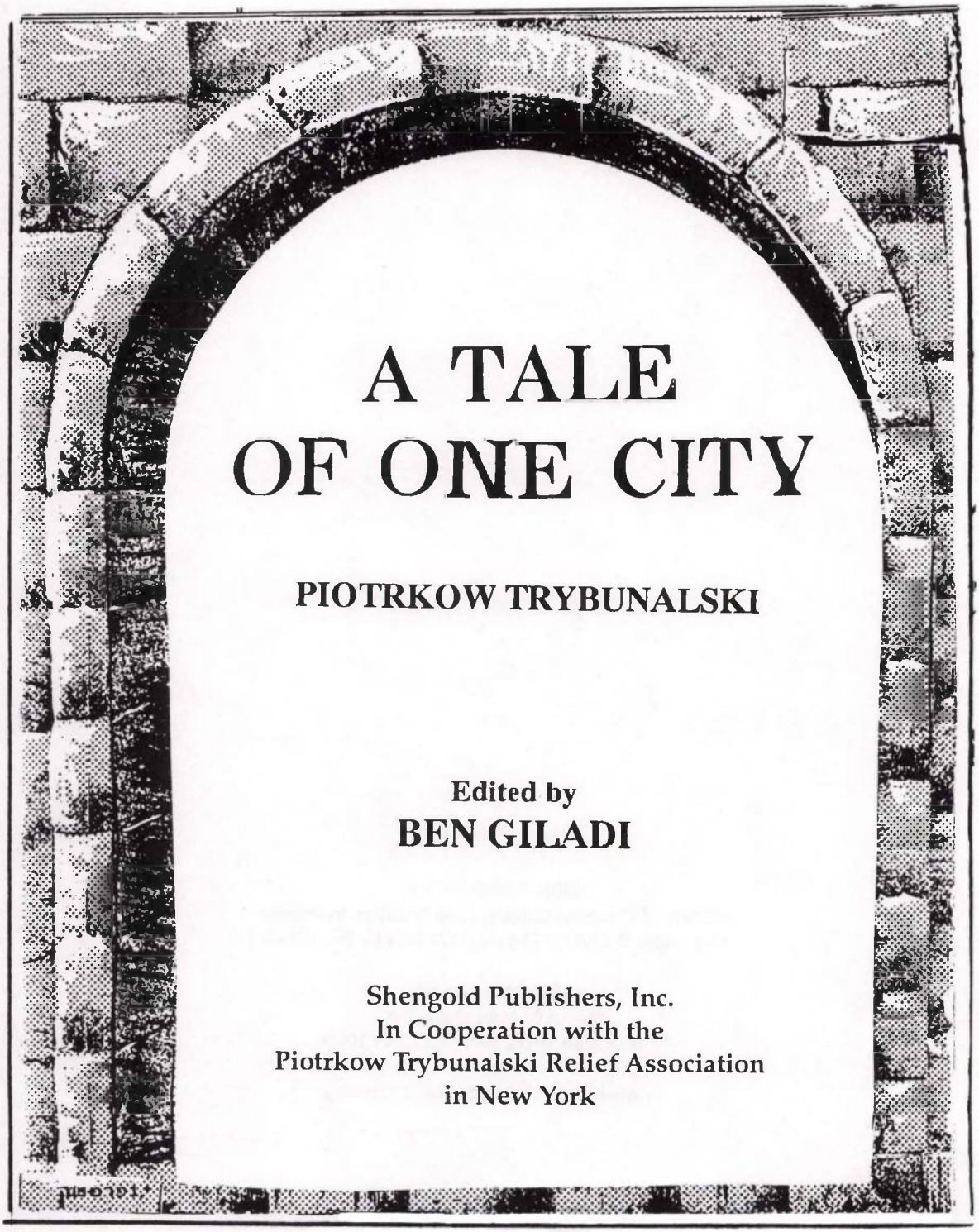
A TALE OF ONE CITY

PIOTRKOW TRYBUNALSKI



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PIOTRKOW TRYBUNALSKI

Edited by
BEN GILADI

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Piotrkow Trybunalski Relief Association
in New York

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WARSZAW
Koło
Łowicz
Żyrardów
Łęczyca
Ozorków
Głowno
Skierniewice
ZGIERZ
Aleksandrów Łódzki
Konstantynów Ł.
ŁÓDŹ
Brzeziny
Rawa Maz.
Andrespol
PABIANICE
Zduńska Wola
Sieradz
Łask
TOMASZÓW MAZ.
PIOTRKÓW TRYB.
Belchatów
Sulejów
Opoczno
Radomsko
Kłobuck
CZĘSTOCHOWA
Kielce
S K I E R N I E W I C E
P O D K A R P A C K I E
T R Y B U N A L S K I
S U D E C K I E
K I E L E C K I E

. . . How doth the City sit solitary,
That was full of people!
How is she become a widow!
She that was great among the Nations,
And princess among the provinces,
How is she become tributary!
My eyes do fail with tears,
For the destruction of my people;

Arise, cry out in the night,
Pour out thine heart before the Lord,
Lift up thy hands toward Him
For the life of thy young children,
That faint for hunger
In the top of every street. . .

Lamentations of Jeremiah—
1:1; 2:11; 2: 19.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way—

Charles Dickens—
A Tale of Two Cities



OVER THE ROOFS OF PIOTRKOW

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Acknowledgments

Acknowledgments by an author of the support he has received from others in preparing his work at times seem only perfunctory, little more than a symbolic gesture. This is not the spirit in which I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to those who assisted me throughout the period during which I wrestled with the arduous task I had set out on.

First, I would like to thank the Piotrkow Trybunalski Relief Association in New York, and especially its committee for the moral support, encouragement and substantial contributions toward the production of this publication.

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I would like to express my gratitude to the second-generation children, whose combined efforts helped me in the preparation and presentation of the book. They are: Suzanne Ajzenberg, Toby Schafer and Alex Rosenblum in the USA, Sheine Mankovsky and her friends in Canada and Tamar Bat-Zion Hess and Ahuva Erez in Israel. Together with Hana Kozlowski, Professor Shragga Irmay and his wife Rina, they all lent a helping hand. My special appreciation is extended to Israel and Elli Krakowski, who helped to get this project off the ground.

Above all, I am immensely grateful to Mr. Moshe Sheinbaum, our publisher. His expert guidance, his intellect, his professionalism and personal involvement truly enhanced the value of the book.

Finally, my most heartfelt thanks to my beloved wife Tova and daughter Irith, who cheered me on and helped me generously during the challenging stages of creation.

I also thank all my compatriots and their children everywhere for their belief in me.

B.G.

Introduction

A lot of water has passed under the bridge—in the Vistula, the Thames, the Jordan or the Hudson—since we all said farewell to Piotrkow. We, its survivors, vividly remember the city, a miniature reflection of a lost world and a shattered civilization. Since leaving Poland, we have never stopped to think, talk or write about our home, about the glories of our forefathers and the cruel fate which befell them.

And so, the magnificent, monumental Piotrkower "Izkor Book" was first published in Israel. And our Bulletin later began to appear in New York. Then the periodical "Heidim" came to life in Israel. It was a vast treasure of the written word devoted to our glorious and tragic past and our hectic and meaningful present.

"Before, during and after": everlasting stories, essays, poems, chronicles, documents, manuscripts and photos, all pertaining to the life and death of our People before, during and after the Holocaust; all accumulated over the years, with more fascinating material still flowing in. However, most of these written treasures could not be appreciated by many of our people, including their children, who do not read Hebrew, Yiddish or Polish. Their basic language is English, which has slowly become the language of the world.

Furthermore, the "Izkor Book" was published some thirty years ago. A lot has happened since then. Much new and relevant material has appeared. The need for an English book such as this became acutely important.

In presenting this fascinating book, I have fulfilled an old dream. It may have been one's destiny to gather in one book all the compassion, the motivation, credibility, strength, heritage and G-d-granted inspiration in order to accomplish such a gigantic task, with the help of so many talented and skillful writers, of course. This book is a final tribute to the memory of our Martyrs and is dedicated by the survivors of Piotrkow and their children worldwide.

The most heartbreaking, difficult task in the editing of the book was the selection of the material. So many important pages had to be omitted or condensed. A careful attempt was made to create a true profile of our history and our life: a reconstruction of the bygone world destroyed by the Amalek.

The treasures of our own Pompeii could only be recovered in our hearts and in our memories. Only then could they be translated into the written word.

There are very few of us left and we are disappearing day by day, one by one. Soon history will speak, at best with the impersonal voice of scholars and researchers, at worst with the poisonous voice of the anti-Semites and the falsifiers. It is therefore important that those of us who are still here to bear witness put everything on record and make it

available to our children and the generations to come—an undistorted record, in all its tragedy and all its glory, so that the world will not forget one of the oldest and most thriving Jewish communities in Poland.

So, here it is. A labor of love laid out in the colorful, fascinating, touching, ever-changing and sentimental landscape of bygone days. A taste of heartfelt feelings. A long-nurtured dream. A legacy for future generations, a solemn promise finally fulfilled: A Tale Of One City!

Ben Giladi

Preface

On October 25, 1990, I walked through the streets of Piotrkow with hundreds of young American Jewish leaders. Fifty years earlier, I had walked through those same streets with my school friends. Those friends are now gone.

Now, as visitors and tourists, we were the only Jews walking among ruins of what was once a thriving, vibrant Jewish community. Jewish shops, Jewish homes, *shtiblech* (small synagogues), Jewish educational institutes all attested to more than 600 years of magnificent Jewish history in Piotrkow—now replaced by a neglected Jewish cemetery.

My friends, young men and women from communities throughout the United States, eagerly sought out stories and memories from every crack in a doorpost where a *mezuzah* had once stood, guarding the house's inhabitants. The *mezuzahs* had long ago been ripped out by their current occupants.

In the cemetery, they lifted and set straight fallen tombstones. They did not know a single person or family laid to rest in that forgotten place, but they turned to me again and again for an account or an explanation of one of the names on a stone. These engraved names—rabbis, community leaders, intellectuals, youth—were all part of Piotrkow's distinguished past.

Even more, though, these young leaders wanted to know about Piotrkow's tragic last days, those bitter days preceding the end of 600 years of flourishing culture and prominent scholarship. The interest of these young Jews in our calamitous past reiterated the need for a common language in which to tell our people's story, a language besides our ancestors' Hebrew and Yiddish.

Publishing this commentary on the Piotrkow community, an almost insurmountable task, testifies to this group's dedication, a dedication demonstrating an understanding of their responsibility to the future.

The reward for Mr. Ben Giladi, initiator and editor of this project, will be the satisfaction of knowing that this book's readers will be enriched with a significant part of our history. This book will be a faithful testimony to events that took place in our lifetime, a monument memorializing those whose deaths ended hundreds of years of Jewish creativity in the community of Piotrkow.

Naphtali Lau-Lavie
Ambassador of the State of Israel

When a City is Destroyed

Many years have passed since that day when the curtain rose and revealed before our eyes a scene more horrible than the human eye had ever witnessed. It was an appalling phenomenon for those who stood outside the abyss and could not offer any help—a nightmare for the lost souls who survived and were suddenly forced to stand before a world that behaved as though nothing had ever happened.

In the years that have passed, time has helped us to forget the sorrow of this event; it has placed upon the community the responsibility for the present and the future. But the Jewish People cannot yet console themselves for the tremendous disaster which befell them; the more we are separated from that horrible time in our experience, the greater is our responsibility to remember the people, to immortalize their buried splendor for the generations that will follow.

In this great Holocaust we lost our city of Piotrkow (Trybunalski) and her almost 20,000 brothers and sisters, the residents of a magnificent "Kehila." For about 400 years this royal Kehila of Piotrkow had blossomed, and, in the last century, she had become an "Ir V'em B'Israel." From her beginning, she had produced "G'doley Torah" and "tsadikim," "Talmidey Chachomim," "Chassidim, Rabanim" and "Admo'rim" dynasties, as well as scientists, writers and freedom-fighters, respected "negidim" and "amcho" people, industrialists and laborers, bankers and tradesmen—a many-colored mosaic and productive and active Jews who occupied an important position in Polish Jewry.

The Jewish historian, Dr. N. M. Gelber of Jerusalem, describes in his instructive overview both the city's beginnings 750 years ago and the first blossoming of its Jewish settlement. In this historic summary are pictured the struggles of the Jewish Kehila and its first steps beyond the periphery of the city, even before Jews were permitted to settle within the city itself. The rise and fall of the Jewish settlement and its communal and economic structure are described, as well as its first attempts at realizing an organized Kehila life, with religious, philanthropic and educational institutions. The historian doesn't omit the personal factors which contributed in shaping the Kehila: he sketches the dynasties of the famous families of rabbis—"admo'rim," "Lamdanim"—whose roots were in Piotrkow. He also portrays the movements and aspirations of the "Chassidim" and "Mitnagdim," the enlightened ones and the revolutionaries, and of "Chovevey Tsion" and Socialists active in the Jewish settlement in the city.

Dr. Gelber depicts the life of the Piotrkow community up to 1914 and the beginning of the First World War. For the period after 1914, we have the credible, written account of the Piotrkow Jews related by a man who was active in shaping many of the events that took place between both World Wars and which ended on the eve of the destruction of the city. This valuable work was produced by Reb Yakov Maltz, who, for many years, manned the rudder of our Kehila and made unceasing efforts to publish what he saw.

His descriptions include the most perceptive accounts of the bubbling life of the city of Piotrkow. However, not everything that occurred in our city took place within its borders. Piotrkow had no influence on what took place outside. Piotrkow was known of in every Jewish home which contained holy books, it had the privilege of having in the Rabbinic Seat "G'doley Hatorah" of their generation, whose beginnings extended far from that Kehila. This was a shrine for groups of Tzadikim, who spread the word of Torah amongst their Chassidim throughout the land. Piotrkow was also the cradle of many noteworthy families among Polish Jewry; such respected and legendary personalities arose there as the Tsadik and doctor, Dr. Bernard, who was known by the name of Rabbi Chaim-David Doctor, zts"l.

More is told about these men in descriptions by Harav Shmuel Zanvil Zharski, z"l, a Piotrkow Talmid-Chacham and researcher, who died in Tel-Aviv while working on this book, and by the writer and researcher of religious music, Rabbi M. Sh. G'shori.

Our beloved Jews excelled not only in spiritual matters, but also in physical accomplishments. They gave the Jewish People human values and ideas. Among those affected were the youth who left for distant places to fight for the oppressed and to further their knowledge for the benefit of all. Their names are inscribed for perpetuity in this book.

Our work would not be complete, however, if we did not mention those citizens of our city who are alive today and who have contributed their blessed efforts on both sides of the Iron Curtain. They are Professor Ari Shternfeld, born in Shieradz, whose family originated in Piotrkow. He is considered by scientists in Soviet Russia to be the one who "paved the road to 'Chalel' " (outer space vacuums); he is one of the leading Soviet scientists in their space program. On this side of the "curtain," there is the young scientist, Dr. Yakov (Kovi) Lubliner, z"l, son of Dr. Michael Lubliner, one of the "Tseirey Agudat Israel" in Piotrkow; he is an educator in Los Angeles,[1] and the grandson of Rabbi Simcha Ozer Lubliner, z"l, who was "Rosh Hakol" of our city during the 1930's. The young scientist is no more than 30 years old, although he, together with other Piotrkow Jews, experienced the road of destruction that led to the complete liquidation of the Kehila. He was liberated by the American Army from a concentration camp. He is now world renowned in scientific circles and is considered a "gaon" in solving mathematical problems dealing with calculating the movement of ships, satellites and rockets in space.

The chain stretches for a hundred years, from Michael Heilperin, the Piotrkower who left for the freedom struggles in Hungary and then in America, until the final days when the city fell.

Alongside these bright portraits appear the figures of dozens of individuals who left their mark on the city because of their intellect, good deeds, and service to the community with such devotion and loyalty as those of the notable Horowitz, Aibeshitz, Shidlowski, Michelson and Lifshitz families. These people created the healthy-minded economic support for orthodox educational institutions—Yeshivas, Cheders, houses of prayer, and "shtiblech"—and lent an air of royalty to the Jewish appearance of the city.

But by describing the "pney" of the city, the folk masses are diminished—they who

---

1 Dr. Michael Lubliner passed away in 1988.



The Jewish Cemetery in Piotrkow

gave Jewish Piotrkow its coloration and folk character. A place of honor is given in this book to the "mokum" Jews, who used to wander about Trybunalski Platz with their sharp tongues, who discussed world problems as well as city matters. No more does one see on Yidn Gas (Staro-Warszawska) or Jerusalem Gas the "Shabes-Yidn" in their satin gabardines and the "Vochedike Yidn" in their work clothes. Their shadows float over the pages of this book.

The history of the life of the Piotrkow Kehila closes with a chapter that is dedicated to the rise and activity of the political parties in the city. The Piotrkow name is distinctly marked on the maps and activity plans of all parties' central headquarters in Poland,

from the "Chovevey Tsion" and "Bund" to the "Agudat Israel," with all their sections and branches. In the last 30 years of the life of the Kehila, there was a strong drive in the parties that competed with each other for influence in the streets and for power within the Kehila. A summary of the inter-party strife in the city is given in the overviews of the various parties, as depicted through the eyes of the various authors who generally guarded their devotion to their political affiliation. No less informative is the description of the educational and cultural labors of the parties that wanted to educate, each in its own way, the younger generation which was growing up in Piotrkow.

Fifty-two years ago marked the beginning of the end of the creative life of Jewish Piotrkow. As of that bitter day, September 1, 1939, when Hitler's forces attacked Poland, the tranquility of the Jewish homes throughout the country was disturbed—among them those of our city of Piotrkow.

Piotrkow, like all the other Jewish cities of Poland, sank into the depths of loneliness, need and murder; the concept of "destruction" was still, at that time, strange and the inhabitants of Piotrkow hoped that even in the shadow of fear they could arrange a relatively normal life and respect God. The efforts which the city executives made exceeded their capabilities. Businessmen and volunteers created secret schools, conducted prayers in private, organized kitchens for the masses of the needy, collected funds for "matan b'seyter," and provided health and sanitation facilities. They didn't forget to provide for spiritual and cultural needs. But when the machine of destruction was set in motion during the days of the 3rd to the 10th of Mar-Heshvan Tsh"g (October 14–22, 1942), these efforts were no longer of value. Only about 3,000 survivors remained in the two labor camps in the city. Behind barbed wires and under the watchful eyes of the S.S. and Ukrainians, a Jewish communal life still fluttered, but it was the "gsisa chadashim" (the new dying) of the Piotrkow Kehila following the severing of its vital life's breath in the crematoria of Treblinka and in the Rakov Forest.

Some of the fearful occurrences, accompanied by dates, are given by the researcher of the Holocaust in "Yad Vashem," Dr. Joseph Kermish, who based his research on accounts given by witnesses who were residents of the city.

A first-hand description was given by Naphtali (Lavie) Lau, who experienced the entire terror-filled road from the outbreak of World War II until the last "legal" Jew disappeared from the city in November 1944. He describes the events as he experienced them in the house of his father, the last rav in the city, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Lau, h"id, who served for a long period as the central spirit prior to these events.

Very instructive, too, are the descriptions given by the eyewitnesses. In the Holocaust chapter of this book, they tell of their experiences during that horrible era and paint clear pictures of what happened to them, memories which are still fresh; men and women relate facts regarding acts so terrible that they exceed any fantasy. From these hellish descriptions arise the pure figures of those who were led to the slaughter with "shma Israel" on their lips, who went into the crematoria for the sake of "Kidush Hashem." In the witnesses' descriptions we also find heroic deeds as well as spiritual and physical preparations to oppose the enemy and to repulse his murderous hand. Among those who engaged in open, as well as secret, warfare against the Nazi murderers,

those from Piotrkow occupy an important place. Among them are war veterans and partisans who are here among us and can serve as living witnesses to the superhuman bravery displayed by the Jews who did not surrender even on the threshhold of despair.

We hold dear the chapters filled with splendid heroism written by our Piotrkower in their battle on behalf of Jewish honor so that it would not be dishonored. Just as touching are the pages filled with the suffering and pain which were endured by the masses of our brothers and sisters who were led to their deaths.

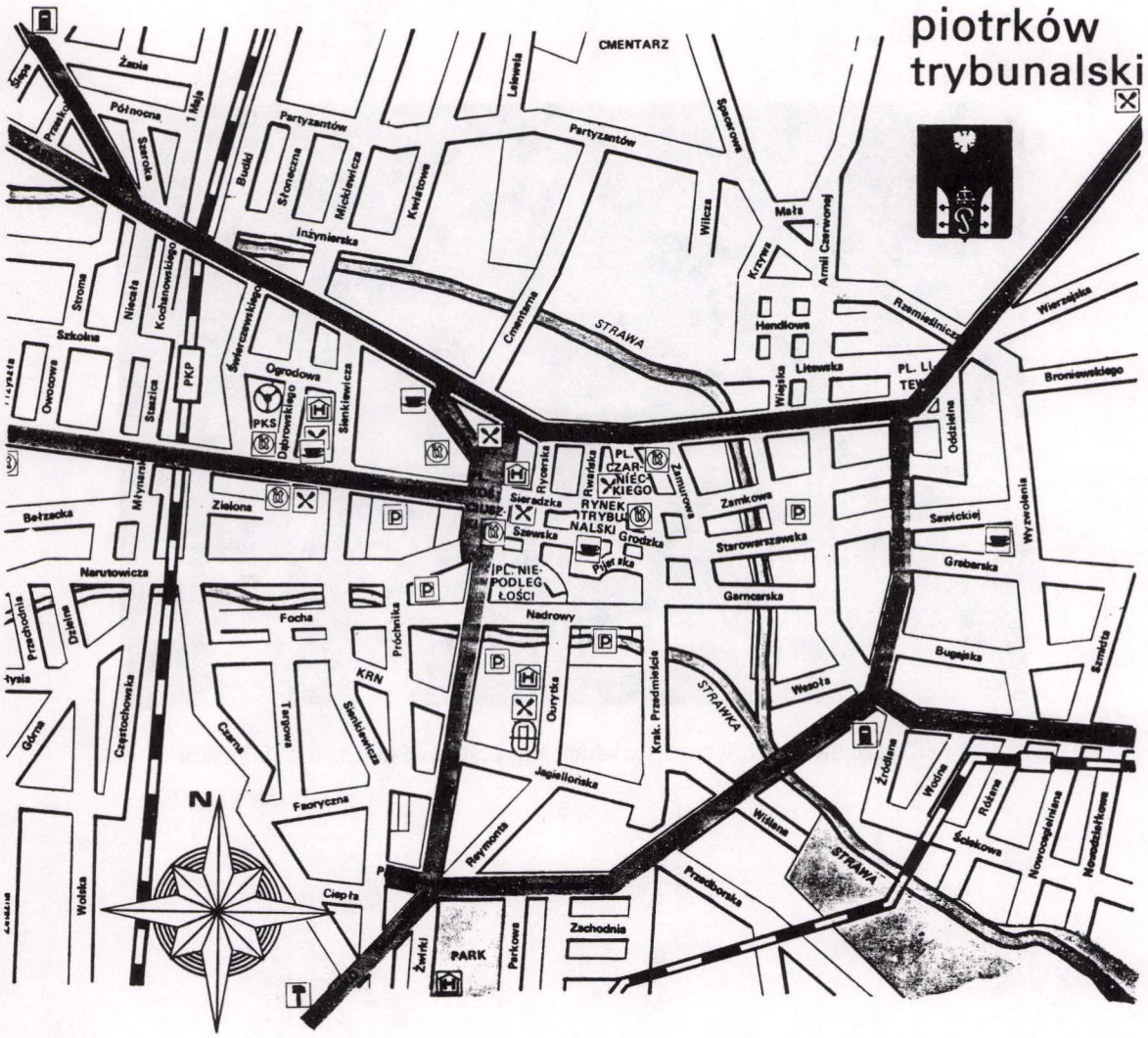
It has not been possible, however, to include everything within the limited framework of this book. What is presented within these pages is no more than a drop in the sea of suffering and agony of that horrible time during which Jewish Piotrkow was forever cut off. Likewise, I could not present a "Chesed Shel Emet" to memorialize all the pure souls of the victims of mass murder in our city, as we lack the details of all their names because the city's "Pinkas" was destroyed.

Our undertaking in publishing this book was made with the sincerest intent. If its publication has been delayed, this has been due to the many technical difficulties which arose as a result of the responsibility assumed by those from Piotrkow who undertook this labor in Israel and the Diaspora. Piotrkow, whose Yiddish print shops have enriched the Jewish libraries and bookshelves of tens of thousands of Jewish families during the past hundred years, was worthy of a memorial in the form of a fine informative book. Of course, even our long-lasting efforts to provide the details of the city have not helped us avoid various difficulties and errors, which occur here and there throughout the pages of this book. For this, the readers will have to forgive us, while thanking those who expedited it, for untiringly attempting to realize our goal.

With this book we are unveiling a monument that we should have erected on the mass grave of our dearest from Piotrkow. Now we erect a monument on the ruins of an "Ir Ve'em b'Israel"—Piotrkow.

The Editorial Board
Tel-Aviv, Iyar 1958
(Izkor Book)

The Streets of Our Joys and Tears. . .





The ceiling of the Great Synagogue which was destroyed during the Holocaust.

Once There Was A Town. . .

Elazar Prashker—Jerusalem

Once upon a time. . . this is how legends begin. Once upon a time there was a town in Poland named Piotrkow. It was my town. Not a legend, not a dream. In this town there was a Jewish community, where my cradle stood. I was born as a scion of twenty generations of Jews who had lived in that community before me. For twenty generations they kept their identity as children of Abraham, our ancestor, Moses, our teacher, and David, our king, and as disciples of Rabbi Judah the Prince, Rashi, Maimonides, and the RAMA. Yet they had undergone transformation and metamorphosis, which in the course of time shaped a unique civilization known as the Piotrkow community. It was, indeed, a unique civilization. It was a living civilization which did not become static, but rather underwent constant changes while keeping its uniqueness. On the surface, the life of the Jews in Piotrkow was not different from that of the Jews anywhere in Poland, yet there were nuances which gave the Jews of Piotrkow a special character. It was something hard to define. Perhaps it had to do with the great personalities who lived and were active in this town. Or, it might have been the fact that Piotrkow was known throughout the Jewish world as the place where Jewish holy books were printed.

Or perhaps as the delicate balance which existed between holy and profane, between the coarse and the refined, between the boors and the world of Torah. Or even for the customs which developed over generations, or the way of speaking, the humor, the Piotrkowers' ability to laugh at themselves. Yes, there was something about the locality which distinguished it from others.

This group of Jews living inside the Christian Polish town behaved like a state within a state. Its contact with the hostile environment was minimal, limited to trade relations, despite the fact that the Jewish intelligentsia was well versed in Polish cultural life and in more than a few instances surpassed the Poles themselves in its knowledge of Polish history, language and literature. There was hardly any cultural or social encounter between the Jewish and the Polish intelligentsias in our town, not to mention such an encounter between the Poles and the more common Jews.

Oh, what a vibrant life this small Jewish community lived, while waging its daily war of physical and economical existence! All the political and cultural currents dominating the Jewish world were represented in it, and were all engaged in a mutual battle over every iota of their ideologies. The Jews of Piotrkow were divided in their socio-political views into several major camps—Zionists and anti-Zionists, religious and secular, socialist and bourgeois. Inside those camps there were factions and subfactions. This, of course, is a rough division. In reality, all groups intermingled.

The religious groups politically belonged to Agudath Israel, but were further divided into Chassidic sects, each with its own *shtiblech,* and into a large religious body of

remnants of misnagdim, small property owners, artisans, and ordinary folk who prayed at the main synagogue, at the Shaare Zion synagogue known by all as the "Deutsche Shul," and in the small houses of prayer in town.

The Zionist camp included the General Zionists with their Al Hamishmar faction headed by Gruenbaum, and the Et Livnot faction of Levite-Gottlieb; the Socialist Zionists of Poale Zion Right, and the Poale Zion Left; the Religious Zionists of the Mizrahi; the Revisionists of Jabotinsky and the Revisionists of Grossman, and another half dozen Zionist youth movements, all of whom opposed the anti-Zionists of the Bund, the Agudah, and the Communists, who also had members and sympathizers in our town.

All the parties conducted major wars among themselves, which climaxed during the elections to the community council, to the town council, to the committees of the economic and trade associations, and so on. Three weeklies were published in our town by political parties, who added their word to the sectarian struggle. In short, no one was ever bored in our town.

But while the fighting went on, this small community was able to conduct orderly autonomous communal life. The community council, which was a form of government of a quasi-state, had the authority to levy taxes from the Jewish community, and took care primarily of the religious needs of the community, as well as public health, education and welfare. To meet all those needs a rather large budget always fell short of its mark.

The livelihood of many families depended on the institutions funded by the community council, and whose workers' wages were paid by the council fund. To mention a few: the council staff itself, including all its branches and their employees, the tax-collectors and the various inspectors, the rabbinate headed by the town rabbi, the neighborhood religious judges, and the emissaries of the rabbinical court. The rabbinate was in charge, among other things, of all marital matters, synagogues and Talmudic academies, including the town cantor and the choir, the synagogue personnel, the bath house and the ritual bath and their staff, male and female; the ritual slaughterhouse and the butchers, the meat cleaners, the mashgihim and their assistants; the cemetery and its Taharah staff and undertaker; the Jewish hospital and its doctors, nurses and midwives; the Talmud Torah school for poor children and its teachers; the orphanage and its workers, and so on.

A large portion of the budget was devoted to welfare—help for the old and the sick, and support for the poor. Things became especially busy before Passover, when it was feared that many families might not have holiday food, mainly matzot and wine for four cups. Months before the holiday, the traditional campaign of maot hitim was started. There were times when a full one-third of the Jews needed such help. Generally speaking, the community council was the one that took care of every calamity, either personal or communal, and the cry for help was always directed to the council.

The voluntary spirit was extremely common among the Jews of Piotrkow. Helping one's fellow man and woman was considered by many a life-long goal and the fulfillment of a basic mitzvah. Thus there were several philanthropic groups active in our town, and such charity organizations as Linat Tzedek (shelter), bikur holim (visiting the sick), hachnasat kalah (marrying the poor bride), hevrah kadisha (burial society), hevrat eruvin

(ritual group), and many more. The active members of those groups were mostly common folk who did this work for years and considered it a sacred mission, doing a mitzvah for its own sake. It was personal volunteering, unlike the organized volunteering done by political parties or national organizations such as TOZ and ORT.

Parallel to the activities of the community council, there was much activity in the area of education, social and cultural affairs, sports and entertainment, financed by contributions and done mostly by volunteers. In our community there was a network of educational institutions, beginning with kindergartens, traditional heders and yeshivot, elementary and vocational schools, and a Jewish high school which completed its own building several years before the Catastrophe. Education for the children was the most important thing to every Jewish parent, and there was not a single Jewish child in our town who did not have the opportunity to study. The ORT school provided vocational training. Orthodox boys had the Yesod Torah schools, and Orthodox girls the Bet Yaakov school. The Mizrahi school had a religious Zionist orientation. Hundreds of young men continued their Torah studies in dozens of yeshivot, academies and *shtiblech.* Dozens of young men pursued academic studies after finishing the Jewish high school in our town, and many returned as lawyers, teachers, physicians etc.

In addition to the ideological conflicts, the parties also attended to the cultural needs of their constituency, especially to the book clubs, choirs, bands (mandolins were popular), sports clubs and the like. The Macabi sports club was the first and the largest in our town, and was formed by all the Zionist parties at the end of World War One. It made a major contribution to sports in our town. Besides sports it also organized a brass band which took part in national events.

The literary circles called themselves by the lofty name "literary societies," and became most popular among the young, especially among the girls. They offered lectures on Jewish and world literature, and even published a periodical which offered the prose and poetry work of the members. Also very active were the drama groups, which for years presented plays from the Jewish and world classic repertoire. The choirs and the mandolin bands continued the tradition of the Zamir (Nightingale) band, founded in our town in 1908, and from time to time offered public performances which were well received by the public. Great success was accorded to the colorful review shows of the Hashomer Hatzair, the revenue from which was earmarked for the summer camp program. In addition, there were chess tournaments, and there were also live chess games on the Dobroczynnosc Field.

The Jewish public of Piotrkow also enjoyed the guest performances of Jewish theaters from Warsaw or Lodz. Famous cantors visited our town from time to time and brought joy to cantorial music lovers. The Kipnis-Zeligfeld duo gave several concerts of popular songs, which were sung for years by the entire town. There were also lectures on literary, cultural and political themes by guest lecturers, who were favorably received, and were attended by not-so-small audiences.

The Jews of Piotrkow received the Balfour Declaration with great excitement. There were demonstrations and mass meetings. The dormant hopes of return to Zion were awakened. The Zionist parties became rejuvenated and redoubled their efforts of settling



In 1917, the Jewish community in Piotrkow celebrates the proclamation of the Balfour Declaration.

the land of Israel. Fundraising for the Jewish National Fund and for Keren Hayesod intensified. The blue box entered the homes, and boys and girls from the Zionist youth movements went each month from house to house to empty the contributions from the boxes.

Business activities in our town were also vigorous. There were several private and two public banks—the Merchant Association Bank and the Cooperative Bank, known to all as the "Yiddishe Kasseh." This bank was known for its good management and its assistance to merchants and artisans with low interest loans. It also promoted the cooperative idea among the town's Jews.

The economic organizations—the merchant organizations (one representing merchants and the other storekeepers) and the artisan organizations (also two—a general one and a socialist) strove to protect their members against the discriminatory policy of the Polish authorities. The general trade association and the association of print-shop workers fought for their employees' rights.

As in any other community, we also had our rich and poor, our secular intelligentsia and Torah students, believers and heretics, the learned and the common folk, merchants and artisans, market vendors and produce brokers, butchers and fishmongers, artisan apprentices and common workers, as well as a large number of religious functionaries, and, at the other end of the spectrum, an underworld consisting of thieves, pimps, whores; truly an entire civilization.

Most of Piotrkow's Jews lived by the divine command, "Six days you shall work

and do all your labor." They worked hard and were barely able to support their families, bring home the precious, meager earnings to prepare for the Sabbath, for the Sabbath was the crown of days, while the rest of the week was incidental. The Jew, therefore, toiled all week long to be able to have a proper Sabbath with "meat and fish and all the delicacies."

Making a living was as hard for the Jews of Piotrkow as parting the Red Sea. There were hardly any external sources of work, and the Jews had to follow the dictum of King David and make a living off one another. But this was hardly enough to fill one's belly.

In the years prior to the Catastrophe the economic conditions of Polish Jewry greatly deteriorated. The hostile attitude of the authorities against Jewish sources of subsistence, the economic boycott by the Polish population, high taxes, the increase in anti-Semitism, and the thunder beginning to be heard from Germany, caused unrest among the Jews and great fear for the future. These events were actually felt in a small community like Piotrkow. The Jews of the town fought with all their might to survive, but the odds were enormous.

The Jews were engaged in crafts and commerce, but they did not emphasize business, which they considered incidental. The important thing was the spiritual life, the Sabbath, the holidays, the family celebrations. Those were the times when the Jew cast off the material life and became a spiritual and holy being. Let me tell a little bit about the yearly cycle of holidays, the family celebrations, and the various customs that determined the way of life of our town's Jews. This subject deserves its own book, and I assure you that a few pages cannot contain even the folkloristic aspect of this tale.

The preparations for the holidays and the holidays themselves were stirring events



A Lag B'omer celebration in the woods.

in the life of the community. Each holiday had its own flavor, its special customs. The life of the community revolved around those holidays.

Passover—the festival of spring. The Passover flour campaign preceded the holiday. One had to provide the poor with the necessities for the holiday. God forbid one single family should lack matzot or wine for the four cups! The smell of matzot baking arose from all the bakeries in town. Men carrying the newly baked matzot wrapped in white sheets on their shoulders hurry to bring the bread of affliction for the eight days to their homes. The houses' doors and windows are wide open. The contents of the homes have been taken outside to be aired. Spring is brought into the home. Women toil as they do a thorough cleanout. Men prepare the oven, and bring down from the attic the Passover dishes. On the morning of the holiday smoke arises from all the yards—the hometz is being burned.

The two nights of the Seder are observed. Everyone is seated around the laden tables. The master of the house presides like a king, wearing a white robe, and reclined over pillows. Next to him sits his wife, who is the "queen" for the occasion, and around them are the family members and the guests. They all recite the Haggadah together in a special chant. The children huddle, exchange winks, and look for an opportunity to steal the afikoman. In the middle of the table stands the cup of Elijah, a symbol of yearnings for redemption. The children wait for the moment when the door is opened and Elijah in person enters quietly, invisibly, to take a sip from his cup.

Lag B'omer, a hot pre-summer day. School children, equipped with bows and arrows, accompanied by their teachers, go out into the fields and woods. Oh, what a break from swaying over the books of the Torah and Talmud! The Zionist youth marches in the streets with the Macabi band at the head, on its way to a mass picnic in the neighboring woods. I believe this custom was introduced after the Balfour Declaration.

The Festival of Weeks —the holiday of the giving of the Torah. The sad days of Sefirah have ended. Jewish homes are decorated with green branches. The women prepare dairy delicacies.

Summer is now at its peak, and the days of mourning arrive, recalling the destruction of the holy temple. There is sadness in the air. The three weeks, the nine days, the Ninth of Av.

With the winds of autumn comes the month of Elul. The sound of the shofar is heard in the mornings coming out of the houses of prayer, making the heart of every Jew tremble. The Day of Judgement approaches. People go to pray Slihot, ask for forgiveness. On Rosh Hashanah the places of worship are full. Before dark entire families go out to the Promshinsky Lake at the Wielka Wies suburb to fulfill the mitzvah of Tashlich. They greet one another with "may you be inscribed for a good year."

Yom Kippur. The streets are empty. All gather in the houses of prayer, spend all day fasting, bent before their Maker, hoping for the mercy of a parent for a child, until the sun sets and the liberating sound of the shofar is heard. The Jews go out joyously to greet the moon with a dance, and immediately after Havdalah they hasten to drive the first stake for the Sukkah into the ground, to fulfill the dictum "from strength to strength."

Sukkot—the festival of joy. Booths are built in the yards during the days preceding the holiday, and the noise of children is heard, running about and preparing decorations

for the sukkah. One has to obtain the lulav and etrog, which is not such a simple matter. It requires expertise in the quality of the etrog, as it does, for instance, to choose the wine for the four cups on Passover. But this problem is also resolved to everyone's satisfaction. On the eve of the holiday the men sit together in the decorated sukkah and the women serve the holiday meal. Everyone is concerned that the rain should not interrupt the festivity. During the days of the holiday the men march ceremoniously to the house of prayer, holding the lulav adorned with the myrtle branches and the willow branches in one hand and in the other the silver box with the etrog, wrapped in flax, like a baby.

On the eve of Hoshana Raba the "hoshanot" are immersed in water overnight to be used the next morning for the mitzvah of "striking the willow."

The joyous holiday of Sukkot concludes with the universal rejoicing of Simchat Torah, the Rejoicing of the Law, during which the Chassidim let themselves go and reach true ecstasy. This, of course, is also a children's holiday, as the children dance in the hakafot (circling) along with the adults, waving Torah flags and going up to the ark "with all the boys" on the morning of the holiday.

Winter brings Hanukkah. The women prepare goose fat, and the smell of fried goose fat (grivenes in Yiddish) rises from all the houses along with the odor of hot jelly donuts and latkes. The children receive Hanukkah gelt (coins) and play with spinning tops. Both Hanukkah and Purim are an occasion for parties and balls by all the organizations, who seize the opportunity to replenish their empty coffers. Fondly remembered are the balls of the Jewish National Fund and the Jewish high school. It is an occasion when the youth enjoys itself dancing to the tune of Katchka the fiddler and his band.

It is winter now. Snow covers the streets and the frost pinches the ears. But the Jews of Piotrkow are celebrating the beginning of blossoming in a distant land, the land of their dreams, the land of Israel. They celebrate the "Hamishaasar," namely, the Fifteenth Day of Shevat. They offer blessings over the fruits of the holy land—figs and dates, while the fruit children prefer is the charub, which for some strange reason is called "boxer." How is one to explain the motives of popular etymology?

Finally it is spring and Purim is here. It brings mirth and the noise against Haman and the sending of Purim portions and costumes and Purim plays which take place while the Purim meal is in progress. A Jewish carnival.

And soon preparations for Passover begin once again, and the circle is closed.

This, in a nutshell, is a taste of the richness and thrill of the holiday customs which evolved during generations in our town. Each holiday and its own food, each holiday and its children's games, each holiday and its humor. Each action, each movement, and even each thought and intention with its own name, its own official term, its own expression in juicy Yiddish, mixed with Hebrew, Aramaic, and corrupt Polish, spoken with the proper intonation accompanied by the appropriate gesticulation and facial expression. And this, of course, applies even more to holidays in which each custom and event has its own coinage which is so popular and only understood by the people of our town.

And not only the holidays. The Jews of Piotrkow loved happy occasions of all kinds. When a child was born the house was filled with joy. During the week between the birth of a male child and his circumcision, the school tots come every evening to the

newly-newborn's home and recite the Shema prayer, and the child's parents give them nuts and sweets. On Saturday night following the birth, a party called the Male Sabbath takes place, during which beer and cooked chickpeas in salt and pepper are served. The circumcision ceremony, during which the child is welcomed into the covenant of Abraham, our patriarch, is a memorable occasion, culminating in a festive meal, as the traditions and customs of the bris are followed meticulously. In the case of a daughter, the naming takes place on the first Sunday after the birth, during the Shul-gang ceremony. When the child starts to study the Pentateuch, usually at the age of five, a Pentateuch Meal takes place, and when he becomes thirteen, the Bar Mitzvah feast takes place.

Marriage was attended by many customs, beliefs and ceremonies. After the families agreed between them on the match, they would first have the Gans-Mal, and then the engagement ceremony, which was called Tenoim (conditions), during which an agreement was written down. On the Sabbath prior to the wedding, guests were invited to the synagogue for the Oifruf (calling to the Torah). The groom was honored with the Maftir of the Torah reading, and the women standing at the Ezrat Hanashim would shower him with nuts, raisins, almonds and sweets. The children in attendance would swoop down on the goodies and try to scoop up as much as they could. The wedding itself took place at the Hertz wedding hall, with a band and with clowns, and one did the Mitzvah dance with the bride. For seven days the Seven Blessings went on, during which guests would drop in and would be given food and drink.

Days of mourning also had their particular customs and were strictly observed, namely, the customs of the funeral procession, the Shiveh, or seven days of mourning, the consoling of the mourners, the Shloshim, or thirty days following the burial, the Yahrzeit, or anniversary of the death, etc.

There were also religious celebrations—the crowning of the town rabbi; the bringing of a new scroll of the Torah to the synagogue in a colorful procession in the streets to the sound of the band; the dancing with the Torah in the main synagogue on Simchat Torah, and many more. There were also a great number of secular events—plays, concerts, sporting events, banquets. The holy and the profane lived side by side in harmony.

The Jewish people of Piotrkow underwent a constant process of secularization—a transition from the old to the new. This process gained momentum after World War One. The rule of religion, which was dominant in past generations, was being weakened. Secularism was reflected in questions being asked, in a desire to know and understand instead of believe, a yearning to break off the shackles of tradition, open the window to the winds that blew in from the great world outside, new ideas, Zionism, socialism. This secularism won the hearts of a great many young people in our town. Sadly enough, however, the young Jew who left the house of study, or who did not reach it in the first place, having absorbed, albeit all too superficially, the new ideas, all the different isms, found himself trapped.

He was locked up in the small world of the Jewish community of Piotrkow, unable to break out. All doors were shut before him. The chance to emigrate was nil. The Zionist

youth kept knocking on the door of the "Palestine Office" waiting for certificates which were few and hard to get. In a small poor community the youth did not have much of a chance to develop its abilities. There was little hope for a better future. The young person felt frustrated and dispirited.

But the youth did not give in. They struggled, they looked for a way out. They joined parties. They found an outlet in cultural activities. This may explain the proliferation of all sorts of dramatic, literary and musical groups, and the great variety of parties and youth organizations. In retrospect, the dominant trait of this youth was idealism, the desire for beauty, for social justice, for a better world.

Harsh economic conditions, a hostile environment, inner conflicts, uncertainty about tomorrow, and perhaps even a subconscious feeling that something terrible was about to occur, all this clouded the life of the Piotrkow community. Sadness was in the air, dripping poison into each cup of joy. One could read the fateful question in people's eyes—What will be? All the great achievements of this wondrous community, all its activities and vitality, its stirring and exciting life were covered by the shadow of an existential question.

Our generation witnessed a cataclysm without parallel in human history. An entire civilization was eliminated during the Catastrophe. Piotrkow was our world, our civilization. Beautiful and ugly, sublime and low, poor and rich like any other civilization, with only one difference—it was ours. Our cradle stood there, there we grew up, there we celebrated, mourned, dreamed and knew first love.

But this world of ours was wiped off the face of the earth.

A hundred years from now its traces will be completely gone. Even now they are hard to find. In the excavations of Pompeii and Herculanium two cities were discovered which had been buried during a terrible natural disaster. In the place where Piotrkow stood nothing will be found, only the memories which we are putting down on paper, and the pictures which we have saved will remain as testimony of what once was and was lost, the testimony of a people who existed for 400 years. Each story, each anecdote, each bit of humor which we collect, each fact and event from the life of that community adds another tile to the mosaic which reflects this unique culture which once existed in a remote Polish town named Piotrkow.

The book you are now holding in your hands attempts to piece this mosaic together. It tells the story of a Jewish town which once was and is no more.

Jerusalem—April, 1991

Chronology of Events in the History of the Jews of Piotrkow

1102–1138	Piotrkow, one of the oldest cities in Poland, as tradition has it, was established by Count Piotr Dunin during the reign of King Boleslaw Krzywousty.
1217	The city is mentioned for the first time in official documents.
1233	Prince Boleslaw of Sieradz grants the privilege of fishing in the Narew River to the "Cisternian" Church.
1347	King Kazimierz the Great summons a gathering of the nobility in Piotrkow for the purpose of creating laws which would pertain to all of Greater Poland.
1404	King Jagiello gives the residents of the city the right to produce and sell strong drinks and forbids the importation of such products.
1435–1628	Fourteen synods of the Catholic Church take place in Piotrkow.
1438	Piotrkow becomes the center for gatherings of the nobility.
1446	Important sessions of the Polish Parliaments take place in the city until 1867, when they are transferred to Warsaw.
1474	The Cobblers' Guild is certified, followed by the Furriers', Hatters', Tanners', Smiths' and Locksmiths' Guilds (1478), Weavers' Guild (1532), Tailors' Guild (1597), as well as Barber/Surgeons' Guild (1700). The barber/surgeons were required to hang a plate outside their doors as a sign of their specialty.
1487	The status of the Merchants' Guild, which attempts to remove those who are strangers to the city, is certified. Pursuant to this privilege, granted by King Kazimierz Jagiellonczyk, only Gentile merchants may enjoy the right to trade within the city.
1544	A fire breaks out in the city and destroys it. King Zygmunt exempts the inhabitants of the city from all payments of taxes for a period of ten years.
1562	The Parliaments of Piotrkow generally discriminate against the Jews. The laws and constitution, approved during the years 1496, 1532, 1562, etc., forbid Jews to lend money to Christians against insurance, the purchase of land, entry into the customs house, leasing of salt mines, and for inns. "Dressing up" as lords with golden belts and swords is outlawed. Simultaneously, Jews are required to wear yellow hats, yellow patches and other clothing which differentiate them from the Christian population.

1569 Edicts are again renewed forbidding Jews to live or trade in Piotrkow (according to the privilege of May 20, 1569, King Zygmunt August permits the Jews to trade in the city, but only at fairs). Jews are forced to settle outside the city on territories belonging to counts and under their protection. They must travel from there to the city for fairs and meetings of the tribunal; for this privilege they must pay the Christian Merchants' Union 30 Ducats.

1578 King Stefan Batory chooses Piotrkow as the location for the highest court (Trybunal) of Poland and Mazowsze. The city, therefore, receives the name of "Piotrkow–Trybunalski."

1585 In order to improve the economic state of Piotrkow, King Zygmunt III permits the holding of two fairs a year in the city.

1590 A blood libel is devised, stating that, in the village of Uszczyn, not far from Piotrkow, Jews killed a Christian child and used its blood for religious purposes. Many Jews perish as a result of it. Because of this, and because of the conflicts between the Jewish and Gentile inhabitants of the city, the Jews are driven from their dwellings surrounding the city and forbidden to return. Their difficult situation, however, forces them to return to their domiciles and even to settle in the city itself.

1604 According to the status for doctors and barber/surgeons, as decreed by King Zygmunt III, it is forbidden for Jews to engage in healing the sick.

1611 A flaxers' union is established, which forbids non-members to work the flax in any form, or to sell linen.

1620 In an official survey, it is noted that the city is bisected by the Yiddishe Gas at the Wolborz Gate.

1656 The Swedes occupy the city, but after a two-month-long siege, they are expelled by Count Jan Konietzpolski.

1657 The Swedes, under the leadership of King Karol Gustave, recapture the city, but, for the second time, they are captured by Jan Konietzpolski, who takes as prisoners the entire Swedish Army together with its chief commander.

Almost all of the 50 businessmen who live in Piotrkow are murdered by Stefan Czarniecki's soldiers because of the claim by the mayor, his assistants and the Christian inhabitants of the city that the Jews aided the Swedes in the capture of the city. The Bet Hakneset is destroyed.

1663 An "auto-da-fé" takes place in Piotrkow. The Jews in Poland are shocked by the trial of the martyr Matatyahu Calahora of Krakow that has taken place in the Trybunal of Piotrkow. Calahora was accused of insulting Jesus and Mary and sentenced to a cruel death, which is carried out in public in Piotrkow.

1670 Adjacent to the city, a wooden hunters' palace, called "Bugai," is built.

1675 Another destructive trial takes place in the Piotrkow Trybunal. The Jews of Prashke (located in the Wielun region) are accused of having tortured a Christian child in the forest, rolling it along in a barrel filled with nails and then hiding the body in the bushes. The sentence is severe: the accused shall be quartered with an axe and the rest of the Jews shall be driven from the town of Prashke.

1679 King Jan Sobieski favors the Piotrkower Jews with a special privilege, which legalizes their living in the city. Prior to this, they had lived there with the permission of the "starosta" Osolinski. The privilege permits the slaughter of animals and also deals with various articles in the production of meat. The Jews are also permitted to have their own barber/surgeon and build a "mikva." The "starosta" is responsible for protecting the Bet Hakneset from attackers, to imprison and punish them. In times of danger he must remove all the Jews and their belongings beyond the gates of the city.

1684 King Jan Sobieski reconfirms the privilege granted by King Zygmunt August, which gave the Christian Butchers' Guild the right to confiscate animals which are killed outside the slaughterhouse. A legal process begins which lasts a hundred years and remains, in the end, undecided. Meanwhile, the Jews organize a separate slaughterhouse in the deserted "Juridica" castle. From Piotrkow magistratorial inventory, there are, in 1694, six butcher shops and the slaughterhouse at the castle's canal.

1689 A new Bet Hakneset, a wooden structure, is constructed in Piotrkow.

1699 A Smelters' Guild is founded. The priest Linetzki visits the city and relates that the old "koscial" is surrounded by a Jewish street, apparently referring to the Franciscan Church, later turned into military barracks by the Russians.

1720 The "Chevra Kadisha" (burial society) is founded with a section for Bikur Cholim (infirmary). (See 1805.)

1726 Rabbi Meir B"ar Elyakum Getz becomes the first Rav. He is simultaneously a Rav in Lask. King August II issues a decree according to which it is forbidden for Jews to come to Piotrkow during the Christian holidays, or to sell their wares there. For violating this decree the punishment is whipping and confiscation of goods.

1731 A huge fire breaks out in the city, causing a tremendous amount of damage. The city becomes extremely impoverished. Anti-Semites use the anger of the populace to incite the students against the Jews.

1740 Angry students attack the Jews, who hide in the Bet Kneset. The students discover them and beat them mercilessly, also demolishing the shul.

1744 Attacks on the Jewish Quarter are thwarted. One of the Jewish defenders, the heroic martyr, Ephraim Fishl, falls in the clash with the pogromists. He is buried in the old cemetery. On his monument is inscribed, "Killed on the 25th of Ab, 1744."

1749 The Bakers' Guild is certified by King August III.

1758 According to a sentence handed down by the "Assessorial" Court in Warsaw, Jews must leave Piotrkow within three months.

1759 An agreement, signed by the Piotrkow "starosta" Malachovski and the representative of the Jewish Kehila, grants the Jews permission to remain in Podzamtche and in Wielka Wies for the annual tariff of 4,500 Zlotys.

1764 As shown in a census survey of Jews in Poland, there reside in Piotrkow 715 Jews over the age of one year; these consist of 381 men and 334 women.

1765 The Piotrkow Bet Hamidrash is founded by Rabbi Hirsh Piotrkower. Near the Bet Hamidrash, a scale is set up and the income therefrom is assigned to support the Bet Hamidrash.

1769 Conflicts arise between the Christian slaughterers, meat dealers and butcher shop owners. The Gentiles argue that, according to the guild privilege given them, for which they pay taxes to the government, the city and the church, they have a monopoly over the slaughter and sale of meat.

1770 Pogroms are perpetrated on the Piotrkower Jews by the students of the Jesuit School. The Jews defend themselves and there are victims on both sides.

1786 An earthquake and fire destroy many houses in the city. The Jewish Quarter suffers great losses.

1787 For the second time, the "Assessorial" Court forbids Jews to live in the "Christian" city of Piotrkow, or to conduct trade and crafts. They may only live and trade in the suburb, "Wielka Wies."

1791 The Piotrkower Shul, considered to one of the most beautiful in Congressional Poland in the 18th Century, is built with the financial help of Moyshe Katzin, wholesale merchant and provider to the military.

The Piotrkow Deputy receives a directive from his constituents to have a law passed in the Warsaw Parliament restricting Jews from settling outside a particular "quarter."

1792 The two Jewish doctors in the city are accused of helping peasants avoid military service. One of the two, Laybl Doktor, is sentenced to receive 100 lashes.

1793 During the second division of Poland, Prussia, per the agreement of January 23, 1793, receives a large portion called South Prussia. The city of Piotrkow is included in this occupied area.

1794 The teacher, Chaim, son of Tsvi Deutch-Goldstein, settles in Piotrkow. On the death of "Brit Avraham," he composes a poem of lamentation. He also translates the book "Rinaldo Rinaldina" from Polish to Hebrew and rewrites it as a drama (Warsaw, 1949). He and the teacher Shmelke Rappoport, with his wife, Hinda, constitute the avante garde of education in the city. Because of their influence, the children of the more affluent strata of the Jewish population begin to study German and arithmetic. The religious circles oppose this activity, but it is supported by the Prussian authorities, which are interested in promoting the German language among the populace.

After the intervention by the Piotrkower Jews, the Prussian occupational forces decree that an oil painting depicting the scene of the alleged ritual murder that a Jewish mob, led by the Rabbi, was said to have perpetrated on a Christian child, now located on the outer wall of the Bernardin Church, be removed. After attempts by Christian believers, they permitted to hang the painting in a "corner" of the church; finally it returns to the outer wall. Not until 1825 do the Jews finally succeed in convincing Warsaw to order the removal of the inciteful painting, which is ultimately transferred to Warsaw.

Piotrkower Jews establish a cemetery on the spot where, in 1657, a Jewish woman who was killed by the soldiers of General Czarniecki during the Swedish war was buried.

1795 The marriage limitations are abolished. Jews enjoy religious freedom and pay fees for marriage permits and taxes equal to those of the Christian population.

1797 The Gentile butchers initiate a court action against the Jews and ask the court to forbid Jewish ritual slaughter and the sale of meat. The chamber does not disturb the Jews, who are setting up a slaughterhouse in a deserted place during the time of the procedures. During this time, Shlomo Razumovski leases the payments for slaughtering.

Prussia publicizes a number of decrees which regulate the Jewish question. Only those who had previously lived in an area during the occupation will be entitled to settle in the new areas; professional Jews, who don't meet both requirements, must leave the area within a given period of time. Those who do have the right to remain receive a "Protectorate Letter."

Taxes for Jews are increased and contain the following tariffs: the Tolerance Tax, in the event a Jew finds himself in a place which is not his usual address; the Protectorate Tax for the right to live in the country and to practice his vocation;

payment for permission to wed; and the Military Service Tax, payable only by those who are not in the military service.

Limitations are set on the rights of Jewish Kehilas and rabbis. They may only concern themselves with religious purposes. The rabbinate may not pass judgement and the rabbi must be able to write and speak German or Polish. The rabbi and all other members of the clergy are to be chosen by the authorities. The Yiddish schools must teach the German and Polish languages. The regulations forbid the Kehilas to implement excommunication or other penalties or to adopt measures by which the Jews shall be forced to follow its demands. The rules also determine that the "shoykhet" may do his own slaughtering and sell the meat, something that has been, until now, in the hands of the Kehila. Jews may not lend money on interest, sell liquor to the peasants on credit, sell merchandise that is not for internal use, or work at peddling. The number of merchants is limited and artisans may work only in the cities. Since, in the regulations, it is suggested that Jews will not be able to earn enough from trading and craftsmanship, they are also granted the opportunity to receive parcels of uncultivated land in a measure which suffices for a village family, in order to be able to earn additional income. During the first three years after settling on this property, Jews are permitted to engage non-Jewish laborers. The decree threatens Jewish trade in Piotrkow, which has been concentrated exclusively in the hands of the Jews.

After the decrees, which frighten the Jewish inhabitants, are publicized, a conference of Jewish Kehilas takes place on the 5th day of Elul 1797; their purpose is to take a stand and to consider ways of annulling them. Participating in the conference are representatives of 31 Jewish Kehilas, among them two from Piotrkow: David Tibeles and Joseph Ben Jacob, as well as noted rabbis.

1801 The first Yiddishe "shul" in the city is established by the government.

The government appoints Chief of Police Reinhardt as overseer of the "Jewish city." The Jewish Kehila pays 50 Florins for his position.

1804 The budget of the Piotrkower Kehila (3,235 Florins and 8 pfennings income and 3,235 Florins and 6 pfennings expenses) shows as excess of 2 pfennings.

1804 The Kehila "apparatus" consists of: 1) Rabbi Lipman Meisels, annual salary 75 Florins; 2) intercessor and translator, Shmelke Shlomo Rappoport, 50 Florins; 3) two cantors, Moshe Hillel, in the shul, and Joseph Marcus, in the Bet Medrash, for a total of 120 Florins, and Jacob Isaac Flatow, the first bass, 20 Florins; 4) attendants, 40 Florins; 5) the sexton of the shul, 30 Florins; 6) the helper of the shul, 30 Florins, 4 night watchmen (Shmuel Feivelovitch, Gershon Brandeis and

two Gentile night watchmen), 100 Florins; 7) Sarah, the midwife, 24 Florins; 8) the Chief of Police, 50 Florins.

The expenses of the shul amount to 358 Florins. There are two teachers, the intercessor Shmelke Shlomo Rappoport, with a salary of 120 Florins, and his wife Hinde, 70 Florins.

1805 The "Bikur Cholim" breaks away from the "Chevra Kadisha" and becomes independent, with Dr. Joachimson as its head.

1807 The constitution, which is made public after the Tilsit Agreement between Napoleon I and Czar Alexander I, proclaims liberty and tolerance for all religions without exception.

1808 The 58th point of the constitution of 1807, based on which Jews enjoy the same rights as non-Jews, is annulled for the reason that there exist vast differences between the customs of Jews and non-Jews. Simultaneously, edicts which discriminate against the Jews are issued, forbidding them from purchasing land.

At the head of the Kehila are: Chaim Segal, Leyb Berliner, Reb Josef, the son of Jacob, Reb Zachariah, Reb Nakhum, Reb Hirsh Piotrkower and Avram, the son of Mordecai.

Jews are subjected to military service. Only the Rav is exempted.

The Jewish settlement grows. The general number of inhabitants amounts to 3,967, among them 1817 Jews (45.8%) and 2150 Gentiles (54.2%).

1809 An additional tax is levied on kosher slaughter.

1811 The French leave the city.

Jews between the ages of 20 and 50 are required to serve in the national guard. Only the Rav and the cantor are excused from serving. After long discussions, they exchange service for the payment of an annual fee.

Jews are kept far from certain neighborhoods. Chaim, the son of Tsvi Hirsh Deutch-Goldstein, assumes the position of Kehila Secretariat following the demise of Tovya Newman.

1812 The leader of the Kalisher Circle, upon the directive of the Minister of the Interior, gives Jews the opportunity to trade, manufacture and produce drinks. Eight Jews receive permission to produce and sell strong drinks.

1815 After the French leave Poland, the government of the Duchy of Poland complies with the request by the "city-ites" to forbid the Jews the purchase of houses or the rental of apartments from Gentiles, as well as the manufacture or selling of drinks in bars.

According to a judgment by the authorities, the right of Jews in Piotrkow to trade and sell drinks is annulled. A decree is issued to drive Jews from the city.

1816 Jews are permitted to engage in commerce without any limitations.

1821 Yoshke Ziskind, nicknamed "Yoshke der Kleyner" (Little Yoshke), appears before Czar Alexander the First, while he rides through Piotrkow, and begs him to cancel the kosher-meat tariff, known as "Korobke."

The Piotrkow Kehila is disbanded in conjunction with an order by the national authorities. Instead of a Kehila, a "Vad Bet Hakneset" (Dozor Bozniczy) is created, which consists of three friends and which must, jointly with the Rav, work out the budget fulfilling the needs of the Kehila.

1822 The authorities decree the expulsion of the Jews from Piotrkow. Only businessmen may have this banishment postponed for two or three years.

The "Chevra Kadisha" in the city is disbanded.

1823 Jews who want to engage in farming and wish to receive government and nobility land are granted permission to do so. They are promised that they will be excused from paying taxes for three to twelve years, and also that they will be given wood and other necessities to help them along.

1825 A tragic fire in the Jewish Quarter destroys all businesses and stores and forces their occupants to relocate to the center of the city ("Makom"). An anonymous Yiddish poet describes the tragedy of those Piotrkower who were consumed in the fire with these words: "How dismal is the day of the 4th of Av/When in flames went up the city of Piotrkow."

An institution that specializes in documenting the citizenship status of the inhabitants is established in Piotrkow. The officers of the institution are Gentiles and the Jews take pains to see to it that they are not included in the records for fear of being subjected to military service.

1826 In order to influence the members of the Kehila to participate in the "Vad Bet Hakneset," they are exempted by special decree from the tariff for the Kehila.

1829 According to an order by the authorities, a representative of the village Jews is co-opted to the "Vad Bet Hakneset."

1831 A cholera epidemic breaks out in Piotrkow. There are many fatalities among the Jewish population; among them is the city Rav, Rabbi Dov Berish Aderstein. In a panic, the Jews leave the city and hide in the surrounding forests, abandoning all their worldly belongings.

1833 Following a quarrel, the new shul committee appeals to the authorities for permission to lease the income of "Aliyot Hatorah" for the years 1834–1836. The "aliyot" will be leased by Nathan Kirschberg for 454 Zlotys. Other residents of the city recommend payments for the lease. Jacob Windheim registers a complaint which leads to a crisis in the shul committee, which resigns. Finally, Kirschberg resigns his rights and, in another litigation, Jacob Windheim leases the income, amounting to 612 Zlotys.

1834 The Piotrkower "Vad Hakol" requests that the authorities forbid foreign teachers from settling in the city because the local teachers would then have no income.

1836 The financial status of the Piotrkow Kehila improves markedly. The Kehila Tax brings 7,989 Zlotys into Piotrkow. A cantor, Lazar Perlmutter from Stawski, is engaged at a salary of 1,294 Zlotys.

1840 The Jewish Quarters Wielka Wies and Juridica are included as part of the city of Piotrkow.

Mayor Galinski nominates a Jew for the position of treasurer of their distillery, but the national authority is not in favor of this nomination; the mayor receives the blame and is forced to remove the Jew from his position.

1845 The first Jewish agricultural colony is established in the city.

1846 Because of a misunderstanding between the "Chassidim" and "Mitnagdim" and the intrigues that it causes, the authority asks them to remove the rabbi of Piotrkow, Reb Aaron Yehuda Jacob, son of Naftali Hertz Meisels.

There is a festive opening of the train line from Warsaw to Vienna. The city becomes an important station for shipping products. The first factories are built in the city.

1850 A Yiddish folkshul is opened by the government in Piotrkow. The shul is abolished after a short time. Only in 1858 is a permanent Yiddish shul established in the city.

1851 The first census made by the Piotrkow Kehila shows that out of 644 families, only 203 pay Kehila taxes. The others are not capable of paying even the minimum of 20 kopeks.

1854 The Piotrkow shul is desecrated and robbed by the "Katsaps" (Cossacks), who stage a pogrom in the Jewish quarter of the city.

1857 The construction of the building housing the general hospital in the city is completed. In the hospital there are 50 beds for Gentiles and 20 for Jews.

1858 Rabbi Eleazer Shalom, son of Simcha Zev Morgenstern, assumes the post of Chief

Rabbi of Piotrkow. The Jewish inhabitants of Shedletz do not permit the Rav to leave their city; only with the intervention of the police are the Piotrkower messengers successful in getting him out and bringing him to Piotrkow.

Harav Morgenstern, a moral individual, is the Shedletz Rav; he creates a "Keren Pidyon Shvuyim," which serves to buy the release of Jews who have been arrested as the result of the persecutions by the police and other authorities. He is concerned with the plight of the poor and destitute in the city and personally collects funds to help them. To convince the fish merchants in the marketplace to lower their prices, he announces a ban on the consumption of fish. Only when the merchants, who begin to lose their income, promise not to raise their prices does he annul the ban.

1859 The Jewish hospital separates itself from the general hospital and relocates to another building, which it receives from the authorities for the price of 6,500 Rubles.

Nine Jewish families live in the Gentile Quarter of Piotrkow. According to law, only those Jews who possess the sum of 20,000 Zlotys are permitted to live there.

The economic situation of the Jews of Piotrkow becomes more difficult after the creation of the "Economic Society," whose goal is to expel Jews from trading and other economic positions. The worsening of this situation is reflected in the amounts of the debts which remain unpaid for Kehila tariffs.

1860 The city becomes a commercial and administrative center. The number of residents increases; however, during this period, while the Russian government displays an interest in the industrialization of Poland and helps numerous cities and towns to begin industrial undertakings, in Piotrkow it hinders the establishment of larger factories, especially weaving mills. According to documents in the provincial archives, there was a large number of workers in the city who might influence the sta.t of a revolution against the military, which was stationed in the city.

A national census taken in the city indicates a total population of 11,159, with 4,999 Jews, 5,843 Poles, 47 Russians, and 270 Germans.

A folkshul for Jewish children is established.

The rabbis, judges and officers of the Kehila are forbidden to leave their dwelling places without permission from the Vad Bet Hakneset and approval by the authorities.

1861 The Russian powers lock up the Bet Hakneset after a memorial honoring five people who were killed in a Polish demonstration against the Russian rulers. The Bet Hakneset, however, is soon reopened.

According to law, the Polish Jews have the right to participate in city and District Advisor elections.

As a result of the "Polish–Jewish Brotherhood," a slogan of the Polish national movement, for the first time in Piotrkow the elections make David Leib Markovitch a member of the Advisory Board and Bonaventura Teplitz and Abraham Brem "shtetl" representatives. Elected to the City Council are Nathan Goldblum, Hersh Finkelstein and Jacob Rosenberg; representatives are Michal Michelson and Pincus Horowitz.

The Jews of Piotrkow experience a difficult economic crisis.

A Gentile officer, requesting anonymity, organizes a collection amounting to 3,000 Zlotys. The monies are deposited with a special Jewish committee that distributes it amongst the needy.

1862 Jews leave the agricultural colonies and return to commerce and trade.

1863 Russian authorities arrest three Kehila representatives—Michal Michelson, Hersh Finkelstein and Jacob Rosenberg—because they sympathized with the Polish uprising. Another Jew, Moshe Neimark, who provided the revolutionaries with 135 pairs of boots, is publicly whipped, as ordered by the Russian commander. A known participant in the uprising was the Piotrkower Jew, Fuks, whom the Russians arrest and whose wife flees to France. Several other city Jews are placed under strict surveillance.

1864 There are 12 factories in Piotrkow: 7 of leather goods, 4 of vinegar and oil, and one of ironworks.

Reb Tovye Faybl, the son of Tsvi Hersh Belchatovski, jointly with Reb Chaim Frenkl establishes the first Hebrew print shop in Piotrkow. The machines and printing letters were received via priests in Czenstochow who had been forced by the authorities to liquidate their print shop in the Jasna Gora Church. In time, Piotrkow becomes a center for Hebrew and Yiddish printed matter, and its reputation spreads throughout the world. In addition, the print shops improve the economic situation of the Jews in Piotrkow, providing many Jewish families with an opportunity to earn a living.

After major efforts, the authorities carry out elections of the Vad Hakol in Piotrkow. However, the elections, which were postponed three times, cannot be realized because of the difficult economic situation and the clashes between the Chassidim, Mitnagdim, and Freethinkers.

Upon returning from his trip and a visit to the Czar in Petersburg, Lord Moses Montefiore visits Poland and remains in Piotrkow until after Rosh Hashana.

1866 David Neifeld, editor of the first Jewish weekly newspaper in the Polish language, "Jutrzenka," which was published in Warsaw from 1861–1863, and who laid the foundation for the Polish–Jewish friendship movement, settles in Piotrkow and opens a bookstore. His arrival strengthens the Polonizational cultural effort among the Jews of the city.

1867 Piotrkow is chosen as the capitol of Batzirk (province). National officers relocate there.

1868 Harav Baruch Tsvi Hirsh, son of Simcha Zev Rosenblum, is elected Rav in Piotrkow to replace the deceased Rav, Reb Eleazer Shalom Morgenstern. Even in 1863, while being the Radziminer Rav, Harav Rosenblum is accused of sympathizing with the Polish uprising and even in helping to collect funds from the Jewish population for the benefit of the uprising. The Rav is detained by the Russian authorities and placed in the Lublin Prison, from where he successfully escapes, together with the Polish Chief of Police, dressed as a Russian officer. Following the amnesty, the Rav leaves the house of the head of the Lublin community, Iserl Wohl, where he has been hiding, and is elected Rav of Wegrov, whence he arrives in Piotrkow. Harav Rosenblum is a friend of Governor Kochanov, who comes from the same city and has known him since childhood.

1871 According to the edicts issued by Governor Kochanov, which punish Jews for sympathizing with the Polish uprising, it is forbidden to wear traditional Jewish dress. The rabbis and all the clergy who wear such clothes are persecuted most cruelly. The Rabbinate is forced to sign a commitment according to which it assumes responsibility for preventing women from shaving their heads after marriage. Men with beards and sidecurls, as well as women wearing wigs or kerchiefs on their heads, will be detained and fined, perhaps even imprisoned.

1878 The "Pozharne Komande" (the fire brigade) of the city is certified; Jews may also participate in it.

1880 Moshe Shereshewski, the first official Zionist of Piotrkow, settles there. A highly educated "Litvak" and member of a rich and noted family, Shereshewski, immediately upon arriving, mobilizes 54 Zionists and embarks upon lively Zionist activities.

1881 The Kehila raises funds to distribute, at a modest price, flour, potatoes, wood and coal among the poor Jews of Piotrkow, who have suffered a severe winter.

1882 The second Bet Hamidrash is erected in Piotrkow by the banker, Fishl Alexandrovitch.

1884 After the demise of Harav Rosenblum z"l, Rabbi Chaim Eleazer Waks, who has devoted himself completely to the idea of "Shivat Tsion," and, even as far back

as 1870, collected money for the poor in Eretz Israel, is elected Rav. In 1886, Harav Waks, together with his father-in-law, Harav Yehoshua Trunk from Kutna (known by the name of Rabbi Yehoshua Kutner), the head of the Kehila, the well-known rich man Pinchus Horowitz, and sexton of the Bet Hadin Moshe (Moshke) Wald, travel to Eretz Israel, where they establish the colony called Chitin, near Tiberias, and plant an orchard of "Etrogim." In 1877, Harav Waks publishes his "seyfer," "Nefesh Chaya" (named after his mother Chaya Toybe), the first Hebrew "seyfer" printed in Piotrkow.

1885 Piotrkow contains 732 trade and industrial businesses. Among the 600 merchants in the city, 82% are Jews.

Sunday night (Parshat Rosh Tarma), a fire breaks out in one of the houses of Yidn Gas. Twenty poor families who have been living there are left totally without possessions. One of them, a porter, who tries to salvage his meager belongings, is burned to death. ["Hatsfirah," no. 35, 1885; related by Mr. Ben Michl; Michl would seem to be Michelson, the translator]

1888 A private Yiddish shul, with Russian as the major language and where Hebrew is taught, is established by the "Maskil" Shmuel Aba Mindl from Riga.

1893 According to the newspaper, "Tydzien Piotrkowski," the number of Gentile stores in the city increases and they are successful in competing with the Jewish trade. ["Hatsfirah," no. 126, 1891]

1894 A philanthropic organization called "Chevra Latzedakah" ("Dobroczynnosc") is founded by the lawyer Gustave Levy, who distributes aid to hundreds of poor families, both Jewish and non-Jewish.

Reb Shlomo Belchatovski becomes the owner of the print shop which he inherited from his parents. He improves and enlarges it and it is considered among the largest Jewish print shops in Poland, as well as in other countries.

1895 Menachem Mendl Shlossberg, in partnership with his son-in-law Anatole Frumkin, constructs a large factory on the shores of the Bugai River. Jews from Piotrkow and Lodz are employed in the building of the factory and also work there.

Pinchas Baron and two other friends establish a club named "Tomchey Aniyim Mechovdim." All three are 13 years old and students in the "cheyder." They order a rubber stamp and printed "blocks," appeal to various people to commit themselves to making monthly payments, and their request receives the hoped-for response. The monies that are raised in this way are distributed among the needy.

1897 In Piotrkow there are 36 "cheyders" under one Kehila Talmud Torah.

Eliahu Pansky's print shop is established and, in 1899–1900, it prints an expensive copy of "Talmud Yerushalmi" with all the commentaries.

1898 "Agudat Hatzionim" is founded; it opens with the first lending library in the city.

1899 400 "Shekels" are sold in Piotrkow, and through the "Oyster Hahityishnot" 600 stocks are sold.

1902 The first group of the "Bund" in the city is organized. The work is performed secretly, mostly in the surrounding forests.

1904 A treasury is established to aid young men who want to get married by offering them loans to arrange their affairs. The founders are Wilhelm Zilbershteyn, Adolf Pansky, Izak Levit, Marcus Meirand and Gershon Reitberger.

1905 The workers of Piotrkow take an active part in the revolution. The workers are a vital factor in the Polish Socialist Movement.

The first group of "Poalei Zion" and S.S. (Zionist–Socialists) is organized in Piotrkow.

1906 In conjunction with the occurrences of 1905–1906, the workers' organizations found a self-defense organization. Leading the Bundist self-defense is Yechiel Kimelman. Because of his part in expediting the assassination of a Russian Batzirk policeman named Mushinski, Kimelman is imprisoned and sentenced to death. The sentence is changed to life imprisonment in Siberia (Katorga), but the awful conditions in the Vladimir prison ruin his health and he dies in 1907.

A Zionist conference in Piotrkow, in which the engineer Jan Kirshrot from Lodz takes part as representative of the Warsaw headquarters, decides on an election platform for the Duma. The platform must include the Piotrkow region.

1908 A conference of rabbis from the entire country takes place in Piotrkow. The goal of this conference is to reform the Jewish community life and enforce the authority of the rabbis. The conference is reprimanded by the Jewish–Russian weekly "Razoviet," which sees it as a "Reactionary Gathering."

1910 A meeting of rabbis in Piotrkow elects delegates to the national meeting, which is slated to take place in Warsaw.

1912 In "Hazamir" there arises friction between the professional and labor factions. The former preach assimilation and the latter want to introduce national Yiddish content, such as bringing Yiddish books into the youth circles and into religious homes, create choral and music circles, etc.

Despite the ban on every political activity, the Zionist–Socialist activities are conducted in secret.

A "Cheyder Metuken," where religious as well as secular subjects are taught, is established.

The "Savings and Loan Treasury" is founded; its purpose is to help poor artisans and small tradesmen by granting them loans at low interest.

1914 Following the first clash in Sarajevo, the national officers leave the city in a rush and a citizen's committee is created; it includes four Jews: Marcus Braun, Yoel Zygmunt, Kaminer and Lawyer Mikolay Kon (son-in-law of Max Braun).

Immediately after the start of World War I, the Russians leave the city and the Germans take it over. After a short time, the Russian Army returns.

Moshe Feinkind begins to issue a weekly newspaper, the "Piotrkower Shtime," published by Shlomo Belchatowski. Only one issue of the newspaper appears. As soon as the war breaks out, Governor Yatchevski forbids further publication of the weekly.

Marcus Braun spends 2,500 Rubles in order to save the Jews from a pogrom which the Russian military are preparing to effect in the city. Incited Russian soldiers nevertheless pogromize the Jewish inhabitants. Twenty Jews are arrested for allegedly having commercial dealings with Germans. The Russian commandant Popov wants to shoot them, but after the intervention of Christian clergymen, he satisfies himself with exiling the Jews to Russia. When the Germans return to Piotrkow for the second time, it is the eve of Yom Kippur. They force the Jews to open their shops and the Jewish bakers to bake bread. When the Germans withdraw, they take hostages in addition to those they had taken when they first entered the city. It is only as a result of the energetic intervention on the part of the "Birger Komitet" (Citizens' Committee) that the hostages are set free. During the Russians' last retreat from the city on Friday night, they conduct a search in the shul, looking especially in the "Aron Kodesh" (Holy Ark) for a "secret telephone" to the German lines; during the search the "Sifrey Torah" are ruined.

1915 During the night of December 15–16, the Austrian Army drives the Russians from the city and occupies it. The Austrian powers deprive the Jews of their right to sell alcoholic beverages and tobacco, forbidding the publication of a newspaper in the Yiddish language. Hungarian soldiers break into the shul on Shavuot, yanking out the praying Jews, forcing them to go on foot to the outer parts of Belchatov and dig trenches there.

1916 The District Director in Piotrkow issues a decree stating that Jewish stores that sell vital articles and tobacco must remain open on Saturday and holidays.

The "Hazamir" organization establishes the second lending library in the city.

Owing to the severe economic hardships of the Jews during the war, inexpensive

kitchens are set up, "Dobroczynosc" and a second in "Linat Hatsedek," where for three kopeks one can get a nourishing meal. For those who can't pay, lunches are free of charge.

Fearing epidemics, groups of Jewish youngsters organize to control the sanitation primarily in the poorer areas. They also help clean the homes, change and launder bed linens, and perform disinfections.

Hungarian–Austrian occupation forces permit the election of a city self-management committee. Of 50 councilmen, 13 Jews are elected; 2 Zionists, 1 Mizrachi, 3 religious, 1 unaffiliated, and 6 assimilationists.

1917 The only Jew to be accepted in the police force is Berl Budkowski.

Marcus Braun, Moshe Shereshevski, and Lawyer Joseph Kon are represented in the District Council, which the authority has nominated.

Together with the Polish population, the Piotrkower Jews take an active role in protest demonstrations to free Poland from the occupation forces, as well as to celebrate the 3rd of May and the 15th of October (Kosciusko's date of death) with national flags.

M. Braun is elected by the city board as a deputy to the Piotrkower Parliament.

In the Piotrkower Parliament, convened by the occupation forces, three Jewish deputies serve.

During the last two years of the Austrian occupation, 1917–1918, the economic situation of the Jews improves because of the influx of Jews from Lodz and other cities, as well as industrial development.

A huge step forward is taken by the Piotrkower Jews on the cultural level, and the authorities create no difficulties. Institutions such as "Hazamir," "Maccabee," "Tarbut," plus evening courses and other opportunities are created.

1918 In introducing the card system for food, cooperatives ("Tsarchaniut") are established; their goal is the equitable distribution of products to the cardholders. As a result, "Hazamir," "Tarbut," "Fareynnikte," "Linat Hatsedek," and the Artisan's Union form cooperatives.

An attempt is made to establish the trade school which had existed before the start of the war at "Dobroczynnosc."

Poland becomes independent. On November 3, the city is liberated from the occupation rulers. Along with the difficult economic situation, the Jews suffered from waves of anti-Semitic accusations.

An organizing committee to establish a "gimnazjum" in Piotrkow is created.

As a result of the initiative of the "Endeks" ("Narodowa Demokracja"), the Piotrkow City Council accepts a decision to expel from the city those inhabitants who have lived there since July 24, 1917, with the excuse that, because of overpopulation, food products in the city have become more expensive. The decision is aimed at the Jewish merchants and manufacturers who came from areas which the Germans had occupied, resulting in the revival of commerce and industry in Piotrkow. The Interior Minister, Jan Statsky, however, who receives the decision for approval, rejects it with the response that such decisions don't belong to the jurisdiction of the City Council. In the meantime, the district commander issues a decree which forbids settling in Piotrkow without special permission from the City Council. As a result, the City Council summons a special committee whose duty it is to examine the list of newcomers who have to be expelled. The committee consists of nine members: 5 Gentiles and 4 Jews. Because of the determined stand of two Jewish friends on the committee, only 2 Jews are expelled; they have allegedly behaved badly.

1919 At the first democratic elections for the City Council, 33 councilmen are elected; 7 are Jews (4 from the Bund, 2 from "Tseirey Tsion" and 1 unaffiliated).

1920 A difficult year for the Jews of Piotrkow. They are boycotted by the "Endeks" anti-Semites at all levels of life. In the public gimnazjum, Jewish students are separated from their Gentile friends and seated on a separate bench. The boycott is also felt on community and commercial levels. Jewish industrialists leave the Piotrkow area as a group and head for other cities where the anti-Semitism has not taken on such frightening forms as in Piotrkow.

A trade school is founded in Piotrkow and is later taken over by the "ORT."

1921 After the uprising in Upper Silesia is quelled, a number of revolutionaries settles in Piotrkow; they terrorize the Jewish inhabitants and plunder the Jewish stores. Finally, they are expelled from the city and settle in neighboring villages.

1924 On the initiative of the Zionist organization, the weekly publication "Undzer Tsaytung" begins to appear. The paper serves the entire Jewish population. The editors are Jacob Baron and Joseph Berish Rosenblatt.

The activities of the "Savings and Loan Treasury," "Tropn Milch," "Toz" and an orphan home are reorganized.

The difficult tax burden of the Jewish inhabitants influences the Artisan Union to protest; they send a delegation to the main office in Warsaw.

The Jewish gimnazjum and the Medem School open new classes. Evening courses for the study of Yiddish are organized.

The city management permits foreign societies to erect an electricity manufac-

turing plant in the city and suggests they also install plumbing and sewerage.

Harav Meir Shapira of the "Agudat Israel" leadership and ex-Parliament Deputy, is elected as the Rav of Piotrkow. In the Kehila elections which take place the same year, representatives are elected from all the Jewish groupings, as follows: "Bund," 6; "Agudah," 5; Zionists, 2; Artisans, 2; unaffiliated, 2; "Mizrachi," 2; and "Tseieye Tsion," 1.

