grew weary, And so it was—until he was overpowered.

Yehoshua died on the 15th day of Adar 2, 1962, at the age of 68.

Y.A. Bar-Levi

Hadassah (Etya) Lerner

In the summer of 1907, a large fire broke out in Zhvanets. Most of the schools went up in smoke, and hundreds of families were left without roofs over their heads. On behalf of the Zionist Organization in Kaminits-Podolsk, a group was sent to the scene of the disaster to organize relief for the victims. The first people with whom I met to organize the help were the older Zionist activists, Sholem Altman and Yechiel Lerner. After a short consultation, it was decided to set up a public kitchen, where bread, tea, and sugar would be distributed free of charge to the victims.

When I requested that one of the younger people of the town be assigned to assist me, they introduced me to a young woman of about 15 or 16 years old who participated intelligently, and with deep understanding, in our discussions. This slim girl with fine features and probing eyes was the elder daughter of Yechiel Lerner, Hadassah, or as she was called in the town—Etya.

When we began working, I could observe, at close range, the personality and friendly traits of this daughter of Zhvanets. The most outstanding qualities of her character were her patience and tolerance in listening to those who came to her for help. They were despairing, helpless people, victims of the disaster who needed not only material help but also spiritual counsel and support. Despite her tender age, Hadassah was very aware of their unfortunate plight and would encourage them, assuring them that eventually conditions would improve. The people respected and admired her.

Hadassah Lerner was born in Zhvanets and was educated in the home of her father, an enlightened Zionist distinguished for his fairness and strength of character. She grew up in an atmosphere of Zionism and a respect for labor. A considerable effect on her character were the influences of the prevailing Hebrew culture sparked in the town by the beloved family friend, Sholem Altman.

In addition to being well grounded in the literature of the Haskalah, she was imbued with an innate sensitivity in her relationships with others, a trait keenly felt by all with whom she had contact. She was graced with prudence, had an analytic mind and a fine sense of humor. She could weigh another person's words and was equally careful to weigh her own. Her discussions on communal or party factions were logical and to the point, a

characteristic favored by friend and foe alike. She stood her own ground firmly but with a delicacy of expression, at times spiced with humor.

Zhvanets was located on the Austrian-Russian border and was known as a place of escape and stealing across the border. Those who wanted to emigrate from Russia because of the czarist regime or other reasons passed through this town.

Many of the Jewish inhabitants engaged in contraband trade with Gentiles of the neighboring villages. These smugglers did not hesitate to rob the emigrants of their money and goods. The heads of the town, Sholem Altman and Yechiel Lerner, began to fight with the profiteers in order to stop their harmful activities. But the smugglers wanted to keep their fingers in the pie and informed on these two activists to the authorities, claiming they were revolutionists, Zionist propagandists collecting funds for illegal purposes. Altman and Lerner were arrested by the administration and exiled to the Urals in Bessarabia. This expulsion depressed the town, particularly Hadassah Lerner.

Despite her youth and frail health, she took upon herself the mission of liberating these two displaced men. For a long time she knocked on the doors of Zionist activists and authorities in Kaminits and Kiev, even reaching the ministry in Petersburg; the boundless, non-stop energy with which she approached this matter astounded many.

Even when she reached a blind alley, she nevertheless did not despair, and confronted the rabbi of Moscow, Jacob Mazeh. Thanks to his connections with the central administration, the exiles were released after three years.

The noble qualities of Hadassah Lerner qualified her for the role of educator, and, until the expulsion of the Jewish population in 1915 by the military authorities, she served as a teacher in the local kindergarten. After the expulsion she and her friend Bat-Sheva Hen organized the first Hebrew kindergarten in Kaminits-Podolsk.

During World War I and the Russian Revolution Hadassah was active in the *Ze'irei Zion* Party and was a member of the local committee. On the way to Eretz Yisrael in the fall of 1920, she stopped in Vienna to complete her course of studies in the teachers seminary of Ts. P. Chayot, and in 1922 she emigrated to Eretz Yisrael. Because of a serious illness she was compelled, after five years, to return to Vienna for a medical consultation, and she died there during an operation.

Y.A. Bar-Levi

Yisro'el Drachler

Y. Drachler was known as a community worker in cultural activities and as an important member of the Labor Zionist movement. He was a teacher and a writer, as exemplified by his literary works: stories, poems, plays, and essays published in newspapers and journals. Drachler was blessed with a talent for cultural and communal work. In his active period, he gained an

honored place among the Jews of Europe and America.

In 1919–20 he was chairman of a committee of archivists who gathered information on the pogroms in the Podolia province. He was also a member of the Jewish advisory committee in Ukraine and fought against the pogroms perpetrated by Petlyura's army. He published a great deal on this subject in the newspaper *Der Tog* and in other newspapers.

He started to teach when he was 16 years old. At that time Yisro'el visited the cities of Podolia and helped institute modern Hebrew and Yiddish schools in which he also taught. A considerable number of his pupils now serve as teachers or cultural leaders in America, Canada, and Eretz Yisrael.

In 1924 Drachler and his family came to America where he was accepted as a teacher in the Jewish schools of New York. Drachler worked as a teacher in the Sholem Aleichem schools in Detroit in 1928. A few years later he became severely ill and had to stop teaching, work which he liked very much. Despite his frail health, he remained active in Jewish community work in America and participated in the Jewish Community Council then being formed. Yisro'el Drachler was among the first to help in the founding of the Jewish youth group, Habonim, in Detroit, and, thanks to his advice and dedicated help, Habonim Camp Kinneret was established.

Anonymous

Minkovitz

A town nestled among hills and forests near the district of Ushitsa. The main street runs through the center of town and leads to Ushitsa. The Jewish population engaged in commerce and trade, and the population reached about 5,000 persons. It had two rabbis, five synagogues, a credit bank, a fire brigade, a committee to visit the sick, and other community institutions.

Moshe Berman

Minkovitz

The town belongs to the district of Ushitsa and is about 12 kilometers from it; it rests among the hills on the banks of the Ushitsa River. Its Jews lived in about 2,000 dwellings in the center of the city with approximately 5 to 6 people in each house, giving it a population of about 10,000 to 12,000. According to tradition the city was built by a Jew named Brainin who was brought from Galicia by a landowner. The town consisted of rows of houses and a central square that included a market for cattle and pigs. The large annual fair of the *goyim* was held there, and many people came to buy and sell.

The Jewish compound was laid out according to occupations: shopkeepers, merchants, and artisans. The main trade was chiefly buying and selling of field crops. There were also lumber merchants and craftsmen: tailors, cobblers, carpenters, tinsmiths, and furriers.

Every Sunday and Tuesday there were fairs in town, and people from the environs would come to buy necessities and to sell their produce. There was no post office in town; postal matters were taken care of in Novaya Ushitsa.

The town had two rabbis and five synagogues. The Great Synagogue, that was built at the time the city was built, still stands. It is particularly noted for its decorated Ark curtain. The Holy Ark is adorned with engravings. In this synagogue, the employers would come to pray; it was a special place for networking.

The second synagogue was the brick synagogue that was built by my grandfather Berman. The town leaders stemmed primarily from the Leibovitz family who conducted the community affairs for many years. The third was the Red synagogue; the fourth, of Reb Leib, and the fifth—Reb Chayiml's *bet midrash*.

Near the bathhouse was the poorhouse, a hostel for the homeless. There were also other public services in town, such as a fire brigade, a committee for visiting the sick, a weigh house, a shelter for wayfarers, and a burial committee. A cooperative credit bank to help the inhabitants with loans in times of need was instituted.

The town had one doctor and two nurses who tended the sick. The population included intelligentsia, Hasidim, *Hovevei Zion*, and general Zionists. When the Zionists wanted to conduct a memorial service for Dr. Herzl in the synagogue, it caused a furor in the town. The orthodox Jews opposed it. This caused a violent outbreak of arguments and confrontations. Some of the teachers in the traditional *heder* whipped the pupils. Some local children went to the neighboring city of Nova Ushitsa for a general education. With the end of World War I, when the soldiers started returning from the front lines and the danger of pogroms was anticipated, a self-defense unit was organized from among the youth of the town.

A group of young people started to prepare themselves to emigrate. During the Holocaust the Jews of the town were completely annihilated. The town's survivors in America dedicated a room in their memory in a Kuppat Holim in Israel.

Hayyim Druckman

Recollections of My Town

I would not dare to record the memoirs of the Ukrainian Jews for the years 1917–20 under the wicked and evil constantly changing regimes; nor would I dare to describe the murders, terrors, and horrible sufferings even in as small a town as Minkovitz. Only a great artist could give expression to all this. I will try to describe a personal episode that I shall never forget.

This occurred on a Saturday morning in 1919 just before Shavuot when I was just beginning to fall asleep. At that time, I was 17 years old and had been on watch the previous night. I did not take my clothes off when I went to bed, because I was very tired, hungry, and frightened. No sooner had I shut my eyes when suddenly my bed began to shake. I jumped up, panic stricken and scared, eyes rent wide open with alarm. Facing me was a Haidamack, wild looking, pimply faced, red eyed, fat and healthy, dressed in the uniform of Petlyura's men—wide, red-striped trousers, an embroidered tunic, hair cut in the then fashionable style, and laden with all kinds of weapons; in short, a Haidamack in the full sense of the word.

"Get up, you dirty Jew," he said to me. I got up and walked, as though I had a choice; I in front, and he behind me with a gun pointed between my shoulders. My mother ran after him, wailing and screaming, "Gevalt, save my son, they are going to shoot him!"

Where did she muster the strength to run to the Jewish *starusta* to seek help? And he, so to speak, could help? My little sisters, scared to death, were kissing the murderer's hand pleading for mercy. "Let our brother be, kind sir; he is now our father." (My father was at that time already in America).

"Leave me alone, miserable worms," the cossack said, "before I shoot you down like puppy dogs!"

My Aunt Sarah, in the last days of her pregnancy, pleaded for mercy, patting, and kissing the murderer's boots, and she fainted as she clutched his boots. To no avail. He sat on his horse and I was at his right, only a few paces away from him, the gun now aimed at my head. In this manner, we reached the road that leads from Minkovitz to Novaya Ushitsa.

"Why are you taking me someplace, honored sir?" I asked him.

"Because you are a Jew," he answered. All Jews are Bolsheviks, and they should all be shot down like dogs."

"And where are you taking me?" I asked.

"To headquarters," he replied.

"And where are the headquarters?"

"In the thicket, *Zhid*."

Life for the Jews at that time was ruled by lawlessness. A murderer was not obligated to justify killing a Jew. What the thicket meant was certain death. He was on the horse and I was at his right, until we reached the new

bridge and the grove came into sight. I spoke to him and pleaded, but I did not cry. The well of tears was dry. To this day I cannot recall my words and my pleas. Suddenly he said, "Go, *Zhid*, tomorrow I'll come get you."

I thanked him, and no sooner did I advance a few steps, when he called out and commanded me to come back; this game was repeated about five times, the game of cat and mouse:

"Go! Come back!"

To murder is not enough; torture, too, before killing. He was on the horse, I was at his side. We reached the Jewish cemetery, and we approached closer and closer to the thicket. Once again I plead for mercy; for the fifth or sixth time he repeated:

"Go! I will come and get you later."

Again I thanked him. I walked very, very slowly. Some strange instinct warned me not to run. I feared a bullet in my head at any moment; but the unbelievable happened: my mother's wailing, my sisters' tears, my Aunt Sarah's fainting had apparently worked. The murderer let me return to my loved ones.

A Minkovitzer

The Jews of Minkovitz and the Sovereign Court

The echoes of the 1905–07 Revolution reached Minkovitz only in 1907. Subversive literature was being distributed among the youth. Speakers from the large cities appeared who incited about 70 workers from various trades to strike. They convened secretly in the surrounding towns, in the valleys, and in the corridor of the old synagogue. The synagogue was an ideal place for such gatherings, because, legend had it among Jews and Gentiles alike, that the dead assembled here at night to pray, and so most people refrained from entering there at night.

The propagandists and the revolutionaries wanted to strike for a 12-hour day that would include four hours of study. The objective was to raise the level of the working youth to that of the sons and daughters of the employers.

The workers organized in an organization called Bund. A young man of Minkovitz named Naska organized the Bund in the surrounding towns. When this came to the attention of the czarist police, they started with harassment and imprisonment. Because Naska had connections with the police he could, by a bribe, liberate the prisoners who then made off to America. Others who participated in this game of conspiracy and rebellion actually knew nothing about these tactics. Other young people obtained money from their mothers or used some of their spending money in order to gain entry to the Red synagogue in order to listen to the modern *maggid* (preacher) deliver Zionistic sermons consisting of quotes from the scriptures and present ideas that were more understandable and pertinent to their lives and not as unacceptable as were the sermons of the orthodox preachers. It was with much fervor and awesome respect that they dropped a coin into the Keren Kayemet box.

Another scenario. A finely dressed young man leaves his *tephillin* at his house on the 20th day of Tammuz, the day Dr. Herzl died, and runs to the *bet midrash*. How I envied those orthodox youths who still had a stake in the redemption of Eretz Yisrael which would put an end to the Diaspora without feeling the conflict between a religious and a secular generation. But if my envy and the fervor of the youths who went to pray in memory of a person who wanted to liberate his people and set up the State of Israel was tied in with politics—we didn't know, neither we nor our parents.