1925 The Bund begins to issue the weekly newspaper "The Piotrkower Vecker." It appears, with interruptions, until the start of the war.

In the second democratic elections for the City Council, 8 Jews are elected out of a total of 33 councilmen. Thanks to the bloc of Polish and Jewish Socialist councilmen, a Socialist city management is elected—P.P.S. and Bundists. The management board behaves sympathetically towards the Jews. Several even fill positions in the City Hall. Jewish unemployed receive aid and work in city institutions. Subsidies are also given to Jewish institutions such as orphan homes, Talmud Torah, "ORT" and others.

1926 In the circular which the City Council distributes to contractors who work for it, it is clearly stressed that in hiring workers, they may not differentiate on the grounds of religious or political background. Because of these circulars, approximately 30 Jews are employed in communal and investment work.

A founding meeting takes place for "Friends of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem."

In the month of March, Dr. Abraham Leipuner, one of the most worthy physicians in Piotrkow, passes away.

On April 5, the hall of the "Dobroczynnosc," a general meeting of the division of the "Central Society for Emigration" takes place.

On April 30, a founding meeting of the "Commercial Bank" (Bank Kupiecki) takes place.

There is a bloody attack by a bunch of rowdies on young people during the Lag B'omer celebrations in the Sulejow Forest.

The Central Jewish Orphans' Society in Poland, "CENTOS," opens a dormitory for 30 orphans, the majority of whom come from the pogromized Jewish families on the Polish–Russian border, brutalized by Malarovitch's soldiers. The dormitory is located in the "Dobroczynnosc" building. Trades are studied on the "ORT" school.

In November, the Kehila approves a recommendation for a grant of 200 Zlotys for the "Kupat Poalei Eretz Israel." Piotrkow is the first Kehila to accept such a decision and it causes strong repercussions in the world.

The "Artisan's Bank," after only a brief existence, is forced to close because of cash problems; it merges with the "Savings and Loan Treasury."

1927 In January, the sheet metal Workers' Guild is established. Watchmakers and goldsmiths belong to it. The eldest in the guild, David Greenspan, has the right to award trade certificates to apprentices and masters of this guild.

Because of the outstandingly difficult winter, the Kehila is forced to distribute 500 tons of coal to the needy.

On Saturday, March 19, the day of Pilsudski's birthday, the anti-Semitic rabble "goes on a spree" and showers Jewish homes and stores with stones, accompanied by insulting anti-Jewish names.

The Rav of Piotrkow, Harav Shapira, who has stayed in America for the benefit of the Lublin Yeshiva, sends $500 from there for Passover assistance.

1928 The representatives of the "Bund" in the City Council offer a resolution that this municipal body ask the culture ministry to introduce Yiddish as a major language in government schools that Jewish children attend; also, to give existing Jewish schools a subsidy and separate powers. The recommendation is refused. In contrast, a recommendation made by the P.P.S. is accepted, according to which the folk-high and trade schools of the national minorities in Poland must be given official rights and subsidies or be taken over by the government.

The authorities approve the regulations of the "Literary Society," founded two years earlier. A theater group is active in this society; its founders are: Jacob Baron, Sh. A. Zygelman, Motel Lenchitsky, Menachem Horovitch, and others.

On December 30, in the City Council elections, 8 Jews were voted in: Bund, 4; Poalei Zion Ts. S., 1; civil bloc, 1; Agudah, 1; and Poalei Agudat Israel, 1.

The number of Jews in Piotrkow is 13,119 of a total population of 46,524.

1929 In June, the first national exams for students take place in Czenstochow. They are for students who have completed the "ORT" school in Piotrkow.

1930 On Monday, June 23, a large protest-demonstration against England takes place because of its abolition of immigration limitations and permission for free immigration to Eretz Israel. In addition to the Zionist parties, the Artisans and Merchants' Unions participate, as well as representatives of Jewish institutions in the city.

1931 The City Hall (City Management) stops payment of unemployment assistance and opens kitchens for the unemployed. The kitchen for the Jewish unemployed is located in the "Dobroczynnosc" house.

A street near the Strava is named for I. L. Peretz at the recommendation of councilman I. Maltz.

In May, Kehila elections are held. From the 14 lists, 17 Kehila councilmen (Dozers) are elected. The elections take place without the participation of the "Bund," which boycotts the Kehila as a "clerical" institution.

The "Agalah," the vehicle of the tax office, with its cruel "sequestrators," causes terror among the poor small tradesmen and craftsmen, who are unable to pay the high taxes. Bailiffs remove everything from the Jewish homes. The Merchant's Union tries to intervene to make the Agalah cease its activity, but without success.

The cost of the basic renovation of the shul amounts to about 30,000 Zlotys. For this purpose, Kehila Chairman Wilhelm Zilbershteyn gives a contribution.

Harav Shapira leaves the "Kisey Rabanut" in Piotrkow and is received as the Lublin Rav, where he simultaneously leads the local "Yeshiva Chachmey Lublin." Harav Shapira has been Rav in Piotrkow for more than 6 years.

1934 City Council elections are conducted according to the new system of county elections. The Council remains in Socialist hands. Because of these new limitations, the Jewish population is not well represented. Only representatives of the "Bund," who finding themselves on the same list as the P.P.S., are elected. Mr. Jacob Berliner becomes city councillor.

1935 Harav Moshe Chaim Lau is elected as the Piotrkower Rav by the Kehila councilmen. He is a great scholar and wit, with a great deal of worldly knowledge. He is known for his oratorical ability, even in the Polish language, whenever he appears at official national solemnities. He successfully fulfills the role of religious leader of Piotrkow Jewry. During Hitler's occupation he, despite many opportunities, does not leave his congregation, but accompanies the Jews on their journey to death.

1936 In February, because of unending intrigues on the part of certain groups in the Kehila, the "Starosta" dissolves the Kehila council and appoints Mr. Leon Shereshevski as commisar over the Kehila and its institutions until the end of its term.

Because a large number (perhaps one-third) of the Jewish population is in need of Passover assistance, the "Joint" complies with the request made by Mr. Shereshevski and allocates funds for that purpose, on condition that Messrs. Shereshevski and Broyda (Director of the "ORT" school) personally distribute the money.

In September, new Kehila elections are held. In accordance with the decision, the Bund returns to the elections. Together with the Bundist Artisan activists, it is successful in controlling the Kehila.

At one of the Kehila meetings, a decision is approved to protest the agencies and the decree forbidding kosher slaughter.

1938 Simultaneously with the increased terror aimed against the Jews in Germany, public anti-Semitic attacks on Jews in the city start to increase. The following incidents occur: (a) on Slowacki Street, in the middle of the day, a Jewish porter named Getzeles is mugged and beaten until he faints; (b) poison is thrown into a fish pool belonging to a Belchatover Jew named Levkovitch. The damage amounts to tens of thousands of Zlotys; (c) on Lazienna Mokra Street, hooligans try to set fire to a Jewish house, having thrown flammable material through a window; (d) a Jewish woman (Esther Weiss) who has come from Eretz Israel to visit her relatives is beaten.

Pickets in front of the Jewish stores prevent Christian customers from entering. Even Jewish drivers and porters are driven away from their destinations, where they usually earn enough for a piece of bread.

In the forum of the City Council the "Endeks' " councilman requests an immediate ban on kosher slaughter as being "inhumane," but the unanimous response of the P.P.S.'s and Bundist representatives cool down the incited anti-Semites.

The authorities' attempts are renewed to remove the Jews' right to a Jewish hospital they have supported with great effort, loyalty and sacrifice, as well as great strength and money for many years.

1939 At a meeting of the employees (January, 1939), a protest is voiced against the "Endecja" and other Polish nationalists; they are sharply reprimanded for harmful anti-Semitic acts in view of the fateful situation in which Poland finds itself.

On April 23, elections for the City Council take place. There are only two Jewish lists: "Bund" and small merchants (7 councilmen) and Poalei Zion Ts. S., united with the "Linke Poalei Zion" (2 councilmen).

The club "Maccabi," which has met with noteworthy success in various branches of sports, has prepared a gala sports celebration at the city's stadium for September 3. Two days earlier, however, the war breaks out and the city is bombed. Within two days, it has been captured by the Germans, who put an instant end to all the plans and to the entire Jewish life of the city of Piotrkow.

1953 According to a Soviet encyclopedia, there are 46,000 inhabitants in Piotrkow (a scant 200 of them Jews).

Izkor Book

The Golden Thread



The Great Synagogue of Piotrkow

* *
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Nearly fifty years have passed since the divine command, "Remember what Amalek has done to you. . . do not forget!" has acquired a new meaning. There is no doubt in anyone's mind as to who the Amalek of our generation is.

One of the questions over which we have agonized is how to find a way to obey both parts of this sacred command—to remember, and not to forget. The monstrous fact that over 150(!) so-called "scientific" books have been published to date about the Holocaust. each claiming to be accurate in its assertion that this event never took place—despite the fact that our generation still feels the horrors of that catastrophe and has Auschwitz numbers tattooed on its arm—is proof enough that we have not been sufficiently successful in passing on the legacy of the Shoah. Even among our own people the subject does not occupy its proper place.

One can offer many reasons for this; let me mention two.

First, we speak of the enormous number of six million. The human mind and heart cannot fathom such an astronomical number, and surely it is hard to identify or empathize with it. If we speak of one community, or one family, or one Anne Frank, we can feel empathy, we can relate personally to that person or persons. But we cannot relate to multitudes. To paraphrase the words of the Talmud, "You can only grasp a little bit at a time."

Second, we have spoken and written about the death of six million, but we have not spoken much about their lives. One cannot grieve over the news of the death of an unknown person who did not speak to us or leave any imprint on our soul. Only when we appreciate a thing can we miss it and cry for it. The younger generation of Jews under fifty, as well as the Jews of Asia, Africa and America—and certainly non-Jews—cannot feel the legacy of the catastrophe of European Jewry if they know nothing about the lives of those Jews, their communities and their history. One should retell the story of how Jews lived the life of sanctifying the divine name, not only how they died with that name on their lips.

The book of our beloved friend, Ben Giladi, who hails from our own native town of Piotrkow Trybunalski in Congress Poland, deals successfully with this awesome and glorious subject, and provides an answer to these two questions.

The book does not speak of millions, but rather deals with the history of a distinguished community, allowing us to relate to it personally. The book dwells not only on the destruction, but on the construction; describes not only the flames that engulfed the town at the end, but also the fire of enthusiasm displayed by its people during times of activity and creativity. Here is a story of a major Jewish community, its personalities and institutions, that became known throughout the Jewish world.

As the youngest son of the town's last rabbi, the scholarly Rabbi Moshe Haim Lau of righteous and sacred memory, and as the younger brother of Naftali Lau-Lavie, author of *The Seven Fires of Hell*, based on his personal experience during those years of darkness, I am deeply grateful to our dear Ben Giladi, who in this book has accomplished what was incumbent on all of us to do: the sacred mission—"Remember. . . do not forget!"

Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv
The son of the last Rabbi of Piotrkow

The Last Chapter

Jacob Birnbaum—Boston

If I forget thee. . .

To the blessed memory of my Parents and my sister Hannah

The month was August, 1963; the place Mount Zion, in Jerusalem. The hot rays of the sun swept through the assemblage of some 70 people who had gathered from near and far for this solemn occasion. From Tel Aviv and New York, from Montreal and Buenos Aires, from Paris and Boston, we had all come to pay our respects. The day was Tisha Ba'av, a day of mourning—a day in which Jews the world over recalled the twice-repeated catastrophe which has occupied so central a role in our people's history and religion: the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, first by the Babylonians and later by the Romans. On this day the prayer service at Martef Hashoa, atop Mount Zion, was to memorialize a third, more contemporary, destruction, one that many of the mourners themselves had witnessed, one that had annihilated their families and friends.

We stood there on Mt. Zion, blood relations. . . well, not really. Though Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob joined our origins as we gathered from the remoteness of our exile, the blood that bound us to this moment and this sacred site was of much more recent descent. We were the sons and the daughters of Piotrkow Trybunalski, her last Jewish sons and daughters. We were now waiting to witness the unveiling of a tombstone dedicated to the memory of the magnificent Jewish Community of learning that had graced that ancient Polish city.

The origins of Piotrkow Trybunalski dated back to the reign of the Polish King Boleslaw III, in the years 1102–1138. There is no known specific date for the settling of the first Jews in the town; however, early chronicles indicate that, in the year 1487, a law was passed in Piotrkow which put severe restrictions on Jewish merchants which forbade them to engage in any kind of commerce. Piotrkow was at that time the site where the High Tribunal met regularly to issue legislation governing all of Poland, hence the name "Piotrkow Trybunalski" (the Tribunal). In the year 1557, the "Piotrkow Constitution" was adopted; it put many restrictions on the behavior of Jews and permitted them to settle only in designated districts.

During the five centuries of its existence, the Jewish community of Poland enjoyed periods of relative tranquility, though interrupted from time to time with outbursts of vicious anti-Semitism usually attributed to the infamous "blood libel." However, despite all the anti-Semitic restrictions and persecutions emanating from the government, as well as from the church, Jews were able to develop self-government and create institutions of learning which produced some of the great scholars of the time.

Shortly before the outbreak of World War II, the Jewish community of Piotrkow

showed great progress in its communal development. In addition to its renowned religious institutions, which provided high levels of Jewish culture and education, the community also supported a Hebrew Gymnasium (equivalent to eight years of high school and junior college) and a well equipped ORT trade school. Jewish Piotrkow also maintained a sports club named "Maccabi" which was housed in its own modern building; a Jewish hospital which was well equipped and manned by trained and dedicated personnel; a large orphanage in the center of the town; beautiful gardens and playgrounds; and several libraries which contained Yiddish and Hebrew books and offered spacious reading rooms where the youth of the town congregated. There was a Jewish amateur theater, three weekly Yiddish newspapers, and a Jewish musical association called "HaZamir," with Bensman, a composer renowned throughout the Jewish musical world, as its musical director.

Little now remained to bear testimony. The buildings, even if extant, had been stripped of their Jewish identity—one could be sure of that. Most of the people were no longer alive, victims of Hitler's gas chambers and crematoria. All that remained were memories—memories strong enough to make me lose for a moment the exhileration of being a Jew in Jerusalem. Instead, I was standing in Jerusalem Street in pre-war Piotrkow, Poland, in the city of my birth and childhood, where I went to school and dreamed about the future. Scenes of a distant past and a distant land came rushing to my mind, creating an inner feeling touched with nostalgia and pain.

> . . . It is the middle of a late springtime Sabbath morning in the Jewish quarter. The cobblestone streets seem deserted and silent. The stores and businesses, so bustling with activity the day before, are now padlocked and covered with heavy iron shutters. Not even the ever-present "Droshkas" (horse-driven taxis) dare disturb the stillness of the Sabbath atmosphere. Soon the service in the Great Synagogue and the Beth HaMidrash will be over, and from the children running in front of their elders will echo the sounds of laughter and chatter. At home, preparations are being made for the festive Sabbath meal, which is sure to include, besides the delicious food, a constant interspersion of singing and talking. After dinner we will walk to the park, meet with friends, play some ball, and then treat ourselves to a visit to the Botanical Garden to immerse ourselves in the beauty of that park in bloom, so fitting for a relaxed Sabbath afternoon. As darkness approaches, we will all rush home for the Havdalah service, which brings this wonderful day to a spectacular end.
>
> Soon it will be Lag B'Omer, one of Jewish Piotrkow's most festive days. Preparations for the Lag B'Omer parade had been under way for weeks. Finally, on that festive day, the various youth organizations will congregate, each before its own headquarters, proudly displaying their colorful uniforms. The youngsters from HaShomer HaTzair will be in green khaki

> blouses and blue ties, the Gordonia and HaNoar HaZioni all clad in their own distinctive colors. And then, somewhat separate from the rest, there will be the militant BeTar in their brown uniforms with matching caps. As the starting hour of the parade approaches, all of the youth groups, with their flags proudly waving in the early morning breeze, will line up behind the Maccabi sports troupe, who will be dressed completely in white and headed by the marching band. As the parade marches through the cobblestoned streets of the town, the multitude of people who jam the sidewalks will loudly cheer the marching assembly. The marchers will proceed towards the outskirts of the town, heading for the Rakov Forest. There, after the encampment, the traditional soccer game between the two rival teams—HaKoach and Maccabi—will take place. It will be a day of happiness long remembered by all. Meanwhile, back home in front of the Great Synagogue, another celebration will take place, this one organized by the religious leaders of the town. Hundreds of students from the many religious schools will celebrate the religious aspect of the day by listening to the inspiring speeches of their respected mentors. Lag B'Omer is the spring classic, an unforgettable yearly event in the town of Piotrkow.

I looked around me, a little shocked at the vividness of my recollection. Many of the mourners assembled at Mount Zion had taken part in the Lag B'Omer celebration. I wondered how many still recalled those joyous days in the detail that I did.

The memorial service was about to begin, or so I expected from the sudden hushed silence. But I stood for one more moment, unable to remove my eyes from the cold, white marble structure representing the once vibrant Jewish community of 20,000 souls. Up from my memory came the beloved image of another structure.

The Great Synagogue played a central role in the lives of generations of Piotrkow Jews. In addition to Sabbath and Holiday Services, all major events in the life of the Jewish community were observed within the massive, exquisitely decorated walls. Happy events were commemorated there, observed within its massive, exquisitely decorated walls, as were tragic occurrences. The lives of many Rabbis and outstanding scholars were eulogized there. The synagogue was also the meeting place for the community when in imminent danger of pogroms of other calamities. On only two occasions in its 150 years of existence were there no prayer services on Friday evening. The first of these happened in the year 1861, when the Czarist Russian military occupying authority closed the Synagogue after it served as the site of a memorial service for five murdered Polish Freedom Fighters. The second such time was in August, 1914, shortly after the outbreak of World War I, when Russian soldiers and their local supporters entered the Synagogue and ripped apart its furnishings with the lame excuse that they were looking for a secret telephone connection to the German Headquarters.

The Jews of Piotrkow were rightfully proud of their Great Synagogue. It was a

magnificent structure built in the Moorish style. Like a fortress, it was built on the grounds where a 17th century Synagogue had previously been destroyed by Jesuit students during an anti-Semitic outburst in 1740. This Great Synagogue of Piotrkow, which was known throughout Poland for its beautiful interior, was built in the years 1791–1793. It was a massive building with exterior walls measuring one and one-half meters in thickness. Upon entering the synagogue, one first experienced subdued lighting until the eyes inevitably were struck by the breathtaking sight of the magnificent gilded artwork on the eastern wall. The carvings, which were executed by the famous artist David Friedlander, depicted the Ten Commandments, replicas of the musical instruments which were used by the Levites in the Temple in Jerusalem and a carving of a golden crown held by two lions, used by the Levites in the Temple in Jerusalem, and a carving of a golden crown held by two lions, one on the right, the other on the left. Over the crown soared a black eagle with fully extended wings. With its beak directed to the south, the eagle faced the beautifully decorated ark containing the holy Torahs which it symbolically protected. Across from the ark stood the golden menorah with flickering lights and two cherubim on either side. Supported by four columns, and exquisitely decorated by murals depicting the holy places in Jerusalem, stood the first and second balconies, where the women prayed. Perhaps the most admirable of the synagogue's artwork was that which adorned the ceiling. Painted in Rococo style, using a rainbow of colors, was a tapestry of heavenly bodies and astrological signs which appeared to be moving through the firmament. Hanging from the ceilings were elegantly designed, immense, brass chandeliers, which were illuminated on various holidays. In the middle of the synagogue was a large, raised platform where the Torah was read. The cantor's pulpit was next to the ark against the eastern wall, and next to it was an enormous, handsomely carved chair of honor for the Rabbi of Piotrkow. The last man to occupy this chair was Rabbi Moshe Chaim Lau, a martyr of blessed memory. Before him our Chief Rabbi had been Meir Shapiro, founder of the world renowned Lublin Yeshiva.

It took the Jews of Piotrkow thirty years to collect the funds needed for the construction of the Great Synagogue. Many famous artists took part in its completion. In the 150 years of its existence, many of Europe's great men entered its gates and admired its beauty. Among them were the Russian Tsar Alexander the First, who visited the Synagogue on his way to the peace conference in Erfurt. Eight years before that, it was visited by the Commanding General of the French Expeditionary Army, while in retreat from Moscow; and, according to legend, the Great Synagogue of Piotrkow was visited by Napoleon Bonaparte himself.

Praying in the Great Synagogue and listening to the magnificent voice of the great Cantor Apter, accompanied by a boys' choir, still lingers in my memory. Actually, I did not worship there regularly. My maternal grandfather was a follower of the Chassidic Rabbi of Rospsha, so our entire family worshipped with the Rospsha congregation two blocks away from the Great Synagogue. On many occasions, however, we stopped over on our way home to sit for a while in this beautiful setting and listen to the cantor.

Suddenly, my thoughts were interrupted as the mournful, familiar words of "El Moleh Rachamim" began the Memorial Service: "Merciful G-d. . . spread thy heavenly

rest upon the pure souls of the Martyrs of Piotrkow who perished for Thy name. . . ." My thoughts went back to my last visit to the Great Synagogue of Piotrkow.

> The time was shortly before my immediate family and I left Piotrkow to settle in Dombrova, a town in the southwestern industrial region of Poland. I was a teenager with no thought of war or Holocaust. Yet, the message that I heard on that day made an indelible impression—one which stayed with me throughout the years. The words were those of the last Rabbi of Piotrkow, Rabbi Moshe Chaim Lau, whose Shabbath Shuva sermon on that day dealt with the topic of "Kiddush HaShem"—Martyrdom. At that point in time, the subject seemed so remote, more applicable to a historic time, to the ages of the Crusades or Inquisition. However, Rabbi Lau, who was in the process of writing a book about the very subject of his sermon, poignantly noted that the happenings in Germany, including the rise of anti-Semitism in general and Hitlerism in particular, forecast a terrible future for Jews, a future when the issue of "Kiddush HaShem" would be most relevant to every Jew in Europe.
>
> Several years later, Rabbi Lau was to deliver the last of his sermons to the remaining Martyrs of Piotrkow. He did so as he led them to their final march to the train which was to transport them to Treblinka. A witness from that scene later related that he spoke with a fervor and enthusiasm no less in intensity then that which he used to convey from the pulpit of the Synagogue. "Better a living death than a dead life," said Rabbi Lau, "and to be killed as a Jew is to die as a saint." He called upon the Jews "to fulfill the will of G-d with joy" and to continue to sing and praise the Almighty. Rabbi Lau succeeded in elevating the spirits of his people, although each and every one of them knew of the imminence of the inevitable fate. As the former Rabbi of Preshow, in Slovakia, he was begged by his students and friends to return to Preshow, where arrangements had been made to accommodate him, to save him from the "Action" (mass murder). Rabbi Lau, however, refused to acquiesce to their wishes, and insisted on remaining with his people to the very end. During the gradual deportations, he inspired the Piotrkow Jews to resist; to resist physically and mentally, to resist the Nazi enemy, and to resist the Judenrat which attempted to force Jews to collaborate in the destruction of their Brethren. I thought of that last sermon I had heard and how Rabbi Lau had lived up to those hard standards he had set. I wondered whether or not he had ever finished his book, *Kiddush HaShem*, and if his work has survived the war.

The service ended with the recitation of the Kaddish by the entire assembly, and

then the people began to leave. Somber faces, tearful eyes, some sobbing. Twenty years after the tragedy and the wounds were still fresh. Not a word was spoken—no words had to be spoken. And the survivors left with an ever stronger commitment: To live in defiance of all odds, and, as the few remaining eyewitnesses, to tell the story of the destruction of their community.

Piotrkow During the First World War



The "Breadline" before a bakery on the corner of Jerozolimska and Bykowska Streets. (Bykowska was renamed Pilsudskiego)



Children waiting for their food provided by the charitable Linas Hatzedek in 1917.



The religious school "Yesodei Hatorah" in 1934.

Inquisition in Piotrkow—

The Martyrdom of Matatiahu Calahora Over Three Centuries Ago

In 1663, Piotrkow became the site of anti-Semitic brutality. The educated Jewish apothecary, Matatiahu Calahora, a native of Italy who had settled in Cracow, committed the blunder of arguing with a local priest, a member of the Dominican order, about religious topics. The priest invited Calahora to dispute him in the cloister, but the Jew declined, promising to explain his views in writing. A few days later, the priest found on his chair in the church a statement written in German and containing a violent arraignment of the cult of the Immaculate Virgin. It is not impossible that the statement was composed and placed in the church by an adherent of the Reformation or the Arian heresy, both of which were then the object of persecution in Poland. However, the Dominican priest decided that Calahora was the author, and brought the charge of blasphemy against him.



This picture was found about 80 years ago in a museum in Lwow, by noted historian Gershim Bader.

The court of the Royal Castle cross-examined the defendant under torture, without being able to obtain a confession. Witnesses testified that Calahora was not even able to write German; as a native of Italy, he used the Italian language in his conversations with the priest. In spite of all this evidence, the unfortunate Calahora was sentenced to be burned at the stake. The alarmed Jewish community raised a protest, and the case was transferred to the highest court in Piotrkow. The accused was sent there in chains, together with the plaintiff and the witness. But the arch-Catholic tribunal confirmed the verdict of the lower court, ordering that the sentence be executed in the following barbarous sequence: First the lips of the "blasphemer" were to be cut off; next his hand,

which had held the fateful statement, was to be burned; then the tongue, which had spoken against the Christian religion, was to be removed; and finally the body was to be burned at the stake, and the ashes of the victim loaded into a cannon and discharged into the air.

This cannibalistic ceremony was faithfully carried out on December 13, 1663, in the market-place (plac Trybunalski) in Piotrkow.[1]

New Bulletin



Rynek Trybunalski, in 1663. The Kadosh Matatiahu Calahora was tortured and martyred there. On the far left, the passage to Plac Czarniecki.

1 "History of Jews in Russian and Poland," by Semen Markovitch Dubnow, 1916.

Notable Personalities of Piotrkow



Rabbi Hayim David Bernard.

Hayim David Bernard (1758–1858), Polish physician and Chassidic leader. Born in Dzialoszyce, near Piotrkow, Bernard is reputed to have been the son of the poet and physician, Issachar Falkensohn Behr. At the age of 14, Bernard arrived in Berlin and later qualified as a physician in Erfurt. The liberal policies of King Frederick William II enabled him to become court physician at Potsdam and a medical officer in the Prussian army—a considerable achievement for a Jew. After Napoleon's conquest of Poland, Bernard was appointed medical inspector for the western regions of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw (1807–15). A typical product of the German–Jewish Enlightenment, he at first remained aloof from Polish Jewry, but a spiritual crisis led him to approach Rabbi David of Lelov, who introduced him to Rabbi Jacob Isaac Ha-Levi Horowitz, the Seer of Lublin. Bernard, known thereafter as R. Hayim David, became a strictly Orthodox Jew and a follower of the Seer. He grew a beard, although he retained western dress and never mastered Yiddish. As the Warsaw Jewish archives have shown, he was a leading communal figure. Among the Jews and Christians whom he treated, Bernard was venerated as a saint. He spent the rest of his life in Piotrkow, both as head of the local hospital and a wonder-working Chassid. For decades after the physician's death, his grave was a center of Chassidic pilgrimage.

(Editor's note: The descendants of the Great Tsadik, the brothers Saul and Robert Dessau, recently restored the "Ohel" of Dr. H.D. Bernard—the shrine of many Chassidic pilgrimages of yesteryear—at the Jewish cemetery in Piotrkow.)

Ernestine Potovsky-Rose (1810–1892), U.S. feminist and social activist, was born in Piotrkow, the daughter of an Orthodox rabbi. Early in life she rebelled against her traditional upbringing and, at the age of 17, she left home and traveled in Europe. In 1832, while in England, she met the English social reformer Robert Owen and became his disciple. The same year she married William Rose, a jeweler and silversmith by trade. In 1936 the couple moved to New York City, and Ernestine traveled throughout the



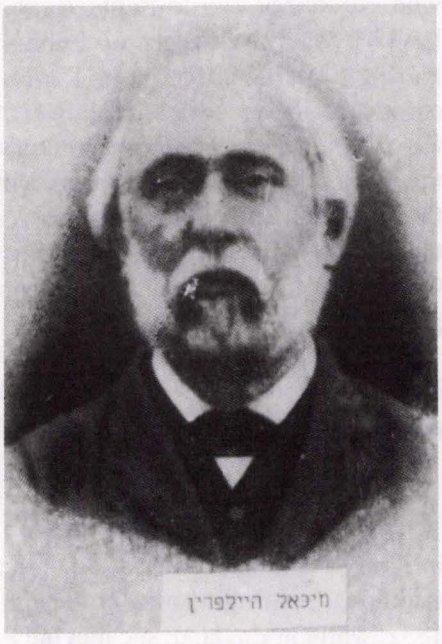
Ernestine Potovsky-Rose.

United States giving lectures on government, religion, free schools, the abolition of slavery and women's rights. In 1850 she helped to organize the first National Women's Rights Convention. Along with Susan B. Anthony and other militants, she founded the Women's Suffrage Society.

Although Ernestine seemed to attach no particular significance to her Jewish background, she did engage, in 1863, in a long-publicized debate with Horace Seaver, the abolitionist editor of the "Boston Investigator," whom she accused of anti-Semitic opinions.

Michael Heilprin (1823–1888), born in Piotrkow, was a linguist, scholar, encyclopedist, and author. In 1842 Heilprin and his family went to Hungary, where he joined the Hungarian liberal movement and became well known as a writer and revolutionary poet during the revolution of 1848. After the suppression of the uprising, Heilprin went into hiding and fled to Paris. He emigrated to the U.S. in 1858 and taught in Hebrew Education Society Schools. After, moving from Philadelphia to Brooklyn, he became editor of *Appelton's New American Cyclopedia.* He was considered one of the foremost writers on European literature and politics. In the 1880's Heilprin was active in the work of the Emigrant Aid Society and advocated the establishment of colonies for Russo-Jewish refugees in Oregon, the Dakotas and New Jersey.

Compiled by Lorraine Justman-Wisnicki



Michael Heilprin.



Saul Dessau before the Ohel of his ancestor, Dr. Hayim David Bernard, at the cemetery in Piotrkow that he and his brother Robert recently restored.

THE SAGES

Rabbinical Portraits

Spiritual Leaders of the Community Over the Last Three Centuries

1) Rabbi Meir Getz (1685–1732), the first Rabbi of Piotrkow and Lask (sharing the pulpit in both cities), served for 13 years after a hard and painful life. He was a great scholar and an active man, paving the way for the great Rabbis that followed him.

2) His son, Rabbi R. Elikim Getz (1705–1738), replaced his father for a short period at age 30 after serving as presiding dayan for 7 years. He was a great, learned man and passed away at the age of 32.

3) Rabbi Hanania Liepmann Miesels (?–1811), a great scholar famous throughout Poland, was advisor to many Rabbis and helped them in writing their books. He lived a long life but had no children. After his death, two local Rabbis tried for the position and Rabbi Abraham Zvi Pacanovski was chosen.

4) Rabbi Abraham Zvi Pacanovski (1777–1819), the great Rabbi of Piotrkow and son of the well-known speaker, Rabbi Eliezer from Pocarow, was the descendant of famous Rabbis. He authored the important and famous book *Biet, Abraham*, published posthumously by his father after he passed away at age 42. He served the Kehila for only seven years. His great-grandfather was Rabbi Zvi Hirsh Piotrkower, a very rich man who built a big walled house for a synagogue, a beit midrash and a Kehila center. Many articles were written about his life, one of them by Jacob Krakovski of Piotrkow.

5) Rabbi David Isaac Bromberg (?–1827), the son of Rabbi Reuben, also of Piotrkow, was a well-known lamdan and was called "The Sharp One." He was a student of famous Rabbis and attracted many students to his yeshiva. He acquired the position after a great fight between his supporters and those of Rabbi Abraham Zvi and later decided to move to the nearby city of Ujazd. He wrote the books *Beth David* and *Chidushai HaRadak*, edited the book *Beth Israel* by the Magid of Kuzman, and was a student of Przysucha "HaYehudi Hakadosh."

6) Rabbi Nathan Neta Piotrkover, the young son of Rabbi Zvi Hirsh, headed the Rabbinate from 1763–1766. He died at a young age and not much is known about him.

7) Rabbi Moshe Pietrekowski (?–1814), a known lamdan, had pupils from all over the country who would come to study at his yeshiva.

8) Rabbi Aharon Pietrekowski, the son of Rabbi Moshe (?–1831), was very sharp. He was a dayan in Lask and studied with his father and with Rabbi Abraham Zvi Pacanovski. He was known for his knowledge in and out of Piotrkow and also as a kabbalist. He was a student of Rabbi Fishel of Strikov. He was very good in math and studied logarithms. His son, Rabbi Itzak, followed him as a Rabbi.

9) Rabbi Yakov Karo (1771–?) was the son of the Gaon Rabbi Arieh Leib, who had to leave his post in Krotechin because of "blood libels" and settled in Germany. Rabbi Yakov served only briefly in Piotrkow and then left for Silesia.

10) Rabbi David Isaac Buchner (?–1827) shared his fame with another Rabbi named David Itzhak Bromberg. Both published books. Rabbi Bromberg wrote *Chidushei HaRadak* and *Beth David.* Rabbi Buchner also wrote *Beth David* on Deuteronomy. After serving in Piotrkow he later served in Czestochowa. His ideas appear in several books.

11) Rabbi Dov Bersh Edelstein (?–1827) served the city for two years after being a Rabbi in Chmelnick. A descendant of a very famous family, he died of cholera during an epidemic which claimed many lives. His life was written about in the book *Olat Chodesh* by the great Rabbi Sinai Safir of Brezsin.

12) Rabbi Leibusch Meisels (?–1848) served the cities of Kilikov, Zamosc and, for a short time, Piotrkow. His son Rabbi David was a Rabbi in Nashelsk, a real Gaon who advised many Rabanim on various subjects. His son printed the books *Ahavat David* and *Chidushei HaRadak.*

13) Rabbi Baruch Zvi Hirsh Rosenblum (?–1883) died at age 65. He served the Kehilot of Rodzin and Vengrow prior to Piotrkow. In Rodzin he was accused by the Russians of supporting the Poles and put in prison. The prison commander, a Pole, helped him and they both escaped. He had to go into hiding for four years until his pardon was announced. In 1865, he began to serve in Vengrow; in 1868, he left for Piotrkow, where he stayed until his death. He had good relations with the Piotrkow chief of officers and got permission to have an Eruv. He influenced Halachic literature and many Rabbis used his answers in public actions.

14) Rabbi Eliezer Shalom Morgenstern was Rabbi of the cities of Cichow and Shedletz prior to becoming the Rabbi of Piotrkow. He was one of the best students of the Holy Saba of Radoshitz. He served from 1858 to 1867. He was known as a great teacher and preacher and attracted many followers. The time he served was one of the best for the Jewish Kehila.

15) Rabbi Isaac Kaczka was known as Yitzhakal Charif. He was a great lamdan. He served as the chairman of the Beth Din after the death of Rabbi Pacanovski and was very famous in his generation. His grandson, Rabbi Hanoch Kaczka, published many of his writings, which were praised by the Rav Kook and Zennenfeld, one of the known Chassidim of the Holy Saba. In 1831, on his way to a simcha, he was almost killed as a spy and miraculously was saved by a guard. This was said to be the work of Elijah the Prophet.

16) Rabbi Hayim Waks (1882–1889) was born in Tarnogrod near Lublin. As a young man he served there as a Rabbi and later served in Kalish. In 1884 he became Rabbi of Piotrkow. He was very learned in Torah and was approached by many Rabanim to answer their questions. He was also a practical man who believed in settling in Eretz Yisrael and bought a citrus grove there in 1876. He sold Etrogim from Eretz Yisrael during Sukkot. In 1886, as an old and frail man, he visited Israel. He wanted people to work the land but realized they were not ready. He decided to buy additional housing in order to increase the area of Jewish settlement and relieve the congestion and crowding.

The books *Yeshuat Malca* of the Kulna Rabbi and *Nefesh Chaya* of the Piotrkow Rabbi tell of their visit and reception in Jerusalem and their encouragement to Chalutzim in Petach Tikvah to stay although conditions were bad and many had died of malaria. After this visit, he worked hard to help the Yishuv and was elected the president of the Kolel Polin Warsaw, which he served till his death. While visiting his in-laws in Kuzmitz in 1889, he had a stroke and died. He was buried in Kalish after a Rabbinacal Decree, since three cities claimed him. All the great Rabbis and scholars came to give him the last honors and his grave became a tent where many came to pray. He left seven daughters, married to rich Chassidim, and one son. His second wife died in Piotrkow in 1910 and is buried there. Many of his family later were victims of the Holocaust. His grandson, Rabbi Isaac Kalish, and a great-grandson, HaRav Menachem Zinger, survived and lived in the U.S. and some of his descendants live in Israel as followers of the Rabbi Chaim Eliezer Alter. He son-in-law, Rabbi Yosef Kalish, published a new edition of his book *Nefesh Chaya* in the years 1931–1937. His grandson, Rabbi Israel Yeshoshua Aibeshitz, lived in Israel and published a book with his writings.

17) Rabbi Simcha Yair Rosenfeld (1831–1911) served for many years in different cities. In 1890 he became the Rabbi of Piotrkow. He served the community until his last day and really loved the city, where he found many wise and learned men. The people of Piotrkow loved him too. An excellent speaker, he maintained close connections with many great Rabbis of his era. At his funeral, scores of Rabbis from other cities honored his memory.



The Tsadiks of Wolborz.

The Court of the Wolborz *Tsadiks*

R. Isachar Dov-Ber Hacohen Turnheim of Wolborz (1803–1878) founded the Jewish community of Wolborz and became its Rabbi in 1862. People flocked to him since he was known as a miracle-working Chassid. He was blessed with a Cantor's voice and organized a choir accompanied by drums, bells, and cymbals. After his demise, his son, R. Jacob Moshe, took over the reins of the Wolborz Court.

The House of the *Tsadiks* of Przedborz

R. Teshaya'le Weltfried (1770–1831) was the *Tsadik* of Przedborz. He settled in that small town with other *Tsadiks* of Poland, as was the custom. He was a descendant of R. Meir Getz, the first rabbi of Piotrkow. He was one of the "Holy Group" of Lublin, whose leader was called the "Holy Jew" or the "Seer" R. Weltfried replaced the "Seer." after the latter's death.

His son, *R. Immanuel of Przedborz* (1802—1865), became the next Rabbi. He was believed to have resuscitated a dead child.

His son, *R. Abraham Moshe* of Rosprza (1841–1918), replaced R. Immanuel as Rabbi of Przedborz. He had at one time been accused of having violated the blood ritual during Passover, whereupon he settled in Rosprza.

His brother, *R. Yehezkel Yehiel* (?–1919), at that time officiated as Rabbi in Piotrkow. (Note: Przedborz, near Piotrkow, was an old community and considered to be the

center of scholarship in Poland. Its synagogue, constructed of wood, was built by King Kazimierz the Third and his Jewish wife, Esterka).

The Branches of the Radoszyce Dynasty

R. Meir Menahem Finkler (1862–1912), was descendant of R. Yisahar Ben Radoszyc, who was called a second "Baal-Shem-Tov." His activity was the pursuit of Chassidic virtues: Modesty, the visit of *tsadiks*, a love of Israel, fervent prayer, a belief in brotherhood, charity, enthusiasm, etc. He was a Rabbi of Radoszyce, and later of Piotrkow.

His son, *Itzhak Shmuel Eliehu Finkler* of Piotrkow (1902–1945), replaced him as Rabbi. He died in a Nazi camp. (The entire moving story about Itzhak appears in this book.

R. Moshe Brukman (Brukazh), the "Paver" of Piotrkow (1790–1881), began his labors as paver of roads, slept on the ground in fields and forests. He was a poor conversationalist, but was considered to be a *tsadik* with a following of at least one hundred thousand people. He was capable of healing with the sheer power of his spirit. When he settled in Piotrkow, he was entreated to intercede in cases of mental illness, especially the "*dibbuks.*" He acquired great wealth and contributed enormously to the settlers of Eretz Israel. His fellow *tsadiks* looked upon him with skepticism and slight disfavor; they considered him to be somewhat of a wizard.

Izkor Book

Rabbi Menachem David Temkin

The seat of Rabbi Simcha Yair was occupied by Rabbi Menachem David Temkin, son of Reb Michael Temkin, grandson of Rabbi David Temkin, one of the leading rabbis of Warsaw. He was born in 1861, and studied in Brisk under the famous scholar Rabbi Yosef Ber Soloveichik. He became one of the leading students of the leading scholar of his generation, Rabbi Yehoshua'le of Kutna. He received his rabbinical ordination in Brisk. A gentle and exemplary person, Rabbi Temkin became one of the beloved rabbis and sages of Piotrkow. He came from an environment replete with the love of study of Torah for its own sake and dedication to the world of Halacha.

While in Warsaw, he married the only daughter of a wealthy Jew, Reb Moshe Natan Halber, who left his son-in-law a fortune and a large house in Warsaw. His home was always humming with the great sages and leaders of Polish Jewry. The Gaon of Kutna would always stay in his house while visiting Warsaw. Even as a young man, he became known as a leading scholar.

After thirty years of affluence, he awoke one day a poor man. His friends, the sages of Poland, headed by the Ostrovtze Rebbe, counseled him to assume a rabbinical position. At that time the Piotrkow needed a rabbi following the passing of Rabbi Simcha Yair. The Ostrovtze Rebbe went to Piotrkow and stayed there for several weeks until he

persuaded the leaders of the community to accept Rabbi Temkin as their rabbi. At first they refused to offer him the position, arguing that it would be the first time they would have a rabbi who had not served in any other rabbinical post. But they were persuaded by the Rebbe, who promised them that Rabbi Temkin would serve them well. In 1913 Rabbi Temkin arrived in Piotrkow as the town's rabbi. He was elected as chairman of the rabbinical conference that took place in Lublin on September 12–14, 1916 at the instructions of the central authorities in Warsaw.

His Trials as Leader in Time of Emergency

After World War I broke out, the town suffered great hardship, and Rabbi Temkin's role became most difficult. The town came under military occupation and then passed from one civilian authority to another. Each time, the rabbi was told that, as spiritual leader, he was responsible for the entire community; if any rules were broken, he would be held responsible. The warnings affected his health and a heart ailment hastened his end.

An interesting incident during that time led to the rescue of two Jewish soldiers from execution, following a charge of espionage. One night in October 1914, the bell rang at the rabbi's office and two armed soldiers marched in. They handed him an urgent summons from the office of the military governor and told him to sign it. He did not hesitate and signed. But because of the excitement, he fainted. His family members revived him. They opened the envelope and found an order that said: "To the Rabbi of the Local Jewish Community. You must appear personally tomorrow at six o'clock in the morning at the military court at the Russian High School building. Your appearance is mandatory, and you must be on time." The rabbi turned pale, since it was already past midnight; he needed to take along a lawyer or a Russian interpreter, and it was too late to do either. Finally he decided to invite the writer, Moshe Feinkind, who would serve as his spokesman. In the morning the two walked over to the Russian high school and, when they arrived at the court, they showed the summons. Only the rabbi was allowed to go in. Feinkind remained in the lobby. The rabbi appeared before the court and faced the presiding judge, a general, and the two officers who served as members of the court. On the bench of the accused sat two bearded Jews, whose pale thin faces expressed fear and despair. The rabbi showed his credentials to the presiding judge, who sat comfortably in an armchair, wrapped in his fur coat.

Because of Early Friendship

Suddenly the general turned toward the rabbi and smiled, asking in Russian, "David! What are you doing here?" The rabbi did not utter a word. The general continued, still smiling benignly, "Don't you know me? I used to be a frequent guest at your house." The rabbi finally remembered who the man was. He had been the commandant of the Brisk fort when his father, Reb Michael Temkin, was the quartermaster of the fort. The rabbi's father and the general had become friends, and the former would visit the general's home and play with his children.



רבי
מנחם דוד
טמקין
Rabbi Temkin.

This unexpected reunion eased the rabbi's heart, and he started telling the general his life story, how he came to Piotrkow and what his position in that town was. At the general's order, the chat was interrupted; it was expected to be resumed after the trial. The indictment was read: the two soldiers were accused of passing information on to the enemy. According to the testimony of some Russian soldiers who had been with them in the trenches on the front at the village of Serock near Piotrkow, each time a shell was fired by the enemy, the Jewish soldiers would shout "Shema Israel" in a loud voice. This went on for several days. Eventually the entire unit was killed except for those two Jews and five Russian soldiers. According to the interpreter, those two words signaled the enemy not to direct the fire at the Jews. The Jewish soldiers now faced execution.

In reality, the rabbi had been summoned to that trial to witness the sentence that was to be pronounced at the end of the session, and, as a clergyman, he was expected to be with the defendants during their last minutes. The rabbi, who had taken heart from his conversation with the general, asked for permission to express his opinion. Permission was granted. He explained to the judges what the words "Shema Israel," which had been repeatedly pronounced by the Jewish soldiers, actually meant. He told them that it was the holiest prayer known to Jews, especially in a moment of grave danger or disaster. He eloquently pleaded the case of the innocent soldiers, who had meant no harm and had only called out to their maker from the depth of their predicament. The rabbi's defense reached the hearts of the judges and the soldiers were acquitted.

The old general who presided at the trial agreed to issue a certificate to the rabbi stating that he had always been a loyal subject of the Russian rule, as the son of a family who for many years was dedicated to the affairs of the Russian army in many places in the Empire. The general stressed that Rabbi Temkin should be treated as a distinguished personage who carried the burden of a spiritual leader and who was a first-class citizen. The rabbi considered that certificate a real tribute and guarded it as a valuable document. After his demise it was publicly shown at the home of his son-in-law, Avraham Cohen, the brother of the famous Lodz industrialist Asher Cohen.

Izkor Book

The Great Teachers

Rabbi Yehuda Meir Shapira

Rabbi Yehuda Meir Shapira was born in March 1887. His father was Rabbi Yaakov Shimshon of Schatz (Bukovina), son of Rabbi Yehuda Meir, son of Rabbi Dov of Tlost, son of Rabbi Yehuda Meir of Shpitovka, son of the famous tzaddik and friend of Besht (the founder of Chassidism), Rabbi Pinchus of Kuritz, a descendant of Rabbi Natan Shapira, author of *Megalah Amukot of Cracow*. In his youth he caused a stir in the world of the Torah with his wisdom and great knowledge. This is confirmed by the great sage, Rabbi Shalom Mordechai Svedron of Berzan, in the ordination certificate he issued for the Rabbi Meir, in which he writes, "I saw a young man named Meir, and I offered the blessing Yotzer Ha'meorot (creator of the lights)."



Rabbi Yehuda Meir Shapira.

Rabbi Shapira had studied with his maternal grandfather, Rabbi Shmuel Yitzhak Schor of Munstritz, author of *Minchat Shai*, mastering all aspects of Torah and knowledge; soon he became known as a great scholar. A wealthy Galician Jew named Rabbi Yaakov David Breitman of Tarnopol gave him his daughter's hand in marriage.

He became totally dedicated to the study of Torah at his comfortable home in Tarnopol. In a short time the "genius of Schatz" became one of the leading lights of his generation. His home became a meeting place for rabbis and scholars who would direct their questions to him; his answers always hit the mark and were accepted favorably, which drew much attention to him. He was seen as a rising star in the world of Halacha, and he proceeded to publish his first book, *Imrey Daat*. Around that time he was offered the position of rabbi of the town of Galina in Galicia and he quickly accepted it, although his in-laws were against his becoming a servant of the community. In Galina he continued to learn Torah and tried to start a school for children and a yeshiva for young men. The neglected town became a center of Torah. His first yeshiva in Galina, which

he headed, became a source of famous rabbis who followed in his footsteps.

But Rabbi Shapira's restless spirit would not let him remain in Galina. He became a public champion of Torah and faith, and in public gatherings he raised his voice against the neglect of young people and proclaimed himself spiritual father to the yeshiva students who, because of lack of attention, were condemned to waste away. He had labored successfully in Galina for ten years, but he started to feel that the place was too small for him; in 1922 he became rabbi in Sanok.

Public Leader and Delegate to the Sejm

In Sanok he also found much to do. Here, too, he did a great deal for the community, and his fame increased. Legends spread about his dynamic personality. He became a member of Agudath Israel and did a great deal for that movement. From Sanok he was often invited to appear on the podium on behalf of Poland's religious Jewry, as a speaker, he fired up the masses. He was chosen to head Agudath Israel and was elected delegate to the Polish Sejm (parliament).

On Adar 16, 1924, he was chosen rabbi of the great town of Piotrkow, which boasted many sages and writers, devoted Jews and Jewish scholars. In 1923 he had proposed at a great assembly of Agudath Israel in Vienna the study of a "daily page" of Talmud and the establishment of universal yeshiva; both proposals were received with loud applause.

When Rabbi Shapira became the rabbi of Piotrkow, he was only 37 years old; not since the days of the Gaon author of *Brit Avraham*, who had become rabbi of Piotrkow at a young age, had anyone been appointed so young to serve as a rabbi of a town that had known so many great rabbis and sages. He served as rabbi of the town while spending most of his time away because of his frequent trips on behalf of the Lublin Sages Yeshiva, which he had organized. But his leadership was felt in Piotrkow, as he was dedicated to his work in the community. This imprint was felt in all matters, great and small. His fiery sermons inspired people, and he became extremely popular; his speeches always drew an overflow crowd.

Head of the Lublin Sages Yeshiva

Rabbi Shapira's crowning achievement was the establishment of the Lublin Sages Yeshiva. He brought together exemplary people, old Chassidim, heads of Orthodox Jewry and public leaders who proceeded to establish the great yeshiva which was his life's dream. The Piotrkow community gave him a great deal of help. Many of its communal leaders supported him because of his great influence and their admiration for him. While serving as rabbi in Piotrkow, he was fortunate enough to see his dreams fulfilled, and even took part in the first conclusion of Talmudic study (siyum), which occurred on the 15th of Shvat, 1934. He was able to teach Torah to his students after the foundation was laid for the great building of the yeshiva, an event that was joyously celebrated at his home in Piotrkow. It took seven years to complete the building; he worked day and night raising funds for the cause. In his short life he was able to see this project completed.

In 1926, Rabbi Shapira published his responsa book *Or Hameir*, a second edition of which was published by his brother in New York in 1951. In Iyar, 1931 he became president of the rabbinical court in Lublin and moved to that city, having served in Piotrkow for six years. His many cares gave him no rest after he settled in Lublin, and he would often tell his friends that he missed his rabbinical position in Piotrkow. Because of his difficult work in Lublin he became prematurely old, and despite his young age his hair turned gray. He suddenly took ill and on the 7th of Heshvan, 1934, after living in Lublin for two and a half years, he departed this world at the age of 46 and eight months. Nearly one hundred thousand people attended his funeral, and religious Jewry in Poland and elsewhere went into deep mourning.

Izkor Book



Rav Shapira with his talmidim.

Rabbi Moshe Hayim Lau—The Last Rabbi of Piotrkow



רבי משה חיים (לאו) לויא הי"ד

Rabbi Moshe Hayim Lau–Lavie.

For several years, Piotrkow was without a chief rabbi, and rabbinical matters were handled by local Jewish functionaries. Only three years before the outbreak of World War II, Rabbi Moshe Hayim Lau was appointed to that post. A native of Lvov, he was born on Iyar 14, 1892 to Rabbi Zvi Yehuda and his wife Leah Hinda, and was the scion of a famous rabbinical family in eastern Galicia, a descendant of the holy SHLA, author of *Bayit Hadash* and *Turey Zahav*, and of Rabbi Menachem Mannes Halevi Ish Horowitz, the head of the rabbinical court in Altona, Hamburg and Wandsbek.

The great community of Lvov, capital of Galicia, where he grew up, was a stronghold of Torah and piety in Poland for seven hundred years. In his youth, he served leading scholars, and for several years he studied in a rabbinical academy in Lvov with Rabbi Yosef Teomim, author of *Peri Megadim*, who was the head of the rabbinical court in that city. The school was crowded with rabbinical students, and the voice of Torah was heard everywhere. Moshe Hayim spend days and nights studying all branches of Torah and acquired great knowledge and skill. He also pursued Jewish philosophy and had a great knowledge of secular subjects. He was ordained by the last poskim, the Rabbi of Barjan, Rabbi Sholem Mordechai Hakohen Shvedron, Rabbi Meir Arik of Tarnow-Buczacz, and Rabbi Shmuel Angel of Radomishl.

Rabbi Moshe Hayim was elected at a young age to serve as the rabbi of Schatz (Sochava) in Bukovina. He devoted most of his energy to bringing the youth closer to the life of Torah and mitzvot. He was successful in his work and became a major influence with youth, since he understood young people and was able to lead them in the ways of truth, Torah, and purposeful living. Besides possessing great knowledge, he was also a great orator. He was a wonderful conversationalist, and anyone who came to him to discuss problems or express doubts left encouraged. Soon he became well known in his own country and abroad and many important communities asked him to serve as their rabbi. From Schatz he moved to Pershov, an old and renowned community in Slovakia. There he founded the Torat Hayim yeshiva,

which attracted hundreds of students from Slovakia, Poland and Austria.

Rabbi Lau became even better known in the Jewish world because of his book *Kiddush Hashem* and his writing about the Jewish mother and family. His essays and articles were enthusiastically reviewed by the Jewish press in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Austria, but he was best known as a great speaker who could move the masses and affect the individual. He had many students who became religious and communal leaders, both in Israel and in the diaspora.

In addition to his educational work and the training of a new generation of rabbis, Rabbi Lau devoted much of his time to the Jewish public in general, and was one of the prime movers for the establishment of educational and vocational institutions for children who did not continue their studies in the yeshivot and Batei Midrash. He was one of the advocates and founders of the religious schools for girls, Beit Yaakov, and through his initiative many such schools were started throughout Galicia.

After his cousin, the Gaon Rabbi Meir Shapira, the head of the rabbinical court in Piotrkow, was chosen rabbi of Lublin, Rabbi Moshe Hayim was chosen for the post of head rabbi of the court of Piotrkow. He derived deep pleasure from the great library that he had brought with him, with over ten thousand valuable books. In Piotrkow he soon became popular, and his talks and speeches made a strong impression on the public; many came to hear him. His influence was unusual, and he created a pious atmosphere around him and brought many back to the teachings of Judaism.

The subject of "Kiddush Hashem" is unique to the Jewish people, and in almost every generation individual Jews and entire communities have had to sacrifice themselves for the sanctification of the holy name. Rabbi Moshe Hayim seems to have felt that he would have to sanctify the holy name with his own body, and he proceeded to write a comprehensive book on the subject. He did an enormous amount of research for this book, gathering material from many sources, old and more recent, adding his own innovations; Torah scholars who read the first copies praised the book as a valuable addition to halachic literature. He wrote other manuscripts with innovations in Torah, Halacha and Aggadah, as well as responsa, which he planned to prepare for publication. Unfortunately, they were lost along with his great library. He conducted a correspondence with other sages on such wartime questions as the agunah (a married woman whose husband is missing)—among them Rabbi Hayim Ozer Grudzinski of Wilna, Rabbi Menachem Zemba of Warsaw-Praga, and the Gaon of Chivin, Rabbi Dov Beirish Weidenfeld.

After Piotrkow was occupied by the Germans, Rabbi Lau sought to use his ties with the leaders of the German minority to make things easier for the local Jewish community, and during the early stages of the occupation he was able to avert many evil decrees.

During the first year of the Second World War, the problem of wives whose soldier husbands were missing, either because they had died in battle, were taken prisoner, or had escaped to the Soviet Union, became acute. The rabbi formed a special court composed of the judges of Reb Mendel Weiss and Reb Moshe Temkin, joined by the judge from Aleksandrow near Lodz, Rabbi Hanoch Henich Sherfinski, who was known for his expertise in Halacha. The court took care of dozens of women whose husbands were missing.

The rabbi paid special attention to this matter, with which he had been familiar from his younger days during World War I, and devoted a great deal of time to each case, while looking for ways to free the women from their indefinite status. In the course of his work he added his own commentaries to Section 17 of the Shulchan Aruch—Even Haezer, which deal with this matter. But this valuable composition, based on Rabbi Lau's vast experience in this area, was lost along with his other important writings, including a Hebrew diary of the German occupation of Poland until the day the rabbi was sent with the last members of his community to Treblinka.

During the Nazi occupation he worked tirelessly on foiling Nazi schemes against the Jews, and was in touch with various persons in Slovakia trying to help people escape and alert Jewish institutions in England and Switzerland. The Pershov community, where he had previously served as rabbi, did a great deal to save the rabbi and his family and bring them to Slovakia. But he chose to remain in Piotrkow until the very end.

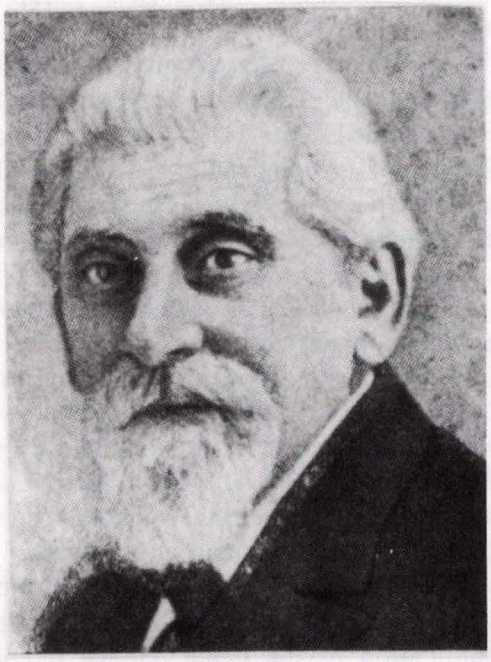
In Heshvan, 1943 the rabbi, along with thousands of members of his community, was transported by the "death" train to the extermination camp of Treblinka, while members of his community from Pershov were brought there at the same time. He did not become discouraged, and continued to lift the spirits of his followers. Even at that fateful moment, when the end was near, he would keep saying, "For you shall go out joyously." In other words: Joy enables a person to overcome trouble, hardship and suffering. He resembled a captain whose ship was sinking in a stormy sea, as he waited to be the last one to jump into the treacherous waves when all hope of rescue was gone. He and his congregants died as saints, and with their death these holy communities came to an end. May their memory endure in the hearts of the survivors. He left three sons who live in Israel.

Izkor Book

Personalities

Moshe Feinkind (1865—1935)

Reb Moshe Hacohen Feinkind, may he rest in peace, the son of Reb Pinhas, was born on the first day of Shevat, 5621 (1865) in the town of Turk, the district of Kalish to a Chassidic family. His mother was the great-granddaughter of the Gaon Reb Avraham Avli Gumbiner, a Jewish scholar famous for his commentary on the Shulkhan Arukh, "The Shield of Abraham," who was born in the year 1637. His grandfather Moishele, the rabbi of Pudembitz (in the environs of Kalish), was known by his nickname, "Clever Reb Moishele." He participated in the Kosciusko rebellion of 1794.



Moshe Feinkind.

In his father's house, Moshe Feinkind received a traditional religious education, studied in the "Heder" and the "Yeshivas" and especially in Brezhin, a town close to Piotrkow—Lodz, with his uncle, the town rabbi, Reb Israel Feinkind, may he rest in peace.

At a young age he showed a penchant for general science and for Jewish scholarship. He went to Berlin, where he studied philosophy, history, literature and Jewish history. He attended lectures by Professors Dr. Kassel, Dr. Lazarus and Dr. Steintal. He was a member of the Union of Jewish students from Russia and, because of his participation in their demonstration against the ambassador of the Czarist Russian government, Orlov, he was expelled from Berlin and returned to Poland. In order to support himself, he taught Hebrew and German in private homes in Lodz.

In this city he began his literary work. He translated poetry of the German classicists into Hebrew and published it in the Noar Hatzioni periodical "Nitzanim." From 1884 he became one of the regular contributors to "Hatzfira" (in "Hatzfira" he published a long biography of Dr. Ludwig Philipson), "Freund" (Petersburg), "Undzer Leben" (Warsaw), and also published articles and reports in German Jewish periodicals and

newspapers such as "Algemeine Zeitung des Judentums," "Israelitische Wochenschrift," and "Judische Literaturblatt."

After marrying Freidl, the daughter of Blume and Leibele Ehrlich (her father was an enlightened scholarly Jew and a respected member of the Piotrkow community), Feinkind moved to Piotrkow, where he taught Hebrew and German. After leaving the teaching profession, he supported himself by working as the private secretary of the famous lawyer Mieczyslaw Hundzinski, an active member of the conservative, anti-Semitic "National Democratic" party, who greatly admired Feinkind's broad knowledge and command of many languages. He took part in the public life of the city, was one of the founders of the "Hovvei Zion" group and, later on, the political Zionist organization.

In 1906 he headed the group that established the first M. Krinski (from Warsaw) Hebrew school in the city, where students learned in Hebrew. It bore the modest name of "Reformed Heder." Ultra-Orthodox fanatics declared war against this school, and at the head of its defenders stood Moshe Feinkind, who courageously fought back. He did much to spread the Hebrew language and the Zionist idea in our city. Around him were concentrated all the devotees of the Enlightenment, the graduates of the Jewish schools and the children of the Orthodox and the fanatics. He guided them, helped them in their desire to obtain knowledge and understanding and loaned them books from his rich library. He appeared in clubs and at gatherings and lectured on Zionism and literature. He did it all with enthusiasm, wisdom, and charity.

In the period of the first World War, when the "Agudat Zion" and "Tarbut" began widespread activity, he was right in the thick of the Zionist and cultural work. On the 20th of Tamuz, the date of the death of Zionist leader Theodore Herzl, he would give a public lecture as part of the memorial ceremony he had arranged, on the creator of the political Zionist movement and his work.

In 1914 he brought out the Yiddish weekly entitled the "Piotrkow Jewish Voice," but when World War I broke out that same year, Governor Yatshevski forbade the publication of the paper. Hence it appeared just once, published by Shlomo Belchatowski's press.

At the end of 1916, the Austrian occupation authorities held municipal elections. Fifty town council advisors were elected: 37 Christians and 13 Jews. M. Feinkind was one elected from the Jewish list.

At the festive opening session of the City Hall, when declarations were read by representatives of the various parties, town councilman M. Feinkind announced that he was joining the declaration of the "Jewish Union" and added "that he would strive, among other things, to achieve for Jews in the independent Polish state equality of national and civil rights." He also announced that he constituted the "Volksgruppe" (people's faction) at City Hall.

In the following years he dedicated himself to organizing the craftsmen in the city and in adjacent towns, he participated in setting up a cooperative league for supplying raw materials to the Jewish craftsmen and in expanding the organization's charitable fund; for many years he served as chairman of the organization and those unions. When he was forced by reasons of health and by his literary work to end his activity on behalf

of the craftsmen, he was honored, as a token of thanks and recognition, by being named their honorary president.

Within the realm of his public activity, it should be pointed out that he was among the founders of the ORT professional trade school, which trained hundreds of boys in carpentry and locksmithing. For many years he was a member of the national committee of the Polish craft organizations.

As a gifted writer, he was famous for his historical book *The Kuzari*, which was published in 1910.

In the period of the first World War he published a Polish-language Jewish weekly called "Glos Zydowski" ("Jewish Voice"). He published articles and short stories in the "Lemberger Tagblatt," in the "Lodzer Tagblatt" and in "Express," a daily paper published in Warsaw, as well as in other periodicals. He signed many articles with a pseudonym: A. Rottman, Servus, Moshe Penkanson, and A.B.C.

He made a name for himself with his monograph in Polish titled "The History of the Jews of Piotrkow and Environs" (1930) [Dzieje Zydow w Piotrkowie i okolicy].

His also published books including *Good Jews in Poland; Women, Rabbis and Known Polish Personalities; History of the Lodz Ghetto; Things from the Past; The Polish Jew*. These books include selections of articles and stories published in periodicals, as well as new writing. They constitute an important source for the history of Polish Jewry and Jewish life in recent centuries, according to Jewish and other authorities.

Moshe Feinkind was a good conversationalist, noted for his sense of humor and his knowledge of Jewish folklore, and he had an encyclopedic mind. He was also a man of charming appearance, who enchanted all who met him. He died on Monday, the second of Sivan, 5695 (June 3, 1935) of a heart attack. In his will he left his extensive library, which contained rare books of historical value in Hebrew, Yiddish, German, Polish and Russian, to the YIWO Institute in Vilna, and his modest financial resources to the charitable organization of the craftsmen's association.

Izkor Book

Pinchas Bar-On (Baran)

Pinchas-Arie-Leib, son of Shmuel Ber and Yehudit, was born on Hei beTamuz Tarmav (1882) in Piotrkow, a descendent of a family of great Rabbis and Zadikim in Poland. His great-grandfather was Rabbi Ber from Radoschitz, founder of the Radoschitz dynasty. He was among the most important pupils of the Lublin Rabbi and famous as miracle worker (Ba'al Mofeth). His son, Reb Israel Itzhak, grandfather of Pinchas-Leib, continued his post as Admor in Radoschitz. His second wife, Devorah, who bore him two daughters and one son, Pinchas' father, married, after her first husband had died, Rabbi Eliezer-Shalom Morgenstern from Schedlitz, who moved to serve as Rabbi in Piotrkow. Devorah, the "rebetzin," a very wise and clever woman, knew all the distinguished families of the city and everybody admired her and asked her for advice.



Pinchas Bar-On

Pinchas' mother Yehudit, born in Radom, came from the family of Reb Arie-Leib Zunz (the "Harif") of Plotzk. He was the author of many books dealing with the Talmud.

Pinchas' first teacher (Melamed), Reb Moshe, taught him the alphabet; he began to read at the age of 3. Then, when he was 5 years old, he was taught the "Chumash" by Reb Ozer Frisch. At the age of 7 he moved to another "Cheder" and began learning Gemara. Because of his talents and diligence he was sent to learn with private teachers and his tuition fees were paid by the community (since his parents could not afford it).

When he was "bar-mitzva," he had already begun his public activities. Together with two friends, he established a charitable society, and approached prominent people of the community for donations to be distributed among the poor. When this became known, there was a great public storm, and his Rabbi was chided for letting his pupils quit learning and deal with trivial secular activities. Especially angry was his elder brother Nathan-David, who was a sort of "father figure" to him; upon his insistence the "society" was annulled.

Slowly but surely, Pinchas was discovering the taste of "Haskala." He met the local Hebrew teacher, in whose house he found a rich library of Hebrew books dealing with new explanations and "midrashim" of the "oral" Torah; as he said, "My eyes were opened to see anew the 'Mishna' and 'Talmud' and I felt like going out of darkness into a great light."

At this vulnerable point of his life, before he was even 18, he was married by his

family (in a "shidduch"). He was learning at the Gur Rabbi's *shtibel,* and outside he looked and behaved like a "Chassid." But, after tasting the "haskala," he wouldn't let it go. Aside from his holy studies, he read everything that came into his hands, such as books about nature and astronomy, etc.; he was expanding his self-education all the time. He was doing this with a group of young men who gathered every evening and were as enthusiastic about new opinions and books as he was. They read and discussed all sorts of books, while one of them was always on guard lest somebody might come and catch them. They searched out the secrets of the world and its creation according to Johann Kepler and Kopernikus; they learned arithmetic and Hebrew grammar, the Rambam's books, and every new explanation of the Bible.

At the same time Pinchas began dealing with "Kabbala" and reading Spinoza. He wrote, "these books meant everything for me, I read them all the time, under the Gemara in the *shtibel* and when walking around, during meals and between prayers. The forbidden books were divided in small pamphlets among all members of our group, because we had only one version of each, and this way it was easier to hide them—because if they were found it often meant loss of money (the expenses of people learning in the *shtibel* were usually paid by their wives' families) and even a forced divorce. We did not deal with fiction, but just with science and research books. We were worried what would happen after we finished all the Hebrew and Yiddish books in these subjects; maybe then we'd have to learn foreign languages to continue our studies into all secrets of the 'divine' haskala."

They were also reading the Hebrew newspapers and magazines of that period—"Hazefira" and "Hameilitz"—as well as the Yiddish ones, like "Die Friende" etc. When a new newspaper, "Hazeman," appeared, P. Bar was among its first readers and subscribers. "Hazeman" was called "the red newspaper" because of its war against the Russian Tsar and his restrictions on the Jewish population. After the defeat of Russia in the 1905 war (against Japan), there were many riots and terrorist incidents against the ruling regime and even more against the Jews. Strikes were everywhere and, among the Jews, only the socialist Bund supported them. After the 1905 declaration of the constitution, "Hazeman" published these two headlines daily: "The Pogromchiks Are Still At Large" and "The Jews Have Not Yet Been Granted Equal Rights."

When the "Mizrachi" was established, Pinchas was among the first to join this religious-national movement, which drew many orthodox people and rabbis to its lines. He was greatly influenced by Rabbi Reines Z.L., who headed the Lida Yeshiva. His logical system of teaching the Talmud seemed to many a fine blend of Torah, wisdom and knowledge, a blend which was the goal of P. Bar-On throughout his life.

When World War One broke out in 1914, Bar-On was 31 years old and had to go to the army, but, after some medical check-ups, he succeeded in getting an exemption. There were now new influences of "Haskala" coming from Berlin and Vienna, and in his home he was giving Hebrew evening classes for adults, together with Jacob Maltz, Mr. Rosenblum and Mr. Birnbaum. A new school for Hebrew and the Bible (both taught by Bar-On) was established, as well as preparatory classes for general Hebrew high

school. The teachers there, beside him, were Josepf-Dov Rosenblum and Mr. Zlotnik. Eventually this became a high school with many more teachers, while he remained the principal teacher for Hebrew studies, replaced by Mr. Rosenblum when he emigrated to Eretz Israel. In the celebrations of "San Remo Day" in Piotrkow in 1917, on the occasion of the Balfour Declaration, he was among the chief speakers. At the end of his speech he even donated his gold watch and chain for the building of the Jewish homeland. Since then he appeared on every occasion, lecturing about Zionism and immigration to Palestine. There was a big gathering in the city's movie theater, in which the Zionist ideas were explained to all by P. Bar-On in Hebrew, Mr. Halperin from Lodz in Yiddish and a third speaker in Polish. Another gathering was assembled in the great synagogue after the death of Yechiel Chlenov z"l.

P. Bar-On's living came from selling coals, but most of his time was dedicated to teaching Hebrew. At night, all his friends came to his open house, reading newspapers, talking politics and guessing who would win the war. Some sided with the Germans, hoping they would bring more education to the people, and some said it was bad to pray for a new ruler. But all agreed that it was time to talk about making "aliya."

And the time came. In 1921, in the middle of the school year, P. Bar-On sold all his property in order to buy travel tickets and, together with his wife, left Piotrkow by train. It was Purim and he read the "Megilah" on the train. At the Polish border, he changed trains and, with other immigrant pioneers, stopped in Vienna for several days. From Vienna he took a ship to Alexandria, Egypt, and from there traveled by train to Eretz Israel.

It was Rosh-chodesh Nissan when he arrived there, penniless. One of the other Piotrkow immigrants helped him with a three-pound loan. He settled in the outskirts of Tel-Aviv and began searching for work. Soon he was informed that there was a vacant post for municipal secretary of Hadera. Even though the small town (Moshava) was afflicted by malaria, which especially afflicted new immigrants, he dismissed the danger and received the job. He celebrated Passover in the company of the Piotrkow people in Tel-Aviv and the next day he was to arrive at Hadera and begin his work. But just then the Arab riots of 1921 broke out and there was no possibility of leaving Tel-Aviv. Only after a week was he able to go, and he immediately began his duties as secretary-general to the town council. His first task (assisted by Mr. Harkavi, the legal counselor of the Jewish National Board, "Havaad Haleumi") was to demand of the British Mandate Government restitution for the damages caused to fields and houses by the Arab rioters. He lived in Hadera for the rest of his life, and besides his jobs in the town council as secretary and late treasurer, he was the bookkeeper for foreign investors who bought lots in Hadera but remained abroad. In Hadera he met many of his students and convinced a lot of them not to return to Poland, however difficult their conditions.

At first, Pinchas settled in a vacant room in the local hospital for malaria patients; but when their number increased, he had to leave and rented a room with one of the farmers. Finally he bought a lot and built a permanent residence. Again, his home became the gathering place for scholars, especially friends from Piotrkow. Each new immigrant from there knew his address and came to visit. His salary as secretary was not high, but he managed to save and send some money to needy people abroad.



A group of the first Piotrkower Halutzim in Eretz Israel.

In 1926, his wife died after an illness, and he was terribly depressed. Some years later, in 1929, his former student Hadassah (Pessa) Staszewska came to Palestine and, after a few months, they were married. They had two children, a son, Uri, and a daughter, Ahuva.

When the State of Israel was founded, Pinchas felt, like many others, that his dreams had come true. He began writing a detailed diary about all that was happening in the young State, and kept it till his last day. Despite his declining eyesight (after several operations), he followed every event and wrote about his reactions, joys and sorrows regarding the development of the Jewish State. Earlier, at the end of 1946, he had been forced, due to his deteriorating health, to take early retirement from his secretarial work. After that, he lived very sparingly on the rent from the shops in his house. Even though money was scarce, he still saved enough to buy books, including the new *Hebrew Encyclopedia* and the new *Ben-Yehuda Hebrew Dictionary*. In spite of his weak eyesight he was reading a lot and each new book made him happy. He was exchanging letters with all his friends and students from Piotrkow, in Israel and abroad—those who survived the Holocaust and those who came before it. Many of his brothers' families

died during World War Two; he took some consolation in the establishment of Israel, and was extremely proud when both his son and daughter served in the Israeli Army.

In his diaries of those days, Pinchas writes a lot about politics, international and local, and one can sense the attention and joy with which he regarded every event in the newborn Israel.

Pinchas Bar-On died in his sleep on Rosh-chodesh Kislev Tashtaz, November 15, 1955. Let his blessed memory be with us forever.

Izkor Book

Yakov Berliner

Yakov Berliner, born in Piotrkow, was a barber by trade. Until World War I, he worked in Warsaw. During his free time he studied Jewish, Polish and Russian literature. He belonged to the existing proletarian literature circles and was a regular in the home of I.L. Peretz. Toward the end of the war, when poverty and anti-Semitism made life in Warsaw very difficult, Yakov Berliner returned to his hometown, Piotrkow, and started to work at the barbershop of his uncle Pinkusewicz.



Yakov Berliner.

Berliner began his public community activities in Piotrkow at the end of 1917, when the "Hazamir" became the Bundist movement. By vote of the new managing committee, Berliner was picked as a member. He immediately assumed an important position in the Bund. He became their representative in various committees which the "Joint" had created for the Jewish people. Their goals were to distribute relief to the poor and to assist the existing cultural and economic institutions.

In the vote for city council in free Poland, held at the end of 1919, Berliner was the first on the list from the Bund and he was chosen with three other councilmen, Rachel Wolinska, Abram Weisshoff and Zalman Stashewski. With the rise of state health care for workers, he became an official in that area, and although at first he had no qualifications, his intelligence and hard work soon won him recognition from the leadership.

He was intelligent and devoted and these qualities gained him respect and friendship from all those who came in contact with him, even when they were political opponents.

Berliner's community work brought him great acclaim and also brought popularity to the Bund.

In 1924, elections were held for the Board of the Health Care Fund and the Bund obtained two mandates: for Yakov Berliner and Abraham Ruven Pinkusewicz. In the same year, Yakov Berliner was voted onto the managing committee of the Jewish Kehila, where he was very active.

He was active in many important institutions and societies, but his main activity was in the City Council and its various committees. While on the City Council, his public presentations were renowned for their brevity and logic, but he could also be very severe

when he had to answer the Councilmen's obnoxious attacks on the Socialist majority in the City Council and in the management, which was organized through a block of the PPS and the Jewish Socialist councilmen. This opposition made venomous public attacks against Berliner's block and used common anti-Semitic tactics when they fought reforms aimed at helping the working class.

The City Council made Yakov Berliner a member of the Committee which ran the Hospital. On this committee, Berliner had to fight the Polish interests, which wanted to take the Jewish Hospital and incorporate it into the General Hospital.

Little is known about his battles behind closed doors and his success in overcoming the evil decree against the Jewish Hospital; it was in the best interest of all to shun the publicity.

He was reelected every time to serve on the City Council. The Bund was not involved in the Jewish Kehila at the beginning of Berliner's thirty years of public service, but in September of 1937, the Bund gained a majority in the Jewish Kehila and Yakov Berliner, the first candidate on their list, became the first leader of the Bund Party.

Berliner remained involved with the Jewish Community until the outbreak of the second World War. The city was quickly occupied by Hitler's outlaws. The Commander of the city ordered that the management of the Jewish Community should be transferred into a "Judenrat." However, Yakov Berliner refused to participate as a member of the "Judenrat." He chose underground activities in order to lead his fellow Socialists and organize resistance. In April 1941, a courier from the Warsaw Underground was arrested by the Gestapo. She carried a full list of the Piotrkow Resistance members. All of the "Judenrat" Bund activists were arrested. Yakov Berliner went into hiding. He surrendered shortly afterward in order to avoid atrocious sanctions by the Gestapo against his captive friends. They were all deported to Auschwitz. Yakov Berliner, one of the most dignified personalities of our home town, gave his life for high ideals and for humanity.

Izkor Book

The Legend of a Man

Abraham Reuven Pinkusewicz

Ben Giladi–New York

If you remember our pre-war home town, you probably remember this tall, handsome, witty and charming man. You could meet him in the City Hall, where he played an important role as a councilman in representing the Jewish community of Piotrkow. If you attended a meeting of the Jewish "Kehila," he was there handling all the complicated tasks of secretarial and public relations work as a trustee of the Board. You could see him on the streets riding his motorcycle on his way to a meeting of the Jewish Health Society (TOZ), where he was the guiding force or on his way to the "ORT" school, the orphanage home, the "Kropla Mleka" center or to many other places where life pulsated in Piotrkow. This man was simply part of the creative scenery in our life; he was respected and adored by most of the people. His name was Abraham Reuven Pinkusewicz but they called him Pinkus.



Abraham Reuven Pinkusewicz (Pinkus).

Pinkus was the son of a barber-surgeon (felczer) and started his medical education early in life. Unfortunately, after finishing at the Russian "Alexandrovka" high school, he could not continue his studies due to economic difficulties. Forced to support his family, he started to work as a medical practitioner at the Jewish Hospital in Piotrkow. Here, over the years, through self-education and outstanding administrative ability, he became the hospital's administrator and the chief assistant to the great Dr. Weinzier. He spent many sleepless nights tending to the seriously ill or even balancing the hospital's shaky budget.

Pinkus was one of the most popular personalities in Piotrkow, and his great talent was for friendship. I never knew anyone with such an ability to gain friendship simply by giving it. Even his political opponents acknowledged his many virtues. For example, Jacob Maltz, the spiritual leader of the Labor-Zionists was his best friend and companion. They would have political discussions; however, their human relationship was really unique.

His cozy apartment at the Jewish Hospital was always full of people. The door was open to all. They came to satisfy their hunger, some the hunger for spiritual fulfillment and some the hunger for food. I remember how he greeted everyone with a warm, broad smile on his face. I also remember all those wonderful, mysterious pieces of equipment in his place. He had a complete wine distillery and made all kinds of wine. His achievements in the photographic field were remarkable. Not only did he take excellent pictures, but he also developed them in his sophisticated laboratory. And so, this man really applied his creativity to all matters in life.

Pinkus had a religion, and this religion was the Jewish Labor Movement— the "Bund" party. He used to reply, when asked, that as far as he remembered, he was always a "Bundist" heart and soul. In the Piotrkower political arena he played a prominent role. As a youngster, he already directed party meetings and various committees. As a member of the City Council, he was known as the most courageous defender of the Jewish community, fighting off the vicious attacks of the "Endeks." The survivors of the "Bund's" younger generation remember Pinkus with admiration and nostalgia. He was their mentor and educator in the branches of "Skif," "Soms," "Zukunft" and "Morgenstern." As an expert in sports, he inspired not only political and cultural ideas but also physical fitness.

Pinkus was a great nature lover. He gave the younger generation a longing for green pastures and wide horizons. Full of vitality and zest, he played with the youngsters and shared their dreams.

The theatrical circle enjoyed his great ability as an actor. He performed many dramatic roles in plays of literary, historical and sociological interest.

He also played excellent bridge. He wrote the editorial column in his party's newspaper weekly. He was a connoisseur of books, being an avid reader. He was an amateur in radio and an expert in art; and I could quote many other things that he was capable of.

One bright, intense memory pierces my mind. It could involve any clear, happy summer day, it could happen in the "Wolborski forest," at the old racetrack in Piotrkow, or at the green, charming farm "Kleszcze" not far from Bugai. It was a wonderful thing, this summer camp of "TOZ" for the poor children of Piotrkow, the place where they also shared a bit of sunshine. For the youngsters, the summer camp was the land over the rainbow. There they played, learned, sang and were not hungry. Their most precious instincts were awakened. On such clear summer evenings, all these youngsters listened to Pinkus. He was the man who had brought this recreation project into existence. And after his chat, the beautiful, Jewish song "Arum dem faier" could be heard far and wide.

Pinkus fell in love with Hela Gelade and they were married in 1933. They had two wonderful boys, Moishele and Fishele. After his marriage, life became even more intense and stimulating for Pinkus. However, the inevitable came—September 1939.

They had kept running from the Germans until they came to a place near the old Polish-Russian border, where Pinkus worked in a hospital. In 1941, the sudden German invasion separated the family. Pinkus was sent to Russia; Hela with the boys returned to Piotrkow ghetto to her parents. After the war, in Bergen-Belsen, Hela, who had lost

the children, received the most wonderful news: Pinkus was alive in Moscow. There was a letter from him at the Piotrkow Magistrate. He asked about his wife and the boys. She hurried to Poland, came to Piotrkow, and here another letter awaited her. A Russian doctor, a friend of Pinkus, wrote and informed her with the deepest regret about the tremendous loss he and his friends had suffered on June 1st, 1945. Pinkus, the symbol of all humanity, had died.

New Bulletin

Houses of Worship

The Great Synagogue

The exact year when the first Jewish "shul" in Piotrkow-Trybunalski was built is not known. Perhaps it was before the expulsion of the Jews in 1657. There was already a "Bet Hakneset," which the Poles destroyed when they expelled the Jews from the city proper and the surrounding areas. The first official document allowing Jews to erect a "Bet Knesset" was issued by King Jan Sobieski III on September 16, 1679 in Jaroslow; it gave the Jews the right to live in Piotrkow, to trade, to cook meat and to build a synagogue.

In 1689, the first "Bet Hakneset" in the area was built and referred to as "Podzamcze" (near the castle); it was not far from the Franciscan church. The shul was a wooden edifice, taller by far than all the other buildings in the city. In 1740, the shul was set on



The restored synagogue, now a district library.

fire by Jesuit students who were never caught. Today's shul was built during the years 1791–1793.

Thanks to Dr. Rabbi Chaim David Bernhard ztz"l, the Piotrkow Jews possessed a shul that brought praise, admiration and honor to the synagogue movement in Poland.

Piotrkow Jews "davened" mostly in the shul and later also in the nearby "Bet Hamidrash," "Chevrot" and Chassidic *shtiblech.* But the shul was always the holiest place for all religious Jews. At times the shul was packed as on "Shabat Tshuva," "Shabat Hagadol," when the rabbi would give his sermon, on "Simchat Torah" for "Hakafot," "Erev Yom-Kippur" at "Kol Nidrey," when even non-Jews would be present, including high officials of government agencies who were in the city at the time.

In 1813, the French general, who was withdrawing with his army from Russia, visited the shul (old Jews tell that Napoleon himself did so, too). In 1821, Alex I, during his trip to the peace conference in Erfurt, also visited the shul.

The shul was open every day from before sunrise until 10 a.m. One "minyan" after another would "daven." In the afternoon, shortly before sunset, the shul was again opened for "Mincha" and "Maariv" services. There were times, during severely cold spells, when the shul was unbearably cold, but the usual "davenners" would not be deterred and would still arrive on time.

On certain occasions and at times of distress, the shul would be opened at midday, when all the Jews were called on to say psalms for the problem to be solved or for the person to be helped. The celebration of the completion of a new "Sefer Torah" for a *shtibel* would end with bringing it into the shul. Sentences meted out by the government court also took place in the shul, which was then illuminated by black candles. A board covered by a black cloth, similar to a coffin, was placed not far from the "amud." A "Sefer Torah" was removed from the "aron kodesh," in the presence of which the proper person gave his oath. This kind of act evoked fear among those present and seldom came to pass, because the entire city became involved and every effort was made for the two sides to come to terms. The Czarist authorities at the time ordered that, during government holidays, memorials and forgiveness ceremonies be held in the shul and, therefore, the children of the government schools, led by their teachers, came to the shul. One of the board members of the shul would explain, in Russian, the meaning of the day; this was followed by the cantor and several of his choir members' singing "Hanatan Tshuah" with a special melody. They would close with the Russian hymn to the Czar. At this ceremony, representatives of the authorities came, who saluted during the singing of the hymn. Later on, the authorities sent only a policeman to represent them. This tradition continued into the time when Poland was independent. Only the contents of the prayers and the hymn were changed, so that the ode was to Poland.

When a city Rav, a judge or a great scholar or saintly person died, the body was brought into the shul, circling the "bima" several times, and a eulogy was made. The shul was very crowded then because all business stopped so everyone could attend the funeral and pay their final respects.

One must certainly describe the "Hakafot" during "Simchat Torah," which was a great celebration. Hundreds of children, sitting on the shoulders and arms of their parents, carried their finely drawn flags, topped by a colored candle which was set into a beautiful



A Lag B'omer festival in front of the Great Synagogue in 1930.

apple. Essentially, however, the eye was drawn to the beautifully "dressed" Torah scrolls wearing silver crowns, silver shields on which were engraved various symbols and the Ten Commandments, artistic trees of life adorned with beautifully designed silver "Teytl finger" (pointers).

The people danced while carrying the "Sifrey Torot," with the rabbi in the lead, the cantor singing, and a chorus of all present in the shul expressing their joy.

On "Shavu'ot," the shul was decorated with green branches and blossoming trees, which were brought from neighboring gardens and forests.

As joyful as holidays were in the shul, so the days of mourning were sad and depressing. On "Tisha B'av," from early morning till late afternoon the Great Temple's destruction was lamented, together with the destruction of our people and their martyrdom in all areas of the world. The melodies of the cantor and choir provoked sadness and tears. They filled the "Bet Hakneset" and summoned a need and longing for the old freedom that once was ours in our own Holy Land.

For generations, the "Bet Hakneset" played the most important role in the life of the Jewish "Kehila," and its fate was tragically connected to the fate of the shul.

As mentioned earlier, the first shul was destroyed in 1657, when the Jews were driven from the city. The "Bet Hakneset" was rebuilt in 1689. In 1790, a pogrom totally

destroyed the shul. Then the fire was set by Jesuit students. The construction of the last shul began in 1791.

In 1854 the Czarist "Katsapn," dressed in civilian clothing, attacked the Jewish inhabitants, beat them and robbed them of whatever they could. They didn't ignore the "Bet Hakneset" either, and they destroyed valuable possessions.

In 1861, the Czarist powers decided to close the shul because a memorial was held there to honor the memory of the five murdered freedom fighters. Only because of attempts made by the Jewish "Kehila" and influential Jewish personalities in the city was the decree recalled.

In August, 1914, following the start of World War I, the Czarist police attacked the shul; destroying, breaking and demolishing everything—while looking for a secret telephone apparatus allegedly connected with the German military powers.

Only twice since the establishment of the shul until the beginning of World War II were there no Friday night services. Once was in 1861, after the memorial for the five Polish revolutionaries; the second time was on August 28, 1914, when there was the threat of a pogrom on the Jewish inhabitants by the Czarist military forces and their helpers.

In 1929, steps were taken to renovate the "Bet Hakneset"; this took several years. It was completely repainted inside and out. The eastern wall and the ceiling were only freshened, but the side and western walls were repainted. Now, a new type of artistry was used, whereby Yiddish letters in various styles and shapes were painted on the walls with modern adornments, introducing brighter colors onto this mosaic of hues. Professor Peretz Wilenberg of Czestochowa, who survived the German occupation in Lodz during World War II, was responsible for this work.

Those who experienced the great tragedy of the Holocaust and miraculously survived tell about the "Bet Hakneset," which during the end was completely destroyed by the Germans, together with the entire Jewish "Kehila."

The "Bet Hamidrash"

The "Bet Hamidrash" was built adjacent to the "Groyse" city shul in 1765. It was built in the same style as the shul. When the shul was extended several meters towards the street, it appeared that the Bet Hamidrash was recessed deeper from the street between the shul, on the north side, and Yoshke Yekl's houses on the south. The eastern wall was adjacent to the old cemetery, which was visible through its windows. Right in the center of the eastern wall was the "aron kodesh." A little to the right stood the "amud,"which was used by the cantor or "Bal Tfila." Around it and lighting it were the "yortzayt" candles. The "amud" was always full of "kvitlech" containing the names of the sick, asking for prayers for their recovery.

There were no special chairs for the honored "Baaley Batim," but usually they occupied the place of honor.

In the center of the "Bet Hamidrash" was a "bima" where the Torah was read.

For many years the "Bet Hamidrash" was open day and night. It was filled with young men, boys and sons-in-law who "ate kest," as well as Jews who devoted

themselves to the study of the Torah and left the concern of earning a living to their wives.

The groups of "learners" varied, as did the subjects they studied. The greatest number studied "Shas." At 3 o'clock in the morning, others, too, arrived to study the Bible and other books with Hebrew explanations. From time to time there were students of a yeshiva and their director, who recited a page of "Gemarah" and "Pilpul" for the more advanced young men and the young married men. Young men came from nearby and distant cities and towns to Piotrkow to study, because it was known for its great Rabbis and scholars. Occasionally a preacher came to warm the hearts of the simple audience and lighten the great burden of earning a living or the troubles of the diaspora. The Enlightened Ones sometimes stepped into the Bet Hamidrash, but mostly they turned to education of a secular variety. Such people were labelled non-believers and were avoided. They would say of them that they had died of a "bad education."

With the advent of Zionism and the Socialist revolutionary movement in the latter part of 1800, many young men were taken with worldly ideals. The number of those who would come to "learn" in the Bet Hamidrash diminished, as a result, the parents of the "learners" also would send their children to the Chassidic *shtiblech,* where the supervision was less stringent.

When the revolutionary wave receded, and with the rise of Zionism and religion, the subject of Torah was rejuvenated in the Bet Hamidrash. The "learners," too, came closer to the people and every Sabbath they "learned" with the "Baaley Batim" subjects which were suitable to their knowledge and understanding. One must make mention of the devotion of Reb Yakov Leventhal (Yenkl Skernievitser), who was a gardener and a "Talmid Chacham" and a very intelligent man. Every Sabbath he would "learn" with the common folk. (He was for Eretz Israel body and soul and his children and grandchildren lived there.)

Itzchak Schwieger, the preacher, drew masses of people every Sabbath with his fiery sermons.

In 1933, the Yeshiva Bet Yosef was newly established and on Sunday, October 6, 1934, the first graduation of students was celebrated in the Bet Hamidrash. It was a great occasion and members of the Rabbinate and leaders of the "Kehila" participated. Among the Yeshiva boys were some who had great talents. One gave an hour-long "Pilpul" and another recited some pages of the "Gemarah." Once more, there was happiness in the Bet Hamidrash. All the Yeshiva boys sang hearty melodies. Some came from as far away as Bialystok.

Two beautiful figures appear before the eyes of this author. He would like to conclude with them. One is Reb Azal, who sat in the Bet Hamidrash all day long. His goal was to examine the "tfillin" of the men who were praying to see if, God forbid, one letter of the "Parshiot" had been erased. He also searched out every piece of paper containing Hebrew letters, which had to have a proper burial.

The other is Avigdor Treger. He worked all week as a porter, carrying packages until he was exhausted, and on Sabbath he walked around the Bet Hamidrash with a clean can of water to treat the "learners" to a cold drink during the summer heat. His face shone every time he answered "Amen" after each "shehakol." There is a story about

this porter: Once, in his youth, the Rabbi of Radom came to Piotrkow to visit the "Bal Tsuva" Dr. Chaim David Bernhard. Avigdor Treger took the bundle from the Rabbi of Radom and escorted him to the saintly doctor. At that precise time, the rain gutter near the house of the "tsadik" broke. The Rabbi could not get across the opening in the ground, so the porter lifted him onto his shoulders and carried him across. The Rabbi asked Avigdor what kind of compensation he would like, and Avigdor simply answered, "A 'zekser.'" Later, once Avigdor realized who the guest was, he regretted, all his life, that he didn't ask for forgiveness for all his sins instead and have the "Yeytser Hara" far removed from him so he wouldn't be tempted to sin.

The Bet Hamidrash was a fortress of Judaism and Piotrkower Jews were very proud of it.

During the Holocaust, for all our city suffered during the destruction, the first fury was aimed at the Bet Hamidrash.

Izkor Book

The Various Chassidic Synagogues (*Shtiblech*)

Yakov Maltz—Tel-Aviv

The *Shtibel* of the Gerrer Chassidim

The *shtibel* of the Gerrer Chassidim on Zamurova Street was one of the largest in our town. It was housed in a four-room apartment on the second floor of Naftali Frankel's house. One of the rooms was large enough for prayer and meditation. There were coarse wooden benches along the western walls which had no back support. In the middle of the room stood a square table covered with a colorfully embroidered cloth, on top of which the Torah scroll was placed for reading. In the middle of the east wall stood a holy ark filled with Torahs. Next to it was the amud (prayer post) with the "Shiviti" inscription above it, where sometimes a note was left with the name of someone seriously ill and his mother's name. The south and north walls had porcelain heating stoves with hooks for hanging upper garments, towels, and water cans for washing one's hands. There were long tables and benches along the western wall. The two rooms to the right of the large room had tables, benches and bookcases filled with volumes of the Talmud, the Bible, the Geonite writings, commentaries, Talmudic discussions (pilpul), Chassidic writings, Kabbalah, and Musar. These two rooms were used by young men and adults who were supported by their fathers-in-law. They would study either alone or together, usually in the company of students who had finished their heder (elementary Jewish education) studies. The room to the left of the large room had two tables, benches, two large barrels, and a tin can. One barrel contained pure water for washing the hands, and the second had used water. There were kerosene lamps hanging from the ceiling, as well as on the tables. Invariably there were candles burning in the candlesticks over the amud to mark the anniversary of the death of someone close to the Chassidim, or on behalf of someone seriously ill. The main entrance to the *shtibel* was in the hallway next to the entrance to the home and print shop of Motl (Mordechai) Cederbaum.

The *shtibel* was full of Torah students from early dawn until late at night, with short interruptions for breakfast and lunch; it was also full on Monday and Thursday nights, and at times one had to wait for a place at the table.

The gabai was Reb David Zelver, known as David Lodzer, and his assistant was Abba'le Sofer (Kruza). Some six hundred men frequented the *shtibel*, including the privileged ones who used to travel to Kotzk. There were many scholarly Jews in town who were steeped in Torah, some of whom were drawn to other rebbes, such as the Lubliner, Ostrowtza, or just learned Jews who did not agree with the Chassidic practices.

Most of the Gerrer Chassidim were shopkeepers, merchants and persons of means. Nearly all the religious functionaries—the local rabbi, the rabbinical judges, the kosher butchers, etc.—frequented this Chassidic house. The rabbi was bound by his agreement with the community to pray in the main synagogue, but whenever he could find an appropriate excuse he would go to pray at the Chassidic place. One example would be the night of Shmini Atzerett, when there were no hakkafot at the synagogue and the rabbi went to participate in the Chassidic hakkafot, or on the first night of Passover, when they did not say Hallel at the synagogue, or when the synagogue was closed for remodeling.

The leading personalities in the Gerrer *shtibel* at various times included: Shalom (Weitzman) Sofer, who used to travel to Izbitze and later to Lublin, a great scholar and a pious man who lived modestly; Rabbi Leibush (Blaut), the dayan (judge), a scion of the Kotzk Chassidim; Meir Halevi Ish Horowitz; Yyukl Horowitz, one of the leading Torah students in town, a noble person, the grandson of the Gaon (Talmudic scholar) Reb Motl Halevi Ish Horowitz, from whom he inherited many of his gifts; Moshe Eibshitz, a descendant of Reb Yehonatan Eibshitz; and Baruch Shidlowski, the father-in-law of the Tzaddik of Ostrovtze, who studied Torah day and night.

The Horowitzes, the Eibshitzes and the Shidlowskis were members of leading families, and invariably were attracted to the Gerrer Rebbe. The Pinchavski, Shapira and Kozlowski families of Malintz were close to Gur court. They were not blessed scholars, but were prominent among the Chassidim because of their militancy. In disputes over choosing a rabbi, a judge, a butcher, etc., the "Malintzers" always took the lead and used all means to do the bidding of the Chassidic court. Rosh Hodesh meals did not take place at the Chassidic house, but in private homes. Sometimes a "L'hayim" toast was offered on a Yahrzeit; and on the eve of Yom Kippur the worshippers were given a cup of wine and a piece of honey cake, and everyone, young and old, shook hands and greeted one another with love and friendship.

When the study of a Talmudic tractate was completed, or when a celebration related to the Kotzk or Gur tzadikim took place, a "royal feast" was offered, with white bread, gefilte fish, beef soup with rice and meatballs, and a drink. Words of Torah were spoken, and there was singing and dancing until late at night.

The Gerrer Chassidim studied Torah according to a schedule they had arranged for the large room at the *shtibel*, and in 1906, when their leader, Rabbi Avraham Mordechai, introduced early rising for prayer, some did not follow suit, and many of those who rose early to pray would only go through the morning prayer in the first minyan, and until the Musaf prayer of the second minyan they sat or stood and studied Torah.

The "Hofetz Hayim" Among the Gerrer Chassidim

That year the Gaon Rabbi Israel Meir, named the "Hofetz Hayim" after one of his important books, used to pray at the *shtibel*. He gave many of his books to Motl Zederboim to be printed at his shop. Since the Hofetz Hayim stayed with the printer, he would go and pray at the nearby Chassidic house. He did not wear the Chassidic silk coat or sash, but ony a common upper garment. He did not sway during the service like the Chassidim. He would stand still during the prayer and read from a prayer book. The

Chassidim found his behavior odd, but they showed him great respect all the same because of his great knowledge.

The Gabai, David Zelever, was a stern man who conducted the affairs of the *shtibel* with a firm hand and often clashed with the worshipers. His behavior resulted in a revolt by young Chassidim, who left the *shtibel* and started the Young Shtibel on 21 Bikovska Street, at the home of Hayim Avrunin. The leader of the "rebels" was Asher Fishel, a Melnitzer. This place served not only for prayer but for frequent celebrations. Some informed people reported that the Gabai had complained to the Rebbe about the revolt of the young, and consequently the *shtibel* was closed down and they had to return for a while to their alma mater on Zamorova.

Between the afternoon and evening prayers there was a break, and the Chassidim would chat about the Torah and the stories concerning the tzadikim of Kotzk and Gur, or would gossip about other tzadikim. There was greater conflict and even hate among the followers of the various Chassidic leaders than between the Chassidim and their opponents or between the former and ordinary Jews or even Jews who pursued free trades, many of whom were assimilationists. The main adversaries of the Gerrer Chassidim were the Alexander Chassidim, who were second to the Gerrer Chassidim in their numbers and their status as students of Torah, as well as their social status. Their quarrels resulted mainly from conflicts while choosing judges, butchers, and other religious functionaries.

The Gerrer Chassidim would often have to reach a compromise with the Alexander Chassidim. Such a compromise resulted in the choice of Reb Yaakov Glaser as judge; he became known as Yankele Dayan (judge). He was a learned man and an Alexander Chassid. Yaakov was chosen in 1901 as the chief judge and served until the Second World War, when he was killed by a bomb on the way to Suleyuv.

Reb Yaakov Yosef Shochet, an Alexander Chassid, was chosen over the objection of the Gerrer Chassidim. But generally, communal matters were decided in Piotrkow by the Gerrer Chassidim with the help of the assimilationists and the professional intelligentsia. Whereas the Gerrer Chassidim were fanatics who fought anyone who dared to introduce changes in educational matters (such as starting a "reformed heder" of a model introduced at that time by the educator M. Krinski) and came out against all types of Zionists, they lived peacefully with those who publicly preached assimilation and even helped them run the community.

But the events of the great world reached even this stronghold. During the Russo-Japanese War, the Chassidim engaged in heated discussions between those who believed that the Russians would win the war and those who considered the Japanese stronger. The debates took place mainly between the afternoon and evening prayers and on the Sabbath between the morning prayers and Musaf. The debaters made a great deal of noise and even fought, and it was necessary to introduce the recitation of Psalms between the afternoon and evening services and do away with the break between the morning prayers and Musaf on the Sabbath and holy days.

The Gerrer Chassidim lent their quarters for the illegal meetings of the socialist parties, since there were two entrances and, in a moment of danger, one could escape through the back door. Thus, there were meetings held during the day, attended by

hundreds of workers and party leaders who came from Warsaw and Lodz to deliver speeches, especially during economic or political strikes. Ahron Singlovski, known as "Yellow Ahron," one of the great socialist orators and leader of the socialist party, would often come to those meetings, and the young men who studied at that time with the Chassidim would listen to his speeches; some even joined his party.

The initiative to start the Agudath Israel branch in town came out of that *shtibel.* During World War One it was known as the "Orthodox Agudah." The founder of the Beis Yaakov girls' school also came out of this place. This school was started to counter the Jewish high school started by the Zionists, which attracted some Gerrer girls. The old Chassidim at first opposed the establishment of a Beis Yaakov school, basing themselves on the verse, "And you shall not follow their laws," in arguing that it was forbidden to change the customs of the past.

From time to time there were cracks in the walls of this Gerrer stronghold. Many young Chassidim joined the various parties that fought for social and national liberation. They mainly joined the various factions of the Zionist movement, and many of them headed the Mizrahi, the General Zionists, the Tzeire Zion-Poale Zion, and the Hehalutz, and many have taken part in the rebuilding and defense of Israel. They remember their origins and pay homage to those who kindled within them the holy flame of faith in the values of Judaism and the eternal Rock of Israel.

The Alexander Chassidim

The home of the Alexander Chassidim in Piotrkow was on Stara-Warshavska Street. It had a large hall and a courtyard, both of which were used for prayer. The Chassidic house had about one hundred worshipers, who consisted of Alexander Chassidim and others who prayed there out of habit or because of the tolerant attitude of that place. Next to the *shtibel* was a yeshiva called Beis Israel, named after the "middle rebbe," Rabbi Israel Yitzhak Danziger, the author of *Yismach Israel.* The yeshiva was headed by Reb Moshe Gomolinski, known as Reb Moshe Silver, a great scholar and baal tefilah.

The Alexander Chassidim were the second largest Chassidic group in Congress Poland. The only larger group were the Gerrer Chassidim. But without going into the differences between the two groups, suffice it to say that the Alexander Chassidim were distinguished by their unassuming ways and simplicity, and their tolerance of the non-religious or those who were less religious than they. This attitude attracted worshipers who had not travelled to see the Rebbe, but who were nonetheless treated as equals. The Alexander Chassidim were more positive and accommodating in their attitude towards Zionism than the Chassidic groups that belonged to Agudath Israel. The Alexander house welcomed members of the Mizrahi and lovers of Zion in general. Reb Mendel Landau, an important member of Hamizrahi in Piotrkow, is worthy of mention. Freethinkers would travel to see the Alexander Rebbe and seek his advice, since his court was open to everyone.

The Alexander Chassidim were a close-knit group who travelled to the Rebbe for the Sabbath, holidays and Days of Awe, and stayed in the same inn. If a Chassid took sick they would rush to visit him. If someone was in financial straits they did their best

to help him, and there were many such cases. Next to the Chassidic house there was a charitable fund headed by Reb Moshe Eliyahu Silber, a learned Jew who knew his grammar and his accounting. The fund helped members with loans, at low interest, to cover its operation cost.

The Alexander Chassidim in Piotrkow took part in the elections to the Jewish community council. They had their own list and got their delegate elected to the council. He was Reb Mendel Weinacht, may his blood be avenged, who was a lumber merchant, a communal worker, a man of means, who married off his daughters to learned grooms and who was an active member of the Chassidic house. His son, Reb Israel Yitzhak Weinacht, was the secretary of the Yeshiva Hachmey Lublin.

During the festivities of the Alexander Rebbes there was a high-spirited atmosphere. The Chassidim would gather for the meal at the *shtibel*, divide among themselves the study of the Gemarah, and each would undertake a tractate which he was committed to finish by the next yahrzeit. The young generation in the Chassidic house was mainly named after the later Rebbes, and many were named Yehiel, while younger ones were Israel Yitzhak, and even younger ones were named Shmuel Tzvi.

Central Personalities in the *shtibel*

The judge Reb Yaakov Dayan, who served in Piotrkow for some forty years and spent his life studying Torah and deciding matters of religious law, submitted his candidacy for rabbi of the town, with the support of the Alexander Chassidim, but Reb Meir Shapira won out and became the local rabbi.

Reb Yaakov Dayan, who prayed on the Sabbath at the Chassidic house, would have people gather in his house for the Third Meal and sing the melodies that he himself composed.

On the Days of Awe prayers were held at his home. The fervor of the prayers was enormous. The prayers always ended later than in other places in town, even Chassidic places of prayer. The Gabai, Reb Moshe Epstein, known as Reb Moshe Yehezkel's, was a beloved Jew who, despite his physical weakness, was always ready to go out and help others. He served as gabai for many years, and kept the Chassidic house clean and orderly. On the eve of Yom Kippur it was customary for the gabai to bring cakes and liquor for the worshipers. Reb Moshe would observe this tradition and would not get angry when a child would come back for a second or third serving. His son-in-law, Reb Lipa Sanik, a pious student, was also a prominent member of the *shtibel*. A leading Alexander activist was Reb Yitzhak Aharon Suchevski, who for many years was a communal leader.

A regular Torah reader for the first minyan was Reb Avraham Dunski, who had a special voice for reading the Torah. He was a well-to-do, tall and good-looking man who dressed impeccably, and his reading of the Torah was much enjoyed by his listeners.

Reb Hayim Perl was baal tefillah, a prayer leader. He was tall and thin, and prayed with great fervor. On holidays and Days of Awe the prayer leader was Reb Elazar Lifschitz, whose soft yet penetrating voice conveyed the solemnity and awe of the day of judgement.



Chassidim of our home town.



Yeshivat Beth Yosef in Piotrkow.

The regulars of the house of prayer included the brothers Dov Berish Meshulam and Mordechai Lifschitz, pious Jews who were close to the Alexander Rebbe and related to him by family ties. Others were Sanik Lipa and Yehiel, Yehoshua Bitsk, the bank director, Ezer Flatau, a real estate agent, Yaakov Shmuel Gint, a melamed, Yudle Neiberg, a Bratzlav Chassid, Yaakov Lieberman, Levi Goldmintz, Moshe Goldmintz, Yaakov Shmuelevitz, Bonim Birnboim, David Katchka Blumenstein, and Yaakov Aryeh Kaminski, may their blood be avenged.

The Radomsk Chassidic House

Shimshon Maimon—Tel Aviv

The great disaster that befell the Jews of Piotrkow did not spare the Radomsk Chassidim who gravitated to the Admor Rabbi Shlomo Hanoch Hakohen Rabinowitz, may his blood be avenged, who was killed with his entire family in Warsaw on 18 Menachem-Av, 1942. The founders of the Radomsk Chassidic house in Piotrkow were Reb Leibish Shachna Shidlowski, Reb Leibish Reisher, Reb Moshe Yaakov Morntenfeld, Reb Efraim Maimon (Reb Efraim Malach, my grandfather) and others.

The Chassidic house was located in an apartment on 13 Stara-Warshavska Street, at the home of Reb Hayim Orner, who was also a Radomsk Chassid. The renowned Gaon Rabbi Mordechai Halevi Ish Horowitz prayed there. Later the Chassidic house moved to 5 Staro-Warshawska Street, the house of Reb Meir Mitelberg.

The leaders of the Radomsk Chassidim in town were as follows:

Reb Avraham Dov Ber Englard, a communal leader and Torah scholar, a man of great intelligence and a great Chassid, devoted communal worker who was dedicated to the Chassid community in particular and the Jewish community of Piotrkow in general.

My father and teacher, Reb Shlomo Hayim Maimon, Reb Israel Yaakov Dula, Reb Natan Piltzer, Reb Hayim Piltzer, Reb Yisachar Eidelstein, Reb Hayim Walkowitz, Reb Motl Goldshneider, and others.

The prayer leaders were Reb Natan Piltzer, followed by his son Reb Hayim Piltzer, and Reb Shlomo Radomsker (Yudkevitch).

After World War One a stream of refugees arrived in Piotrkow from Lodz and environs, and the benches of the *shtibel* were filled with students. From early dawn till late at night the voice of Torah did not cease. Among the excelling students were Reb Yaakov Yakobovitch (The Yellow Yankl), a great Torah scholar who knew his Shas and commentators, Reb Yosef Shapira, Rev Avraham Elimelech Shidlowski, and others. In 1920 to 1925 the leading students were Reb Hayim Falik, myself, the young Meir Goldshneider and Reb Asher Goldshneider (now in the United States), and the young Yaakov Michal Yakobovitch, and others whose names I have forgotten.

In the thirties the Keter Torah yeshiva was founded by the Gaon Rabbi Moshe Rabinowitz Hakohen. It was headed by the Gaon Rabbi Mendel of Radomishla, a great Torah scholar and an outstanding teacher. The yeshiva had some forty students. The

head of the yeshiva board was Rabbi Avraham Dov Ber Englard; my father, Reb Shlomo Hayim Maimon, was the treasurer.

The voice of Torah did not cease for a moment in that holy place, and the Chassidic way of the Tiferet Shlemah method, the teaching of Torah and love of Israel filled the place, not with noise and publicity, but with a still. small voice. A special nobility typified the Radomsk Chassidim, who imparted the love of Torah to the masses until the axe was lifted over the head of the great community of Piotrkow, which had been known throughout the world for its scholars and writers, great rabbis and student, including the Radomsk Chassidim, may the Almighty avenge their blood.

The Amshinov Chassidic House

Yaakov Maltz—Tel Aviv

After the death of Rabbi Bonim of Pshischa (on 12 Ellul 1828), many of the Pshischa Chassidim crowned his leading student, Reb Yitzhak Kalish of Werki, as their leader. After the death of Rabbi Yitzhak of Werki (on the last day of Passover, 1848), some of his Chassidim crowned his first-born son, Rabbi Yaakov David, the Rabbi of Amshinov, as their new leader.

The Werki-Amshinov house excelled in their love of Israel, in looking for the good side in every Jew, and in defending Jews. In our town the prayer house of the Amshinov Chassidim was on Stara-Warshavska Street, corner of Parna, on the second floor. It had some three minyanim. Many of those Chassidim became well known because of their activities on behalf of the community, following in the ancestors' footsteps. One of the best known was the sage Reb Yosef Hayim Ber, the son of the Chassidic Rabbi Israel Ber of Warsaw, author of the book *Agudath Israel*. Reb Yosef Hayim always combined study of Torah with physical work.

Mordechai Feiner, an Amshinov Chassid, was a member of the community council. Yosef Handels was known for his ethical character. Mordechai Zederboim was the famous printer. Yaakov Milioner and his son David, as well as Shmuel Milioner and his son David, were known for their good deeds. The Brothers Feitl and Wolf Fisch were known for their pleasant voices in leading the prayer. Leib Tushiner was a man of good qualities. Pinchas-Pinie Nisanson and Moshe Pershovski represented the Mizrahi in the community council. Reb Shlomo Fuchs and his gentle son-in-law Reb Michal Fulman also ought to be mentioned. Other members who were not so well known were also kind and modest people. During the celebration in honor of the Amshinov rebbes they showed great joy at their meal, to which they would invite members of Agudath Israel and the Mizrahi, since the love of Israel among them transcended all disagreements. When we mention the names of the houses of prayer and the Chassidic houses in our town, let the name of Amshinov also be remembered, with all its worshipers, the kind, gentle Chassidim whose memory will always live in our hearts.

Izkor Book

Organizations and Movements

Agudat Israel

The World Organization, *Agudat Israel*, was founded in 1912 in Katowice by the leading orthodox rabbis, *tsadiks*, and Chassidic leaders. A branch was established in Piotrkow by Gur *Chassids* and a few *Mitnagdim*. In 1918, they founded a school for boys named *Yesoday Tora*, which combined secular and religious studies under the direction of R. Henoch Folman, and later under R. Dov Ber Koplowicz. Numerous future rabbis, scholars, authors, teachers, and civic leaders graduated from this school. A few years later, a counterpart for girls, the *Bais Yakov*, was founded as well as its daughter organization, *Batia*. A Yeshiva, the "Bney Tova," was established in 1922 under the leadership of Rabbi Zvi Rynkewicz.

In 1925, *Agudat Israel* founded a weekly publication, *Die Yiddishe Stimme*, under R. Isaac Ber Akerman. It fervently supported the *Aliah* to Eretz Israel. In 1939, another publication, sponsored by R. Moshe Chaim Lau, appeared. It was a four-page popular weekly, *Das Yiddishe Licht*, written in Yiddish, Hebrew and Polish.

Agudat Israel also founded the commercial *Bank Spoldzielczy* and supported the professional school of art, as well as the charitable *Linas Hatzedek*. Their representatives were members of the community, the municipality, and the Councils.

In 1913, a youth organization, the *Tsirey Agudat Israel*, was founded. It generated cultural activities for the young.

Josef Konstantynowski founded the *Poaley Agudat Israel* for the working members of the organization. A library was also established and, in 1923, a *Hachshara* point for *Halutzim* was prepared. Several dozen of these *Halutzim* made *Aliah* to Eretz Israel.

Mizrahi

At first, the activity of the Zionists in Piotrkow was minimal, since Zionism was forbidden under Russian rule and looked upon unfavorably during the occupation by the Germans during World War I.

A Zionist religious group led by R. Jacob Krakowski founded a branch of *Hamizrahi*. They set up a school with sixteen pupils in 1917, teaching in conjunction with religious subjects, Hebrew *Agada*, Jewish history, geography, and general subjects, which comprised the equivalent of four years of tuition in high school. This school was strongly opposed by *Agudat Israel*. The conflict created a rift between parents and children.

In 1917, a youth group, the *Irgun Tseirey Hamizrahi*, was formed; another group of young people opened a farm for *Hachshara*. They founded the *Hehalutz Hamizrahi*. Their first *olim* reached Eretz Israel in 1931.



Activists of Poalei Zion C.S. in 1929.



Hanoar Hazioni in 1931.



Gdud Mishmar Haemek—Hashomer Hatzair in 1933.



The Gordonia Movement.

The Socialist Zionist Movement in Piotrkow

Under the Austro-Hungarian occupation (1914-1918), the military authorities permitted public activities of a cultural nature, which had been forbidden prior to that time. It was then that the Hebrew organization *Tarbut* was founded. It served as a vanguard for all Zionist, public and educational Jewish activities in Piotrkow. The first leaders were general Zionists, without specifically defined doctrines.

This led to the creation of various parties, such as the *Mizrahi* in 1918; this was the socialists' party of the *Tseirey Zion*, which was represented in the Municipality by two members (Berish Rosenblum and Jacob Malo). In 1925, they joined forces with the socialist block consisting of "PPS," *Bund*, and *Poaley Zion*. This coalition gave them a majority on the Council. Later on, *Tseirey Zion* and *Right Poaley Zion* fused into a united party and founded a local branch of the League for the Working Eretz Israel. Piotrkow became an active center for neighboring towns such as Tomaszow, Sulejow, Rozprza, Belchatow, etc.

Hitachdut—Gordonia

In 1925, a local branch of *Hitachdut* was established. Its committee consisted of representatives from all the Zionist institutions: *Keren Kayemet*, the *Keren Hayesod*, the League for Working Eretz Israel and the *Hehalutz*. Its cultural activities were conducted in Yiddish and Hebrew. *Hitachdut* established a library, a Hebrew evening center, and a drama circle; the members met frequently. A *Hachshara* point was founded in Sulejow, which sent several dozen *olim* to Eretz Israel in 1929.

The youth movement, *Gordonia*, established in 1927, followed the ideas and teaching of the great thinker, A.D. Gordon. Its goals were the achievement of *Aliah*, work on the land, self-realization, simplicity, and a life of justice and equality.

Herzlia—Hanoar Hazioni

In 1930, high school students joined the *Herzlia* movement, which stressed the study of Zionist history and Palestinography. They combined with *Hanoar Hazioni*, whose ideals were *Aliah* and scouting. Numerous members made *Hachshara* and then *Aliah*, settling in Eretz Israel.

The Scouting Organization

In 1916, high school students founded the *Zydowski Zwiazek Kolezenski*, which later became a scouting organization. They studied the Morse Code, Palestinography, physical culture and first aid and organized trips and plays. The group was disbanded in 1922, after it had arranged outings, learned various skills, performed plays, held symposia, etc.



Mizrachi—the religious Zionist organization.



Young *Mizrachi* members bid farewell to I. Gotesman, who leaves for Eretz Israel.



Poalei Agudat Israel.



The activists of Betar.

Hashomer Hatzair

In 1919, a political scouting organization in Poland formed the *Hashomer Hatzair*, a youth Zionist-Socialist movement based on scouting principles with the ultimate goal of settling in Eretz Israel. The *Ken* (Nest) brought together a wide spectrum of young people, high school students and the sons and daughters of artisans. Pupils from vocational schools and young apprentices from shops and stores had high aspirations and espoused strict rules of clean living. They organized summer and winter camps. Their meetings, events, and symposia were highly imaginative. Their ultimate goal was to nurture high ideals. The sports club *Shomria*, consisted of very active members and organized interesting events. When the movement decided on obligatory *Aliah*, they joined the *Hecheleitz Hechsheva*.

Quite a number of *Hashomer Hatzair* members from Piotrkow are now living in *Kibbutzim* and *Moshavim*, as well as in cities all over Eretz Israel.

The Revisionist Movement in Piotrkow

In 1930, the *Zahar* and *Betar* movements were organized in Piotrkow. Their organization, inaugurated in 1931, was active until 1942. They set up a choir, a dramatic circle and met every Friday evening.

High schools and *Ort* pupils formed the group *Massada*, which maintained educational, athletic, political and Zionist activities.

In 1933, the so-called pro-Grosman group emerged. Its goal was the establishment of a Jewish state on both sides of the river Jordan. Another youth group was *Brith Kanaim*.

All these groups were politically active. They opposed Hitler's Third Reich and, in 1935, formed the New Zionist Alliance under the leadership of the Municipal Committee. They acted on behalf of the illegal *Aliah* and promoted military preparation for the eventual armed struggle to establish a Jewish state in Eretz Israel.

Brit Hahayal, founded in 1933, was the youngest group. Its goal was to become the nucleus of the future Hebrew Army. Another group was the revisionist-religious *Brit Yeshurun*.

Every candidate for *Aliah* was required to study and pass two years of *Hachshara*, learning aviation, navigation, fish husbandry and agriculture. Several group members clandestinely fought against the Germans.

Condensed from the Izkor Book

The Jewish Labor "Bund" Movement

It was 1897, in an attic in Vilna, that the The Jewish Labor "Bund" Movement of Russia, Lithuania and Poland was founded. The first Socialist circles of Piotrkow came into existence around the year 1900. The young Socialists, imbued with an idealistic



The activists of Zukunft, the youth branch of the Labor Bund movement.



The Scouting movement.

wish to wage battle against Czarist rule and social injustice, regularly met illegally. Those years, just prior to World War I, were marked by turbulence. 1904 and 1905 were especially eventful, filled with strikes, arrests, struggles and cultural as well as political activities. Cruel repression (from 1905 to 1912) resulted in many of the revolutionary leaders' being incarcerated or sent to Siberia, thereby seriously depleting the ranks of the movement. During the years of World War I, however, the movement began to take flight and expanded its cultural, educational and political activities.

After World War I ended and Poland became independent, the "Bund" organization continued to flourish and strove for a freer world of equity and justice. During the following twenty years, the Movement made an impact on the Jewish Community of Piotrkow. Many "Bund" leaders became representatives on the municipal council and in the *Kehilah*, and the members of the Movement benefited from various social, economic and cultural institutions within the Party structure, enriching their quality of life.

The Party's youth movements, the *Zukunft, Skif, Soms* and the sports club, *Morgenstern*, became beacons of hope for the many children of the Jewish workers of Piotrkow. A Jewish Weekly, the *Piotrkower Veker*, was published by the Party.

At the outbreak of World War II, under Nazi oppression, the Party leaders who represented the Jewish Council endeavored to continue their activities and maintain contact with the Central Socialist underground movement in Warsaw.

In July of 1941, a Polish underground courier, Maria Szczesna, was captured and arrested by the Gestapo. She was carrying illegal publications, as well as a list of names of the entire Council. It was thus that the Germans learned who the members of the resistance movement were and the nature of their rescue efforts. The leaders of the Piotrkow "Bund" were arrested shortly after and sent to Auschwitz. After a few weeks, their families were notified by telegrams that their loved ones had died.

Izkor Book

Education

The Hebrew High School (Hagimnasia Haivrit)

Yaakov Maltz–Tel Aviv

The establishment of the Jewish high school in Piotrkow was an important event in the annals of Jewish education in the town. It was the culmination of several attempts to open a school that would impart to its students the knowledge of Hebrew and Jewish culture in addition to general studies.

In 1888, the periodical Hatzfirah published an announcement by Shmuel Abba Mindel regarding the opening of a private school "which will teach its students Hebrew language and grammar as well as Torah, while living languages will be taught as required by the authorities by specialized teachers. The school will also provide meals to the students according to their ability to pay, and the character of students can be attested by the learned Rabbi Leib Eisenrowitz."

The Russian-language Jewish weekly Voschov of 1890 relates that "on October 16 of last year, the school inspector of the Warsaw district, accompanied by the director from Lodz, along with two senior teachers, visited the private Jewish school of Shmuel Abba Mindel of Riga, in the town of Piotrkow, and tested the students in Russian language and writing and in arithmetics, and were satisfied. The visiting dignitary expressed his gratitude to the above teacher, signed his name and left with an affectionate farewell. On December 17 the above Mindel was presented at the Piotrkow city council center a twenty ruble check by the director from Lodz at the order of the inspector, to be paid by the government treasury."

In 1906 a school called "reformed cheder" (*cheder metukan* in Hebrew) was opened in our town by M. Krinski, the author of the Hebrew grammar books. It was given this name so that the evil eye of fanatics would not harm it (the latter, speaking ashkenazic Hebrew, called it heder mesukan, Hebrew for "dangerous school"). This school was closed when the First World War broke out.

In 1914 the Zionist association, Tarbut, started giving Hebrew lessons in the evenings; then it opened the Herzliya school. In 1919 the Piotrkow Zionists opened the Hebrew high school, which became an exemplary school.

According to Dr. Y. Katzenlbogen, the first principal of the school, it belonged to the association of high schools of Polish Jewry, founded by Dr. M. Braude of Lodz. The honorary president was Wilhelm Silberstein, the leading lay leader of the community. The members of school board were Dr. Avraham Leifuner, Avraham Stern, Yaakov Litmanowitz, Berish Dzibaltowski, Avraham Tarlowski, Yosef Goldfried, the dentist, H. Eicher, and Katzenlbogen himself. The chairman of the board was H. Eicher.

The board ran into many difficulties in finding a facility and securing funds. Its work was conducted under strained conditions. The economy of the newly liberated Poland was shaky, and the aftermath of the war was typified by social demoralization, increased crime, impoverishment, and, above all, the spread of anti-Semitism throughout the state. One must marvel at the courage of Piotrkow's Jewish community, which, under such conditions, was able to promote an important educational institution. Katzenlbogen writes: "I remember how Henich Levin [nephew of Knesset member Rabbi Itche Meir Levin, a leader of Agudath Israel, husband of Rashka, the daughter of the learned Chassid, Rabbi Yukel Halevi Ish Horowitz; and father of the distinguished poet Leopold Lolek Levin. Yaakov Milstein, Israel Ziskind and many others who were not members of the board, nonetheless took part in organizing the school. I also recall Moshe Feinkind, Berish Rosenblum and Yaakov Maltz, who showed great interest in the school, but for several reasons did not take part in its organizing."

The faculty consisted of Henich Horowitz (inspector and mathematics teacher), Manya Lefkowitz (natural history), Mrs. Gefner (Polish), Mrs. Stowitzka (Polish), Yakobson (Polish), Maria Kronman (Polish, spelling and arithmetics for the lower grades), Pinchas Bar-On (Hebrew), Yosef Berish Rosenblum (Hebrew), Imanuel Goldberg (Latin and mathematics), and Rivka Levin (daughter of the scholar Rabbi Yeshayahu Wolf Fulman).

Instruction was at a high level, which was also the assessment of the religion and public education inspector of the government. Two years after its founding, the school was recognized as a public school. The principal of the school from its inception was Dr. Katzenlbogen, who served until 1921. He was followed by Dr. Tzvi Zemel.

Dr. Katzenlbogen remarked that the board spent a great deal of time determining the tuition fees of needy students. Some 30 percent of the students received tuition reductions.

Moshe Orner relates: "Among the founders were I, Avraham Stern, Henich Levin, Motl Goldblum, Yaakov Milstein, Berish Bitsh, Avner Margalit, Moshe Grinspan, Moshe Kenigstein, Yaakov Litmanovitz, and Avraham Poznanski. Some of them served on the first board after the opening of the school. Besides the teachers mentioned by the first principal of the school, Dr. Katzenlbogen, who survived the terrible catastrophe and now lives in Warsaw, were also Dr. David Zlotnick, Yaakov Fisch (Adi), and Shlomo Makovski. The last two, as well as Pinchas Bar-On and Yosef Berish Rosenblum, also taught Bible, Jewish history, modern literature and more. The physical education teachers were Krakowiak, followed by Grimeisen, who had served before as Maccabee coaches.

The paper Unzer Tzeitung, dated April 16, 1926, mentions the names of the graduates. The female graduates were Eicher, Barasch, Goldberg, and Hava (Hella) Rosenboim. The male ones were Shmuel (Mulek) Bronowski and Weintroib Kappel of Sulejow.

In the June 10, 1927 issue of the paper we are told that the "Hebrew high school in our town was given full recognition by the authorities, according to the announcement of the ministry of education." The paper adds that "excellent results of the final exams of the school were submitted by the school. Eleven students took the tests and all passed.



Alumni of the Hebrew Gimnazjum in Piotrkow (late twenties).



The famous kindergarten of Maria and Roma Ginzburg, class of 1930.

The female graduates are Basiar, Blumenstein, Grossberg, Hempel, Weinacht, Landa, and Stern. The male graduates are Wolfstein, Levin, Rosenzweig and Stern."

The school administration proceeded to build a suitable facility for the school. After many efforts, a spacious three-story house was obtained on 8 Sulejowska Street.

In the new building the school increased its activities, increased the number of its students, improved the laboratory and expanded the library. The economic condition of the school, however, did not improve, and throughout its existence, until it came to an end when the war broke out in 1939, it struggled to balance its budget. Only through the efforts of the administration and the dedication of the students and the principal was a crisis avoided.

The principals of the school were Dr. Y. Katzenlbogen, Dr. Tzvi Zemel, H. Burenstein, Imanuel Mannes Goldberg, and Dr. Manheim.

The Principals and the Faculty

Dr. Katzenlbogen was the organizer and the first principal of the school, from 1919 to 1921. When he came to Piotrkow he dedicated himself to public activities and was the founder of the Ort vocational school. He survived the war and now lives in Warsaw.

He established the school curriculum together with the teachers, the students and the administration. He set the way for those who followed him.

Dr. Tzvi Zemel came in 1921 to head the institution. He had been known in Galicia, from where he hailed, as an experienced Zionist activist, who was distinguished by his dedication to the tasks he undertook. He came to Piotrkow in the year that some of the local Zionists, including Pinchas Bar-On, immigrated to Palestine, and there was a fear that the Zionist effort in the community would be weakened. He undertook to lead the Piotrkow Zionists. In 1924 the idea of issuing a Zionist paper, Unzer Zeitung, was realized, and he performed successfully as its editor. He served as a member of the Jewish community council and a patron of Hashomer Hatzair, and was also active on the board of the Friends of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He headed the school for eight years, then moved to Bialystok to head the 700-student Hebrew high school, the largest in Poland. In 1934 he immigrated to Palestine and headed the H.N. Bialik high school in Haifa. He died on 19 Kislev, 1947.

The teacher Henich Horowitz became the principal of the high school in Radom. His father was a founder of the Tarbut Zionist association in our town and his son followed in his footsteps. He was an affable person, one of the first Tzofim (scouts) in our town. He later joined the Tzeire Zion. In the Radom book, page 106, we find the following: "The students regarded the school principal Horowitz as a friend and guide. He would explain his rules and policies in open discussions, and was willing to listen, to which his students responded with affection and friendship."

The teacher Shlomo Makowski was a scholar, well versed in the Talmud and Poskim, early and late. He could quote entire chapters by heart from the old and the new sources. He was the son-in-law of the religious Zionist Yantche (Yaakov) Kenigstein, and the husband of Rachel, a teacher in the public elementary school for Jewish children. During the ghetto period he continued his activities in secret.

The teacher Dr. Grossfeld was a socialist Zionist thinker who devoted his free time to lecturing for the Poale Zion Z.S. party on Marxism and Borochovism. His lectures were well received and attracted a large crowd to the party center every Wednesday. He was invited to serve as assistant principal of the high school in Radom.

The teacher Michael Weinsinger was active in the Gordonia Zionist youth. He is now in Israel, serving as the head of the high school section of the ministry of culture and education. His name is Dr. Michael Ziv.

Among the graduates of the school who later became teachers there, we should mention Leon Rosenzweig and his wife Genia, nee Stern. He was murdered by the Nazis and his widow, Mrs. Rozycka, lives with her daughter in Israel, where she holds an important position with Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

Special articles have been written about the teachers Pinchas Bar-On, Yosef Dov Rosenblum, and Yaakov Fisch (Adi).

I am sorry I cannot provide more detailed information about the rest of the teachers, who dedicated their lives to the sacred task of educating hundreds of students in our town and its surrounding area.

Izkor Book

The Vocational School, Ort

The idea of vocational training in our home town had existed long before the establishment of the worldwide ORT organization.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the philanthropist and advocate, Gustave Levy (the head of the Doboroczynnosc), had promoted the notion—later widely accepted —that underprivileged youngsters should learn a trade, mainly carpentry and mechanics. Some courses had been organized but they lasted only a short time because of the outbreak of World War I.

The ORT school in Piotrkow became a reality only after the war, when the prominent ORT activist from Lodz, Dr. Jacob Kacenelbogen, became the principal of the Jewish Gimnazjum. Under his initiative, a conference of politicians, cultural activists and professional people unanimously resolved to establish an ORT school in Piotrkow. A committee of four was elected: Dr. Katzenelbogen, Moshe Feinkind, Dr. Leipuner and S.E. Zygelman. Thus, in 1921, a dream came true.

The Hertz Hall at Garncarska 7 served as the first location of the school. Moshe Shereshewski, the well-known benefactor from Wola Krzysztoporska, was named as curator. Thanks to his leadership and the financial assistance of the Shereshewski-Szpilfogel families, a large building at Leonarda Street was purchased a few years later. The ORT in our home town, under the leadership of a group of skilled and dedicated men, emerged as one of the best Ort institutions, not only in Poland but also in Europe. When



The vocational school, Ort—late thirties.

Dr. Leipuner, the first chairman of the school, died, Dr. Shimon Tenenbaum, his successor, dedicated a great deal of time and energy to the school. Later, the chairmanship was transferred to Dr. Israel Feiman, who guided the institution until the outbreak of World War II. Shortly after curator Moshe Shereshewski passed away, his son, Dr. Leon Shereshewski, took over the important position. He was quite a personality; he held a Ph.D. degree and was a member of the Warsaw Chamber of Commerce. He was also a gifted writer and playwright. Despite his very heavy schedule, he always found the time and energy (and also money) for the school, which, under the dedicated chairmanship of Dr. Feiman and with the unconditional help of loyal, able and devoted associates, prospered enormously. These associated were Jacob Berliner, A.R. Pinkusewicz, S.A. Zygelman, A. Weishoff, J. Glogowski, S. Zeiten and others.

These factors proved crucial for the ORT in Piotrkow to become a model vocational school in Poland. A significant number of out-of-town students lived in the dormitory (*Bursa*) managed by Leon Shitenberg, a respected teacher and educator. Thanks to the able and dedicated staff, the education and training in the school were of high quality. School director Broide, secretary Leon Kimmelman, instructors Zalman Tenenberg and Joseph Epstein, and teachers Leon Shitenberg and Ms. Rubin worked arduously and efficiently to give the boys the best start in life.

Those bright and eager, mostly underprivileged, students were the true contributors to the great success of the school. The few who survived became successful entrepreneurs in their respective professions all over the world.



A group of teachers and counselors of the "Toz" camp in the Wolborski Forest—1935.

The fame of the Piotrkow ORT was widespread. Personalities like Arthur Zygielboim sent their sons there for schooling. Thanks to the efforts of the Board, an additional building wing had practically been completed when the war broke out.

During the Nazi oppression, the school premises served as a German shop, producing garments for the *Wehrmacht*. The Jews of Piotrkow were subjected to harsh labor there. Many contemplated with grief, during the long, cruel working shifts, the glorious past of the ORT school days, compared to the heartbreaking reality of the wartime present.

Izkor Book

Literary–Artistic Activity

Motl Mordecai Lenchintzky—Buenos Aires
Shmuel Eliyahu Zygelman—Milwaukee

After the Revolution of 1905, when the "Reaction" was rampant in Poland and politically related work was forbidden, there arose throughout the country a network of literary–musical societies. Also in Piotrkow, in 1908, the "Hazamir" Society was founded. Serving on its executive board were the Poznansky brothers, Marcus Litmanovitch, M. Lenchintzky, M. Berliner, Shmuel Eliyahu Zygelman and Mrs. Ginsburg. The Zionist, Meyrand, was the president. Among the organizers were also Engineer Yoel Izak, Dr. Zygmunt Feiner, Adolph Pansky, Lawyer Zilbershtein and the well-known community and Zionist leader, Michl Hertz. For a period of time, the great philanthropist, "Maskil," and founder of the Zionist "Aguda," Moysh'l Sheresehvsky of Wola-Krishtoporska, was president.

The society organized a chorus under the direction of the bandleader of the Russian Military Regiment, David Karagadski, and later under the direction of the conductor and composer M. Bensman; following him was the composer Leo Kopf, conducting the large symphonic chorus of the "Ikuf."

The organization was located in Shmaragd's house on Rynek-Trybunalski near the rotating pump. Choral concerts, in the form of family entertainment, took place. They sang Yiddish, Hebrew and Polish songs. Every concert started with "Hatikva." There was also a violin quartet, with G. Shvartsnsteyn as soloist. The chorus was composed of workers. At every concert, soloists performed; among them were Motl Lenchitzky, Ms. Ginsburg, Ms. Sarne, Mendl Rosenzweig, with piano solos by Mr. L. Cohen, G. Pansky and G. Zusman. The dramatic circle was directed by Ch. Granat. The concerts were performed in Meyer Hertz's Hall on Garntsarska Street.

In May, 1910, a grand concert took place in Sphane's Theater (at that time, the largest theater hall in the city, located on Bykovska Street in the same building as his beer brewery; the latter passed into the hands of his son-in-law, Braulinski). Among the participants was the reciter from Warsaw, Mrs. Z. Hantshak. It was a very rich program.

An upheaval in the management committee was related to this concert: the management elected to have, as part of the program, the song "Mishmar Hayarden," thereby avoiding the singing of the national-Zionist "Hatikva" at the opening. But the chorus began, as usual, with the "Hatikva," and this shook up all the assimilationists who were on the management committee, causing them to resign from the committee.

In June of the same year, the "Hazamir" conducted a festive celebration in honor of the Shpilfogel-Shereshevski family in Wola-Krishtoporska. The chorus and members, as well as the invited guests, spent an entire day enjoying various entertainments, such as singing and dancing, with the participation of an orchestra. A buffet was provided entirely complimentarily.

The dramatic section featured such talented members as Chaim Eleazar Dubeck, Motl Lenchitzki, Mendl Rosenzweig and others. The question of language caused great conflicts: some wanted to "Polonize" the "Hazamir." The Yiddishists wanted to be far from the Hebrew culture because it smacked of Zionism. The friction became stronger and stronger. The supporters of "Polonizing" the "Hazamir," the assimilationists, were the affluent members of the committee; they were the first to leave and also refused to give further financial help to the institution.

A new committee was created, one whose disposition was national. Two members of the chorus were also included in the committee: Sh. A. Zigelman and the singer Zigmuntovitch. Mr. Levin, from Vilna, was invited to direct the dramatic section.

Unable to continue financially without its rich members, the "Hazamir" began to go downhill until it ultimately dissolved. The entire inventory was transferred to the domain of the Jewish Kehila. As a result of this, the "Hazamir's" first chapter ended in 1912. The cultural activity, however, was not severed. It was conducted sporadically by arranging performances, concerts, and entertainment evenings from time to time, with a rich program of recitations and songs for the benefit of charitable organizations such as "Linat Hatsedek," "Bikur Cholim" and others, which sought sources of income for their activities.

During World War I, when the city was occupied by Austria, the general situation was better than in Lodz under the German occupation. At that time, a group of cultural activists devised a plan to restore the extinct cultural organization, the "Hazamir." A meeting took place in the home of Nachman Rosenshtein (an important and very active Bundist leader, who was also called "Frayland" and Nachman Yidl Avram Beiles), where a way to establish a community library was discussed. A committee of three was chosen: Tovya Rosenblum, Sh. A Zigelman and Yidl Belzitski. They appealed to the artist Julius Adler, who was then on tour in Piotrkow, to give a benefit performance for this purpose; it actually brought in a nice profit. It was thought that with this money they could begin to organize the library, but it did not work. Then the idea of renewing the former "Hazamir" arose again.

One of the authors of this article had the charter of the old "Hazamir"; on the basis of the charter and according to the laws of the occupation, it could exist. Immediately, they went to work. They rented a room in Levkovitch's house (Henryk Festenshtat's grandfather) in the Narrow Street across from Fishl Tushener's "Bet Hamidrash." They fixed up a fine meeting room and opened a buffet, where for a "graytzer" one could have a bite of food. The idea spread like wildfire.

The new committee consisted of representatives of the following parties: the "Bund" (Berish Rosenberg or Berish Blacharz, Avraham Reuven Pinkusevitch or Pinkus, Avraham Weisshoff; Zionists and "Tsirey Tsion" (Joseph Zayontshkowski, Yakov Maltz, Yakov Kurtz); the S.S.-ovtses (Yakov Baron, Motle Lenchitski, Shmuel Elye Zigelman). Those not officially affiliated with any party were the journalist Henryk Festenshtadt and Yidl Belzitski.

A dramatic–musical society was organized. Its quarters were open from 6 PM every evening. There one could play chess, checkers, and dominoes. Discussions were arranged on cultural and scientific topics, there were readings, literary evenings, judge-



מ. לייזעראוויטש אין דער ראלע פון „מאטקע גנב"
פון ש. אש

M. Leizorowicz in *Motke Ganef*
by Sholem Ash.



א מיידל־גרופע פון די יידיש לימעראריש גזעלשאפט
אין יאר 1925. אין צענטר: ש. פאלמאן און י. קעניגשטיין.

A group of girls of the Jewish Literary Society in 1925 with their mentors:
S. Folman and I. Kenigstein.

ments on various heroes of Yiddish literature. The critique of "Bontshe Shveig" by I.L. Peretz created a tremendous stir amongst our younger people. The society avoided touching on subjects of a political character in order not to disturb the harmony of their joint efforts.

This idyllic situation did not last long and the "Bund" was responsible by introducing, at a general meeting, an anti-Hebrew recommendation that was also simultaneously anti-Zionistic. A sharp conflict ensued between the representatives of the Zionists and "Tsirey Tsion," who opposed the Bundist motion; after the motion was passed, they left the meeting along with all the followers of Zionism.

A rich chapter in the history of cultural activity in our city was written by the "Dramatic Circle" and Chorus, conducted by Motl Lenchitski. They performed a number of dramas and presentations. On December 13, 1916, the "Hazamir" had its first dramatic evening. The program consisted of "Mitn Shtrom" (With the Stream) by Sholem Ash, and "Nor a Doktor" (Only a Doctor) by Sholom Aleichem. Participating in these two plays were the women Beyle Pinkusevitch, Stella Bielska and Wolberg, and the men Chaim Eleazar (Leon) Dubeck, Avraham Reuven Pinkusevitch, Motl Lenchitski, a child by the name of Yakubovitch and others.

At the 25th half-jubilee celebration for Avrom Reisen, on January 13, 1917, a rich artistic evening was arranged in which the chorus and dramatic circle appeared on the program. It contained songs, recitations and the one-act play "Gute Brider" (Good Brothers). Participating were N. Bernholtz, M. Lenchitzki, Sh. S. Zigelman, Gitl Birnbaum, N. Grushofski, V. Tornberg, M. Meyerovitch and the chorus of 25 singers directed by M. Lenchitzki. The evening was a great success. It took place in Hertz's Hall "Kupiecki" on Garntsarska #7.

On Shabbat Nachmu, August 4, 1917, a grand performance of Jacob Gordin's "Got, Mentsh un Tayvl" (God, Man and the Devil) was presented by the artist J. Rakov and home performers.

During the years of the Austrian occupation there was a blossoming of the literary–artistic cultural life in Piotrkow. The occupation forces permitted theatrical performances to be presented for the military, in spite of the fact that it was actually forbidden to arrange public social events. Thus it became a way for the dramatic circle and the "Hazamir" to present a broadly challenging event which Austrian military persons of almost every rank streamed to see.

At the second general meeting to elect a management committee, an inter-party list of candidates was submitted so that the list was decided *en bloc*; thus the committee as a whole would have the same political construction. Secretly, however, the "Bund" instructed their members to strike all non-Bundist candidates. The result was that only Bundists were elected onto the management committee, and the institution was turned into a Bundist one which conducted its political activities.

The deceived representatives of other parties organized to form their own, which shortly thereafter was legitimized under the name of "Education Union for Jewish Workers." The Zionists and "Tsirey Tsion" increased their activity in the Hebrew Zionist Culture Institute "Tarbut." Following the establishment of a liberated Poland in 1919, and with the legalization of political activity, the primary weight of community affairs



"The Dybbuk."

was placed on political party efforts and legal political parties were formed. These also conducted cultural affairs.

The cultural work also brought in income for the activities of the institutions, which the party greatly needed. Performances and other cultural presentations aided the school movement, libraries and other institutions.

On October 25, 1921, an artistic evening took place with the participation of the young F. Hamburger, Pesse Kurtz, Rochl Shtinberg, Gitl Birnbaum, Feyge Baumshteyn and Beyle Pinkusevitch, directed by M. Lenchitsky, and in 1922 the presentation was "Got Fun Nekome"(God of Vengeance) by Sh. Ash. In 1923, it was "Der Foter" (The Father) by Strindberg. Participating in the performances were Ms. Rosa Weisshoff and her husband Abraham, Elle Shtern (the wife of Itzchok Shtibl), Shmuel Zeitn, Veltman, Yakov Berliner and many of those previously mentioned. On December 22, 1923, the dramatic circle of the co-op "Eynikeyt" (earlier known as "Hazamir") performed a play for the benefit of the children's home, with the participation of the before-mentioned and Ms. Bernshteyn, Blume Oynig, and Libe Kotkowski. In 1924, Peretz Hirshbein's drama "Navla" was performed by Ms. M. Moshkovitch, M. Trisker, and I. Trisker. For the benefit of the schools, L. Kobrin's dramatic play "Yankl Boyle" was presented by the Lodzer artists.

As previously stated, after the split in "Hazamir," there arose dramatic circles among the Zionist parties, which also had significant successes. One of the great successes was the production of "The Dybbuk," performed by the dramatic circle of the "Tsirey-Tsion." Because of its great success, it had to be presented several times. In this play, the participants were Ms. Goldblum, Ms. Yitke Levkovitch, Ms. Ida Venglinska, Itzchak Shtibl, Fishl Mintz, Mendl Leiberman, J. Maltz, Natan Stashevski, Yechiel Kurnendz,



M. Leizerowicz in "Day and Night" by Shalom Ansky.

Ms. Reitberger, Ms. Rosenstein, Rosenbaum and Rubin. The director was Mordecai Meyer Leizorowicz.

The youth of "Freiheit" presented, among others, Sholem Aleichem's "Mentshn" (People), directed by M. Lenchitzki, which was also a great success. It was performed in the "Kilinski" Hall and again in the "Maccabbi," as well as in the provincial towns. The chorus and orchestra used to arrange literary and musical presentations under the direction of the brothers Yakov and Moshe Fish, Ms. Frohman, Yidl Zeitn, Stashevsky, the brothers Mendl and Shmuel Lieberman, and others. The Artisan's Union and the "Hashomer Hatsair" also had active drama groups. In 1926, these two successfully presented Peretz Hirshbein's "Grine Felder" (Green Fields).

The "Linke Poalei Zion" also excelled in its cultural work in the field of theater and song, etc. The major directors were Israel and David Trisker and their sister and Fishl Yakubovitch and his wife.

The "Poalei Agudat Israel" reactivated the old plays such as "Mechirat Yosef" and "Achashveyrush," which were always expertly and successfully performed on many festive occasions.

Without exception, these outstanding cultural labors in all segments of the Jewish population of our city were undoubtedly a great influence on the shaping of our community and political life.

The theater group did not limit itself to playing for the local population, but toured neighboring cities as well, where Jewish youth yearned for a new Yiddish word.

Izkor Book

Jewish Publishing Establishments

Yeshayahu Pudlowski—Rishon LeZion

The history of Jewish printing shops in Piotrkow began in approximately the latter half of the 19th century. At that time there was already a thriving Jewish community life, whose reputation had reached far beyond the borders of the city. Piotrkow was known throughout the world for its active publishing houses.

On various holy books, which were published at that time, there was the evidence of beautiful covers imprinted "Published in Piotrkow," a name known throughout the Jewish world for promoting printed works at a high level of graphic art. As a result, the Piotrkower printing houses published thousands of books, both rabbinic and secular, as well as prayer books which were distributed beyond the borders of Poland.

Among the founders of the Yiddish printing industry in Piotrkow were Reb Tovye Fayvl and Tsipe Belchatovsky (1864) and their son Shlomo, who later became the proprietor of the print shop. They published books and had a Polish–Russian section, as well as lithographs, new in the printing field at that time. In their home, too, they had a store of writing utensils which, on a Friday in 1893, burned up in a fire precisely prior to candle-lighting time. The fire consumed the entire house as well as the print shop, which was located therein. It continued to burn for several days and the firemen of the Province and of Lodz (Piotrkow was then a government city) had to come to the aid of the Piotrkower firemen.[1] The print shop had existed for many years.

In approximately 1897, the print shop of the brothers Eliyahu and Shmuel Pansky was established. This was the largest and most varied printing shop in Piotrkow and vicinity. It had a Jewish and Polish section. In the Jewish section, whose manager was Motl Tsederbaum, were printed holy books, and it is worth mentioning that one of the rarest editions of "Talmud Yerushalmi" was published there. According to an ex-worker at Pansky's,[2] it was even a tradition to "daven" with a "minyan" every day, because printers and students from other cities were employed there, many even sleeping in the print shop.

In Pansky's Polish section, the manager was the oldest printer, Leibush Branyetz; his son Joseph also worked there. Motl Lenchitzky worked at Pansky's from his earliest youth. The oldest print-mechanic was Itche Rosenbloom (Itche Zamostcher).

One must add that the Pansky's were a broadly varied printing family. Shmuel Pansky left the partnership after ten years and relocated to Lodz, where he operated a large paper business. His son Marcus stepped into his place and later opened a large print shop in Radomsk. Shmuel Pansky's other son, Vladislav, relocated to Warsaw and there

1 This information was related by Motl Lenchitzky of Argentina.

2 Reb Shlomo Weinberg of Bilgoray, currently residing in Rishon-Letsion, Israel.



The title pages of some books published in Piotrkow.

he, too, established a printing shop. Finally, Shmuel's son Adolph, who owned a bookstore at that time on Kaliska Street, took over the print shop.

Adolph Pansky coopted his son Alexander and they published a Polish-language daily newspaper called "Glos Trybunalski." Among the numerous employees of the last of the Pansky's, only a few Jewish workers remained: Bronyetz, as linotypist; Wolf Erlichman, as printer; and I. Rosenbloom, as printer. The manager of the print shop for many years was Mr. Bloom. In the end, he, too, opened his own print shop directly across the street from Pansky's.

Tsederbaum's print shop was established around 1900 and was operated by Reb Mordecai, who died before the start of the last World War, and his son Yakov Tsederbaum.

Tsederbaum's publishing house was known throughout the world because of its editions of the highest quality. It should be mentioned that only the Bet-Yehudah Chumash (with Rashi's commentary in Yiddish) was but one of the editions that Tsederbaum was credited with. The Tsederbaum's were talented printers and were among the pioneers in the art of Yiddish printing. Thanks to their vast trade contacts, their "sfarim" made their way throughout the entire world.

Tsederbaum employed the printer-machinist Chaim Schwartz, a person for whom everyone had the greatest respect because of his honesty. As an orthodox Jew, he did not avoid attending the meetings of the Jewish Printers' Union, organized in the '30's, and was one of its most active members. Tsederbaum also employed Yudl Yudkevitch as an assistant-machinist.

In time (early in the 20th century) the compositors of "sfarim" grew in number, because the composition itself, without the printing, did not involve gigantic invest-


ספר
שאלות ותשובות
אור המאיר
ח"א
יהודא מאיר שפירא
פיעטרקוב

Or Meir by Rav Yehuda Meir Shapira.

ments, as did a complete print shop. A compositor with a little initiative could, if he had money, organize such a "sfarim"-composing shop by purchasing some letters necessary for setting up only a few pages of a "sefer." Instances are known of where such "print shop necessities" were laid out on a bed during the day and under the bed at night.

1903 saw the arrival of the "sfarim" composing shop of Reb Nathan Note Kronenberg and his son-in-law Abraham Rosengarten, who also had a shop of his own. Kronenberg took on as a partner Reb Chanuch Henech Folman (the son of the famous Talmudist scholar Reb Isaiah Wolf Folman zts"l) and the partnership lasted until the start of the First World War.

From that time until the Hitler War, Reb Henech Folman was independent and managed the composing shop at 1 Garntsarska—later at 21 Garntsarska—together with his two sons, Aaron (who died in 1945 in Lodz) and Motl (who perished in a German camp). Osher Zitman and Moshe Rosenwald (who perished in Treblinka) also worked there, as well as Leybl Kornfeld (who is currently in Israel).

There were other "sefer" composing shops owned by Yakov Kurnenz and Reb Abraham Rosenwald (who is today in Israel), as well as that of Kopelman (the son-in-law of Reb Yakov Tsederbaum). In addition to the proprietors, Wolf Fish and Moshe Nutkewicz (who died in Israel in 1960) were employed.

Additional consideration should be given Reb Benyomen Liebeskind, whose print shop, established about 1902, printed, next to rabbinical and holy books, popular Yiddish story books (before World War I), which began to infiltrate strongly orthodox Jewish homes. It is known that the famous writer, I.J. Trunk, had his works published by Liebeskind. The most unusual characteristic of Liebeskind's print shop was that, in

addition to his sons, he also employed his daughters. In the end, Liebeskind's children relocated the print shop to Warsaw.

The last three Jewish print shops that we shall mention significantly reflected the Jewish community life of Piotrkow and vicinity.

In Yakov Moshe Rosenstein's print shop (on Trybunalski Platz), the largest in scope, was published a "Bet-Yakov" journal, as well as many religious books and other editions by the Lodzer publisher, Abraham Moshe Grubstein (a son-in-law of the Piotrkower Reb Itche Meyer Sofer z"l); also, for many years, the "Literarishe Tribune" was published there. This was a journal of the Communist Party for which Mr. Rosenstein had to, more than once, pay fines, endure court actions and even go to jail. The Bundist weekly newspaper, "Piotrkower Vecker," was printed there, along with many other publications and printed works for various parties and community institutions in Piotrkow. There, too, was published "Shtaplen," a local literary newspaper in which, among others, Harav Shimon Huberband, Sh. Ziegelman, H. Wohlreich, Yidl Davidowitch, V.H. Ivan, M. Weiss (the grandson of Mendl Dein), the well-known artist Henech Barchinsky (Lodz), Yosl Yablonski, Sh. Yablonski, Sh. Leyzerovitch, Sh. Pudlowski and others appeared.

Rosenstein employed his sons Shimshon (who died recently in America); Israel (who perished in a German camp); David (who lives in the USA); his son-in-law, Hertzl Grinbaum (who died in the German camp "Flossberg"); his daughter Frania (passed away in the US); Moshe Rotbein (who died in 1941); Shamai Glogovsky (the ex-chairman of the Jewish Printer's Union); Yantshe Milyoner (who died in 1936 in Israel in Tirat-Tsvi); Israel Liebeskind (who died in Treblinka), Moshe Rosenstein (living in Israel).

Abraham Mordecai Horowitz's print shop, located at Czarniecki Platz, was managed by his son Menachem, who, despite his active community affiliations (Poalei Zion, for instance), dedicated the major part of his efforts to the development and growth of the print shop, where for many years, the Piotrkower Zionist weekly, "Undzer Tsaytung," was published and edited by Yakov Baron. For a time, the "Freiheit Youths' " "Undzer Freiheit" was published there; for many years a Tomashov weekly newspaper was published there, issued by Note Goldkrantz.

Menachem Horowitz and his wife, mother and sister perished at the hands of the Germans. Fayvl Bloomstein, who worked there, shared the same fate. Only Benchovksy survived the German camps.

Reb Yakov Sternfeld's print shop (on Garntsarska #13) was established by his son Yochanan, who had previously worked for Pansky and then for Horowitz. This was when the publication of the "Poalei Agudat Israel" was printed; it was called "Der Yidisher Arbeter." Also printed for a time were the "Piotrkower Vecker," the Agudah weekly "Di Shtime," a Tomashov weekly newspaper, "Tomashover Vort," issued by the Kurtz Brothers, the "Radomer Shtime," whose editor was Leyzer Fishman, the Krakower literary weekly, "Di Post," whose editor was Moshe Blecher; the literary periodical of Zishe Bagish, "Indzlen," a literary journal, "Tsvit," by David Puchalnick of Volin, as well as Yiddish books and other printed matter in the Polish language.

Just as in other print shops, the children helped out with the work.

Employed there were Eliyahu Horowitz, who made Aliya to Eretz Israel in the 1930's; Yakov Milyoner, who relocated to Eretz Israel in 1936; Yosl Milyoner, who perished at the hands of the Germans; Eliezer Praszker, who died in a German camp; Yochanan Sternfeld, who died in Treblinka; Moshe Rosenzweig, who arrived in Israel via Vilna in 1941—one of the miraculous survivors of Kfar Etzion and Yeshayahu Pudlowski, who is living in Israel.

When Hitler's murderers marched on Poland, everything that had been created throughout generations with so much effort was erased in an instant, together with their creators and founders. The history of the printers of Piotrkow was cut off at its prime.

Izkor Book

"Fun Der Alter Heim"

A Stroll Through Our Piotrkow

Elazar Prashker—Jerusalem

Do you remember the town?

Do you remember the town of our sweet, pristine young years? The town of our adolescent dreams and struggles? The town where our hearts awoke to the ideals of the Jewish Renaissance and Social Justice? The town where we experienced the ecstasy of first love and also the bitter disappointments of our more mature years? The town of our fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, family and friends, fellows and acquaintances? The town of "everyday" people, of "Shabbath" and "Yom Tov?" The town with the merchants and craftsmen, the scholars and the intellectuals, "Chassidim" and "Baalei Batim," the privileged and the poor? The town of thousands of pulsating and throbbing "Yiddish" hearts?

Do you remember our Jewish home town, Piotrkow?

So, please come. Let's stroll once again, in a dream-like reverie, through the streets with every house so homely and every face so close to you, where you know everyone and everyone knows you. Every other person you know by his nickname. Every third person has a little tale, or just a joke, attached to him.

Just look around; it's so strange that during all these years nothing here has changed—nothing at all. The same houses, the same courtyards, the same streets and



The "Maccabi" brass band—early thirties.



The "Hapoel" soccer team—mid-thirties.

squares. The same stores and merchants. That's the way they were when you were young and that's the way they remain until the great destruction.

The Czarniecki Square (Plac Czarnieckiego)

We come to the square where, in the middle, a few dusty bushes barely cling to life, along with some scattered, anemic bunches of grass. Please, refresh my memory—were there benches on the square? If so, we, the young, didn't use them. We passed our free time in the Poniatowski Park, in the Bernardynski Garden, in the shady cemetery avenue full of trees, or yet the other green spot, the "Budki." The older folks didn't use the benches either. Firstly, they were too busy; secondly, how would it look to just sit around? Ridiculous!

Now, look at this house, just here, near the ominous jail gate. Once it was painted green. Today, you hardly recognize the color, which is rather gray and dirty. As you see, everything here has remained static; nothing has changed. Like all these unrestored house facades.

If this particular house could speak, many nights would be needed to listen to its tales. Once, the wealthy Reb Nusen Horowicz lived here. He was the son of Reb Meshulam Piotrkower. You'll probably ask who Reb Meshulam was. Don't you know? It's fair to say that his virtues were "Torah Gdolah, Yiches, Chassiduth" and all "Maaloth Tovoth Bemakom Echad." Hardly a trifle—the bells of the entire community tolled for Reb Meshulam.

At the start of World War I, his son, Reb Nusen, took all his family (he had "Bli Ayin Harah" ten daughters) and escaped to Russia. There, he passed away. His two sons-in-law—Reb Henzl Frenkel, the banker, and esteemed Reb Moshe Aharon Zussman—returned after the war to Piotrkow. Reb Frenkel, honoring Reb Nusen's legacy, erected the "Talmud Torah" house. He later moved in here, into Reb Nusen's old house, and now lives with his son Mordechai, next door to the "Yiddishe Kasse."

I will tell you some other time about Mordechai Frenkel, one of the most interesting Piotrkower personalities. There are poignant stories about the "Yiddishe Kasse." For now, however, let's sneak into the printing shop of Horowicz, located on the ground floor of the building.

The Print Shop

Before you enter, you may smell the printing ink and hear the humming of the heavy printing press, which takes up considerable space in the large room. On the right, you see a few "zecers" (typesetters) standing over the spacious boxes that contain the lead typesetters. They arrange the letters into lines to be put into print. The tall, spacious windows give an excellent view of what's going on inside.

Ay, ay. . . the Yiddish print shops of Piotrkow! They are known throughout the world. In the Diaspora or in Israel, when a book, a "Siddur" or a "Machzor" is opened, the logo on the title page is clear and distinct: "Printed in Piotrkow." Then, the names of the printers appear in order—Shraga Faivel Belchatowski, the brothers Eli and Shmuel Panski, Nathan Kronenberg, Rosengarten and Horowicz, Yakov Ber Mordechai, Cederbaum, Henoch Bar Yishai, Zeev Folman, Abraham Rozenwald, Benjamin Libeskind—these names are known to every "yodea sefer." A large volume could be written on the subject of the Piotrkow printers.

The Horowicz print shop did not set books. Its trade consisted of printing various forms, cards, announcements, posters, etc. Here, at the beginning, the Zionist weekly "Unzer Zeitung" was put together. In later years, the weekly was printed at the Rozenstein print shop on Rynek Trybunalski.

The Horowicz print shop was founded by Abraham Horowicz and is now being run by his son Menachem, who, in an ink-stained smock, runs hectically around the place all day. He is as mobile as mercury. He attends to the customers, puts the texts together, tends the printing press, and collects fees; in short, he does practically everything.

Menachem was a short, round-faced man, smoothly shaven. His mouth was slightly bent. He spoke so rapidly, it was hard to understand him. This, however, didn't prevent him from being the second keynote speaker (after Yakov Maltz) at the first of the May rallies organized by the Right Poalei Zion Party. Are you surprised? Just remember Demosthenes.

In the evenings, on Saturdays or holidays, Menachem underwent a complete metamorphosis. Clean, wearing a black suit and tie, he attended meetings, conferences, rallies, gatherings. He was a member of the Tzeirei Zion, Poalei Zion C.S., Hechalutz, Hapoel, Maccabi, various organizations, committees, literary and musical circles, sport clubs, leagues and alliances. He attended drama workshops, women's and youth movements and all the unfolding and growing cultural activities that were flourishing. "Bli Ayin Harah," like mushrooms after a rain.

Doesn't your head spin when you hear all those names of the various circles and coteries? Just wait! Firstly, I am not sure that I didn't forget anybody. Secondly, these are only the circles associated with the Party, which, after many transformations, acquired the official name, "The Jewish Socialist Labor Party, Poalei Zion United with C.S."



"Kwutzat Shomrim of Kibbutz Aliya Aleph" in 1927. Lower row, from the left: Hela Rosenbaum, a "teacher's teacher and a fine educator," Mordechai Fajner, Shayek Fajner, Tila Warzager, Zeev Lipski (Liwne). Upper row, from the left: Hertzel Fajnkind (Jafet), Riwka Jakubowicz, Lea Wajntreter and young Elazar Prashker, the author of the essay.



The committee of Poalei Zion C. S. in May 1930. Sitting, from left: I. Kogan, M. Fisz, B. Lewkowicz, M. Szydlowski, Szapiro and I. Fisz. Standing, from left: M. Wajnberg, Rozental, J. Wolrajch, C. Kogan, J. Malc, M. Horowicz and S. Horn.

Yiddish Newspapers Published in Piotrkow Before World War II



"Di Yiddishe Shtime"—Agudat Israel



"Piotrkower Weker"—Jewish Labor Bund.

Our people, however, dislike lengthy names. So, the Party was called "The Right Petzekes," or "Peitzadikes." Understandably, when there is a right, there must also be a left. And though united, there were also some left ununited. These parties also had their youth organizations, women's groups, libraries, choirs, temples, sport sections, etc.

Now, where is the "Bund," with its domain of "Kol minei" circles, rings, associations, societies, and institutions? Yes, and all other parties and their offspring? Mizrachi, Tzerei Mizrachi, Poalei Mizrachi, Hechalutz Mizrachi; the Agudah, Poalei Agudah; the Radical Zionists of Grynbaum and the "Algemeine" Zionists; Revisionists of Jabotinsky and Revisionists of Grossman. There were also Communists—those of Stalin and Trotzky and who knows whose else?

I even knew some Independent Socialists and followers of Dr. Joseph Kruk, who was famous here for his lectures on Ghandi and Roman Roland. Noah Prilutzki and his Folks Party, however, wasn't so popular in our town. Assimilators? They almost completely disappeared. Maybe some remain among the so-called "High Intellegentsia," but they are not to be heard. It's interesting how our lifestyle has changed lately. About 15 to 20 years ago, the assimilators played the dominant role in Jewish Piotrkow, but today, no more. And that's the way the world turns. You probably think that the Piotrkow "Yidn" were quite interested in all their parties' programs, principles, ideological platforms and would found a new party every Monday and Thursday, then divide or reunite as the politicians in the Warsaw headquarters did. You are in for a surprise. Our people had all these things in the "Linke Piente." Only a small group of enthusiasts were involved body and soul in these party antics. Except for this group, you wouldn't find a handful of people that knew the difference between Hitachdut and Poalei Zion or between Gordonia and Freiheit.

Ninety percent of the population had other worries. How to obtain a "Gemilath Hessed" to redeem an outstanding obligatory note? Where to get a few "Zlotys" to make "Shabbos?"

Oh Lord! How could one obtain a sack of potatoes and a cart of wood to store in the cellars for the winter? The poverty was enormous. There were years when over a thousand families didn't have the means to prepare for the Pesach Holiday and were forced to apply for "Kimcha L'Pascha"[1]—and all in all, there were only a few thousand Jewish families living in Piotrkow.

Our Newspaper, "Unzer Tsaytung"

How did I get sidetracked? We were just talking about the print shop. In fact, during the three years prior to the beginning of the "Hurban," I remained in the print shop on Thursday evenings to help prepare a new issue of "Unzer Tsaytung," which would be ready on Saturday for the Jews of Piotrkow. This was during the weeks when "important events" (like elections) were taking place. During other weeks, Yankl Baron and the printer compiled the issues. As time passed, a routine was established. "Unzer Tsaytung"

1 Kimcha L'Pascha—the traditional relief activity dispersing Kosher-for-Passover victuals to the poor.



№ 13 (673) 14-טען יאנואר פריין 15 גר. Rok-XIV. Unzer Cajtung

אונזער צייטונג

פאליטיש-ליטעראריש-געזעלשאפטלעך זאבענבלאט פאר פיעטרקאוו און אומגעגענד.

Piotrków, 26 marca 1937. פיעטרקאוו, פרייטאג ערב פסח תרצ"ז

Adres redakcji i administracji: Piotrków-Tryb. Plac Tryb. 4. Tel. 12-13, w drukarni M. Rozensztejna.

„הגלילה"

צום גליל — איז איצט דער רוף פון ארץ-ישראל

ז. קאטלער

(ירושלים)

PRZETARG.

Ogłasza się przetarg na dostawę do Szpitala Żydowskiego im. Małż. Braun w Piotrkowie następujących artykułów w roku

"Unzer Tsaytung"—Zionist Movement.



The Zionist Movement "Freiheit" at an outing in 1931.

became like the old "shtraymel" in the anecdote: if you put it on the table, it would, by itself, crawl further.

The founder of the Piotrkow weekly newspaper "Unzer Tsaytung" was "davka" a "Galitsyaner"—Dr. Tsvi Zemel, director of the Jewish "gimnazium."

Following the signing of the Balfour Declaration, the Jews believed that the "geula" had arrived. The Zionist dream captivated Jewish hearts. During that period, several enthusiastic Zionists decided to establish the Jewish "gimnazjum" in Piotrkow. I'm not going to tell you about the "gimnazjum"; that's a story all by itself and should be told by its ex-students, the few that are still left. I still remember the first director, Dr. Katzenbogen, who started it on its way. He remained in Piotrkow only two years longer. Following him, Dr. Tsvi Zemel was engaged as director. He was, as they say, a man of substance—"mechikmo u-mala." During his tenure, the "gimnazjum" blossomed and Zionist activity in Piotrkow had a new purpose. Dr. Zemel immediately became the head of the Zionists in the city, and through his initiative it was decided to publish a Zionist weekly newspaper.