Even when the district governor came and brought Jews to vote in the selection of a *starusta*, then, also the Jews made no connection between this and politics. It was considered merely a part of the ordinary humdrum events in the course of running the town, similar to the meetings in which the police commissioner, in all his glory, would participate in the discussions as to who would be promised more wine for kiddush.

The Jews of the town were very involved with town matters such as a wedding, a birth, a funeral, or a recovery from illness. At every such event there was issued a manifest which more than once abolished taxes and fines. The fines were mostly on the prohibition to sell herrings, on teaching children without a license, on pouring dirty water in the street, on playing cards, and the like.

The authorities appointed a surrogate rabbi who was responsible for registering marriages and deaths in the town. This individual was a merchant who spent most of his time traveling to markets and fairs, and so at those times someone else from his family would act for him and register the births. More than once errors cropped up: Instead of writing *Chayah*, he would write *Chayim*; instead of *Shalima* he would write *Shloime*. When this girl turned 21, she received a notice calling her up for army service.... When a boy died, the surrogate rabbi's helper forgot to erase the boy's name from the book of the living; the girl would report again—and this would happen frequently—a way to slip out from being called up for military service! Many young men fled the country in order to avoid service in the army. The parents of the dodger would have to pay a fine of 300 rubles, and, understandably, no one paid such a sum. What Jew in Minkovitz had such a sum? Any person who owned real estate signed it over to somebody else. There were, nevertheless, those who tried not to be drafted. Otherwise they would be endlessly investigated, searched, and harassed. Military duty could be avoided only by virtue of an illness while in the czar's service. From this you obtain a little understanding of the relationship of the Minkovitz Jews to life under the Russian government.

Aharon Ulman

The Minkovitz of My Youth

Minkovitz was outstanding for its wisdom and learning, especially among the youth. No trifling matter—the young people of Minkovitz!

They were all interested in studying. There was no work, they did not engage in trade, and every young man hoped for a fat dowry. To attain this, however, one had to be a scholar, and, when one is obligated to be a scholar, he must study and read, and after reading engage in endless discussions. The library in Minkovitz with its collection of books in Hebrew, Yiddish, and also Russian served to achieve these goals. And even during a walk with young ladies on the famous Minkovitz bridges—here, too, the discussions about books and authors did not cease.

There were six oil presses and two tanneries in the town. The processing of dried fruits, primarily plums, was also engaged in, and the product was exported to the interior of Russia. Some Jews were grain merchants, but the biggest commodity were the forests. Truth to tell, there were only one or two Jews in the lumber business, but a large coterie of salesmen surrounded them. One would earn some agent fees; another a meager reward as a mediator; consequently, there was very much talk about forests.

There was no lack of topics to cause conflicts among the Jews. I recall the fierce argument between the Zinkov Hasidim and those from Husyatin when the latter started to build a separate synagogue for themselves.

Meshulam Tochner

A Story about a House

(My family's recollection of an episode in Minkovitz in the last century)

It happened in Minkovitz, a town set in the plains of Ukraine, attached to its river, isolated in its valley by dark forests. Silence surrounds it; life goes on undisturbed. Synagogues are alternately filled and emptied. At times the *hazzan* chants first and the congregation repeats; sometimes the order is reversed. In the afternoon, the *minhah* prayer; later in the day, the evening prayer. On market days the street is noisy; on other days the streets are quiet. A cacophony of sounds begins when evening approaches. Girls sing; boys argue. Night follows day, and day follows night. And one day the serenity is shattered and is no more.

Reb Mendel Polik, an elder of the town, receives a notice from the authorities. His hands shake. The paper is rough, the letters strange, and even his spectacles don't help. Very, very slowly he leaves his house, seats himself, as is his wont, on the large stone behind the house, raises his eyes, and looks around. It is indeed a fine house in the heart of the town, with a façade of a columned porch, with tall windows and spacious rooms. To the right of it is the synagogue; to the left, the house of study. To both he renders their due reverence. Reb Mendel sits, cane propped between his legs, spirits depressed, his future uncertain.

For whom is Reb Polik waiting? His first-born son, Yudel, had uprooted himself from the town a long time ago. Father and son had parted ways, each to a different mode of life. Yudel had married a woman from a distinguished family in Berdichev, struck roots there, and never returned; whereas his second son, Yehoshua, who was sickly and had poor eyesight, has his home here, but he works in the forests. He comes and goes, returns home, and goes again to distant places. Sometimes he comes home early, sometimes late. Would either of his sons come soon to decipher this mysterious writing?

As though one heart had drawn the other to itself, Yehoshua approaches from afar. He alights from the wagon. The father hastens to stand up but breathes with difficulty. He hands the son the written notice and says:

"Take a look, Yehoshua. What does this notice say, and what is it all about?"

The son does his father's bidding, hesitates for a moment and reads the letter. His face registers surprise, astonishment. Stammering and stuttering, he finally exclaims:

"It's strange, very strange, Papa. This notice is meant not for you nor for me, not even for Yudel. It is meant for Avrumel, may he rest in peace; listen to what it says here."

"Being that Avrumke, son of Yudel Polik, has reached the age of 21, he is obligated to report to the Military Committee on this and this day."

"But didn't Avrumel die when he was a child?"

"It means that this fact was never noted."

"So help me God!" exclaims Reb Mendel with alarm. "With my own hands I submitted the notice Yudel sent me from Berdichev."

There is a loss for words. Slowly, very slowly, Reb Mendel sinks back on to the stone. The day runs its course and is swallowed by the darkness. The town puts on its lights, a web of shimmering gold; darkness and light in a disorderly mishmash. Reb Mendel nods his head, half-awake, half-asleep. Past and present, life and death. The full image of Avrumel's pale, childish face comes before his eyes. Dimmed visions of bygone days, like an embroidered, confused panoply of dreams, and the chill of death. It is a long, wearying road to the ancient cemetery. The ground is opened, and a handful of earth is strewn on a young, tender body. Morning comes. Reb Yehoshua goes to the government offices. There is a chill in the high-ceilinged rooms. On the table are volumes of red leather-bound books; books of life and books of death. The official spreads them out, leans over, turns the pages and ponders over them.

"Indeed, yes ... that's the way it is." He raises his head, and there is a sly smile on his face...." True, Avrumel was born, lived, and died January 3, 1889. Avrumke, however, did not die, and his name has not been crossed out from the book of the living."

"How can that be? Aren't Avrumke and Avrumel one and the same name?" Reb Yehoshua wonders and asks.

"How am I to know your names? Avrumel is registered as deceased, and Avrumke is registered as not having died."

"But isn't it clear that Avrumke and Avrumel are the same name?" he asks imploringly.

"If it is so, why is it once Avrumel and at another time Avrumke; one time, Yudel and another time, Yudke?"

Reb Yehoshua swallows hard and says softly, "Perhaps it is merely an unintentional error."

The official, nevertheless, sticks to his own story. "We know, we know; it is common knowledge that the Jews want to evade the draft, so they intentionally confuse the names Avrumke and Avrumel."

The son goes back to his father and mutters, "We'll live and see. The Lord will help."

Days pass, and again a notice. If Avrumke doesn't report for military service he is liable for punishment and penalty of a fine. Reb Mendel is insistent. He will not pay the fine. Again, repeatedly, orders and protests, and again night returns. Yudel himself is far from here and is not forthcoming with advice in his letters; and Yehoshua, as yet, has not done a thing.

The town, too, is raging. Who doesn't remember Avrumel, a pale, gentle boy, a delicate child, now dead and buried? Who can't understand that

Avrumke is Avrumel. So what? Sometimes it is written one way, sometimes another way. What difference does it make? Who pays attention to such petty details?

The matter, nevertheless, becomes more and more complicated. Powerful authorities come, search the house, examine it all around from every angle and make notes. A rumor is spread: A fine was levied and not paid. The house will be sold. There is, apparently, someone who has cast his eye on this desirable house with a post box and a stable in the yard. Conjectures abound; fears increase. The inheritance from a father has been breached, patrimony nullified.

Once more, Reb Yehoshua appeals to the authorities. Again, they shut the door in his face.

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It is dusk. A chilly sun is setting. The frogs on the river's edge are croaking. Darkness advances. And suddenly—a grand looking carriage appears in town, majestic horses stamping their hooves. A shrill sound, and then an abrupt halt. A tall, mustachioed *goy* alights, approaches the house, gazes at it in wonder, looks around, gets back into the wagon, and disappears into the dark night.

There is no longer any light, meteors streak by, young men in the house of study are intoning their readings. Reb Mendel is sitting on the stone, bowed and bent, sunk in thought: who can predict what is liable to happen? The authorities have decreed that the house will be put up for public sale. They tell him that the house has been sold to the *goy* who had looked at it. Indignation rages through the town: Why this *goy* in our midst? Who is he and what brings him here to the center of town? Look to the right—a synagogue; to the left—a house of study. And even the heavens proclaim the glory of God!

The house was sold. No Jew had sought to buy it; it fell into the hands of a Christian—Ivan Markovich. He won possession of it. Yehoshua had returned and offered to pay the fine, but no one responded. It was Avrumke they were looking for to report for army service, alive, not dead.

The town is stunned. It seems as though the days were grayer, the forest horizons darker. Reb Mendel sits fastened to the stone, reflecting on his world, gazing at the building, a magnificent building and a monument to its fathers, as splendid now as it was in the past. But when and by whom was it built? It is doubtful whether the old people would remember, and the younger ones wouldn't know. People are prone to forget. He didn't lay the foundation, and he didn't build it. His kinsman, Reb Alter Shilman, an intelligent, wise man with a strong sense of design, had drawn up the building plans for the house, laid the foundation stones, and, with the power of his own talents, supervised the construction to its completion. He was a wonderful man. It was said that he was very rich and had no children. No one knew from whence came his wealth, and no one knew to where his

small children had disappeared. Legend had it that a whirlwind had carried them away, but it remained ever a mystery.

Even Reb Mendel didn't know how to explain it, and he also had not known that Reb Alter Shilman had asked to adopt his son Yudel. Distraught, his heart throbbing, Reb Mendel had begged him to retract, to let him keep his son, but to no avail. Part of him was torn away, and there was no one to whom he could appeal. The long remembered image of Reb Alter Shilman was one of an officious person. His word was law, every utterance a command; no sooner said than done. Yudel grew up in royal luxury, grew up and distanced himself from him his adoptive father. When Reb Shilman departed this world and willed the house to Yudel, Yudel disregarded his inheritance and did not return to Minkovitz. Reb Mendel spread his wings over the house, set Yehoshua and his family in it, and guarded the inheritance with body and soul.

❧ ❧ ❧ ❧ ❧

Reb Mendel stirs. Changing visions roll by, and trouble follows trouble. His heart throbs and his mind rages: Why does life change, with nothing being done to safeguard the inheritance? Will Christians live in the house? And from his heart an anguished scream:

"Alter, Alter! How can you help me?"

Yehoshua stands up and looks with dismay at his father's face. Old age is creeping up on him; yellowing parchment and unfulfilled promises.

"What's wrong, Papa?"

The old man rises and angrily cries out to his son:

"Yehoshua, Yehoshua, why do you keep silent?"

The son bends over and answers:

"You know, Papa, that I am not a fighter, not a quarrelsome person. My time is spent in earning a living. What can I do to help? The inheritance is for Yudel. Where is Yudel?"

"Forget about Yudel. You will inherit the house!" Suddenly Mendel grabs his son, pushing and pulling him at the same time.

"Where to, Papa?"

"To your father-in-law, my *mechutan*, Hirsh Kleiderman. If he won't stand by you at a time of need, if he won't make any effort to help you—the house will be lost forever to you, to your family and to the town."

The son agrees and submits to his father's request. Reb Mendel pushes and trudges on. Reb Hirsh Kleiderman is standing at the threshold filling the doorway. He is a tall, handsome elder, intelligent and discerning. He extends his hand in greeting and invites Reb Mendel to enter. It is a meeting of the minds. Each knows what the other is thinking:

"Let's do something about this transgression!" Reb Mendel imploresh. "For the sake of your children!"

"Shouldn't Yudel be the heir?"

"Let Yudel be. The house goes to Yehoshua. If you rescue the lamb from

the mouth of the wolf, he, Yehoshua will inherit the house!"

They sit around the table, look at each other, souls depressed, hearts throbbing. Reb Hirsh Kleiderman jumps up to his full stature and declares his decision:

"We will do whatever you say, *mechutan*!"

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Reb Hirsh Kleiderman goes to the district city, to Kaminits-Podolsk, to meet personally with Satnovsky, the advocate. Determined in his mind and resolute in his decision he enters the house. He will not waver, he will not retreat. He sees a carpeted parlor, sculptures, and paintings. A ceremonial candle flickers in a corner. Apparently someone born of a Christian lives here—but it is not so. Satnovsky is Jewish by birth. The sea is wide, open to all who would cross it, but to swim it will be able only he who sheds his clothes.

Satnovsky had reached his eighties; he has a full face, his hair slightly graying. Kleiderman glances around as he enters and gazes in awe. This is a friendly person who will lend an understanding ear. They would have a heart-to-heart talk, though there is a deep chasm between them. A ray of light penetrates the shadows, the light is sown, Stanovsky lifts his hand and says:

"I know, Gospodin Kleiderman, I know what's happening in the town; I know that Avrumke and Avrumel are one and the same; it's all known to me Reb Hirsh Kleiderman. So let's fight for it, brother, until we redeem the booty."

Reb Hirsh stood up in all his dignity, skullcap atop his head, beard reaching his chest, excited and agitated. Should he be thankful? Should he cry?

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In the meantime, the *goy* Markovich returns again, wearing a high hat and shiny leather boots. He bursts open a door and profanes the privacy of a home. Reb Mendel is crushed and with pleading voice implores:

"What do you have against me and my house, Mr. Markovich? Why do you bother us? I am old; let me die within the walls of my house."

Markovich is amazed, rolls his eyes, and with a patronizing smile says: "Forgive me, Mr. Mendel; this house is my house. I paid for it with my good money. Why should we waste words? Mr. Polik has sons who will look after him; they will surely buy him a different house and everything will be settled."

Reb Mendel was shaken. Mockery is the devil's domain. Reb Mendel knows—the house is no longer his.

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That very same day, a wintry day. The town is wrapped in white robes.

The sun, from behind chilling, sullen clouds, levels a path. Sharp-pointed ice crystals hang from the roofs' edges. On that day they, the new owners, came to take possession of the house. The townspeople assembled at the columned porch, stepping as though to a funeral, the venom of vipers in their hearts and restrained wrath in their hands. One individual was enraged and let go in a vehement outburst:

"Listen, Mr. Markovich, is it right what you are doing? Is there no God in the world? Are we not human beings?"

The *goy* answers him facetiously:

"Am I to blame, young sir? If I hadn't bought it, someone else would have."

"That is not so; no one but you would have bought it!"

Markovich turns away, unconcerned. Heavy clouds hang overhead, growing ever thicker, floating into the distance, their threat diminishing. Markovich is apprehensive, trapped by the moment with the fear of being captured, but he does not stir from his corner. Mendel Polik is dispossessed from his house; he shuts the door very, very slowly with a cryptic oath on his lips, walks out between the columns of the porch, pauses, and walks. And with him exits the Divine Presence of the house.

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It was a time of utter confusion in the town. The distress and shock could not be shaken. The townspeople watched their new neighbors from afar. They peered into the curtained windows, raised their eyes to the clouds of smoke rising from the red chimneys, stretched their ears to hear the boys' joyous shouts, and gazed in amazement at the grown daughters who, in spite of the bitter cold, sat at the window sills polishing the sparkling windows.

The skies were the same skies, the brightness the same. The river froze over as it did every year, but the storm did not subside. Reb Yehoshua, when he chanced to be in town, would constantly walk about the town with downcast eyes. He would be drawn to the side of his house. Markovich had removed the stone from the rear of the house. Actually, there was no need for it.

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One person did not weaken. The advocate Satnovsky worked secretly and openly. The ant swarms in its burrow and no one can decipher its ways. One day Citizen Markovich was summoned to appear before the investigating committee to once more explain the matter regarding the house. When Satnovsky saw the faces of the committee, he whispered something in Reb Kleiderman's ear. After they drank the tea that had been prepared in the home of a Jew who had offered the use of his parlor for the occasion, and after they finished smoking their cigarettes, they got down to the crux of the matter. When Citizen Markovich, with a cryptic smile and an air of

indifference, declared, "I didn't know a thing. I bought the house at a public sale, public and according to law," Satnovsky again whispered into Kleiderman's ear:

"For every ruble we offered, he gave ten."

After a short session of negotiations, the committee came to a decision. "The purchase of the house by Citizen Markovich was proper in all respects." In a winning and eloquent manner, the chairman added, "It is possible, however, to claim compensation from the government for damages." Markovich gets up gently. Satnovsky casts a gloomy look at him and whispers, "We shall see; the case is not yet finished."

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Months pass. In his final days, Reb Mendel stands in the doorway of his new dwelling and, with his dimming eyes, strains to drink in the house across the street. Apparently changes had been made. It had been freshly painted, but its glory still shines through to him. His heart is heavy with the undertone of "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The townspeople bend their heads and slip away in silence.

Reb Mendel Polik is gone; he died with his eyes turned towards his house. The congregation steps along intoning verses of Psalms, pauses, looks around. Markovich, standing in the shade of the pillars of the house, appears and disappears; his daughters are peering out from behind the drapes. The two camps are standing opposite each other, and between them is the coffin of Reb Mendel Polik.

Weariness spreads throughout the town. It is clear now: Until the house will be returned to its rightful owner—joy will not dwell there.

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Suddenly fate thunders in all its fury. Markovich dies, dies in the prime of his life. It is evening. The news spreads like wildfire, accompanied by a seething whisper—Reb Mendel's revenge. Yehoshua sits dumbfounded. Markovich had proposed a compromise, and here, too, this is cut off. There is sadness also in Yehoshua's house. There are two, however, who do not rest and do not remain quiet, Hirsh Kleiderman and Satnovsky. Satnovsky knocks on the door of the house of Madam Markovich and pushes it with all his rage and fury. Blind fate, however, does not relax. Again it releases its fury with a vengeful warning. The younger daughter also dies with a song on her lips; she was dressed in her youthful garb and carried in an open casket. The Jews of the town looked through their shutters, watched and whispered tremblingly, "She will flee from here, the widow; Reb Mendel troubles her there."

Nevertheless, she did not flee. She closed the shutters and bolted the door, shut the back porch, and hung a heavy lock on it. To enter, one had to go through the yard.

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The townspeople wait with bated breath. A decision must be made. It is imperative to do something. Satnovsky comes and goes, with cheerful countenance, inspiring hope. Again the committee meets. This time the issue is clarified. Satnovsky delivers a fiery speech. Avrumke is Avrumel. The truth explodes vigorously. The committee recognizes Yehoshua Polik's ownership of the house. The house will be returned to its rightful owner, and Avrumel will rest in peace.

In a flash the news spreads through the town. The townspeople convene from all corners of the town; adults and children, old and young stream to the side of the house, circle around it on all sides, crowd around the windows, and swoop to the door. From inside—utter, complete silence, not a sound. The ocean winds rage, the waves are rough. Who will restrain them?

The young people, in their enthusiasm, press to the door and pluck off its two locks. Outcries of horror and fright rumble like thunder. From the bowels of the house, the widow Markovich bursts forth with bloody curses on her lips. The Jewish crowd realizes its wrongdoing and withdraws in silence. Within an hour Yehoshua Polik is imprisoned. Stanovsky had as yet not completed his work. The widow Markovich was looking for blood, sought revenge. Reb Yehoshua was sentenced to a month in jail for breaking and entering. The sadness of Reb Yehoshua being apprehended was balanced against the total sum of sorrows. Reb Yehoshua sat in jail, and the town sat with him.

To everything there is an end. Night follows day, and day follows night. Reb Yehoshua goes from a deep darkness to a great light. The house is returned to him, and the townspeople accompany him to the threshold. They also restore the stone to its place.

Smotrich

A town on the Smotrich River, in the Kaminits-Podolsk region, 30 versts from the capital city; one of the oldest settlements in this region. In the middle of the thirteenth century, it was destroyed by the troops of Batu Khan, the Mongol chief who invaded Russia in 1236.

During the reign of the Lithuanians, one of the rulers fortified the town and settled there. Due to the quarrels among the rulers, the town fell into the hands of the Poles. In 1448 it was included in the Podolia government and enjoyed the benefits of an independent municipality under the Magdeburg Law.

In 1712 it had a community of 375 Jews. In 1808 it came under the jurisdiction of Russia and was recognized as a second class municipality. In 1837 it reverted to the status of a town.

In 1847 the town had a population of 1,274 Jews, and during the ensuing 50 years the number grew to 1,725 in the total population of 4,339.

Moshe Hochman & Mordechai Schneiderman

Smotrich

The city was named after the river that flowed through it. It was a small, quiet town with a Jewish population of about 400 families among a poor rural population consisting mostly of farmers, workers at a sugar refinery, and potters.

The Jewish population existed here for many generations; they were simple Jews, honest and peace loving, as were the Jews of the environs. They lived frugally, worked long and hard; they engaged in trade (generally agricultural exports across the Austrian border, about 30 kilometers from the town), in crafts, and in clerical work.

The town was never blessed with great philanthropists. The hard life, however, did not detract from the town's fine spirits.

Who of us does not remember the Great Synagogue? Many groups got together to design, build and maintain it. Its walls were beautifully decorated, and the Holy Ark was outstanding for its artistic craftsmanship. The sanctity of the chambers had never been disturbed. The Central Committee of the Jewish Society for History and Ethnology in Petrograd headed by Dr. S. An-Ski (Solomon Zainwil Rapaport) did some research there and found many interesting artifacts. Much to our sorrow this synagogue was destroyed by order of the government.

There were eight other synagogues in the town for the various Hasidic sects and for the craftsmen, and their religious life centered around them. There were old-fashioned one-room *heders*; also a yeshivah for the more mature students.

The aura of Hasidism that to a great extent brightened the grey, day-to-day life of our town is noteworthy. There were conflicts and arguments among the sects, but they were all with regard to the sanctification of God's name.

Before World War I, as a result of the national movements in Russia and the rest of the world, there were already the beginnings of Zionist organizations in our town that attracted the Jewish youth and inspired them with a fervor for a national revival. At that time, too, a Hebrew school, staffed with teachers who inspired hope and striving for a new life was established. The youths were imbued with the spirit of a renaissance. This organization consisted of factions of *Ze'irei Zion* and *Po'alei Zion*. Workers' organizations such as the Bund and *Mahanei Yisrael*, a religious group, also arose, as well as mutual aid organizations, such as a mutual credit society, interest-free loans to the poor, hospitality for wayfarers, secret almsgiving, and a burial society.

As a result of World War I and the Russian Revolution, Jewish youth came under the influences of the *Haskalah*, the ideas of self-defense and positions on self-determination of man and nations. During the time of the

pogroms in Proskurov and Felsztyn, the Smotrich people came to the help of the victims with medical and food supplies. We instituted a large library that included many books in Hebrew, Yiddish, and Russian; and many people benefited from exposure to these resources of the *Haskalah* and general knowledge.

A group of capable and qualified young people from *He-Halutz* worked on the estate of Count Potocki. The members of this group would go out to work on various laborious jobs such as cutting trees, cultivating fields of beets, paving roads, repairing dams at flour mills, and other such tasks. They were living examples of Jewish workers. With these activities they paved the way towards a cooperative life in the Land of Israel. This group did migrate to the Land, and, later, other youths followed.

Despite all the changes and turmoil in the life of Russian Jewry, even after the Revolution, the town was full of life. The town was caught up in the wave of migration to countries across the sea. Some inhabitants left for the steppes of Russia; others to the big cities, and some to America or Eretz Yisrael.

There still remained a nucleus of Jews who maintained for themselves a semblance of their former way of life until the horror-filled days of the Holocaust befell them, and the hands of the accursed Nazis left no vestige of remembrance of what was once our town.

Frampol

A town within the jurisdiction of Kaminits-Podolsk, Podolia region. In 1847 the Jewish community numbered 570, and in 1897—in a general population of 1,240 there were 1,216 Jews.

Ze'ev Meiberg

Frampol

The origin of the town of Frampol is hidden in the annals of history. Approximately 200 years ago there was a Jewish community at the same place that is now the town of Sviench, about two kilometers from the place that is now known as Frampol. In my youth there were still extant, in the ancient cemetery, remnants of tombstones of former residents of that place. Some of the older people used to go visit the grave of one called Reb Abbele, one of the last residents there. He was a holy man, a descendant of the first Hasidim.

It is thought that the first settlement of Frampol was centered around a wall called *Aavstria* which was built in the days of the *Fanshtashina*. It was the center of the town's marketplace. This wall was built in the shape of a square.

On the south side there were palatial dwellings. The other three sides included about 20 stores for groceries, flour, textiles, and other household goods for the surroundings that consisted of about 20 villages and the above-mentioned Sviench, which was the largest and closest one.

Frampol and its adjacent villages were a self-contained economic unit that counted on each other for their livelihoods. The shopkeepers and craftsmen provided the farmers with clothing, shoes and other goods. The farmers, in addition to working on their own farms or on a nobleman's estate, would hire themselves out as transporters of goods between the two industrial centers in our region, Kaminits-Podolsk and Proskurov.

Our town was on the highway between these two cities, and its main street from the south side of the *Aavstria* was one long line of inns for the merchants and the carters commuting between the two large cities that were at that time centers of trade and manufacture and the location of the district's government offices.

As each of the towns on both sides of the *Aavstria* grew and flourished, some of the first settlers took the initiative to build taverns for the farmers who came to market twice a week (Sunday and Wednesday). The Frampol marketplace gained a reputation for itself and, on fair days, attracted the farmers from beyond its environs as well as the merchants and craftsmen of other cities in our district. In essence, the location of the main road between Kaminits-Podolsk and Proskurov was an important factor not only in the economic flourishing of the town but also in its cultural development.

In 1850, when the road was being built between the two major cities, the engineers asked for a bribe of 100 rubles from the innkeepers, who would be the ones to profit most from the road's location. The latter refused to comply. The engineers then rerouted the road about 10 kilometers from the town, and the town's progress came to a halt. In addition, because the traffic on the dirt road declined, the larger inns remained empty and many

livelihoods were gone. The main road that in former days was a thriving, bustling place became a ghost town.

Even though the livelihood of the neighboring farmers and the market days existed as before, weeks and months could pass without the townspeople seeing a new face; there was no commercial, social, or cultural contact with the outside world, and news was late in reaching the town. The spirit of the *Haskalah* that started in the Jewish world in the second half of the previous century did not reach us until the world outrage of the Dreyfus libel and the First Zionist Congress that followed on its heels.