Decisions are easily made but expediting them is more difficult. However, since Abraham Eli Rozenthal stood behind the decision, it soon became a reality. This is how, one Spring day in 1924, the first Yiddish weekly in Piotrkow, "Unzer Tsaytung," was born.

Every Friday for 15 years, "Unzer Tsaytung" stirred up the generally sleepy Jewish community of Piotrkow. A poke was made at a communal leader who had "made a mistake"; it was discovered that the "gmina" was up to no good; the paper took a stand against Grabski's schemes, but also announced cultural and artistic events in the city; it agitated during the "Sejm" elections, the "Rav" elections, the "Magistrat" elections, and the "Gmina" elections and, of course, "guarded and protected the interests of Zionism in Piotrkow."

Well, what did you think? That the Zionists would have their own newspaper in Piotrkow and the Bund would sleep? Immediately, they came out with their "Wecker"; following them the "Agudah" issued their *Shtimme*. True, from time to time the *Wecker* seemed to "sleep" a little and *Di Shtimme* was quiet, but you may be sure that when the scent of elections was in the air, the newspapers rose to the occasion and let themselves be heard.

The Gray Eminence

Of course, "Unzer Tsaytung" was a simple provincial weekly which barely existed, and only miracles kept it alive. That such a miracle occurred every Friday for a period of fifteen years can only be credited to several "mishugoyim," several of whom are worthy of mention.

I have already mentioned Abraham Eli Rosenthal. As far back as I can remember, A. E. Rosenthal had been the secretary of the Zionist organization in our city. Usually he did the daily "groye arbet." I never saw him get angry nor raise his voice. He was a fanatic about order and punctuality. I was always amazed by how organized his office was—his desk neat, the minutes recorded, the papers catalogued, everything in its place.

Behind all the Zionist events and actions lay Abraham Eli's organizational hand. He was the "groye eminents" of Piotrkow Zionism.

He also "made" *"Unzer Tsaytung"* from its inception until 1938. Then, for personal reasons, he withdrew from communal activities. He had been the editor, administrator and provider of most of the newsworthy material. Throughout those years, Abraham Eli Rosenthal was *Unzer Tsaytung* and *Unzer Tsaytung* was Abraham Eli Rosenthal.

Yankl Der Rebbetsin's

Corrections on *Unzer Tsaytung* were always made by Yankl Baron. He was called "Yankl Der Rebbetsin's." The "Saba Hakodesh" of Radoshitz was his great-grandfather. He was raised by his grandmother, the widow of the Piotrkow "rov," Rabbi Eleazar Shalom Morgenstern. In our city she was called "Di Rebbetsin," so of course, he was called "Yankl Der Rebbetsin's." The name stuck even after he left the "Beyt Hamidrash" and started to befriend the Zionistic Socialists of the S.S. Party, which was beginning to be organized in Piotrkow.

For several years, Yankl Baron was the secretary of the *Lodzer Togblat*. Even then he was known to be knowledgeable in Yiddish literature. Sometimes he even "sinned" with a poem and a "peyrek" of prose. With the outbreak of World War II, he returned to Piotrkow. At that time drastic changes were occurring amongst Polish Jewry. The *shtibel* and the "Beyt Hamidrash" were no longer of primary importance in Jewish life. People started to be more involved in worldly matters. There was a growing interest in Yiddish literature and in secular culture in general. In Piotrkow , the people began to feel this. The young people who came from the "cheyder" and the *shtibel* and, even more, the Jewish girls who had no place at all where they could learn, were starving for knowledge, culture and any fresh breeze from the broader world. That was when the "Hazamir" was founded in Piotrkow—it was to be the first swallow of the approaching Spring.

Yankl Baron promptly got involved with this cultural activity and, together with Shmelke Folman, organized and directed the "Literarishe Gezelshaftn," as it was then called.

"Unzer Tsaytung" was actually published by the "Algemeyne Tsionim," but it was far from being simply a party publication. In fact, all the Zionist factions, from the "Mizrachi" to the "Poalei-Zion" were represented in it. And, in general, it took a liberal stand on social issues. Yankl Baron, who at that time identified with the Poalei-Zionists, saw no difficulty in joining the editorial staff and started to work for *"Unzer Tsaytung"* immediately. From time to time he published his articles under the name of "Doresman" (his wife's name was Dvorah), but essentially he did the proofreading and saw to it that correct grammatical Yiddish and a superior style were used. More than once he had to correct the writings of various community leaders who wanted their work to appear in the newspaper but were, unfortunately, rather weak with the pen.

Every Thursday afternoon, he left his kiosk at the "hoicher kole," from which he barely eked out a living, and took his place in the printing room. All night, until Friday at dawn, he remained at his job until a brand new issue of *"Unzer Tsaytung"* was

completed. The few "Zlotys" he received added somewhat to his income. The Bundists could not forget their earlier arguments with him, ever since he had been the leader of the Zionists, and constantly accused him in their *Vecker* of "selling out to the Bourgeosie.

I can only remember Yankl Baron during the last three years before the "Hurban." Engraved in my memory is a scene which took place late one winter's night in the printing office, which was simultaneously the editorial room. Yankl Baron was standing in a corner near a "shtentser" wearing a worn coat and an old, misshapen hat on his head. On his hands were knitted half-gloves, from which his naked fingers, swollen from the cold, and looking like red sausages, protruded. He held the pen awkwardly between his fingers, dipping it constantly into a small bottle containing only a drop of ink on the bottom. Thus he stood patiently correcting the material printed on narrow strips of paper for the compositor.

By that time, it seemed that the revolutionary fire of his youth had been extinguished. He never participated in the heated arguments of the small groups of idlers who always hung around the print shop. Seldom did he make a comment. But when he did, one saw, through the lenses of his misshapen metal frames, a spark of the old fire in his eyes.

"Yerubel"

On almost every Friday for many years, there appeared in *Unzer Tsaytung,* under the pen name "Yerubel," satiric poems and rhyming parodies. In funny, pointed rhymes, full of humor and wit, they accompanied the events of Piotrkow's Jewish world. Week after week they reflected in a "krumer shpigl" the humorous side of our life. One did not envy the "parves" whom "Yerubel" whipped for his "sheyne maysim." It was pitiful to behold the "kokhlefel" when Yerubel honored him with his stabbing mockery because of a clumsy misstep. The readers delighted in the light, playful lines which excelled because of their folksy but very rich Yiddish.

Not only were sharp arrows aimed at wrongdoing and injustice; not only were there biting satires of the distorted and oftentimes ridiculous shape of our Jewish reality: Yerubel also knew how to illustrate, with warm sentiments, the beautiful aspects of Jewish life, to draw sincere pictures of simple folk manners.

However, although the readers were greatly pleased by his humorous parodies, his comic rhymes and witty lectures, which always made their point, the author himself was always clouded and embittered.

Yosef Berish Rosenblum, known as "Yerubel," earned his living as a Hebrew teacher at the Jewish Gimnazjum. I had the honor of knowing him closely. He was really "aley v'gadash" with "khakhmay Yisroel, Tanakh, Talmud, rabbinic S'farim" to the latest research on behalf of Judaism, not to mention all of Yiddish and Hebrew literature. Everything was known to him, and he was the "bal-habayit" of it all. Judging from his knowledge and abilities, he could have been a professor in any Judaic institution. With his pen he could have shone as a writer of human interest stories in the most important Yiddish newspapers. His satiric talents could have succeeded in social and political newspapers in the broadest sense. But fate had cruelly trapped him in Piotrkow.

There he taught in a small provincial "shul." His witty satires dealt with small provincial muck and were published in a poor provincial brochure.

This was his tragedy. And another thing: Yosef Berish Rosenblum was a fanatic Zionist. He had a premonition about the Holocaust. As a representative of the Zionists in the "Kehila," he fought bitterly against the local teachings of the "Bund," which either did not hear, nor did not want to hear, the approaching heavy footsteps of history. In speech and writing he tried to influence the indifference of the Jewish masses, who, while involved in their daily problems, did not sense the oncoming storm.

This almost brought him to despair. The last drop in his bitter cup was that his tragic destiny prevented him from realizing his greatest dream, to make "Aliya" to Eretz Israel.

Hundreds of young people heard his talks in the "gimnazjum" and during evening courses. He implanted in their hearts the love of the Hebrew language and Jewish culture. Thousands of his readers memorized passages of his satires and parodies and entertained themselves with them for many years. Those who remain still remember him with gratitude and love.

The satire which he published in "Unzer Tsaytung" on Erev Pesach 1924, which, if I am not mistaken, was his first, opened with the following lines:

> Do you know the city
> That's at God's mercy,
> Where the Jordan doesn't flow,
> And not, too, the Rhine,
> But the genuine
> Strawa itself?

Let's alter the first line a little and make it the motto of our "shpatsir":

Do you remember the City? . . . .

The Loyal Soldier

And last, but not least, Fayvl Shteinberg. Who didn't know Fayvl, the son of Menil Shteinberg, who owned the tavern on the "Farna," across from the "Tushiner Feltsher?" Everyone knew that at Menil Shteinberg's one could get the best glass of beer in town. Whenever we passed by, we would always stop in for a cold glass of beer with "zokher arbes" and thin "zalts-matselekh." Fayvl himself would fill our glasses with a particularly large head. He could always be found in the tavern, except when he was involved in his Zionist activities.

Do you remember Fayvl? Short, thin, a "halb droybele" with a long neck and protruding Adam's apple right in the center? It was always thought that he would lose his trousers and jacket, which were always several sizes too large for him.

He was neither a writer nor a speaker. He was only a simple soldier, always on the alert. He made sure that the Zionist interests were taken care of. Without wisecracks and without arguments, he alone did the major share of the daily "shvartze arbet": he took care of the necessary chores, retained contact with the "responsible leaders." He never

seemed to be in a hurry, yet he always managed to be everywhere. He knew everyone and was aware of what was going on in the entire city.

Fayvl was an unusual kind of soldier. No one gave him any orders. His orders seemed to come from a higher authority. Nevertheless, he made sure that the "generals" did their jobs. He supervised each and every one and did not relax until everyone in the organization accomplished whatever they undertook to do or what Fayvl thought they should be doing.

At the time that I was coopted by the staff of *Unzer Tsaytung*, an embittered Yerubel had already ceased contributing his rhyming "felyatonen." Abraham Eli Rosenthal had also withdrawn during the past year. It seemed that *Unzer Tsaytung* was going to close up shop. But Fayvl was on the alert. When the generals fall, the soldier takes command. *Unzer Tsaytung* continued to appear.

On Sundays, Fayvl would begin to remind me that the paper must be ready for Friday, and on Wednesday afternoons he moved into my house and did not leave until all the material, including my editorial for the new issue, was in his hands.

The same thing happened on the last day before the beginning of the great disaster. On that Friday, September 1, 1939, I left my apartment in the morning for work, as I did every day. I never saw it again. I also never saw the last issue of *Unzer Tsaytung*, which appeared that Friday, and I never got to see my editorial. I would give a great deal to know what nonsense I wrote in the final hour before the catastrophe hit us.

I also never saw Fayvl Shteinberg again. Nor did I ever hear from him again. Now, after so many years, I read witnesses' accounts that Fayvl Shteinberg provided secret underground literature to the small ghetto and the "block." He never stopped carrying out the orders of his "higher authority."

He was the loyal soldier to the very end.

Heidim

Conjunctions in the Past Tense

Ben Giladi—New York

One of these days, I shall have to take pen in hand and write a thousand stories about my boyhood and my home town. . . .

What I remember vividly about those years, just before the Holocaust war, are the sights and sounds of the "Yidn Gass." I remember the yards of the tenements, the small orthodox congregations and, most of all, the tiny neighborhood stores. I remember all those places where life moved on in colorful simplicity.

At the grocery of Pinkchas Tillis on "Yidn Gass," the piquant fragrances of spices and dried prunes would send my senses reeling. Garlic garlands hung from the nails and huge, open sacks were filled with beans, barley, sugar, salt, and rice. I would walk around, not only smelling the foods but visualizing the places from which they had come—a multiple lesson in geography.

I loved to go to "Toltsa's" bakery. All the years that have passed have not dissipated the memory of the heart-warming aroma of the fresh-baked bread and rolls that made my mouth water. There was a small, hut-like store near the "Strava" bridge that was packed with vegetables, greens, fruits and pickles. The owner, a short, heavyset woman, had the flattest nose I had ever seen; as you might guess, people called her "Die Platzinose."

Questioning the price was standard procedure: "How much is this one?" "Three groshen." "Okay, I will take the other one for two groshen."

"Fair trade" meant that you never paid the asking price. When one woman was caught shoplifting, the merchant did not press charges. "Just pay for the item and we will forget what happened." With tears of gratitude running down her face, she squeezed his hand, sobbing, "I don't know why I did it! I will be glad to pay for it! But not at your prices, you crook, you!"

A real treat was a visit to the stationery stores of Mr. Okrent or Mr. Wald. If there was money in one's pocket one could buy the most desirable school supplies.

There were all kinds of men cruising the streets. A ragman carried a burlap sack on his back and sang out, "Szmaty—alte zakchen." Another one chanted, "Handel, handel, handel." There were music men, too. Sometimes a man played or sang in the street or a tenement backyard. Soft-hearted Mamas would wrap a coin in a piece of paper and throw it out to them. The artist would stop the performance, pick up the coin, bow to express thanks and continue. I still remember some hit songs from this era, such as "Oi Madagascar" or "Abbisynia." The most popular song, however, was "Remember Capri."

In our house in Piotrkow—No. 13 Garncarska Street—there was a little synagogue called "Hessed shel Emmeth" (Benevolence and Truth). On Sabbath, just before the evening, the congregation would sit around a long table for the closing Sabbath meal (Shalosh Seudoth). The men sang table chants and ate "chale," a piece of herring, carp



The Staro-Warszawska Street (Yidn Gass) in perspective.

or even meat. The food was provided by a noble woman named Rivkeleh, who lived in a second-floor apartment overlooking the front. People called her "meshugeh" (crazy). She spent all the money she received from her rich children on charity. She also provided "chale" and bread for the "Beth Lechem" society. They distributed the goodies to the poor from the only brick-built, all-year-round static "Sukka," which was the pride of our landlord, Hertzkeh Gutkind.

On holidays, it was always a thrill to watch the four wings of the roof open and then to eat a delicious meal inside.

Some very strange individuals came for the Sabbath meal, which was probably the only substantial meal they had all week. The most memorable character was called "Eisl." He was a slender man with a little black beard, long earlocks and shiny eyes. His mission in life was to visit every garbage dump in the Jewish quarter and to look for pieces of paper written in the holy language in order to give them a decent burial. He salvaged prayer books and every scrap of paper with a Hebrew letter on it. He spoke softly and had a large aura of holiness around him. No one ever tried to poke fun at this remarkable man.

Then there was "Sender a Needle," who got infuriated whenever the word "needle" was mentioned. Apparently, this was his weakest point.

Shaye Pukatz was a stoutish man dressed in an old orthodox coat with the ritual fringes outside. On late Friday afternoons, he roamed the "Yidn Gass," wooden hammer in hand, knocking on walls and reminding merchants to close their stores before the Sabbath.

One man was called "Mendele Shmeck Taback." He constantly approached people asking for a little dab of this nose-tickling substance.

"Awremele der Wasser Treger" (the water carrier) supplied this necessary liquid to the houses without a running water system. All week long, the wooden carrier on his back and two heavy buckets attached, he strolled from a pump to houses carrying water. On the Sabbath, the bent figure would appear at the door of the congregation. He wore his best clothes and a bright smile on his usually impassive face, which indicated that this must have been a happy moment in his life.

The man conducting the ceremonies inside was called "Reb Leibele." He was surrounded by pious, poor people who chanted "Zmiroth" and unraveled the mysteries of the Torah. And while they sang, the first stars came out and the Sabbath was over. A new week had begun. The lamps were lit, the evening prayers said and, as "Reb Leibele" said grace over the wine, the men held their fingers near the candle flame and smelled a box of "B'sumim" to ensure a prosperous new week. The *shtibel* was filled with the odor of burning wax, blessed spices and an atmosphere of wonder and miracles.

Youth passed quickly for us. Our minds are charged with vivid memories of the only place on earth where we experienced the greatest thrill of all—our childhood and our youth.

Therefore, one of these days, I shall have to take pen in hand and write a thousand stories about my boyhood and home town. . . .

New Bulletin

Peretz Street

Maria Migus–Paris

A street, it seems to me, like so many streets of Polish cities. Poor, neglected, it was located in the center of the heart of the Jewish quarter. She cradled the poor houses in her arms, as a loving mother, and felt the joy and pain of its inhabitants.

She would have had so much to tell of her long life—of Jewish poverty and want, of Jewish heroism, bustle and struggle—and how her arms once nestled the illegal Bundist "Birzhe" before Czarist times.

This street was not very long. It contained only a few dozen houses. At its border was a girls' school, named for the Jewish commandant of the Polish liberation struggle against the Czar, Berek Yoselevitch; it later became the building which housed the Hebrew "gimnazjum" and, in the Ghetto, the Jewish hospital. Across, the slaughterhouse for fowl. At the junction of the "YiddisheGas" porters would stand, their loins girded with rope, waiting for their services to be purchased. A little further on were the "richer" porters who could already afford hand-trucks. Across were traders of old things. From here there rang out to all the city's courts the elongated sounds of "Shmattes." Old shoes and clothes waited for customers.

Across the small bridge, over the Strawa Stream, troubled women and young children, who had forsaken their schools in order to help provide support were selling their wares, which consisted of damaged apples, pears, plums and green vegetables.

In summertime there was a distant fragrance coming from the forest, together with black and red berries. Groups of pranksters ran about in ragged clothes, barefoot and with discolored lips and blackened teeth because berries were very cheap. In the web of the total ambiance, there came a rhythmic beat from the cobblers, as though from an accordion, locksmiths' and metalsmiths' hammers and the sewing machines, interwoven with interrupted strains of songs. The cobbler's awl and thread, plane, shears and iron took the upper hand. Thus the Jewish workers, bent over their worktables, sent, through the windows and into the world, their longing for freedom, their readiness to fight, which rekindled a flame in their extinguished eyes.

It only became quiet here late at night. Exhausted from a day's labor, some with earnings, some without, they dragged themselves home, where a shriveled wife, a hungry child waited. Together, in the light of a dim kerosene lamp, they ate their meager meal and laid their weary bones on a straw-filled sack until dawn once again forced them out.

The houses on the street were low; a few had collapsed. The tallest house was one story high with a skylight where a chunk of gray sky peeked in, but seldom a ray of sun. There were narrow, unpaved courtyards, where Jewish children wove their hopes and dreams.

How different the street appeared with the arrival of "Shabbat." Together with the "in shul-klapn," a majestic stillness took over. Trade disappeared, the sewing machines

and the workshops were silenced. Candles were lit, like stars in the sky. Groups of children, sparkled with their shampooed hair, like birch trees after a rain. Jews with neatly combed beards and "taleisim" under their arms, headed with measured steps, either to the shul or to their *shtibel*, the youth headed to their party halls, some of them to learn how to respond to the revolution, others to dream of a land where palm trees grew and the Dead Sea rolled.

On Saturday afternoon, a soft "nigun" from "zmirot" and "tsena u-Rena" strolled about saying "Today we rest, today we don't worry!"

Until Sunday awakened, and the new week raised its head and chased the residents to seek sustenance. Thus, life continued in the very heart of the Jewish quarter in Piotrkow, on the most Jewish of all the Jewish streets, which later bore the proud name of our great writer, I.L. Peretz.

Izkor Book



Peretz Street with the Strawa Stream in the center.

City Stereotypes

Yakov Leber—Tivon

Once, every city and town in Poland had its characters, at whom the people poked fun, thereby gladdening the sad moods of the inhabitants. Under the conditions in which they lived, their daily life was really difficult; in addition, they were surrounded by "good" neighbors, who, on more than one occasion, sought an opportunity to find happiness at the cost of a beard or a back. This, of course, was the time of the Russians during World War I until the outbreak of the Hitler catastrophe.

Toybele Mitn Lokshn Bret they called her. A soul that "was not all there," she would cavort each day in front of the Polish barracks across from the Jewish hospital and shout dirty words through the windows to the Russian soldiers. This would delight the soldiers and, as a reward, they would hand out or throw through the window some bread and sometimes even cigarettes. At night, she would steal into the women's section of the shul and spend the night there.

Sender a Nodl lived on Yidn Gas, where Zayontshkovski had his herring store. He came from a very honorable family in our city, the Horowitz's, but, unfortunately, he was not totally in possession of his mind. I could never find out the reason, but when someone showed him a pin or a needle, he would yell and chase the children and was ready to "tear them to pieces."

Der Shtumer Vove was mute and deaf, but if anyone wanted to have some fun, they would give him three kopeks (Russian money). Then he would let them speak to him, and when a pretty girl passed and they said, "Vove, give her a kiss," nothing could stop him. He would kiss her so violently that she, alas, ran home in great embarrassment.

Yitschok Bas was the father of Wolf Platow, who was later the owner of a large carpentry shop as well as the movie house. Yitschok Bas earned his living as an organ-grinder; a parrot would stand on his organ and, for three kopeks, would choose a lucky ticket for the servant girls. They were actually the best customers and always wanted to know who would save them from their difficult destiny and their "balebostes'" iron pots, or who would be their prince, whose white horse would take them away to distant places. They could see him every Tuesday and Friday on market days, with his organ, among the peasants of the neighboring villages.

Kichele they called him. He had a pitifully little shop near the "Strawa." Since there were several "cheyders" in that area, the children would come to him to purchase a roll or a piece of candy and pay him for it with three or five Kopeks. He would always take the money, but never wanted to give them their change. Instead, he would give them a cookie.

On Yidn Gas, where my uncle Henoch Korman lived, there was a cheyder. The "melamed" was named Leybush Koze. He only taught "Chumash" to the boys. As was his wont, he would fall asleep at the table. One day, we wanted to "teach" the rabbi a

lesson. We brought pieces of rope from our home and, when he fell asleep, we tied his feet to the bench. Then we took his whip, with which he often let us have it, and smeared it with garlic; then we placed it into the "Kalch" oven, where the heat dried it out well, and we returned it to the table. When the Rabbi awoke and couldn't rise from the bench, he became angry, grabbed the whip, and began to strike the first boy sitting next to him. The leather tongs began to fly in all directions.

New Bulletin



The cemetery "Watchman" before the war.

A Letter From Ben-Gurion

Elazar Prashker—Jerusalem

A Gift to the Research of the History of Piotrkow Jewry

Our friend Michael Shidlowski has given us several documents for the Piotrkow archives. Among them is a letter written by David Ben-Gurion on July 6, 1933 and addressed to the committee of the Eretz Israel League in Piotrkow. Michael Shidlowski was, at the time, chairman of the League and Joshua Ziegelman its secretary.

The letter takes us back to the time of the bitter interlude in the Zionist movement which preceded the 18th conference in Prague (Aug.–Sept. 1933). This was truly a period that would shape the future. In January of that year, Hitler had come to power in Germany. The Jewish communities in Israel suffered greatly after the anti-Zionist turn in British policy, which had begun in 1929 and had reached its culmination with the publication of the "white book" of the labor government, headed by Lord Pasfield, in 1930.

Britain's new anti-Zionist policy caused great divisions of opinion about which road the Zionist movement should take. Such divergences were heatedly debated during the 17th congress in Basel.

The Revisionists were extremists had remained outside Zionist administration. As a result, their influence with the workers' factions from "Mapai" and "Hashomer Hatzair" declined.

In 1933 the poison of internal rivalry between the Socialist-Zionists and the Revisionists filtered through the entire Zionist enterprise of the diaspora. Jabotinsky called for the dissolution of the Zionist organization. He asked that the rug be pulled from under its feet. There were heated arguments about which direction and policy ought to be pursued. Some of these led to assassinations.

Only six days after the arrival of Ben-Gurion's letter in Piotrkow, Haim Arlozorof was murdered; this climactic event, occurring, as it did, in a tense, hate-filled atmosphere, caused all havoc to break loose within the movement.

This background clearly explains Ben-Gurion's words about a "a campaign of life and determination, the battle for the destiny of Zionism."

Printed below, the letter is a document typical of Ben-Gurion. He wrote it in pencil on pages from one of the hundreds of his now-famous notebooks, and a copy of it remained with him. His spelling of the city name Warsaw ("Varsho") is reminiscent of his particular pronunciation of words such as "Americo" and "Africo." As no corrections have been made, and as there is no attempt at grammatical precision, we can assume that Ben-Gurion wrote the letter in a rush. It is a clear, brisk letter and the Hebrew word "et" ("so favored") by Ben-Gurion appears only once.

At the time he wrote the Piotrkow letter, Ben-Gurion was the head of the united front

of the labor movement in the Eretz Israel elections of the 18th Zionist conference. This was the conference which was to determine the face of the Zionist movement, but this hardly prevented him from being concerned with the details of every small unit of the movement. In this case, the unit was our small town, Piotrkow. Such attention makes Ben-Gurion's letter a valuable historical document for us Piotrkow Jews.

The Letter

Warsaw, June 7, 1933

To the League Committee in Piotrkow:

Dear Friends:

I received an answer to the shekel questionnaire from Piotrkow, signed by our colleague M. Shidlowski, and I was ashamed to read it. In your town there are 68 Poale Zion C.S. members, 30 Hitachdut members, 86 Freiheit members (of whom 64 are *bogrim* [those who have finished their youth organization training for life in the newly rebuilt land of Israel]), 280 in Hashomer Hatzair (45 seniors), 20 in Gordonia (14 seniors), 159 in Hehalutz, with 28 in the Hachshara [preparation for settling in the land of Israel], 170 in Hapoel (60 of whom are apolitical), 367 in the League of whom 85 are apolitical, which totals about seven hundred persons (not counting Hehalutz, who might be party members, and the youth organizations), and you are proposing to sell only 500 shekels? Our colleague Shidlowski further writes that a financial assistance in the sum of 300 zloty was given to you! The members, not counting their parents, should give at least 1,500 shekels, and, after all, in your town you have also 400 craftsmen who can be won over to labor Zionist in the land of Israel. What is the meaning of this delinquent negligence? In most towns the members increase their quotas five–six fold, and you can do the same if you fulfill your duty out of a sense of realizing that this time it is not an election campaign but a struggle for life and decision, crucial for the survival of Zionism, of the workers' union (the Histadrut), and the pioneer immigration!

Sell the shekels among all the parents of members in the youth organizations; impose a minimum of 60 groshen on every member of Freiheit, Gordonia and Hashomer Hatzair who cannot vote, for the shekel fund; sell the shekels to the craftsmen. You have to guarantee a minimum of 1,500 shekels for the bloc of labor Zionism.

I am awaiting your answer and I expect more encouraging news.

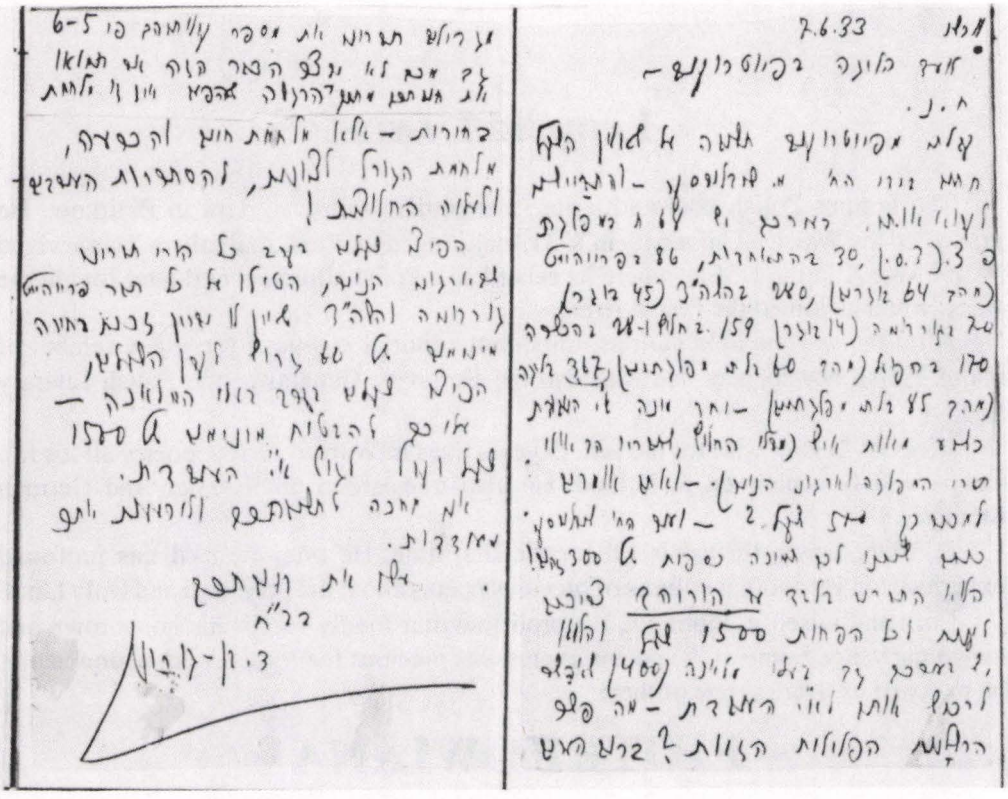
Fulfill your duty!

With fraternal greetings,

(signed)

David Ben-Gurion

Heidim



The original letter of Ben-Gurion.



Ben-Gurion during his visit to the "Migdal Or" (Tower of Light) house in Haifa in 1961. On his left is Pola Gelade-Glatter of Piotrkow. She was then the manager of this house for the blind. They are surrounded by the blind inhabitants of this noble institution.

Leopold Lewin

The famous Polish poet and writer, Leopold Lewin, was born in Piotrkow. He graduated the Warsaw University in 1931, majoring in Law and Journalism. He survived World War II in the USSR, where he served as a Polish diplomat and later fought the Nazis when he joined the Polish Army.

After the war, he held various, important editorial positions serving a number of major Polish newspapers. He was also the Secretary General of the Polish Literary Society.

Leopold Lewin, who for the last 45 years lives in Warsaw, wrote poetry all his life and is widely acclaimed in Poland. He also translates from Russian and German literature.

In 1988, Lewin visited Israel for the first time. He immortalized this profound experience in yet another volume of precious poems about the Promised and Holy Land.

Born and raised in Piotrkow, the prolific writer fondly recalls his home town and his young years. Some of the poems express his precious feelings shared, undoubtedly, by many of us. Here is one of them:

PIOTRKOWIANA

LEOPOLD LEWIN

* * *

Nie chciałbym przyjść na świat we Frankfurcie nad Menem
I mieszkać w miniaturze stolicy — Weimarze;
Nie chciałbym przyjść na świat we wsi Michajłowskoje
I mieszkać nad kanałem w złotym Petersburgu;
Lecz chciałbym przyjść na świat w Piotrkowie Trybunalskim,
Gdzie w zaułkach Starego Miasta, na Rycerskiej,
Na Trybunalskim rynku, na Grodzkiej, Zamkowej
Rozgrywały się sceny wzięte żywcem z Troi —
Ich siłą napędową pasja i namiętność.
Bitwy klanów, gonitwy, zasadzki, porwania,
Napady nienawiścią, zemstą dyktowane
I najazdy, którymi kierowała miłość.
Tu każda sień, piwnica sekrety odsłania,
Godne homeryckiego patosu i mocy.

Tak, chciałbym przyjść na świat w Piotrkowie Trybunalskim
I stąd wyruszyć na podbój Kolchidy.

LEOPOLD LEWIN

* * *

I would not like to be born in Frankfurt am Main
Or to live in the miniature Weimar Republic;
I would not like to be born in Michajlowskoje domain
Or live on the gold, Petersburg channel—so unique;
I would like to greet the world in Piotrkow Trybunalski,
Where, among Rycerska, through the city alleys,
On Trybunalski Rynek, Grodzka and Zamkowa
Ancient Trojan images—sounding like reveilles—
Their driving power—desires, lust and passion.
Fights of klans, ambushes, chases and abductions,
Assaults and vendettas, hatred and compassion
And raids motivated by love and seductions.
Here, every cellar, hallway, beneath and above,
Unveils the Homeric-like epics full of pathos.

I would like to be born in Piotrkow Trybunalski
And from here set out for the conquest of Colchis.[1]

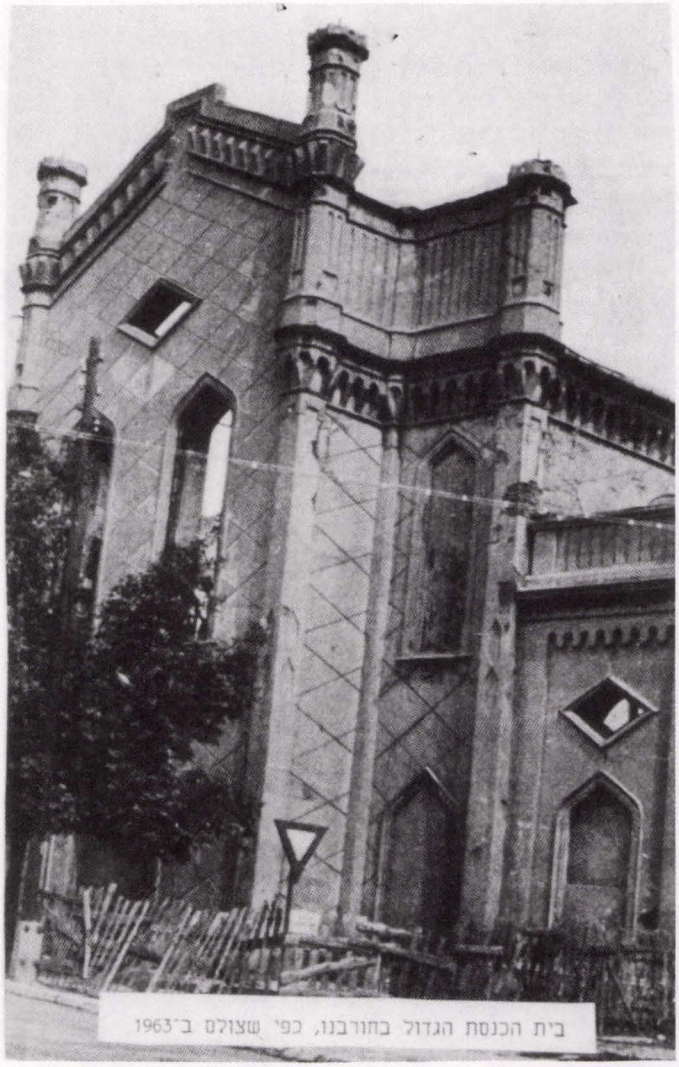
Leopold Lewin
Translated from Polish by Ben Giladi
Heidim No. 25, 1984



The founders of the Jewish Library in Piotrkow in the early twenties. From the left: Leopold (Lolek) Lewin, Yakov Pais, Hela Horowicz-Staszewska, Shimon Blausztajn and Eva Blausztajn.

1 Colchis is the mythological land of Medea, the wife of Jason, the leader of the Argonauts, whom she assisted in obtaining the Golden Fleece.

THE TRACK OF THE STORM



The outside walls of the Great Synagogue after the war.

The Seven Fires of Hell

The Destruction of Piotrkow

Naphtali Lau-Lavie—Jerusalem

Hell is above the firmament. Some say it is behind the mountains of darkness.

—The Talmud, Tamid 84

Hell will cease, but they will not cease.

—The Talmud, Rosh Hashana 17

The earthly hell of our times was not hidden behind mountains or darkness. It found us in our very homes, in the midst of civilized, twentieth-century Europe, and made us pass through its seven gates of fire. When this hell ceased, those who had crossed its portals were no more, except for a few embers that had been spared and brought forth to tell what their eyes had seen and their ears had heard. Fragments of their words, retold or in writing, are now appended to the scroll in which the destruction of the city of Piotrkow is recounted.

The facts attesting to this truth, revealed by these few rescued embers, have not been obscured by the rivers of tears of the witnesses in their personal accounts. These terrifying facts, deeply engraved in the consciousness of all who saw and heard, should serve as eternal testimony for future generations, so that they may know, informed by the original and authentic source, of the era of the horrors that visited humankind at the pinnacle of its civilization.

It was at the time of the historic trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem that we gathered testimony of the destruction of our city. By day we sat opposite the judges' bench and heard the horrors described from the witness stand. By night we edited the transcripts of these agonies of the survivors of Piotrkow. They took on a palpable form when retold: Before my eyes these accounts animated the dry bones that had been presented during the trial. They made this reality tangible to us and gave identity to the nation's anonymous victims. Thus they are presented in this book—through the persona of the city of slaughter, Piotrkow, and in the image of its Jewish inhabitants.

Our memory was refreshed by those details of events that had sunk deep into our consciousness. They flashed before our eyes like a motion picture, as we had witnessed them from a hidden corner of my father's house, which had served for a time as the setting of events, and as we had experienced them in the flesh when torn, with the other survivors, from the ruins of Jewish Piotrkow. We now retell them briefly in the order in which they occurred.

1939—The Blow

It was late August, 1939. The warm, late-summer sun spread its rays. We—thousands of schoolboys—hurried back from summer vacation in order to resume our education. While riding the express train from Carpathia to Piotrkow, I witnessed scenes the likes of which I had never seen before. Wailing women and girls crowded the platforms of the stations between Krakow and my destination; they were parting with their husbands, fathers, and sons. As the train slowed, clusters of disheveled young men leaped into the doorways of the cars and clung to the railings. "There's gunpowder in the air," whispered an old Jew who sat with me in my compartment.

We reached the Piotrkow station after a ten-hour journey that normally took only five. There, too, I witnessed similar outpourings of raw emotion. I headed for home, oblivious to the raucous crowd of men clutching suitcases and wooden crates on the other side of the station. When I arrived, however, the greeting I received was not the cheerful one I had expected. Beneath my father's smile and my mother's caress, their concern about the future showed through—a concern that proved to be justified.

The school year began two days later, on Friday, September 1. The principals of the Jewish schools decided to postpone the resumption of studies until Sunday, but even in the public schools few students reported. Thus, granted an extra day of summer vacation, I went out to amuse myself in town. The mischievous nature of youth had not been dissipated by the depression and tension that were felt everywhere. Who imagined that this would be our last breath of freedom in this city?

As I stood on the steps of the *Beit Midrash* on Jerozolimska (Jerusalem) Street, marveling at the antics of one of the town eccentrics, an army vehicle streaked by, full of soldiers shouting, "War!"

We began to appreciate the significance of this cry fifteen minutes later, when I reached the center of Stara-Warszawska Street, known as the "Jewish street" of Piotrkow. I found the Jews there seized with fear, for a radio news broadcast had informed them that the border town of Wielun had been attacked. The sirens began to wail at midday, and people hurried to doorways and cellars for shelter. A chance bomb that fell on the outskirts of the city caused slight damage. That day, the first day of World War II, passed without bloodshed in Piotrkow.

Only a few people ventured out of their houses for Sabbath evening services that night. The synagogue was dark and desolate, as were most of the *shtieblach.* Hardly a glimmer of light could be seen in the city streets. People strained their ears to hear the drone of the steel birds that spread terror throughout Piotrkow. On our street, Pilsudski Street, troops of infantry filed by singing marching songs. Slightly encouraged, I ran outside to verify that Poland's armed forces were indeed ready to repel the Nazi invasion. Their dismal appearance only compounded my depression: only some of the soldiers were armed, and many were barefoot.

A night of fear and anticipation passed. Some predicted that the allies would intervene quickly to staunch the conflagration. Others feared a second "Munich" at

Poland's expense. Still others appreciated the situation for what it was, but not the full impact of its cruelty.

Piotrkow was dealt a convincing blow the next day, Shabbat morning, when several squadrons of Stukas bombers emptied their bays on the downtown area and claimed the first casualties. Scores of people on the main street, Slowackiego Street, were buried under the rubble. First-aid teams loaded the casualties onto stretchers and, for lack of any means of transportation, carried them to the general hospital, far from the site of the attack. For the first time I saw crushed human bodies, with their intestines exposed and fragments of their limbs dragging behind. It was then, too, that the Jews of Piotrkow contributed their first victims: Romek Zaks, injured in his home by shrapnel, and Lolek Epstein, standing near the new railroad station.

The streets were strewn with broken glass. Few people dared to peek out of their doorways. The deadly enemy aircraft continued to circle over the city before heading to their other destinations. Occasionally, the sputter of a single machine gun could be heard, sending intermittent gunfire in the direction of moving targets overhead.

That afternoon, a Jewish soldier frantically burst into our house. He was stationed at an anti-aircraft artillery near our house, equipped with a few medium-range machine guns and nothing else. The sporadic coughs that came from there reminded us of the existence of the anti-aircraft defense.

"The war's over for me," the soldier shouted hysterically. Before we could size him up, he told us that a Polish reconnaissance plane had been downed over the city a few moments ago; his unit's commanders held his position responsible for the mishap. The soldier felt that he had been victimized, turned into a scapegoat. Nor was he exaggerating:about an hour after we had fed him and sent him to a safe shelter, military gendarmes began combing the area in search of the "traitorous Jewish deserter."

On Saturday night, the situation in other parts of the country still unclear, a mad scramble to flee Piotrkow began. Hundreds of Jews converged on our house, demanding to know what my father, the rabbi of the city, Rabbi Lau, would do. The only advice he could offer was, "Hide for a moment until the furor is passed" (Isaiah 26:20), adding that "Flight is the beginning of defeat" (Sotah 44).

The4 affluent, who had procured suitable means of transportation, geared up for a long journey and planned to migrate eastward, hoping that the Nazis' advance would be arrested near the Russian border. Others doubted the possibility of any temporary refuge from the deadly bombardments. The city exits were blocked; thousands of refugees clogged the roads and dirt paths with hundreds of wagons, pulled by either horses or people. Most of them moved eastward, toward the nearby towns of Przyglow and Sulejow. A few had given thought to their destination, but most wished only to flee the focal point of fire in the city.

In any case, the steel birds caught up with the refugees. On Monday afternoon, German planes swooped down on the masses who had taken shelter in the forest of Sulejow, strafing them with machine guns and other automatic weapons. Most of the victims were Piotrkow Jews who had fled the city. Entire families were wiped out, including the elderly *dayan*, Rabbi Jakob Glazer, and his daughter and grandson.

Those who remained in Piotrkow and heard about the slaughter at Sulejow and saw

the tongues of flame that had broken forth from the houses of that town preferred to seek shelter in the city. However, Piotrkow's turn for aerial bombardment came two days after the devastation in Sulejow, before the Nazi ground forces had occupied the area. Between bombardments, residents hurried to the stores to restock their food supplies. Shortages were felt in the very first days, after the frantic exodus on the eve of the war. Looting was rife. Civilian discipline was slack; hardly any policemen were seen. On rare occasions, Polish army units passed through the main street, some armed and in formation, heading for the front, and others in disarray, the remnants of units now retreating to the interior of the country. The latter troops brought news of the entrenchment and rapid advance of the Germans, who had broken through the front lines before the Poles could gird for resistance.

Every day I stood at the door of my house and peered into the empty street, waiting for future developments. Indeed, on Tuesday afternoon, September 5, a Civil Defense lookout spotted two motorcycles racing up Pilsudski Street from the direction of the railroad tracks. With their gray–green uniforms and unfamiliar steel helmets, the riders looked like foreigners. When the house commander, an educated Gentile, saw them, he cried out, "It's the Allies! The French and the British!"

The news spread quickly. Many people rushed out of their cellars to witness the saviors' arrival. However, as soon as the motorcycles turned around the corner of Pilsudski and Jerozolimska Streets and passed by again, the identity of the "allies" became clear.

The two motorcycles, the vanguard of the invading forces, were followed by command cars, trucks packed with Wehrmacht troops, and light armored vehicles. Soldiers fired indiscriminately. I saw my first victim of German gunfire: a Jew who had sat with me in the cellar of the Radoshitzer Rebbe, Rabbi Yitzhak'l Finkler. The man peered through the doorway and took a bullet through the heart.

By the end of the next day, Piotrkow had been cleansed of its last pockets of resistance; German garrison forces controlled the city. However, any lone shots fired at a German car at the corner of Jerozolimska and Zamkowa Streets were met with cruel retribution: the Germans decided to burn down the block of houses bounded by Jerozolimska, Staro-Warszawska, Wspolna, and Zamkowa Streets. All these homes were occupied by Jews, and the Germans threatened to torch them with their occupants inside.

The warning was issued on Wednesday at noon, and all the inhabitants, who had been afraid to put their heads out earlier, fled in panic with nothing but the clothes they were wearing. Six of them were shot as they ran; several died of their wounds. Within minutes, the Germans made good on their threat, igniting flames that took more than two nights to burn themselves out.

Thus began a new era for the Jews of Piotrkow—the five-year period of Nazi occupation, which brought upon the world a terrible holocaust the likes of which mankind had never known.

1939–40—Plunder, Murder, and Organization

Chaos reigned in the city. Crowds thronged the stores, bakeries, and coal depots,

forming lengthy queues. Even before the Germans unveiled their Jewish policy, Polish mobs vented their undisguised hatred for the Jews; they were among the first to drive home the lesson of the new era. Anyone who "looked Jewish" was shoved out of the queues. Whenever a German soldier passed by, Poles pointed at the unfortunate one and shouted "*Jude*," showing the German, with unmistakable gestures, the kinds of treatment they had in mind. Jewish stores and businesses were routinely vandalized, and Polish looters directed the Germans to these locations in hopes of sharing the spoils.

Corpses that had been killed as the Germans entered Piotrkow accumulated in the gutters. The many Jews among them were gathered up by their relatives and hauled on hand trucks to the cemetery. The burial society people had not yet returned to the city, and the only person available to prepare the corpses for burial was the gravedigger, Reb David (Tetlok) Nutkievicz. He cried out for assistance, and Rabbi Lau and several other Jews came out to the cemetery and began to bury the scores of dead.

The *Kehila* offices were still closed. Most of the community council and its staff had fled during the bombardment. Those who remained, or had succeeded in returning, kept themselves far from public view. The Germans, however, joked for an official Jewish address. The city was under the command of a Wehrmacht *Oberst* (Colonel) named Brandt, who, having been appointed town major, made initial contact with the Jews by visiting Rabbi Lau at home.

Two days before Rosh Hashana 5700 (September, 1939), a green Volkswagen, already a Gestapo trademark, pulled up at our house. Three high-ranking SS officers stepped through the gate, climbed the stairs, and pounded on the door. When I hurriedly pushed the door open, I was surprised by their politeness and courtesy as they asked to speak with the "Chief Rabbi." They waited in the vestibule for a few moments and then entered the study, saluting crisply in a manner quite unlike the sloppy style typical of the Nazis. Then they removed their hats and turned to the rabbi.

Rabbi Lau remained seated in his armchair, forcing himself to look calm. He asked them to sit down, displaying a businesslike coolness. After an initial exchange of sentences, the Nazis pulled out three chairs near the desk and seated themselves.

"We have come to you as the 'elder of the Jews' in this city. We wish to establish a basis for cooperation between the authorities and the Jewish population," one of them told the rabbi. Then, without pausing, he presented his demands. The rabbi was to present them with a city map marked with the "Jewish neighborhoods," a list of the members of the community council, its staff, and their functions, and a record of community assets.

Silence reigned. Then, carefully measuring his words in fluent German, the rabbi explained that he, as rabbi, was given his position by a Jewish public that sought his spiritual and instructional leadership, not by the authorities as a "communal elder."

The Germans smiled at themselves and, except for complimenting the rabbi for his beautiful Viennese German, did not interrupt him. They stood up, bowed, and left, having made their first official contact with the Jews of Piotrkow.

For Rosh Hashana, the Jews readied themselves for prayers in the great synagogue, the "*beit midrash*," and the *shtiblech*, but the rabbi advised them to pray in private gatherings. In the auditorium of the Dobroczynnosc orphanage, holiday services were held with the participation of the rabbi and a congregation of some 300, led by Cantor

Reb Baruch Kamieniecki (later martyred) and several members of his large choir. The first day of the festival passed quietly. About thirty Jews chose to pray in the great synagogue. On the second day, however, the Germans conducted a manhunt in the city, abducting men for forced labor. In the midst of this operation, they burst into the Amshinover *shtibel*, interrupting one of the improvised *minyanim* and seizing thirty of the hasidim as they stood in silent devotion, wrapped in their prayer shawls. The victims were herded into a truck and hauled away. The Jews were panic-stricken.

Several of the kidnaped men returned that evening. Their captors had humiliated them, subjected them to severe beatings, and ordered them to scrub latrines with their prayer shawls. Another group, including Rav Baruch Asher Nodelman—head of the Beit Yosef Yeshiva—had been sent to a concentration camp in Germany. These men returned about a month later; one of them, R. Peretz Prashker, had died along the way.

As the morning service at the orphanage drew to a close, a whisper spread among the worshippers: two German officers had been seen slipping into the courtyard. I had just come up from the cellar of the building, where several trunks containing Torah scrolls and synagogue ornaments belonging to the community of Lipno on the German border were hidden. I was clutching two silver finials, used to embellish the *atzei hayim* (wooden supports of a Torah scroll), and an ornamental silver breastplate. We were to mount these on the Torah scroll from which we would read. The Germans entered the auditorium and looked at the objects. One of them, who seemed to recognize me from his visit earlier, asked when the prayers would be finished. After hearing the answer, they left. Late that afternoon the two reappeared at our house and offered the rabbi a "deal": the Nazis would stop kidnapping Jews for forced labor, and the rabbi, or his agent, would promise to provide 1,000 able-bodies Jews a day for physical work.

This was an enticing offer, for the kidnappings were causing great suffering at this time. Several men had paid with their lives in the course of the work and its hardships. Again, however, the rabbi asserted that he was not the authorities' representative vis-à-vis the Jewish community.

"But you will serve as the Jews' representative vis-à-vis the authorities," the Nazis ordered.

The conversation lasted about twenty minutes, long enough for the Nazis to begin to display their "erudition" in Jewish matters. Nothing, however, came of it.

The day after Rosh Hashana, people came running to the rabbi and told him that the Nazis had brought huge piles of wood to the plaza in front of the synagogue; surely they were preparing to torch the building. As soon as this information had arrived, a Polish policeman appeared and presented the rabbi with a written order summoning him to the City Hall. The last time he had visited the municipality, the rabbi had met with the mayor, Stefan Fischer. Now Fischer stood aside. Facing the rabbi was a Nazi, his chest spangled with decorations, who introduced himself as *Oberbuergermeister* Hans Drexel.

This proved to be a short getting-acquainted meeting with the new ruler of Piotrkow, whose chief concern was the Jews. Drexel got to the point, wasting no time on courtesies or protocol. He seated himself at his desk, offered his guest an aromatic cigar, and, in the midst of a monologue about the hardships of war, ordered the rabbi to remit a collective tax ("contribution") of 25 thousand German marks. Drexel left no room for

dispute about the rules of cooperation between the authorities and the Jews, nor did he suggest that the rabbi act as a representative. Instead, he presented the facts and allowed the rabbi to bargain. In the course of these negotiations, he reduced his demand by half, that is, to 25 thousand zlotys, and agreed to give the Jews two weeks to raise the money rather than one.

The rabbi took the opportunity to ask Drexel to ensure the safety of the synagogue. The Nazi smiled cynically: "You're facing difficult times, you Jews. Why should you worry about things like that?"

Drexel, however, was not the only boss in town. A staff of security police and S.D. sat at 14 Legionów (Bankowa) Street, where the Gestapo maintained a torture detail under one Ditmann, who was subsequently killed in a Polish attack. One of the members of this unit was a tall, thin, dark-skinned sergeant named Putzalla, who stalked the Jews of Piotrkow like a nightmare throughout his years of service there, during which he rose steadily in the ranks. The senior Gestapo agent, Altmann, and another jackbooted soldier named Miller had their offices in the same building. Gestapo agents from elsewhere, representing the "Jewish section" 4B4, occasionally visited this headquarters, delivering instructions and directives concerning the Jews.

The Wehrmacht town major took up location in another house, on Third of May Boulevard. This unit was headed by *Oberst* Brandt, the only German who showed a modicum of human understanding. After leaving Drexel's office, the rabbi went to Brandt, who clarified that the wood heaped next to the synagogue was meant for the construction of outhouses and barracks for Polish prisoners of war, who were being held in prison camps out of town. No harm would befall the synagogue, Brandt promised, adding that the rabbi might empty the holy ark of its Torah scrolls. By the time the rabbi reached the synagogue, however, he found scores of Jewish and Polish workers already removing the furnishings, the benches, the reading table, and the bookcases, hurling all of it into the street. They carried the Torah scrolls into the *beit midrash* next door.

That evening, a group of Jews broke into the *beit midrash* and transferred some sixty Torah scrolls to the bathhouse, quite a distance away. Thence the scrolls were brought to the cemetery and temporarily interred among the *ohalim* of the *tzaddikim.* Subsequently the men returned, packed the scrolls in wooden chests lined with panes of glass, and buried them in the earth.

On the night when the Jews slipped into the *beit midrash* and removed the Torah scrolls, the wood in the square in front of the synagogue disappeared. Logic suggests that local Poles had stolen it for use as fuel. The Germans, however, construed the action as Jewish sabotage, arguing that the Jews had sought to prevent the construction of latrines and the desecration this would cause the synagogue.

The consequences were not long in coming. Two days before Yom Kippur, ten local Jewish dignitaries were arrested at home and imprisoned in the Gestapo cellar. Rumor had it that the Germans would kill them on the very day of Yom Kippur. The rabbi appealed to Drexel, to Brandt, and to a German pastor with whom he had contacts before the war. None of them were able, or wished, to lift a finger. Finally, the rabbi turned to security police headquarters, where Ditmann explained that the ten Jews would be hanged for sabotage.

Putzalla, however, displayed some willingness to bargain. He explained the difficulties encountered by his unit, which did not draw its supplies from the military depots. An acceptable quantity of *Kolonialwaren*, such as sugar cubes, cocoa, quality (South American) coffee, chocolate, and dried fruit, might be considered compensation for the damage the Jews had caused, he asserted.

To provide this "acceptable quantity," the Jews were assessed a new "contribution" of a quarter million zlotys. Then, when they had already reached the door, Putzlala changed his mind. He wanted cash, not goods, and he wanted it within three days. Drexel, however, was a businessman, who controlled the robbers' mutual war chest. He agreed to give the Jews a week, even promising to free the ten guarantors before Yom Kippur.

Affluent Jews were scarce in Piotrkow; the local community could not meet the terms.

The morning before Yom Kippur, several young men participating in the organization of a ransom campaign, arranged by the rabbi in time for Kol Nidrei, presented themselves at the rabbi's house. Every head of household had been dunned ten zlotys for his family and another zloty per capita. Few worshippers had materialized at that early hour, however, and the amount collected was small. At the end of Yom Kippur, a messenger was sent to the Spielvogel-Szereszewski family in their Wola-Krzysztoporska estate. He returned with a sizable sum, but even this could not satisfy the robbers. A significant donation toward this "contribution" was provided by Avraham Namirovsky, a Russian Jew, who had once spent four years in the prison in Piotrkow for financial crimes. The rabbi, who habitually visited Jewish prisoners from time to time, knew Namirovsky, an educated man who had formerly owned large businesses. Namirovsky was one of many prisoners who had been freed at the outset of the war, and he had reached the rabbi's home in the thick of the German aerial bombardment. Using his own connections, Namirovsky succeeded in obtaining credit and made it possible for the rabbi to deliver the "contribution" to Drexel's office the following day, the day before Succot. To haul the suitcases of cash, the rabbi was accompanied by his secretary, Mr. David Zachs, who now lives in the United States, and by myself.

Drexel began with polite words—extraordinarily for him—expressing regret for the pointless sacrifices of the war. The rabbi turned in my direction and, his head at an oblique angle, whispered to Zachs in Hebrew, "I don't have to listen to this mockery of the defenseless." Then he lifted two cloth sacks, each marked with the sum of money within. Much was still lacking. Drexel added up the sums and became furious. At that very moment, the rabbi pulled a small bag from his coat pocket and emptied its contents onto the desk: gold jewelry, bracelets, earrings, necklaces, rings, gems, diamonds, and pearls.

"This is all we were able to collect," the rabbi said.

The sight caused Drexel's eyes to light up. With no further haggling, he raked the booty into his desk drawer.

Some of us thought this plunder would cause our situation to improve. The random and deliberate murders that took place in subsequent days proved otherwise.

On the Shabbat of *hol hamo'ed* Succot, as we sat in our succa, hidden in our courtyard, three black-garbed SS men came to the door and asked for the rabbi. When

he approached them, they seized him by his clothes and dragged him into the street, where, shouldering their bayoneted rifles, they made him walk in the middle of the road toward the Landsrat in the Starostwo building on Slowackiego Street. There the town and district commander, Kreishauptmann Busch, had his headquarters. Busch had his own policy on the Jews. The city was in a state of panic. A large crowd gathered outside the building, anxious to know what had happened.

The rabbi returned an hour later in severe pain, his back covered with bruises.

The SS men had brought him to their commander, a new figure in town and an underling of SS General Katzmann, who was in charge of the area at this time. How, he asked, had the rabbi collected some of the "contribution" money from the Wola-Krzysztoporska family, whom the Germans had dunned for a special remittance for themselves? After being rebuked for this, the rabbi was freed, but two black-garbed SS men waited for him outside and pounded him with clubs.

The rabbi was ordered to stay in bed and allow his back to heal. On Simchat Torah, however, the Germans summoned him again, this time to Putzalla's office. The summons had been sent in writing from the security police and S.D. commander in Piotrkow to Rabbi Moshe Chaim Lau, "the elder of the Jews of Piotrkow." At this meeting, Ditmann and Putzalla announced that the Jews were henceforth under curfew between 6:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

In the meantime, the new sovereigns began to coalesce in the occupied country, which they divided into four districts: Warsaw, Krakow, Lublin, and Radom. Piotrkow belonged to the Radom district.

One of the three SS officers who had first visited the rabbi before Rosh Hashana presented himself at his house on October 14, presenting the governor of the Radom district, Dr. Karl Lasch. He was accompanied by two locals, Putzalla and an SS officer from Katzman's unit, representing the Landstrat.

The rabbi lay ill in his bed. The three Nazis sat down around him, as if paying a get-well visit. The officer from Radom, evidently the highest-ranking of the group, informed the rabbi of plans to establish an "area of Jewish residence" in the city, i.e., a ghetto. Would the Jewish institutions of Piotrkow be so kind as to cooperate in the exchange of Jewish residences outside the ghetto for non-Jewish residences within the enclosure? The Nazis also disclosed an edict handed down by the head of the *General-gouvernement*, Dr. Hans Frank, under which every Jew was to adorn his right arm with a white ribbon ten centimeters wide, with a blue Star of David, one centimeter thick and eight centimeters in diameter, positioned in the center. Would the rabbi, under his personal signature, please order the local Jews to comply?

That would be difficult, the rabbi answered. Several days earlier, the *Kreishauptmann* had ordered every Jew to wear a yellow patch shaped like a Star of David on his back.

The rabbi's response provoked a short argument, after which the three Nazis went to the *Kehila* building, three doors away from the rabbi's house, where several functionaries provided the needy with shelter, clothing, and food.

Several *Kehila* leaders who had returned to town were living on the second floor of the building at the time. Among them were Zalman Tennenberg (deputy-chairman of

the community council), Mikhail Hertz, Avraham Samelson, Moshe Nordmann, Bunim Kaminsky, Simcha Blachman, and Fischel Lubliner. The Nazis took them by surprise, and when they were asked which was the head of the *Kehila*, Tennenberg answered, representing himself in his power position.

On the spot, the Nazis appointed Tennenberg as chairman of an institution they called "the council of elders" of the Jewish community of Piotrkow. Within a few days, Tennenberg presented a list with twelve members of the council, as the Nazis had demanded in keeping with their Jewish policy introduced by the *Generalgouvernement* on October 12, 1939. Later, the council was expanded to twenty-four members.

The Jews regarded the establishment of this body an important step toward a regularization of relations with the Nazi rulers. The Germans viewed it as the first goal toward the fulfillment of their Satanic plan. Now they were assured of the existence of


BEKANNTMACHUNG

Die Jüdische Gemeinde in Petrikau fordert alle Juden der Jahrgänge 1923 bis 1914 ... sich in der Zeit vom 14 bis 19 März 1940 zur Zwangsarbeit registrierten, auf, sich am März 1940 im Gebäude der Jüdischen Gemeinde in Petrikau (Pilsudskistrasse 23) zu mel... zwecks Ergänzung ihrer Erklärung durch Angabe ihres Jahreseinkommens (von 1939).

Die Nichtbefolgung dieser Aufforderung zieht dieselben Strafen nach sich, wie das Nichtmelden zur Registrierung.

Der Ältestenrat

OGŁOSZENIE

Gmina Żydowska w Piotrkowie wzywa wszystkich żydów, urodzonych w latach 1923–1914, jacy zarejestrowali się do robót przymusowych w dniach 14 – 19 marca 1940 r., aby

w dniu 28 marca 1940 roku

głosili się do gmachu Gminy Żydowskiej (Piłsudskiego 23)

w celu uzupełnienia zeznania przez wskazanie swego rocznego dochodu z 1939 r.

Niezastosowanie się do powyższego zarządzenia grozi tą samą karą, co i niezgłoszenie się do rejestracji.

Rada Starszych

באקאנטמאכונג

... 1923–1914,

צו מעלדן זיך אין לשכּה פון דער יידישער קהלה (פּילסודסקי 23)

דעם 28 מערץ 1940 יאר,

בכדי אויפצוגעבן זייער יערלעכע הכנסה פון יאר 1939.

דער עלטסטן-ראט

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הודעה של „מועצת הזקנים" ליהודים שנרשמו לעבודת־כפיה

באקאנטמאכונג.

דער עלטסטן-ראט פון דער יידישער קהלה אין פיעטרקאוו האט אין אירער סעסיע פון דעם 24-טן יאנואר 1940 וועגן דער

פליכט צו מעלדן דאס פארמעגן

אינם געמערקט-גיוורנעמענט (אנארדנונג ... בלאט פארן קריג פיעטרקאוו נ. 3 פון 1940) אוב טערליגט דאס גאנצע יידישע פארמעגן דער פליכט אנגעמעלדט צו ווערן אין מערמין ביזן 10-טן מערץ ד. י.

די געהעריקע אמטלעכע פארמולירונג, וועלכע עס מוז צו דעם צוועק אויספילן יעדער באזיצער פון זיין פארמעגן, ווערט אין געשעפטיקט 21 יאר, קאן מען באקומען ביזן 8 מערץ ביזן 9 ביז 13 אין 15 ביז 17 אזייגער

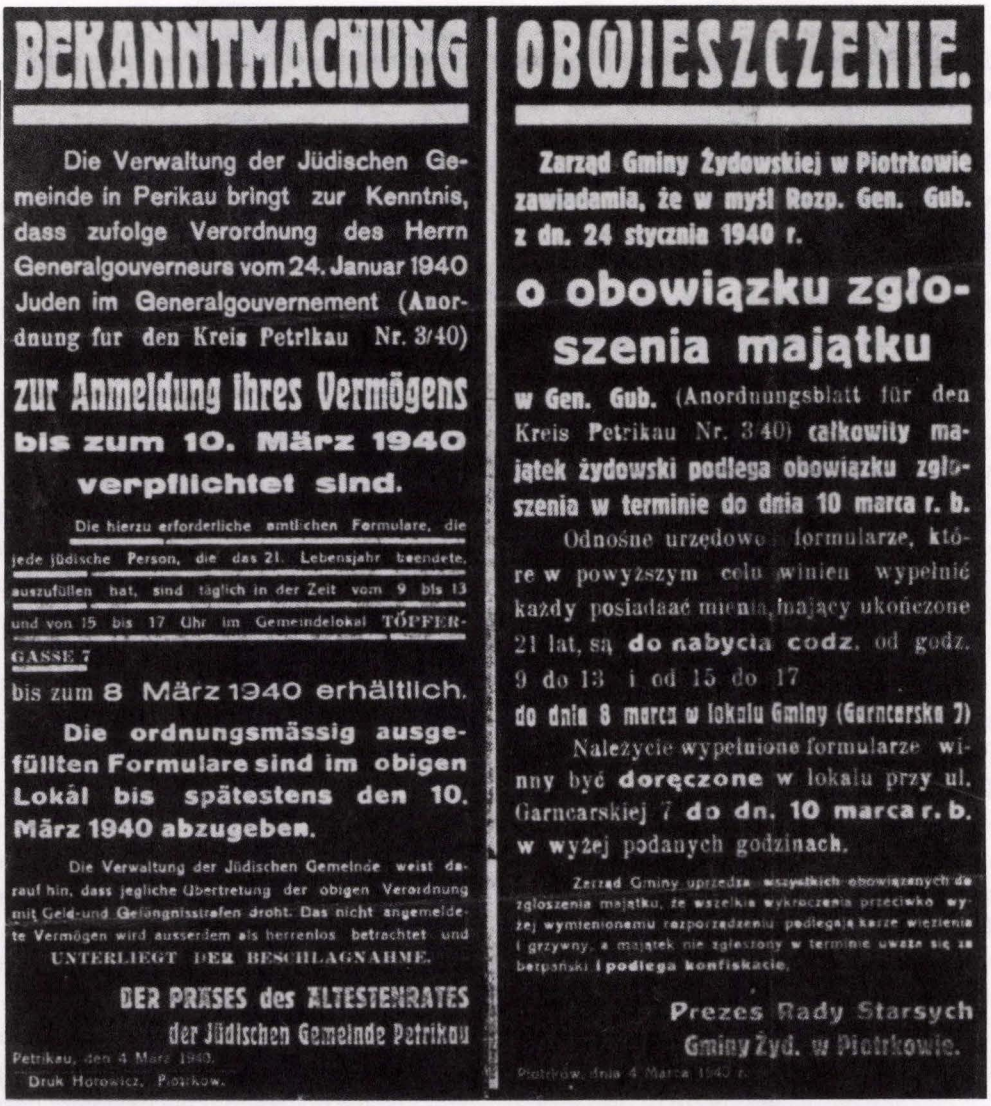
די באהערדע אויטנעמיגונג פארמולאר-ארן דארפן ווערן ... אין לשכּה פון דער קהלה אויף גארנצארסקע 7 ... ביזן 10 מערץ ד. י. אין די אויבנדערמאנטע שעה-ארן.

די פארשרייבונג טוט פחדה זיין אלע די דאזיגע ... פארמעגן אויסטרעגלעך זייער פארמעגן, אז דאס גיוס אויסטירן די אויבנדערמאנטע פארדרונג דאס טוט פחדה אין גלות-שטראף אין דאס גיוס אנגענעמען פארמעגן אומפארליגנ קאנפיסקירט צו ווערן.

פרעזעס פון עלטסטן-ראט

פון דער יוד. קהלה אין פיעטרקאוו

The first draconian announcements—registration for forced labor and declaration of yearly income (March 1940).



BEKANNTMACHUNG

Die Verwaltung der Jüdischen Gemeinde in Perikau bringt zur Kenntnis, dass zufolge Verordnung des Herrn Generalgouverneurs vom 24. Januar 1940 Juden im Generalgouvernement (Anordnung fur den Kreis Petrikau Nr. 3/40)

zur Anmeldung ihres Vermögens bis zum 10. März 1940 verpflichtet sind.

Die hierzu erforderliche amtlichen Formulare, die jede jüdische Person, die das 21. Lebensjahr beendete, auszufüllen hat, sind täglich in der Zeit vom 9 bis 13 und von 15 bis 17 Uhr im Gemeindelokal TÖPFERGASSE 7

bis zum 8 März 1940 erhältlich.

Die ordnungsmässig ausgefüllten Formulare sind im obigen Lokal bis spätestens den 10. März 1940 abzugeben.

Die Verwaltung der Jüdischen Gemeinde weist darauf hin, dass jegliche Übertretung der obigen Verordnung mit Geld- und Gefängnisstrafen droht. Das nicht angemeldete Vermögen wird ausserdem als herrenlos betrachtet und UNTERLIEGT DER BESCHLAGNAHME.

DER PRÄSES des ÄLTESTENRATES der Jüdischen Gemeinde Petrikau

Petrikau, den 4 März 1940.

Druk Horowicz, Piotrkow.

OBWIESZCZENIE.

Zarząd Gminy Żydowskiej w Piotrkowie zawiadamia, że w myśl Rozp. Gen. Gub. z dn. 24 stycznia 1940 r.

o obowiązku zgłoszenia majątku

w Gen. Gub. (Anordnungsblatt für den Kreis Petrikau Nr. 3/40) **całkowity majątek żydowski podlega obowiązku zgłoszenia w terminie do dnia 10 marca r. b.**

Odnośne urzędowe formularze, które w powyższym celu winien wypełnić każdy posiadacz mienia, mający ukończone 21 lat, są **do nabycia codz.** od godz. 9 do 13 i od 15 do 17 **do dnia 8 marca w lokalu Gminy (Garncarska 7)**

Należycie wypełnione formularze winny być **doręczone** w lokalu przy ul. Garncarskiej 7 **do dn. 10 marca r. b.** w wyżej podanych godzinach.

Zarząd Gminy uprzedza wszystkich obowiązanych do zgłoszenia majątku, że wszelkie wykroczenia przeciwko wyżej wymienionemu rozporządzeniu podlegają karze więzienia i grzywny, a majątek nie zgłoszony w terminie uważa się za bezpański i **podlega konfiskacie.**

Prezes Rady Starsych Gminy Żyd. w Piotrkowie.

Piotrków, dnia 4 Marca 1940 r.

The first "edict" issued by the Nazi plunderers demanding the declaration of any Jewish property and possessions (Piotrkow, March 4, 1940).

a Jewish institution through which they might carry out their designs for the Jews.

The looting and murder that had characterized the first three months of the occupation—the last three months of 1939—became more organized in 1940. Instead of the imposition of collective fines by competing agencies of the occupation regime, matters were run by only two parties: the civilian governor, Drexel, and the police-political-judicial echelon represented by Altmann and Putzalla. The two agencies cooperated as prescribed by a policy handed down from above, formulated by Governor-General Hans Frank and the head of the Radom district, Dr. Lasch. To be sure, those carrying out the policy on location suffered no lack of initiative and special methods of operation, which manifested themselves in plunder and extortion accompanied by murder. With inspiration from above, Polish intelligentsia and patriot circles were decimated by arrests. Three

of the victims were Jews: Zalman Abramson, Bank, and Bogdansky; they were shipped to Buchenwald.

Spontaneous plundering and looting diminished now, as the "council of elders" met the Nazis' needs for clothing, footwear, jewelry, and delicacies. In late 1940, an edict was issued forbidding the wearing of furs by Jews, at which point the council conferred these treasures upon the local gangleaders. Even before this decree, however, the council supplied the Nazis and their wives with costly furs in return for access to some of the goods the Nazis had confiscated. These were relocated to the council storehouses, situated in its new quarters in the school at 23 Pilsudski Street, and used to meet the council leaders' various needs.

The personal rapprochement between the council chairman and the Nazi rulers led to some mitigation of hardships. Tennenberg cultivated especially good relations with the city commander, Hans Drexel, and one of the Gestapo leaders, Dirmann. The ghetto was indeed established, but for appearance's sake only. Its boundaries were marked with signs bearing the word "ghetto" in German and a threatening skull and crossbones. The first ghetto in the *Generalgouvernement*, it was the most comfortable one for most of its years of existence. On the other hand, the Germans enforced the armband rule stringently, occasionally shooting Jews to death for being caught outside of the ghetto without it.

Bund factotums, members of Zalman Tennenberg's party, holed up the council leadership within the bastion. Most of the burgeoning staff, too, was composed of Bundist or Bund sympathizers. As soon as the council offices moved into the school at 23 Pilsudski Street, various departments were set up: mail and telephones, housing, supply, welfare, sanitation, finances, labor, culture, and law. Only a few individuals were allowed to communicate with the outside world; almost everyone had to rely on the council departments to arrange their affairs, from mailing a letter to finding housing in the ghetto—usually the flat of some Gentile who had taken over the Jew's apartment outside the ghetto. These swaps were often coupled with transactions not always to the benefit of the parties directly involved.

As Pesach approached, the Jews began worrying about a supply of matzot. The "council of elders" disregarded this need. The rabbi telephoned the civilian authorities directly and, with the support of the German pastor and the manager of the Hoebler Glass Enterprises, a German named Christmann, he secured permission to bake enough matzot and enough flour for this purpose.

The forced-labor kidnapping came to a virtual halt the day the labor department went into action; the department met these needs by mobilizing the ghetto population. The Germans formalized the forced-labor system, requiring every resident aged sixteen or over to meet a given quota of work days. The labor department compiled a card file of those obligated to work and instituted a rotation. Eventually a labor market developed between the indigent, interested in working for payment, the others wishing to avoid work and willing to pay a substitute.

The Nazi labor office, headed by a German clerk by the name of Rattke, drew up a register of all residents of the ghetto, issued work papers, and set work quotas. The council's labor department was headed by Mr. Felix Poznanski, who now lives in Israel. By mutual agreement, workers were sent to the job sites in an orderly fashion, without

dragnets and without hardships imposed by work overseers. This arrangement provided many ghetto residents with an assured source of livelihood. However, mistreatment of workers was known to occur. In the wake of these incidents, others refused to go to work and the Germans resumed their abductions. By that time, the *Ordnungdienst* or O.D. (the Jewish "order-keeping police") had come into being. It was the duty of this force to supply workers, sometimes forcibly and arbitrarily. Thus the Germans refrained from breaking into Jewish homes.

Along with their forced-labor arrangement, the Nazi rulers tightened their control of Jewish property. In early 1940, they appointed a German named Roenig as custodian (*Treauhander*) of the Jewish property in Piotrkow.

In July, 1940, the Germans demanded a census of Jews between the ages of 16 and 25. The purpose was to draft them for the building of fortifications in the frontier area along the River Bug. This census was widely opposed because of a variety of concerns. Many were afraid of being sent to the Lublin area, where German atrocities were rife. Many Jews among the Polish prisoners of war, including three from Piotrkow, had been murdered there.

But the census was carried out, and nearly a thousand young men were gathered and sent to the Hrubieszow, Belzec, Dzikow, Cieszanow, and Plaszow labor camps. Conditions in these camps were brutal. The regimen introduced by Nazi commander Dolf provoked mass flight to the other side of the river, but the Soviet sentries there returned the fugitives to the German side, where they met their deaths.

The men from Piotrkow alerted their parents to the harsh situation. Parcels of food and clothing were sent to them, but this help failed to solve the problem. The rabbi telephoned his friends in Lublin, who succeeded, through bribery, and personal connections, in freeing several hundred of the young men and returning them to Piotrkow.

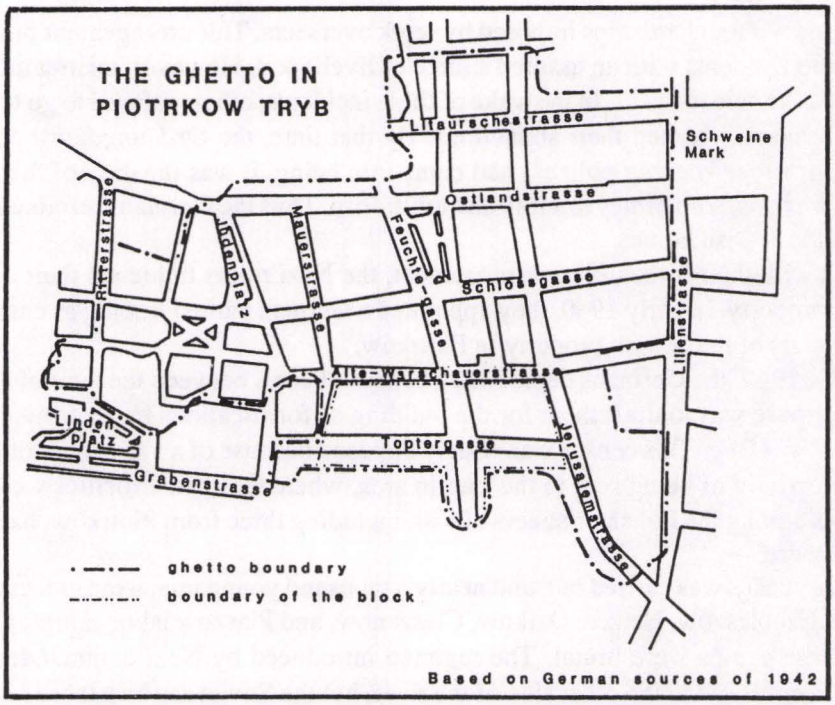
These were the days between Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, 5701 (September, 1940). Again a ransom collection was conducted before Kol Nidrei, with better results than the year before. In exchange for a sizable sum of money, which the rabbi forwarded to Lublin, groups of forty men began to arrive until the last of the young men of Piotrkow—including some on stretchers but excluding about sixty who had died in the Lublin camps—had been returned to the ghetto.

The leading figure among them was Shlomo (Solomon) Gomberg, a Betar member from Lodz who had happened to be in Piotrkow when the war broke out. He displayed exemplary leadership during this time. His courage and personal honesty mitigated the sufferings of the young men of Piotrkow, compared with the treatment that befell others.

The summer of 1940 was a time of relative freedom in the ghetto; residents resumed nearly full contacts with the outside world. Several Jews received permits to travel significant distances by train, albeit within the confines of the *Generalgouvernement.* Christians came to the ghetto to make purchases or to sell foodstuffs.

The situation was worse in other cities, and a significant influx of refugees ensued. Most of them came from Warsaw, but others were from the western region that had been annexed to the Reich—Lodz and its vicinity, Belchatow, and Kalish. They came to ride out the storm in Piotrkow.

Those who arrived of their own free will brought possessions. Among them were



A map of the ghetto with the streets renamed in German.



In the ghetto—1940. The young girls with the Star of David band on their forearms are from left: Esterka Szerman-Gomo (now in Melbourne), Fela Moszkowicz, Bluma Dzienciarska and Cela.

people of stature who contributed to community life in the ghetto. Together with these, however, the Germans exiled to Piotrkow thousands of residents of the villages of Pomerania, of Plotzk and its surroundings, and of Gniezo and its vicinity. A grave housing shortage developed in the ghetto. Many refugees were accommodated in apartments confiscated for this purpose by the council, but most of them were housed in the Great Synagogue and in the Maccabi Hall at 25 Pilsudski Street. Jews from Tuszyn,



In the ghetto—1941. Picture taken on Szpitalna Street where our people gathered for deportation to Treblinka a year later. From the right: Itka Lipnicka, Leon Miller, Lucia Wajshoff, Berek Pytel, Cesia Gelade and Heniek Henig. (All wear the Star of David armbands.)

transported to the city on farm wagons one frosty winter night, were housed in butcher shops in the meat market between Czarniecki Square and Zamurowa Street.

The Jews of the ghetto began to adapt to the new conditions and to devise new pastimes, including entertainment. Performing artists among them even presented a production of S. Ansky in the Hertz Hall on Garncarska Street. Teenagers organized sports tournaments. Organized studies had not taken place since September 1, 1939, and throngs of schoolchildren milled about in the ghetto alleys with nothing to do.

Educators pressed for the establishment of a school. The Germans acquiesced to the opening of one in which Hebrew, rather than the "emasculated German dialect," as one of the Nazis called Yiddish, was used. However, the council heads were reluctant to follow through. Medical personnel and others opposed the idea, fearing that the concentrating of children in crowded conditions might endanger their health and permit the Germans to lay their hands on all the youngsters at once, as they had elsewhere.

Nevertheless, studies were conducted in secret. Veteran teachers arranged elementary and high-school classes in private homes. Religious study continued in many private homes. In addition to the general and religious teachers of the Talmud Torah and Yesodei Hatorah School, and the deans of the Yeshivot Beit Yosef and Keter Torah, many of the refugee teachers and religious apparatchiks started cheder-type schools in every corner of the ghetto.



יהודי בעבודת כפיה הוכרח להצטלם ב„חברת" הנוגש הנאצי

A Jewish man at forced labor in the ghetto. A smirking Nazi guard looks on.

Despite the general poverty—the refugees, in particular, were penniless—many craftsmen made a comfortable living

by providing their Polish customers, under Nazi patronage, with shoemaking, tailoring, and jewelers' services. Economic life was so lively at this time that an active "securities exchange" developed, where one might trade in all kinds of hard foreign exchange.

1940/41—The Noose

In the winter of 1940/41, however, the severe overcrowding caused by the continuous influx of refugees caused sanitary conditions in the ghetto to worsen. Initial indications of a typhus epidemic appeared at Chanukah time, and, in place of the Jewish hospital that the authorities had confiscated and annexed to the general hospital, a makeshift hospital was set up in the Jewish gymnasium building. To staunch the epidemic, the council immediately established a special "sanitary service department," staffed by three young men wearing hats of the O.D. (distinguished from the regular police by blue ribbons instead of red). the new unit was headed by Shlomo Gomberg, who in due course held many important positions in the small ghetto (the "block").

The "sanitary service" people, some of whom subsequently participated in O.D. operations and failed to meet the test of the hour, contained the epidemic superbly. It was their duty to discover cases of the disease immediately, to transfer the sick to the hospital, to send their families and all residents of the apartment to the bathhouse for disinfecting, and, finally, to put the apartment under quarantine for whatever period of time the medical officer deemed necessary.

All physicians in the ghetto were enlisted in the war on typhus. The head of the action was Dr. Yakubowicz of Lodz. Yakubowicz was a relative of the deputy chairman of the council, Szymon Warszawski, who displayed great activism at this stage despite his position of authority over the other doctors and his tense relations with them.

Many perished in the epidemic. The council confiscated a house on the corner of Peretz and Staro-Warszawska Streets and designated it as an infirmary. Around the clock we could see the "sanitary service" wagon plying the ghetto streets, bringing the sick to the hospital and their relatives to the bathhouse for disinfecting. Another wagon, a black one, was also seen frequently. It hauled the dead to the cemetery, where their burial, too, was seen by the "sanitary service" people.

It was an especially harsh winter. Fuel was hard to come by, and supplies, doled out by the council, were extremely limited. The economic condition of most ghetto residents worsened. Children, especially those of the refugees, were found to be suffering from malnutrition. The council and groups of volunteers began efforts to provide them with food.

The active group of volunteers was founded by the initiative of Rabbanit Lau, Dr. Henia Greenberg, Mrs. Kaminska, and Mrs. Malvina Tannenbaum. This group also set up a free kitchen for the needy in the Dobroczynosc celler. Before long, these women, who toiled from morning to night, were distributing a thousand free meals a day. Good relations were then established with the center of the ZSS (*Zydowska Samopomoc Spoleczna*, the Jewish Self-Help Organization), which was funded mostly by the Joint Distribution Committee. With ZSS assistance, it was possible to do much to feed and clothe the unfortunate children of the indigent.

During this period of time, with much of the ghetto gripped by epidemic, cold, and hunger, the local Nazi leadership underwent major changes. Drexel, who had arrived at the beginning of the occupation and come to know the Jews' representatives, from whom he extorted whatever would fulfill his wishes, was transferred to a similar position in Kielce and replaced by Kommissar Buss.

Whereas Tennenberg had been almost the only one with access to Drexel, Warszawski now participated in contacts with the new commander and succeeded in buying Buss for a suitable price. Buss, however, was anxious to justify his appointment; he ordered the contraction and closure of the ghetto even before it occurred to the *Generalgouvernement* to demand this. This decree placed additional houses outside the ghetto bounds, reigniting the bargaining between Jews compelled to seek alternative housing in the ghetto and Polish Christians who remained in the ghetto and demanded exaggerated sums for their run-down attics. Most of these people were caretakers of old houses of the ghetto and had been living under miserable conditions. Now, by a trick of fate, they acquired fine apartments in a good part of town, in addition to payoffs.

The council's housing department, under attorney Szymon Stein, tried to prevent the profiteering and extortion associated with this trade. The outside authorities, however, would have none of this. They had a vested interest in determining which houses would be gerrymandered out of the ghetto because this enabled them to establish in advance the monetary benefits they would gain from managing the barter of apartments.

It was indeed a different and much smaller ghetto, but the closure threatened by Kommissar Buss, meant to safeguard the health of the city's non-Jewish residents from the spread of epidemic, was not carried out in full. Ghetto residents could still come and go in a limited manner.

Life continued "as usual." With the approach of the spring of 1941, conditions actually eased slightly. The epidemic was arrested and the sun's rays brightened the Jews' spirits as well. The "council of elders" expanded its activities and its staff by taking on many people from Gniezno and the Pomeranian towns, who were fluent in Polish and German and proved to be efficient administration and staff workers. The council's authorities increased; it was given operational powers by the incorporation of the "Jewish police," still officially known as the *Ordnungsdienst* or O.D., literally "the order-keeping service." This service enforced the rulings of the council's court of law, headed by Judge Borenstein, and the decisions of the rabbinical court, which operated in the rabbi's apartment. Verdicts of the latter body, enforced by the council, included orders affecting alimony.

It was still a mere nucleus of police force, numbering twenty-four young men under the command of Izhok Magner, a tall and handsome fellow originally from Berlin who had reached the ghetto with the exiles from Pomerania. These young men were to escort the labor details outside the ghetto and, in special instances, to take workers from their homes and bring them to the council courtyard, where they were counted and sent to work. The decision to set up this force had been made in the spring of 1940 but, because of the opposition of several members of the "council of elders" who still had influence with the council leaders, only a small core group of handpicked young men had been designated at that time.

The order to found a Jewish police force had been Drexel's. Tennenberg became a fervent supporter of the idea at some point, viewing it as a way to increase the council's esteem and to improve his own status. Others warned against a rash decision in this matter, and so the issue rested until the establishment of such a force had obviously become inevitable, at which time the council discussed it in full session. The rabbi, attending this meeting, asked the council to appoint a special committee of public figures that would choose candidates among local young men with the appropriate attributes. The rabbi alerted the council to the dangers the ghetto population would face if power and authority were entrusted to a group of young people lacking the requisite social and moral basis, and warned of the fateful consequences this service would bring in tow. Indeed, Tannenberg's inaugural remarks to the members of the new police force were in this vein.

As soon as Buss assumed his position, Szymon Warszawski began to build personal contacts with the Nazi high command of the city. Once he even traveled to Radom, where he met with the regional commanders concerning matters of the ghetto. As with every other representative of the Jews during this bleak period, Tennenberg and Warszawski could not speak frankly with the German officials, insisting on the rights of the community they represented. The only language the regime understood, in those days, before the annihilation mechanism was set in motion, was the distribution of payoffs and personal favors to big fish and "small fry" alike, including officials' drivers and servants. Thus orders for the absolute closure of the ghetto were commuted from time to time, and the Piotrkow authorities turned a blind eye to the infiltration of Jews from Warsaw and even from Lodz.

As Pesach approached, the authorities again permitted the baking of matzot in an arrangement similar to that secured the year before. Conditions in workplaces previously known as being especially harsh were improved, and the ghetto dwellers were eager to work. Demand for labor, however, had decreased because the German labor office had reduced the forced-labor quota and fewer people were willing to hire others to replace them in rotation. Still, day laborers were anxious to go to work. Leaving the ghetto presented them with opportunities to bring home cheap loaves of bread and packages of butter; by this time, restrictions on departure from the ghetto toughened with each passing day, and the Polish farmers no longer visited the ghetto to market food.

The more routinized life became, and the more amazingly skillful the Jews became at adapting to it, the more Jews returned from the places across the new German–Soviet frontier to which they had fled in early 1940. After Pesach 5701 (April, 1940), four Jews arrived from Brisk (Lithuania) and Wolkowisk, of whom two were natives of Piotrkow who had fled the city in 1940. The Russians had begun transporting Jewish refugees from the annexed areas into the Soviet interior, including Siberia, and many Jews wished to return to the German occupation zone.

This migration was short-lived. By midsummer of 1941, the first sparks of a great conflagration were visible on the eastern horizon.

1941/42—Dread

Early 1941 was a time of acquiescence to reality. Many young couples married and had children. Notwithstanding the grinding poverty that afflicted much of the ghetto population, well-dressed people were seen and customers frequented the open stores. "Idlers" who had no need to worry about their daily bread spent their time in cafés and the one remaining pastry shop.

Here and there one heard echoes of underground organization campaigns by the nationalists and the populists. The founders of Armia Krajowa (the A.K.) stressed their anti-Semitic leanings and banned Jewish fighters from their ranks, but it was precisely this organization which depended on the sympathies of the broad Polish public, that carried out most of the underground Polish activities against the Nazis. The second organization, Armia Ludowa (the A.L.), was established by socialist elements that maintained connections with Jewish forces in the ghetto. Bund, Poalei Zion, and Hashomer Hatzair activists aligned themselves with this organization, if only on an individual basis.

After June 22, 1941, when the Nazi armies attacked the Soviet Union, the A.L. stepped up its activities, supported by Soviet partisans behind the lines.

The outbreak of war between German and the USSR caused an abrupt turn for the worse in the situation of the Jews in the occupied areas. Hair-raising accounts began to arrive of slaughter by the Nazis and the Ukrainians in the new regions in the east. The atrocities of the Einsatzgruppen in the *ostland*, following in the Wehrmacht's tracks, were also evident in the *Generalgouvernement*, in Lublin, and in the area annexed to the Reich, where large-scale murder was practiced. Evidently having learned the lessons of the Einsatzgruppen in the east, the Nazi hangmen convened in Wannsee to draw up their painstakingly detailed "Reinhardt Plan" for the annihilation of all European Jewry, starting with the Jews of the *Generalgouvernement*. The A.L. stepped up its activities and this underground already seemed firmly in the grip of the communists. At this time, the participation of Jews was limited to the dissemination of propaganda and newspapers from abroad. A.L. Agents, seeking to establish relations with Jewish groups, visited Piotrkow and contacted several left-wing activists, including Bund functionaries Tanhum Freund, Izchak Samsonowicz, Kimmelman, and Zauer. The chairman of the "council of elders," Zalman Tennenberg, and the Bund leader in Piotrkow, Jakob Berliner, were aware of these contacts.

This underground liaison was conceptual only; it never reached the stage of operational planning. Even these tentative contacts, however, had unfortunate consequences for one of the organization's messengers, who traveled about with propaganda material both in Polish and Yiddish. In a routine search for contraband foreign currency and gold at the town railroad station, the Germans and the "blues" (the Polish police) came upon an abandoned suitcase containing underground literature. A Polish woman at the scene pointed out its owner at once. Searching her bags, they found a notebook with lists, including the address of Tanchum Freund, a leading Bundist in Piotrkow and a confidant of Tennenberg's.

The Gestapo began to track the "council of elders." Ambushes were set up around

the council building, and councillors and suspected members of Freund's group were followed. It took the Gestapo four days to tighten the noose. On July 5 they rounded up nearly all the town's leading Bundists, including Tennenberg; only Berliner, Samsonowicz, and Kimmelman eluded them. When the Nazis threatened to take hostages, Berliner gave himself up. The other two escaped.

The detainees were held for ten weeks in the massive prison of Piotrkow. Every day they were transferred, handcuffed in pairs, to the Gestapo cellar for the agonies of interrogation. Putzalla, formerly a recipient of Tennenberg's payoffs, dealt with them personally.

On Friday morning of the eleventh week, a rumor spread that the detainees were to be transported out of town. A crowd gathered along Pilsudski Street (Ostlandstrasse) and waited for the transport. However, only those in the vicinity of the prison saw the detainees on their way out, barefoot and hands tied. They were loaded into a flatbed truck with high walls that concealed them from the other spectators' view. In the driver's cab sat a sentry, armed with a submachine gun; two Gestapo Volkswagens escorted the truck from the rear. The crowd in the street emitted a cry. Only those in the upper stories of the houses could see the detainees, seated with their backs against the walls of the truck.

Subsequently, Piotrkow was flooded with rumors about the fate of these men, condemned without a trial. Some asserted that they had all been shot to death in the Rakow Forest. Others reported having received "regards" from a camp in Germany. The wives of several of the detainees, however, had received notices from Auschwitz offering them their husbands' ashes for twenty-five marks.

Arrests accompanied by grievous suffering were frequent by this time. Jews caught outside the ghetto were murdered on the spot. Still, ghetto life continued in its "normal" way. The rural Jewish communities in the vicinity—Wolborz, Serock, Rozprza, Kaminsk, Przyglow, and Sulejow—continued to supply the city with foodstuffs, particularly kosher meat. The ghetto did what it could to help itself. The Polish police, under the command of a scourge named Leonarski, nicknamed "the fat guy," turned a blind eye to what was done in the courts of the houses. Even when caught in the act, people could make arrangements with the police. So it happened in one courtyard in Stara-Warszawska Street, when a group of Polish policemen caught a ritual slaughterer and three butchers slaughtering a cow. Where the death penalty could have been expected, the matter was settled with a heavy bribe, and the meat found its way into the kitchens of any household that could afford it. In late 1941, however, a new district commander, Kundt, took over in Radom. Economic strictures and the terms of closure of the ghetto were toughened.

Typhus struck again in the winter of 1941/42, although on a smaller scale than the previous year. Dysentery and scabies savaged the city in epidemic proportions. The sanitary service was reinforced. Council member Bunim Kaminski was appointed as co-director along with Gomberg. Kaminski had been a leading official of the burial society but was no longer needed in this function, as the society members were no longer allowed to visit the cemetery. He continued to supervise arrangements for burial, which was performed by members of the sanitary service.

After Tennenberg and the Bundists in the council had been deported, Szymon Warszawski, Tennenberg's deputy, seized the reins of leadership in the ghetto, assisted by Izchak Feiner. However, whereas Tennenberg had collaborated with party advisors

who had political interests at heart, Warszawski worked with several relatives. Conspicuously influential among them was his daughter, Mrs. Bronya Lieberman.

Encouraging news reached the Jewish ghettos in the winter of 1941/42: the Nazi juggernaut had been stopped in White Russia, the Ukraine, and the desert of northwestern Africa. Not only had the blitz been arrested for the first time, but "General Winter" began to decimate the Wehrmacht, pinned down in the snow-covered fields of Russia. The Jews hoped for a speedy end to their agonies. By spring, however, the Germans recouped and improved their positions, dampening the Jews' morale. As if to augment the Jews' dread of the future, the first reports of organized, planned slaughter of Jews in isolated places and of actual preparations for mass extermination campaigns permeated the ghetto. No one's imagination, however, could grasp the actual dimensions of this scheme.

1942—Annihilation

These terrifying rumors were first confirmed by two young Jews who reached the Piotrkow ghetto before Pesach of 5701 (1941) from the area annexed to the Reich. They had been working in a special "kommando" (labor detail) that performed mass burials in the Chelmno Forest, to which corpses had been transported in sealed gas cars.

The two young bachelors, Chaim Yerachmiel Widawski (today an affluent industrialist in Belgium) and Izchak Justmann (who lived for a short time in Israel and died in New York) wandered through the ghetto for a few days in search of secure shelter. One day they visited the rabbi at home. A Gestapo agent, a Volksdeutscher named Emerring, had already been assigned to them and was trailing them like a shadow. When they reached the bridge over the River Strawa on Pilsudski Street, Emerring summoned a Jewish policeman named R.H. for assistance. When they reached the Rolstein café, the two young Jews suddenly forked in different directions. Emerring chased Justmann, who fled toward the bathhouse. R.H. pursued Widawski, who succeeded in reaching the stairwell of the rabbi's house. The policeman wrestled with Widawski, trying to drag him away. Hearing the victim's shouts, Rabbi Lau appeared and invited him inside. Emerring reported to the rabbi's house five minutes later. Justmann had eluded him; where was the second youth? In the meantime, Widawski had found a hiding place in a corner of the house, and the rabbi succeeded in sending the Gestapo agent away.

Still panting from the agitation of his ordeal, Widawski began to unfold his story, which sounded, to many of the listeners, like the product of a wild imagination.

Four days earlier, the two had escaped from their labor camp in Chelmno. The detail had been engaging in the extermination of the Jews of "Wartland," who had been brought in sealed trucks from a hut, camouflaged as a bathhouse, to the forest where the labor detail dug their graves. During the twenty-minute ride, the Nazis had funneled the exhaust fumes from the engine, mixed with cyanide, into the airtight rear compartment of the truck, suffocating the passengers. The truck then backed up to the edge of the open pit. The rear door was opened and the corpses, naked and entangled, were dumped out. The Jewish "kommandos" then climbed into the pit in order to separate the bodies, strip them of false teeth and gold crowns, arrange them in layers, shovel lime upon them, and cover up the traces of the murder.

One day, Widawski stood with his spade next to one of the open pits and waited for the next load of victims. When the mass of some forty bodies arrived, he recognized among them thirteen relatives, including his fiancée. He fainted. His friends dragged him back to the camp with difficulty. The next day he recovered from his shock and decided to flee, joined by Izchak Justmann.

The rabbi recorded all of this in his pocket diary, verbatim, evidently questioning nothing. That very day, the rabbi summoned the community leaders to a meeting in Warszawski's room, bringing Widawski along to repeat the story.

Not everyone was convinced. Attorney Stanislaw Zilberstein, in charge of the Jewish police at the time, called the story a "delusion of horror" meant to arouse compassion for the fugitive. He accused Widawski of perpetrating a fraud for the purpose of extorting tears and money.

The rabbi, however, believed it. Restlessly, helplessly, he tried to persuade key members of the "council of elders" that the matter was grave and that they should discuss it and formulate a plan for the future. But Widawski's testimony was to terrible to serve as a practical subject for discussion.

Since the Gestapo had discovered the presence of the two men from Chelmno in the ghetto, it was necessary to move them out at once. Thus they donned railroad workers' uniforms, armed themselves with forged identity papers and pocket money, and headed for the Slovakian border.

They vanished, but their terrible report from the first extermination camp stayed behind, spreading gloom and depression throughout the ghetto.

New rumors filtered into the ghetto: mass expulsions from Lublin, organized slaughter in Tarnow, a plan for mass expulsions from the Warsaw ghetto, the physical liquidation of those deported. Concurrent rumors, however, brought "best regards" messages from labor camps and Jewish concentrations in the east, where the Germans were allegedly setting up a Jewish autonomous region, a sort of "Jewish state."

One day around this time, the rabbi received a postcard bearing a Reich stamp and the postmark of a town in Eastern Prussia. On the back was the following message in Hebrew:

> To my friend, Rabbi Moshe Chaim, may his light shine: Our community has been uprooted and deported to the east, and I am at the head of the exiles. May God have mercy. Yoisef Carlebach

These were not "best regards" but last regards, sent by the rabbi of the Altona-Hamburg community. Rabbi Carlebach, to his friend, the rabbi of Piotrkow. This signaled the expulsion of German Jewry.

The "best regards" that came in from various places lulled our senses. Reports of the deportation of the Jews of Warsaw to a station near Malkinia in the direction of Bialystok (Treblinka, we discovered later), and of the expulsion of the Jews of Lublin to Trawniki, Maidanek, and Belzec, did not convey the fullness of their cruel significance to the Jews of Piotrkow.

The first description of the fate of Jews from Warsaw who were sent to Treblinka was communicated by Polish locomotive engineer who had taken freight trains to that

camp, each composed of fifty cattle cars loaded with exiled Jews. As familiar as this account is today, people refused to believe it at the time.

Most Jews of Piotrkow took no action at this juncture. A few had secured forged papers and gone over to the "Aryan" side. Several hundred young men and women armed themselves with Aryan papers in case of future need. Some took jobs in factories that were deemed vital to the Nazi war effort. Nearly five thousand Jews found work of various kinds in the Kara and Hortensia glass factories, in the Nazi Dietrich-Fischer lumberworks next to the Bugaj River, and in other plants. The ghetto population, however, exceeded twenty thousand, each life dangling by a thread.

Many of them made peace with this cruel fate and entertained hopes that they would cope "there," too. They sold everything they owned and bought good clothing, rucksacks, and small objects of value that could be concealed.

Months of tension and nervousness ensued. When it became known that the Nazi scourge had spread to the district capital of Radom, the entire ghetto was gripped with fear. People ran about in panic, seizing upon anything in their despair. Hundreds converged on the rabbi's house demanding advice, and some dignified people burst in hysterically, shouting, "Rebbi, gevalt! Help!"

"Perhaps we should put up a resistance anyway?" asked Reb Meir Abramson, whose son Zalman had been one of the first three Jews of Piotrkow sent to Buchenwald in 1939.

"By all means," the rabbi answered. "But How? With what?"

The chance of rescue was slight, and the Jews were interested in survival, not merely fighting for their honor. The possibility that the exiled young people would be sent to labor camps and left alive, and that several thousand Jews would remain in the ghetto, squelched all thoughts of mounting an uprising, which would surely end with the obliteration of any trace of Piotrkow's Jews.

Jewish homes bustled with the construction of hiding places in attics, cellars, and secret rooms. The ghetto streets were thronged by young women whose hair had suddenly turned blonde, and who were ready at any moment to flee the ghetto and hide on the other side.

The "councillors" were greatly concerned, although many of them hoped to arrange their personal salvation in the mini-ghetto (known as the "block") that would be set up. Community leaders and several council members took part in consultations in the rabbi's home. The participants included Zilbershatz, Michelsohn, Nordmann, Samelson, Lubliner, Kaminski, Attorney Sztajn, Feivel Steinberg, Dr. Ziegler, Sochaczewski, Gomberg, Zeidenworm (from Lodz), Englard and his brother-in-law Librach, and others. The leading trend of thought in these consultations was "every man for himself"; individuals were to hide in the ghetto or on the outside, avoiding the transports as best as possible. Collective active resistance was out of the question.

According to information in Warszawski's possession, the Nazis had decided to leave only two thousand Jews within the city limits. These would be housed at the factories that were considered vital, i.e., the glass works and Bugaj. Otherwise, Piotrkow, like so many other localities, would become *Judenrein.* Warszawski's intervention, supported by the local authorities, increased the number of Jews allowed to remain in town to three thousand. Moreover, these fortunate souls, after being spared the expected

deportation, would be quartered in a block of houses in the ghetto, not with their employers.

The mini-ghetto was set up with great haste. The rectangular block—bounded by Jerozolimska Street on the west, and Staro-Warszawska Street on the north—was enclosed with barbed wire down the middle of the boundary streets. Two camps were formed in the ghetto: the fortunate, who were to live in the "block," and the unfortunate, who were to be sent "eastward."

The Reder house, at 12 Jerozolimska Street, was set aside for the officials of the council, its chairman, and some members of the Jewish police. A workers' kitchen would be set up on the bottom floor. According to the plan, these institutions were to move even before the Germans began their transports, but not one of the council members was willing to follow through.

By Rosh Hashana, 5703 (early fall, 1942), the angel of death stood at the very gate of Piotrkow. The Jews of Radom and Kielce had already boarded the death trains. The forces of annihilation now approached Czestochowa.

On the night after Shabbat Shuva, fifty people, including a few agitated youth, convened for an open meeting in the rabbi's house. Several of those in attendance were members of the Jewish police, who distinguished themselves by exemplary service and allegiance to their Jewish cause. Particularly outstanding among them were two brothers-in-law from Lodz, Asher Landau and Michael Klausner, who, when the time came, voluntarily joined their parents in the transport to Treblinka, as did another three policemen, Kuba Wolkowicz and the Rokmanns, two sons of Tzine Rokmann, the shoemaker. At this meeting, for the first time, it was publicly suggested that the transports be resisted by force. Several participants with "ultra-Orthodox" leanings—Elazar Sheinfeld, Reuven Neifeld, Avraham Moses (from Kalish), and others— shared this view. Others took exception, arguing that it was hopeless. They included Judge Borenstein, Dr. Brahms, R. Moshe Shapira (brother of the distinguished Rabbi Meir Shapira), R. Baruch Zilbershatz, and Dov Handel. The *dayan*, Rabbi Moshe Temkin, adamantly pressed the case for resistance. R. Moshe Nordmann, an activist among the "ultra-Orthodox," presented the anti-resistance argument just as strenuously, insisting on responsibility toward those who had a chance to remain alive.

Many saw only one route to salvation: a place of refuge in or outside the ghetto until the storm had passed.

The tension reached unbearable levels. Women sewed rucksacks and packed them with needed items. Men working in vital industries married young women in the hope of protecting them this way. Outside the ghetto, the Poles lined up and bought Jews' possessions for a pittance.

The whole ghetto prayed on Kol Nidrei night. The sound of crying emanated from every house. Hundreds of people gathered at the rabbi's home for the emotive prayer. The next day, Yom Kippur, the rabbi gave the Piotrkow community a farewell address before Yizkor. It was an emotional speech, evoking rivers of tears. The worshippers expressed only one wish: that a few of their number would survive to bring their names to remembrance.

Czestochowa's turn was the very next day. Messengers sent from Piotrkow returned

with terrifying report. The Nazis' special "Operation Reinhardt" detail then went on to Radomsk, the last stop before Piotrkow, and carried out their premeditated mass murder of the Jews of that city. Thousands in Piotrkow were transfixed, terrified and hopeless at the news.

As the death trains passed the Kara and Hortensia plants, the martyrs of Radomsk tossed slips of paper, bearing their names and warning of the tragedy that had befallen them, to the waiting Jews of Piotrkow who worked there. The latter, knowing that their town would face this tragedy in a few days' time, were as drained of strength and incapable of clear thinking as those aboard the train.

As the agony of the Radomsk transport proceeded, the Germans gathered the Jewish residents of the villages around Piotrkow into the ghetto. Scores of farm wagons, under heavy Nazi and Polish police guard, brought the Jews from Srock, Tuszyn, Wolborz, Przyglow, Sulejow, Rozprza, and Kaminsk, dragging along their property, housewares, and even chickens.

At this time it was discovered that two foreign SS officers had moved into the ghetto; one was the "expert from Lublin and Radom," Hauptsturmfuhrer Willy Blum, who had come to prepare the operation, The first of the Ukrainians who belonged to the extermination unit appeared in town on October 12, 1942.

Those employed in the vital industries, whose safety had been assured, were ordered to bring their possessions to the factories, where they would have to remain during the deportation. Thus on Tuesday, Heshvan 2, 5703 (October 13, 1942), groups of workers, escorted by squads of firemen, marched from the factories to the ghetto and back, taking leave of their loved ones, abandoning their wives and children to the mercies of the murderers. Strong men cried like babies, unwilling to return to work. Horrifying sights occurred that day. Wives, mothers, and children pushed the men into the lines that returned to the factories, hoping that keeping them alive might somehow help the deportees in their new homes "in the east." Some of the men, however, refused to part with their families, forfeited the privilege of remaining in the mini-ghetto, and boarded the death trains together with their relatives.

On Tuesday night, the night of Heshvan 3 (October 14, 1942), Ukrainian and German SS troops surrounded and sealed the ghetto. Even before they began their work, the murderers amused themselves by firing indiscriminately into the air and at any target in the ghetto. The annihilation began at dawn.

The *aktion* was planned to the minutest detail. First, numbers of Jewish police passed through the ghetto streets, relying on a map prepared especially for the day's activity, and ordered the residents to present themselves in a "deportation square" on the premises of the Franciscan barracks next to the Jewish hospital. The deportation area continued on both sides of the River Strawa. Whole families, men, women, old people, and children, trekked across the square with their rucksacks and their possessions, some silently, others crying bitterly. After this death march, the SS men combed the houses, looted whatever they found, and shot any living creature they encountered. These corpses were dragged to the square, as were the sick and the disabled. Rabbi Avraham Dov Englard, who was blind, and Rabbi Michael Folman were towed to the train on flatbed carts.

In the center of the square stood the commanders of the operation, headed by an SS officer, the representative of Gestapo's Jewish department, 4B4, known as Sturmbanfuhrer Feucht, who, with great cruelty, had displayed his expertise in these operations in other towns. As soon as the victims had been formed into ranks, the Nazis examined the documents of those needed for labor, since they had not presented themselves beforehand, and selected those destined for transport. The day's quota of six thousand people, enough to fill the fifty-two available cattle cars. Once the quota was filled, all the others were freed until the next transport.

In a ghostly procession, the six thousand deportees marched to the new railroad station, where they were loaded onto the black train. Fatal blows with clubs and rifle butts accompanied the parade. Another SS bodysearch was conducted next to the train. The Ukrainians were especially thorough, stripping the victims of any nice boots, wristwatches, or valuables visible to them. Finally, the people were loaded into the train, more than one hundred to a car, each car marked "Maximum load: Thirty Persons or Six Head of Cattle." This done, the death train lurched into motion.

The tracks were lined with workers from the glass factory, including the Jews who were housed there temporarily. At dusk they saw the train on its way and saw the trembling hands groping at the window gratings, witnessed the tearful eyes peering through. The survivors retained only these scenes, and the farewell cries emanating from the cars, as last reminiscences of their loved ones, whose terrible cries still reverberated in their ears.

They observed the passing of four such trains: on Wednesday of that week, the third of Heshvan; on Friday night, the fifth; on Monday, the eighth; and on Wednesday, the tenth. Each transport exterminated a quarter of the Jewish residents of Piotrkow, leaving deep gashes in the flesh of the mute witnesses to this atrocity.

The three transports were completed in an "organized" manner, except for the scores of victims who were murdered *en passant* by the Germans, the Ukrainians, and the Latvians in the middle of the operation. Many inhabitants of the ghetto felt a kind of relief each time a transport was sent, imagining that they would be allowed to catch their breath until the next stage. They were incapable of feeling the terror of the nightmare that was taking place before their eyes. The pent-up anticipation of the unexpected, i.e., the deportation, was more excrutiating than death itself.

On the day of the last transport, as the Nazis tried to fill the fourth train, they realized that several cars remained empty. The quota of six thousand had not been met! They rushed into the small ghetto and rushed its inhabitants to the square, where the commander of the operation, the murdered Feucht, passed among the ranks and selected the tree hundred victims he needed. In one of the groups stood several dignitaries of Jewish Piotrkow, community leaders in the pre-Holocaust years: doctors, lawyers, teachers, several public figures who had belonged to the "council of elders," Judge Borenstein, and finally, the town rabbi, Rabbi Lau, who, alone among them, still kept his traditional dress and beard.

The leader of the murderers noticed the rabbi gesturing with his cane and approached him. "The Jews need rabbis there, too," he shouted. As the selection began, with the murderers abusing their victims, the rabbi called on those standing near him to attack

their persecutors. "Pummel them. Don't be silent witnesses to this disgrace!" This was told by Dr. Abraham Greenberg, a survivor who later lived and died in Tel-Aviv, who stood near the rabbi at the time. But the angel of death had already made his decision and assured his victory. The rabbi was dislodged from his position and, clutching a small Torah scroll, joined the last transport of Piotrkow Jews. With their departure, the ancient community of illustrious Piotrkow was no more.

1942/43—Convulsions

The annihilation unit continued to its next stop, Tomaszow, leaving rubble and several thousand bleeding survivors where the Piotrkow ghetto had stood. SS supply units, in charge of collecting the spoils, ordered the survivors in the mini-ghetto to clean such objects as were worth sending to Germany and pack them for shipment. As the miserable remnants of Piotrkow Jewry labored, the SS thugs continued to abuse them.

When the workers from Bugaj and the glass factories returned, they were housed, by workplace, in the dwellings of those who had been deported. As they moved into the ghetto, people who had remained hidden in their houses outside the ghetto boundaries took the opportunity to filter back in. Thus several hundred "illegals" filled the mini-ghetto. This was of concern to Warszawski, Silberstein, and their colleagues, who feared that the Nazi authorities would discover the clandestine influx and stage a new selection.

Indeed, the SS units in charge of the ghetto uncovered the influx, of refugees very quickly. They began intensive searches, assisted by Jewish policemen, some of whom instigated a shameful episode in the history of the ghetto. Advancing from house to house, the search teams discovered several hundred Jews, including entire families to which babies had been born while in hiding. At first, all of them were incarcerated in the ghetto police dungeon. When this space proved insufficient, they were transferred to the Great Synagogue, which stood at the opposite end of the small ghetto.

Here, without waiting for orders from their superiors, the murderers committed brutal atrocities with satanic pleasure. Babies gave them special opportunities to vent their sadism. They carried the infants out of the building, shattered their heads as their mothers looked on, and hurled their convulsing bodies into basins brought to white-heat over bonfires.

Further horrors were witnessed when William of the SS, escorted by his black German shepherd, went from house to house, uncovered the concealed Jews, and shot them for fun as they walked to the synagogue. William's forays were accompanied by his dedicated assistant Y.L., once a furrier and now a Jewish policeman.

They considered attaching the first group gathered in the synagogue to the Jews of Tomaszow, whose transport to Treblinka was being carried out at the time. This did not come to pass for some reason, so they remained in the synagogue, imprisoned under terrible conditions. Outside, their families bargained either for their release or for their exchange for other captives. Those who had connections with the Nazis and could afford bribes succeeded in freeing their loved ones. When the Nazis demanded other Jews in exchange, various liaisons suggested that old or sick people be dispatched to the synagogue in exchange for wives, husbands, or children imprisoned there.

This situation led to manifestations of sublime courage and moral virtue. In one case, parents, presented themselves at the synagogue in order to free their daughter, whose husband was in the ghetto; the daughter rejected the offer. When one of the go-betweens offered to liberate Elazar Sheinfeld's wife and daughter, Sheinfeld handed him all the money he had. Just as the deal was about to go through, the Nazis demanded two other Jews in exchange. When Tzilla Sheinfeld found out about the transaction, she climbed to the uppermost window of the women's gallery and jumped. Her dress snagged on an iron rod, and she hung in mid-air until she was taken down. Several days later, all those left in the synagogue were transported to the Rakow Forest, where they were murdered in cold blood.

A month later, the Nazis assembled another group of several hundred Jews in the synagogue. In the middle of Tevet, 5703, after hideous agonies, they, too, were taken to their bitter end in the Rakow Forest.

Members of the shattered families remained in the mini-ghetto and moved about like ghosts. Death in the lush forest of Rakow lurked close to the ghetto and was therefore more tangible. At just that time, however, two figures straight out of hell—survivors of



The 18th century polychrome mural of the Ten Commandments, spotted with bullet holes—the only remaining omen left of the Great Synagogue's interior. The mural is hidden behind a curtain and shown only occasionally (upon request), by the Polish librarian to Jewish visitors.

the transport train and the Treblinka death camp, which had become the cemetery of the Jews of Piotrkow—slipped into the ghetto. The first was Moshe Wolreich, who had leapt from the train immediately after it passed Warsaw on its way to Malkinia (Treblinka). After him arrived Dudek Lewkowicz, who died in 1963 in the United States.

Wolreich, careless with his tongue, described the last transport to Treblinka in detail. He even repeated Rabbi Lau's inspiring words about how the Jews had progressed to martyrdom, uttered at the railroad station as the Nazis filled the cattle cars. Wolreich also brought best wishes from relatives whom he had seen in the railroad car in which he had ridden. His stories reached the ears of the authorities, and the Gestapo swept him up in one of its periodic forays.

Lewkowicz, a more prudent man, had stayed in the mini-ghetto until sent with the men's transport to one of the camps in Skarzysko. The only survivor among the Jews of Piotrkow who returned from Treblinka, Lewkowicz described Treblinka's death machine to those close to him. This was the first eyewitness account of the mass murder in Treblinka to reach the Jews of Piotrkow. He repeated part of his description in his testimony at Yad Vashem, in which he described the final moments of the Jews of the last transport, with whom he had been deported from Piotrkow. After a Jewish foreman had selected him for a labor detail, he stood alongside the crowd that waited its turn to enter the gas chambers. From this vantage point he had seen many of the city's Jews; the images and sights were forever engraved into his memory. Thus, in simple language, he described how, as the community leaders stood amidst the crowd, most of them barefoot, the rabbi's voice suddenly shattered the deadly silence that reigned there. The rabbi recited *vidui*, whereupon everyone in the assemblage, a congregation now, repeated this final prayer and followed him on their last journey.

By order of the district authorities, Piotrkow was declared legally *Judenrein.* Only 2,400 Jews were permitted to remain in the mini-ghetto known as the "block" because of their work in vital industries; in fact, the population of the block exceeded 3,000. Most inhabitants were employed in the large factories, thanks to which the rump community was allowed to remain in town. Many others, however, worked in the Nazi "shops," clothing factories, and at odd jobs that the Nazis devised from time to time. A few inhabitants of the block worked in internal services—the laundry, the kitchen, food supply, the clinic, janitorial work, and the Jewish police.

Frequent reports reached the ghetto of Jewish bodies found outside the city limits. Most of these were Jews who had tried to reach the ghetto and were caught by the Nazis or their Polish helpers. In several cases, young people had fled the ghetto and were caught outside. thus, too, the ghetto learned that several dozen Jews had escaped at the time of the second Rakow Forest massacre in Tevet, 5703; the Nazis, aided by local Poles, caught and murdered the fugitives.

Six weeks after the second slaughter of synagogue prisoners, when the anguish in the mini-ghetto had begun to ebb, a new order arrived: 250 men were to be transferred to the labor camps attached to the weapons and ordnance factories in Skarzysko.

Working with lists drawn up in advance, the O.D. fanned out through the mini-ghetto and rounded up men designated for the transport, mainly those who had no permanent work. After they completed this duty, several O.D. leaders were ordered to leap aboard

the moving trucks themselves. One of them was Teitelbaum of Lodz, who had preceded Attorney Silberstein as commander of the Jewish police.

Then, as the German trucks were about to pass through the gates of the mini-ghetto, Szymon Warszawski ordered Tadek Glogowski, a policeman and one of the most shadowy figures in the ghetto to the "block," to join the transport. When Glogowski refused, Warszawski, with the help of one of the SS men, threw him into the truck as it started moving. Then he did the same with Weisros, a policeman and underworld figure whose behavior marked a shameful page in the history of the ghetto. Glogowski was caught after the war and served time for his despicable actions; Weisros was killed by the Nazis.

A month after the first transport, the Germans demanded an increase in manpower for the Skarzysko camps. This time they needed women, since they had several departments that employed women in particular.

This transport was not pre-planned; the Germans simply broke into the mini-ghetto and abducted 250 women and men. One of them was the Radoshitzer Rebbe, Admor Itzchakl Finkler. Among the others was his entire family.

There was no contact with the victims for a few days after the transport. Then communication was established, and it became known that quite a few Jews from Piotrkow were working in the "Z" factories, where the regimen and work conditions were the harshest known.

One of the cruelest tyrants in the "block" was officer Luckner of the SS. One day, Luckner appeared at the office of the chairman of the mini-ghetto, Szymon Warszawski, and presented him with an order from Radom: ten members of the Jewish intelligentsia were to be exchanged for German hostages whom the British were about to repatriate. These Jews would be transferred to Vienna and thence to Palestine. He presented Warszawski with a list, with Rabbi Lau and his family at the top of it. When he was told that the rabbi was no longer around, he settled for Dr. Zilberstein and his wife.

Luckner allowed no time for rumination; a Red Cross ambulance for the transport of the lucky ones had already joined his little convoy. After Jakob Kurz had left for Palestine, many people believed in this possibility. Four families, composed of ten people, were chosen: attorney Stanislaw Zilberstein, commander of the Jewish police; Dr. Maurycy Brahms; Dr. Leon Glater; and attorney Szymon Stein, who was unmarried.

The inhabitants of the "block," their eyes wide with envy, accompanied them to the Red Cross vehicle and asked them to pass along regards. After seating themselves in the white ambulance, however, the liberated ones were subdued and depressed, as if in shock. It is doubtful whether they could guess what fate had in store for them.

This was in late march, 1943, a day before Purim. The next day, on Purim afternoon, reports reached the mini-ghetto of the satanic murder carried out the previous evening in the Jewish cemetery. The entire German colony in Piotrkow had gathered in the cemetery, greeting the "Luckner convoy" as a band played marches. The ambulance stopped next to the little building where corpses were readied for burial, and the ten unfortunates were hauled out, screaming wildly. The band increased its tempo and the bloodthirsty crowd applauded as the victims were forced to run between the rows of graves, tossing their clothing aside as ordered. When Dr. Brahms' young daughter

stumbled, one of the spectators shot her on the spot. In this fashion the others ran to an open grave prepared for them, as the Germans cheered and laughed at the sight of the abomination.

Several days later, it became clear that this devilish scheme had been concocted by the criminal Ernst Klatenbrunner, commander of the S.D., who had ordered his local agents to engage in murder on Purim as retribution for the hanging of the ten sons of Haman.

The mini-ghetto was virtually paralyzed by shock and depression. Life, however, had to go on: people went to work and haggled over the quantities of food and other supplies they were given. The Nazis, for their part, continued to enter the area and carry out their daily abuse.

One morning Luckner came again, accompanied by two Ukrainian members of the mini-ghetto border guard. This time they entered through the gate at the corner of Garncarska-Jerozolimska. They stood in the snow in the middle of the street and shouted in the direction of the Reder residence at 12 Jerozolimska. Itzchak Feiner, Warszawski's deputy came out. As he stepped past the sidewalk and into the street, one of the Ukrainian sentries, standing next to the gate, fired one round from his rifle. Feiner stumbled and fell; the snow under his body turned red. Later, the men explained that it had been a mistake; they had meant to kill an insane Jew who lived at the Weiser bakery across from the Reder residence, which was outside the "block."

The murderer, Meister Klete of the SS, a member of Luckner's unit, materialized the next day. He uncovered the wanted Jew, a young man from Opoczno who was serving in the Wehrmacht transportation services unit, keeping his Jewishness a secret. Klete ordered him to step outside. The young man, who had indeed lost his mind, sat in a shed at the entrance to the house at 17 Jerozolimska, where brushes and brooms were stored, and refused to come out. When one of the Ukrainians fired into the shack, the youth panicked and began to run through the snow with nothing but socks on his feet. A second bullet evidently struck him; he stumbled and fell. Klete approached him, bent over, unholstered his handgun, and fired several rounds into the boy's temple. Amazingly, the deranged young Jew stood up and broke into a mad run toward the mini-ghetto gate. The Ukrainians continued to fire at him until he fell dead, leaving a trail of blood across the snowy street.

In April, 1943, the mini-ghetto was engulfed in tension and rumors about its fate. One morning the Germans followed the workers on their way to the factories; many viewed this as an augury of the end. During the day, however, it became known that the Nazis were merely toughening their security measures, since the local authorities had just been informed of the eruption of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

News of the Warsaw insurrection breathed life and pride into the tiny ghetto, even though no one deluded himself about its chances of success. A few individuals were positively elated, as if a fire had been lit under them. Many others continued to fantasize about the possibility of escaping or joining one of the Polish underground units.

The Lieberman and Goldberg brothers, members of Betar, had been planning such an escape and had even made contact with a Pole who worked with them at Hortensia. The Gentile's role was to lead them to a unit of the Polish partisans. He supplied them

with a pistol, some ammunition, and forged papers. As soon as he brought them into a nearby forest for their rendezvous with underground agents, the young Jews realized that they were surrounded. The Gentile fled in time. The Jews tried to use their handgun, only to find that the rounds were blanks. Taken captive and tortured by Gestapo interrogators, they confessed and informed on their accomplices: Katz, a hatter who had fashioned firefighters' headgear for them, and Shimon Nyss, a young member of the Jewish police who had led the would-be partisans out of the ghetto. They were rounded up, and the seven victims were taken to the cemetery and murdered.

The next Gestapo atrocity came two weeks later.

Piotrkow Jews in the Skarzysko camps and their relatives who remained in the mini-ghetto maintained regular communication. Gentile couriers brought money to Skarzysko and returned to Piotrkow with letters and regards. One of these messengers was caught and, in the course of the interrogation, informed on those who had sent him. It took the Gestapo less that two days to seize all the Jews involved, including Ber Handel and his son Leibish, Marmor, and others with sons and daughters in Skarzysko. After a brief investigation, the "culprits" were taken to the cemetery and shot; their relatives in Skarzysko were sent to Auschwitz.

In July, 1943, it became known that the original plan to make Piotrkow *Judenrein* had been completed. According to the plan, only 1,500 Jews were to remain within the city limits, employed in the two glass factories and in the Dietrich-Fischer lumberworks next to Bugaj.

After some bargaining, Warszawski extracted an agreement permitting 1,720 Jews to remain—1,000 of them near Bugaj and the rest in the glass factories—on condition that the Jews would live on the factory premises and evacuate the mini-ghetto.

This conformed with the overall policy of the *Generalgouvernement* toward the Jews, under which only a few enclaves of Jews were to remain in Poland. These were to be the operational arms of concentration camps, subordinate to the command and regulations of these camps and supervised by local SS authorities.

To reduce the Jewish population of Piotrkow to 1,720, the Germans deported some 15,00 "excess" Jews to camps in Blizin, Pionki, and Starachowice. For those who remained in Piotrkow, residence camps were set up next to the Kara factory and on the grounds of the Bugaj plants. When the transports left town in the second half of July, a sign reading "Piotrkow is *Judenrein*" was posted at the railroad station.

This liquidation, too, was accomplished by fiendish murder. The Nazis separated children from their parents, who were being sent to Blizin, by promising good conditions for the children. The youngsters were then taken to an isolated building in the city, where they were murdered with great cruelty.

A month later, one of the Gestapo men discovered that he had been deceived about the number of Jews remaining in the city. Only 1,500 were to remain, he insisted. Thus, in early September, another selection was carried out at the glass factories and at Bugaj. One hundred workers at the glass factories were transported to the Pionki camp; another hundred from Bugaj—91 men and nine women—were sent to the Dietrich-Fischer wood factories in Tropau, Sudetenland. Whereas the women emerged from the war alive after

numerous ordeals, none of the men survived. They were last seen at the Berlin railroad station, just before the Nazi regime collapsed.

1944/45—Sunset

The internal organization of the two camps that remained within the Piotrkow city limits was divided in two. Szymon Warszawski was in charge at Bugaj. In the second camp, Solomon Gomberg, who had headed the sanitary service in the ghetto and had displayed laudable leadership, took over. The Jews adapted quickly to their new situation, resumed communication with their relatives in Skarzysko, and established strong ties between the two local camps.

The Allied armies were advancing from the east and the west by this time, arousing great hopes in the hearts of the Jews. For the first time in the history of the occupation, the Jews witnessed a Polish partisan attack on the Kara glass factory and even helped the partisans commit sabotage.

The camps were supervised by Polish firefighting units under the command of uniformed Nazis and Volksdeutche civilians. In the Kara-Hortensia camp, three Volksdeutche made a great impact on living conditions: Herford, who was in charge of the camp, and Hortensia's two security officers, Foerster and Seeman, a pair of Nazis who tyrannized the Jews and embittered their lives. The supreme authority in the camp, however, was the Jewish Department under the city's Gestapo command.

The Polish firefighting squads, who led the Jews to and from work, permitted them to buy food along the way and take out such valuables as they still possessed in order to sell them to Gentiles. Additional contacts with the outside world were often made when the squad was lenient and willing to turn a blind eye. Thus several inhabitants of the camp succeeded in deserting the ranks and slipping onto the Aryan side; in the same fashion they returned to the camp when they found no refuge on the outside.

A young Jewish woman from Lodz, Ala Margulies, reached the area one day. She had been sent by the coordinating committee of Jewish organizations that operated clandestinely and received funds from overseas. Margulies tried to slip into the camp, but she was caught and handed over to the Gestapo for interrogation. Her contact in the camp was Mrs. Renia Zaks-Irmay, who now lives in Haifa. Additional attempts were made to establish contact with outside groups at that time; agents of the coordinating committee even transferred rather large sums of money to a group of young people in the camp for purposes of relief. At no time, however, did these efforts lead to organizational action toward any goal.

Life in the Kara-Hortensia camp was relatively comfortable, but people were too anxious about the unknown future to feel at ease. The Polish rebellion in Warsaw raised hopes. However, while the insurrectionists engaged the Nazis in desperate struggle, the Red Army, positioned across the Vistula in the suburbs of Praga, failed to lift a finger. When the rebels' fate became clear, these hopes, too, were dashed.

In the camps, religious life was carried on to a certain extent, and enough inhabitants concerned themselves with spiritual needs to ensure the continued existence of public worship. In Bugaj, religious life thrived under the leadership of young Chassidic yeshiva

students, including the martyred shochet R. Leibel Kupiec, R. Mordechai Znamirowski, who maintained religious instructions, and R. Shimshon Maimon. In the Kara camp, a small community of young ultra-Orthodox formed around Elazar Sheinfeld, Leib Baumgold, and Silman, who set up a sort of Gerrer Chassidic *shtibel* in their room.

The laborers in the glass factory camp were given Yom Kippur off; only the most essential workers performed their duties that day. Kol Nidrei was recited in one of the larger rooms, with the participation of nearly everyone in the camp. They were joined by an unexpected visitor: Christmann, the managing director of the glass works. The elderly German was moved by the heart-rending performance of Israel Chaim Blumstein, who led the prayers. Unable to restrain himself, the German executive provided the Jews with some emotional words of encouragement.

Rumors were circulating about the final evacuation of the few surviving Jews in the *Generalgouvernement.* The Skarzysko camps had already been evacuated, partly to Germany and partly to the Hasag factories in Czestochowa. A similar fate had befallen the other remaining camps. There were no illusions about the future of Piotrkow.

It was further rumored that the Germans were retreating quickly under Russian pressure, taking with them the surviving Jews so as to leave no witnesses alive. The camp leaders, Warszawski and Gomberg, were in frequent contact at the time and coordinated an orderly transfer to the camps in Germany.

The evacuation rumors were confirmed on November 25, 1944. Instead of the regular squads of Polish firefighters, SS units stationed themselves at the camp boundaries. The night shift that returned from work was not replaced with the morning shift, for the camp had already been sealed. When the night laborers reached the gates of the Kara-Hortensia camp, they found members of an SS operations unit guarding the approaches.

The camp was engulfed in disorder. People took leave of each other with shocking displays of emotion. By noon, everyone had been taken out to the roll-call square with all their belongings. The SS left no room for thought, driving everyone into the middle of the square and ordering them to arrange themselves in two columns, three abreast, men on one side and women on the other. Then the captives were rushed to the platform of the Kara factory railroad station, where several cattle cars waited, their appearance engraved into the memories of those who had seen the death train pass them in Heshvan 5703 (October, 1942).

The Nazis loaded the survivors into the cars, pushing and beating them to help them along. SS men with submachine guns were stationed at the door of each car. The women had been placed in separate cars, and the farewells shouted through the barred windows were heart-rending.

At sunset, a service locomotive was coupled to the cars and pulled the train to a freight siding, where the cars carrying the Jews from Bugaj were appended.

All that night, the train moved from main tracks to sidings, the passengers knowing nothing about their destination. Before dawn, it was sensed that several cars had been uncoupled. The shortened train resumed its journey, finally stopping on a siding at the Czestochowa station. Two hours later, several high-ranking SS officers appeared and issued orders: the cars were to be separated and scattered in different directions.



On April 11, 1945, Buchenwald was liberated. Above, the children walk through the open gate to freedom. Among them are: Lulek Lau, Fredek Margolis, Lalek Russ, Salek Sandowski, Goldblum, Zylber, and others of our boys. The fourth in the left column is Elie Wiesel.

The three sections of the train were transferred to weapons and munitions factories in Czestochowa—Rakow, Warta, and Czestochowianka. The first part, which had been detached during the night, had vanished. Later it became clear that its 500 occupants had been sent directly to Germany, the men to Buchenwald and the women to Ravensbruck.

The survivors of Piotrkow, about a thousand in number, remained in the Czestochowa camps, where they passed through an additional gate of hell. As the pressure on the Russian front increased, the turn of these few remnants, too, came. On January 15 and 17, 1945. SS troops appeared and gathered the Jews of Czestochowa in order to dispatch them to the next portal of agonies. The Piotrkow survivors in Czestochowianka were taken to the cattle train on January 17, six hours before Red Army forces broke into the city. On the next day, January 18, the train pulled into Buchenwald. For many of its passengers, this was the last stop. For others it was a life raft, which they clutched until liberation of Nisan 28, 5705 (April 11, 1945).

Even during that last gasp of Holocaust, the survivors of Piotrkow were made to drain their cup of suffering. From Buchenwald and Ravensbruck, they were scattered to other hell-camps in Germany and Sudetenland, where they encountered others from

their city who had undergone different ordeals. In the last four months of the Holocaust, they were forced to pass through the seven fires of hell at double time; the agonies from which they had been spared thus far became their lot at the last moment. In death-march convoys they plodded along the roads of Germany, feet swollen under the cocked rifles of jackbooted Nazi troops. Some of the dead of Piotrkow fell onto shoulders of the country roads and *Autobahnen* of Germany. The corpses of others were heaped on the piles of bodies that were commemorated as a testimony to everlasting shame.

Among the survivors of the community, beaten in flesh and spirit, knees failing and morale collapsing on the very threshold of freedom, there remained only several hundred living witnesses to the devastation of European Jewry, including our city Piotrkow.

The Beginning

Friday, September the first.

Soon, school would start again. Meanwhile, we had all returned from summer vacation and found Piotrkow in the mist of events that seemed like fun to us youngsters. The OPL (Civil Air Defense Board) was mobilizing people to dig zigzag trenches all over town. The windows, marked with long paper stripes in the form of an X, somehow looked grotesque. Bulbs in public places were painted blue. Polish Foreign Minister Beck said in his radio speech that the country's honor was at stake. Now we were to defend it. On every street corner hung huge placards announcing that "We'll not give up a button" and how "Mighty, consolidated and ready" we were.

Would there be a war? Many people didn't think so. "Nobody wants a war," they said. Meanwhile, the army barracks of Szpitalna Street were swarming with more and more mobilized men.

The salesmen of peace told the world they had made a deal in a place called Munich. It had cost only the freedom of Czechoslavakia. . . not to mention Austria. . . and still before a land of black men with spears: Abyssinia. The rape of Spain was almost forgotten; just recently, the latest broadcast brought the news about the German–Soviet pact. And the weather was indeed beautiful, a real "zlota polska jesien."

Saturday, September the second.

Airplanes cruising in the clear sky since early morning. We were sure that they were our planes. In the afternoon, we went for a walk toward the Trzeciego Maja Avenue. Suddenly the sirens blew, but the bombardment had already started. People ran into the streets. Children cried and men cursed. The first raid lasted a good ten minutes and the houses on Slowackiego Street were in ruins. The very first bomb hit the Bernardynski garden. Romek Zaks and a few others were killed—the first fatalities of war in Piotrkow.

We ran towards home, glad to be alive. A large cloud of smoke came from the east side of town. Also, the military barracks lay in ruins. We waited in agony and suddenly we heard the bombers again. Moments later the house shook. Now the Stukas bombed for a long time and a great deal of damage was done. The Kopydlowski barrel factory just near us was in flames. We waited, praying, for the planes to leave and, as though in answer, the silence came.

The Polish cavalrymen on horses with their swords were no match for the Stukas' long-range machine guns. The old-fashioned Polish infantry could do nothing against the incredible speed of the vast German army on motorized wheels. A monstrous, mechanized war machine such as the earth had never seen, was roaming toward us.



Sulejow after the September 1939 bombardment.

Sunday, September the third.

The bombardment went on and on, soothed only by the silent prayers of the people. The Warsaw radio was playing military marches and, only occasionally, the program was interrupted by the familiar words, "Hello, Hello—Attention, Attention! It's coming. . . It's over. . ." In the afternoon an excited speaker reported the important news: England and France declared war on Germany! "Now our troubles are over!" everybody shouted.

Alas, they were not over. More and more bombing followed. Somebody spread a rumor that there was poisonous gas in the air. People started to panic. Luckily, the rumor was unfounded.

Several policemen were leading a handcuffed man across the street. We were told it was a captured spy, a Volksdeutch who was signaling the German bombers.

Toward evening, we'd decided to leave town. For a large fee, a droshke took us in the darkness to Przyglow, a village near our hometown.

Monday, September the fourth.

Until afternoon there was silence. In the Przyglow forest, we felt somehow more

secure. At about three o'clock we heard the planes again. The black-crossed vultures came diving and dropping firebombs just a little ahead of us. The target was Sulejow. A second wave of planes vomited a barrage of machine gun bullets into the town. The instant they passed, heavy bombs started to fall again. The town went up like a torch. Heavy clouds of smoke came from the distance, Sulejow on fire!

Later, in darkness, we passed through the ill-fated town. Most of it was in ashes; some houses were still smoldering. There was a smell of burning flesh and burning wood. Dead bodies of people and horses were scattered everywhere. All was havoc.

Humanity had been endowed by the Germans with their Beethovens and Schillers and Bachs. Now the German people presented us with a horrifying new innovation of German culture, the Blitzkrieg.

Friday, September the eighth.

We returned to Piotrkow. The roads of Poland trembled beneath the treads of hundreds of tanks moving eastward. These were followed by thousands of German soldiers moving with absolute precision. The Invaders were here!

On our way we met detachments of Polish soldiers, now Kriegsgefangene. We saw towns and villages leveled into smoldering rubble heaps.

In Piotrkow, we luckily found our home intact. Just a street away, the entire block of houses on Zamkowa Street had been destroyed. All that remained there were the chimneys. Now and then an entire wall stood out. A solitary sink hung in the air.

The Wehrmacht and the Luftwaffe were finishing their ultimate mechanized slaughter. Now, the time had come for the SS, the Shupo, the Sonderkommando and the Gestapo.

The first terrible chapter of war was on the verge of closing, with other, most horrifying, chapters still forthcoming.

New Bulletin—Ben Giladi

Testimonies

First Victims



Romek Zaks, the first victim.

It began on the day the mobilization of the reserves was announced, one week before the outbreak of World War Two. We suddenly realized we were in grave danger.

Avraham Zaks (Romek), the son of Yehudah and Manya Zaks, was about twenty at the time, and his girlfriend, Luisa, a Jewish refugee from Germany, had told him exactly what awaited us Jews. He did not hesitate for a moment and decided to enlist in the army and fight the enemy of Poles and Jews.

His parents did not object. He rushed over to the draft office, where a long line of men of all ages was waiting, but was sent home and told to wait until he was called. There were many Jews with a secondary education who had the right to serve as junior officers, but they were all sent home.

Romek was disappointed and disheartened; he found no peace in his nerve-wracking inaction.

We were glued to the radio day and night, awaiting a miracle. But a miracle did not occur, and the inevitable happened: war was declared. That night, Friday, September 1st, no one slept. The house was full of guests, relatives, and refugees from Czestochowa who hoped to find refuge from the Nazi occupier.

Romek, pale and nervous, entered his parents' bedroom, and kissed his mother goodbye as if he knew he would not see her again. Which is exactly what happened. . .

The next day, on the Sabbath, everyone in town was scurrying about, peering at the bright blue sky where silvery airplanes were buzzing. Everyone was wondering what those maneuvers meant when a deafening thunder shook the house. As the people huddled around the radio we realized that a bomb had hit our house. A terrible wail was heard in the next room.

We ran into the room and saw a blood-chilling sight. Romek was lying on the floor in a pool of blood. His body was still warm, but he was lifeless.

Someone brought him water and tried to revive him, but the hand holding the glass stopped in mid-air as the person's eyes met the eyes of a doctor who happened by. Romek's soul had departed from his body through the hole in the chest where, a few seconds earlier, his warm heart had been beating.

This is how the terrible war began in Piotrkow. For Yudl Zaks and his wife, Romek's death was also the end.

The burial took place beneath a shower of explosions, during the occupation of the town by the Germans. The expulsion from the house, the methodical robbery of the

business, the transfer to the small ghetto and to Treblinka. . . . those were the next stages of death, a prolonged process of dying.

Romek's mother, known for her strong character and intelligence, did not recover from her son's death and could not forgive herself for not sending him to the land of Israel after the departure of her first-born son. The father, a good-hearted and happy man, was destroyed by a heart ailment.

I alone have survived to tell the story of the destruction of this family. After I escaped from the murderers at the end of the war, I immigrated to Israel to join my older brother Aharon.

Rina Irmay (Renia Zaks)—Haifa

Editor's Note: Another young man was killed by the same bomb. At the time, he was in the Bernardynski Garden, just across the street from Romek's balcony. His name was Abraham Wajnrot.

Eliezer-Lolek Epstein

Eliezer Lolek, the son of Joseph Epstein, while a student of the "gimnazjum," belonged to the "P.W.", which was the military preparatory division. When the war broke out, his position was to guard the water station, located far down on Bujnowska Street.

On the second day of the war, while the Germans were bombing the city, some bombs landed on the freight station as well as the water station, where Lolek fell at his post.

We only learned about his death on Sunday night. All the fallen victims were transferred to the Catholic cemetery. The sight of the dead was horrible. Lolek's father, after searching for a long time, could not locate his body. Only on Monday was he found under the rubble of the destroyed building on Buynovska Street. The president at that time said that he would receive a military funeral, as befitted one who gave his life for the Fatherland. His father refused the offer, but asked instead if they would relinquish the body to be buried in the Jewish cemetery. All the father's efforts were futile, but his appeal to the Rav, Rebbi Moshe Chaim Lau zts"l brought the desired results. The Rav immediately sent for Schwartz, the wagoner, and he, together with the father of the fallen soldier, under threat of German airplanes overhead, brought the victim to the Jewish cemetery, where, late that night, he was given a proper Jewish burial dressed in his military uniform.

Izkor Book

The First Transport to the Labor Camp

David Perach (Blum)—Rechovot

During the hot summer days of the month of Av, 1940, the Judenrat sent requests to several hundred young people to meet at the gathering place near the Kehila and to bring with them eating utensils, two sets of underwear, work clothes and other small necessities.

150 youths, I among them, lined up one Friday at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. From there we marched, under the strict security of German policemen, to the freight station, where they packed us like animals into freight cars. Only at about 8 P.M. that evening did the train finally begin to move. The resounding strains of "Hatikvah" suddenly broke out in all the cars of the transport. Courageously and proudly the youths sang the Jewish national anthem as it had never in their lives been sung. So we travelled along, or, to state more accurately, we dragged along for three days and three nights, until we arrived in Belzec (in 1941 that camp was converted into a death camp for Jews of Galicia and Lublin).

The following day we Piotrkower were transferred to Cieszanow. We walked the 30 kilometers.

The Obersturmfuhrer Dolf, may his name be blotted out, was truly an animal, and not one of us escaped his bestial beatings.

The camp was located in an area that had been bombed, across from the large Bet Haknesset. There were more than 5,000 Jews in the camp: from Warsaw, Siedlce, Czestochowa and other cities. We had to rise at 5 A.M. The first shift worked from 6 to 12 and the second shift, from 12 to 6. The work consisted of digging trenches near the Russian border.

We marched to work lined up in rows. In addition, we were made to sing for the entire time that we marched, and the SS men who accompanied us on the left and right kept beating us and also shooting into our ranks. The camp leader was a man called Glinatzky and his assistant was named Goldbloom, but he surely brought no honor to the Jewish people.

Each time we were admonished that if one of us were to dare to escape to the Russians, five of us would be shot. One fine morning, a Piotrkower named Kaczka crossed the Russian line; an alarm was sounded and a tumult ensued. The head count indicated that one of the group was indeed missing. They took us aside and an SS officer, riding on a white horse, ordered five of our group to be shot. A group of 19–20-year-old friends did not break. But the younger ones, such as the Kozlowski brothers, Diamant and others were crying hysterically. That day, in fact, I was the group leader.

Tsvi Bladi (now residing in America), Avrom Eisen (now living in Israel) and I approached the officer and asked him to take the three of us and let it suffice. It appeared that the officer was surprised by the way we reacted. He scrutinized us from our heads

to our feet and announced: "You are brave Jews. Why don't you all return to camp." We went back singing so loudly that the heavens seemed to split. Later the writer of these lines received 50 zlotys as an award from the Kehila in Piotrkow.

The day following the above-mentioned occurrence was a sad one because, at the order of Dolf, Blumsztajn, the first victim among our Piotrkower, was shot.

We worked in Cieszanow until Sukkoth, after which we were transferred to Dzikow Nowy, Dzikow Stary, where we remained until January 1941. Then we were freed to return to Piotrkow.

Izkor Book

Editors Note: The conditions in these places were dreadful. Hard labor from dawn to dusk—whippings and shootings. The most meager food rations and lack of elementary, sanitary facilities completed the scenario of living hell.

The gallant man who helped free the boys was Solomon Gomberg, emissary from Piotrkow. Due to his bravery, eloquence and initiative, he somehow was successful in obtaining the release of our young men and bringing them home to Piotrkow.

The Unforgotten

Ben Giladi–New York

The sirens wailed, the bombers skimmed the rooftops, and in the streets people were running, bending their heads in panic.

When the smoke settled, the youngsters of Piotrkow suddenly discovered that the joyful event of the first day of school did not exist anymore. The bloody banner with a fierce black eagle clutching the swastika was fluttering over every school building in town now occupied by German soldiers.

In addition to the atrocities and bestialities inflicted by the Nazis, the young generation faced a strange dilemma. There was nothing to do other than hide from the oppressors, to play cards and gamble. Demoralization spread slowly. Former students were involved in the black market and smuggling, and smoked cigarettes. Education, essential for the young, leading to wider horizons and molding characters, was desperately needed.

It seemed that no one cared. Soon, however, the teachers of Piotrkow started an immense campaign of useful action. They were eager to continue practicing their noble profession and to be productive again. And, most of the youngsters were thirsty for knowledge and eager to learn.

My recollection of the illegal classes begins with my mother introducing me to a petite, lovely woman. Magister Hela Rosenbaum was a lyceum teacher from Warsaw. She rented one of our rooms and, in exchange, I became her student.

My curriculum was that of the second year of high school. Soon we were a group of eight students. The studies were based on the 1938/39 educational program.

The rooftop room was small but spotless, with a curved ceiling and a narrow window—a typical attic. A large table stood in the middle of the room; the small blackboard hung against the teacher's bed, always ready to be removed and hidden in case of a raid. In this tiny room, Hela Rosenbaum opened to us the wide and wonderful world of knowledge. She made us feel equal to all the youngster who were free. She placed us on the same level as the outside world.

She taught every subject: Literature and History; Latin and Mathematics; Physics and Hebrew. We all felt that such learning added something important to our understanding, to our capacity for growth and, above all, to our sense of freedom and dignity.

It took six months to absorb a full school year's program. Homework became an immense pleasure. In class, everyone felt privileged to respond to questions. This was really great and true education.

Hela Rosenbaum soon joined forces with two other teachers: Mgr. Eugenia Rosenzweig, a former pedagogue of the Jewish Gimnasjum in Piotrkow, and Mme. Eichner from Warsaw. They soon started full-scale education for several classes. Each one of the teachers taught the subjects that she had taught before the war. An average



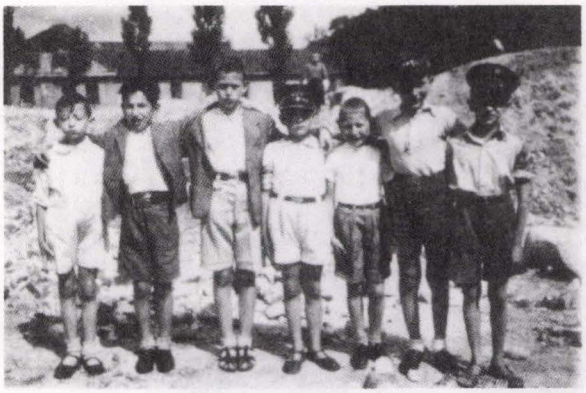
A group of youngsters, students in the Ghetto of Eugenia Rozycka-Rozenzweig and Hela Rosenbaum. Identified are: (from the bottom) Fredek Erlich (now in France), Julek Miller (now somewhere in Australia), Rutka Horowicz-Kriger (now in Israel), Heniek Hendel (now in Israel), and Lolek Altman. They all wear armbands. Who remembers the names of the others? . . . (Mrs. Rozycka, now retired, lives in Jerusalem. She worked for 20 years in Yad Vashem.)

class of approximately ten pupils went to the teachers' homes on a rotating basis. For example, on Monday to Mgr. Rosenbaum for Algebra, Geometry, Hebrew, and Latin; on Tuesday to Mgr. Rosenzweig for Polish Literature, German, and Social Studies; on Wednesday to Mme. Eichner for History, Physics, Chemistry, and so on.

The teachers worked all day and succeeded in serving five or six different classes during this time. They also taught students on a public school level—the younger kids who also needed schooling. Their tuition was modest. Some students that could not afford the tuition were taught gratis.

This was the ghetto. Conspiracy was essential. Every false move invited serious consequences. We were told to enter the teaching places one by one, to carry our notebooks under our clothes. Textbooks were scarce and therefore, cherished and shared. We had to be careful not to say anything to anybody connected with the Germans. Sometimes, we had to stop in the middle of a class session and disperse rapidly when the SS was raiding the block.

But the feeling of friendship among the students and the relations between the students and the teachers were rewarding indeed. We felt gratitude for their devotion and their guidance. They taught us how to read. They told us what to read. And when,



Little boys in the ghetto.

on our way to "school," we passed other youngsters walking aimlessly through the streets or hurrying to play cards or billiards, we experienced a sense of productivity and usefulness.

There were other teachers engaged in underground education in Piotrkow: Natalie Stern, Miriam Bialowas, Ala Englard, Stefek Rosenbauam, Rachell Makowska, Ela Sztybel, Eva Kurtz, Sara Szepska, Mme. Bornstein, Renia Zaks and many others.

In 1940, during one of the "breathing spells" in the ghetto when the Nazis weren't pushing so hard, the teachers, with the help of Zalman Tenenberg, the first chairman of the Judenrat (deported later to Auschwitz for illegal activities), organized a "Kiermasz" (bazaar). The artistic evening took place at the Joseph Hertz auditorium and the proceeds were designated for "Winterhelp." The event was one of the brightest spots in our burdened lives. The auditorium was decorated as during the good old school days before the war. The artistic part was unforgettable. I still remember my fellow students: Ada Makowska reciting Bialik in Hebrew; Szymek Librach reciting "Piotr Plaksin" and "Dancing Socrates" of Tuwim; Edzia Orbach doing a sketch. A dramatization of Antski's "Day and Night" with songs and dances was also presented. Ala Braun did pantomime. Zosia and Jakubek Bomstein played the piano. The people were thrilled and the true value of education suddenly emerged. Alas! This was the only major artistic event in the ghetto. Awful times zeroed in closely and inevitably upon the community.

In 1942 the older boys faced forced labor. I went to work at the "Hortensia" glass factory. My world of studies collapsed. Hela Rosenbaum, the teacher, attempted to teach me after working hours. This attempt, however, proved futile. It was impossible, after ten hours of hard work, to study seriously. Until this day, I fondly cherish the memory of a dedicated educator and wonderful human being, who ended her life in Treblinka.

A few of my fellow students survived. This is not the place to recall the many moving stories of courage, human valor,and mortal struggle. Sometimes, however, I do recall some of the names of those who did not survive. A piercing memory of awfully nice kids: Hania, Brams, Stefka Brandwein, Olek Goldberg, Halinka Najkron, Helka Danielewicz, Hanka Horowicz, Adas Zylberminc, Ziuta Sladowska, Moniek Tarko, Chawka Kon, Sewka Janowska, Lalek Russ, Eva Litmanowicz, Niusia Rosental . . .

The following words of Thornton Wilder suddenly become very significant: "This

is a land of the living and a land of the dead and the bridge is love, the only survival, the only meaning. . ."

As I see it, underground education during the era of German tyranny was one of the nicer chapters in the history of the Holocaust. There is the fascinating truth about the uprisings. There are the poems and stories of the ghetto, which are important historical documents. There are also records written by lost men and women, and awful indictment cast at humanity. But at least, in chapters such as the above, one finds a ray of hope which, like a lonely star, shines over the somber wilderness of the Nazi jungle.

New Bulletin Source

Piotrkower Chalutzim During the War, 1939–1945

The speaker of Radio Moskva was greeting the new year of 1941 when Zelmek Horowicz wrote this letter from Poniewiez, in the Vilno area, to his sister Ceska Warzager in Palestine. There, she, her husband Motek and brother Salek experienced their dream of Chalutziuth.

Zelmek, a young lad and a Hashomer Hatzair himself, fled the Nazis, as other young people did, he found himself with his Hachsharah in the Vilno area, at this time under the Lithuanian regime.

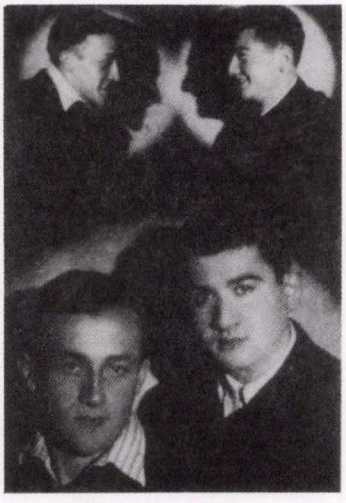
Zelmek's letter reflects thus the present problems and future dangers ahead for the Jewish people. He writes about the bad news from the Piotrkow Ghetto. He writes about family and friends from Piotrkow who were sent to Siberia, who landed in Warsaw, the Ukraine or France.

The article by Jerry Bengal (on page 210) provides the background of groups of young Shomrim who tried to reach the promised land. Almost all of them were later murdered by the Nazis.

This group of Shomrim in Poniewiez was the flower of the youth. Among them were individuals such as Mordchai Anielewicz, Tosia Altman, Joseph Kaplan and Arieh Wilner—all in the leadership of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Mordchai and some of the others were sent to Warsaw by the Behazith group from Poniewiez.

The letter is an interesting study of a turbulent time. It expresses the feeling of the concerns of an intelligent young man caught in the trap of history.

New Bulletin



Zelmek Horowicz and Szlamek Zauer,
Panevezys (Poniewiez), 1940.

Droga Cesiu, Motek i Mania!

Tonieniei 31.XII.1940r.

Twój list i pocztówkę otrzymałem, która mię bardzo uradowała. Piszę teraz do Was w nocy sylwestrową. Dziś mija akurat rok gdy opuściłem Sielpernów, udając się w dalną drogę tułacza bez grosza w kieszeni – czy wszystko skończyło się dobrze, zmierzam się ze swoją gminą żyjąc próbką życia przyszłego... Rok który minął był dla mnie i dla wszystkich nadzwyczaj dobry. Przedewszystkiem odpoczęliśmy po przeżyciach wojennych: nabraliśmy chęci do dalszego „użytkowania powietrza"... Myślałem że się z Wami zobaczę, ale z tego zrobiły się „życzenia", ale nie tylko to, myślałem że skończy się „wyjazdem" na Syberję, wrócimy dalek wstecz... Narazie jest wszystko w najlepszym porządku. Jesteśmy jeszcze z wszystkimi razem. Mieszkamy za miastem dwa kilo., pracujemy, jemy i żyjemy. Ale to pewna jeszcze około dwa lub tydzień. Dziś wydało rozporządzenie że wszyscy uchodźcy otrzymują obywatelstwo, a co za tem idzie podporządkowanie się prawu... Paszporty które my otrzymujemy zawierają paragraf zabraniający mieszkać w dużych miastach co życia nie przedstawia być zachęcającego... lecz trudno, trzeba będzie się przystosować. W domu jest wszystko w najlepszym porządku, otrzymałem pocztówkę dwa dni temu. Czy mi piszą prawdę to nie wiem. W każdym bądź razie pracy nie ma.

Od Heli Auerbacha otrzymałem pocztówkę, donosi mi że Idel został wysłany w głąb Rosji dokąd nie podała mi. Takie Minuśka Majerlauer została wysłana za daleki wschód (dalszy wostok) jak: tysiące innych, prawdopodobnie za to że nie posiadała paszportu. U nas rozdawanie zaczyna się jutro. Dalej donoszą że Józia Granat z mężem i dziećmi znajduje się w Warnawie, tylko że on jest bez pracy (nie wolno...) Dostaję takie sporo listów od Kolegów i znajomych. Wolf E. znajduje się w Równym za Ukrainie razem z Esterką Cymberknop, przed wojną tydzień urodził się mu synek. Otrzymaliśmy list od Hermla L.: Lejbka, jak u nich to przecież my lepiej wiemy. Majlech Zamet znajduje się w Clermon-Ferran w niezokupowanej Francji. W tym samym mieście znajduje się Lypka Skrobin, ale z nim Kon Jakób nie mamy.

W Piotrkowie otrzymują listy od Kolegów: kolejowiec życie tam jest bardzo ciężkie. Młodzież bywa wysyłana na roboty, zdaje się uwalniają zdolnych lub wcale nie...

W tej chwili mija godzina 12-ta podaję spodkiem moskiewski jest już rok 1941! Skończmy z okazji i pożyjmy sobie, gdyż tylko to pozostało nam. Życzę Wam nie tylko dobrego lecz także rodzinie całej i znajomym. Chciałbym obszerniej odpisać możliwe że odpowiedź już mnie nie zastanie, lecz nie zważając na to, w razie czego adresu poinformuje Was oczywiście.

Do Julka napisałem: dołączam do tego listu. Bym mógł więcej do pisania, lecz po pierwsze streściłem, a po drugie nie mam głowy do obszernego pisania. Życzę Was Moi Drodzy całuszy dla Nasuy

Wasz Lolus

At the start of the war, September 1939, we were in Radom in kibbutz Hachshara "Behazit." There were six Piotrkower. By the third day of the war, we had been walking under German bombs and machine guns, without food or water, toward Lublin, Kovel and then to Rovno. This was quite an experience. When the Russian occupant came to the Western Ukraine, we received instructions to proceed to Vilno and with the hope for future Aliah and escape to freedom.

In Bialystok, we met Mordchai Anielewicz and his group from Warsaw; then together we traveled to Vilno.

Meanwhile, the Lithuanians got the Vilno region from the Russians in exchange for military bases.

At that time, a Rikuz of 1000 Shomrim was created in Vilno, organized by the kibbutzim and led by the Hanhaga. There, contact with our people in Palestine was established. The American Joint was also starting to help. Some Chalutzim managed to make Aliah. Some members of Bund were successful in reaching the shores of America.

I remember the heated discussions in the Rikuz regarding the young generation in the Polish Ghettoes, and especially the Ghetto of Warsaw. It was then resolved that Shomer Hatzair, as a youth organization, was obligated to send leaders into the Ghettoes and not to abandon the children and youngsters to despair. As a result, Mordchai Anielewicz, Tosia Altman, Joseph Kaplan and others were sent through various borders back to Poland.

Later, they were all leaders of the resistance, with Mordchai as the commander of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

In 1940, kibbutz Bechazit was forced by Lithuanians to leave Vilno and to go to Panevezys, deep in Lithuania. There a new kibbutz Hachshara was built based on our principles of work, Hebrew culture and Zionistic ideas.

The enclosed photo was taken in Panevezys (Poniewiez). The following Chalutzim from Piotrkow are, from left: Szymek Wegliszewski, Zelmek Horowicz, Zlata Rosenblum, Shlomo Rubin, Jerry Wegliszewski-Bengall and Szlamek Zauer.

Jerry Weglishewski–Bengall—Toronto—New Bulletin



Panevezys, Lithuania, May 1940. Standing from the left: Szymek Wegliszewski, Zelmek Horowicz, Zlata Rosenbaum, Szlomo Rubin, Jerry Wegliszewski-Bengall (the only survivor), and Szlamek Zauer,

The Last Stage

Meyer Zar (Zarnowiecki)—South Bend, Indiana

After the outbreak of World War II, "Hashomer Hatsair" faced enormous difficulties in continuing its educational and social activities. Courage and the indomitable "Hashomer" tradition helped us to continue and, in one way or another, keep our heads above water.

When the bombardments were over and those who had fled gradually started to return to town, we convened a meeting of the "ken" (nest; inner group) to decide how to structure our activities in light of the dreadful reality. Most members felt that we should start out for the Russian border while there was still a possibility. Some members indeed set out to achieve this goal. Among them were Mordechai Ar-On, his brother Shmuel, Jacob Hershlikowicz, Itka Kaminska and others. Those who stayed behind realized that the organization had to continue to function as an efficient body. Thus, the older members continued to meet for discussion and an exchange of views. Our hope was to make contact with the central organization in Warsaw and, eventually, we did succeed. Our central meeting was an apartment on 21 Pilsudski Street. Meanwhile, the German occupation continued to make inroads into Jewish life. The ghetto was established and Nazi oppression increased.

The Visit of Anielewicz

In the period between the outbreak of the war and February, 1940, we managed to create a world of our own in spite of the increasingly difficult conditions. We lost ourselves in talk and debate. We even read poetry. We continued to hope and to search for direction. The visit of Mordechai Anielewicz to Piotrkow did a great deal to strengthen our spirit and to imbue us with courage.

Mordechai's visit took place by chance. One of our members, Shoshanna Guterman, had been to Lodz to visit her family. There she met Mordechai in the ghetto. We had asked Shoshanna to make contact with Shomer members in Lodz. We were very interested in knowing how they were coping in these difficult times and what advice and encouragement they might possibly give us. It was through the members in Lodz that Shoshanna found out that someone from the central organization, namely, Mordechai Anielewicz, was visiting. Shoshanna attended the meeting which Anielewicz conducted. She was greatly inspired by him and told him about our activities in Piotrkow. This is how he came to know of our existence and decided to visit us and lend his moral support.

By this time, travel from Lodz had grown increasingly problematic. Shoshanna and Anielewicz had to travel on false papers. They traveled to the railroad station through the cemetery. From Lodz they made it to Belchatow, where a new border divided the "Reich" from the General Government. They arrived in Belchatow during the curfew,

when Jews were not allowed out on the streets. The one Jewish home they found refused to let them in; However, Shoshanna obtained the address of Wenglishevski's parents. Wenglishevski was one of our members, and his parents lived in Belchatow. Crawling along the street, Shoshanna and Anielewicz eventually reached the home of the Wenglishevski's, who of course, received the travelers with open arms. Their generosity was rewarded when Mordechai was able to give them news of their two sons, who had just escaped to Lithuania. The following morning the travelers set out on foot for Piotrkow.

At about three o'clock on Saturday afternoon, there was a "Shomer" meeting at our apartment. I played the mandoline while the others softly hummed. The windows were shut and the room was dark. Suddenly the door opened. There stood Shoshanna and Mordechai. Shoshanna introduced us to this member of the central leadership committee. We listened with great interest to Mordechai's lecture. He first discussed the political situations of Nazi Germany, Russia and the Allies. He then went on to the position of Judaism within the new constellation. He finished his talk by focusing on what had happened within "Hashomer" from the start of the war until the present time. He told us that our movement was active in the Ukraina and concentrated in Lithuania, where a great many preparatory "Shomer" kubbutzim functioned. At its convention in Lithuania, the members had decided to sent three delegates to the occupied zone in Poland. Their function would be to help set up a resistance movement. Mordechai was one of these delegates. In his talk, he clarified that our goal was nothing less than war with the Nazis.



German crossroads signs in the ghetto.

He knew that we had no chance of winning such a war, but as Zionists it was our duty to protect the name and honor of the Jewish people to show future generations that their blood had not been spilled in vain. Mordechai also outlined the few limited possibilities for Aliya to Eretz Israel. The only way was through Japan and Rumania. Very few managed this dangerous route. Mordechai Anielewicz stayed with us for two days and then continued to Warsaw.

Organizing Activity

It was now quite clear to us that our goal was war. We decided to organize the youngest members and proceeded to follow through on this idea. From that point on, our activities were aimed in three separate directions. The older members continued meeting as they had done previously, while the younger members were guided by counsellors. We instituted a secret code for communicating with Warsaw. Thus, we were able to maintain regular contact until the end of the war. As a matter of fact, someone found a postcard signed by Jacob Aronowitcz, Hanka Zigelman and Meir Zarnowiecki after the liberation. Immediately after Mordechai Anielewicz's departure for Warsaw, a "Shomer" convention was held there. Because he looked so Aryan, we sent Jacob Aronowicz to be the representative of the Piotrkow "nest."

The convention again emphasized the urgent need to train Jewish youth in active self-defense against the Nazis. When Jacob returned, he brought the Movement paper which was produced in Warsaw and distributed all through Poland.

The situation grew worse. Signs of the oncoming Holocaust were apparent everywhere. Eye witnesses brought reports of unbelievable brutality and even genocide. Self-defense became a burning issue.

At the outset of 1942 we received a letter from the central leadership which requested that we send a delegate to Zarki, where the movement had set up an agricultural community. This time Shoshanna Guterman, who had Aryan papers, went. She met with Mordechai Anielewicz and Arye Wilner, who demanded that we organize in underground cells which would gather weapons or infiltrate German work places, as well as establish contact with other underground groups. Some of us managed to acquire Aryan papers. We made contact with the Communist Party, which ordered us to take part in a weapons-gathering operation. Unfortunately we were unable to reach our goal in this area. We couldn't transfer weapons to the woods and our dreams of self-defense crashed against the hard rocks of reality.

Izkor Book

Editor's Note: Mordechai Anielewicz later became the commander of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Shoshanna Guterman is presently the wife of the author, Meir Zar (Zarnowiecki). She and her husband reside in South Bend Indiana. Both brothers Wenglishewski, Itzchok and Szymek, were in Vilna and Poniewiez. Itzchak now lives in Toronto; Szymek was killed by the Nazis. Itka Kaminska is a member of kibbutz Beit Zera. Jacob Aronowicz, Mordechai, and Shmuel Bar-On, Hanka Zigelman and Jakob Hershlikowitz all perished in the Holocaust.

The Cheerful Baker

He was called the "Kalisher Baker" because he had actually been born in Kalish. He had left his birthplace and came to our city following the monstrous devastation left by the Amaleks during WWI. He lived with his family in the heart of the Yidn-Gas. In the dwelling into which he moved there was a baking oven. It was not just any ordinary oven; it had a large furnace and a *Piekelik* (an upper warming area). The housewives bragged about the *cholents* they got from him and their husbands licked their fingers after eating the Sabbath *Kugels*. In short, he was our baker and liked by all of us as were the other bakers.

And yet, he was quite different. He had a special status as far as his fellow tradesmen were concerned. The bakers of our town were simple people who wore boots that were covered with flour and had worried expressions on their faces. But he, Itzhak Leib, was a Jew, a Chassid, a person of stately appearance, with a long beard and *payot*. A slice of his bread had a truly Chassidic flavor, albeit no form. His place was a veritable *malon orkhim* for stranded people. In the winter he even obliged them with a glass of warm tea.



Staro-Warszawska Street—The "Yidngass" on early Shabbat afternoon. "Ruchele" carries her "cholent" pot from the "Kalisher Baker" down the street.

Reb Itzhak Leib Rusak was quite different. "A person does not live just to bake bread," he would say habitually. For him, baking was really only a necessity in order to be able to support his family. Like the smoke from his oven, he more than once ascended to heaven in deep meditation, his eyes closed and his head held high. He did not doze off like his colleagues while the dough rose after he had kneaded it in the doughbox. He would put on his glasses barely over the tip of his nose and immerse himself in a volume of *mussar*, or sink into a Chassidic book. Whenever he read a lovely tractate he was unable to contain himself, burst out into hearty laughter. Overjoyed he would bang the table and would vigorously, wake his apprentices and regale the half-asleep with his beautiful thoughts. More than once he was so deeply engrossed in recounting a Chassidic tale that the bread in the oven would burn while he continued to tell the story to its very end.