In about 1898, some young educators from the *kloyz* and the *bet midrash* who already sensed the new era and whose measure of idealism was indeed greater than their knowledge and enlightenment, decided to open a Talmud Torah. Poor children whose parents could not afford to pay fees for private teachers would benefit from this school. It was decided that in addition to the studies of Rashi, *Tanakh*, and Talmud, the curriculum would include Hebrew grammar and also the Russian language. A large protest broke out, waged by the orthodox faction who exclaimed, "Is this a school for learning Torah they wish to establish? No, indeed! It is merely a school for learning how to write!"

The battle raged throughout the town; in the marketplace, in the synagogues, and, of course, in the bathhouse. It even came to the attention of the town's Rabbi Simha Kahana. The opponents of the idea confronted the Rabbi and complained about the atheist abomination in the form of a writing school about to be instituted. The Rabbi, however, paid no attention to their complaints and decided in favor of the proposed idea. (More about Rabbi Simha follows in the course of this narration.)

I remember this battle well, because my brother Shmuel, our nephew Eliezer, and I, the youngest, were among the first pupils of this institution. Our parents, Yossel Feisis and Velvel Feisis, were learned people, and they expected their children, even if not tutored in the conventional schools by *melamedim*, to be brought up knowledgeable in Torah as well as good manners and culture of the world they lived in. We were sent to this pilot school with the hope that we would receive such an education, even though perhaps to a limited degree; also sincere gratitude was extended to the young, idealistic people who were willing to give of themselves and their time to teach, without remuneration, the children of the poor. Our parents became deeply involved and, with their common sense and persuasive powers, fought for the establishment of this school and argued with the opponents until they won on all points.

As far as I know, Mendel Kramer, the only living member of the Talmud Torah's founders, may he live and be well, emigrated to America, studied to become a dentist and retired from his profession two or three years ago.

These young men were all bachelors, unmarried men in their twenties. After a few got married and left our town, the supervision of the institution

and its development was passed on to Yitzchak Rabin and his brother-in-law, Yitzchak Eliash. The two Yitzchaks were the cream of the crop in our town because of their affiliation with its spiritual aristocracy. The former was the son of Meir Rabin. The scholarship of the latter was no less than that of the greatest rabbis in Israel, but he did not use his learning to earn a living by it; he dealt with wheat and flour. His son, Yitzchak Rabin, was no less a scholar than his father, but he already mastered the treasures of the new Hebrew literature and Russian literature as did his brother-in-law, Yitzchak Eliash. Both were grandchildren of Rayzel the Matriarch of our town. It was in honor of her that her son-in-law was dubbed "Meir Rayzel's." After she was widowed, the measure of her unequalled hospitality was well known in our environs. Any poor man who came to town knew her address and her observant adherence to the spirit of hospitality that was practiced by our Patriarch Abraham; her good name preceded her in all the surrounding cities.

They, these grandchildren of Rayzel, dreamed about a modern *heder* for the town and hung their hopes on the first educators and graduates of the Talmud Torah. The graduates themselves also wanted in some measure to repay the debt to their benefactors and their town, but the advent of World War I with all its upheavals brought their plans to naught.

I would like to recall fondly some favored Jews of the town. First and foremost was the above-mentioned Simha Kahana. He stemmed from a rabbinic family whose genealogy includes Don Abrabanel. In addition to being versed in the Six Orders of the Mishnah and *Posekim*, he was a man of common sense, and the reputation of his fine intellect spread far and wide. He acted as mediator in the arbitration of arguments between merchants of distant localities. Der Frampoler Ruv was a household word throughout Podolia.

My father, may he rest in peace, was a Zinkover Hasid who prayed in the large *kloyz*. Reb Simha prayed in the *bet midrash* where he served as cantor for the High Holidays. Even though we shed many tears during the *shemone esrei* on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in our *kloyz* where the services ended before those in the *bet midrash*, we would nevertheless immediately go to the *bet midrash* to hear the Rabbi's incantation of the *Le-David mizmor*. In my mind's eye I see the Rabbi standing upright before the Torahs, pouring out his words before prostrating himself to pray for himself and his congregation, the congregation of the children of Israel.

At the beginning of World War I, Rabbi Simha reached his seniority and retired from the rabbinate in favor of his son, Rabbi Nahum, who was the son-in-law of one of the officiants of the Rabbi of Chortkov. Rabbi Nahum was a young man of fine character who savored the scent of the Galician *Haskalah* in Chortkov. The town was as proud of him as it was of his father. He served as rabbi and teacher in the town until the middle of World War II. When Hitler's troops, may their names be erased, asked him to submit

to them ten Jews to act as hostages, he replied that he could provide them with no one but himself. They seized him in the center of the town and immediately killed him. He will forever be remembered in blessedness and magnificence by all the townspeople and by many future generations.

A few more words about two or three Jews, common folk remembered for their simpleness and righteousness. One was Moshe Wallis, the bookbinder of our town. When he was given a book to bind, one would never know when it would be returned. There were so many prayers and verses of Psalms to be recited each day. To go to the *mikveh* each day was also necessary, as was collecting alms for the poor; and in order to avert anyone's suspecting an innocent person, he would steal off for himself a coin from the proceeds of his collection. On Sabbath nights in the two rooms of his house, in addition to the lit candles, there would be 20 large oil lamps, and the illumination was splendid in its magnificence, "almost sevenfold greater than that of the sun."

One couple in our town, Yo'el Yehudah Leib's and his wife Devorah, were not blessed with children. Although they were childless, they married off sons and daughters of poor families providing dowries and wedding expenses; thereby they gained for themselves many grandchildren.

I will recall one more townsman whom I was not privileged to meet, because he died before I was born. The town elders, however, remember him with pride. His name was Itze Tolner. Were I.L. Peretz a native of Ukraine, I would dare say that Itze Tolner served as the archetype for his story *Oib nisht nokh hekher*. It was the same depiction of righteousness that Peretz portrays in his story about the Zaddik of Nemirov, the elders maintained, that could be attributed to the earthly being of Itze Tolner.

Personalities

Dr. Ya'akov Hoffman

I remember him in all his glory. Dr. Ya'akov Hoffman, of blessed memory, was an outstanding person, admired and loved. He arrived in Frampol from far away, from Elizabetgrad; that is to say he came to us not directly from there but happened to remain with us by chance. He had been with the Red Army that was retreating from the front in World War I. The army encamped in Yarmolinits, and from there we persuaded him to settle in Frampol, especially since we didn't have a doctor.

One of his first accomplishments was to organize the community on a democratic basis. On no account would he agree to serve as a private physician; he wanted to be hired by the *kehillah* who would remunerate him for his services. He would visit the sick without receiving payment; the patients paid into a community fund on a progressive scale based upon ability to pay.

The well-to-do of the town who would have to pay larger sums of money

raised a furor; they didn't need a doctor and didn't want to pay the sums imposed on them. A typhoid epidemic that was raging at that time, however, did not bypass the homes of the rich; then they came running, wailing, "Doctor, save us!" He then reminded them, "Didn't you say that you didn't need a doctor, so why are you coming to me?"

I recall one incident when he requested from one of the rich men, who wanted the doctor to visit him, a fee of 500 rubles which for that time was an exorbitant sum. The doctor received the money, but right then and there he destroyed it; and then he went to visit the sick person.

Dr. Hoffman introduced much vitality to the town. Most of the monies raised from the large area of the surrounding villages were used for the school that was established in the town. From Yarmolinits he brought over the young teacher, Sh. Shpan, and supported him with food and lodging.

Dr. Hoffman and his wife more than once rescued the town from pogroms. I remember one incident when the infamous Ukrainian army had to camp at night near the town. Dr. Hoffman surmised what might happen. He gathered up some of the more respectable officers, prepared a small party for them and kept them in his house until late at night when they heard screams for help from all sides. He, together with the officers, mounted their horses and chased every last soldier out of town.

Moshe Meiberg

Kupin

During the Polish reign in Podolia in the 18th century, the town belonged to the Kaminits jurisdiction of the Podolia region. In 1765 there were 405 Jews there who paid a poll tax. After the partition of Poland, when the transfer of government was taken over by Russia, the town was included in the Kaminits district of the Podolia region, and in 1847 there were 923 Jews. According to the 1897 census, there were 1,351 Jews in Kupin.

Abraham Rosen

Kupin

(With the kind permission of Yad Vashem)

It was a small town surrounded by hills and forests in the district of Kaminits-Podolsk. In its center was a large, expansive marketplace, and around it were several streets and lanes. The streets nearest to the marketplace were populated mostly by Jews; those farther away, by Christians. At the edge of the marketplace stood the synagogue with its *bet midrash* as well as the Zionist *kloyz*. On both sides were one-story dwellings with stores that sold groceries, haberdashery, dry goods, building materials, and other consumer goods. During the week the marketplace was practically empty, but on fair days it would fill up with the nearby farmers who brought their produce to sell. Thanks to the proximity of the Austria-Galicia border (about 25 kilometers away) the Jewish merchants could export various products, especially chickens and eggs. The town had various craftsmen and artisans, such as tailors, furriers, cobblers, carpenters, and blacksmiths. Some of the townspeople worked in the nearby Jewish-owned sugar refinery.

The Jewish population numbered about 2,000 persons. With the exception of the synagogue, the burial society, the bathhouse, and the voluntary fire brigade, there were no other community organizations. Sanitary conditions were neglected, and, because there were no paved streets and sidewalks, the town was mired in mud and muck whenever it rained. There was no doctor or hospital in the town, and the people made do with the services of the local male nurse (a Jew) or called for a doctor from the neighboring city of Gorodok. Also, there was no local post office; consequently a special messenger would travel daily to Gorodok, deposit the mail and packages, and bring back the mail he picked up addressed to the people in Kupin. Except for the town's clergy, namely the rabbi, the ritual slaughterers, the cantors, and the officiants, the Kupin *kehillah* had no other paid communal workers. In times of need, matters would be taken care of by the officiants or the richer townspeople. The registration of births and deaths was handled by the so-called surrogate rabbi of the town of Gorodok.

Kupin was not different from the other small, depressed towns in its economic and social conditions in Podolia. However, in its accomplishments in furthering the ideology of national revival, primarily in the field of Hebrew education, Kupin surpassed many of the other small towns and was considered among the forerunners in those accomplishments. Because of the efforts of some of the local enlightened Zionists, particularly the well-known activist, Aharon Weinbaum, Zionist ideology permeated almost every Jewish home in the town, and Zionism was the dominant factor in all the community affairs. With the initiative of the local Zionist group, a modern Hebrew school (Talmud Torah) was instituted. This school absorbed almost

all of the town's children from all strata of its Jewish population, rich and poor, orthodox, and free thinking. The traditional religious schools were shut down because the richer orthodox Jews sent their sons and daughters to this Zionist school. The number of pupils in this school was about 120–150; it was governed by a parents' committee headed by the above-mentioned Aharon Weinbaum. The curriculum included general studies in addition to the studies of *Tanakh*, Talmud, Hebrew language, Jewish history, and literature. In the course of 10–12 years, this integrated school was up to the standards of the Tarbut educational institutions throughout Russia. The *ivrit be-ivrit* teaching method, an innovation not approved by the surrounding towns, was adopted. Every year there were public tests for the students, and this practice had a great impact on the town in promoting further study of the Hebrew language.

The budget for the school was derived mostly from the tuition fees paid by the richer Jews. During the days of World War I, the regular course of studies was somewhat disrupted because our young men were seized by the Russian army that passed through our town on its way to the Austrian border. Yet these disturbances did not undermine the institution that existed up until the time the Soviets took over in the area.

With the cooperation of the teachers, who had come from various cultural centers, the young people conducted a multi-faceted program of activities to enhance their nationalistic goals. For the lack of a public library and reading room, they created a Sabbath Club where various age groups would meet for discussions and readings. From time to time debates were arranged on various literary topics. After a while a Hebrew-speakers Club was founded whose members would meet every Saturday night for a discussion in Hebrew on sundry issues. In the course of events, some theatrical talents manifested themselves, and amateurs formed a group dedicated to presenting plays in Yiddish and in Hebrew. This group produced plays by Sholem Asch, Peretz Hirschbein, Jacob Gordin, and others. One young woman from this group, Shifra Ashman-Ripnitzer, later came to Eretz Yisrael where she was selected to be one of the first actresses of the Israeli theater company, *Ohel*.

With the onslaught of the Holocaust on Ukrainian Jewry, the small Kupin community was wiped off the face of the earth, as though it had never existed. The memory of it, however, will never cease among its survivors who were educated there in an outstanding national Zionistic milieu and migrated to Eretz Yisrael to work on it and make it a flourishing fatherland for all.

Hayyim Sarig

My Town

Kupin, in the Kaminits district, Podolia region, is located among Christian farmers who work the soil and earn their livelihood from agriculture. In the center of this rural setting, where the Jews were surrounded by Jew-hating Ukrainians, nature offered green fields, forests, and waterfalls that during the summer attracted the people to bathe in the waters. The town was sparsely inhabited; a scant population of 300 families who earned poor livings but were distinguished for their good spirit and aspirations for a better, more interesting life. The town was located far from a railroad; consequently, there was a dearth of economic development. Suffering and sadness were the lot of its inhabitants, especially in the wintertime, when they wallowed in mud and rain. In spite of all these difficulties—cultural life sparkled there.

Although close by there was a sugar refinery owned by the Zaitsev family, Jews from Kiev, it was the Gentiles who benefited most from it, because they supplied the sugar beets. There was little benefit in it for most of the Jewish townspeople. The Jews were engaged in small businesses of dry goods and in the crafts of tailoring, shoemaking, and fur making. With these crafts they served the neighboring people and filled the needs of the Jewish community.

The townspeople, for the most part, were observant and true to the customs and traditions of their fathers, studying Torah; the Hasidim were followers of one rebbe or another. The children were educated in traditional religious schools under less than satisfactory conditions. Kupin was one of the first towns to institute a modern Hebrew school that was soon incorporated as a Tarbut school. The language of instruction was *ivrit be-ivrit* and even the general studies were taught in Hebrew. I must here mention and extol the teacher, Zalman Melamed, a dynamic personality, resourceful and creative in the field of Hebrew pedagogy. He came to our town from Khotin in Bessarabia, was invited to be principal and to teach, and, with his dedication and love of the Hebrew language, he served as an example to many.

Some differences of opinion among the Jews of the town did exist between the Hasidim and their opponents and between the Zionists and the Bundists. I remember, when the Zionists wanted to make arrangements for a memorial service a year after Herzl's death, a fracas broke out in the *bet midrash* that created quite a furor, and the anti-Zionists would not permit the memorial to take place, much to the chagrin of the Zionists. Although the majority of the townspeople favored Zionist ideology, the apprentices of the tailors and shoemakers belonged to the Bund.

The depressed economic situation and the lack of direction for the energies of the local Jewish youths strengthened their resolve to emigrate

from the town into the wide, wide world—to America and to Argentina. There were also attempts to go to Eretz Yisrael. There were instances where aging people went there to live out their days. After the Revolution, when the lives of the Jews were disrupted and the hopes of what the Revolution would bring were shattered, they felt deceived and disappointed; many emigrated to other countries or to Eretz Yisrael.

In the town, the Jews had a form of self-government subordinated to the local authority. The *starusta* was chosen by the townspeople and certified by the authorities. He would be responsible to the regime; he would collect the taxes, issue licenses and passports. I remember that my grandfather, Shmuel Schreiberman, served as *starusta* in this capacity for about 25 years and had been chosen whenever there were elections.

Many of the townspeople were members of *Hovevei Zion* and later, political Zionists. They were dedicated to the Hebrew language, and every newspaper and periodical published in Russia or the United States reached our town. During that time, a Hebrew-speaking club was formed.

During the 1905 Revolution, the farmers revolted against the estate owners. The farmers refused to pay taxes. They drove the regime agents from their villages, burned the estate buildings, barns, and granaries. A punitive expedition of Cossacks was deployed to quell the rebellion. It was the Jews who suffered most of the casualties, even though they had no part in the uprisings. The Cossacks acted wildly in the town, rioted, and plundered Jewish property. One of the townspeople was killed, for no apparent reason or cause, and a reign of terror and panic enveloped the Jewish community until the Cossacks left the town. The authorities stood passively by, as they watched the Cossack atrocities and did not intervene, acting as though they did not see what was happening. The town's community officials tried to appeal and to protest to the estate administrators and to the police officer, but to no avail.

In 1914, when our town was close to the border and served the Russian army as a way station on its way to Galicia and the Carpathian Mountains, life was threatened and tense, even though from the economic viewpoint the Jews had benefited from trade with the army until the time of the army's retreat. The security of life was undermined.

During their hasty, disorderly retreat, the soldiers passed through the town and heaped trouble on everyone in their path. When the overthrow of Kerensky started and the strivings towards a new life that had been inaugurated were squelched by the soldiers, the frustrated local Jewish young people mustered their forces and organized themselves into a self-defense unit in cooperation with the Jewish soldiers who had returned from the army. These soldiers trained them in the use of light arms and gave them ammunition. The group consisted of about 40–50 people.

In the first confrontation of the soldiers who tried to infiltrate the town in order to plunder it and while the self-defense group tried to thwart them,

a few of the defenders were killed. Faced with the overpowering number of aggressors, the defenders decided to withdraw and left the town at night.

The following day the soldiers came cautiously to the town helped by the local farmers who served as their guides. When they saw that the Jews had left their homes, the plundering began, aided and abetted by farmers of the area, but there was no loss of lives. Some Jews had fled to nearby Grayding; others hid at the homes of friendly farmers. I believe that this was the first pogrom in Russia after the Revolution. The Jews returned to their homes after three days and resumed their lives with the help of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee which at that time began its philanthropic activities in Ukraine.

In addition to this aid, there were also groups that sold goods cheaply to its members and organized themselves into consumer co-ops. A cooperative mutual aid society was formed. Everyone paid a membership fee, and the "Joint" also extended monetary help towards this project.

The craftsmen organized themselves for mutual help during lean and depressed times. A society for the study of Hebrew culture, Tarbut, conducted discussions and lectures in Hebrew, held evening classes, and presented plays in Hebrew by amateur groups. Very supportive in this activity was our comrade, A. Rosen (Rosenzweig), who worked as a Hebrew teacher and dedicated much time and energy to strengthen and spread the study of Hebrew. A local Zionist group committed itself to the collection of monies for the Jewish National Fund and other such activities. The moving spirit and active force in this was Aharon Weinbaum who took upon himself this labor of love, propagandizing the Zionist cause, and collecting funds. He was sent as a delegate to the Zionist Congress.

Until the time of the Revolution, Zionist activity was conducted illegally. During the Revolution, a branch of *Ze'irei Zion*, which was centered in Moscow and later in Kiev, was formed. From that group we received directives and circulars regarding preparation and training for migrating to Eretz Yisrael.

With the initiative of the *Ze'irei Zion*, a He-Halutz group was organized, and the first pioneers (the Grossman brothers) emigrated.

During the war, with the invasion of Hitler, may his name be erased, the town was wiped out and not a trace of it remained.

Personalities

Weinbaum Family

In each and every town of the Pale of Settlement in Russia there was one particular family that stood out above the others. The family members were active in meeting the needs of the community and personally bore the spiritual burdens and troubles of the community. In Zhvanets it was Sholem Altman; in Khotin, Hannah Reiz. In Dunivits, which was a larger city, there was probably more than one family. I remember most clearly the personality of Mottel Royzen. In Kupin, it was the Weinbaum family.

The father, Shmuel Hershber's, was the family's patriarch; a handsome and noble-minded man, a Nachman Krochmal (19th century writer and philosopher) type. He was well versed in *Posekim* literature as well as in theological research and in philosophy. He was frequently called upon to mediate in cases of arbitration that came up between merchants of the area and to settle difficulties between Jews and Russian or Polish land owners. He gained their trust with his broad knowledge and prudent manner, and he was known for his straight thinking and adherence to complying with the biblical verse: Justice, justice shall you pursue.

His two sons, Nachum and Aharon, gave credence to the saying "like father like son." Both were of the same moderate character as their father; each inherited the father's superior traits.

Nachum, the elder son, inherited the bent for theoretical and constitutional research. He was a lawyer in the town, writing petitions from the people, Jews and non-Jews, for presentation to the authorities. He also interpreted the civil law. He was a Tolstoyan and a Gordonist, even before Gordon loomed on the horizon of our culture and our movement, with his belief and preaching on the principle of self-employment. He really practiced what he preached. He repaired his own and his family's shoes, ans did various carpentry and construction jobs around his house; he also spiced his sermons with proverbs and injunctions from the Hasidic and scholarly greats of the day and days past. He migrated to Eretz Yisrael after the Communist Revolution when he was in his fifties and reached his old age there. He would walk around the poorer neighborhoods, in the streets of Tel Aviv and Jaffe, with saw and ax on his shoulder prepared to fix, for a modest fee, whatever needed to be repaired.

Aharon, the younger son, inherited from his father the love of social and cultural pursuits. His devotion to the Zionist cause and Hebrew culture cost him dearly in his personal family life and in business matters that he sorely neglected. He was the chairman of all the community clubs and organizations founded in the town; the Zionist club, the Hebrew-speakers club, and the amateur theater group. Anything that touched on the cultural life of the town was not strange to him. And were it not enough that he

plunged heart and soul into all the national and cultural activities, and his pockets were always laden with newspapers and pamphlets for the causes he espoused—he also would amuse his listeners with stories and folk tales. With his familiarity in Jewish folklore, he was like a bubbling spring.

I recall one episode about these two brothers. When the proposition of the Uganda territory was on the agenda of the Sixth Zionist Congress and the differences of opinion between the Zion Zionists and the Uganda Zionists reached a climax, an argument broke out between Nachum and Aharon about their split opinions regarding Zionism. The first was in favor of Herzl's and Nordau's acceptance of territory from Great Britain, and the second was among the naysayers to the same proposition. The dispute heightened to the point where the two of them could no longer continue in their partnership and they separated.

During the days of the Bolshevik Revolution, Aharon passed through the Seven Halls of Hell as a representative of Zionism and Hebrew culture and as a capitalist, so to speak. In one of his last letters to me in 1926, he poured out his bitterness and decried the grievances of his fate, that his brother Nachum, the Ugandist, was enjoying the later days of his life in Eretz Yisrael, reaping in joy what others had sown in tears, and he, Aharon the Zionist, was destined to die in the Land of Exile.

Ze'ev Meiberg

Meir Haezrachi (Munye Zak)

At the age of six, Munye was taken from his mother and brought to live with his aunt in the Brodsky Family of Kaminits-Podolsk. Here he was raised in a Zionist atmosphere and received a general education in a technical secondary school. When he completed these studies, he attended the Institute of Psychoneurology in Petrograd, but, because of the political upheavals during the Revolution, he did not continue with his studies but devoted himself solely to community Zionist activities.

Proficient as a propagandist, Meir was also prominent as a good organizer. He was straightforward, honest, and impartial. He was liked by all who knew him, and he got along well with people. From the day he became aware of Zionism, he was in its mainstream, he could appreciate the affiliation of the labor movement with it, and he was loyally devoted to all its followers.

He visited all corners of Europe and won people over to the Zionist cause and the Jewish National Fund. When a vacancy occurred for a department head in the office of the Jewish National Fund, Meir Haezrachi filled that position and worked there until he died.

Y.A. Bar-Levi

Kitaygorod

A town in the Ushitsa district, Podolia region, on the Tarnov River that flows into the Dnester River.

In 1765, during the Polish reign, the town had a population of 489 who paid a poll tax. During the Russian reign, in 1847, there were 642 Jews; in 1897, 1,745 Jews in the general population of 2,794.

M. Kapeliyuk

The Rabbi Who Refused to Say the *Zaddik Ha-Din*

An article published 35 years ago in the newspaper *Ha'aretz* (no. 8-9, 1928) under the title, "A Town," signed by K. Menahem. The story and description is of the town of Kitaygorod near Kaminits-Podolsk, the district city of Podolia (now known as Khmelnicki's region).

The pogrom perpetrated by the Ukrainian bands occurred in 1919 (18 Sivan). This article was written nine years after the massacre. The contents of the article are the same as published in 1928 with certain emendations and changes.

A

Peace and quiet reigned in this small Podolia town in Ukraine. On three sides, it was surrounded by fertile valleys and rushhing streams and brooks full of waters and fish. Above these valleys, a green ring of interwoven foliage of forests and thickets, were Ukrainian villages, large and small, spread out on large, expansive areas of black fertile fields.

The town was old, its origins unknown. Remaining from the past was the ancient cemetery at the edge of town; because of the weight of its many tombstones that were bent and had sunken into the earth, it was only with great difficulty that the dates could be discerned on the stones which had become grey and darkened with age. This cemetery, surrounded by a bent, concave wooden fence could be seen opposite the synagogue that, according to hearsay, was built following a certain incident which happened to an ancestor of a Polish squire who owned many estates and properties in town. Close to the town stretched the spread of this large Ukrainian village.

In the spring, when the mud and the mire melted away and the paths were passable, the youths of the town would go for a walk to the village, sit in the shade of the willows, and stealthily pluck the white, fragrant cherry blossoms; at the beginning of summer—the sour fruits.

The Jews of the town had good neighborly relations with the Christian farmers of the village. Every Jew—be he merchant, shopkeeper, or craftsman—had his regular customers, and every farmer had a Jew whom he trusted. Not only in business matters were the neighborliness and closeness manifested, but also on holidays and festive occasions. When a Jew married off a child, the farmer would put together a bounteous offering of produce from garden and field to which he added a rooster and a white-feathered hen. (It was common knowledge among the farmers to be careful not to give a black hen.) The Jew would bring colorful woven cloth to a Ukrainian bride; also a bottle of brandy, vintage '96, signed and sealed with the royal inscription on the cork.

The town's Christians favorably accepted the towns "saintly Meirke" (reputed to be Reb Meir Ba'al ha-Nes) and many discussions and stories circulated about him as a Jewish miracle worker in Ukraine. When a villager became ill, the town's cantor was approached, and an offering was

made in honor of Reb Meir Ba'al ha-Nes who was requested to intervene for the recovery of the sick person. Among the older women of the town, there was the well-known Yavducha, the village sorceress, a venerable Gentile woman whose thick oak cane never left her gnarled, bony hands. She was summoned to a sick person's side when the doctors and the rabbis could not help; she would crouch over to half her size, and with her dimming, peering eyes and heavy dark eyebrows her appearance was formidable and frightening. She would boil a brew of various herbs and spices and mutter her incantations. Those who believed in her necromancy would say, "If Yavducha couldn't devise a cure, even Hecate couldn't."