Every Friday one would know that it was *Erev Shabbos Kodesh* by observing Itzhak Leib. His preparations for Sabbath *Hamalka* started early. Everything and every corner of his home would be polished. The large tea urn would be filled with fresh water. Only things pertaining to *Shabbos* would be placed in the oven, such as challahs, *eyer kichlach*, roast goose, and other delicacies. Returning from bathing with a beaming red face and his beard combed wide, he would close the boxes of dough and cover the kneading table with a white cloth. It was easy to see that the chores of the week were done and that the holy *Shabbos* was upon him and would soon arrive together with the *cholents*: large, wide, wealthy pots, also Chassidic devices. Sometimes a few small pots would sneak in among them, as well as those of the Chassidic poor. The pots would be placed in the oven according to the status of their owners: the pots of the wealthy in the middle (so that they would not burn) right in front of the pots of the poor, whose contents at times remained half raw.

An hour before the lighting of the candles, the door of the oven would be shut with the *cholents* inside, to be opened on *Shabbos* afternoon with a broad, resounding *"Gut Shabbos."* That was how Itzhak Leib Kalisher conducted himself. On *Shabbos*, after prayer, he would come into the bakery, greet the crowd with a smiling face and a "good *Shabbos*," then return home to his family. He himself would not go near the oven. The gatekeeper's son, Antoni, would remove the *cholent* and put the pots into the oven on Fridays because the Jewish bakers had to go to the ritual baths.

Itzhak Leib would spend a sanctified *Shabbos* and immerse himself in a holy world under the *shtraiml* and in his black silk frock. Pious men would come by for a glass of tea. While sipping the warm beverage, all would be regaled with interesting Chassidic tales. Reb Itzhak Leib was a master at storytelling and was able to enthrall the group. Many of his stories were the creations of his mind, but all were full of brotherly love, strength and joy. After several glasses of warm tea, the hearts and souls of the men would also become warm; the fresh bread would have been removed from the ovens on *Motsei Shabath* but the Kalisher baker would still be celebrating *Shalosh Seudot* and singing Sabbath songs until the stars were high in the sky. Only then would he open his boxes with the sour dough to the tune of a holy song from the *Hamavdil*

When *Purim* came, Itzhak Leib would be full of joy. Year after year he participated in the *Medurat Joseph*, which was presented at the home of the rabbi. He played the role of Jacob like a real artist. Before then he would prepare himself for the *Purim* festivities.

His grey beard notwithstanding, he would study his role for the Purim play with all the other young lads. He also disguised himself for another role, that of *Meshulach.* He danced and sang a variety of songs in a mixture of Polish and Yiddish and would not cease until the crowd was caught up in the spirit of the festivities, singing along with him in ecstasy while dancing incessantly all through the night.

For Passover, the entire bakery would put on a new face in order to bake the matzohs. Everything was washed and scrubbed. The walls were repainted. The oven was *kashered.* The floor was scrubbed with soap and hot water. The tables were covered with shiny tin. A new barrel was placed in the corner and covered with a white cloth; every day at sundown, water was poured into it and poor women and girls wearing freshly washed aprons kneaded the dough swiftly and rolled it with new rolling pins. The entire Chassidic community obtained their *Shmira* matzohs from the Kalisher baker's premises. With what kind of rituals were the *Erev Passover Matzohs* baked? The most pious Chassidim, Lamdanim, together with the head of the *Beit Din,* cut the pieces of dough. A *beedle* (Shammos) carried them over to the table. The Chassidim kneaded, formed and rolled them. The *Shames sheni* would take the matzohs over to the oven while singing a Passover tune. Itzhak Leib would be standing at the oven and, with a new shovel, push each matzoh into it, all the while singing songs from the *Hallel.* The crowd would chime in and soon it seemed as if the matzohs were dancing into the oven. The Kalisher baker was overjoyed, raised his voice even higher and heartily roused the crowd to song and celebration.

Reb Itzhak Leib probably would still be strolling around God's holy earth had it not been for the Holocaust. Our community, too, was destroyed and our hero was among them. Nevertheless, he died, not in fear, but with a smile on his face.

When bad news spread through the Jewish community, even the great scholars, politicians, and optimists would shake their bent heads. The Kalisher baker did not succumb to bitter fear but would shake his head and say: "The darker the times, the nearer is the coming of the Messiah." With a strong *Emunah,* he awaited the coming of the Messiah. Those were the last days in the life of the community. The streets were empty, the houses shuttered closely; it looked like a cemetery. The silence was broken with cries and moans. Occasionally, a door would open somewhere; a figure would ashamedly and stealthily exit with a knapsack on his back and wander away. That Sabbath, the oven of the Kalisher baker remained cold and empty. No *cholents* were pushed out by Antoni, who had already been ensconced in a comfortable Jewish flat. The children of Yitzhak Leib had already departed for their legally assigned working places, while he himself remained behind at home with his sickly wife. Dressed in his silk coat with a beaming smile on his face as ever, he stood at the open bookcases, quietly humming a sad *nigun.* He pulled out one book after another, nervously turning the pages as if to strengthen his confidence and belief. He had the feeling that all the forthcoming trials, tribulations and atrocities that were mentioned in the Holy Books as supposedly occurring just before the coming of the Messiah were about to happen or already were upon them.

So the baker would noisily shut his books with his fists and rejoice singing in a highly pitched voice "*Menucha V'Simcha!*" His wife was amazed. She had not experienced him in such a state of holiness for many years. His melodies intermingled with

the cries and moans of those outside.

Surely the last day had come. It was a beautiful autumn day. The sun, in a clear blue sky, shone as always over the roofs of the houses of the Jews. From time to time, a mild breeze scattered the yellowed leaves of the chestnut trees and swirled them from one side of the street to the other. The nearby church, as usual, marked the hours for the town with the chimes of it bells. In the ghetto, these chimes were nervously counted. Even though it was a regular weekday, Yitzhak Leib donned his *Shabbos* clothes and the white *kittel* with the silver threads. He prayed a *Yom Kippur* prayer service, sang *Hallel* with intense love and chanted, "It may be that today is the last time that I can praise God well." He turned to his wife, however, she could not hear what Yitzhak was saying; the shouts and screams outside drowned out his *Hallel*. His wife continued to putter around the rooms; she pulled together clothing, dishes, and valuables. She laid them out in two equal piles, one for him and one for her, to be taken with them for the resettlement. Her jewelry and the bit of money they had buried were also divided into two equal parts. The two mounds of possessions grew taller and taller. Once more the shouts, as if from Hell, grew louder and louder: "Everyone out, whoever remains will be shot." She hurried and brought more warm undershirts and flannel underwear to take along; also spoons and knives. The baker from Kalish, watching her, cried, "In the world to come, we don't eat with spoons!" His wife stood there with a garment in her hand and looked perplexedly at her husband. He spoke again: "All knives, forks, and jewelry—give them to me." He spread out all of the jewelry which his wife had put together and announced, "These are our weapons—I proudly carried the image of God all through my life. Shall I lower myself today? Should I bow down before the killers, beg for mercy, allow myself to be driven out? No!" he shrieked with all his might, "I will fight for my life, which God has given me, and if I must die I will die like a grandchild of the *Hashmonoim* and not like a mouse. Father of mercy, although I am old and weak, give me the strength to hear your name once more." He turned to his wife and said, "Give me the shrouds." The clothing fell from her hand. She pulled the clothes of death from out of the piles. She was a modest woman, his wife, and always did as her husband asked. They wrapped themselves in shrouds. "See, this is our armor," he said, pointing to the shrouds. "Now we are ready."

With a wild shout, the door was broken down. Two Nazi killers entered, two beasts! Upon seeing the distinguished old man dressed in the white shroud, with knives in his hand, they momentarily were taken aback and stood still.

"Get out, old man," they shouted. Yitzhak Leib remained calm and did not answer. When one said, "Shoot," the baker from Kalish threw what he held in his hand into their faces. Shocked by the old people's nerve, both killers moved to one side in an instant.

Yitzhak Leib calmly said the last prayer of confession. His wife repeated it after him word for word.

Their voices, with all their might, then exploded with "Shma Yisrael." Two gunshots silenced the hearts of the two holy ones.

Outside, in the street, someone chanted, "Blessed be God Who is the righteous judge. . ."

Izkor Book

The Bunker of Farna

Roman Mogilanski (New York)



The young Roman Mogilanski
after the liberation.
Buchenwald No. 87872.

The "Judenrein" action in Piotrkow had already lasted two days. Nobody ate, nobody exchanged greetings, and nobody thought of looking at a watch—all notion of time had disappeared. People slept dressed anywhere—on floors, in attics, or in the empty rooms of those who had already been taken to the Umschlagplatz and to the freight cars. We only heard the continuous jiggling of broken glass panes. At this terrible sound, the arms stiffened and eyes became wide with fright.

A distant cry and screams. Along the stone brick pavement of the narrow street, which lead to the huge Farna church, there ran a little man with a bundle on his back, while another man in SS uniform stretched his arm and, from the tip of his fingers, there broke forth quickly a sharp snapping sound. The running man dropped down.

A strange, sharp cry of "They are shooting!" passed along the street. Demons made their appearance. They were looking for the hidden Jews. Doors to the poor, shabby apartments, stores and cellars were broken in. Old men's arms were fractured; women's bosoms were kicked by heavy, dirty heels. Many were perishing from torture and bullets; others were taken away by the Polish police and the Jewish collaborators in their round, ridiculous hats.

A few people were hiding in the dark bunker under the corner house, across Grabowski's drug store. There they stood, expecting a miracle. Now and then, a rustling; an even, sleepless breathing could be heard. The brain cannot familiarize itself with these sounds in the darkness and silence. Perhaps they were asleep; none could tell.

At night —it must have been late—another two stole in quietly.

"Is it you?" asked one of them, without seeing anybody, and the sudden sound of his voice seemed to light up the darkness for a moment.

"Yes," answered the schoolboy. "It's all right!"

"Sha-aa! They might hear you," said the owner of the cellar, catching each of them by the arm and pulling them down.

The newcomers placed themselves by the wall, while one of them was rubbing his forehead with his hand.

"What is the matter?" asked the weeping mother in a whisper. "It is blood."

Then they all grew silent again. The injured man applied a handkerchief to his wound

and became quiet. There followed again a thick silence, untroubled by time. Again a sleepless breathing!

On top, underneath the ceiling, a very faint whiteness appeared. The schoolboy was asleep, but the others raised their heads and looked up. At last it became clear that the cellar had a tiny window through which the break of day peeped in.

Then hasty, frightened steps were heard, and there appeared a tall, coatless man, followed by a young woman with a baby in her arms. The morning was advancing, and one could read the expression of wild fear that stamped itself upon their faces.

"This way! This way!" whispered the man.

"They were running after us, they are looking for us," said the woman. Her shoes were put on her bare feet, and her young body displayed strange, white, malignant spots, reminding one of a corpse.

"They won't find us; but, for G-d's sake, be quiet!"

"They are close by in the courtyard. Oh! Be quiet, be quiet. . ."

The wounded man got hold of the mother and the owner by the hand, while the Mother seized the man who had no coat. There they stood, forming a live chain, looking on at the young woman with her baby.

All of a sudden there broke out a strong and familiar sound, bringing them closer to their terrible fate. What fate that was they knew at once, but they were unwilling to believe it. The sound was repeated. It was the cry of the infant.

"Lull him, my dear," said the Mother. Everybody's chest and throat were battling against faintness. The young woman marched up and down the cellar, lulling and coaxing the baby.

"You must not cry; sleep my golden one. . . It is I, your mother, my heart. . . "

But the child cried on stubbornly, wildly. There must have been something in the woman's face that had no tranquilizing effect.

And now, in this warm and strange underground atmosphere, the woman's brain wrenched out a wild, mad idea. It seemed to her that she had read it in the eyes, in the suffering silence of her companions. And these unhappy, frightened people—she was thinking of them. They understood it in the unspeakable tenderness with which she chanted, while drowning the infant's eyes with her own.

"He will soon fall asleep, I know. It is always like that; he cries a moment, then he falls asleep at once. He is a very quiet boy." She gave the tall man a painful smile.

From outside there broke in a distant noise. Then came a dull sound, and a crack, shaking the air.

"They are searching," whispered the schoolboy. But the infant went on crying, hopelessly.

"He will destroy us all," screamed the owner of the cellar.

"I shall not give him away—no, never!" exclaimed the confused mother.

"Oh G-d," whispered the wounded man, and covered his face with hands. His hair was unkempt after a sleepless night. The owner of the cellar stared at the infant with persistent eyes.

"I don't know you," said the woman in a low voice. "Who are you? What do you

want from me?" She rushed to the other men, but everybody stepped back from her with fear. The infant was crying on, piercing the brains with its shouting.

"Give it to me," said the Mother, her eyebrows trembling. The young woman turned around. She stood up on her toes, and with high, uplifting arms, she handed over the child to the Mother. It seemed to her that by doing this she was committing a terrible crime, that hissing voices of the men were cursing her, rejecting her from life forever and ever.

Finding itself in the loving, delicate hands of the Mother, the child grew silent, asleep.

All of a sudden it grew dark in the cellar. Somebody had approached the little window and was listening. At this shadow, breaking in so suddenly, they all grew quiet, they felt that it was coming, it was near. . .

But the young woman interpreted this silence differently. To everyone's surprise, the woman turned grey in a single moment, as if they had poured acid over her hair. As soon as the child's cries died away, there resounded another cry, more awful, more shattering and heart-tearing. The young mother rose up on her toes, grey and terrible. Like the goddess of Justice herself, she shouted in a desperate, inhuman voice that brought destruction with it. Nobody had expected that sudden madness.

The remaining people in the small Ghetto told each other of the shooting of the men, the boy and the infant by the SS-men. No one touched the mad, old woman of 26: she was taken away with the Mother to the dark basement in Flattau's house on Garncarska, which served as a temporary jail before the synagogue, Tomaszow and Treblinka. It was guarded by the Jewish police.

Blood from my split head, mixed with tears, ran down my neck. The henchman Hamer was punishing me viciously with his long, heavy club for trying to kiss, for the last time, my Mother in jail at Garncarska. I didn't feel any pain: I felt the paralyzing fear and grief for my Mother, my Mother.

From the Bunker to the Synagogue

In October, 1942, at the time of the great *aktion* in which the Jews of Piotrkow were deported to Treblinka for extermination, my martyred wife Rivka concealed herself in a bunker prepared in the cellar of the house at 2 Plac Czarnieckiego. With her were most of the other members of my family: my parents, Shmuel Gedalia and Esther Friedel; my older sister Rachel (Rozia), her husband Mordechai Frankel, and their son Hansel; Mordechai Frankel's mother Bella; and several other families. In all, some thirty persons had taken shelter there.

The bunker and all its occupants were discovered after the great deportation (October 14–21). Everyone was taken to the mini-ghetto and jailed, first in the ghetto police lockup and, several days later, in the synagogue, which was used as a prison for "illegals."

Extensive efforts to liberate them by intervening with the authorities were fruitless. My entreaties to the Judenrat and the ghetto police, several members of which were acquaintances or friends of ours, were similarly useless.

I corresponded with my late wife by means of Mordechai Kaminski. In one of these exchanges, a tragic vacillation shows through: whom to save first? My late wife insisted that a child with his mother, i.e., my older sister, had priority. However, my hope of rescuing some members of my family by means of a German policeman proved false when, one afternoon, a Gestapo man shot two Jewish policemen, Sandowski and Goldstein—may God avenge their blood—for having succeeded in freeing their parents from the synagogue. Immediately after this, the German policeman was removed from the case altogether.



David Reder (now of Booklyn), amid the ruins inside the destroyed synagogue in 1945.

I was working at the Kara factory at the time. Every day after work, I was escorted to the mini-ghetto and kept under guard. There,j however, I devoted most of my efforts to liberating my relatives from the synagogue. I even avoided having to go to work several times, notwithstanding the risk this entailed.

One day, after returning with my work group to the ghetto, I was given the terrible news that all 600 Jews imprisoned in the synagogue had been transported in peasants' wagons to Tomaszow. In fact, they had been taken to the nearby Rakow forest, where they were murdered in cold blood and hurled into a mass grave which 42 men among them had been forced to prepare the previous day.

Meir Horowitz

Massacre of the Children

In July, 1943, a Jew from Blizin appeared in Piotrkow and advised the community to sign up voluntarily for the Blizin labor camp. Conditions there, he explained, were especially convenient for parents of small children. Artisans were concentrated in Blizin, and their children were given special care while the parents were at work. This propaganda made a strong impression. Mrs. Bronya Lieberman, daughter of community chairman Szymon Warszawski, was enthusiastic about the idea of going to Blizin and did everything she could to persuade her friends to sign up for the trip.

The "block" (the mini-ghetto) was facing liquidation at the time. Some of its inhabitants would be housed near the Kara and Hortensia glassworks; others would live near the factory in Bugaj. The others, including the children, were to be sent elsewhere.

The lists were drawn up quickly. After a roll call and head count were held, the transport headed for the train, children and adults marching together toward the "paradise" of Blizin.

As the crowd approached the train, still in Piotrkow, the Germans separated the children from their parents by force. They shoved the parents into the cattle cars and brought the children back to Piotrkow, housing them somewhere outside the Jewish "block". It is hard to describe the despair that gripped the parents on their way to Blizin, having left their children to their terrible fate.

The children were kept for several days in an isolated building in town. Then, one chilly morning, they were led out of Piotrkow to a place where a large grave had been dug for them. German soldiers armed with bugles and drums played various tunes, and the miserable children, half-naked, were ordered to dance. As they complied, the soldiers opened fire with machine guns. The youngsters collapsed, still half-alive, into the mass grave. The ground over the martyrs' corpses continued to palpitate for many hours, as if protesting the untimely and murderously brutal termination of these young lives.

This episode is undoubtedly one of the most horrifying in the annals of the Piotrkow ghetto, and will remain forever engraved in the memory of every Jew from the ghetto who survived.

Dr. Shulamit Morgenstern
Izkor Book

Vicinity

Lorraine Justman-Wisnicki—New York

Deportation From Gorzkowice

October 17, 1942. The machinery of destruction organized by the Germans with utmost precision and secrecy reached out toward a small town—Gorzkowice, in the vicinity of Piotrkow. An ice cold breath of impending death woke up the inhabitants from their last peaceful sleep.

Concentrated at the railroad station, and hardly aware of our tragic fate, we waited for the train. In front of us, behind us, around us—green German uniforms. Assigned to keep guard until the arrival of the freight trains, the German police stationed in Niechcice were to keep a watchful eye on the Jews.

"You are going to Ukraina to work. You shall be happy there!" Deceitful assurances revived sparks of hope and faith in a possible future.

To everyone's surprise and delight, the Committee of Polish Women obtained permission to distribute hot soup to the shivering crowd. What a moral lift! What a noble deed!

Though the cold was biting, and the winds grew stronger, the atmosphere was still calm. People talked to each other, moved around voicing their fears, suspicions and political views. Some of them surrounded Rabbi Dawidowicz to pray together with him. Profoundly believing in God and His Divine judgement, they were resigned to accept their destiny.

I looked up to the overcast sky and searched for an answer from above, for Allied planes coming in our defense. Those were but daydreams, childish delusions. Instead cruel reality took over, suppressing more and more the fleeting picture of imagination, stifling naive trust and diminishing moral strength.

As from the very depths of the earth a luxurious automobile emerged in front of the railways: all eyes turned in one direction. A tall SS man in black uniform with Nazi insignia stepped forth with a Hitler salute, exchanging a few words with the Chief of German police.

"Ordnungsdienst austreten!" thundered the SS man with a bearing of absolute authority. "Ihr bleibt mit den Frauen zuruck!" Following another order, a doctor and the Chairman of the Jewish Council with his wife and son rushed to the newly formed line. Altogether there were 20 people. The SS man scrutinized the dense crowd of degraded humanity and once more exclaimed with disgust and contempt, "Weg mit der Scheisse!" Then he left.

Pandemonium broke loose. Twenty people, with meager luggage in hand, were to be assembled on an isolated end of the station to await further directives: the chosen ones. . . the lucky ones who were allowed to remain. It was now unimportant for how long.

Revolting images in disarray. . . inner conflicts tear apart one's selfhood. . . "Why them? Why not the workers of German plants and factories?"

For the chosen group, individual dilemmas: to stay, or to go by train to the unknown because of their children, because of their parents: it is not easy to be a hero.

Najman made his last painful decision. Loud sobs escaped his chest, which he beat with his fists like a madman. Strong feelings of family love, of duty overpowered all logic and turned the scale of his life. There, at the end of the railroad station, seemed to be temporary safety, for a day, for days. . . who knows. Yet, here were his children, speechless with fright and insecurity. Trembling with every fiber of his muscular, young body, Najman, in a gesture of utter despair, threw his blue, symbolic cap to the ground. This cap, brought with seven others by Manela and Zamel a few days earlier from Piotrkow, became unexpectedly synonymous with survival. And now, by a twist of fate, arose a chance for someone else. Yudka Jakubowicz, standing nearby, picked up the cap—the golden fleece of life—to join the chosen group with his bride, lovely Hanka Dykerman.

Soon another glimmer of self-denial galvanized the attention and interest of many: the rescue of little Ania, the 4-year-old daughter of Dr. Rubinsztajn.

Behind the fence, among curious onlookers watching the last act of the Jewish tragedy, stood a Pole, a friend of Dr. Rubinsztajn. He had come to fetch the child: however, he was a day too late. The girl had but a few minutes to walk over to the other side. Yet there were no volunteers daring enough to extend a helping hand and cross the "Rubicon" with her. Then, in a split second, I saw my father heading in the direction of the fence. At his side, a young child. He stopped briefly to talk with the German guard at the post and then disappeared. Minutes stretched into infinity. . . I spotted him again. He returned unnoticed by the guard and, with wiry steps, came back to us. In his blue eyes, deep satisfaction, for he had performed an important task, an obligation of his heart. In times of the extreme degradation of mankind, when Jewish blood was cheaper than a loaf of bread, he did not forget to be human.

Soon enough, new, shattering happenings quickly overshadowed everything else, tearing to shreds the thin fabric of our hopes and illusions. A force of black-uniformed Germans arrived. They had a special mission.

Through the air tore a barbaric, diabolical order. "Shuhe ausziehen!" (Take your shoes off!)

The throng of people recoiled in terror. Exasperated voices of protest, indignation, and pleading, but above all the overwhelming roar of the "Special Commando" men and the sight of their dreadful rifles.

The children, left without shoes, whimpered from cold.

Mr. Altman, the Chairman of the Jewish Council, tried to intervene, but in vain. The Germans didn't have any mercy.

At the fence, as in a goldrush, quickly mushroomed clusters of young Poles—war merchants and speculators. "Heigh, Moshek, Josek, Srulek, come here! We have wooden shoes for you! We heard what's going on and want to help!"

Josek Zamel was first to respond. "How much?"

"400 zlotys."

It was a most exaggerated sum for a pair of sandals. One could get beautiful leather boots for that price on the black market. Yet, Josek Zamel had no alternative. His mother stood there, in stockings only, shivering from cold. Nothing was too expensive to ease her suffering. So, he purchased the wooden sandals. Others, though enraged and perturbed, followed his example.

In the middle of that mad bargaining and commotion, a peasant woman handed down a little blonde girl of five, Franka Pfefer—Lipowska's only child, Halinka. The woman muttered defiantly, "I am scared to keep her with us. I don't want to risk my life. The money we'll give back after the war. . ." Franka fainted.

Night was already falling. Merciless winds blew mists of dust into our faces. The skies were covered with black clouds, which seemed about to burst any minute and come thundering to earth.

I sat on a knapsack stuffed with personal belongings, next to my mother. She pressed her pale cheek to mine and caressed my hair with her hand. Her eyes glowed with inner fire, as she said with determination: "You have to stay! You must not go with the transport! Father will supply all necessary documents, and then—run away! Do you hear me?! Run away!"All of a sudden, the jeering whistle of the engine. The rhythmic rumble of the wheels. "The train! The train is coming!"



El Mole Rachamam for the Belchatower "Kedoshim"
Menachem Sharon-Szmulewicz (in Talith), says the prayer surrounded by the Belchatower leaders from all over the world. The time—September 1989. The site—the Nazi annihilation camp in Chelmno, where people from the "Third Reich" annexed territories (as Belchatow and Lodz) were gassed and destroyed. Towns like Warsaw and Piotrkow were situated in the "General Government" and our "Kedoshim" were sent to Treblinka. The Belchatow delegation also unveiled a bronze plaque in their hometown which proclaims the existence and honors the Martyrdom of this once thriving Jewish community.

I felt my mother's breath on my face. I felt her fast-beating heart next to mine. With trembling hands she released herself from my embrace. Father tore me away from her and pulled me to the end of the platform, to safety, where the chosen ones waited in heartbreaking silence.

A wild horde of SS men jumped out of the cattle train—a bellowing, angry horde with clubs, whips and pistols. They broke into the petrified multitude of men, women and children and pushed them forward into the black cavity of ill-smelling wagons.

"Mother!" I still had a last glimpse of her. A vague flash of a vision. In my narrowed perspective, a distant smile, a farewell gesture. . . My mother, who gave me life for the second time, was soon beyond my reach, lost in an undulant human sea.

It was a macabre, frightening reality.

An agonizing blood-curdling discord of screams, outcries, shouts and curses. And then the screeching sound of closing doors and the gruesome whistle of the locomotive.

I felt like an empty vacuum sinking into a bottomless abyss of nothingness.

The train with its human cargo—our love, our world—moved into the darkness of the cold night. Destination: the gas chambers of Treblinka.

The last Jews of Gorzkowice:

Chairman of the Jewish Council, Mr. Altman with his wife and son; Yudka Jakubowicz with his wife Hanka, and his sister; my father, Jakub Justman and myself. Majlech and Marysia Rosen, Zygmunt and Micia Pfefer, Motek and Zosia Winter, Josek and Lodzia Zamel, Henryk Magazanik, Mietek Manela, Dr. Rubinsztajn, and Haskielek Cwilich.

Dr. Rubinsztajn was shot at the railroad station in Gorzkowice during an unfortunate escape, and the remainder of the group, 19 people, was transferred to the Synagogue in Piotrkow several days later.

What I Saw in Treblinka

Dudek Lewkowicz–Chicago

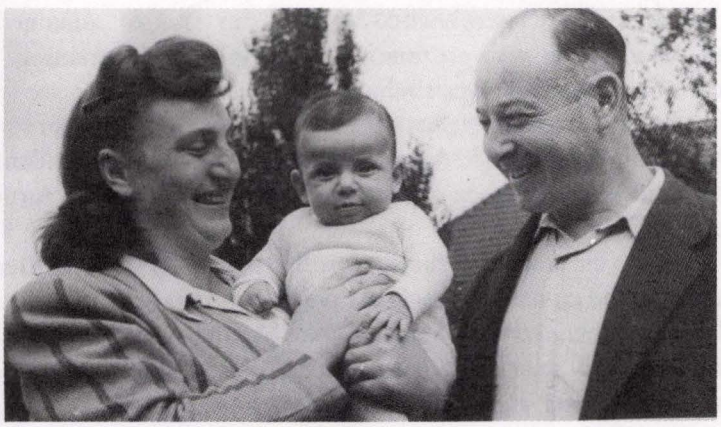
Several days before the evacuation, some thirty people were deported from Novo-Radomsk. They were the last Jews in hiding to be discovered and were held by the Jewish police. At the same time, three Jews from that town appeared in the Piotrkow Ghetto. They had either escaped from the transport or perhaps even from Treblinka itself, and they told of the fate which awaited those who were being deported. No one could fathom what they were describing and, in fact, the Judenrat commanded the Jewish police to arrest them for spreading false rumors in order to get gold and precious stones cheaply. Nevertheless, the ghetto boiled like a cauldron as a result of the many rumors. Everyone tried to locate and guarantee himself the best work-cards and each one was certain that he would be able to avoid the terrible fate of deportation.

On October 14, at about 7 or 8 P.M., Latvians and Ukrainians surrounded the ghetto and began to shoot. I lived near the northern border of the ghetto, where, from the very first moment, you could hear the shots, and as soon as anyone dared to look through the window, he was shot instantly. At night armed bands entered the homes, and not only did they help themselves to valuable articles, they also ravaged young girls.

Finally, the action began.

It was expedited systematically and calmly, one house after the other. Every second day, 6000 Jews were deported; on the last day it was our turn. Everyone left carrying his knapsack, lining up four across, and in this fashion they hustled us to the Zamkowy Platz, where we were again told to line up in fours.

The Piotrkower from Treblinka



The late Dudek Lewkowicz with his wife Mania and their four month old son Mark, in the UNRRA Camp 522 in Eschwege, Germany on August 28, 1946.



Dudek Lewkowicz.

Some time later, many people, who had been imprisoned in the synagogue since the earlier transport left, were also brought to the Zamkowy Platz. Members of the Gestapo circulated amongst us saying that whoever possessed government money should surrender it, since we would be traveling to another country, where we would not be able to buy anything with it anyway.

Many young children, who had probably been deserted by their mothers, or perhaps had gotten lost in the maddening throng, were also among us in the Plaza. The Gestapo men, however, were so "kind" that they gave the first, "best" women a child to care for.

At about noontime, we were marched to the train station, where they again detained and searched us. Whosoever had a good pair of shoes, or good clothes, had them taken away and thus, in only socks and slippers, were chased into the cars. About 80 to 125 people were herded into each freight car, and when the entire transport had boarded, they made us wait in the station for many hours. In torment and fearfully crowded conditions, we waited even longer and our guards, after a while, attacked us, seeking valuables, or offered to bring us a bottle of water for a large sum of money. Eventually, probably at about 7 P.M., the transport began to move in an unusual direction. We were later to find out that the reason for the long detention of the transport was that there were two empty freight cars, which caused them to conduct an additional roundup in order to fill them and complete the transport.

It was in the dark of night and difficult for us to make out which stations we had passed, but at dawn we were able to see that we had already passed through Warsaw and were now nearing Malkinia. From time to time we could see peasants along the way; they hung around the train lines as if they were working in the fields, despite the fact that it was already late autumn. They waited for someone in the freight cars to throw an article of clothing or perhaps a vessel of some kind, which they might have used to serve their natural needs, through the window. Everyone, including the children, had been confined since 12 noon. The peasants collected the pots and various articles of clothing and signalled to us in a secret way that we were going to our death.

After circumventing Malkinia, our transport arrived in Treblinka. We didn't actually see the Treblinka station, but some 7 kilometers beyond Malkinia our transport remained standing in a field, waiting. After a while, we were removed to the "place of destruction." A wire-covered gate, decorated the green leaves so that no one would be able to see in from the outside, opened. However, from a distance of several kilometers one could see the smoke and smell the stench of burning flesh. Also, freshly filled ditches were evident near the camp. The area around there had been a forest that was cleared and the earth looked like whitish-yellow sand.

After our cars were directed to the ramps and the doors rolled open, Jews from earlier transports appeared. They were the so-called "transport crews," wearing red ribbons. They drove us out quickly and cleaned the wagons as we were leaving. They hustled us along to the nearest place, where they separated the women and children from the men. The women and children were ushered into a barrack located to the left of the plaza, especially intended for them to strip down to their bare skin. After undressing and placing their clothes on the ground, they were transferred to another barrack, which was connected to the first, where benches were arranged for them to sit on. About twenty

men who worked as barbers entered and shaved the women's hair, which was later packed into sacks, disinfected, and, afterwards, sent to Germany.

After being shaved, the women and children were rushed from the barrack through a beautiful "avenue" covered with white sand into a second camp, where the gas chambers were located. These were low, hermetically sealed brick barracks which had a wide, gate-like door on one side and, on the other, a small door. As many people as possible were packed into this space. After the doors closed, a nearby compressor extracted the air in order to save on gas, and, for lack of air, the people choked and their lungs exploded; thus the Nazis did not have to use much gas at all.

While the women were undressing in the barrack, the men stood in rows across from the barrack and undressed too. Afterwards, they folded their clothes and knapsacks and tied their shoes together (those that still had them), and were chased, carrying their packages of clothes, to an adjacent plaza which was also surrounded by barbed wire and covered with green vines. Every few steps there stood a Gestapo agent, carrying a large blackjack, chasing ;and beating everyone as he passed. This is how they rushed the men, with their meager packages of clothes, along. They were instructed to throw their shoes onto one mound and their clothing onto another. Following this, they, too, were quickly herded into the same barrack which the women and children had just left and were ordered to gather up the remaining clothing. When everything was completed, the men were reunited and continued on the same path to their deaths.

How was it, then, that I survived?

I was standing together with everyone else when the camp elder called me and ordered me to stand aside. At first, I didn't obey, thinking that he had singled me out to be beaten. He called me again and remained standing against the wall with his face turned away. He then walked away and chose several other young people. In addition to myself, he also chose Yerakhmiel Schwartz, a certain Gomolinski, whose brothers I later met in Skarzysko, and the two Zizek brothers.

As we stood there waiting for further orders, to my utter surprise I recognized great personalities of the Piotrkow Ghetto amongst those waiting to undress. I also saw a number of Judenrat members and the Piotrkower Rabbi. I realized then that the Piotrkow Ghetto must have been completely liquidated. We stood to a side and with suffocating breath we witnessed the final moments of those near and dear to us. Our hearts stopped when we heard the Rabbi intone the "Vidui" (confession of sins) aloud. The entire throng repeated the prayer as they accompanied the Rabbi on his final journey.

After this entire procedure was completed, we were lined up in rows and sent out to the Plaza for our work assignments. Gomolinski and Zizek were transferred to another camp, and Yerakhmiel Schwartz and I were sent to the "Lumpenplatz," where we were given the task of sorting clothes. This was a huge plaza with mountains of clothes and shoes. Several other people from the Piotrkow transport were also chosen, but I never saw them because they were transferred to another camp (Treblinka, a penal camp, which was located some 4 or 5 kilometers from the death camp). Several hundred Jews and Poles worked there, hacking out stones to be used for paving roads. No one could possibly survive the hard labor and meager rations for more than a few weeks. Each week they brought back 30 to 50 barely alive humans, who were later to meet their end

in the gas chambers. Nothing more could be seen of them than bones and two frightened eyes.

On my second day in that fearful hell, which no one can adequately describe, I met a Piotrkower, Birnbaum by name, and also Lieberman, the second of three brothers, who had lived in Piotrkow and owned a jewelry store. His older and younger brothers had emigrated to Uruguay, I believe, but he had remained in Warsaw, where he later married. From the Warsaw Ghetto he and his family were deported to Treblinka, where now only he survived. I did not meet any other friends from Piotrkow because they had already died or been murdered. In Treblinka I met a larger group of Jews from Czestochowa because, prior to the evacuation of Czestochowa, it appeared that the Germans had changed their tactics. Before then, the Germans would send the clothes from the earlier deportees to Lublin to be cleaned and sorted. Now they decided that the sorting, cleaning and examining of the clothes for money, gold and diamonds which may have been overlooked should be done on the spot. For that reason, a larger number of people were chosen to sort the things from the transports arriving from Czestochowa and the vicinity of Kielce.

There were almost 700 of us and every group had its appointed job. There were "Koch-Yudn"—Jews who worked in the Jewish, Ukrainian and German kitchens. Those who worked in special workshops considered themselves part of the "elite." There was a "forest company" which went into the woods every day and returned with straw from which brooms were made. They were also engaged in doing some smuggling for the "elite." The most sought-after article was alcohol, for which they were not paid a high price. There were also the "transport crew" and the "Lumpen crew," to which I belonged.

I sorted and examined trousers; others, jackets; another groups sat and cut up entire breads and challahs into tiny pieces, looking for gold and diamonds; others sorted bed linens; still others sorted men's, women's and children's underwear. Shoes, too, were sorted. I worked at sorting haberdashery and wool. I was supposed to check to see if the packages of wool contained any American dollars, English pounds or even precious jewels and diamonds.

In the beginning of November (it was either the first or the second), a transport of Jews, deported from Tomaszow-Mazowiecki, arrived in Treblinka. On a certain day—I think it might have been mid-November, (we had no calendar and could not differentiate one week from another, and since we worked Saturdays and Sundays, too, we couldn't even tell what day of the week it was; however, because of some newspapers we had found, we could orient ourselves more or less)—a transport arrived with Jews from Berlin. They came in closed, regular passenger cars with seats. When the doors were gently opened and they were politely led onto the ramp, they asked if this was the "Treblinka Colony." We were lined up as if we were porters. We took their valises so they would not have to carry them. We supported the older ones by slipping our arms through theirs and guided them carefully. They were to learn the truth only when they reached the baths.

A few days later, another transport arrived from Czechoslovakia and several people were chosen to work. Because several people escaped or were killed every day, the total number of laborers had to be increased to equal the number listed in the reports.

In late November, a transport came from the Radom Circle. The rumor was that these must be Jews from Staszow. The doors were opened, but no one walked out—only the "transport crew," who threw the bodies of dead men, women and children out of the cars. They had been shot and were frozen. Some of their heads were swollen and larger than their bodies, with eyes popping and their clothes bloody.

Several wagons (from which people had evidently tried to escape along the way,) were broken. The Germans had ordered the train to an off-route station and there they "calmed" the people with bullets; the rest froze to death because they were detained in the freezing cold for several days and nights.

At that time we were all taken from our work to convey the corpses of the before-mentioned transport. Four people carried a corpse in a blanket or a sheet. From the ramp we had to run to the nearby plaza, strip the body naked and toss it into the burning ditch. There were about 6000 dead corpses. Because the process of burning the bodies wasn't going fast enough, we had to lay out the dead uniformly. I shall never, ever, forget this picture as long as I live.

Then, four Jews from the Kielce area escaped one night, but they got lost and were captured near the Ukrainian barracks. At noon they were led out to the plaza, and after being ordered to take off their clothes and get down on their knees, they were shot. Later the "beautiful" S.S. man whom they nicknamed "Lalke" (doll) lectured us on the fact that there would be no purpose to our trying to escape because, no matter where we ran, we'd return, sooner or later, to the same point. We had no other opportunities and here life was good for us—we had food and clothing. The "doll" had a dog called "Barry." Our fear of him was as great as that of William's dog, who used to attack children at Trybunalski Plaza in Piotrkow. "Barry" could tear a chunk of flesh from anyone in the wink of an eye, and after such an encounter you had one foot in the next world anyway, since it would be impossible to get up in the morning and stand during the attendance check. When the housemaster reported that there was a sick person in his barrack, that person would be removed and promptly given either a fatal injection or a bullet to the head.

Early in December, 1944, the general province was already free of Jews and only small remnants remained in the diminished ghettos. That's when a transport of Jews from Grodno arrived. This particular transport did not show up, as all the others did, in the morning. It arrived much later, at night. After they were led to the plaza and made to undress, these Jews put up resistance. But what arms did they possess except G-d in their hearts and perhaps a few bottles of water? A few may even have had a knife. The shooting began and, in a little while, all was quiet again. One person from that transport succeeded in forcing his way into our barrack. He stabbed one of the men who was barring the door to the barrack with a knife and entered.

The Gestapo was alerted, however, and arrived soon thereafter. We were made to look at him. In the early morning, after the attendance check, we were forced to return to the plaza to clean the clothing of those who had been aboard the transport from Grodno, since they were immediately sent to the gas chambers and were not forced to carry their clothes to the appointed area. It seemed that the murderers wanted to be finished with that transport as quickly as possible.

Again, we witnessed a horrible sight: the dead little bodies of tiny children, discarded and frozen, lay around like worn-out, unimportant objects. It was the end of yet another Jewish ghetto.

Also at that time, a transport of Jews arrived from a concentration camp and not from a ghetto. These people, after being driven from demolished ghetto streets, were detained for a time in an enclosed camp. About 20,000 Jews had been gathered there and now they were brought to Treblinka, but without knapsacks on their backs, thin, and filthy. They were also lice-infested, and after that transport came through, an epidemic of typhus broke out in Treblinka. As soon as someone developed a fever, the doctor would visit him the following day and, by order of the "Lalke," administered an injection which promptly "cured him of all his pain."

During the entire time I was in Treblinka, my thoughts moved in only one direction: not to die in such a horrible way. The place where so many Jews were put to death was very important to me, but I wanted to die in another manner, not from contagious lice. I was constantly plagued by the thought of escaping from that hell.

Everyone thought about escaping but lacked the courage to undertake such an act. We would be running from one danger to another. Where could a Jew go then, and who would have permitted him to enter, especially in that region where poor Ukrainians lived. They would gladly have stolen a pair of shoes from Jewish feet, not to mention accept the 5 liter of alcohol or 10 kilos of sugar which the Germans would have given them for informing on a Jew whose clothing he would be allowed to removed later anyway.

Escaping was quite easy at first, because, in the afternoon, before heading "home" from the plaza where the clothes were being sorted and stacked in the mountainous hills, one could hide there. Then at night, one could escape by running through the barbed-wire fence covered with ivy. Later, during the count, at attendance time, when two or three people were missing, they could be replaced by the next incoming transport. As time went on, however, and escapees became widespread, so that even the speeches of the "Lalke" were no longer effective, as the fear of being shot did not keep people from running away, the Germans initiated another tactic. Every Kapo who had 200 people in his work detail received fiver "overseers," each of whom was responsible for 40 people. Prior to every attendance check, he would line up his people in rows and, when one was missing, the other 39 had to find him. Also, one could no longer run away from the workplace, and certainly not from the barrack, which was surrounded by Ukrainian guards every night.

There now remained only one possibility for escaping and this had to be calculated by split-seconds.

At that time they began to construct guard towers with electric reflectors. Utilizing an electrical current to the reflectors, they could not simultaneously direct it to the wire electrified enclosure, since the current was too weak; this made escaping possible. I decided finally to take advantage of my only and last chance to escape. The latrine was located behind the barrack where I "slept," or passed my sleepless nights, and about 2 meters from there was the beginning of the work area, which was also separated by barbed wire covered with ivy. So I, and a friend from the barrack whose sleeping place was next to mine, undertook a plan which was to give us no rest; we decided on a date

right before Christmas holidays, since many Gestapo officers left for home on furlough at that time. They would be preparing for this for many weeks, packing their best and most expensive belongings, not excluding dollars and gold and precious gems for their families. The Ukrainians, too, would be busy preparing for the holidays, collecting alcohol from everywhere, plus sausages and gifts. We came to the conclusion that this would be the most advantageous and logical time, allowing us the opportunity to steal out of the camp and run for a distance of at least several kilometers.

One morning, immediately after being awakened, while it was still dark outside, we left the barrack to go to the latrine area to see how the situation looked like and to check whether the guard was stationed in front of the barrack or at the side of the latrine. Here we noticed two other camp inmates, who had already cut the wires in order to cross to the "Lumpenplatz" and from there to escape to the other side.

Instantly I told my friend that we must leave now, because the opportunity to escape this way might not be available to us the following day. We moved from words to actions in a second, following the first two men to the Plaza. I had hidden some money where I worked, but now we could not risk losing any time returning there to look for it. After we worked our way through the last barbed-wire fence, we glanced for the last time at the horrible place and darted forward, running through a heavy snow that had begun to fall over hills of sand which were heaped near the train tracks. We followed the road to the forest. In order to eradicate our tracks from the snow, we entered a small forest and hid there. After waiting there until midday, we started on our way again in a pouring rain. I opted for the road to Sokolow because going toward Malkinia would have been more dangerous. At about 2 in the afternoon, we circumvented Sokolov and continued further. At about 3 o'clock we stopped in a small village to rest a while. It was impossible for us to go any further because the hours of the civilian curfew were from 5 A.M. to 5 P.M. and the nearest town, Cizow, was about 27 kilometers away.

In order to provide ourselves with food along the way, we entered a village restaurant. It appeared that the owner was a Pole who had been evacuated from Gniezno and, after consulting with him about where we might spend the night and perhaps locate a cart to take us to Cizow, he advised us to choose the simplest way: the train. We still had time to catch it. We decided to postpone leaving for the train station and ordered something to eat. He then seemed to figure out who we were and promptly changed his tone. Pretending not to be suspicious of us, he even suggested our having a drink and later introduced us to his friend, who worked at the "Soltys," explaining that, thanks to his intervention, we would now find a place to sleep at the home of a certain Ukrainian who had a wagon in which he would take us to Cizow the following morning.

We agreed to this because we really had no other choice. Soon the "writer" from the "Soltys" arrived and brought along a Ukrainian peasant, who invited us to spend the night at his home. He promised to drive us in his wagon to Cizow at dawn the next morning. After we arrived at the peasant's house, his mother brought in two bundles of hay for us to bed down on the ground. Even before the light of the constantly available oil lamp had a chance to extinguish itself, the same village "writer" arrived, in the company of a Polish policeman.

I realized that we had been trapped in order for them to extract money from us. The

policeman started to shout at the peasant for allowing us to sleep there because we might be partisans, spies or even Jews. After we identified ourselves (we gave Aryan names, of course), the peasant defended himself by saying that the clerk from the village office had brought us there. Again, a discussion ensued between the policeman and the clerk, who said that we the inkeeper's friends and that we were introduced by him as people he knew in Cizow.

After the questioning, the policeman escorted us to the inkeeper. While we were there, the policeman and the "writer" pretended to go to the German police, but in fact they remained outside, waiting for the inkeeper to resolve the matter with us.

The inkeeper began his speech by saying that he knew we were Jews, escapees from Treblinka, so he would like to help us. He advised us to escape through the back door to the highway and from there into the forest. We understood right away that as soon as we left his house that night, the "writer" and the policeman would shoot us on the road like dogs and remove everything we wore from our bodies. In addition, they would also receive, as a reward from the Germans, 5 liters of alcohol and 5 kilos of sugar for each of us. We immediately interrupted his talk at the word "Jews," and I asked how much it would cost.

Actually, I had no money, but my partner-in-destiny had a thermos bottle, where he had hidden some Polish money and German Marks. After we concluded a deal with him for the sum of 1200 Polish Zlotys, he called the policeman and the "writer" in and they divided up the money. Afterwards, the policeman took us to the peasant's house, since if he exposed us at the inkeeper's house, he would also be shot. The policeman explained to the peasant that everything was in order and we had permission to remain there overnight.

We sat in the dark Polish house, impatiently waiting for the night to end. At 5 A.M. the peasant harnessed his horse to the wagon and took us to Cizow.

We finally arrived there without any problems. Again, we wandered through a strange city, seeking something that was impossible to find. We searched for any Jew, but all we saw were the remains of a small ghetto, a dead picture without a sign of humanity.

We hired a horse and wagon to take us to Siedlce because we did not want to chance taking the train. It was always filled to capacity with salesmen and smugglers transporting their wares, and the police often conducted searches.

We arrived in Siedlce at 3 P.M. and again, after walking several blocks, we wended our way, as evening arrived, to the train station and purchased two tickets to Warsaw. The train left Siedlce at 6 P.M. and we arrived at the main station in Warsaw at 8 P.M. The conductor told us that a train would be leaving for Czestochowa at about 8:30 P.M. It turned out, however, that there would be no express train to Czestochowa earlier than 12 midnight. There was no other choice but to buy two tickets and wait. Impatiently, we counted the minutes on the clock. At ten minutes before twelve, a megaphone announced the first cars were being reserved for Germans and the rear ones for Poles. After going out to the platform, we opted for the front cars, since I reasoned that they would not be searching and checking the Germans.

Having passed through Skierniewice and Koluszki without mishap, the train stopped

at the Piotrkow station at 3 o'clock in the morning. We couldn't go into the city because a patrol might stop us and we had no documents. We decided to follow the train tracks in the direction of the "Kara" and "Hortensia" glass works. I heard the town clock strike 5 A.M. Through a side road we headed toward the Jewish cemetery, where we would be able to turn onto Leonarda Street and enter the so-called tailor shop, which was located in the building which had once housed the "Ort" school. As we approached Leonarda, a policeman, warming himself at a fire, didn't want to allow us to pass. He announced that these were the streets where the ghetto had been located, they had not been cleaned after the Jews were deported. Though the night was dark, it seemed even darker to our eyes. The policeman told us to return to the station. (I told him that we wanted to go to the "Silever Kolejka" and come around the other side of the city, so that we could avoid the ghetto area from Cmentarna to Garntsarska.) Despite the fact that we could hardly drag ourselves any further, we took his advice. We headed toward Kosciuszki Platz via Torunska and there we heard the sound of wooden shoes. At that moment we met with a party of Jews whose leader was policeman Lolek Weishof; they were on their way to work at the "Pheonix Glass Works," which were located not far from the Towarowa station.

A new glimmer of hope rose up in me: perhaps I was not the last of the survivors of the Piotrkow Ghetto. After asking about my family and my friends, and after purposely asking several naive questions, such as "Is it true what they say?" I accompanied them into the Glass Works. Lolek Weishof refused to take me into the block, saying that he feared denouncers, but he did take my friend, because no one knew him, and he brought him to the members of my family who had survived. My friend gave them news about me. The following day, he left the ghetto.

I, on the other hand, while at the Pheonix Glass Works, knocked at the door of a Polish family whom I knew very well from my business dealings before the war. I asked them to permit me to stay with them for one day because I had something to attend to with some Poles we knew in the neighborhood before I could enter the ghetto. They refused. I went to another Pole, who lived about a kilometer from the Glass Works, where I was able to stay for one day. In the evening I went out to see the city and, after spending the night, I left at dawn and went to wait for the group of Jews who would be going to work. This time their leader was Tuvye Perlmutter, who agreed to take me into the block. He told me about the 13 informers and said that the best thing to do would be to tell President Warszawski about my return. I obeyed him and, after coming into the block, we went right up to Warszawski's apartment. He was very angry and shouted that he must now know about me and sent us away to see Lawyer Zylbershteyn, the chief-commander of the Jewish police. Zylbershteyn asked me innocent questions about Treblinka and directed me to Teitelbaum; there I had to answer more questions. It's possible that these questions sounded naive to me because no human mind could be capable of understanding what really had happened in Treblinka. With Teitelbaum my wanderings ended.

In the "White House" and the Police Station of the Piotrkow Ghetto, there was no longer any tumult, because only 2400 people remained, many of whom did not come from Piotrkow

After reuniting me with my dear ones, the Judenrat wanted to get rid of me so they would not have to report me to the Gestapo. Warszawski's son-in-law, Lieberman, did everything he could to save me, as did the Judenrat member Samelson. They even advised me to leave the ghetto and travel to Radomsk, where there was a labor camp, or to Czestochowa. After all, I was in the block illegally.

After being in that horrible ghetto for several weeks, living happily under one roof with my surviving sister, her husband and their two sons, I prepared to escape beyond the ghetto walls. My plans to reach the partisans in the forest never materialized because a party of men and women were deported to the munition factory in Skarzysko. I was part of that party.

Izkor Book

The Purim Massacre in Piotrkow

Dr. Michael Lubliner–Los Angeles

The annals of Jewish communities in many parts of the world include peril and cruel laws which threatened the lives of Jewish individuals and sometimes endangered the survival of the whole community. In a few fortunate cases, the danger was suddenly removed, or the dreaded law was inexplicably abrogated. Then, that community would commemorate each anniversary of the happy change by observing a "Second Purim," a festival which mimicked the original Purim, which marks the deliverance of the Jews of Persia from the evil machinations of Haman. Historians have listed some 90 "second Purim" anniversaries observed by various Jewish families and communities, beginning with the early Middle Ages and ending with the so-called "Hitler Purim" proclaimed by the Jews of Casablanca in 1943.

In tragic contrast to these "Second Purim" celebrations, Jewish history also knows of instances in which the joyous festival of Purim itself was turned into a day of mourning. On such case in point was Purim, 1943, in the Ghetto of Piotrkow, where Nazis trained in the art of murder set out, by orders of their Fuhrer in Berlin, to annihilate all the Jews. In contrast to the harsh decrees enacted against Jews in earlier times, this particular order was not openly promulgated but was kept a closely guarded secret, known only to a select few high officials who had been sternly warned not to permit even rumors of the Nazi plan to leak out.

This sad Purim came about at the end of the winter, 1943, in the so-called "Little Ghetto," a stunted remnant of what had once been the flourishing Jewish community of Piotrkow.

After the mass "evacuation" of Jews from Piotrkow in October, 1942, only 2,000 Jews had been left in Piotrkow. This number included refugees from the immediate environs and also from other cities and towns of Nazi-occupied Poland. They were crammed into a Procrustean bed south of Staro-Warszawska, once the "Jewish Street" par excellence. It was ringed by a thicket of barbed wire that turned the area allotted to Piotrkow's remaining Jews into a convenient cage within which the murderers could gun down their victims any time they chose.

The streets on the other side of the barbed wire, formerly part of the larger Ghetto, were lined with houses where Jews had once lived but which were now deserted shells. With their doors agape and their window frames having had their glass panes knocked out, they looked like so many skeletons with toothless mouths and empty eye sockets. They spread an atmosphere of stark terror with their graveyard stillness, a silence broken only from time to time by the sounds of the Nazis knocking down walls and tearing open floors in search of hidden treasures which the deported Jews had supposedly left behind.

It was in this still atmosphere, heavy with constant dread, that the Jews tried to muddle through life. The intention of the authorities was to keep their frightened victims

in a permanent state of suspense. Every day brought a new regulation, but so disguised that the Jews would not be able to suspect its intent. Thus, it often happened that a shipment of food would arrive just before a "partial evacuation," or on the eve of a mass execution.

This is the way things happened on that tragic Purim which I am to describe. Only the pale sun, hiding behind the Ghetto houses, shed a feeble light which infiltrated the frozen roofs as if seeking to melt the winter ice upon them. But its light could not warm the human shadows in the Ghetto prison; their bodies were too stiff, their souls too congealed for that.

To whom would it have occurred that this day was Purim, the merriest of Jewish holidays? Perhaps there were some who managed to keep track of time; those who kept their Judaism with self-sacrificing devotion even under the most inhuman conditions, or those exceptional individuals who stole a glance in the underground newspapers smuggled into the Ghetto by some Polish and Jewish workers. Among the "contrabandists" who managed to sneak this literature into the Ghetto at the risk of their lives was our friend, the young Zionist activist Feivel Steinberg of blessed memory, whose own optimism helped cheer many who were on the verge of despair.

When, on that bleak winter day, a truck bearing armed policemen pulled up in the front of the house at 12 Jerozolimska Street, the headquarters of the Ghetto Committee, no one suspected that this would be the start of an orgy of murder. On the contrary, there appeared a faint glimmer of hope, whose feeble glow briefly diminished the gloom of the Ghetto. There were whispered rumors that Jews from various Ghettos in Poland were about to be exchanged for German citizens living in Palestine, in Sharona, a colony founded by the Knights of Templar. This fortune had come to Jacob Kurz, Rosenthal, and several others;[1] they had been permitted to leave the Ghetto of Piotrkow and had arrived safely in Palestine.

The Nazis saw to it that this rumor would spread widely through the Ghetto. They stressed that "for the time being," the privilege of "repatriation" to Palestine in exchange for German citizens would be limited to ten Jews in all: each one would have to show proof that he had graduated from an institution of higher learning.

On the Purim afternoon in 1943, the Ghetto was more alive than it had been in many a day. There was unusual activity, particularly in the courtyard of the so-called "Jewish Committee," at Reder's house, which had been designated as the assembly point for those "privileged few" who, it was said, were eligible for "repatriation" to Palestine.

The first ones to arrive at the assembly point were Stanislaw Silberstein and his white-haired wife. As a wealthy, assimilated lawyer and the son of Wilhelm Silberstein, a former president of Piotrkow's Jewish community, he had been a highly esteemed personage before the war, as well as in the circles of the Polish intelligentsia. As it turned

1 Kurz, Rosenthal and Itzkowitz, natives of Piotrkow, had emigrated to Palestine as pioneers long before the war. They had returned to their home town to visit relatives, only to find themselves stranded in Poland when the war broke out. Thanks to efforts made by friends in Palestine, these men were eventually permitted to return there in exchange for Germans who had been living there. Subsequently, the late Jacob Kurz wrote *The Book of Testimony* (in Hebrew), a documentary history of the early phases of the destruction of Polish Jewry.

out, Stanislaw knew better than the others what the true intentions of the Germans might be, as his prompt reaction to the news that the Germans were about to "exchange" Jews for Germans was to pull out a vial of poison. When the others saw this, they kept him from taking the poison. He asked them to look out for his only daughter.

The next "privileged" individual to report was Dr. Maurycy Brams. With him were his wife, his dark-haired young daughter and his sister-in-law (a member of the Kagan family). This humble but most efficient and devoted communal leader, whose gaunt, ascetic features were brightened by shining, gentle eyes, had been helping his needy fellow Jews to the point of self-sacrifice, particularly since the outbreak of the war. Unlike Silberstein, Brams was in high spirits. He was certain that he was about to be sent to a country where he would not only be freed and independent himself, but be in a position to help the Jews who remained in the Ghetto.

The mood of Szymek Stein was entirely different. This brilliant young Jewish lawyer, bubbling over with life and wit, had been educated at the Jewish Gymnasium and was an active Zionist. As soon as he arrived at the assembly point, he had a premonition of what the Germans were really planning to do, and he tried to escape—too late, unfortunately.

Also among the "privileged few" was the psychiatrist Dr. Leon Glatter. Altogether, ten individuals had been "selected" for the "exchange."

As the "repatriates" were shepherded into the waiting truck, the mood in the Ghetto street grew tense. The "lucky" few were followed by curious, searching glances from those who had to remain behind.

The truck with the "repatriates" drove off in the direction of Sulejowska Street. Supposedly, they would be taken to Radom, the chief city of the district to which Piotrkow belonged during the Nazi occupation. There, they would join a large transport of "privileged" people from other Ghettoes and set out together on the journey to freedom.

The next morning dawned dark and somber in the Ghetto. The Jews were suddenly confronted with the incredible reports of blood-curdling scenes in the Jewish cemetery. People in the know told gruesome details about the fate that had befallen the "privileged" individuals. In order to make a proper production of it, the Nazi hangmen had imitated the account in the Book of Esther of the execution of the ten sons of Haman—except that, to the ten Jewish victims, they had added an eleventh one.[2]

All the Nazi bigwigs of the Piotrkow district had gathered at the mass grave, which was surrounded by gendarmes, policemen, and army officers with machine guns at the ready. They drank, made merry and even read an obscene parody of the Book of Esther before killing the "repatriates."

Polish policemen who had been present at the cemetery later recalled the horrible scenes they had witnessed with their own eyes: how Dr. Brams had collapsed when he saw his beautiful daughter dragged to the mass grave, and how Szymek Stein had appealed to the conscience of the Nazi police chief not to take the lives of innocent human

2 It should be noted that those who were supposed to complete the quorum, or the alleged eleventh one, were never identified. The rumors that the Jewish watchman of the cemetery and his wife were among them proved false. However, according to some reports, the mother of Szymek Stein had to come with him.

beings. But the hearts of the Germans had remained cold to his pleas. All the Nazi officer said was, "We are carrying out our order," and this with a cynical, satanic sneer.

In order to avert any suspicions the Jews might have had, the Germans drove them all over the city until nightfall. Only under cover of pitch darkness did they finally take them quickly to the cemetery, where even the optimists in the group lost the last of their illusions.

The tears for the Martyrs of the Purim massacre had not yet dried when there came a new wave of mass executions. Dozens of young, vibrant Jews were gunned down, including some who later were found to be carrying forged "Aryan" passports.

And so the sufferings of the Jews were prolonged like a thick, blood-soaked chain, day in and day out, leaving no breathing spell in which to contemplate what had happened that day, or even the hour before, in the words of our Sages, "The latest sorrows cause the earlier ones to be forgotten" (Ber. 13).

To this day we are wading through a vast sea of tears over the horrible deaths and unspeakable sufferings of millions of victims—our fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, wives and husbands and children, and other loved ones—whose final resting place we do not know and for whom no adequate dirges have been composed. To that deluge of tears let us add still more for the ten Martyrs of Piotrkow.

Bulletin No. 39, 1976



Piotrkow, November 3, 1988. Jakub Rener from Paris (right) and a representative of the Christian "Pax" society lay a wreath on the grave of Dr. Maurycy Brams and the "Purim Massacre" Martyrs. Rener attened the extensive ceremonies marking the tragic 46th anniversary of the liquidation of the ghetto of Piotrkow.

My Parents

Irving Cymberknopf—Toronto

It was my destiny to be born on January 2, 1925, in the town of Piotrkow Trybunalski, Poland.

It was also my destiny to lose both parents in September 1942. They died within one month of each other. I was 17 years old.

Today, close to 50 years later, I cannot understand how I survived the deep emotional pain of that period of my life.

It happened to all of us who were born as Jews in Poland during that period. However, I can only speak about the effect the experience had on me.

I was an only child. The love I received during the first years of my life had a lasting effect. I was very close to my parents. Since they were murdered, in 1942, I have not forgotten them for an instant. The pain of my memories is constant and unforgettable.

It took 50 years before I was able to even try to write down the manner in which my beloved parents died. I had to do something. And if not now, when? I didn't want the tragic story of how each of my parents died to be forgotten—not by my children, and not by their children. I want their stories to be recorded for their heroism and for the strength of their beliefs, but mostly because they deserve to be respected as human beings.

My mother was a very devoted person. She believed that everything that happens is G-d's will. My father was also observant. But he believed in individual strength and in the ability of each person to shape his own destiny. Each in their own way struggled for life and against death.

In 1941, my mother, in her wisdom, bribed someone to obtain a position for me in the local glass factory, called Hortensia, believing that one who worked would survive. At that time, the so-called Final Solution for Jews had already begun in other cities. We did not believe what we heard. We considered it in our interest to remain in the city. The ghetto was established with its barbed wire. The limited space was cramped with people. In our 2-room apartment lived 12 people. Before, there had been three.

As the liquidation of Jews in our city progressed, my parents and the immediate family started to dig a bunker, a simple hole in the ground, thinking that once the liquidation (Aussiedlung) was over, they would re-enter the population which was working in the glass factory and in the other places, such as the one which was called "Bugaj." After the deportation, the Ghetto was greatly reduced in size. The working population that remained was about 2,500 people out of a population of approximately 30,000 Jews. When it was time for our people to be deported to "other places" (in fact, the people in our city were taken to Treblinka), my parents and four other families, including their children (a total of 10 people), went into hiding in the bunker (2 Rushniks, 2 Cymberknops, 2 Rimers and 4 Lichtensteins).

Approximately 28,000 people were taken from the ghetto. There were many bunkers where people were hiding. When these people started to come out they found themselves outside the ghetto boundaries and they had to smuggle themselves back into the ghetto. The ghetto was surrounded by barbed wire and every few meters there stood Ukrainian and Lithuanian guards. One had to be extremely fortunate just to be able to make it to the ghetto.

In this respect my father was brave. Perhaps this was due to the fact that he had been in the Polish army in 1920, when Poland became independent. He was the one who smuggled himself and the other 9 people back to the ghetto. I remember how I trembled when he ventured out through the barbed wire again and again to a distance of about a thousand meters, avoiding the murderers, to bring back my mother, my aunts and 6 children. All were gathered in this small apartment that belonged to my uncle Janckel. At that point I was so happy to have my parents and the rest of my family together. My father pressed me close to his body, my mother kissed me without stopping. We were together for only one day, for the next day the Jewish police started to look for people who had left the bunkers, and for that matter anyone they could find. My parents went into hiding in this small apartment. The Jewish police came in, found my mother and father and took them both to the Synagogue, where there were a few hundred Jews from the bunkers and hideouts. The Germans brought Poles with horses and wagons to transport the Jews gathered in the synagogue to a nearby city called Tomaszow, where the liquidation had not yet been carried out.

Instead of going with the people, my mother hid herself in the attic of the synagogue. My father was outside, in one of the wagons. He was waiting to see my mother come out of the synagogue. As he did not see her coming out, he knew she had succeeded in remaining hidden. This is how he told it to me, and he also told me how he had decided to escape. He took the whip which was used by the Polish driver for the horses and walked away as though he were a Polish driver. He looked like a Pole. This helped. He went in one of the empty houses outside the ghetto, waited until night and then smuggled himself back to the ghetto.

When my father came into the room, I was in bed and totally speechless. The happiness I felt in my heart to see my father alive was limitless. It was dark and it was light, it was death and it was life, it was disaster and it was joy. We hugged and held each other close all night.

Two days later, the Jewish police started a new search. My father hid himself. I was working legally and did not feel the need to hide. When I came back from work, three policemen were waiting for me. One was my teacher, one a neighbor and the third a friend of my father's from childhood. They took me to the synagogue, where a few hundred people were already gathered. What was to become of us was unknown. I was sure that this was the end. For three days without food and water except for the snow I could gather through the window at night, I kept myself and others alive. I still can't believe how I survived those days.

On the third day, in the late afternoon, a Gestapo officer came in and started calling names. He called approximately 20 names, mine among them. A total of 562 people—men, women and children—were in the synagogue. I started to walk out of the



From the Jewish cemetery in Piotrkow to Har Menuchoth in Jerusalem.
Irving Cymberknopf exhumes again the remains of his mother Bina in 1977. (She was killed in 1942 during the deportations to Treblinka and buried in the Wolborski Forest. In 1945, Irving brought her remains to the Jewish cemetery and put her to rest according to Jewish custom.)

synagogue. In front of the synagogue, a Gestapo officer stood with white gloves and a revolver in his hand. Beside him lay a dead body. That moment is imprinted in my mind forever. It was the first time I had witnessed death so close to me.

We lined up to be counted. A group of people came towards us. They were also lined up. Among the people in this group stood my beloved father. I do not know until this day how I could remain standing just across from him and not run to him as I wanted to do. I cannot forgive myself to this day for not having done so. He was going to the synagogue and I was coming out.

My father, I found out later, had turned himself in to the Jewish policemen. He had traded his life for mine. He went in and I went out. He went to meet death and I survived.

After one week in the synagogue, 42 young, capable men, including my father, were taken out and marched to a nearby forest, known as the Rakow Forest. They were ordered to dig ditches, and as they finished digging the holes, they were ordered to take their clothes off. At that moment, my father attacked a guard and tried to escape. However, he never made it. During the fight, eight people were able to save themselves and come back to the ghetto. It was through one of these eight survivors that I learned how my father died. My father was a hero.

Now, for the story of my mother's death.

At the last minute, a Jewish policeman discovered her hiding in the attic of the synagogue. She was the last to be taken out of the synagogue. My father never saw this. She went with the transport to Tomaszow. On the way, she didn't see my father and was told he had run away. So she, too, ran away from that transport and managed to stay in a farmer's house for two weeks. Since our business dealt with farmers' supplies, she had not difficulty in finding a place. Our relations with them had been very good in the past.

At this point, I would like to mention that, after my father returned from his escape, we found out that she had been discovered by a Jewish policeman on the second day. This was told by another policeman who had been present at the terrible occasion of her death. I cry to this day. My heart cries. My soul cries.

After being at the farmer's for two weeks, she decided to return to the ghetto. On the way, she was caught and taken to the forest called Wolbosherwald, and beaten brutally. Finally she broke out into hysterical laughter. Then she was shot. So, a farmer who was an eyewitness told me.

In 1945, after the war, I returned to Piotrkow and visited this farmer. With his help, after a day's searching in the forest, we found her body. I knew the remains were those of my mother. I recognized her by her clothes and by the Star of David she had on her. My mother was a great woman, a great believer. She said: "If this is G-d's will, then let it be so." Very few people could say that, very few indeed. Yet she also struggled to survive. She had a good nature and her actions were filled with love and kindness.

I brought her remains to the Jewish cemetery and buried her according to Jewish custom. I erected a tombstone. In 1976 I went to Poland for the purpose of exhuming and bringing her remains to Israel in order to bury her there. I was unsuccessful.

In 1977 I went to Poland again and, with the help of the Dutch Ambassador, I was able to bring her to Israel in 1978. She is now at rest on Har Menucha in Jerusalem.

My mother left me with the strength not to abandon my faith, and my father left me

with the conviction that one has to strive to find strength within oneself and with it one can maintain control over one's life even in the most dire of circumstances.

There is yet another story to be told.

When I returned to Piotrkow, I found the sack that my mother had buried, in my presence, close to her mother's grave in our town's Jewish cemetery. It contained some jewelry, our silver candlesticks and a silver kiddush cup. These items were our most valuable goods.

After the war, upon my return to Piotrkow, I retrieved that sack. Although most of its contents have been lost or stolen since, I was able to hold on to a gold chain, which I presented, together with its history, with great pride and pleasure to my daughter Bina on her wedding day. It is priceless to me because it is one of the few tangible things left from my youth—from the time when I basked in my parents' love and devotion. To be able to pass it on to my beloved daughter brought some comfort to my scarred neshomeh.



Exhumation of the "Rakow Kedoshim" just after the war. From the Rakow Forest to "Kewer Achim" at the cemetery in Piotrkow.

The Topic of Resistance

Ben Giladi

First, we huddled together in the ghetto of Piotrkow. Slowly, edict by edict, the enemy claimed our dignity, our property, our strength and our lives. In the beginning we did not comprehend. Then we prayed. Then we accepted. But gradually we learned how to resist because we shared one common dream—the dream of survival.

With the establishment of the ghetto, the most pressing needs were food and housing because of the enlarged population, of which 45% were other Jewish souls from the areas incorporated into the Reich. In order to stay alive, many people started to smuggle food into the ghetto in exchange for money, clothes and other valuable items. Very few bakeries were functioning legally. To supply the pressing demand for daily bread, dozens of little, illegal bakeries came into existence. The butchers, despite strict prohibiting orders, were supplying meat.

Such activities were punishable by death; many paid the price of being arrested and deported, among them shochet Yehoshua Lerner and butcher Berek Pudlowski, who was caught when bringing a cow (live) up flights of stairs for slaughter.

Bribery was a big factor in disobeying the draconian rules of the oppressor. For example, in 1940, a large group of young men was deported to various forced labor camps in the Lublin area. A man named Gomberg was dispatched by the Council and was successful in releasing the boys in exchange for a large sum of money paid to the SS monster Dolf.

A hard task was satisfying the extortion for demands by the Germans. On December 2nd, 1939, the Council was ordered to deliver a thousand men for forced labor each day and to pay their wages. In addition, the constant demands for the delivery of pianos, furs, furniture, etc., plus three cash contributions of a total of three hundred and ninety thousand zlotys greatly afflicted the people. In January, 1940, the Stadtkommissar demanded all leather and textiles from Jewish stores. The Council then submitted several memoranda to the occupants boldly describing the desperate situation and requesting that the community be spared in the future.

The people also responded with defiance. They sold or gave away the furs and other forbidden articles to the Poles or simply destroyed them.

Widespread welfare and medical aid was initiated in the ghetto by the Council—a kitchen for the needy, milk distribution for babies and children, shelters, clinics and many other facilities. Despite hard living conditions, some cultural activities were organized.

People tried somehow to brighten up their gloomy ghetto existence. There were a few illegal libraries, providing a vigorous book exchange; amateur theater groups were active and performed, from time to time, before selected audiences. Musicians also performed, mostly chamber music.

The ghetto was established in the oldest and drabbest part of the city. All the parks and gardens were located beyond our reach. In 1940, a special squad of "new made" gardeners was organized. They planted flowers and greenery, beautifying the gloomy ghetto backyards and squares.

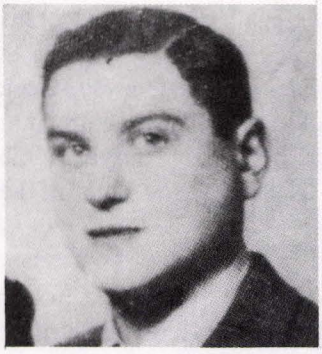
The religious people, in defiance of the rules, observed the Sabbath and Holidays as much as possible. A group of orthodox activists was responsible for saving holy books and scriptures. They succeeded in saving over three hundred religious objects from sacrilege.

A separate chapter of courage and dedication was written by the teachers of the ghetto. Soon after the smoke in 1939 had settled, they started their immense and very useful activities. Some joined forces and maintained a regular educational system, conducted in strict secrecy. Every false move invited serious consequences. The youngsters were told to enter the flats one by one and carry their notebooks under their clothes. Sometimes the class had to stop in the middle of a session and disperse rapidly when the Germans were riding the block. This underground education was one of the most powerful expressions of passive resistance.

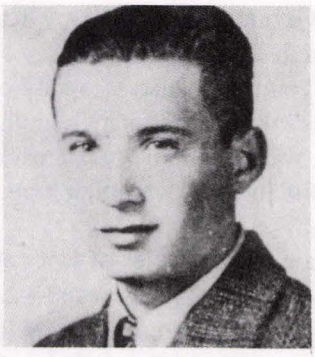
Various organizations continued their activities in the ghetto. Understandably, they were limited. The Bund movement held regular meetings and maintained close contact with their Central Committee in Warsaw, receiving underground literature and outlines for eventual active resistance. In July, 1941, a Polish underground courier, Maria Szczesna, was arrested by the Gestapo while carrying illegal publications and the names of the most of the Council as underground activists. The Germans learned who was involved in the resistance and rescue endeavors. Shortly thereafter, a few of the Council members were arrested, among them chairman Zalman Tenenberg, treasurer Zalman (Stach) Staszewski, Maierowicz, Fraint and others. One of them, Jacob Berliner, surrendered to the Germans of his own will in solidarity with the arrested colleagues. They were sent to Auschwitz, and, shortly afterward, a telegram arrived stating that they all had died.

Despite the loss of their most important leaders, a group of Bund's younger activists kept in contact with Warsaw. Even in 1943, they were receiving large sums of money and underground pamphlets. All this was distributed among their fellow members.

Many others were arrested and killed for possession of illegal material, among them



Josek Goldberg



Welwek Goldberg



Mendel Goldberg

Itka Lipnicka, Niusia Mordkowicz and Lusia Weishoff. Lolek Kon lost his life for possessing a stinging satire about Hitler and Stalin.

The Hashomer Hatzair movement also continued its work in the ghetto. In February, 1940, an emissary from the Warsaw Hanhagah Rashit came to Piotrkow. His name was Mordechai Anielewicz; he later became the commander of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. His mission was to spread the gospel of resistance. After his visit, the contact with Warsaw was kept and Jakov Aronowicz, the head of the Ken in Piotrkow, attended a conspiratorial meeting in Warsaw dealing with future resistance policy and behavior. A special code was used in communicating with Warsaw. After the war, letters in such code, written by Aronowicz and Zarnowiecki, were found in the underground ghetto archives.

Movements such as Betar, Hanoar and others also conducted meetings and discussions. The subjects were mainly resistance and freedom.

There were several attempts of active resistance in the ghetto of Piotrkow. Let us mention with esteem the heroic outbreak of brothers Goldberg and Liberman, members of the Betar. At their workplace, they made contact with a Polish foreman. For an exorbitant fee, the man was ready to deliver guns and ammunition and also firemen's uniforms. He claimed to be a member of an Armia Krajowa unit and promised safe passage to their hideout in a nearby forest.

On a set day, the foreman delivered the arms and uniforms. He did not tell the boys that the bullets were blanks. At midnight, the five youngsters crossed the ghetto wall. The man led them to the Sulejow forest and left them there. They were soon surrounded by Germans. A gun fight ensued. But how do you fight an enemy with blank bullets? Soon they were captured, some of the boys wounded. The Gestapo brought them in for torturous interrogation. Shmuel Katz, the hatmaker who made the firemen's caps, and Szymek Nyss, who helped them to cross the ghetto wall, were implicated. All those seven courageous men were brought to the Jewish cemetery and shot.

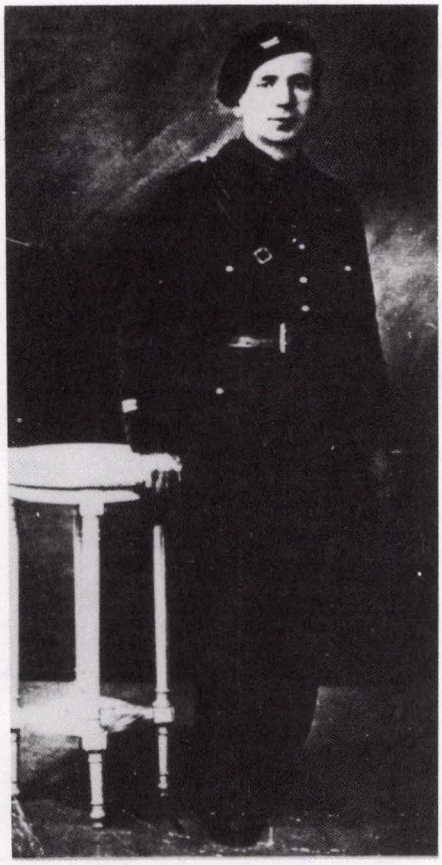
Some young men were successful in joining the Polish underground. One of them, Julek (Kazik) Szmulewicz (Small), escaped from Bugaj and was accepted by an Armia Ludowa unit, a left-oriented fighting force which had a policy of helping Jews. With them, he fought the enemy and, after the war he became an officer in the Polish Army. Heniek Goldhersh (pseudonym Wyrwa) and Heniek Ryterband fled from Bugaj and joined a different AL group. Just days before the Russian front reached Piotrkow in 1945, they were in combat with the Germans in the Milejow forest. Heniek Goldhersh lost his life; Heniek Ryterband survived.

At the same time, another young man also escaped from Bugaj. His name was Motek Szteinberg. He had difficulties in making contact with the underground and returned to the camp. Miraculously, he wasn't killed by Dietrich or Fisher and survived the Holocaust. He lost his young life in 1948 defending kibbutz Degania on the banks of the Kinereth.

It's impossible to mention all such stories of valor and heroism in one short essay. History teaches that there are two ways to resist—actively and passively. Active resistance is possible when the will rises in enough people to make the supreme sacrifice for honor and freedom. However, support from the outside is the ultimate condition



Julian (Kazik) Szmulewicz.
(Pseudonym "Jelen")



Bernard (Bendit) Flatto.
Fought in the French Resistance.



Motek Sztajnberg. Escaped from the Bugaj to join the partisans. Returned, however, unable to make contact. Died heroically during the Israeli War of Independence.



Hersz (Heniek) Goldhersz.

For ages, the Jews in Poland were dispersed among hostile, sometimes reactionary and prejudiced masses. When the Germans came, we were contained in ghettos, where annihilation could proceed swiftly at a moment's notice without even the remote possibility of resistance. We were also cruelly deceived and alone. Still today, we cannot rid ourselves of the awful feeling of isolation that we experienced so deeply at that time. To set a foot out of the ghetto meant to be hunted day and night. And from the outside world, in answer to our cries, came only shattering silence.

The road to survival we instinctively took was the only one possible fit for sanity. Those who blame us today for our lack of active resistance then are only trying to cover up their own guilty consciences, to cover up the dark moments in the history of mankind, when the world stood silent.



Yakov and Eliezer Liberman.



At the grave of Hersz (Heniek) Goldhersz. (Pseudonym "Wyrwa.")

The Radoshitzer Rebbe, Reb Itzchakl Finkler

Yechiel Granatstein—Jerusalem

It was during the early days of the Polish autumn. The days were especially beautiful, sunny and bright. Yet, the tension that had been evident all summer long now grew from day to day, hour to hour. The fear of war was overwhelming, yet people refused to believe in that horrible possibility; they wanted to hope that, at the lasts moment, it could still be avoided. Then, one fine dawn, they awakened and all their fine illusions melted away. German bombardiers were showering incendiary and explosive bombs on cities and towns; Hitler's armies crossed the border into Poland and, almost unhindered, penetrated deeper and deeper into the country.

That day, a family celebration in the home of Rebbe Itzchakl was disturbed. The "shevat yemey hamishta" that followed the marriage of his eldest daughter Dina to the son of the Ziditchuver Rav, Harav Yehoshua Eichenstein, had not yet been completed. Due to the outbreak of war, the guests left in a great hurry and the joy in the house was quickly extinguished.

The Rabbi's house was not the only one; the joy went out of all the Jewish homes that day. Fear overwhelmed everyone. Jews began to look for an escape, not knowing where to turn. Those of Piotrkow took the road to Sulejow, not wanting to be present when the German army marched on the city. But German airplanes caught up with them and, as everywhere else, rained death on the roads.

Rabbi Itzchakl did not believe in running without a goal. For those who came to ask him what to do, where to run, he had one answer: Stay where you are, because no matter where you turn, the German soldiers will get there first.

In the early days, many people would gather in the cellar of Rebbe Itzchakl's house. Among others, there were the Piotrkower Rav, Harav Moshe Chaim Lau and his family, as well as Rebbe Itzchakl's brother-in-law, Reb Yankele Horvitz.

One day a Chassid of his from Belchatow arrived at the Rebbe's house with a truck and suggested that he will transfer his entire family to the part of Poland which was occupied by the Soviets. But Rebbe Itzchakl wouldn't even consider the idea, explaining that he would not desert his Jews during such a stormy time. He advised his Chassid to take this opportunity for himself.

For the first 5 months, Rebbe Itzchakl hid in Tsimbler's house. There they "davened" together. During this time, the Germans searched, but could not find him.

One day the "Judenrat" received an order from the Germans to register young people for work. They were to be sent to Lublin. Many asked Rebbe Itzchakl for guidance. He advised them to avoid the registration as much as possible, i.e., simply not to register. The "Judenrat" heard about the advice the Rebbe was dispensing and warned him not to get involved in this matter because if those on the list didn't show up for the labor transport, others, not on the list, would be picked up off the streets. Rebbe Itzchakl

responded categorically that no one had the right to compile lists of people for work, and certainly not to determine whom to include and whom to omit. He stressed especially that Jews themselves must not do such a thing.

Some time later, the "Judenrat" appealed to Rebbe Itzchakl to become a member of its leadership. He refused. They also recommended that his son Hilel, although still quite young, should enter the medical service of the "Judenrat", even if it meant that, as a result he would have to do hard labor.

News began to arrive about deportation actions taking place in Warsaw and Lublin. Jews understood that Piotrkow, too, would not be able to escape such actions. In those days, Rebbe Itzchakl urged people to prepare bunkers for themselves, to place their children in the care of Gentiles they knew outside the ghetto and, generally, to do everything in their power not to be vulnerable to deportation. In his house, too, a bunker was built, and when that mournful day arrived and the action began in the city, Rebbe Itzchakl, his family and others entered it and spent the next month there.

When the Germans started searching for those who were hiding, the Rebbe's bunker was discovered. Everyone was led to the synagogue, where the Rebbe advised his children not to let themselves be led voluntarily into the freight cars—to fight back, even if it meant their lives. It did not, however, come to that. The president of the "Judenrat", Warszawski, removed the Rebbe's entire family from the synagogue and transferred them to the small ghetto. But this would not last long. Their house again became a center for the remaining broken and suffering Jews. There, those who were left of families which had been destroyed gathered and spent time with the Rebbe, refreshed by the words of Torah, until one day, the house was again destroyed. The Rebbe and his children were captured and assigned to labor details, loaded onto trucks and sent off to a camp in Skarzysko.

After this deportation, there remained in Piotrkow only Rebbe Itzchakl's younger brother, Reb Chaiml, and his young daughter, Kayle. Reb Chaiml, who was ill at the time, died shortly afterward but had the honor of being given a Jewish burial near the tomb of his father, rebbe Meyerl. His wife, Golde, may she live long, was the daughter of the Modzhitzer Rebbe, Rebbe Shaul Yedidya; together with Rebbe Itzchakl, his old mother, the daughter of the Zvoliner Rebbe, Rebbe Shmuel Eli and his daughters, Rabbi Shaul was also sent to Skarzysko. They survived and now live in America. Their only daughter, Kayle, also survived the camps and now lives in America and Israel.

Rebbe Itzchakl's only son, Hilel, met with another fate. On the day when those close to him were deported and taken to a camp, he was at work in the Hortensia Glass Works. He remained in the apartment for a short time, but continued to "daven" with a "minyan" and even celebrated "shalosh seudot" every Saturday night (after the Sabbath). Then, one day, Hilel was also deported. For a time he was with other Piotrkower in a camp in Czestochowa; from there he was transferred to Buchenwald.

People who were with him and are now living in Israel tell of his wonderful behavior in the camp. Reb Hilel Blankovski (Jerusalem) was in Buchenwald and relates that Hilel smuggled a pair of "Tfilin" into the camp and "davened" in them each day, thereby jeopardizing his own life. He would then pass them through the barbed wire to the other barracks for others to use.

Thus he remained alone, separated from his loved ones; then the news reached him that his father was no longer alive. This broke him completely. For a while he said "Kadish" while going to and from work, but the pain of losing his father, with whom he was so close, was very severe. Daily, his health became more fragile and on March 10,1945, only two months before the end of World War II, he breathed his final breath and died in Raimsdorf, Germany at the age of 25.

Rebbe Itzchakl in the Skarzysko Camp

For about half of year Rebbe Itzchakl lived in the Skarzysko Camp, where he worked at assembling grenades. During that time he suffered great emotional and physical pain. Simultaneously, he displayed outstanding spiritual courage, sacrificing for the Jews and observing "mitzvot" under very difficult circumstances in the camp. The hunger he suffered, because he would not eat the food prepared by the camp kitchen staff, and the unaccustomed physical exertion, could not diminish his spiritual wholeness. His aristocratic appearance of earlier, more normal times, was also still with him. Although he was dressed in his usual attire, and the beautiful beard of earlier times no longer adorned his face, the people, nevertheless, immediately discovered his personal qualities and recognized in him an extraordinary human being from the first day they were in awe of him, helped him at his work and did everything to make things easier for him.

It did not take long for the barrack where Rebbe Itzchakl lived to become an underground "Bet Hamidrash," a spiritual nest which attracted and paternally warmed and soothed broken hearts.

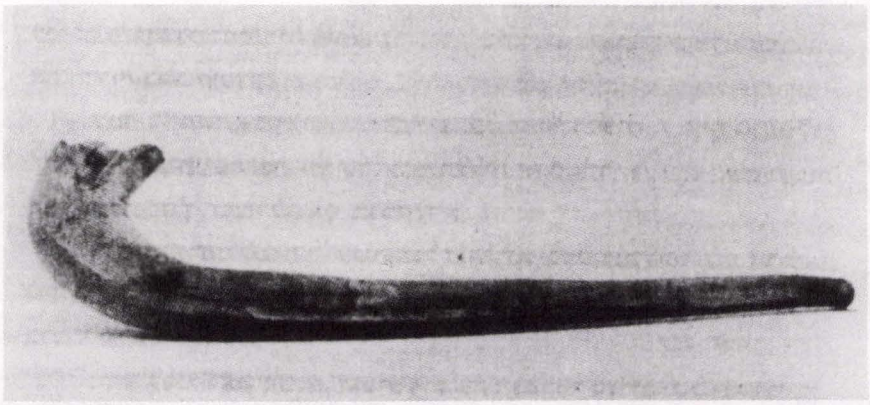
And So Ended the Difficult Struggle

"The Rabbi's Barrack"—this was how all the Jews in the camp referred to the place where the Rebbe lived. In the evenings, during the late-night hours, on the Sabbath, or on holidays, tired and exhausted Jews quickly entered and crowded together in the corner where his bed was and breathed a little easier, refreshed by a Chassidic story or Torah words, or just a hearty word of consolation that made one forget the pain and suffering of the day which had just ended.

The dense darkness of the barrack was reminiscent of the "Shalosh Seudot" in a "Bet Hamidrash" or in a Chassidic *shtibel,* where orthodox Jews would shed their earthliness and feel uplifted.

It was so easy to forget at times that one was in a German Camp while visiting the Rebbe's barrack. It seemed that he transformed the entire atmosphere of his "Bet Hamidrash"; the feelings of exaltation, although perhaps lacking the heartfelt joy of those earlier days, had that same pure cleanliness in its spiritual level, if not an even higher one because, finally, it came "from the depths," yes, the very depths.

Sounds of moans and sobs would permeate the barrack. With semi-extinguished glances, those lying on the boards would look towards the corner where Rebbe Itzchakl socialized with his followers. It was dark all around, but in the corner, like an eternal light, a fire glowed; not even a spark would allow itself to be extinguished.



"Hod W'gwurah" — This is the shofar that Moshe Weintretter made for the Rebbe in the Skarzysko camp, which Rebbe Itzchakl then blew on "Rosh Hashana at the risk of his life. (Courtesy Yad Vashem, Jerusalem.)

As I have stated, Rebbe Itzchakl's own sacrifice to fulfill a "mitzvah"was unnatural. Every morning, before leaving the barrack, he would wrap himself in a "talit," don the "tfilin," cover the "shel rosh" with his hat, which he would pull down over his forehead as he walked with the people to work while reciting the prayers from memory. The Jews who walked in the same row with him would pray along with him. The same scenario would replay itself on the return trip from work, when they would recite the "Minchah" and "Maariv" prayers together.

As the final days before Rosh Hashana approached in the camp, Rebbe Itzchakl was overcome with the idea of providing the Jews with a "shofar," and actually fulfilling the "mitzvah" of blowing the "shofar." No sooner was the idea born than it began to give him no rest. He told everyone who could be trusted that the idea should not be that difficult to realize. One had to really want it and God would provide.

A Pole who worked in the camp received a sum of money from the Jews to buy a horn, but it was from cattle, and the Rebbe had to reject it, as it was against the law. Now the people asked him to forget about it, especially since there would not be enough time left to prepare the "shofar" properly. But Rebbe Itzchakl was adamant and couldn't be convinced. Again the same Pole was approached; they explained the law to him—which horn could be made into a shofar and which could not. The very next day he returned with a whole head of a ram.

From that moment on the Rebbe worked feverishly. He shared the secret with a Piotrkower Jew named Moshe Weintretter, who happened to work at the locksmith's, then handed him the ram's head with the horns attached and asked him to do whatever he could—as there must be a "shofar" to blow "Tkiyot."

To tell the truth, Moshe Weintretter had no idea where or how to begin, not the slightest notion. Nevertheless, he busied himself with the task day and night: soaking, cooking, doing everything his intelligence told him to do and, as Rosh Hashana arrived, One Jew told another with great joy that there was a "shofar" in the camp.

Yes, they really did blow "tkiyot, shvarim, truot" in the German labor camp in Skarzysko, in Rebbe Itzchakl's barrack. Endless tears accompanied the soft lamenting

voices. The Jews' prayer of suffering rose up to heaven, spread out before the "Kisey Hakavod" and begged, "Call off our evil decree."

(By the way, many of the Jews who "davened" that Rosh Hashana with Rebbe Itzchakl in the barrack survived. They also took the shofar with them to Poland, where they returned following the war. At that time, Jacob Patt, the famous Bundist leader of prewar Warsaw, visited Poland and was given the shofar by Heshel Reisman, one of the survivors of the Skarzysko camp, now in Israel. The shofar is now located somewhere in a museum in the United States.)

This was how the holidays were celebrated in the Rebbe's barrack: Before Sukkoth, Rebbe Itzchakl, with the help of his two daughters, would build a miniature "sukkah," which leaned against a wall of the barrack, fulfilling the obligation to "sit in a sukkah." On Simchat Torah they would march, Bible in hand, celebrating the Torah and softly singing songs and melodies of bygone years. In honor of Passover, Rebbe Itzchakl would bake several "matzot" on a small stove, which would last all eight days. Jews from the camp gathered in the barrack where he had baked the "matzot" and together they would recite "Halel" as they had done long ago in their homes.

The Difficult Struggle Ends

One day Rebbe Itzchakl's daughters were taken from him and transported to work in a munitions factory. The Rebbe worried about their destiny and suffered greatly because of the separation. The last thread that connected him to his home was suddenly severed. Rebbe Itzchakl was then transferred from Skarzysko to Germany. Finding himself in Schlieben, the Rebbe again "davened" for a group on Rosh Hashana. At the exact moment that he was delivering a sermon, planes dropped bombs on the camp and he was wounded.

There haven't been any exact details of what happened afterward. There are survivors who tell that the Rebbe expired on the road from Schlieben to Buchenwald. Others say that he died in Buchenwald.

Rebbe Itzchakl's difficult struggle had finally ended. His exhausted body couldn't take it any more. His two devoted daughters were far away and couldn't help him, couldn't prepare the food to keep him alive.

Cruel reality overcame the physically depleted man and conquered him. But in this struggle of a saintly Jew who had tried with all his might to maintain the purity of his soul, in this struggle, Rebbe Itzchakl, the Radoshitzer Rebbe, was elevated even higher and was spiritually and morally the victor, paying with his life, as witnesses relate, during one of the last days of the month of Kislev (November 13, 1944).

A survivor of the camps, A. Rotenberg, who now lives in Israel, described (in a letter to the newspaper "Hatzofeh") the personality of Rebbe Itzchakl Radoshitzer with these words:

"For those who knew him during the hellish Nazi years, his image will forever shine. He died in Flossenberg, where he was brought, ill, from Schlieben. He was taken there in a weakened condition because he refused to eat the food which was cooked in the kitchen. Some time before, the "Lagerfuerer" in Skarzysko tried to force him to eat pig's

meat, but accomplished nothing. He pushed the meat into the Rebbe's mouth, but the Rebbe didn't swallow it. This is how he was. He lived with his faith and faithfully, he died."

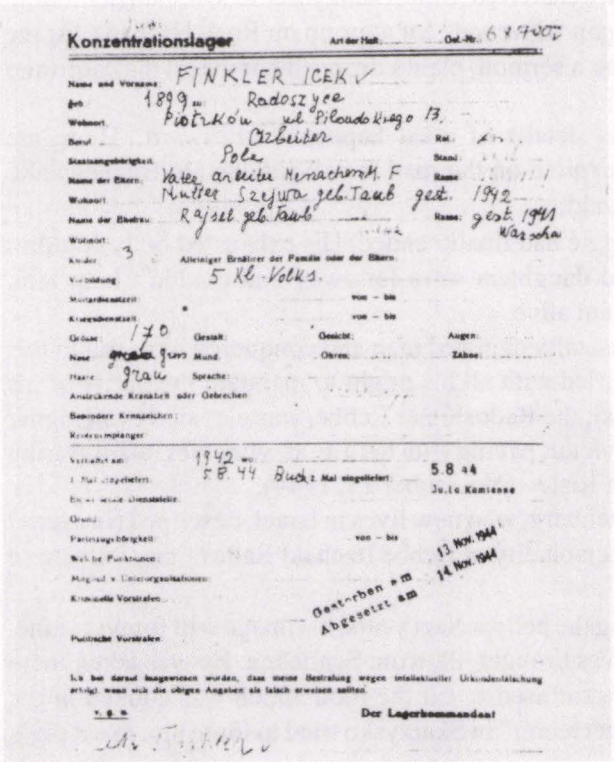
He was a "tsadik" during his lifetime and so he remained to the end.

Yes, such a person was the Martyr, Rebbe Itzchakl Finkler, the Radoshitzer Rebbe in Piotrkow.

Izkor Book (translated from Yiddish by Pearl Krupit)

Editor's Note: When I brought the above essay to Mrs. Krupit for translation, Benjamin Meed, the President of the American Gathering, and Wagro had just walked in. (Mrs. Krupit is the secretary to Mr. Meed.) Seeing the article, Ben excitedly told me the following story: When Jacob Patt, visiting Warsaw just after the liberation, received the shofar, Ben and his wife Vladka were also present. After living for a few years in New York, Ben and Vladka, on their first trip to Eretz Israel, took the shofar from Mr. Patt in order to bestow the holy object on Yad Vashem. The shofar was first put in a valise, but at the last minute, Ben Meed became restless. Just before boarding, he raced instinctively to the luggage area, retrieved the shofar and placed the holy object in his bosom pocket. Lo and behold! The valise was lost in transit. Today, the "third shofar" of the Radoshitzer Rebbe, Itzchakl Finkler, zts"l, is one of the most sacred exhibits at Yad Vashem in the holy city of Jerusalem.

(Mr. Yechiel Granatstein, the author, is a prolific and gifted writer. He is the son-in-law of Rebbe Itzchakl and the author of numerous books, including a biography of his father-in-law. He and his wife, the Rebbe's daughter, live in Jerusalem.)



Konzentrationslager

Name und Vornamen: FINKLER ICEK

geb. 1899 in Radoszyce

Wohnort: Piotrków ul. Piłsudskiego 13.

Beruf: Arbeiter

Staatsangehörigkeit: Pole

Name der Eltern: Vater arbeiter Menachem F.

Wohnort: Mutter Szejwa geb. Taub gest. 1942

Name der Ehefrau: Rajzel geb. Taub gest. 1941 Warschau

Wohnort:

Kinder: 3

Alleiniger Ernährer der Familie oder der Eltern:

Vorbildung: 5 Kl. Volks.

Militärdienstzeit: von – bis

Kriegsdienstzeit: von – bis

Größe: 170 Gesicht: Augen:

Nase: gerade Mund: Ohren: Zähne:

Haare: grau Sprache:

Auffallende Krankheit oder Gebrechen:

Besondere Kennzeichen:

Kostenempfänger:

Verhaftet am: 1942 in

1. Mal eingeliefert: 5.8.44 Buch 2. Mal eingeliefert: 5.8.44 Ju.Lo Kamienna

Bei der letzten Dienststelle:

Grund:

Parteizugehörigkeit: von – bis

Welche Funktionen:

Mitglied v. Unterorganisationen:

Kriminelle Vorstrafen: Gestorben am 13 Nov. 1944 Abgesetzt am 14 Nov. 1944

Politische Vorstrafen:

Ich bin darauf hingewiesen worden, daß meine Bestrafung wegen intellektueller Urkundenfälschung erfolgt, wenn wir die obigen Angaben als falsch erweisen sollten.

Der Lagerkommandant

The record from Camp Buchenwald with a stamped notice: "Died on 13th November 1944."

The Long Day

Ben Giladi

Dedicated to the fellows of Kara and Hortensia

The most ghastly moment of the twenty-four hours of camp life was awakening, when, at a still nocturnal hour, the shrill waking signal tore you pitilessly from your exhausted sleep and the longing of your dreams The day started when it was still dark outside. Katzman, the militiaman, was screaming at the top of his lungs: "Na zmiane—szykowac sie!" After thirty minutes, the workers of the day shift were ready at the camp gate. Herfort, the vicious Volksdeutch, checked the ranks, making his usual contemptuous remarks. He opened the gate and the Werkschutz took us toward the gray buildings of the Kara glass factory. Once within the factory complex, the workers scattered, each group heading toward its assignments. There was a lot to be done. Emil Haebler was building his new, huge factory at full steam, using blood, sweat and tears.

The "Shaidim tanz" (devil's dance) started promptly as usual. Blum, Sosnowski, Rozenwald and others, wearing only their underwear but with handkerchiefs serving as masks over their faces, were running back and forth carrying heavy loads of sand, soda lime and all kinds of strong chemicals, pouring this into a large mixing drum where the glass material was prepared. The hankies didn't help much and the devilish stuff penetrated their eyes, lungs and skin. They looked ghostly and grotesque. It was hard to believe that a body could withstand such severe punishment and yet still function. This devil's dance lasted eight hours every day.

The huge ditch was almost ready, four or five stories deep. This was the foundation for the new glass furnace. With the maze of wooden boards placed everywhere, it looked like a circus, a macabre arena. It was called the "cyrk" throughout the Kara-Hortensia complex.

The gladiators were the teenage boys who carried the heavy tragas. The beasts were the Polish laborers loading the tragas with dirt. They were paid by metrage and filled the tragas like crazy, since this meant a lot of vodka and food for them. It also gave them the ultimate thrill of torturing the boys who had to carry the loads constantly, unmercifully. The Volksdeutch foremen with rubber clubs kept a close watch and saw to it that the boys could not rest.

Not far away, they were building a new chimney; it was already many stories high and still growing.

Two expert masons were sitting on a ledge inside the chimney, piling the bricks higher and higher. A dumbwaiter was moving up and down inside the shaft, held by a rope made of steel. The rope was threaded through a little wheel at the top and unwound from an engine-powered drum located on the ground.



The carpenters on Huta Kara, in 1943.

Icie Goodfriend was at the controls. His job demanded precision and he was tired. No wonder—almost every day he worked forced overtime, like all the others, without any letup.

The workers loaded the conveyor with bricks. Icie pushed the lever and the drum started to rotate, pulling the heavy load up. The thing would now stop at the level where the masons were sitting, just at the top of the chimney.

But this time the lever jammed and Icie, despite his frantic efforts, could not stop the machine. The heavy load toppled over, tearing a huge chunk of the chimney way down. Debris was falling everywhere. By a miracle, the two masons grabbed safety ropes and were somehow saved from death. All hell broke out. Vogel, Mrozinski and other oppressors came running. They accused Icie of sabotage and wanted to call the Gestapo. Somehow, they checked the machinery and found a malfunction. Goodfriend was severely punished but his life was saved.

The old functioning furnace called "the tub" was a prelude to hell. On one side, Baruch Groman and Yoyne Renkiewicz poured the material into the oven every half hour, rain or shine, day or night. The procedure took twenty-five minutes of murderous labor. A five-minute break was much too short. These material pourers were real titans.

On the other side of the "wanna," the thick plates of window glass were coming out, hot and highly breakable. The observers and lifters had a hell of a time handling the job without a hitch or accident. Beasts like the brothers Eswein and Paul Push supervised these gates of hell.

There were many other places where hard labor persisted with cruel regularity. The construction helpers, the so-called "Uszerowicz group," poured tons of concrete into the new structures. The brick and lime carriers broke their backs day by day.

Then there were the workers unloading coal and sand from the freight trains. The fellows stuffed coal into the "Gasakis" every fifteen minutes. There was the stone mill, the "Krajownia," the shipping commando and other places where everyone struggled in sweat and pain. Only the craftsmen and the professionals had it a little easier.

Director Christmann's idea of productivity was to put only one Jewish worker where two were needed. The hardship and agony didn't matter. The only important fact was that the job was done cheaply. Efficiency was enforced by the whip.

At 6 p.m. the working day was supposedly over. The fellows started to gather at the factory gate ready to "go home." This, however, was wishful thinking. Mrozinski the "zdechlak" appeared and started to call group after group, now giving them different assignments, mostly to unload freight or to pail up bricks for the next day.

For unexplained reasons, he somehow disliked me and therefore sent me down to the saw mill (the tartak). This extended my working schedule until 12:30 a.m. Since I started at seven o'clock in the morning, this spelled out 17½ hours of hard labor without interruption.

At the saw mill,, I moved the logs to be sawed into planks. Adas Rosenblum was at the circular saw. He was so overtired that he actually fell asleep for one split second. This proved disastrous and he lost three fingers. They rushed him to the camp ambulatorium.

I was forced to replace him at the menacingly buzzing and still bloody saw. Miraculously, nothing happened to me.

At 12:30 a.m., the long day ended. The nightmare of this particular day now belonged to the past; there was only one problem: we were faced with another such day tomorrow.

And that's the way it was at the Kara glass factory in Piotrkow, circa 1943/44. The theme was survival, the capacity of men and women to live under the immense pressure, to sustain terrible damage to mind and body and yet be there—sane, alive and still human.



Workers at Huta Hortensia. From the so-called "Wojdela" group in 1943.

Piotrkow Trybunalski in Holocaust Literature

"Kiddush Hashem"—Wartime Chronicles

Among the Holocaust-related literature, "Kiddush Hashem" deserves a special place in the historiography of those tragic, bygone times, never to be forgotten. Written by Rabbi Shimon Huberband as part of the Ringelblum Archives known as "Oneg Shabbat," the book is replete with information on contemporary events—life, martyrdom and death in the Polish ghettos, woven into a fabric of autobiographical stories. The text covers every aspect of Jewish religious and cultural life, of Nazi atrocities and Jewish spiritual resistance.

The chronicles, hidden in milk cans in a cellar in Warsaw, were discovered in 1946 and eventually translated from the original Yiddish into Hebrew in 1969. The recent translation into English was done by David E. Fishman of Brandeis University.

"Kiddush Hashem" is a living testimony from beyond the grave, a penetrating voice from the great beyond about a tortured world which crumbled under the heavy boots of German bestiality.

Shimon Huberband was born in 1909 in Checiny, near Kielce. Trained as a rabbi, he became a historian, a writer and a poet. He established himself at first in Piotrkow Tryb., where many of his works were written. There he founded the Society for Jewish Science and lectured each Saturday on topics of Jewish history. His monograph, "Jewish Physicians in Piotrkow from the Seventeenth Century until the Present," was being published in installments.

At the outbreak of the war, Rabbi Huberband and his family decided to escape the frequent bombardments by following the stream of people who had fled to smaller, insignificant settlements. But the German planes knew no bounds, no restrictions. A hail of bombs hit the tiny village of Sulejow and killed Huberband's wife, child and father-in-law. Broken in body and spirit, he returned to Piotrkow, but could not recover emotionally. Everything there reminded him of his lost happiness.



Rabbi Shimon Huberband (1909–1942).

In 1940, Huberband traveled to Warsaw, hopeful to find solace in a new environment. Surrounded by close, devoted friends, he immersed himself in work. He became active in the Jewish Community, working for the Jewish Social Self-Help Organization and, at the same time, attempted to carry on his research, both as a historian and as a chronicler of the Jewish tragedy and Jewish courage.

He won a prize for one of his studies, which he

entered in a contest sponsored by Yikor, the Society for Jewish Culture. The conditions under which Rabbi Huberband worked are hard to imagine. Hunger, poverty, cold and lack of rest and peace of mind were his constant companions. And then sickness—a bout of typhoid fever—overcame his frail body. He recovered and, though weak and emaciated, continued to write for future generations.

The sufferings of Rabbi Huberband were terminated by the Germans. On August 19, 1942, Huberband—together with masses of Jewish Martyrs—was sent to Treblinka, where he perished with many others for *Kiddush Hashem.*

Rabbi Shimon Huberband departed from this world as a pauper, and yet he left to posterity an enormous legacy: his writings.

Among the numerous pages that truthfully depict the events in various towns and villages, portraying Jewish people and their struggle for survival, we also find poignant episodes about life in war-torn Piotrkow Trybunalski. With pangs of nostalgia and tears in our eyes for the world dissipated in ashes, we present excerpts from the book, *Kiddush Hashem.*

The Beginnings

On September 1, I entered the synagogue and found a group of "politicians" discussing the morning's radio news. Suddenly, at about 9:20 A.M., we heard the siren sound announcing an aerial alarm. We soon heard the hoofbeats of the horse-drawn peasant-wagons leaving town, and the order of the LOPP commanders to hide inside the gateways.

It didn't take long until people from the surrounding courtyard came in with the news that it was war. A chill passed through our bodies. We all turned as pale as corpses. Many began to cry aloud. The streets were empty,as if they had died out.

Hour after hour passed, and people gradually became accustomed to the wartime atmosphere. Everyone assembled his own food rations and made his last possible purchases. Women began, shortly before Sabbath, to bake fish, meat and other dishes.

But soon word spread throughout the city that the neighboring town of Radomsko had been bombarded a few hours ago and that there had been many casualties. We began to sense the entire horror and tragedy of war.

On the Sabbath, September 2, we prayed in the early morning. In the middle of the prayers we saw several trucks full of Jews pass us by. The trucks stopped for a short while. The Jews inside told us that they were from Wielun and that yesterday, Friday morning, a squadron of German planes had appeared over Wielun and totally destroyed the city. Several hundred Jews were dead. We all felt as if we were in a trap with no way out.

It was close to twelve o'clock noon. As I ascended the staircase to my apartment, I heard the tik-tik-tik of artillery fire. Loud cries immediately went out from all the house residents. Mothers quickly grabbed their children and ran from their apartments to the cellars, which had been designated as the shelters. When we entered the corridor of the cellar, we heard the first boom of a bomb explosion. The entire building trembled. Soon there was another explosion, followed by many more.


Archiwum Ringelbluma

Arbeitsamt: ARBEITSAMT WARSCHAU

Nebenstelle: NEBENSTELLE FÜR DEN JÜD. WOHNBEZIRK

Meldekarte für Juden

Nr. 21321

Der Jude Huberband Szymon

Die Jüdin

geboren am: 19.IV.1909

in Chęciny Kr. Kielce verh.

Wohnort: Warschau

Zamenhofa Str. Nr: 19/19

Berufsgruppe u. Art: 25 a 1

ist auf Grund der Zweiten Durchführungsvorschrift zur Verordnung vom 26. Oktober 1939 über die Einführung des Arbeitszwanges für die jüdische Bevölkerung des Generalgouvernements vom 12. Dezember 1939 erfasst und steht dem Arbeitsamt zum Arbeitseinsatz zur Verfügung. Ein Auffangen auf der Strasse ist nicht statthaft.

(Stempel des Arbeitsamts)

(Unterschrift)

Kontrollmeldung am

jeder Woche, soweit kein Arbeitsverhältnis besteht.

Staatsdruckerei Warschau — Nr. 4779-41

1940 wrzesień – 1942 sierpień 30, Warszawa – getto. – Meldekarte rabina Szymona Huberbanda, członka „Oneg Szabat" z adnotacjami o zatrudnieniu

ID card of Rabbi Shimon Huberband in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Women went through spasms, children cried and several men fainted.

Meanwhile, through the janitor's son, we received news about the situation in the city. The first bombs had hit a group of workers in St. Bernardiner Gardens, killing two of them. A bomb splinter had struck the Zaks family residence on Narutowicza Street and killed the younger Zaks, who was standing on the balcony at the time. On that day, close to thirty people perished in Piotrkow, six of them Jews. Among them was the young Epsztajn, the son of engineer Epsztajn, who was one of the directors of ORT in Piotrkow.

On Monday, the fourth of September, at about eleven, the recognizable humming of heavy airplanes sent us all rushing back into the cellars. The planes circled the city for a long time, flying very low. The Polish artillery shot at them with machine guns, but the planes went on flying undisturbed, as if the shooting had nothing to do with them.

At close to four o'clock in the afternoon, Judge Bornsztajn and his wife burst into our cellar and told us that a bomb had struck their house on Narutowicza Street. Bornsztajn's mother had been killed and lay beneath the ruins. He and his wife had miraculously survived. They reported that the entire city was in flames; that Slowacki Street was in rubble. The bombing intensified at about five. The fear of death and destruction inside the cellar was terrible. Suddenly, we heard a strange crackling sound and were left sitting in darkness. A bomb had hit the electricity station, also knocking out the running water. And here we were, in the midst of a hail of bombs and burning fire.

Many people left Piotrkow in search of a peaceful, safe place. So did Rabbi Huberband, with his wife, a small son and his in-laws. But there was no peaceful, safe place anymore and in search of it during the bombardment he lost his wife, his child and his father-in-law.

On Sunday the tenth, we all went to the cemetery to bury the Martyrs.

Before noon, as we returned from the cemetery after the burial, we met Moishe Gomoliski, Rozenwald, D. Kaminski and others.

My mother-in-law and I took a coach to Piotrkow. Exactly eight days ago we had left Piotrkow as a whole family. Now we were returning with deeply wounded hearts. We arrived in Piotrkow at 4:30 in the afternoon. One was only permitted to be outdoors until 5:00. When we got to the front of our gate, the courtyard residents gathered outside, pitied us from afar and shook their heads in sympathy. We unlocked the door to our apartment and walked in. On the table there still stood plates with leftovers of fish eaten by my father-in-law, wife and child. I saw my child's unfinished slice of challah. We cried until we choked on our tears. Our home, once full of so much life and happiness, was now so sad, so very sad.

Our neighbors tried to calm us, begged us to control ourselves and explained to us how dangerous it would be if our cries were heard on the street. They told us of the attitude of the German authorities toward Jews, of the terrible way in which Jews were being seized for work, brutally beaten and afflicted with horrible torture. We learned from the neighbors that on the evening of Tuesday, September 5, when the Germans marched into the city, they shot and killed close to twenty Jews. Among them were: Reb Jekhiel Mikhl Promnitski, Reb Lejzer Blumsztajn, Rajchman and Reb Bunem Lebl, who was wounded and died afterwards.

On the following day, they (the Germans) surrounded the block of Jewish houses, which encompassed the streets—Staro-Warszawska, Jerozolimska and Zamkowa. They ordered all Jews to stay in their homes, and immediately began to pelt the houses with fire-bombs and shoot at the windows. With the entire block of houses in flames, the Jews left their homes and despite the orders, ran out to the courtyard. A few Jews tried to leave the courtyards for the streets and were immediately shot at.

An hour after the fire the Ger nans entered the house at 13 Zamkowa Street, took out six men, ordered them to run forward and proceeded to shoot at them. Five Jews died on the spot, among them Jalowicz, Tilis and the "Treger." Miraculously, one person survived.

On Monday, September 11, all male Jews were in hiding. Those who were caught were beaten brutally and then taken to work.

On Tuesday, September 12, the seizure of Jews for work intensified. If a bearded Jew was caught, his life was put in danger. They tore out his beard along with pieces of flesh, or cut it off with a knife. Many Jews were wounded this way, including Meshulam Lipszyc, Moishe Temkin, Anshel Wajs and others.

The Germans collected taleysim, talis-kotons and kitls. These holy garments were given to Jews to wash floors, automobiles and windows. To clean the filthiest places Jews were given pages from the Talmud and other religious books.

Jewish stores were looted daily. Zyskind's and Frenkel's stores were emptied out

and homes continued to be robbed. A large sum of money was taken from Mr. Michelson, under the claim that it was counterfeit. All belongings were taken away from Mr. Zylberszac and others.

On Wednesday, September 13, the eve of Rosh Hashanah, 5700, the seizure of Jews for work continued. Regardless of how one hid, Jews were still being found. And when a Jew was found, he was first beaten cruelly and then taken to the street where Jews were assembled. When a large number of Jews accumulated, the beatings began anew. Then the detainees were divided into several groups and sent to various workplaces.

On the first day of Rosh Hashanah close to twenty Jews gathered in the synagogue. In many buildings prayers were held in private apartments. Such was the case in our apartment.

The Jewish people had, relatively speaking, all the fine food they needed for the holidays. But who could eat under conditions of such terrible fright and panic? The Germans were proceeding from house to house and were carrying out searches. They took from the Jews all of their possessions and dealt murderous blows to men and women alike. Then they took the men off to work, which in fact was not work but an inquisition.

As night arrived the sense of fear subsided, because they didn't seize Jews for work at night, and didn't perform robberies. But the night brought with it a new set of anxieties. Our blood froze in our veins as we heard the noise of tanks, artillery guns and other deadly weapons traveling all night long in the direction of Warsaw.

On the second day of Rosh Hashanah, after Shachris, we decided that today we would blow the shofar. The shofar-blower made all efforts to blow as softly as possible. When the "job" was done, we all felt greatly relieved.

However, there was terrible chaos at the Amshinov *shtibel*, 8 Farna Street, the only shtibl in which prayers were held. A number of officers entered in the middle of services and took everyone away—roughly thirty Jews—to prison. They were taken away dressed in their taleysim and silk caftans, and were beaten en route. Those arrested included Yitzkhok Aron Sochaczewski; the rabbi of Uszakow, named Tiger; the rosh yeshiva, Reb Baruch Asher Nudelman; Moishe Chaim Zelmanowicz, his son and others.

The news filled us with great fear. Toward evening we learned that the detained Jews, in their maimed and bloodied condition, had been taken away by trucks on the Czestochowa highway.

The days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur were terrifying.

The seizure of Jews for work intensified as did the searches of Jewish houses. Whenever they (the Germans) found a few Jews together during the house searches, they would torture them and charge that the Jews were holding clandestine meetings. They also simply harassed people. For instance, when they found a leather eyeglass-case in the home of a seventy-year-old man named Dovid Kaczka (Trybunalska Street), they "established" that the case was for storing ammunition. The matter was "settled" for a large sum of money.

Because of such instances, people stopped visiting each other. Everyone hid in his own private corner. In addition, everyone shaved off his beard, either entirely or partially, and put on European clothes.

The sense of terror, panic and fear was unbelievable. When the day finally passed and the night drew near, people sighed with relief.

Two days before Yom Kippur a truck full of soldiers drove up to the synagogue. They went over to the ark, flung the Torah scrolls onto the floor, tore them apart and hurled them into a lot across from the synagogue. Then they chopped down the ark and demolished the eastern wall, designed two hundred years ago by the artist Dovid Fridlender.

On the eve of Yom Kippur the Kehilah appealed for the last time that all those who had received notices should contribute the amount requested of them toward payment of the tribute tomorrow, on Yom Kippur.

On the day before the fast, the round-up was larger than usual. They (the Germans) had a good day's catch. The details of how the Jews were tortured are not within the purview of this study. In general one can say that the (Spanish) Inquisition was put to shame by their deeds. The Inquisitors were veritable men of compassion compared to the Germans.

The chairman of the Judenrat at that time was the Bundist city councilman Z. Tenenberg. In the beginning of December 1939, Dreksl, the mayor of the city, known as a vicious anti-Semite, summoned Chairman Tenenberg to his office and ordered that the Jews of Piotrkow construct military barracks.

The construction materials were extremely costly and this levy was imposed after three contributions had already been extracted from the Jewish community. Tenenberg manifested great courage by categorically refusing to have the Jews pay the contribution. Dreksl began to threaten. Tenenberg told the mayor that he could shoot him if he liked, but the Jews would not give the money and he left the room. The next morning, an urgent meeting of the Judenrat was convened to discuss the question. During the meeting an emissary from the mayor's office arrived with a message for Tenenberg to see the mayor at once.

The mayor informed Chairman Tenenberg that he was releasing the Jews from the obligation of covering the cost of the construction materials for the barracks.

In the summer of 1941, all of Piotrkow's local Bundist leaders were arrested, including Chairman Tenenberg, Wajshof and Yakov Berliner—a member of the Piotrkow municipality and of the Kehilah, a man who had devoted his entire life to the community. Abraham Cahan, editor of the American Forward, once wrote the following of him: "When the history of the modern thirty-six hidden saints is written, Berliner will occupy the first entry." Wajngarten, Frajnd, Stasienski and others were also arrested. They were taken to Auschwitz for extermination, where they died for *Kiddush Hashem.*

HONOR TO THEIR MEMORY!

Compiled by Lorraine Justman-Wisnicki, New York
New Bulletin



Posłanie do wnuka **LEGACY FOR GRANDSON**

* *
*

LEOPOLD LEWIN

Na starych fotografiach z czasów okupacji
Szukam twarzy Najdroższych z rozpaczą daremną,
Lecz zawsze, gdy na marzeń zatrzymam się stacji,
Wyrastają wśród głazów i jezior przede mną.

Nagle się ich cieniami zaludnia cień głazu,
Jakby do zdjęć pozując na nim się oparli.
I z płonącego w chmurnych oczach krajobrazu
Uśmiechają się do mnie. Czy wiedzą, że umarli...

Leopold Lewin

* *
*

On ancient photos from the Nazi days
I search for dear faces in grief and in vain,
Not once when I stop for a dream on my ways,
They grow amid gravestones and lakes full of pain.

Suddenly the shadows crowd the tint of stone,
Posing for a picture on the rocky bed.
And through cloudy eyes landscape-burning tone
They give me a little smile. Would they know they're dead. . .

Leopold Lewin (translated by Ben Giladi)

RECALLED TO LIFE

פיוטרקוב –
עיר ואם בישראל



The symbolic monument of our Martyrs at the Vale of Tears—Treblinka

Piotrkow—Ir Waeim B'Israel

M.I. Bar-On, Tel Aviv

We, the sons and descendants of the magnificent Jewish community of Piotrkow, are in mourning. We mourn the crown of our heads, the mother city of Israel, our Piotrkow, just as children mourn their mother. Our wonderful community was destroyed by the hand of the oppressors, our community was drowned in her own blood amid the vast cemeteries of Poland

How could our Jewish community in Piotrkow, the Jewel of our Crown, have been so devastated? Oh Piotrkow! What has become of you? Our city, full of Jewish life, streaming with the vigorous currents of our heritage. Lo and behold!—Suddenly, the soil covered all your being.

We shall keep our memories and images of the serene and pulsating life within your limbs, of the sweaty, hard days of labor and the days of rest and leisure. We shall remember the Sabbath and the Holy Days, the complete cessation of daily worries in the stores, shops and markets; the shining, festive atmosphere emanating from every window and every floor, the homes exulting light and inspiration even toward the gentile population of our town.

We remember, as if it were today, the large, excited crowds marching in parades beneath fluttering banners on national holidays. We remember the happy rallies and somber times. We remember the days of the Balfour Declaration or the San Remo festivities; the volunteers collecting groshins for noble causes; the sad days of the Tel Chai disaster or the other calamities that befell the Yishuv. Like a seismograph, our sensitive Piotrkow community reacted to the positive or negative events affecting the birth of our awakening nation and the redemption and building of our homeland.

Piotrkow! You were not any ordinary Polish city for us here in Israel, not just another geographical spot on the map of the Jewish Diaspora. You were a strong, historical supporting pillar essential to the Israeli saga. During your last generations, you were to Israel what Cordoba was in the Spanish Diaspora of the past. You were to the Jewish communities of the world what Prague was in the Bohemian Diaspora, or what Krakow and Lublin were in the Polish Diaspora. Rabbinical chairs of international renown were situated within your boundaries, where "Gaonim" and "Tzadikim" solved questions about "Halacha" and "Dinim."

You were the home of noble families like the Horowiczes, Eibeshitses and others, blessed with outstanding offspring—uncrowned princes in their spiritual conduct.

Within your walls, the bastion of the "Shulchan Aruch" was kept by volunteers so it would not be subjected to stormy disturbances. You saw the early "Hassidim" movements, full of miracles and mystique. The voices of "Lamdei Torah" rang out day and night from "Batei Midrash." Your "Hamonei Amcha" were staunch devotees to and admirers of the Torah.

Piotrkow, you were always the first to give your strength and your resources to every noble movement, to all kinds of actions and deeds for the people. You were the first to fight for education and enlightenment. You were the first—in the words of your "Gaon Hatzadik," R'Chaim Elezar Waks, Z"L, the author of "Nefesh Haya"—to wake the hearts toward the Yishuv in Eretz Israel." You were the first at the time to respond to the call of Zion for monetary and moral support. You were also the first to send your sons and daughters to the battle lines to fight for our nation's existence and honor. And, especially, you were the first to send the flower of your youth to "Hachshara Halutzit and Aliah" to mold the spirit in our homeland and the rising of Zion.

Most of all, you were known in the world of Israel for your richness of soul and for the treasures of the written word that you so generously dispensed among the cities and towns of the Diaspora. Your books, "Siddurim, Machzorim, Chumashim, Gemaroth," folk literature and so many other publications reached readers overseas, in Eretz Israel and everywhere—from Brooklyn to Shanghai. Jewish mothers, praying and pouring their hearts out to Almighty G-d, would tearfully recite verses that were printed "Here—Kechilath Kodesh Piotrkow—by R'Faivel Belchatowski and sons."

In Jerusalem and Lublin, the young "Talmud Torah" students read from pages that came from the printing presses of R'Abraham Rozenwald. From Johannesburg to San Francisco, Jews prayed and pounded their hearts when they recited "Al Heit" from the "Machzorim" for Yom Kippur assembled and printed by R'Mordchai Cederbaum. Hundreds of thousands of observant Jews worshipped and studied on Shabath and on Holy Days in synagogues using "Midrashim" from books set and published in the Printshop of Henoch, Ben Ishai Zeev Folman.

With your enterprise of publishing Holy Books you earned an esteemed name among the scattered Jewish communities of the world. This point about Piotrkow was brought up by the great scholar and writer of our generation, Shmuel Joseph Agnon. With his artistic perception, he profoundly mourned the enormous tragedy of our Holy Community, "taken prisoner and subjected to torture among gentiles."

In his story, "Siddur Tefilati," there was a monumental tribute to our beloved Piotrkow. In sadness and sorrow, we too say, together with Agnon, "I opened my Siddur at a different place and stared; and there is no Piotrkow anymore—only holy and awesome prayers are whistling from the pages. . . "

Itgadal Witkadesh Shmei Raba!

Izkor Book

Piotrkow After the War

Chaim Henig—Ramat Gan

The *Shtibel* at 33 Pilsudskiego Street

Now is the time, and certainly it is suitable, to remember the Piotrkow Jews, the "Sharit HaPleyta" (the remnants of survivors), in the early years following the liberation and the only *shtibel* where Jews gathered to pray during the holidays.

There were no Jews who, for various personal and other reasons, could not yet leave Piotrkow and remained there until 1952–1957.

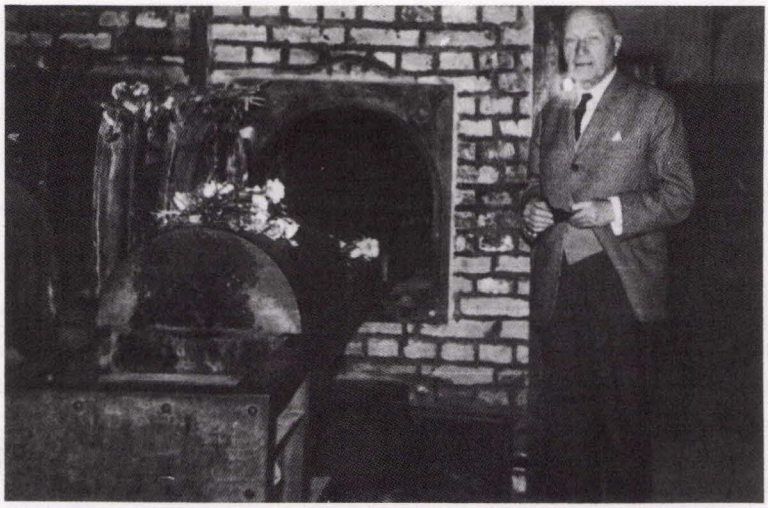
As long as my memory serves me, I want to recall at leasts a few of the Jews who were active at 33 Pilsudski Street, across the way from the prison. There, we met in two neglected rooms in the basement (called the "religyeze congregatsye") and there, too, kosher lunches were cooked. The overseers and cooks were Lutka Weinberg (previously the wife of Yakob Milshteyn Z"L; she died in Sweden), Mrs. M. Zigreich, Z"L (who was known then as Milshteyn, and who died two years ago in Israel, and Mrs. Litmanowicz.

The preparation of lunches at that time was a great help especially for the Jews who were staying there only temporarily and who were preparing to leave anti-Semitic Poland.

Amongst the active members of the religious circles were Moyshe Kurnendz, Z"L, Israel Zigreich, the brothers Sh. and P. Hipsher, Nuske Fishpan, the butcher Kirschenbaum, the older Weinberg and his son Manyek, Brauner (of Suleyow), Patsanovski (who died recently in Haifa), Shmuel Cohen (in Belgium), the elder Bialovons and others.



Moshe Tarko at the "Umschalgplatz" of Piotrkow. From here our Martyrs were sent to Treblinka.

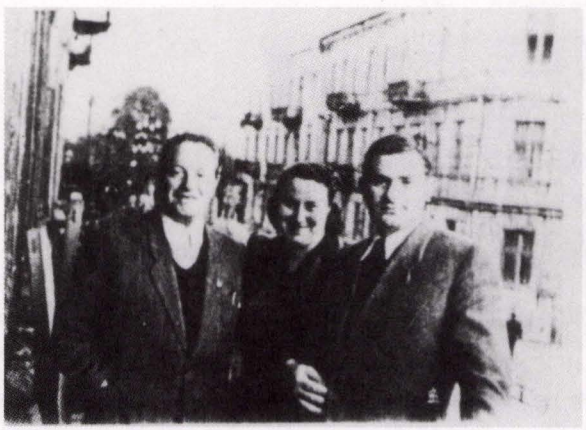


Dr. Zygmunt Tennenbaum brings flowers to the
Auschwitz crematorium.

Of course, there must always be a difference of opinion among Jews. This one came as a result of there being three candidates who wanted to manage the religious "shtibl." It reached a point where the "magistrat" almost had to intercede. A miracle, however, occurred when one of the claimants left Poland, another moved to Lodz, and the crisis was over.

In time, the *shtibel* grew emptier and emptier. There was no longer a "minyan." There were "Sifrey Torah, and taleysim" and "sfarim," and even a "Bal T'fila," but where did one find Jews?

When the High Holy Days arrived, the hearts of the Jews who remained awakened; each Jew wanted to be seen in the "shtibl." In addition to the few loyal "daveners," there were those who had long forsaken their "Yiddishkeit"—among them Katchka, the



Szmul Kon, Cesia Henig and Heniek (Chaim) Henig.



The congregation kitchen.

fiddler, Markowitz, who lived with Gentiles, Fuehrer, a Jew from Chelm who lived with an Ukrainian woman and later converted, Birenzweig, a barber who lived with a Gentile woman, Joshua Eisenshteyn, who had a Gentile wife, Dluzhnowski, now in Israel—even Hershel Goldberg of "U-B"[1] also came to take a look."

1 U-B is the Polish equivalent of the KGB.



Exhumation of the "Rakow Kedoshim" just after the war.
From the Rakow Forest to "Kewer Achim" at the cemetery.

Despite my responsible job in the "Kranke Kasse," I always left my workplace during the holidays and came together with all the Jews to cry our hearts out remembering those who were no longer with us and also the former shuls and "batei t'filot" which used to be filled with Jews.

The greatest experience was when our wives and small children came to see how we "davened." For some of the children, this was the first time they had observed such a "spectacle."They stood with their eyes opened wide and with flaming cheeks and understood nothing of what was happening.

My little son, who was 3½ years old, began to ask questions and wonder. He had been accustomed to going to church with our maid every Sunday; there, the priest would caress his head lovingly. And here questions began to pour forth. That's when my wife Cesia started to explain everything to him: that we were Jews and that everyone in the *shtibel* was praying to our God; that we had a large family living in Eretz Israel, the country where all Jews lived and to which we, too, would emigrate.

After that my son lived with the happy hope of going to another world, as if a new soul had entered into him. He could hardly wait for the day when he would see his grandmother, aunts and uncles in the much dreamed-of Land of Israel.

After my wife began to tell him the whole truth about the painful journey we had endured during the war years, he stopped going to church with the maid and understood very well why they didn't include him in the "protsesye."

To this day my son still wants to know every detail of what happened to us during the woeful Hitler years and tries to convey it to his children, so that the "Shoa" will not be forgotten by future generations.

The Remnants Unite

Chaim Samelson—Toronto

The winter of 1945 was the hardest for the Jews in the concentration camps. The Germans ignored the seriousness of their defeats on all fronts and continued with their plans of annihilation. We, the prisoners of the camps, were totally without strength, owing to hunger and cold, and could barely stand on our feet. We clearly felt that we were dying, and only the Jewish hope and trust that beat within our hearts enabled us to hold on.

Every day Allied planes would appear and bomb factories, and we were joyfully following the flames which the bombs left behind, but which were not as strong as the fire of revenge that burned in our hearts, when, one morning, the order suddenly came to assemble on the parade grounds. From there we were taken to the train, packed into cars, and, after three weeks of travel in conditions of hunger and thirst, the iron gates of Theresienstadt suddenly opened before us. From there we were liberated by the Russians on May 9, 1945.

Hand in hand with our joy at our liberation was the nagging question that all of us faced: What would we do now and where would we go?

I myself decided not to return to Poland, the country where every inch of land was soaked with Jewish blood. After some consideration I made the decision to immigrate to Israel, the historic homeland of our people.

The attitude of the Russians toward us was good. They took care of us and supplied all our needs. But before our stomachs could adjust to digesting human food, many among us, my brother included, came down with all sorts of illnesses.

Meanwhile, the Russians issued an order for each of us to return to his homeland. In accordance with my decision not to return to Poland, I declared myself to be a Roumanian, as did my brother and aunt, whom I had discovered in Theresienstadt. After many difficulties, we managed to join a group leaving for Roumania.

The trip was not easy. My brother ran a high fever and only managed to reach the Red Cross train we were traveling on at the last moment, with my aunt's assistance and leaning on a cane. The train was insufficiently provisioned so that, from time to time, the healthy among us had to get off to get food from the Czech and Slovak inhabitants and, occasionally, from the Red Cross itself.

Hundreds of Jews awaited us at the station in Budapest. Some of them were meeting family members—Hungarian Jews who had been liberated. We, the "Roumanians," remained standing where we were, enviously watching those excited meetings. Shortly before the train departed I heard someone ask if there were any Jews from Piotrkow among us. When I heard the name of our town, I broke for the window and saw a familiar face. It was Yitzhak Wenglishewski, from Piotrkow, who had been a member of the Hashomer Hatzair movement in our town. Here, as it turned out, he was active in the

escape operation that was assisting the illegal immigration to the Land of Israel. When he saw me, he called out in a loud voice telling me to get off the train. We left the car one after the other, and Yitzhak Wenglishewski led us quickly outside the train station without attracting attention. After we took various trains through the streets of Budapest, he brought us to the gathering point. Two days later, a special emissary appeared; he led us to the Austrian border, and that's how we got to Graz.

We stayed in that city for a while; it is notable for its magnificent scenery. Then the order came to take to the road again.

We marched quietly, one after the other, with the high Tyrol mountains rising above us. My heart was full of doubts about whether my old aunt and my sick brother would be able to cross those peaks. But, by the grace of God, we made it to the top safely. There, a broad-shouldered Russian soldier jumped out at us. For a moment we froze in our tracks in fear, but we quickly took heart after one of the escape team leaders slipped something into the Russian's palm and he motioned to us to continue.

Twenty minutes later we were on Italian soil near a British military camp. Here soldiers from the Jewish Brigade were waiting for us. They immediately loaded us into camouflaged trucks, in which we made our way to the Italian interior. Occasionally the caravan would stop and we would get out for air and to stretch our muscles; then we would immediately continue on our journey.

Finally we made it to Treviso, where the Brigade had pitched camp. They put us up in tents, fed us in the dining hall, and gave us the best of everything. The Jewish soldiers from Eretz Israel were indescribably loyal and devoted to us. There, for the first time, we were able to talk freely in the fields and on the trails without fear that someone might betray us. On one of my outings I noticed a soldier carrying a book under his arm, which, from afar, I made out to be "A Book of Testimony," written by Yaakov Kurtz. Full of curiosity, I approached the soldier to check on the author's identity. He turned out to be none other than the Yaakov Kurtz from our town, who had been miraculously saved in 1942 from the Piotrkow ghetto by an exchange of German and Palestinian Jewish nationals.

On that same day we met, among the Brigade soldiers, Mishek Zemel and the brothers Natan and Arye Sandovsky. It was a dramatic meeting. They were sure we were the only Jews from the town to be saved from the talons of the German murderers. And for us they were the first sign of life of our townfolk who had immigrated to Israel.

The next day we met the brothers Poznanski—the younger, Sandovsky, and Glogowski. My old Betar commander, Yehuda Kushinski, also arrived, along with a group of partisans from Vilna. We had a lot to tell them. The details of the hardships we had experienced were still fresh in our minds and our hearts still bled.

That same evening, Sabbath eve, we went with the Brigade soldiers into a wide field in which a temporary stage had been set up. On stage, a ceremony was held to welcome the Sabbath, and a Jewish female soldier lit the candles. Then two former commanders of the Vilna district's Jewish partisans went up on stage; they were Abba Kovner and Haim Lazar, and we all heard the Jewish partisan song for the first time—"Zog nit keinmol az du gehst dem letztn weg"—and we were told about the courageous struggle to defend the honor of the people of Israel.

As dusk faded into night, a huge bonfire was lit and we all danced a wild "Hora." Our powerful singing—which expressed the feelings that stirred within us at our return to our own people, proud, courageous Jews, a new and wonderful generation—echoed late into the night and ended with a national anthem. We really felt that hope was not lost and we would yet reach a safe haven in our homeland.

Izkor Book



The first anniversary of liberation—Bergen-Belsen, April 15, 1946. On the right, Bronia Krakowska-Rodal, now in Kibbutz Rosh Hanikra.

A Survivor's Happiness

Jerry Wenglishewski —Toronto

The bright sunshine of that beautiful day in May 1845 cannot be forgotten. The streets of Vienna were crowded with Soviet military vehicles—all kinds of jeeps, trucks, tanks, and horse carts, moving westward.

Yuri was looking at the Russian soldiers and he wanted to shout out his happiness. He was free! Yet he was too weak to yell and he could barely walk. Years of torture, pain, hunger, humiliation and of feeling like a hunted animal always on the run could break even the strongest individual. Only a few days before, he had been pondering the idea of suicide.

Now he wanted to laugh, but he could not. He still did not believe that he was free. He could walk in the streets without being afraid for his life—not hunted by the Nazis nor by his own dark suicidal thoughts. He could hardly believe that, after years of living as degraded, dirty Jew and a hungry animal, he was again a human being.

Yuri was confused: He wasn't sure who he was any longer. Was he a Jew? Or was he a Polack? Many times he lived as a young Polish man and had been abused and tortured as such. Was he a Lithuanian? He spoke the language fluently, and all his documents stated that his name was Jurgis Veglishauskas, of Lithuanian nationality.

The Russian columns were moving east through Vienna. Only a few civilians walked on the streets, mostly "Auslander" (aliens). The Viennese population were hiding behind their heavy house gates. They now feared the Russians. They felt guilty, realizing that the Russian soldiers would not forgive them for the sadistic atrocities that the German army committed on Russian soil.

Next day Yuri walked along Ottakringer Gasse. A column of Russian soldiers in horse-drawn carts were resting and preparing their lunch. Yuri felt a pang of hunger and pain in his stomach. He had not eaten any food for several days. As he approached a soldier with a common greeting in their language (a language he had learned during the war), he was questioned about his name and business by one of the soldiers. Yuri was not sure what to answer. He quickly reasoned that he no longer had to lie, as the German-Nazis were powerless. "I am a Polish slave-laborer and I thank you for liberating me," he answered. The soldiers were good-natured, front-line men and offered Yuri a loaf of bread and butter. He thanked them profoundly. Tears streamed down his face. He hadn't had real bread and butter for all the years of the war. All he had tasted was sawdust bread. Now he remembered the taste of bread before the war.

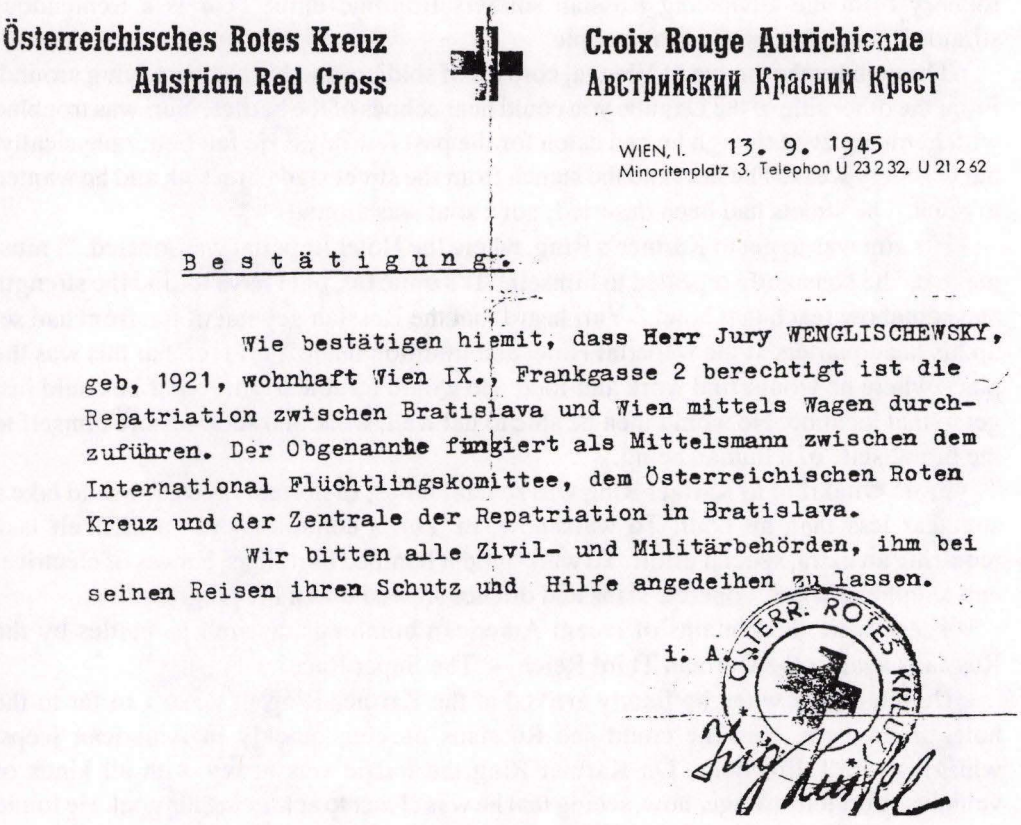
Happily, he returned to his little room at Lienfelder Gasse. There he boiled some water and, with the Russian gift, he prepared his own feast. Chewing on the bread and butter, his hopes slowly began to rise. After all, he would be able to be himself. But who was he?

Going back in his mind, he began to remember; his parents, brothers and more family. He felt a twitch in his heart. What had happened to them? Would he meet them again?

The delicious meal and the rays of sun beaming through the window of his tiny room brought him back to reality and to the enjoyment of his food. His tired body was now able to call out: "I am free, I am free!" There was no need for lies, no more humiliations and no more slave work.

Yet he did not believe that 100%. Years of false hopes and experiences taught him not to take for granted "those good ways of life." They had not given him his freedom. The Nazis might still return. It had happened before and Yuri had paid dearly for his unreal desires for freedom. That's why he was afraid to think of his family or about what else his future would bring. His habit of worrying only about the next meal made him think of his table, laid out with bread and butter. Nothing was more important than food. Food meant a full stomach and energy to fight for the next day.

He sensed how degrading his way of life had become—but at the same time he knew that he was too weak and too tired to understand it right now in any human way. He just sat down and enjoyed his first day of liberty.



Österreichisches Rotes Kreuz
Austrian Red Cross

Croix Rouge Autrichienne
Австрийский Красний Крест

WIEN, I. 13. 9. 1945
Minoritenplatz 3, Telephon U 23 2 32, U 21 2 62

B e s t ä t i g u n g.

Wie bestätigen hiemit, dass Herr Jury WENGLISCHEWSKY, geb, 1921, wohnhaft Wien IX., Frankgasse 2 berechtigt ist die Repatriation zwischen Bratislava und Wien mittels Wagen durchzuführen. Der Obgenannte fungiert als Mittelsmann zwischen dem International Flüchtlingskomittee, dem Österreichischen Roten Kreuz und der Zentrale der Repatriation in Bratislava.

Wir bitten alle Zivil- und Militärbehörden, ihm bei seinen Reisen ihren Schutz und Hilfe angedeihen zu lassen.

i. A.

ÖSTERR. ROTES KREUZ

Letter of recommendation by the Austrian Red Cross giving Jerry Wenglishewski wide authority to operate across the Czechoslovakian–Austrian border between Vienna and Bratislava.

For the first time in years he fell asleep on a full stomach and with hope in his heart for a better future.

Or was there any future at all?

Next morning Yuri woke up to the sounds of exploding bombs and artillery fire on the other side of the Danube. Fighting was still going on. Later in the day. someone mentioned that the Germans were putting up a struggle in Langenzersdorf, resistance against the advancing Russian units. However, the general feeling was that the Germans hadn't a chance.

Yuri was in good spirits. He still had a piece of yesterday's bread. The weather was fantastic and he could hear more Russian army units rumbling through the streets of Vienna. It was a gorgeous day in May 1945.

Because of their fear of the Russian soldiers, Yuri's Austrian neighbors in the house at Lienfelder Gasse began to invite him into their apartments, offering him wine and sweets. It was funny, in Yuri's eyes, to see that the same people who hadn't acknowledged him as a human being before should suddenly begin to greet him with a loud "Guten Tag." This was the character of the Viennese. As far as they were concerned, Yuri was a Lithuanian who spoke Russian and could help them to prevent rape and robbery from the advancing Russian soldiers frontline units. Fear is a tremendous stimulant, even for the German people.

Throughout the streets of Vienna, corpses of soldiers and horses were lying around. From the other side of the Danube you could hear echoes of the battles. Yuri was troubled with hardship even though he had eaten for the past few days. He felt better physically, but was very weak. The heat and the stench from the street made him sick and he wanted to retch. The streets had been deserted; not a soul was around.

His aim was to get to Kartner's Ring, where the Hotel Imperial was located. "I must make it," he constantly repeated to himself. "It's quite far, but I have to find the strength and somehow reach that hotel." Yuri heard that the Russian general of the front had set up his headquarters at the Imperial Hotel and intuition made Yuri feel that this was the place where he would find work and food. He would be able to survive if he could just get to that location. He would then be able to get well, work and soon restore himself to the moral state of a human being.

From Ottakring to Kartner Ring was several miles. In normal times, it would take a streetcar less than an hour. To walk now, in Yuri's condition, was a difficult task requiring an extra, special effort. To walk amidst bombed buildings, a mess of electrical and telephone wires, concrete slabs and ditches slowed down his progress.

These were the remains of recent American bombings, as well as battles by the Russians against the German Third Reich—"The Super Race."

He felt happy when he finally arrived at the Kartner Ring. It wasn't so far to the hotel from there. Now he could see Russians moving quickly in American jeeps, whizzing in all directions. On Kartner Ring the traffic was heavy with all kinds of vehicles. Yuri felt stronger now, seeing that he was closer to achieving his goal. He found the Imperial Hotel guarded on all sides by Russian soldiers.

Yuri walked over to the main entrance and was promptly stopped by a guard. He explained in Russian that he wanted work as a translator. The guard told him only to

stay outside and wait until he could locate someone who might be interested. After waiting for more than an hour, a woman emerged from the building, dressed in a military uniform with the insignia of a major on her shoulders. Though Yuri was very tired, his old zest and daring started to circulate in his bloodstream, contradicting the deep fear in his guts.

Yuri realized that his future would depend on his first response to the major's questions. To the question, "Who are you and what are you doing here?" Yuri said, "I am a Jew and want to work and eat. I speak Russian as well as German and I know the city of Vienna very well. She looked at him with a long gaze and then ordered the guard to let him through.

In the huge vestibule she told him to sit down and wait. After a while she returned in the company of another major, a tall man in his fifties, who began to question Yuri in Russian. Yuri told him pertly, but politely, that he escaped from concentration camps and had been living sometimes as a Polish worker and sometimes as a Lithuanian worker. He stated that he was born in Poland and had no clue as to what had become of the rest of his family. He continued to tell the major that he was alone, hungry and very tired. He stressed the point that he wanted only to work for a bowl of soup and a piece of bread. Both majors looked at each other; one ordered Yuri to follow him. The major brought Yuri to the kitchen and gave orders to the cook to feed him. He told Yuri to return to the vestibule upon finishing his meal. The cook examined Yuri's thin cheeks, turned suddenly and brought him a large plate of steaming soup, full to the brim. In a soft voice, he kindly told him to eat very slowly. He also placed a huge piece of black bread on the table in front of Yuri, and again repeated his instructions to eat slowly. It seemed that Yasha the cook understood what hunger was. In the bowl there was more meat than soup. Yuri devoted his entire attention to eating. Nothing else mattered at that moment. This was a meal fit for a king. He felt suddenly energized. He found it difficult to accept the fact that tomorrow he would have food again. Therefore he asked the kind cook for a loaf of bread. When the cook asked "For whom?" Yuri replied, "For a friend at home." He was ashamed to admit that he wanted it for himself for the next day. It had become second nature to be concerned about his next meal through the recent years.

With a full stomach, his hunger satisfied, he then returned to the vestibule wondering what to expect next.

Russian officers, captains, majors, colonels and many others had been coming and going. Some disappeared behind the vast number of doors on different levels of the luxurious Hotel Imperial. Yuri alone was in civilian clothes, sitting in the lobby. All around him were officers with different insignias on their uniforms. A captain asked him who he was and what he was doing. Yuri could not understand himself, but answered that he was a Lithuanian and was going to work as a translator. maybe it was his intuition again, or some kind of premonition that, even to the Russians, his liberators, it was better not to say that one was a Jew.

Later he found out that his intuition was right, as usual. Yuri's liberators didn't like Jews. As a matter of fact, they hated them, though nobody would say it openly. He was soon summoned upstairs and introduced to the general. General Godin was a tall, husky man with a round, open face, his chest decorated with medals.

After a brief interview, he told Yuri that he would accept him as a translator. The terms were that Yuri had to be available at any time of day or night. He could sleep in one of the hotel's rooms and eat in the officers' mess. Yuri thanked the formidable general profusely for his generosity. Godin was the general in charge of the third Ukrainian front. It was his army that had pushed back the Germans from the Ukraine, Romania and Austria and was now progressing to the west to meet the Americans.

The next morning, Yuri was called to the general's office. He entered just where General Godin was sitting at a large table surrounded by his adjutants. Yuri was pleasantly shocked; most of the adjutants had "hooked" noses and invariably Jewish faces.

He thought to himself, "Now I am at home." A kind of warm feeling swept through his body, being a Jew among other Jews. It was a new sensation to him. He could not understand what was happening to him. Never, as far back as he could remember, had he felt this way. Maybe in his soul, he was longing to be a Jew, a plain Jew among other Jews. Subconsciously, he did not even suspect that during all those years of pain and torture, he wanted to be among his own kind. Under torture, he had had to yell that he was not a Jew. His soul had screamed out, "a paradox like this could only happen in an inhumane world." He, who had longed to live as a Jew with all his heart, had to denounce himself and live another identity.

The general introduced Yuri to his companions and he was assigned to work with Colonel Upita. The colonel was a soft-spoken man around forty-five years old. He took Yuri to a waiting jeep with a chauffeur and they started on their way. They drove about twenty miles from Vienna to a textile factory. The Russians wanted to start production of clothing to have a supply for the advancing army. Yuri translated the conversations between the colonel and the director of the factory regarding the immediate start of production, raw materials and shipment of goods.

On their way back to Vienna, the colonel indicated to the driver that it was time to eat and it would be nice to have a picnic. The driver found a clear, grassy spot, spread a blanket, brought out white bread, butter, cans of meat and a tall gasoline cannister full of Hungarian wine. The colonel invited Yuri to sit down, as well as the driver. Together they enjoyed their meal. On this sunny day in the vicinity of Vienna, Yuri had his first picnic—a symbol of his return to the human race.

Colonel Upita was a well-educated man and inquired into Yuri's background with many curious questions about his childhood, education and life during the war. He asked about the Germans, Austrians and the city of Vienna. Yuri answered openly to the best of his knowledge. The colonel liked that. Upon arrival in Vienna, the colonel offered Yuri food to take home, but for the first time in years, Yuri refused, stating that he was eating in the hotel and therefore didn't need it. At that moment he started to regain his self-confidence. He was reverting from the hungry animal he had become to a human being again.

Colonel Upita probably mentioned his satisfaction with his translator to the general, for the next morning Yuri was summoned to the general's quarters. General Godin appointed him as his personal translator. He would accompany the general wherever he went. Yuri was honored by the general's confidence and promised to try his best.

From then on, Yuri went with the general on all his shopping trips, to cultural events, theaters, operas, conferences and meetings. All of Yuri's wants and needs were taken care of—meals, clothes, etc.

Austrians began to seek his acquaintance in order to acquire favors. A translator could be of great assistance in the request for political favors and in other business and personal matters with the "Almighty Russian General." Fate had brought Yuri from destitution and hunger to an honored and powerful position.

Editor's Note: Jerry (Yuri) Wenglishewski, a member of Kibbutz Hachshara "Behazit" (the kibbutz of Mordechai Anielewicz and other Warsaw Ghetto Uprising heroes), served honorably in the "Bricha" in 1945–1948. He was one of the organizers and operatives of the important transit center at the Rothschild Hospital in Vienna, helping many illegal immigrants to reach Eretz Israel. Another Piotrkower working there was Eliezer Bashan (Leshek Blachman). Elazar Prashker was at the time the head of the Zionist Federation in Vienna.

In the Jewish Brigade

Aryeh Sandowski (Leibek)—Ramat Chen

In the very last days before the outbreak of World War Two, I managed to escape from Poland. Before arriving in the Land of Israel, I spent a month on the open, stormy sea with the illegal immigrants of Aliyah Bet. The war severed all contact between me and my family, and all efforts to communicate with them failed.

With the first appeal to the Jewish community in the Land of Israel to join the fight against the Nazis, my brother Natan (who had immigrated in 1934 and was studying at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem) joined the first group of volunteers in the war against the Germans. By the end of 1940 he was already in uniform as I took my first steps as a member of Kibbutz Messiloth.

As the war continued, the first terrible reports of the bitter fate that had befallen our relatives under Nazi rule began to reach us. When the Jewish Brigade was formed, I immediately volunteered. It was my desire to fight actively against the murderers and avenge the blood of millions of Jews.

As the war front in Europe shifted to Italy, the Brigade went into active combat in the front lines against the Germans. This was the opportunity to pay back the murderers of our parents, our brothers and our sisters.

But in addition to our desire for revenge was a question that was constantly on our minds: Had any of our relatives survived? Could we manage to help them? Was there really any point to our war if, if fact, God forbid, nobody was left for us to help?

In July 1945, after the victory over the Nazis, while we were stationed in Treviso (not far from the Austrian border), Jewish refugees began to arrive unexpectedly from the remnants of the ghettos and concentration camps.

On one of the refugees vehicles I found many people from my town, including the brothers Samelson, the sons of the tailor Samelson of Piotrkow, who was the well-known benefactor of the tradespeople in our town. They looked terrible. We consoled them and tried to lift their spirits. The sight of soldiers from the Jewish Brigade, who had come from the Land of Israel, inspired in those survivors the hope that they might yet make a new life for themselves. Every day new transports of refugees arrived, and on one of them, brought in by the Brigade, we were fortunate enough to find our two young brothers, Avraham and Yaacov. There were no bounds to our happiness; it is impossible to describe our feelings in those moments—the great happiness mixed with pain and sorrow upon hearing of the loss of the people of our town, including most of our family members, cruelly murdered by the Germans.

On orders of the High Command, the Brigade left Italy and was tasked with missions in other countries of Europe. We will never forget the Brigade's transit through Germany, where we met Jews from Piotrkow near the Landsberg camp.



חיילי הבריגדה עם ניצולות השואה בפריס

עומדים: נתן ואריה סנדובסקי וחברם; יושבות הניצולות: רניה זקס וברוניה שידלובסקי

Soldiers of the Jewish Brigade. From left: Nathan Sandowski, Aryeh Sandowski and their friend, Sitting: Renia Zaks-Irmay and Bronia Shidlowska-Ofir.

Among the other tasks assigned us was that of guarding German prisoners in Holland.

The desire to find relatives and town members never left us, not even for a moment. At the first opportunity I set out for Poland, travelling together with one of the Brigade members.

On May 3, 1946 we arrived in Katowice. From there we travelled to Piotrkow, and I visited the rotten forest in which my parents had been shot to death along with hundreds of the city's Jews.

Later on I participated in a mourning gathering at the grave of Mordecai Anielewicz in Warsaw, where he had fallen while commanding the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

In the cities I visited I met dozens of Jews from Piotrkow. Before leaving Poland I took it upon myself to arrange the transfer of two girls from Piotrkow to the land of Israel. They were Renia Zaks and Bronia Shidlovski. Accomplishing that involved many difficulties and adventures. At the Czech border I was taken to the Moravska Ostrava jail and from there to the famous jail in Prague. Our route was hardly strewn with roses, since they took us for spies. In jail we spent 10 days in hunger and fear for the fate of the two girls. In the end we were released, thanks to the intervention of the British military attaché in Prague. At that time news reached us of the dismantling of the Brigade, and I, together with my friend, made every effort to reach our unit as quickly as possible.

The news of the "Black S" that the English had arranged for the Jewish community in the Land of Israel, which reached us aboard ship on the way back, left us dumbstruck. It is hard to describe the morale of soldiers whose weapons have been taken away, along

with the right to feel the taste of a homeland. We were very depressed, but our firm determination to struggle for the right of free immigration for our surviving brothers and sisters remained unflagging.

On that day we demonstrated in Haifa and stoned the English, the ship that brought the two girls from Piotrkow dropped anchor in the port. Our protests were to no avail, and, together with thousands of other illegal immigrants, the girls were transferred to Cyprus. Those were the first steps in the great struggle waged by the Jewish community in the land of Israel on the eve of the War of Liberation, which gave us our independence and the State of Israel.

Izkor Book

The Past Revisited

I stood in the doorway of the tenement at Garncarska Street in Piotrkow and looked at the flights of stairs my family had climbed so often.

I felt sad for a moment. I'd been here before, but I hadn't really explored the place since my return to Poland after the war. Now, the time had come to leave this soil and, somehow, I felt the urge to take a closer look at this town, now so strange and quiet.

With a bit of imagination, I could "see" the people and my dearest and my friends, full of zest and life as they had roamed these streets years ago.

I walked down to Starowarszawska Street. Here, Jewish stores, one after another had given this section of town a lively and folkloristic appearance. Now everything was closed and empty. I passed the narrow Grodzka Street and Korman's delicatessen store. His delicious wursht and parovkes had been a gastronomical treat. Then I came to the Trybunalski Place. When I was a kid the droshkes—four-wheeled carriages and horses—were stationed there. It was a lot of fun to hitch a ride with one of them.

I looked up to the second floor of the building where the Merkaz Library had once been located. From there I had obtained whole shelves of Verne, Dumas, Korczak and other writers. The former Gletger's restaurant downstairs, from where the Nazi Befehlstelle had directed the atrocities in 1942, was already open and selling vodka again.

The photoprints in the display window advertised a Russian war picture.

I stood in front of the Flattau's movie theater as my afternoon memories wore on. It was right here or in kino Czary that we experienced the dreams and splendor of the wide world as we watched the movies: Greta Garbo, Rudolf Valentino, Bette Davis, Clark Gable, Molly Picon, Maurice Chevalier, Marlene Dietrich and Charlie Chaplin. I didn't know then that years later I would eagerly look for these movies in the T.V. Guide and watch the late show in order to digest them again, language and all—and to feel the recollection of home and the past, so vivid and burning.

Then I walked down to the section of the Jewish Kehila, the Dobroczynnosc, the orphanage, the Maccabi and Maria Konopnicka Public School, all located on a stretch of one block. Here I experienced a feeling of great warmth as I remembered all the important events and pleasant things that had taken place here. I thought of the children and the wise, of the sportsmen and the scholars who had attended these quarters. It had been right here that every year, the big Lag B'Omer Parade started its movement toward the forests.

The schoolyard reminded me of something else. I stood precisely on the same spot where Meister Klette had killed people. A few yards away I could see the former premises of the Ordnungsdienst.

Then I went toward Jerozolimska Street and to the front of the main Synagogue. I thought of the High Holy Days, with everything so sincere and quiet—the earnest prayers and the inspiring sound of the Shofar; the great cantors and their enchanting nigunim.

And then other memories: mothers and children; the Shupo, Ukrainians and the police; the long line of peasant carriages crawling toward Tomaszov and the last journey to Rakov.

The walls of the Synagogue still stood. there was no roof and the interior was completely destroyed. Many houses on this side of the street were missing.

From a distance I could see the building that was once the Jewish Hospital—the only reminder of help and kindness still standing.

Years ago, when I rode the same little puffing train to the Przyglov-Wlodzimierzov summer resort, my heart was always pounding. That was the place to be! A beautiful river, lavish trees, elegant villas and pensions, games, and visitors—all the ingredients of a full and rewarding kind of life. Upon arriving, I almost missed the station because the old wooden structure was no longer there. I walked along the river and the familiar roads, rarely meeting a soul.

Finally, the day's events were coming to a close with dinner at the Sielanka restaurant. A few Army officers with their girls were the only customers. A musician was playing Russian and Polish songs. The soldiers drank vodka and tried to sing along in their drunken stupor.

From the window I could see the little stadium where the Katzenelson colony's "Olympics" were usually held at the end of each summer season.

I took a droshke back to town. The coachman was none other than Leonarczyk, my former boss at the Hortensia factory at the time of the Nazis. He didn't show any sign of recognition; he was aware, however, that I was Jewish. From our small talk I remember only one episode. When we approached the Bugaj complex, he said regretfully, "Those were the days when the Jews were living here . . . those were the days, mister. . ."

I understood his feelings quite well. He was sorry about the loss of his prey, he missed the days of blackmail, robbery, and all the fun that people like him used to have with the Jews. And suddenly, I realized that I had no more business to attend to in this town.

Such are the memories we cherish. They are more than nostalgia for a home town. They are the memories of our earliest beginnings. Earliest beginnings may not always be pleasant, but they remind us of our youth and of our flesh and blood. We honor these all the days of our lives.

Ben Giladi



The last Jew in Piotrkow, Roman (Rivele) Hipszer, the last guardian of the Jewish cemetery.

In Memory of Jacob Maltz

Jacob Maltz died in 1976. To write about his life and his endeavors is to write the History of the Piotrkower Jewry and the Zionist Dream of our ancestors during the last eighty years.

He was one of the chief leaders of the Zionist Movement in Piotrkow, and his eloquence, personality and dedication contributed enormously to the spiritual and idealistic education and goals of scores of young Halutzim.

He, himself made Aliah in the thirties and continued his fruitful activities in Eretz Israel. His last gigantic task was to turn the Piotrkower Izkor Book from a dream into reality.

In 1971, when Jacob Maltz became 80 years old, I wrote the following essay in tribute to this great man.

The Vanguard

Every year, on Israel's Independence Day, in the main grandstands, against a dramatic background of waving flags and enthusiastic crowds, the country's aging elite watches the parade go by. The entire government is there, headed by the President and flanked by scores of septuagenarian and octogenarian settlers who are facing a great dream come true. Among the fine men watching the parade is Jacob Maltz.

It all began years ago in Piotrkow. Young Jacob had begun to think deeply about the fate of his people. The Zionist Movement, whose influence was beginning to expand at the time, reached into his world with its challenging slogans and magic attraction. All this made an enormous impression and so Jacob started to spread the gospel of Zion.

A hard-working and sensitive fellow with a brilliant mind, who spoke in a quiet but authoritative voice, Jacob Maltz soon became one of the leaders of the Zionists in our home town.

One of the most vivid memories of my childhood is the house on 9 Garncarska Street in Piotrkow, where the beautiful aroma of fresh bread and rolls always emanated from "Toltza's" bakery. I went to school with Jacob's daughter Ruth and often visited their house. It was a fascinating place to visit. There were so many books and people. You heard many exotic words, like "Poalei Zion," "Keren Kayemeth" and "Hapoel." In this house you were close to a man who, on Lag B'Omer Day, was the center of attention to scores of intense young people wearing blue blouses and colorful ties. In a word, you felt you were near many important, splendorous things.

There was another place where I had the chance to meet Jacob Maltz. He was a very good friend of my brother-in-law Pinkus and often visited my sister Hela's home at the Jewish Hospital. A wonderful relationship existed between those two remarkable men. Their political views were far apart—Pinkus was one of the "Bund" party leaders. However, every other human interest kept them together. And when those two men took



Jacob Maltz (left) and Berish Rosenblum in 1919. Both were members of the city council as representatives of Poalei Zion.

a walk down the street, the people of Piotrkow felt good. There was still a brotherly understanding between folks despite the notorious party conflicts that plagued Jewish communities everywhere.

Years passed. Years of war and destruction and later years of fighting and hope, One day, a man came to see me at the Social Security office in Tel-Aviv; when he approached my desk, I recognized him immediately. It was Jacob Maltz. After finishing some formalities regarding his retirement, we went out for a chat. He had told me about his years of work in the country's service and about his devoted activity as the head of the Piotrkower Society in Israel. I gladly accepted his invitation to visit his home.

There, for the first time, I came into contact with his great obsession; the project of the Piotrkower Memorial Book. Vast, coherent planning and effort went into accumulating the records and materials for this project. The endless photographs, documents and articles were neatly sorted. I was amazed how much Jacob cherished every item and how wide was his knowledge about the whole history and people of our home town.

Since then, I often visited Jacob and became one of the many whom he mobilized in order to realize his noble idea.

In 1969, I came to Israel and went to see Jacob Maltz. The book was already published. However, during our conversation. I understood that, in a sense, he never really considered the book finished. For it was his intention to add at some future time

additional chapters—"a sort of summing up," as he said. In his words, every bulletin or "chovereth" published and every scrap of significant writing should be a supplement to the pages that told the story of our ancestors and ourselves.

He spoke about the archives, the library and about "Beith Piotrkow," and I felt that as the book had become a reality, the new idea would also materialize; it was only a matter of time.

Time is very precious for Jacob Maltz. He is now living in his own world: with his books, thoughts and accomplishments. A lonely man, though.

Only when the occasional guest visits him can he show the wonderful vitality that still inspires others. Or on Independence Day, he watches the parade go by.

So, shake hands, Jacob Maltz, and say "Shalom" to the other "chaverim" in the crowd! To Zalman Shazar and Golda Meir, David Ben-Gurion and the younger fellows in the golden chain, Moshe Dayan and Igal Alon. And tell them, "We're still working for our beloved Country!"

Ben Giladi

I Believe

Rabbi Israel Meir Lau

The appearance of our Rabbi Lau, Shalita, on television on Saturday night, the Tenth of Tevet 5733 (1973), caused a great stir among our Piotrkow brothers and sisters and became a topic of conversation. Small wonder, since his words penetrated every sensitive heart, particularly the hearts of our Piotrkow Jews. The following is an excerpt from the rabbi's program, which he titled "Ani Maamin" (I believe), recalling his life as a child in the Nazi hell.

Editor of Heidim

"I believe with perfect faith"—these words by the Rambam (Maimonides) became the hymn of those who died for Sanctification of the Name. Tomorrow is the Tenth of Tevet, the first day on which the calamity of the destruction of the Holy Temple started, leading to the Babylonian exile and the other exiles of Israel, the day chosen as the general memorial day for our six million martyrs who were lost in the Second World War in the most horrible of all the calamities that befell our people, without our knowing their place of burial, and without their having been given a Jewish burial as their ashes were scattered all over Europe, and with even their date of death having remained unknown.

We shall not attempt in this program to investigate the Shoah. We shall perhaps attempt to touch on one point which I consider central—the great faith and inspiration of those millions, who appeared to be led like sheep to the slaughter, but whose spirit was not broken. Their flesh was consumed by the flames, but their soul remained pure and they could sing and hope even during the most difficult moments of human life. . . .

Piotrkow, my home town, was a city in Poland which had some 22,000 Jews at the beginning of the Shoah. Students of Torah around the world will recall Piotrkow because of the cover pages of many holy books which were printed in the Hebrew print of that town. It had Jewish organizations from Agudath Israel to the socialist Bund, It had vibrant Torah life and a great variety of activities.

I was about two years old when the war broke out. Despite my young age, I recall scenes of horror which I am sure will never leave me.