Such was the way of life in this vicinity, the Jewish town and the Ukrainian village. Each one knew and recognized the others weaknesses and strong points, and to all appearances they were accepted without question. In 1905 when an edict was received from the authorities to provoke the Jews, and when an informed representative took the trouble of coming up from the district city to make inquiries about the character of one Jew or another, the villagers drew him aside and whispered in his ear, "This is not the place." He took the hint, and before too long he disappeared, just as he had come. One day, when some distant villagers had come to the weekly market fair and had tried to attack the townspeople, the neighboring villagers came to help the Jews and chased the attackers from the town. For many years the attackers remembered all too well the crushing defeat they had met at the hands of the Jews and their allies, the neighboring villagers.

B

During World War I the town was not hurt. From the distant battlefields one could hear the gunshots. When the news of the mass deportation of Jews reached the areas close to the German border, the Jews in town bemoaned the fact and were overcome with fright and fear. The town divided into two camps: the larger one, was supportive of "Uncle Velvel" (Wilhelm, Germany's Kaiser) and "Uncle Efraim Yosef" (Austrian Franz Josef); the second camp, the smaller one, believed in "Aunt Rayzel" (Russia). The battle was pitched between the two camps and serious fights broke out at any opportune time or occasion—between the afternoon and evening prayers on summer afternoons, on Sabbath days, on long wintry nights at gatherings in the rebbe's house, or in the home of a rich man for a glass of tea in the course of a discussion of politics. Cited often was the name of the news sheet, *Kievskaya mysl*, subscribed to by the town's pharmacist, and the readers were convinced that "it was possible to extract from it many momentous truths, if one only knew how to read it."

They would read between the lines and discover sensational news from the situation at the war front and the expectations for the near future. Each of the two camps proved its arguments and the logical conclusions it sought in what it read between the lines as acceptable to its point of view. In such a manner, they would fight until the day came when the town was

desecrated, and the two opposing groups were not aware of what had happened.

C

On one of the last days of winter, the fat village policeman, his hanging jowls weighed down with excessive layers of fat, and, together with him, the intimidating armed guard suddenly disappeared. Reports circulated around town that Czar Nicholas had been overthrown and in his stead there would be a republic that would give Jews equal rights.

Some days passed, and the sounds of boys and girls singing *The Marseilles* rang through the air. In the course of weeks and months, this first song of liberation was sung incessantly, as were other revolutionary songs, by the young boys and girls who sang them with much enthusiasm. On May 1st all the youths, boys and girls, gathered together and traveled to the district city to celebrate this day, and they returned joyfully, filled with resurgent hope.

D

A few months went by.

During the winter, when the snow piled up around the walls of the houses, and the window panes were covered with fronds of frosted icicles, a rumor struck the town that "something was going to happen, and there would be a change," because the Bolsheviks (a word that then sounded foreign and strange) would be coming to take over the reins of government. Many expressed opinions circulated regarding this matter. The rumor spread that the new government's stand was to create absolute equality for everybody, and there were people who praised the Bolsheviks to the heavens; there were others who mocked them, saying that the Bolsheviks could not change the ways of nature, and "they would be knocking their heads against the hard rock of the nature of man." The town had no chance to assert itself, because one bright morning at the end of winter during the few weeks when the town was not under the aegis of any form of government, the townspeople saw streets full of Germans wearing steel helmets, Austrians swathed in many-layered turbans, and red-faced Hungarians who every minute spewed out grievous curses in their language. The old armed guards now had a new name, "militants."

Not too many days passed before the Germans and the Austrians began returning to their homes. One fine morning, the Ukrainian town was finally clear of the soldiers and the police who disappeared together with them.

E

When reports reached the town about the disturbances, killings, and pogroms by the Cossacks and Haidamacks of the *Batko* Petlyura and his hetmen, a cloud of gloom hung over the town, and matters began to worsen. First there was the story of the murder of the Jewish *arendars*, about a Jew

who was found murdered on his way to the market fair, and then about the pogrom. This two-syllable word was fraught with fear and horror and frequently heard before the Pesach holiday—when the snows began to melt, and the air was filled with the first signs of spring, and the heart with stirrings of joy. The news of the pogrom in Proskurov that killed more than 300 Jews came as a thunderbolt. Among the stories of these atrocities, there was frequent mention of the names of Petlyura, Semosenko, and Tutunik as an integral part of the narrative.

Since Proskurov was not too far from Kitaygorod, it took only a few days before the details and the details of the details were fully known about the slaughter perpetrated that Sabbath afternoon when the Jews were wont to go out for a leisurely stroll. Even if the first reports were supposedly not exaggerated, it must be declared, contrary to fact, that the reality was far more dreadful than reported.

F

The following week, another report attested to the killings and massacres in the Jewish communities of Ukraine. Family members were already attuned to the fact that when the men came home from afternoon or evening prayers with worried and anxious expressions, with furrowed brows, and were asked why, the reply at first was very brief: the name of the town and the number of victims; then followed the details of the troubles and the endured human tortures. The women would sigh and cry, and the little children, upon seeing their fathers' sad faces and hearing their mothers weeping, would clutch at their mothers' skirts for security. The parents mouths uttered the words: "Would that we will at least be saved by virtue of these children who have not sinned."

Fear and worry shrouded the town, and the people walked around as though in the shadow of death. Relations with the neighboring villagers did not change, and even with the reassurances by the gentry that "This time, also, no riots would penetrate this quiet place," peace and security were not felt by the people. It happened on a Tuesday, the usual market day, when the hooligans would try their tricks and a little something would just incidentally stick to their hands. This time, as though it were agreed upon, such doings were ignored, in order to prevent any conflict liable to disrupt the friendly relations between the Jews and the villagers.

G

After two or three weeks, the "big ones" (the Jewish name for the Bolsheviks) entered the town. Both the Jews and the Bolsheviks knew, and the town knew, that the Russians would not remain there for too long. Difficult days of fighting lay ahead for the revolutionary regime because of Kolchak, Yudenich, and the other White Russian generals, the Czechoslovakian units, and, last but not least, Petlyura and all the hetmen

and gang leaders as well as the Polish officials. All these forces prevented the Bolsheviks from gaining much ground in Ukraine. The thought of the imminent confrontation with the Petlyurists and other White Russians froze the blood in the Jewish veins.

On the eve of Shavuot, when the weekly market day began, a furor suddenly arose. The army that had been alerted to retreat passed through the town and seized the wagons to transport its troops and equipment. A hasty flight ensued. The farmers jumped on their wagons and beat the horses to escape to their village. The pursuit by the enraged soldiers, the sounds of the pistol shots between the attackers and the attacked, and the curses of the captives filled the air of the marketplace. The shopkeepers hastened to close their shops and bolt the shutters, and, within a few minutes, not a living soul remained in the marketplace. How strange and amazing it was to see the market suddenly empty and desolate when only a few minutes before it was bustling and noisy with buyers and sellers, and housewives with children hanging on to their skirts, while their mothers were carrying overflowing baskets.

Only the dogs, who usually tread cautiously at the side of the road to avoid a farmer's stick or a stone thrown by a passerby, roamed around fearlessly in the center of the market and sniffed at what was left strewn in the hay by the fleeing villagers. The large holiday challahs, braided in a special way in honor of the Shavuot holiday, were next to the oven ready to be baked; they looked as though they had been abandoned, as though someone had left them there by accident. In the boiling foods on the stove, one could sense the angry unrest that bode evil; when it happened that one of the pots boiled over, the housewife walked around gloomfully and listless, paid no heed to it as though what was being done in the kitchen in honor of the holiday meant nothing to her.

In many homes people were packing belongings and household goods. With the bundles, quilts, and barest necessities, however, inextricably bound up with them, loomed the big question: "Where to?" To flee to a town? But wasn't it clear that a similar lot would also befall them there, and that it was just a matter of time—sooner or later? Only one place of refuge remained: the district city that the Ukrainian government had chosen as its capital. There, in the capital city, the people reasoned, the disasters would not be perpetrated. How to get there—what with the roads being assaulted by the Haidamacks and other assassins who called themselves "rebels?" More than one Jew who chose this plan of escape was killed by the rebels. Hopelessness, despair, and fear overtook the town.

H

The evening of the Shavuot festival happened to coincide with a double *tikkun*—that of the holiday and that of a *leyl shemurim*, observed not only by the older and God-fearing Jews, but by old and young alike. Young

children were not allowed to take off their clothes. In the morning, several shots, accompanied by the raucous, drunken singing of the Haidamacks were heard from the valley surrounding the town. The sound of the singing frightened the shut-in Jews. A unit of several tens of troops had entered the city to capture it, as declared by the posted order of the National Ukrainian Republic, and the order concluded with the demand that the town surrender all its arms to the commandant. The commandant, a young man about 25 years old, was wearing golf pants and polished, high tight boots. He was tall and thin, sickly looking, bearing a sinister expression which bespoke evil. Angry spittle accompanied his words. He called out to the *starusta* and ordered the surrender of all the arms in the town's possession, that, according to his knowledge, was abundant. The *starusta*, a Jew about 65 years old, who had served faithfully for forty years as official representative of the town, answered him, "I assure you that no arms can be seen or found in my town. On my honor, this is the truth and nothing but the truth."

The words "on my honor" were rarely uttered by him and then only in times of stress, but, in this instance, they did him no good. Sharp and blasphemous words accompanied by severe blows was the reply.

"Come, old dog, we will search and investigate the truth of your words, a pack of lies and deception!"

First the Haidamacks went to the synagogue and inspected the Holy Ark, searched the Torah scrolls and unrolled the parchments, uprooted planks from the floor in various places, and searched underneath them, concentrating particularly on the square where the cantor stood when he would chant the words "From the depths have I called to you, Oh Lord!" Two soldiers were stationed there uprooting, breaking, digging, shattering, and examining everything they could lay their hands on, their faces flaming red and wild hair, Haidamack-style, sticking to their damp foreheads. When all the searching and investigating yielded no results, a barrage of vile curses ensued.

I

The following morning, the commandant summoned the *starusta* and two other respected citizens of the town and notified them curtly: "You must collect 200,000 rubles head tax by three o'clock this afternoon." When the summoned delegation pleaded for the revocation of this harsh decree or at least to lessen the sum, he lashed them repeatedly with his whip. Offended, crushed, and frightened they fled from the commandant's room.

With the speed of an arrow, the news of the contribution spread through the town and became the topic of discussion and concern for all, but perhaps there was a spark of hope, nevertheless. Maybe their intent was merely for gain and not for remaining there.

Two Jews rose to the occasion; one, a well-to-do dignitary, the other, a distinguished scholar whose opinions were respected in the community.

They went around in the town to collect the required sum. First, they approached the richer people who, for the most part, after some grumbling and complaining, gave the amount asked for. There were, however, some who refused to pay, either because it would deplete their funds, or they simply did not have the means. To those who paid less than their share and those who refused to pay, the scholar came forth with this argument:

"My good man! I stand before you not as a business dealer nor as a merchant asking you to ransom your life. Here you have Petlyurists confronting you!"

Just these few words sufficed for the non-payer, angry and sullen, to come forth with money to submit to the collectors. But, the demanded sum was still lacking at the time it was supposed to be submitted. So, once again, the collectors made their rounds from house to house, adding coin to coin and from each received what the donor could afford, and after much hard work and effort they brought the requested sum to the leader of the gang. They found him at a party with some of his men feasting and carousing drunkenly. They did not let the two Jews come in; the commandant's deputy, cursing and spitting, came out and received the money.

J

The commandant and the deputy had seized one of the nicest and most spacious houses that had been built shortly before the war. The best restaurant in town supplied them with tasty meals at the expense of the community, and, after each repast, the commandant would come galloping on his horse through the streets of the town.

This ride recurred each day because of a demand, among other orders, for a certain kind of cloth for a suit that the commandant much desired to have, a cloth which had been obtainable only before the war. Attempts were made to suggest other expensive cloths for the suit, but he wouldn't hear of it. "This cloth only and none other," and, at any other suggestion, he replied with curses, sharp words, and threats. A frantic search began in closets and packages until the cloth the commandant wanted was found in one of the homes, and the town breathed easier.

One evening the *starusta* was ordered to appoint sentries from among the town's inhabitants. This sudden order was very strange but not one to be countermanded. Before morning several shots were heard in town. Many hurried out of their beds where they had been sleeping fully clothed, frightened, knowing that within a short time the guards would attack and shoot them. One person was killed, and others who had not managed to escape were wounded, some slightly, some more seriously. Then the soldiers spread out and attacked the homes of the shopkeepers in the marketplace, plundered money and jewels, and killed one of the merchants, distinguished for his learning and knowledge, who was beloved by the townspeople as one who gave an honest weight and was pleasant to everyone. The happenings

of that night were very depressing to all the townspeople. All felt that the horrible end was near.

K

The material for the commandant's suit was given to one of the best tailors in town. This was not an easy matter. The tailor pleaded to be relieved from this task and implored not to be delivered into the hands of the murderer. "What would happen if his work did not find favor in the eyes of the commandant," as though he were begging for his life, "and I am a father of small children."

The town's notables, however, did not let him be; they reasoned, explained, tried to persuade and convince him that the lives of several hundred Jews lay in his hands. After much deliberation, there was a prolonged silence, and this silence was considered to be an agreement.

"Sweep the streets, clean them well!" This was the newest order circulated among the homes of the town. Out they came, men and women, boys and girls, broom in hand, sweeping the plots of ground in front of their houses, raising thick, blinding clouds of dust. Through the clouds of dust were heard the galloping hooves of the commandant's horse. The commandant was riding wildly through the town. Hearts beat faster, with the Jews adding expressive curses, and the Jewesses, who were fluent in the *tsenerene* and the Yiddish prayers of Sarah Bas-Tuvim, uttered under their breath, "Oh, Master of the World, may his end be like that of Holofernes and the wicked Haman."

Six hard-faced Haidamacks with bloodthirsty eyes went from house to house to see and investigate whether the last order had been carried out according to the command. Not a single place was overlooked. They entered the house and beat the master of the house, his wife, and children with murderous whip lashes to the tune of blasphemous and obscene scoldings which rang through the air. How strange were the meticulously swept empty streets that were ringing and laden with the screams and shrieks of the beaten!

A depressing, disturbing question would loom before a casual passerby in this usually not-so-swept town, observing the inhabitants whose every step and movement was fraught with fear and panic. This unusual cleanliness, for what purpose?

L

Twenty thousand *Nicholayevs* (the Russian currency named for the last czar, the value of which was more than that of the Ukrainian currency) within three hours, and no later! It was clear to everyone that this new demand was but only an excuse that the Petlyurists could claim as one of their orders which was not complied with, and there were those who said it was not worth the great effort to collect the money. Nevertheless, the same

two Jews who had gone around to collect the first contribution began the new collection.

That same day the Haidamacks ate and drank, became drunk, and behaved riotously. From time to time were heard their calls, wild words, and licentious songs. Throughout the day, isolated attacks on passing Jews did not cease. The townspeople began to hide—in a cellar, in an attic, or in other hiding places. The houses on the main streets were almost empty, because their occupants fled to the side alleys where the most impoverished Jews lived, saying: "Perhaps the hand of the murderers will not reach there." In this way, the low, thatch-roofed crooked little houses filled up with men, women, children, and infants until there remained not a bit of space. There were also those who went to seek refuge in the neighboring village, but the villagers were afraid to provide this, lest they be harmed. All those in hiding had a bag of money that they called "ransom." Well-to-do relatives supplied their poorer relatives and children with a sum of money to be used for redeeming a life should the murderers come.

A full moon sheds its light on the silent town. An old Jew hastily crosses the street with stressed haste. A young woman covered with a long black winter shawl, carrying a child, takes hurried mincing steps in the direction of one of the remote alleys, glancing over her shoulder with frightened eyes. A black short-tailed dog strolls by searching and sniffing at the clean swept ground.

A wailing cry is heard. A soldier stand, aims his gun. Frequent pleas for mercy are heard among the cries. Malicious laughter and a rifle shot. A sigh of a bloody death and the final collapse.

A loud prolonged scream of "Woe is me" breaks through from one of the houses. The father of the family is brought outside, wounded and beaten with the rifle butts. He falls helplessly to the ground. The Haidamacks roll him and drag him. Suddenly one of the soldiers yells, "That's enough, guys. How long are you going to occupy yourselves with this Jew? The work is much, and, as you know, the time is limited."

As he spoke, he speared the chest of the victim with his bayonet, a stream of blood spurts out ... prolonged death gasps ... family members are being chased by the murderers ... screams of terror from the pursued, and vehement curses from the pursuers ... frequent shots, outcries, groaning, and collapsing with outstretched arms and legs on stomach or on back.

In a similar manner, the town's *shochet* and his wife, gouty 70 year olds who walked with crutches, were murdered and put to death. They had been in their beds and were sure that the old and sick on the verge of dying would not be bothered with. The Haidamacks entered, thrust them out of their beds to the outside, and butchered them with the *shochet's* long knife.

That was not enough. The soldiers confronted the young married man who had all the time provided the gang members with the desired food and necessities.

"Have I not run about and made every effort to bring to you whatever you wanted? Spare me my life. I am young, recently married, and a child has been born."

"For all your bother, we have chosen a beautiful death for you," the murderers replied. And two Haidamacks, one facing the victim's back, the other facing his chest, stood with guns at the ready, with the young man as the sacrificial victim between the two of them. From amidst the brawl of mocking jests and raucous laughter could be heard the one pleading outcry, "Spare me my life"—until the two guns, fired simultaneously, felled the young man to the ground, and the two streams of blood that jetted from his death wounds formed a wide puddle of blood in which the murdered body sank.

The 72-year-old cantor was pulled by his gray sidecurls from the hiding place in the attic of his house. One of the murderers bound the cantor's hands. The cantor began to beg for his life in a language half Yiddish and half foreign. They lifted him up and thrust him to the ground. The wretched cantor lifted his crying voice and recited his confession. Immediately they attacked him with the butts of the rifles and the spears in their hands, sliced him, and crushed him.

The shattering of window panes, the breaking down of doors, screams, weeping, prolonged and sporadic wailing, the final moans of the dying, curses, outcries, and shootings filled the air of the town that night. The peasants, the near and far neighbors, went into the empty houses and filled their sacks with everything that they could lay their hands on.

M

The morning found the town strewn with casualties entrenched in puddles of spilled blood beginning to coagulate with the light and warmth of the sun; there were the cries and wailings of women wandering around like mad, beating their heads and their chests. In a corner of the street, a man, his legs in the throes of spasm, was lying in the final writhings of death, and the brain was exposed from his ripped-open skull. Not far from him was his wife with a blood-soaked scarf tied to her head, her toothless mouth wide open in the final, aghast expression of deadly fear, near her right eye, a deep cleft. Here and there outstretched bodies, some on their stomachs, some on their backs with hands folded under their heads, mortally wounded men and women, young and old.

In the remote alleys of the town where the houses were filled with the fleeing townspeople, who thought that there they would be secure and safe and find refuge from the atrocities, the casualties were many—mostly entire families. Here was a family of husband, wife, sons, and daughters lying close to each other. Hands and feet were interlaced; heads were split open, swollen faces covered in blood now coagulated and dry. There, not far away, at the edge of a solitary, bent, downtrodden house, rests an open-eyed 19-

year-old youth, chest uncovered. Not far from him lies a girl with a deep, dark red wound down her middle. Her long golden curls are spread on her pale face. From afar it looks as though the youth and the girl are sleeping. Near one fence lay the water carrier, his long black beard full of clots of blood which were falling. His face was so crushed that it was difficult to differentiate the eyes, the nose, or the lips. In the same house where the commandant had his headquarters, the housewife was found dead at the threshold of the house, and her 17-year-old son lay dead on his bed with his left eye split by a gun. The young man with his gentle, innocent face was covered and wrapped in a blanket as though asleep, except that the pillow was red with his blood.

The murderers victimized 84 people during the night. Before leaving the murderers wanted to burn the town, but the Ukrainian villagers restrained them from doing more harm. The town was plundered and robbed; utensils and clothing that spilled out from the overflowing bags of the looters were strewn all over. Panes were shattered; many doors were broken; everywhere death, destruction, devastation, and wailing.

After hours of panic-stricken outcries, faintings of some mothers and fathers, the rabbi began to murmur, "Enough; the martyrs are to be buried according to proper Jewish burial." A few wagons were hired from the Christian villagers who came wearing their long floppy hats over their averted eyes.

Several members of the Jews' burial society grasped the arms of the victims who had been gathered together to one spot in the market, placed and positioned them gently onto the wagons until the mound of the dead was all collected. Hanging from the wagons were hands and feet and heads disengaged and pressed one upon the other. All the town's survivors, from the youngest to the oldest, gathered around the wagons that were loaded with their slaughtered mothers, fathers, and children; and the lamenting and the wailing grew to a crescendo. The place became a scene of horror and outrage, and, when the cantor mentioned the name of a victim in the *El Male Rahamim*, the dirge of the relatives rose above all the voices of this bitter bereavement.

The town's rabbi, a fine young man, whose black beard added a special charm to his image, officiated at the burial ceremony at the cemetery. He read the prayer and the verses of Psalms. With great effort he continued to recite the prescribed *Zidduk Ha-Din* verses.

When he reached the part for the recitation of *Zidduk Ha-Din* there was an abrupt, sudden prolonged silence. Everyone was waiting for him to say the verse: "The Lord gives and the Lord takes, blessed be the Name of the Lord," but the rabbi stood rooted to his spot—mute. He coughed when he was to recite what he was supposed to say, but then the people heard the rabbi explain: "I cannot say *Zidduk Ha-Din*; I will not recite *Zidduk Ha-Din*," and saying that, he pointed to the fresh mounds of earth that had been prepared to conceal the victims of the slaughter.

Let Us Remember

with much pain and anguish the souls of our martyred brothers and sisters who fell into the hands of foul murderers during the *Shoah* in the Jewish communities of Kaminits-Podolsk and its surrounding cities: Balin, Chemerovits, Chertezh, Dunivits, Frampol, Grayding, Husyatin, Kitaygorod, Kupin, Lantskorun, Minkovitz, Novaya Ushitsa, Orinin, Satanov, Shatava, Smotrich, Solobkovits, Staraya Ushitsa, Vinkovitz, Yarmolinits, Zamekhov, Zbruch, Zhvanets, Zhvanchik, Zinkov.

Let us remember these martyrs among the Jewish martyrs and heroes, and may their souls be bound in the eternal bond of Our People

Memorials

Honoring those members of the Committee of Emigrants from Kaminits-Podolsk and its Environs who died during their efforts to finish this book. May their memories be blessed.

Matityahu Siegel

Matityahu Siegel was born in Kaminits-Podolsk in the home of his father, Cantor Yitzchak Meir Siegel, and received a traditional education in a *heder* and a yeshivah.

When he came of age and the time came for him to serve in the army, he stole over the border to eastern Galicia, continued his studies, and was caught up in Zionist ideology. With the aftermath of the February 1917 Revolution, he returned to his native city as a political activist and joined the *Ze'irei Zion* Party. During the years of 1917–20, with the heightened activity among the Jews, he emerged as an outstanding public speaker, capturing the hearts of his audiences, particularly of the weaker sex.

In the fall of 1920, when the flight out of Kaminits across the border to Galicia and Bessarabia began, he also left the city, came to Khotin and then to Kishinev. At that time, the well-known Zionist activist, Dr. Bernstein-Kogan, befriended him, and Matityahu Siegel began to rise in the arena of Zionism and community work.

During the 20s of this century, there were many Jewish refugees from Ukraine, and they concentrated mainly in Kishinev. At that time, aiding the American Jews were the relief agencies of the Joint Distribution Committee and the HIAS; Siegel was appointed head of the local Joint.

When the work of the Joint dwindled in Bessarabia, he became a field emissary for the national committee of the *Keren Hayesod*. He served in this capacity until he migrated to Eretz Yisrael in 1932. Here, he was appointed director of the *Keren Hayesod* office in Tel Aviv.

In Eretz Yisrael, Siegel affiliated with the General Zionists and, in the last years of his life, joined the Progressive Zionists. He was also active in various community organizations, contributing to them much of his time and energy.

It was thus, not unexpectedly, that he functioned in cooperation with the other members of the Committee of Emigres of Kaminits-Podolsk and its Environs to establish in the *Martef Ha-Shoah* on Mt. Zion the memorial tablet of the victims and also to be instrumental in the publication of this book.

May his memory be blessed.

Y.A. Bar-Levi

Gabriel Shahor (Schwartz)

Gabriel was born in 1894 in Zhvanets. He was educated in a school where Hebrew was the language of instruction, and he was brought up in the spirit of nationalism and Judaism. From his environment, he absorbed his love of Hebrew culture and Zionism, and this helped him overcome the effects of the 1905 Revolution.

Because of the disturbances at the end of World War I that covered Ukraine with Jewish blood, he moved to Kaminits with his family and continued his activity in Hebrew culture and the Zionist cause. He was among the organizers of a group of young pioneers who, at the risk of life and limb, illegally crossed borders and migrated to Eretz Yisrael. He was among the first of the Third Aliyah pioneers to arrive there.

He was one of the organizers and guiding spirits of the Kiryat Anavim collective settlement. He later left for a short visit to Russia, and, upon his return, championed the cause for the Jewish "conquest of labor" and inculcated the idea in Jerusalem. He was also among the founders of a Jewish transport company in Jerusalem, the first of its kind there, and served as its director. From 1934 on, he worked at the Zerubavel Bank as a senior administrator and was respected by his colleagues, helping them carry the burden of its managerial problems. He was active in the organization of community officials, in the council of the consumers cooperative and was a life-long dedicated member of the *Histadrut.*

He was an outstanding, sociable person, a good mixer. At every gathering, party or family or community festival, he was the lively one, distinguishing himself with merriment, group singing, and elevated spirits. He was a gracious person, faithful to friends near or far, and he was tireless in every worthwhile activity for benefit of the community or an individual.

A.D. Steuss

Aharon Wasserman

Aharon Wasserman dedicated his heart and soul to working for the cause of Zionism from the time he was a student in a secondary school in Kaminits until the day he died. He was a rank-and-file person who considered himself as one of many dedicated persons who consecrated time and effort to the upbuilding of Eretz Yisrael.

He left Russia in 1920 with a group of pioneers and wandered for many months in Romania and Turkey. In Palestine he joined the *Koach* club of *Gedud Ha-Avodah* that engaged in community work in Tel Aviv. He then began to work as a clerk for the Tel Aviv municipality. In his free time, he devoted himself to community work in the organization of the municipal workers, in the Palestine Labor Party, and in musical organizations: The Israeli Oratorio, the Israel Opera under the conductorship of M. Golinkin, and the National Opera.

He was loyal and true to his friends, participating with them in various

projects. In his later years, he took an active part in establishing *Irgun Yots'ei Kaminits-Podolsk u-sevivatah* (Organization of the Emigrants from Kaminits-Podolsk and its Environs).

U.M. (Uri Mikhaeli)

Appendix A

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Glossary

Adar. Hebrew month occurring in February/March.
Aliyah. (calling up). Used in two contexts. In the context of a religious service, the calling up of a person to participate in the religious service. In association with Eretz Yisrael, it means immigration to that country.
Arba parshiot. Four portions of the Torah read in addition to the weekly portion on the four Sabbaths preceding Passover.
Arendar. Tenant farmer; lessee.
Ashkenazim. Central and Eastern European Jews.
Av. Jewish month occurring in July/August.

Ba'alei-batim. Houseowners, landlords, masters.
Bet midrash. House of learning; synagogue.
BILU. Hebrew initials of *Beit Ya'akov Lekhu ve-Nelkha;* "House of Jacob, come ye and let us go." An organized group of young Russian Jews who pioneered the modern return to Eretz Yisrael.
Black Hundreds. An organization of secret fighting squads that were largely responsible for the 1905 pogroms in Russia.
Bund. Abbreviation of *Algemeyner Yidisher Arbeter Bund in Lite, Poyln un Rusland* (General Jewish Workers' Union in Lithuania, Poland and Russia). Jewish socialist party founded in Russia in 1897.

El male rachamim. (God full of compassion). Memorial prayer for the dead.
Eretz Yisrael. (Land of Israel). Term used to describe Palestine prior to the creation of the State of Israel.
Eruv. Term applied to various symbolic acts which facilitate the accomplishment of otherwise forbidden acts on the Sabbath and holidays.
Etrog. Citron used for ceremonial purpose on Sukkot.

Faraynigte. United Jewish Socialist Workers' Party. Short-lived group in revolutionary Russia and interwar Poland. It was formed in June 1917, and dissolved by the government in 1937.
Freylekhs. Cheerful tune.

Galut. The Diaspora.
Gemara. Rabbinic exposition of the Mishnah, the codified religious law. The second and supplementary part of the Talmud, providing a commentary on the first part.
Gimnazye. European school equivalent to high school and junior college.
Goy(im). Gentile(s); non-Jew(s).

Haftarah. A chapter from the Prophets read in the synagogue after the portion of the Pentateuch.
Hakhnasat Orchim. (Bringing in guests). Hospitality.
Halutz(im). Pioneer(s).
Hanukkah. Eight-day celebration commemorating the victory of Judah Maccabee over the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes and the subsequent rededication of the Temple. Commences on the 25th of Kislev. Occurs in November/December.

Hasid. Follower of the movement founded by the Ba'al Shem Tov.
Haskalah. Enlightenment. A 19th-century movement among Eastern European Jews which attempted to acquaint the masses with European languages, secular sciences and culture to supplement Talmudic studies.
Haskamah. Official approval of a publication.
Hatikvah. (The Hope). Jewish anthem that became the national anthem of Israel.
Heder. Jewish religious school.
Hetman. Polish commander; Cossack chief or leader.
High Holidays. The holy days of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.
Hullin. Tractate in the Mishnah and the Talmud dealing with the laws of slaughter.
Hummash. The Pentateuch. The first five books of the Bible.

Ivrit be-ivrit. Hebrew teaching method that employs maximum use of the Hebrew language as a tool of instruction.
Iyyar. Jewish month that occurs in April/May.

Judenrat. Jewish Council set up in Jewish communities and ghettos under the Nazis to execute their instructions.

Kabbalat Shabbat. Reception of the Shabbat; prayers on the Shabbat eve.
Kaffiyeh. Arab head dress.
Kashrut. Jewish dietary laws.
Katsop. Nickname for a Russian man.
Kehillah. The organized Jewish community.
Kiddush. Prayer for the sanctification of the wine.
Kloyz. Small synagogue; house of study frequently restricted to some occupational or social group.
Kolkhoz. A shortened form of **Koliektivne khozyeyistvo** (collective holdings).
Kov'ei Itim le-Torah. Those who fix specific times for study of Torah.
Kupat Holim. Sick fund; health insurance fund.

Lag ba'Omer. The thirty-third day of the counting of the Omer; a semi-holiday.
Le-Hayyim. (To life!) A toast.
Leyl Shimurim. Night of watching; watchnight; vigil.

Maftir. One who reads the portion of the Prophets after the conclusion of the reading of the Torah.
Magen David. (Shield of David). A six-pointed star consisting of two superposed triangles.
Maggid. A popular, and often itinerant, preacher.
Mahzor. Prayer book for the High Holidays.
Mashgiach. (1) Kashrut (Jewish dietary laws) inspector. (2) Official in a yeshivah responsible for the conduct of the students.
Mensch. Literally "a man." A complimentary term used to describe a man of dignity.
Mezuzah. Small rectangular box affixed to the doorposts of every room and to the entrance to a Jewish dwelling or public building.
Mikveh. Ritual bath.
Minhah. Afternoon prayer service.

Minyan. A quorum of ten men required to pray as a group.
Mishnah. Codified religious law based on the Torah. The rabbinic exposition of the Mishnah is called the Gemara. Together, the Mishnah and the Gemara are the main components of the Talmud.
Mishnayot. Set (six volumes) of the Mishnah.
Misnoggedim. (Opponents). Opponents of Hasidism. Communities were often ideologically split into two opposing camps, Misnoggedim and Hasidim.
Mohel. Person who performs circumcisions.
Musaf. Additional service on Sabbath and festivals.

NEP. National Economic Policy.

Pe'ot. Side curls.
Posekim. Rabbinic authority on halachic questions; literature on such questions.

Purim. Jewish holiday that celebrates the story of the Book of Esther. Occurs in March/April.

Revkom. Revolutionary Committee.
Rosh Hashanah. Jewish New Year. Occurs in September/October. Together with Yom Kippur, they are called the High Holidays.

Shabbat ha-Gadol. The special Sabbath preceding Passover.
Shabbat Shuvah. The special Sabbath between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.
Shabbes goy. Gentile hired to perform domestic chores forbidden to Jews on the Sabbath.
Shavuot. Feast of Weeks. One of the three pilgrim festivals. Also known as the time of the giving of our Torah. Occurs approximately seven weeks after Passover.
Shechita. Ritual slaughtering of animals.
Shekel (Shekalim). Israeli coin(s); fee(s) for Zionist membership.
Shemone esrei. Eighteen benedictions of daily prayer.
Shevat. Hebrew month that occurs in January/February.
Shoah. Hebrew term for the Nazi Holocaust.
Shochet(im). Jewish ritual slaughterer(s).
Simhat Torah. Jewish holiday that celebrates the completion of the reading of the Torah for the year and the restarting of Genesis. Occurs in September/October.
Starusta. Village elder; bailiff.
Sukkot. The festival of booths (tents). Commemorates the booths in which the Children of Israel dwelt in the wilderness. It begins on the 15th day of Tishri.

Takhlis. Practical pursuits.
Tallit. Four-cornered prayer shawl with fringes at each corner.
Talmud. Compendium of religious law, rabbinic commentary and debate, moral codes and parables. Composed principally of the Mishnah and Gemara.
Talmud Torah. Place of study, usually for children, preliminary to advanced yeshivah study.
Tammuz. Hebrew month that occurs in June/July.
Tanakh. The usual collective term for the Old Testament. An acronym standing

for Torah-Nevi'im-K'tuvim. Torah, the Five Books of Moses; Nevi'im, prophets; K'tuvim, writings.

Tefillin. Phylacteries. Small leather cases containing passages from Scripture and affixed on the forehead and arm by male Jews 13 years or older during the recital of morning prayers.

Tehillim. Book of Psalms.

Tikkun. Restitution; reintegration. Order of service for certain occasions, mostly recited at night.

Tishri. Seventh month of the Jewish religious year, first of the civil. Occurs in September/October.

Torah. First five books of the Bible. Also used more generally to include the entire body of religious study.

Tosafot. (Additions). Annotations to the Talmud.

Tsenerene. (Come and see). A Yiddish rendering of the prayers used by women.

Tu bi-Shevat. Fifteenth day of the month of Shevat; Jewish Arbor Day. Occurs in January/February.

Verst. Russian unit of length equal to about 3,500 feet or two-thirds of a mile.

Yeshivah. Academy of Jewish scholarship.

Yevsektsiya. Jewish section of the propaganda department of the Russian Communist Party from 1918–30.

Yom Kippur. (Day of Atonement). Occurs in September/October. Together with Rosh Hashanah, they are called the High Holidays.

Yozerot. Liturgical hymns for the morning service on Sabbaths and festivals.

Zaddik(im). Righteous one(s). Title given to leader(s) of Hasidic communities.

Zemirot. Songs; Hasidic melodies sung in unison at the Sabbath table.

Zemstvo. Elective district council in pre-Revolutionary Russia.

Zhid. Derogatory name for a Jew.

Zidduk ha-Din. Justification prayer (at a burial acknowledging the rightness of divine judgment).

Zionism. The political movement to establish a Jewish homeland in what is Israel today.

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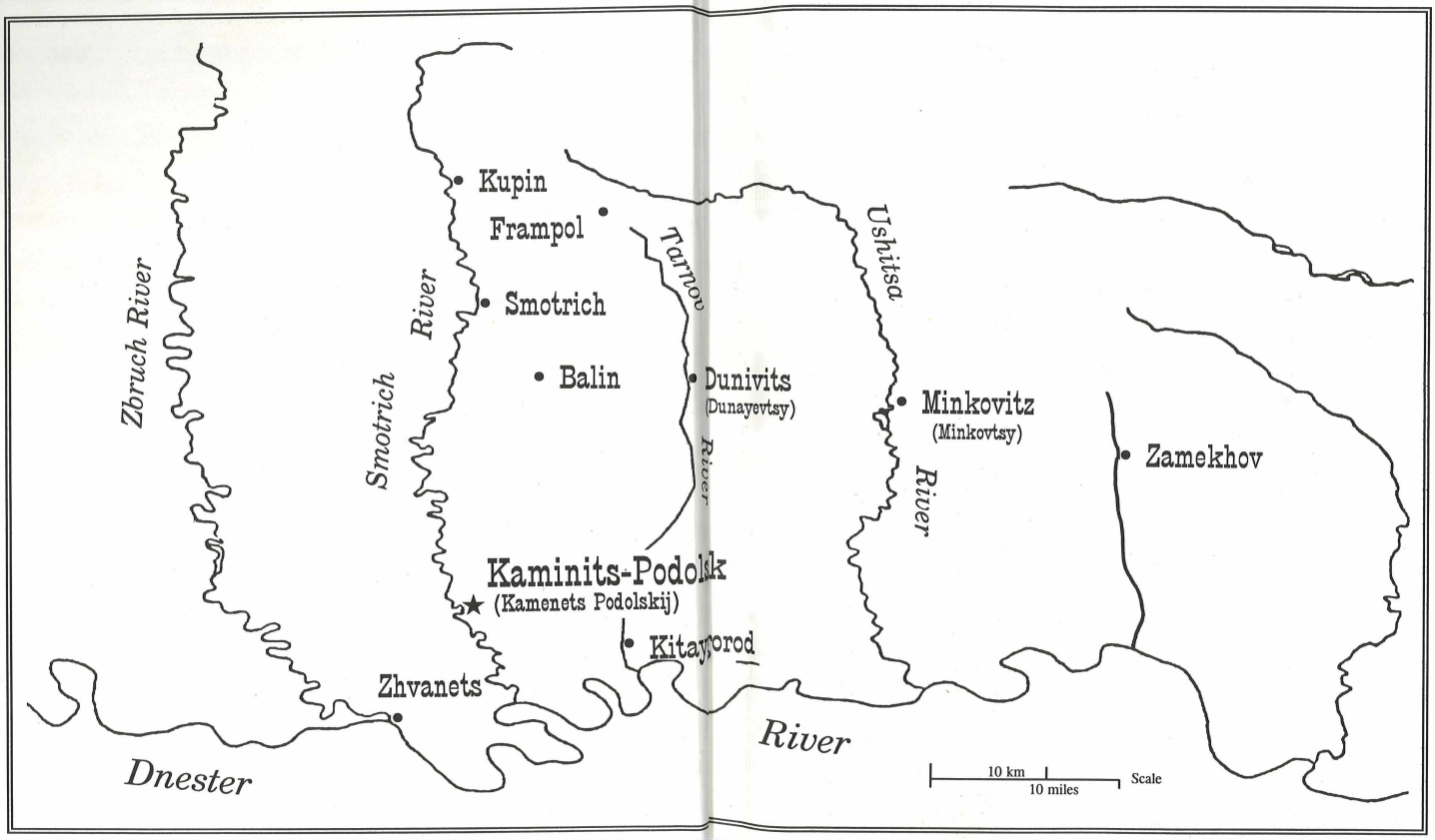
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