My father, Rabbi Moshe Haim Lau, HYD, was the last rabbi and spokesman of Piotrkow even in peacetime, when the attitude of the authorities was good. It was especially during the war and in time of trouble that my father's house became a center of public activity and a place for people to bring their personal problems.

It was in that home where I grew up that I first learned about life during the time of

oppression and hardship. My mother was also active in the charitable organizations of the ghetto in Piotrkow.

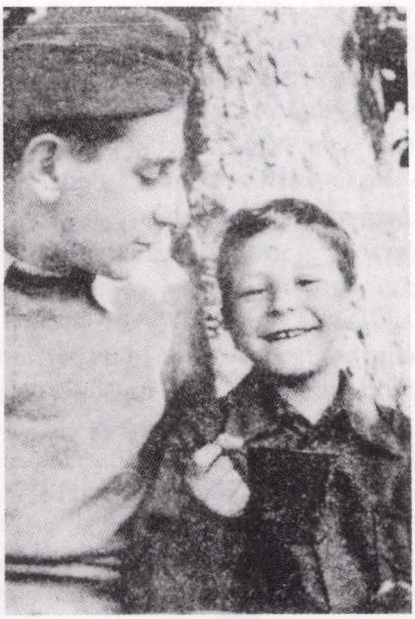
I particularly remember the scene when I said goodbye to my father. It was in the deportation yard from where Jews were sent to Treblinka. Father was left in the yard. Mother, my brothers and I were thrust into the synagogue, from where the transport was to depart. We were able to escape from there at dawn, but my brother Shmuel, HYD, was forcibly separated by the Germans. Mother's screams reverberate in my heart to this day. But they were to no avail. The next time we had to line up in the yard to complete the quota for the Treblinka transport, father saw to it that we were not sent to the yard, hiding us instead in an attic.

Mother pleaded with father to hide with us, but he refused. He said that everyone knew him and of his existence, and if he was not seen in the yard they would look for him and find hundreds of Jews who were hiding throughout the ghetto.

When mother and I came out of hiding in the attic, we no longer saw father. It was his last journey to Treblinka, and only a few survivors who came back from there, from the gas chambers, were able to tell us about his last speeches, his last words; "For you shall go out in joy," the confessional prayer he would recite in public, and the singing of Ani Maamim.

We were separated from our father and, a short time later, from our mother, who left us in the train station; only after the Shoah did we find out that she had died during the last months of the war in the Ravensbruck death camp, where she had died of hunger in the arms of a woman whom I met here in Israel.

I remained with a much older brother, who took the place of my parents, and



Naphtali Lavie and his brother in 1945 after the liberation from Buchenwald.

Many years later: Rabbi Lau, Chief Rabbi of Netanya; Naphtali Lavie, Senior aide to Moshe Dayan.





Israel Meir, the Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv since 1989.



Ambassador Naphtali Lavie, Consul General in New York, in the early eighties.

wandered with him from Piotrkow to Czestochowa and from there to the death camp at Buchenwald, Germany, leaving behind the ruins of houses, synagogues, public places, with towns and villages in flames. Jewish Europe disappeared without a trace, with only the remains of walls bearing silent testimony to what used to be. As Gebirtig's poem, "Brothers, Fire in the Village," expresses it, "There is fire, brothers, the fire is burning."

I was taken to Buchenwald by my brother inside a knapsack, for it was a camp for men, not for children. My brother took me there after he snatched me from a train that was going to Bergen Belsen so as not to leave me alone.

In Buchenwald we were first in Block 66, where Jews were kept. Conditions there were infernal. A Polish doctor, himself a prisoner, took pity on me and cut the letter "P" from the corpse of a Polish prisoner and sewed it on my clothes; thus I was transferred as a Polish child to Block 8, where Russian prisoners were kept, near the gate of the camp. There, conditions were much better. I met a Russian officer named Fiodor who took care of me like of a son and made sure I ate cereal or potato soup every day.

One day, while I was in the yard of Block 8, I saw a group of exhausted prisoners in striped uniforms, known as Musulmen, being dragged toward the camp's gate. Suddenly I heard one of them calling, "Lulek" (diminutive for Israel). It was my brother, whom I had left behind in Block 66, who was now being brought over with other persons to the train taking him to his last destination, the death train. He ran towards me, held out his hand across the barbed wire fence, and said, "I would like to talk to you openly. You are now a big boy (I was seven and a half); you are the last one remaining. I don't know if you will survive, or whether this hell will ever end. I am going away and I shall not return, but if it ever ends and you survive, remember that there is a place in the world called Eretz Israel, where you have an uncle. Ask them to take you there. Tell them your name and ask them to look for your uncle. They will find him by the name, and you will not be alone. I am going. Goodbye, Lulek."

I did not know what to say. If I had the right words for him at that time, I would

have said in Yiddish the words of the Song of the Partisans, which we know in Hebrew: "Do not say you are going on your last way."

As I said before, I am not going to attempt an investigation of the Shoah. I would like to point out to you so that you may believe that Jews stressed their singing, their faith, and clung to their heritage as much as they could, more than they stressed their pain and tears.

My story ends in Buchenwald on January 9, 1945; then I arrived with my brother, who was saved in spite of everything, in Eretz Israel, where I was born again. I carry everything in my head, I see and hear everything, but above all I hear the plea of the Martyrs: "Do not only remember six million dying to sanctify the Holy Name. Remember them living to sanctify the Name, with Shema Israel on their lips and Ani Maamim in their mouths. the voice of bursting faith—I believe with perfect faith."

Heidim

Remembrance of Things Past

It is not a question of remembrance but a state of being. . .
Marcel Proust

There were thousands listening silently in the Temple's sanctuary, and still thousands more standing outside Temple Emanu-El in the cold April wind, most of them survivors of the Holocaust. Many wept openly during the prayers of the memorial service for those who had perished in the death camps and who were killed fighting heroically in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

The moment New York's Governor, Hugh L. Carey, spoke, my curiosity was alerted at once. I had heard this timbre of voice before, with such distinctive diction that could be remembered even after many years. I was positive that when I had heard it, a long time ago, it had been only a fascinating sound without my understanding any of the words. I tried to explore the corners of my mind and to find out when and where I had heard this voice. Meanwhile, the Governor spoke:

"... We gather here today to commemorate the two momentous and heroic events in our modern history. This year marks the 30th anniversary since the US and Allied Forces liberated the Nazi concentration camps. And this year marks the 32nd anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

"Thirty years ago, as an officer in the US Army, I stood with other American soldiers before the gates of Nordhausen and witnessed the nightmarish horror of the slave camps and crematoriums. I inhaled the stench of death and barbaric, calculated cruelty. . . "

Nordhausen! A charming, red-roofed town in Turingen, Germany. . . . In the heart of the Hartz mountains—and in the middle of town an extermination camp, a long block of former military warehouses or garages surrounded by a barbed-wire fence.

I arrived there from K.L. Dora. No longer able to work, I was destined for extermination. Block No. 6 was a vast, bare structure where hundreds of subhuman beings with hollow faces and transparent bodies covered with striped rags were lying on the bare, concrete floor. There were no bunks, no blankets, not even straw or sand. Just cold concrete—day and night. Twice a day there was an "Appell" outside. After each "Appell," the Kapos carried away the corpses of those who had died of exhaustion or were killed.

In block No. 6, I met some people from my home town, Piotrkow. They told me about the sad fate of so many of my friends. In November 1944, a large group of men from Piotrkow, including myself, was sent to Czestochowa. After a short transition, some were transported to Buchenwald, then to Dora and finally to Nordhausen.

I was lucky. I was allowed to stay in Czestochowa four more weeks before going the same route. Four important weeks—a matter of life and death.

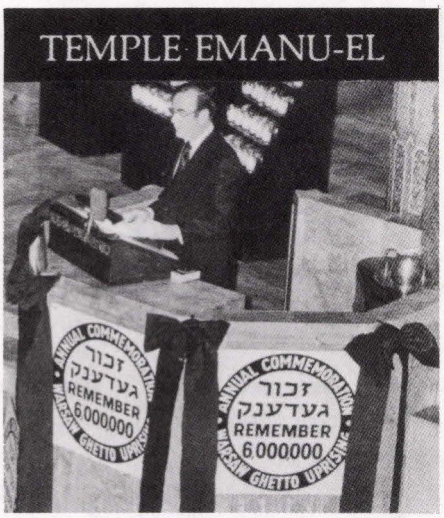
In block No. 6, I was told by Leon Nusenowicz how hard they all worked breaking tunnels into the mountains, building future V1 and V2 sites. He told me of the atrocities,

hunger and inhuman conditions. Strong, lion-like boys like Sioma Pikus or Leib Gliker perished there. Nordhausen seemed to have only one immutable law: "The only way out was up the chimney."

A shadow of a man approached: "Do you recognize me?" he asked. I helplessly said "No." He started to cry. This was "Red Isaac," once a Samson- like man, and I knew him well.

I recognized a neighbor, Mendel Windman (called Szmukler). He also cried when I asked him about his son, who was my friend. During the time I met others; Moshe Rubin, Baier, Itzek Tennenbaum the restaurateur, the Szlamowicz brothers.

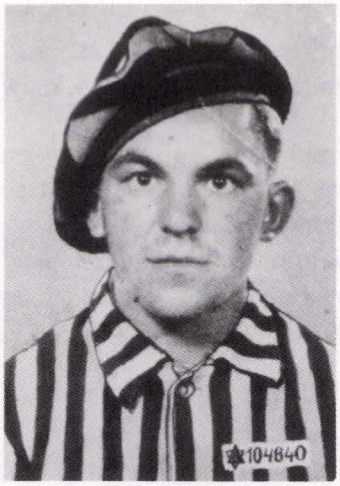
Meanwhile, the Kapos used fire hoses to clean the concrete of vermin and excrement. We had to wait until the floor was dry in order to lie down again. The late German winter of 1945 was vicious. The end of March was still icy and frosty.



GOVERNOR HUGH L. CAREY



Nordhausen, April 1945
Slain slave laborers at a V-bomb factory are stacked in the anonymity of mass death.



Charles (Shapse) Salomonowicz after liberation. The survivor of K.L. Dora–Nordhausen.

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Mr. Ben Giladi
Editor
New Bulletin
135-30 82nd Avenue
Kew Gardens, New York 11435

July 20, 1989

Dear Mr. Giladi:

Thanks so much for sending me the "Remembrance of Things Past."

Since we in a free country tend to take things for granted, being reminded of the surrounding circumstances of war and the less fortunate makes one again realize that Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness are the most precious things we as humans have. And it is to that end we must uphold all that is good and moral in this country.

Thank you again for taking the time to write.

Sincerely,

HLC/ek

A letter from the former Governor of New York State, the liberator of K.L. Dora–Nordhausen.

One day, during the "Appell," we were delighted to see the sky streaked by little metal crosses, which sparkled in the sun like diamonds set in platinum. The hum of engines sounded. The Liberators had arrived.

The wailing of sirens was interrupted by explosions. The bombers dived one by one, spreading destruction. Each bomb that fell devastated everything in sight, leaving only huge craters and a sea of flames. This was unbelievable! The Allied Forces had bombarded the camp!

One of the tragic mistakes of the cruel war was that, when the smoke had settled, about 90 percent of the inmates were buried under the debris.

I was alone, miraculously unhurt, half deaf from the explosions. Some of the buildings were still afire. The SS ran away. The camp became a no-man's land. I walked among the ruins looking for food. Some stronger survivors were already eating all kinds of things. They guarded their precious possessions closely. I was still hungry.

Suddenly, I stopped. The view ahead seemed like a fairy tale. A large SS Kantina building was split wide open by a bomb. Every floor was loaded with different victuals. A room full of bread; another one of cheese; still another of sausages. There were shelves loaded with margarine, boxes of conserved food, noodles, candles, jars of preserves, wines. . . The picture was the ultimate in surrealism.

"And to think" I said to myself bitterly, "All this was so near us all the time."

Exhausted and hardly moving, I joined forces with a smart little peasant boy, who happened to be from Gazomia, a little village near Piotrkow, Poland. We found two

blankets and, little by little, gathered all the necessary food. Pulling the blankets, we went a little outside the camp and settled in a hole created by a heavy bomb explosion. We covered the top of the hole with some wood and earth for camouflage. We were just in time: the SS returned from the municipal bunkers and rounded up the rest of the survivors who had not hidden. They were taken away to Dora. Those captured were to go through the deadly journey to Bergen-Belsen.

April 11, 1945. The day was ending and already the shadows of twilight cast a red tint on the naked, battered brick walls of the ruins. We crawled out from our hole and were standing with a few of the inmates from other bunkers near the main entrance of the camp. And then, all of a sudden, a convoy of jeeps, command cars and Red Cross ambulances appeared in the dark.

This was the first image of our liberation!—The olive-drab shadows with spotted capes and helmets embellished with leaves and branches, moving cautiously from the vehicles, submachine guns in one hand, grenades in the other. They appeared stalwart, unafraid.

The GI's became aware of our presence. They saw the multitude of skeletons, a gigantic scene of death. One of them, apparently the commanding officer, gave orders rapidly to all the others.

The language sounded heavenly. There was a distinctive timbre of voice full of authority but also full of concern and compassion. A voice that could never be forgotten. . .

The army interpreter briefed us. In a matter of hours, all the survivors were carried by stretcher to an American field hospital and tended gently with magnificent devotion in order to bring us back to life.

"I made a vow as I stood there at Nordhausen, face to face with the survivors of death, that as long as I live, I will fight for peace, for the rights of mankind and against any form of hate, bias and prejudice. . ."

These words of Governor Carey, as he spoke, suddenly became very special to me.

So, Mr.Governor. You and your fellow soldiers had come at the risk of your lives, into an unknown country, for the sake of unknown people, bringing us the most precious thing in the world: the gift of freedom.

Today, I finally know your name.

Ben Giladi
New Bulletin

Yidele

Ben Giladi

Yidele was four months old when, on October 13, 1942, the suspense in the Ghetto of Piotrkow reached its climax. The next morning, at about 2 a.m., Ukrainian squads, the Einsatz Kommando, and the Polish Blue Police took up positions around the ghetto. His father, with the other men of his family, was already in the barracks of the Bugaj factory. They were among the so-called "legal" Jews who worked with the Germans. His mother, along with other women and children, went into hiding. As the people were driven out of their houses toward their last journey to Treblinka, a group of about 50 souls lay in wait in a bunker—an attic in a house located on Rynek Trybunalski 10. The baby Yidele, resting securely in his mother's arms, was among them.

The dreadful days went by. Outside, men, women and children were hunted down. Cellars and attics were searched; shots came from everywhere. The people in the bunker could only wait and pray. Sarah Henechowicz, Yidele's mother, had a little "primus" warmer and was able to prepare food for her infant. The action lasted eight days. On the ninth day, the shooting outside subsided. Now, another ear-piercing sound was heard; it was the cry of the baby. Yidele was hungry. There was no more milk. Sarah cradled him in her arms but to no avail. The child cried on and on.

The elders of the hiding place had a hushed discussion. They decided to silence the baby by strangulation in order to save the other souls. Sarah, alerted by her cousin Szeina, wouldn't let the child out of her arms. The fierce crying became a whimper; the baby was totally exhausted.



Rynek Trybunalski. Arrow indicates the house where Yidele and his family were hidden

Outside, the meticulous bunker search was raging on. The Germans were able to uncover one bunker after another by a perfidious method. Yoyne, of the "Judische Ordnungsdienst," would approach the cellars and attics and shout in Yiddish that the coast was clear, that he had come to help with food and water. Many Jews foolishly responded. Once a bunker was located, the horrible fate of the hidden was sealed.



Yidele in Finland shortly after the war.

At the end of the second week the bunker on Rynek was uncovered. The people were taken away to the basement on Garncarska, later to be sent to the synagogue, Tomaszow and Treblinka. As the captives were passing Starowarszawska, Sarah spotted Symche Dovid, her husband, standing inside the little ghetto behind the barbed wire. With one swift movement, she threw the baby into his father's arms. Symche Dovid, clutching the boy quickly, vanished from sight and into the entrance of the Chaml Orners building. The SS escort didn't notice the incident but the Jewish Police inside did. They ran after Dovid in hot pursuit.

The father reached the attic. There he pushed Yidele deep into some heaps of loose straw. Then he quickly ran downstairs just in time to avoid his oppressors. The police looked everywhere. With their long clubs they sifted through the straw. The child didn't utter a cry. Somehow, they didn't find him. Late that night, the father secretly brought Yidele down from the attic to his living quarters. The baby was safe, so far.

There was also a nine-year-old girl in the bunker. She was Yidele's relative and her name was Gutka. She and her mother Szeina were taken away with all the others to the temporary jail in the cellar of Flattau's house. She was in a less fortunate position than Yidele. She already understood what was going on. She saw a little stray dog running and said to a Polish Blue Policeman, "How I envy this little dog, he at least has his freedom." Then she asked the man, "Do you have children? Why do you take me? I didn't do anything bad." And then she asked her mother, "Does it hurt when you are shot? If it does not hurt too much then let them shoot us so that we can get out of this agony."

Mother and daughter were taken to the synagogue the next day. A few hours before the deportation to Treblinka, they escaped. It was a one-in-a-thousand chance. For a huge sum of money, a policeman let them out through a narrow back window. From there they were on their own. They ran from house to house; all were empty now. Their biggest obstacle was crossing the cruelly lit, heavily patrolled streets. Painfully they crossed Jerozolimska, sneaked through Zamkowa, Pereca and, gasping, made it to the barbed-wire fence of the little ghetto. With the guards at the other end, they somehow crawled under the barbed wire. Shots followed but they were lucky. In the next few minutes, breathless and full of scratches, they knocked on the door of their husband and father's room—the room where Yidele was.

Hearing the knock, Symche Dovid said, "This could only be my cousin Szeina, she

is a born survivor." Gutka tearfully fell into her father's arms. One of the first things that Szeina did was to give Yidele a bath. But their troubles were not yet over. They were still considered illegal and had to stay in hiding.

After the deportation, only 2,000 "legal" Jews remained in the little Ghetto. They worked for the Germans. The Judenrat, the Jewish Police and their families also remained. Some of the people who were spared worked at the "Befehlstelle," cleaning out the houses. Hundreds were still illegal and in hiding.

Yidele was kept hidden most of the time. He was tended to by his father, grandfather, and uncles, who worked alternate shifts. Szeina and her daughter spent hours in a cellar full of rats or in a closet. Once, during an "Action," a searching policeman actually felt Gutka's shoe as she was standing in the closet.

During November and December 1942, a new wave of "Actions" swept the ghetto. All the illegals were rounded up, among them Szeina and Gutka. More than 500 were amassed in the synagogue, where they were subjected to atrocious treatment. They were deprived of food, water and sanitary facilities. Barbarous scenes occurred inside and outside, where the oppressors took children and burned them alive; soon after the illegals were taken to nearby Rakow woods and shot. In the last moments, Szeina and Gutka were saved by their relatives and returned to the little Ghetto.

Yidele was spared this time. His father literally put him in his huge breast pocket and went to work with the baby. From then on, during the dangerous actions, he used this method of protection. How he managed to persevere and keep the child is inexplicable.

After the Rakow action, Szeina and Gutka became "legal" and started to work at the "Befehlstelle." As the only woman in the decimated family, Szeina took a large part in taking care of Yidele.

In July 1943 Piotrkow was officially declared "Judenrein." With the liquidation of the small Ghetto, the remaining people were divided into three groups. One group was sent to Blizin, the second was sent to Kara and Hortensia glass factory, and the third group, among them Yidele and his family, were taken to the Bugaj wood factory, now called Di–Fi.

During the time spent at Bugaj, Yidele began to walk, but with difficulty. he was the baby in the camp and everybody loved him. Luckily, being the only two-year-old among the workers,he was somehow accepted by Dietrich and Fisher, the camp fuhrers. Yidele was growing fast. He was constantly roaming around the barracks and searching for food. He loved meat. When, on rare occasions, the camp kitchen rationed a meager portion of this precious nourishment, Yidele was delirious and greeted Szeina and the others coming from work in his strange baby talk, shouting, "Mama taish—Mama taish," which in his language meant "meat."

Symche Dovid, his father, and two brothers worked the afternoon shift and tended to the boy in the morning. Szeina worked the first shift and, as the woman, did her best to feed and wash the child upon returning from work. Understandably, the harsh life of Bugaj deprived the child of decent, constant care and he was on his own for many hours. A little angelic, sometimes dirty, face with lively brown eyes shrewdly appraised the cruel outside world. Many times he had to make a judgement as an adult would.

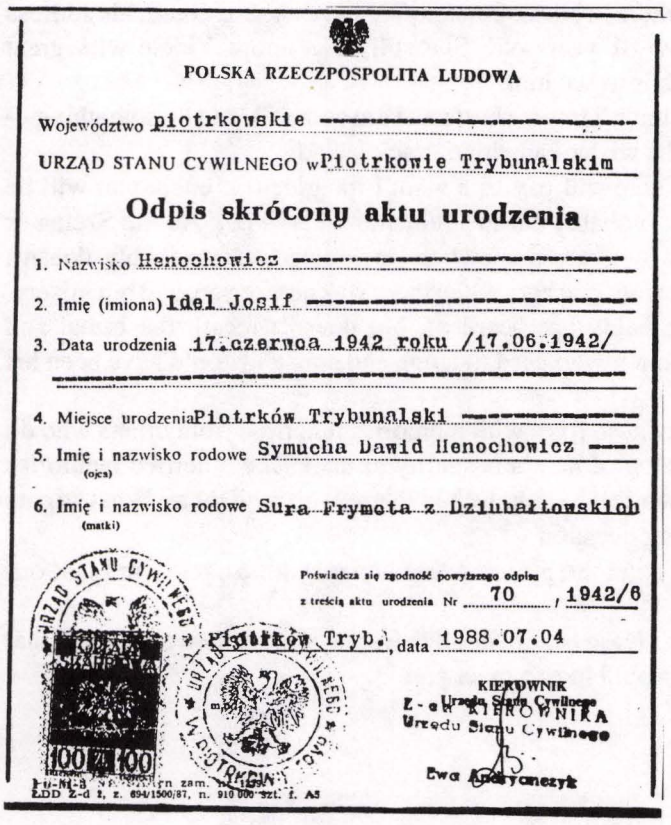
In November of 1944, as the Russian Army advanced into Poland, the last Jews of Piotrkow were deported. Some were sent to Czestochowa and the rest, including Yidele, were sent to Buchenwald Concentration Camp. In Buchenwald the child was taken away from his father. Symche Dovid was frantic and feared the worst. One day he was in such a low state of mind that he disobeyed the guard's orders and was killed on the spot. Meanwhile, Yidele was taken to Barrack no. 63, where the red-headed Gustav, a Jewish Communist from France, was the "Blokalteste." This barrack contained only children, who were treated better by the mostly political camp inmates.

Yidele, being the youngest, became the pet of all the Kapos and other leading camp figures who were longing for their own children. He quickly learned the German language and became the youngest inmate in Buchenwald's history.

In the early spring of 1945, Yidele and some other youngsters were sent to the death camps in Bergen-Belsen. There the women caretakers were also taken with Yidele's childish charms and took him under their care. The conditions at Bergen-Belsen were horrible. The typhoid epidemic was rampant and Yidele became acutely ill. Only by sheer luck did he survive.

In April 1945 the British Army liberated Bergen-Belsen. Yidele, the Holocaust survivor, was not even three years old.

Szeina and her daughter were also deported to Bergen-Belsen from Ravensbruck. After all the struggles and immense suffering, liberation finally came. They found Yidele



POLSKA RZECZPOSPOLITA LUDOWA

Województwo piotrkowskie

URZĄD STANU CYWILNEGO w Piotrkowie Trybunalskim

Odpis skrócony aktu urodzenia

1. Nazwisko Henochowicz
2. Imię (imiona) Idel Josif
3. Data urodzenia 17 czerwca 1942 roku /17.06.1942/
4. Miejsce urodzenia Piotrków Trybunalski
5. Imię i nazwisko rodowe (ojca) Symucha Dawid Henochowicz
6. Imię i nazwisko rodowe (matki) Sura Frymeta z Dziubałtowskich

Poświadcza się zgodność powyższego odpisu z treścią aktu urodzenia Nr 70 / 1942/6

Piotrków Tryb., data 1988.07.04

KIEROWNIK
Z-ca KIEROWNIKA
Urzędu Stanu Cywilnego

Ewa [illegible]

The birth certificate of Yidele obtained just recently. Amazingly, four months before deportations the Polish municipality still recorded the only birth in the ghetto.

in the Kinderheim, tended by English nurses. The boy greeted them happily; he called Szeina "Mama" and asked them to stay with him. This was impossible. Szeina tried to carry the boy away but was caught and sternly reprimanded by the authorities. The child's father's cousin was not a close enough relation. Yidele was sent to Sweden for adoption. A few weeks later, his real Uncles Morris and Wolf Henechowicz arrived at Bergen-Belsen, but the boy was already in Scandinavia.

Years passed. Szeina, her husband Jacob, and Gutka settled in Israel in a Moshav called Gan Hashomron. In 1951 there was an addition to their family—I married Gutka. In 1952 our daughter Iris was born.

In Gan Hashomron there was an Olim group from Finland. We heard from them about Yidele. He had been adopted by a Jewish attorney who lived in Finland. We were told that Mr. and Mrs. Maslovat, his present parents, simply adored the child. We wrote to the Maslovat family and their response was prompt, with a picture of Yidele enclosed. A few weeks later Mr. Maslovat, a refined, elegant gentleman, paid us a visit. He spoke of the boy with great love and compassion. He promised to bring Yidele with him on his next visit. But this never came to pass. Szeina constantly spoke about the boy and her wish was to meet him again.

His uncles, Morris and Wolf, settled in Toronto,. Morris became a wealthy manufacturer and traveled extensively. He established contact with the Finnish family and visited Yidele in the sixties at a college in London. Yidele, we heard, has become an engineer, married and is now a father. He is 38 years old. To the best of our knowledge, he now resides with his family somewhere in North Canada. We have tried to obtain his address but to no avail. Szeina is now 81 years old. She still talks about Yidele with great compassion. Her greatest wish is to see him.

The subject is indeed touching. Time is short and I am compelled to do something—anything—in order to fulfill the wish of an elder, gracious lady.

I do hope that one day Yidele will pay us a visit. I imagine this encounter will be fascinating and rewarding. He probably doesn't remember his father, Auntie Szeina or the others in his family. His roots are somewhere in Finland. He probably doesn't remember a time and place, not too long ago, when there was nothing around but misery, death and destruction. He probably has heard of, but doesn't recall, the brutal and senseless murders of little children who used to laugh and sing and could have been his playmates.

Yidele, a child of the Holocaust, lives with memories inherited from others who do remember the most horrible time of man's bestiality to man. The inherited memories could not be anything other than real to him; he had to grow up with them. What stigma have they left? That's a burning question.

I do know that I *cannot* forget the past and that he *must* not forget it and that our children *shall* be reminded.

Yidele, wherever you are: Please bear in mind that somewhere there are people that remember you, love you and would like to meet you.

Straight From the Heart

Not until a while ago did I receive Yidele's address from his uncle, Morris Henechowicz of Toronto. The address was a secluded place somewhere in British Columbia. I forwarded the Bulletin with an explanatory letter to that address and waited.

It started the way almost everything starts these days—with a phone call. It was Yidele at the other end; the moment was rather touching. His diction was British, refined and distinctive. Our conversation was brief and filled with emotion. Guta told him that Szeina was seriously ill and asked him to visit us soon. His response was positive and humane: "I will see what I can do," he said. "First I will write you about my life, my family and myself." A few days later the letter came. The following are some excerpts:

> "Dear friends:
>
> "I thank you greatly for your letter and the enclosed bulletin. In reading, so many different emotions went through me, anything from shock to amazement to horror, to puzzlement; but more than anything, I was moved by the help I received from total strangers and relatives who enabled me to survive those first horrible years. Thank you. I will be able to thank you in person, as I will be arriving at JFK airport on May 31, 1982.
>
> "In the meantime, I will tell you some of the things that have happened to me since 1945. I remember very little of my early childhood. I was adopted in 1946 by a couple who lived in Helsinki, Finland. Sam was a lawyer and Minna a housewife. I believe I had TB in those days and was under excellent medical care. I started at the Jewish school in 1948. I thought of myself as an average child who broke the usual number of windows and got into the usual mischief. I knew that I was adopted and it bothered me, although I never really discussed it. I was never told of my past. In 1956, we all agreed that I would go to England for the summer to learn English. I was good in science and mathematics and decided to continue studies in engineering. I was graduated from London University in 1964.
>
> "After studies, I had returned to Finland for about a year to do my compulsory army service. I moved to Canada in 1966 and for the first eight months, I stayed in Toronto and got to know Willie, Morris, and their families. They certainly made my change to a new country and culture a lot easier. My company transferred me to Edmonton, I met Maria and we married in 1967. Our daughter Carrina was born in 1969 and our son Dana in 1971.
>
> "Up till 1976, I worked as an engineer in computers. We wanted a different lifestyle and therefore left Edmonton looking for such a thing. A life where we could grow our own food, do our own

building, and all in all, be more responsible for our lives. We were extremely lucky and found what we both considered to be close to paradise. The next town to us (4,000 population) is 5 miles from us. Our community has perhaps 300 people spread over 5–6 square miles. We have a good garden, fruit trees, and some livestock. I make pottery, Maria is a weaver. In addition, both of us have commitments in the various clubs and organizations where we live. Our day usually starts at 7:30 a.m. and ends at 11:00 p.m. without a break for coffee. But we enjoy it and do not lock our doors and we know our neighbors.

"As you see, I have a relatively full life but one that I am by and large very happy with. I will go into more details when I see you. Looking forward to meeting you,

Yours
Yidele"

We waited for Yidele at the airport. Our daughter Iris was with us, sharing the anticipation and excitement. When he emerged from the plane, we greeted each other warmly. From the first moment, the spark of understanding was apparent.

At our home, the meeting with Szeina was indeed touching. Yidele understood a little Yiddish but could not speak. Somehow, they both communicated very nicely. The first evening was devoted to memories and photographs. We told him about his parents and his turbulent childhood; he told us about his young years in Finland, his family and his present life.

Yidele came to us from a small, secluded place but his knowledge of the world was universal. Any subject discussed—art, history, science, music, ecology, etc.—was tackled impressively by his systematic mind.

In the daytime he explored New York; he knew more about the Big Apple than a native New Yorker. To join him on a tour of the city was a pleasure. In the Metropolitan Museum one could enjoy his guidance on how to look at a painting by a great master. When we visited the galleries or even Macy's pottery department, one could see what a fine artist he really was. His sensitive hands could feel every irregularity or unnecessary thickness in the pottery displayed. He explained the secrets of pottery making. We could now compare some pieces on display with the artcraft he gave us as a gift. The objects he created were thin, beautifully shaped and of high quality.

One day we went to a Broadway matinee. The show we saw was "Amadeus." It was an excellent show, enjoyable in anyone's company. With Yidele, however, it was an experience. He understood and felt the story better than an average theater-goer would. His knowledge of Mozart was amazing. He actually predicted which musical motif would be used, whether it was "The Magic Flute," "Requiem" or a famous concerto.

In our backyard Yidele introduced me to the wonders of nature. He showed me how to trim a bush, how to prune a tree, and how to tend the grass properly. Every plant in the garden was familiar to him. The greenery shown to me through his eyes now had a certain new dimension.

Evenings were mostly devoted to the past. Our conversation revolved around what happened in the ghetto and the chronology of events. His determination to learn as much as possible was intense.

There were also precious moments when our grandsons, Jason and Evan, aged ten and seven, listened to the stories of another child's (Yidele's) heartbreaking experiences, while clinging to Yidele and putting their heads on his lap with the utmost confidence and admiration.

On Sunday, we took our guest to the Association's meeting. There he met many Piotrkower who knew his parents. The image of the cherished past emerged untarnished by the years.

On the last evening, we all sat watching the Tony Awards on TV. Yidele was relaxed and hummed practically every Broadway hit song that came along. Then he suddenly said, "Thank you for this truly magnificent experience. I came to New York looking for family, but I feel that I leave having also found friends. Friends that are caring, warm and affectionate and have their historical roots in the same place as mine. Thank you again."

For us these words were an expression of extreme value and they gave us a feeling of immense gratification.

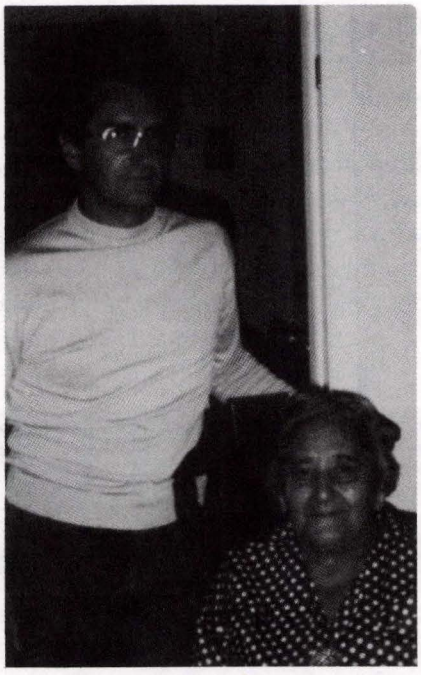
When the time came to say good-bye, we too felt we were parting with a very good friend and not with a person that we had met only a few days before. Seconds later, when Yidele was on his way to the plane, the world already seemed duller. Our last wave and glance came straight from the heart.

New Bulletin



Yidele at the age of 13 in Finland.

Julius Maslovat (Yidele) and Szeina Flatto in New York during his first visit in 1982.



The Gathering

Reflections and Observations

Washington D.C. 1983

Alex Rosenblum—New York
(Second Generation)

I still don't know exactly why I chose to attend the Gathering. Perhaps I'll never know. Nevertheless, the Gathering was exciting, spiritually uplifting, and full of sad and joyous moments. The following is a recounting of some of these moments.

During the second day, I was attending a seminar involving the Second Generation. A young woman and man sat down near me and began a conversation with the person next to me. During their conversation, the young woman and man stated that they were brother and sister, living in Louisville, Kentucky, and that their father was a survivor. When asked from which town their father came, the young woman replied, "It's a small town in Poland, you never heard of it, called Piotrkow."

My heart skipped a beat. I quickly introduced myself and we excitedly discussed our backgrounds. Soon Janet and Ben introduced me to their father, Abe Jakubowicz, and I, in turn, introduced him to the numerous Piotrkower attending the Gathering.

What made the moment so special was the feeling of affinity that we immediately felt for each other. Although we were total strangers, our common background and heritage transcended our differences. We were the children of the survivors of Piotrkow, and, as such, a bond was immediately formed.

At this seminar there were at least 400 members of the Second Generation. The seminar had just begun when someone entered and informed the audience that a doctor was urgently needed in another room. Immediately, several people rose and hurriedly left the room. I couldn't help but think that here, at the seminar attended by sons and daughters of Jews who endured the worst moment in history, were probably enough doctors to staff a large, modern hospital.

At the dedication at the Capitol, I stood next to a very old woman from Germany.



On the podium: among the distinguished guests with President Reagan and the First Lady are two of our Piotrkower—Rabbi Israel Lau and Cantor Isaac Goodfriend.



Rabbi Lau with Jack and Mira Birnbaum of Boston.

She seemed to enjoy the fact that near her was a group of young people. Suddenly she interrupted them.

"Is anyone here a doctor?" she asked in a serious voice. A concerned young man immediately stepped forward and offered assistance.

"Will you please take my picture?" she asked pleasantly and handed him a camera without waiting for an answer.

The doctor seemed more confused than annoyed. He began to scold her when the old woman, with a twinkle in her eye, asked him "Wouldn't you rather take my picture than treat me in an emergency?"

He gladly took several photographs.

There were numerous emotional reunions of old friends and distant relatives. People walked aimlessly around with large signs asking the whereabouts of long-lost relatives. A reporter from Virginia told me of the bittersweet reunion of a couple married before the War. Both survived, believed the other dead, and remarried and had children. They found each other on Tuesday, April 11, 1983.

The people were captivated by Rabbi Israel Lau. As a child, he survived Bergen Belsen and was not chief rabbi of Natanya and an international figure. Wherever the Rabbi went, he was surrounded by people who wanted to talk to him, hear his words or just shake his hand. On Tuesday, about 18 or so Piotrkower had gathered to take some photographs. On our invitation, the Rabbi stopped by to say hello and to pose with us for pictures. The crowds followed us for pictures. The crowds followed him to our small group. I asked someone to take some photographs quickly. When I stopped posing and looked around, our small group of 18 Piotrkower was lost in a crowd of about 50 people, who were posing with Rabbi Lau.

I was very disappointed by the fact that not one of the survivors chose to speak in Yiddish. They all spoke of passing on the legacy to the second generation; yet, they all spoke in English. Sam Gejdenson, 33-year-old Congressman from Connecticut and the

son of survivors, addressed the 8,000 people gathered at the Capitol on Wednesday. In beautiful, flawless Yiddish he spoke of his background and his pleasure at being involved in the Gathering. The audience loved his speech.

> Benjamin Meed:
> "Soon, we—the witnesses—will all be gone. . . Our sons and daughters will carry forward our legacy of pride, of heroism, of an obligation to keep the memory alive, and to warn the world again and again—don't let this happen again."

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE PIOTRKOW TRYBUNALSKI RELIEF ASSOCIATION

THE SECOND GENERATION

As the heirs of the six million Jews and twenty thousand Jews of Piotrkow who died during the Holocaust, and as the sons and daughters of those who survived its horrors, we pledge to forging our future by remembering our past.The second generation committed to the oneness of the Jewish people, to the solidarity with Israel,to the fundamental principles of universal freedom, justice, democracy and equality. Our central goals are to perpetuate the authentic memory of the Holocaust and prevent its recurrence, to perpetuate our common background, to strengthen and preserve our spiritual, ideological and cultural heritage, to fight all manifestations of anti-Semitism, and other forms of racial, ethnic or religious hatred, and to raise our collective voices on behalf of all human beings, Jews and non-Jews alike, who suffer from discrimination, persecution and oppression anywhere in the world.

Together with our parents, we shall perpetuate the memory of the Holocaust and Piotrkow and we shall ensure that no similar cataclysm will ever again be allowed to befall mankind. That is a fundamental purpose of our being.

New Bulletin

The Unsung Heroes

. . . for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the land of your possession ye shall grant a redemption for the land.

The word of God is given to Moses in *Leviticus*

In the wake of the awful pogroms and persecutions of Jews at the turn of the 19th century, the Jewish People of the Pale groped desperately for an answer. This was the time when in many corners of ghettos and shtetlach, a new voice was heard from people who called themselves "Hovevey Zion."

Their motto; "Beth Yakov Lechu Venelekh," which in transliteration became "Bilu," guided the first settlers to the Promised Land. They grew in leaps and bounds.

In the Sharon they founded Petach Tikva. In the Galilee they founded Rosh Pina. In Samaria they founded Zichron Yakov. And soon, all over the Ishuv, the amazing posts called Kibbutzim started to sprout.

After World War I, Zionist youth movements started to flourish in Poland. Hashomer



The unsung Heroes of Ein Hachoresh. From the left: Menucha Reuveni (Rubinstein), Szulim Reuveni, Varad Zviri (Konstantynowski), Regina Ben Yakov (Jakubowicz), Lea Kaminer (Weintreter), Lea Amrami (Zygmuntowicz) and Zeev Amrami. *(Hazorim Bedimah—Berinah Ikceru)!*

Hatzair and Gordonia, Freihait, Hanoar Hatzioni and Betar. Also in Piotrkow, scores of young people found their new world in the "Kens, the Isbas and Locals." They learned; they sang of Zion; they danced the Hora; they dreamt of Canaan.

From the Bnei Midbar, Ankorim, and Kwirim through the Tzofim and Bogrim, some reached the hard and demanding life on Hachshara. After all this, the ultimate reward was a British certificate of immigration to Palestine.

No bed of roses was waiting for them there. They found hard labor and malaria, the desert sun and scarce food. "Homa Umigdal" they called the era. In the midst of night, they would move up to a post and build a watchtower and a stockade in order to be protected from Arab bullets. Then, painfully, they started to build a life within. A beautiful song, "Two Letters," originated in those time. "Al niar lavan," it begins... The snow-white letter from the terribly sick mother in the Galuth calling her son home; the other letter, a grey sheet of paper from the Halutz, who, with tears in his eyes, refuses to abandon his dream and will not return.

The time has come to pay tribute and honor the Halutzim of Piotrkow, co-founders of Israel, for their devotion and their sacrifice. They are now respected senior members in the following Kibbutzim though, (alas!, some are no longer among us): Salek Horowicz* and Franka Konstantynowska in Kibbutz Messiloth; Abram Milsztein and Itshak Grossberg* in Ein Shemer; Cvi and Sara Zygmuntowicz, Yehoshua and Hanka Zigelman,* and Shlomo Bogdanski* in Negba; Regina Jakubowicz, Vered Konstantynowski, Leah Weintreter, Leah Zygmuntowicz and Shalom Rubinstein in Ein Hachoresh; Itka Kaminska in Beth Zera; Shmuel Sherman in Lehavot Habashan; Shlomo Majzner* and Badana Katzenelson in Maaleh Hachamishah; Andzia Brem in Kibbutz Galon.

There are many others. It would be so good to mention their names. So, Dear Friends! We salute you and wish you health and happiness for many years to come!

*Deceased

New Bulletin—Ben Giladi

A LETTER FROM THE UNSUNG HEROES IN KIBBUTZ EIN HACHORESH

Dear Ben:
We all left Piotrkow when you were a little boy. . . We all are really glad to be contacted and that you found time to write these words about the times of Halutziut and Hityashvut.
We do sent our warmest "Drishat Shalom" to all our landsleit everywhere. . .

Lea Zygmuntowicz Amrami

My name now is Varad Zviri (Konstantynowski). I am a widow with 3 children and 7 grandchildren. We came here in 1932 with

Aliah B. The first Piotrkower came in 1929. Our first base was in Hedera. When we went on Hityashvut, we were living in metal (tin) huts. . . The first house of 2 stories was built for our children. The structure was called the house of safety. The grave malaria epidemic proved a horrible experience. It took us more than a year to recuperate. Our Kibbutz grew and developed during the years—where there was a desert, houses are standing and gardens are now blooming.

We all enjoyed the Bulletin very much. It brought so many memories. . . We came here as youngsters; now we are all 78 plus. . . We still work part-time for our beloved Kibbutz. . .

Varad Zviri (Konstantynowski)

Report From Israel

The Annual Memorial and the Unveiling of the Scroll of Immortalization at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem

Moshe Ish-Horowicz, Tel Aviv

On November 17, 1985 (4th Kislev 5746), an assembly of about 400 survivors of Piotrkow Trybunalski, and vicinity gathered from all over Israel at Yad Vashem. They took part in a most touching and dignified Annual Remembrance Day, combined with the Unveiling of the unique Scroll of Immortalization of the names of our Martyrs who perished in the Holocaust.

Amidst mourning and silence, Mrs. Henia Grinberg unveiled the Scroll of Parchment placed in a special niche in the Hall of Names. Rabbi Israel Meir Lau read out his introduction inscribed in the Scroll. A children's choir opened and concluded this first part of the program.

The annual Remembrance ceremony for our Martyrs followed under the chairmanship of Mr. Moshe Ish-Horowicz. At the dais were also seated Mrs. Henia Grinberg, Dr. I. Arad of Yad Vashem and—for the first time together at our Hazkarah, the two distinguished brothers, Rabbi I. M. Lau, the chief Rabbi of Netanya, and Mr. Naftali Lavie, Director General of UJA in Israel and former Ambassador from Israel to New



Rabbi Lau dedicates the Megila



Guta and Ben Giladi at Megilat Piotrkow.

York: both prominent sons of the last Chief Rabbi of Piotrkow, the late Moshe Hayim Lau.

The Hall was filled beyond capacity. In solemnity and sorrow, the Chairman welcomed the Assembly and Mrs. Grinberg began the dignified and emotional ceremony. Six candles were lit by members of the Second Generation in memory of the Six Million Martyrs of the Holocaust, and a roll of Honor was called for our townsmen who had died in Israel and abroad during the last year. After a minute's silence in their memory, Dr. Arad and Rabbi Lau addressed the meeting.

The impressive day was concluded in the Tent of Remembrance of Yad Vashem. A guard of honor stood by the symbolic location of Treblinka and Auschwitz. The flame was kindled and, after the service and El Mole Rachamim, the Kaddish intoned by Rabbi Lau echoed in the ears and souls of the assembled.

Never before have the words of the Hatikvah rung more true and full of promise than at the end of this inspiring Day. This Remembrance Tribute did honor to the Assembly, the Society and, most of all, to our Holy Martyrs, to whose Memory it was dedicated.

New Bulletin

Roman Mogilanski (Abram Mogilaner) Z.L.

Dr. Michael Lubliner—Los Angeles



Roman Mogilanski
(1913–1982)

It is heart breaking, as well as a cruel and bizarre irony of fate, that Roman Mogilanski, the initiator and planner of this anthology, its editor and fund-raiser, was not privileged to see it published or to leaf through its pages, tenderly and proudly. His sudden and unexpcted passing caught him in the midst of the hard work of completing this anthology. He went through all its birth pangs: the laborious screening of materials and the painstaking search for new, authentic documents pertaining to the ghettos of Poland during the blackest years in Jewish history—from the end of 1939 through 1944. He established contacts with reliable institutions, at home and abroad; he sought out highly placed dignitaries, and, with his personal charm, managed to obtain valuable papers and records. His initial successes were accompanied by setbacks and disappoinments. Yet, in spite of all obstacles, he went on with his work boldly and arduously, weathering all impediments, and even finding eminent scholars to contribute to the anthology.

Roman addressed himself to the "walking documents," the survivors, upon whom it is incumbent to perpetuate the memory of our martyrs by setting up proper monuments, not only of marble and stone, but written ones. "Righteous men need no tombstones, for their words in themselves are their memorial (Jerusalem Talmud, *Shekalim,* 2,5). One must not tarry with the realization of this project, because our walk is slowing down. Let us not forget that "life (the life we know) has never given us a round-trip ticket. . ." Roman became more eager to speed it up, noticing that the passing of time diminishes the memory of tragic experiences and that the once vociferous condemnation and the unparalleled atrocities by their nefarious Nazi perpetrators were subsiding. (This was before "holocaust" and "survivor" had become household words in the United States.)

His idea of refreshing our memory was to introduce us to the cataclysmic and grueling trials of the ghettos of Poland, whose Jews—the heart and soul of the world's Jewry—were crammed, sadistically tortured and tormented. Needless to say, these ghettos were designed as stepping stations to the death camps and mass extermination, which took place as the "civilized" world stood by undisturbed.

Roman reasoned that the retelling of these stories, accompanied by heartrending facts, would be a stimulus for recalling what happened to our people during the Holocaust, keeping us alert and sensitive to any attempt to infringe upon our rights or weaken the state of Israel, whose vigorous and independent existence is the surest guarantee against the repetition of a holocaust, wherever and in whatever guise it may occur.

We are the nation of Yizkor, which has survived and outlived all those who have endeavored to destroy us, and this only by remembering, looking back and clinging tenaciously to the past. It is possible to glimpse life, according to Kierkegaard, only when one looks backwards, but to live it requires a forward look.

We have been commanded to remember two events that happened during the formative years of our nationhood. The first is the Exodus from Egypt, which began with slave-labor and culminated with the casting of male Hebrew infants into the Nile. The second is the unprovoked attack by the Amalekites on the Israelites—who had just taken their first breath of freedom after centuries of bondage—in which only the feeble and defenseless were attacked.

While the punishment of Egypt was mitigated by the prohibition against hating them (because, after all, we had been guests in their land for many years—see Deuteronomy 23.8), there is no letup in the ongoing war against Amalek, "from generation to generation." We are commanded to blot out any trace of Amalekism (see Exodus 17.14–16, Deuteronomy 25.17–19) as if it were an infestation of poisonous germs.

The requirement to maintain the memory in writing, besides retelling it, may have served Roman, consciously or intuitively, as a pattern for his project. Himself a ghetto and concentration-camp survivor, hardly recovered from torture and misery, Roman enlisted in the dedicated army that pledged to fight Amalekism in any form and to keep the memory of the Holocaust alive by harnessing his energy and his journalistic skill. Upon arriving in New York he immediately became active as secretary of the Polish-Jewish Club and as co-editor of *Nasza Trybuna* (published by the veteran journalist Jacob Appenszlak, who before the war had been editor-in-chief of the distinguished Polish-Jewish Warsaw daily, *Nasz Przeglad*). Later, he was elected president of the Association of the Nazi Victims of Piotrkow Trybunalski (where he had been born and raised, graduated from the Hebrew Gimnazjum, and had begun his journalistic and accounting careers). He held this position for twelve years, and at the same time edited the Association's Bulletin, so popular among the *Landsleit* of Piotrkow all over the world; all this in addition to his professional work as a financial expert employed in important position by the U.S. Research and Development Corporation and the City of New York.

In the last years of his life Roman devoted all his efforts to the publication of the Ghetto Anthology, which his sudden demise impeded. His cherished family—his beloved wife Musia and their gifted sons, B. Marc Mogil and Roy Brian Mogilanski—made all possible efforts for its publication. Fortunately, they found the right man for this challenging job: Benjamin Grey, an attorney and civic leader in Los Angeles who has been a leader in organizations of Holocaust survivors from their inception. Upon accepting the family's offer he almost single-handedly accomplished his mission, despite many restrictions.

May the Ghetto Anthology be a solace to his family and a monument to our dear Romek, a proud Jew, a devoted Zionist and a lover of Israel, who had, ever since first settling in New York, been haunted by the dream of a written memorial to our martyrs, and who had come so close to fulfilling it.

New Bulletin

A Salute to the People of Piotrkow

Dr. Michael Lubliner of Los Angeles, a gentleman and a scholar in the true sense of the word, sent us his essay to the publication of the Ghetto Anthology, a project of the people of Piotrkow initiated in tribute to the sacred memory of those who perished.

The essay, is a moving testimonial for the late Roman Mogilanski, the main initiator, arranger and fund raiser for this project, who sadly, did not have the privilege to see it finished.

According to the article, the publication becomes a reality now and we all welcome this volume as one more link in the sacred chain of remembrance.

Although the Anthology is being published by people that we do not know, we feel proud and satisfied that the Herculean labors of Roman Mogilanski and the works of our own people were not in vain; that despite obstacles and difficulties, the dream will finally come true.

In his credo "Why an Anthology?" (Bulletin No. 48), Roman wrote: ". . . The very first link in the chain or our common tragedy was the Jewish town of Piotrkow Trybunalski. . . Our Anthology will give a prime emphasis to this ghetto prototype in our hometown. . ."

We greet the birth of the book with acclaim. Roman Mogilanski worked on this project boldly and arduously. We do thank attorney Benjamin Grey, a Jewish leader in Los Angeles for his devotion in accomplishing the mission. But if not for the People of Piotrkow, the true sponsors, supporters, aides and main contributors to the project, there would not be a Ghetto Anthology.

So, my dear Piotrkow friends!

Just ponder a moment and please. . . TAKE A BOW!

Ben Giladi
New Bulletin, No. 14 - 1986

*Dr. Lubliner passed away in 1988

Megilat Piotrkow

Shayek Pudlowski–Tel Aviv

The Piotrkow "landsleit" in Israel may be justly proud of their glorious "kehila," which once contained communal institutions and colorful political parties with prominent leaders in the pulsating community life of the city.

Piotrkow was especially known for its book publishers, who were instrumental in making the name Piotrkow known throughout the world. In all Jewish settlements, Yiddish books with the inscription "Piotrkow" helped to perpetuate the severed Jewish community and created glory for her as well.

The Zionist organizations in our city, which in time sent part of its youth to Eretz-Israel, have also rooted here and today are represented in almost all the kibbutzim throughout the country, as well as in vital government positions in the land.

The Archives

Among the most important of their accomplishments must certainly be that the Piotrkower in Israel have an archive of their city, collected over a period of decades by our longtime communal leader, Jacob Maltz, z"l. He guarded every detail related to our city with his life.

Following his death, the Piotrkower Committee decided to place the archive in experienced hands, so that all our city's historic materials should be properly catalogued.

Because of the efforts of Mrs. H. Grynberg, who for a number of years has been the Chairperson of our Farband, we succeeded in contacting the famous Holocaust researcher at the Tel-Aviv University, Dr. Yoel Raba, and he was willing to organize and restore the archive of our city.

Dr. Raba and his assistants worked for many months erecting yet another monument to the memory of our perished Piotrkow community. Because of his self-sacrifice and devotion to this holy mission, Dr. Raba was successful in overcoming many difficulties and created an archive of which we can be justly proud.

Thus, we express our gratitude to Dr. Raba for his personal interest in our archive and for his special efforts in exhibiting a number of documents from our archive for the visitors of the University, under the heading of "The Kehila That Once Was—And Is No Longer." The exhibit is open daily to all visitors and is located in the foyer of the "Holocaust Era Research" Building of the Tel- Aviv University.

It is important to indicate that our archive is registered with the annual "Catalogue of Official National Archives," which is published annually and in which we are mentioned.

The Megila

Among the most important goals of the Piotrkow Organization in Israel is to memorialize the murdered martyrs of the Hitler era. Therefore, every form of perpetuation is a great achievement. Thus, for instance, in Netanya there is a Torah Institute named "Ohel Moshe" (Moshe's tent) for our last Piotrkow Rov, Harav Moshe Chaim Lau, z"l. As we all know, he was the father of Harav Israel Lau, Sh'lit"a, who is the Chief Rabbi of Netanya, and his brother Lavie, who, for numerous years, was a consul in Washington.

Upon the initiative of several active "landsleit," headed by their chairperson, Mrs. H. Grynberg, as well as by M. Ish-Horowitz and Prashker, and after many attempts, they finally succeeded in convincing the "Yad Vashem" leadership to allow a place for the "Megila" containing the names of murdered martyrs of Piotrkow.

For some time now, there has been in the "Heychal Hasheymot" (Tent of the Names) in "Yad Vashem" a Megila in the shape of a Sefer-Torah, in which a scribe has written the names of all the Piotrkower Jews who perished in the ghetto and in the camps during the Hitler Era.

It is certainly no coincidence that our City of Piotrkow feels privileged to be able to perpetuate its Martyrs for future generations in a Megila for which survivors throughout the world have sent names. It appears that tragic destiny chose the Piotrkower Jews to be the first in Europe to be entrapped in a ghetto, which was enforced by the Germans in fall of 1939. This date is engraved on the memorial plaque located on the wall in "Yad Vashem." It is beneath the Megila-Sefer, visible only through a protective glass cover which protects this sacred monument.

Thus, a small group of "landsleit" sit and, in their free time, copy all the holy letters and names which are received so as to transfer them at a later date to the sacred Megila of those who perished. They are continually updated by an experienced scribe, who immortalizes the Martyrs in the Tora-K'tav (the written Torah), which will remain an eternal reminder.

The "Irgun Yotseyi Piotrkow" (the organization of those from Piotrkow) in Israel is now making preparations to summon a world gathering of all its "landsleit" to honor this monument located in the "Heychal Hasheymot" of the "Yad Vashem."

This is only a part of the activities engaged in by the Piotrkower in Israel, who devote themselves with deep respect and pride to their monumental task.

Heidim

Notes From Piotrkow

Jakub Rener—Paris

I came from Paris to Piotrkow in 1988 just in time to attend the popular science session commemorating the 46th tragic anniversary of the liquidation of the Ghetto of Piotrkow. The sponsors of the event were The Pax Christian Society, the Jewish History Institute of Warsaw and a number of other distinguished organizations. Among others present were delegations of various Polish groups such as ABOWID, Armia Krajowa, Armia Ludowa and others. Also present were the Righteous Gentiles of Piotrkow, people who saved our Jewish brethren from the hands of the Nazis, Maria Spiewak, Danuta Trybus, Wieslawa Chynowska and Adam Ratajczak, the son of the late Wiktor Ratajczak.

The keynote speaker, Dr. Zygmunt Hoffman of the Jewish History Institute, outlined in his speech the history or Piotrkow Jewry from early times until the very end. The only Piotrkower survivors present were Roman Hipszer and myself. After the session we all went by bus to the Jewish Cemetery. Commemorative wreaths were laid on the graves of the Martyrs of Rakow and of the "Purim Action." We also unveiled the newly restored monument of the Heroes of "Bund," who perished in Auschwitz for their underground activities.

Over the next two days, I roamed the streets where the Yiddish language had once been dominant. I walked through the town, from one end to the other. From the



Piotrkow, November 3, 1988—Jakub Rener from Paris is greeted by Dr. Zygmunt Hoffman from the Warsaw Jewish History Institute at the science session. The Polish sign (in translation) says: "The righteous among the nations of the world," in tribute to the saviors present at the ceremonies.

Szczekanica to the Bugaj, from the Jewish Cemetery to the Stacja Towarowa at Bujnowska Street. I came to Jerozolimska Street No. 33, where we used to live, just opposite the windows of the Hashomer Hatzair movement site, and I went inside our apartment. I passed the Starowarshawska, once Yidngass, and came to Garncarska No.1/3, where the premises of the Bund organization had been located. Here was where I had spent my youth. I was a member of the Skif Youth and the Morgensztern sport section of the "Bund" party. Here the Szlamowicz family—my Aunt and Uncle with their five children—used to live. Not one of them survived.

How many memories came back to me during these walks? Despite the biting poverty, these were the dearest years of our lives. In the evening I strolled through the central Slowackiego Street. Everything was so deserted and gloomy. There were no more vigorous Jewish youngsters around. All was so quiet, as if in mourning. Here I came to the Bernardynski Garden, with its memories of the evenings spent here, our fights with the Endecja, the Polish Fascists, and anti-Semitic friction. When the Endecja wanted to throw us out of the garden, we resisted. We fought them bravely. The Polish Socialist groups of the P.P. S. and the TUR gave us a helping hand, especially the three brothers of the Palac family. The eldest of them perished in Auschwitz.

The confrontations with the Endecja were a prelude to the atrocious events of years 1939—1945, the tragic *years of the Holocaust*

New Bulletin



The Chief Rabbi of Poland embraces the last Jew of Piotrkow at a ceremony in Lodz, in 1990.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF PIOTRKOW

BY THE NAZIS DURING WORLD WAR II

I. DISASTER

II. EXTERMINATION

III. RESISTANCE

By Dr. Joseph Kermish, Israel

Translated by P. Wollman, U.S.A.

Edited by Hassia Ben Harari and Joseph Goldberg, Israel

I. DISASTER

The town of Piotrkow was heavily bombed at 8:30 in the morning on Saturday, September 2nd, 1939, the day following the outbreak of the war. Hundreds of bombs were dropped on the city, and Romek Zaks, who was killed at once at Slowacki Street (Kaliska)[1], was the first Jewish victim. Lolek Epstein was also killed on the same day.

A second heavy bombing took place the next day, Sunday, beginning at 10:00 o'clock in the morning, and caused many casualties. About one hundred explosive and incendiary bombs were dropped during the day, destroying a number of public buildings such as the city hall, police headquarters, the state bank, Bank Polski, and the post office, as well as the city water system.[2] Numerous Jewish homes were set on fire as well, but a large number of Jews managed to escape to Sulejow (Silev), near the Pilica River, 15 km. from Piotrkow in the direction of Lublin.

The city itself became an empty shell, but the main roads became congested with thousands of refugees loaded with whatever little possessions they had managed to hurriedly take with them. These refugees were trying to reach the shelter of the woods in the belief that they would be safe there from the German air raids. Even while many streamed from the city, others, from outside, were turning towards it.[3]

The Jews who sought protection in Sulejow were bitterly disappointed, for that town was heavily bombed on the afternoon of September 4th. Several squadrons of German bombers attacked it twice with explosive and incendiary bombs. The small houses collapsed in flames, burning to death those unfortunate people who didn't succeed in escaping. Those who escaped the bombing of the town were strafed by the planes as they fled. Among the thousands killed were over 1,000 Jews and the dead lay spread out on the streets.

After the Germans occupied Sulejow, the surviving Jews buried their dead in two mass graves. Individual graves were accorded only to those, such as the Dayan of Piotrkow, Rabbi Jacob Glazer, his daughter and grandchild, who were found by their relatives. Some Piotrkow families, for instance the Goldblum family, were completely annihilated in Sulejow.[4]

Tuesday, September 5th, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, the Germans entered Piotrkow and conquered the city after two hours of street fighting. The same day, they shot twenty Jews, among them Rabbi Yechiel Meir Fromnitski, Reb Eliezer Blumstein, and Reichman.

The next day, September 6th, the Germans set fire to the whole Jewish quarter, which encompassed the square of Jerozolimska, Wspolna, Warszawska (Jews' Street) and Zamkowa Streets. Jews trying to escape from the burning houses were shot on the spot. The only ones saved were those who managed to run, unnoticed, over a narrow "Dead Lane", officially Wspolna Street, to the Henoch Horn house, which had a gate at Zamkowa 13. Epstein, the painter, was fatally wounded while trying to escape. An hour later, after the fire ceased, the Germans entered the house at Zamkowa 13, took out six Jews, ordered them to run and shot them. Five of the Jews died instantly and one, Reb Bunem Lebel, was wounded and died later.[5]

The streets of the city were covered with bodies, many of which lay there for several days. Volunteer brigades of workers and artisans were quickly organized by Jewish "Askanim" (public functionaries) to remove the corpses to the cemetery.

In light of the German atrocities, the Jews still hidden in their homes were panic stricken. They soon noticed that the Germans were primarily interested in their property. Individually or in groups, the Germans invaded the Jewish community and stole everything on which they could lay their hands, such as clothes, linens, furs, carpets, valuable books, etc.

The doors to the homes of rich Jews never shut ; no sooner did one group of looters leave than another appeared, guided by the local Folksdeutsche or by members of the Polish underworld. Often, they came to Jewish stores with trucks and took away all the merchandise. Thus, the stores of Ziskind and Meir Frenkel were emptied. A roomful of merchandise belonging to a Jew of Katowitz was confiscated at Szewska 8, and a large sum of money was taken from Reb Motel Michelson under pretense that it was counterfeit. All the possessions of Baruch Zilbershatz and of many others were taken. On Shabbat Tshuva, September 16th, almost everything was stolen from Mrs. Baila Raichman's hardware store on the Platz Trybunalski, from Yitzhak Aron Sochatchewski's grocery store on Farna street, and from a number of smaller stores. On the eve of Yom Kippur, the confiscation of furniture, clothing and pillows from the Jews was begun.

The Germans often invited the Poles on the streets to participate in the robberies, after which they fired bullets into the air in order to give the impression that they were driving away the Polish "thieves". These scenes were photographed in order to create the impression that the Germans were protecting Jewish property from Polish looters.[6]

A decree was issued on the eve of Rosh Hashana that shops must be kept open every day of the week except Sunday and that whoever did not comply would be punished as a saboteur. Jews were forbidden to be outside their homes after 5:00 p. m. and Getzel Frenkel, aged 27, was shot to death for coming home five minutes late.[7]

Jews, old people included, were kidnapped and sent to forced labor camps where they were tortured or beaten, often to the point of unconsciousness. These kidnappings took place during the days preceeding Rosh Hashana (Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, September 11, 12 and 13) as well as on the holiday itself. Jewish men hid themselves in cellars, attics and other places.

The Germans shut up whole houses in the Judengasse, Platz Trybunalski, Pilsudski Street and in other smaller streets in their search for men to work in the forced labor camps. In the course of the searches, many things were stolen from the Jews. Those who were found were brutally beaten, especially religious Jews who were discovered with prayer shawls (talis-koton) or wearing skull caps (kipot). Their beards were torn off, together with the skin. Mezzuzot were cut down and torn and phylacteries (tefillin) and holy books were torn up and burned. The remaining Jews thereupon were forced to abandon their traditional apparal, to cut off their beards and to hide the tefillin and holy books. The Germans ordered the Jews to wash floors and windows with talessim and shrouds (tachrichim), and to use pages of the Talmud and other sacred books for the purpose.[8]

Jews caught for hard labor were sent to one of several places. Those who were lucky were sent to military bakeries where they often received a loaf of bread after work. The work of loading and unloading wagons was onerous, but the fate of Jews sent to work with the "Black" (SS Precinct) in the "Casino" or in the Landrat School at 3rd of May Avenue was indeed pitiful. The object of the work there was torture, rather than production. Jews were forced, for instance, to do "Gymnastics", at which time they were beaten and exposed to all kinds of humiliations. While this was taking place, hundred of Poles watched, laughing and enjoying the sight of the tormented Jews. Labor conditions were somewhat better, however, at German Headquarters in the Railway Workers' House, called "Pekin", at Pieratska Street.[9] Captured girls, especially well-dressed ones, were also sent to do housework in houses and hospitals.[10]

One affliction suffered by the Jews during the early days under the new regime was their being chased away or beaten as they queued for food together with other citizens. Any opposition on the part of the Jews resulted in their being shot.[11] During the Holy Days of Rosh Hashana, as Jews gathered to pray hurriedly in the synagogues, in the "Shtiblech" or in private homes, other oppressions were inflicted upon them. Several German officers entered the synagogue at the end of Mussaf, causing confusion among the worshipping Jews who escaped hurriedly. Twenty-nine worshipers were taken from the Amshinower Shtibel on Farna Street, beaten brutally and taken to prison. Among those arrested were the Rabbi of Ushiakow ; Yitzhak Aron Sochatchewski, layleader of the congregation ; Baruch Asher Nudelman, Dean of the "Beth-Yosef" Yeshiva ; Moshe Chaim Zalmanowitz and Reb Peretz Praschker, head of the Talmud Tora.

The news of this event spread rapidly over the city, causing great fright, consternation and anxiety.[12] After long and terrible torture, the 20 arrested Jews were forcibly shaven and then sent to a concentration camp in Germany. Reb Peretz Praschker died on the way to the camp and some of the others returned four weeks later without shoes and in rags.[13]

There were no worshippers in the synagogue on the second day of Rosh Hashanah. On the day following Rosh Hashanah, the Germans searched the premises of Judengasse 13 (Staro-Warshawska) and found the Strykower Shtibel, whose two Torah scrolls were torn up and burned. Reb Motel Michelson's home at 13 Garncarska Street was searched that day as well and a complete set of the Talmud (Vilner Shas) found there was torn up and thrown out of the window. Two Torah scrolls from the prayer house "Chessed Shel Emeth", located in the same yard, were trampled on and desecrated.

The demolition of synagogues and prayer houses was begun several days later. Two days before Yom Kippur, officers and troops entered the shut synagogue, broke up the furnishings and completely destroyed the beautifully ornamented Eastern wall. They broke down the artistic Holy Ark which was built into the wall, tore up the floors and broke up the pulpit, chests, lamps, etc. The synagogue's Torah scrolls, many of them valuable antiques, were partially torn up. All the scrolls, both torn and intact, were then put out on the square in front of the synagogue.

The Beth Hamidrash was subjected to similar destruction. Desecrated and cut Torah scrolls, benches, stands and parts of the demolished Holy Ark and pulpit were put out in the square in front of the synagogue. Almost all the books, among them rare old first editions which had been presented to the Beth Hamidrash 200 years earlier by the wealthy Rabbi of Piotrkow, Rabbi Natan Neta Piotrkower, were torn up.

German guards were set at the square to prevent the Jews from rescuing the scrolls which lay for a long time, exposed to the autumn rains.

All the silver ritual objects in the synagogue were confiscated with the exception of the silver objects of Lipnie in Upper Silesia, which had been transferred to Piotrkow the day before the outbreak of the war for security reasons. These were hidden in the cellar of Dobroczynnosc and were kept there until 1942.[14]

The Germans squeezed several thousand prisoners-of-war, among them many Jews, into the synagogue and the Beth Hamidrash on the eve of Yom Kippur. Jews were seized and set to cleaning the synagogue and the Beth Hamidrash which had become defiled with human excrement since the prisoners had no other place where they

were able to take care of their needs. For the cleaning work, they were given talessim, Torah scroll covers, curtains of the Holy Ark (parochets) and "kittles".

On Yom Kippur, the Jews were searched for talessim, Torah scrolls, tefillim and holy books. There was no more public worship, and those who prayed individually did so as the Marranos had done in Spain hundreds of years earlier. Jews were caught for 24-hour work stints on Yom Kippur and forced (some of them in prayer shawls) to load barrels of gasoline. The Jews had to pass a row of vicious guards, armed with truncheons and bars, who beat them ruthlessly. Many of the Jews did not survive these blows.[15] On Yom Kippur, a group of Jews were accused of buying eggs, butter, etc. from the peasants and were arrested, beaten and made to endure other terrible indignities.[16]

The Germans ordered long deep pits to be dug at the end of the cemetery, and a large toilet was erected there for the thousands of prisoners. A great number of tombstones, which had been dug out before the war due to the initiative of the "Iwo", were removed from the graves. These tombstones (many of them decorated with the Polish Eagle and other designs) were used to form a sidewalk running from the synagogue to the toilet and crossing the whole cemetery. One night, a few days after Succoth, the toilet was removed by unknown individuals. For this, 22 Jews were arrested as hostages on the following day and a fine of 20,000 zloty and numerous articles of food such as coffee, tea and cocoa, was imposed on the Jewish community. After paying the fine, the community erected a new toilet on its own account, in the yard of the Jewish hospital which bordered the cemetery.[17]

The synagogue and Beit Hamidrash were finally emptied of prisoners at the beginning of November and the guard was taken away from the square where the remnants of the Torah scrolls and other religious articles had been lying. The Jews imediately mobilized themselves to save the scrolls, while the Poles carried off the benches, tables and the remnants of the Holy Arks of the synagogue and Beth Hamidrash to be used as firewood. The synagogue and the Beth Hamidrash remained empty, but were shut by the Germans. The window and door frames, floorboards and whatever books still remained in the Beth Hamidrash were taken away by the Poles to be used as fuel, and only the four walls were left. Little by little, the Jews rescued the Torah scrolls and books from the square and brought them to the cemetery where they were hidden in the tents (ohel) of the Rabbis.[18]

In October, the Wehrmacht (German military forces) gave the rule over the city to a civil administration headed by a commissar, Oberburgermeister Hans Drexel. Two weeks later, a Jewish Community Council (Judenrat) was appointed. It was headed by the "Bund" leader Zalman Tenenberg, former instructor of "Ort" and pre-war chairman of the Jewish community, member of the city council and chairman of the professional unions. In the 24-member Judenrat, the majority were members of the "Bund" or of other socialist groups, as had been the case in the pre-war community council.

Besides the Chairman, Tenenberg, and the Treasurer, Zalman Statchewski (formerly a member of the Municipal Council), other "Bund" leaders in the Judenrat were: Leon Kimmelman, Maurice Meirowitz and Shmuel Zeiten, former city and Jewish community councilmen: Yeshaya Weingarten, former member of the Jewish community council; Yitzhak Samsonowitz, former head of the Department of Culture and Education in the Municipality; Tanchum Freund, former head of the Students' Advisory Council of Ort, and Moshe Sternfeld. The representatives of the General Zionists were: Michael Hertz, Berish Bitsh, Abraham Eli Rosenthal and Joseph Berish Rosenblum. The Aguda representatives were Motel Michelson, Baruch Zilbershatz, Fishel Lubliner and Moshe Nordman. The right wing of Poalei Zion was represented by Simcha David Blachman, and the left wing by Shimshon Gomolinski. Shmuel Eliahu Ziegelman represented the Socialist Artisans' Union and Abraham Samelson represented the Artisans' Union. Finally, Shimon Warshawski was representative of all the non-affilated Jews.

The Secretary-General of the Judenrat was Samsonowitz and the Treasurer was Statchewski. Other department heads were as follows: Marcus Litmanowitz (General Department); S. Blachman (Finance Department); F. Lubliner (Supply); Abraham Weishof (Technical Department); Pinchas Nissenson (Economic Department); M. Sternfeld (Social Investigation and Welfare), who was later arrested and replaced by M. Nordman; Dr. Jacobowitz (Medical and Sanitary Department); Ziegelman (Labor Director); Poznanski (Registration); Simon Stein (Housing Department); J. B. Rosenblum and Bunem Kaminski (Funeral Department); Judge Borenstein (Law and Legal Advice); Engineer Lipe Hirsch Broide (Commerce and Trade) and Bitsch (Post, Telephone and Telegraph).

Together with the members of the Jewish Police which was set up in Spring 1941, about 500 people worked in the Jewish community.[19]

The Jewish Police Service (Ordnungs-Dienst) was headed by the lawyer Stanislaw Zilberstein, and was responsible for matters of supply and health. Its function was to supervise the regular bathing of the inhabitants as well as to see to it that those unwilling to work, as requested by the Labor Department, were forced to cooperate. Their first operation was to arrange for gardens in the Jewish quarter. A year after it began its activities, the Police Service of Piotrkow was reorganized. It was then composed of 45 members divided into three groups. In connection with this reorganization and its expanded functions, the Service received special hats and arm badges. The Judenrat was very strict about the behaviour of the Jewish policemen, at least at the beginning of its functioning.[20]

The heads of all the parties sat in the Jewish Council of Piotrkow. These men had been the elected representatives of the community in the pre-war period. The Jewish Council, during the first period of the occupation, developed real social work services. It did its best to satisfy the needs of the population within the scope of its possibilities. The fact must be considered that Jewish life during the occupation was concentrated within the framework of the community which took care of supply, housing problems, taxes, social work, etc.[21]

An Emigration Committee operated from December 8th, 1939, first at 27 Pilsudski Street and afterwards in the public school building at 23 Pilsudski Street. This Committee issued a special communique on December 26, 1940, announcing that the registration of emigrants to Soviet Russia would be continued and that the date of departure of the first emigrant trains would be announced publicly.

The Emigration Committee functioned with the permission of the German authorities who sent special forms to the Jewish Council to be filled by proposed emigrants who designated themselves "Ukranian citizens". The projected exchange with Russia of "Ukranian citizens" against citizens of German origin residing in Russia ended in a fiasco, for the Russians saw through the German deceptions. It was, nevertheless, possible to smuggle Jews of Piotrkow over the border into Russia and many Jews, including whole families with children, made the attempt. The fugitives were exposed to many dangers before reaching Russian border cities, Malkinya, Biala Podlaska and others, and many of them perished on the way. Some of them returned, ragged and barefooted. It must be noted that some of those who came back did so even though they had already crossed the border.

Besides the emigration to the Soviet Union, the Committee probed the possibilities of Jewish emigration to other European countries and overseas, establishing contacs for the purpose with Hias and with shipping companies such as Adriatica, Francopol and Norddeutescher Lloyd. The Committee also mediated between residents of Piotrkow and their relatives abroad. According to correspondence from Piotrkow published in the official Jewish newspaper of occupied Poland, "Gazeta Zydowska", No. 19, of September 24, 1940, a few Jewish families emigrated prior to the prohibition of Jewish emigration from Poland. Emigration of Jews was officially prohibited in October 1940, by the Hauptreichs-Sicherheits-Amt (the Chief Security Office of the Reich) in Berlin as it was felt that the emigration of Polish Jews had great influence on the "spiritual renaissance of North American Jewry".

The Committee also dealt with the search for missing persons and relatives during the war, making contacts for the purpose with other Jewish communities in Poland and abroad. Lists of all persons who left Piotrkow after September 4, 1939, were prepared. As a result of the work done by the Committee, financial aid from several countries reached Piotrkow during a certain period.[22] It is not known when the Committee ended its activities.

An order to erect a ghetto in Piotrkow (for the first time officially called a "Ghetto") was issued on October 8, 1939, by the city commissar, Oberburgermeister Hans Drexel. This was the first ghetto in the occupied areas of Poland. In accordance with this order, a registration of the Jewish population was to be ready by October 20th. A special appeal of the Judenrat on October 28th requested the Jewish population to cover the expenses of erecting the ghetto and to move into it no later than October 31, 1939, in conformance with the order received from Drexel. Initially, the order did not include those Jews who had special permission to remain outside the ghetto until a special date. At the same time, landlords and tenants were requested not to interfere with the moving of the Jewish population to the localities set aside for them by the community.

Sign-posts were set up at the exit of the ghetto about December 1939, bearing a white skull on a blue background (40×60 cms. in size). The ghetto as yet had no fences or guards and these signs were, for the time being, the only announcement of its existence. They caused, however, considerable anxiety among the Jews.[23]

Simultaneously with the erection of the posts on the ghetto borders, the Jewish Council issued orders on December 20, 1939, that all Jews stil living outside the ghetto or having businesses there must move into the ghetto at once. This request included those who had obtained temporary or permanent permits to live outside the ghetto as well as those who applied to the authorities for permission to live outside. The Council warned that the German authorities would impose severe punishment on anyone transgressing the above orders.[24] The Jews who had to leave their dwellings in the rest of the city in order to move into the ghetto were allowed to take only their pillows and blankets with them. Thus, with one stroke, the 600 Jews who had to leave their homes became paupers. Those Christians who lived in the area of the ghetto had to move out.[25]

The area of the ghetto included the following streets : Jerozolimska Nos. 1-19, 19a, 20-42, 44, 70, 72, 76, 84, 86, 90-93, 96-97, 97a, 99, 101, 105, 138, 140, 142, 144, 146, 148, 150, 153-159 ; Mala Nos. 1-7 ; Krzywa Nos. 1-20, 22, 24, 26, 28 ; Spatzerowa Nos. 7-10 ; Handlowa Nos. 3-5; Rzemieshlnitza Nos. 1-8, 10-12, 14, 18, 19, 21, 23, 27, 28, 33 ; Litewska Nos. 1-3, 6-15, 17-20, 22, 24, 26 ; Platz Litewski Nos. 1-14 ; Odjelna Nos. 2-14, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32 ; Wieyska Nos. 1-10, 12-16, 17, 19, 21 ; Pilsudski Nos. 1-33 ; Zamkowa Nos. 1-5, 16, 19, 24 ; Garntsarska Nos. 1-13, 16, 24, 26, 28 ; Peretz Nos. 2-14, 11, 17 ; Leonarda Nos. 1-15, 20 ; Staro-Warshawska Nos. 1-35 ; Zamurowa Nos. 1-16 ; Farna Nos. 1-8 ; Platz Tsar-

nietski Nos. 2-10 ; Lazienna Mokra Nos. 1-6 ; Konarska Nos. 1-4 ; Rynek Tribunalski Nos. 1-12 ; Rwanska Nos. 1-5 ; Ritserska Nos. 5-10 ; Sheratzka Nos. 1-10 ; Shewska Nos. 1-10 ; Platz Niepodlegloschi Nos. 2-7 ; Nadrowa Nos. 2-6 ; and Wspolna Nos. 1, 6, 8.[26]

Characteristically, the ghetto borders were complicated and ran in a crooked line. They were determined in many cases with the help of bribes from landlords who feared that the houses they owned would fall outside the ghetto boundaries. These landlords raised a collection among themselves in order to bribe the authorities concerned to set the borders in a manner favorable to them. There were even houses which were "islands" apart from the ghetto, yet considered part of it.[27]

The only Jews outside the ghetto were old Dr. Shantser who had been an apostate for 60 years, Jacob Witorsh, who was a Turkish citizen, and an Egyptian named Kam. These people were only briefly permitted to be exceptions; during the "Action" they were transferred to the ghetto and from there to Treblinka.[28]

In accordance with the orders of City Commissar Drexel of December 1, 1939, Jews were permitted outside their homes in the ghetto only between the hours of 8:00 a. m. — 5:00 p. m. and they were allowed to be outside the ghetto only between 11:00 a. m. — 1:00 p. m. The order of October 5, 1939, restricted the Jews to their homes except between 10:00 a. m.. — 1:00 p. m. and 3.00 p. m. — 4:00 p. m. as punishment for purchasing food, which was regarded as an act of sabotage.

They were permitted to walk in some streets for longer hours than in others, and were not permitted the use of the main streets at all. There were other streets where they were allowed to walk only on the road and were punished if they used the sidewalks. Even in part of Pilsudski Street (since the invasion of Russia known also as Ostland Street), which was within the ghetto borders, they were forbidden to walk on one sidewalk. Signs were put up reading, "Jews are forbidden to use the sidewalk".

The Jews used the few hours during which they were permitted to be outside the ghetto to take walks around the city or to take the short train ride to Przyglow and Wlodzimierzow where they could stroll in the surrounding woods. Those who transgressed the restrictive orders were threatened with dire punishment under martial law for sabotage, punishment which was actually carried out.[29] After the "sperrstunde" (curfew time), a dead silence fell on the ghetto as all the inhabitants sat in dread and wondered what events the coming night would bring.[30]

As time went on, the decrees, prohibitions and limitations increased in number and severity. According to the decree of Governor-General Frank for the occupied provinces of Poland, dated November 23, 1939, the local decree of December 12, 1939 and the decrees of the city and district of Piotrkow of December 23, 1939, all Jews over the age of ten were required to wear a white badge sewed on to their right sleeves. The badge had to be at least 10 cm. wide, embellished with a blue Magen David 1 cm. wide and 8 cm. long. Those who failed to comply with the order would be punished with six months imprisonment and required to pay a large fine.

The local despots, it should be noted, did not wait for orders to be given by the central authorities with regard to the Jews, but issued even severer restrictions on their own initiative. For example, the "Kreishauptman" (district captain), Buss of Piotrkow, on November 27th, ordered all Jews over the age of six to wear a yellow badge 10 cm. in width on their right arms.[31]

The city commissar, Oberburgermeister Drexel, on December 1, ordered all persons who had even one Jewish parent, and even converted Jews, to wear on their right forearms a yellow badge bearing the inscription "Jude". Anyone found without such a badge from December 3rd on would be court-martialed.

Similarly, all Jewish stores had to affix a white sign with a blue Magen David to their premises in order to "protect the non-Jewish population from the Jews." Even the droshkes (hacks) in the ghetto (of which only 10 remained by the summer of 1940) had to bear a Magen David.[32]

The decrees which aimed to legally expropriate Jewish property ruled that no Jew was to be allowed to possess more than 2,000 zloty or any gold or jewelry, nor was he permitted to earn more than 5,000 zloty per month. Jews were prohibited from working in heavy industry or in public or governmental institutions ; they were not allowed to bake bread for Aryans nor to engage in trade with them. They were neither permitted to heal Aryan patients nor to be treated by Aryan physicians. Furthermore, Jews were not allowed to leave the city without a permit nor to ride on a train.[33]

An ever greater calamity was the request for frequent "contributions" by the local authorities, on their own initiative or, more frequently, on the orders of the Governor-General. The first "contribution" amounted to 25,000 zloty, another was for 15,000 zloty and a third for 350,000 zloty, and there were also contributions in kind. The Ringelblum Archive contains the written order for a contribution of 350,000 zloty, within a few hours. On November 29th, the Commissar of the Piotrkow city district presented the Jewish Council with the following decree : "In accordance with the order of Herr Governor-General (Hans Frank) of the occupied territories in Poland, you are requested to deliver 350,000 zloty to my office by 11:00 a. m. today. If this request is not complied with, punitive measures will be taken as ordered by the Governor-General."

It is needless to go into detail on the difficulties involved in raising such a large sum in a few hours. Many wealthy and middle-class Jews has escaped from the town, but the sum had to be paid somehow. During one of the

periods during which a sum of money had to be raised, three hostages were held and were beaten so mercilessly that one of them, Leib Desseau, died.[34]

On October 29, 1939, the Jewish Council, in compliance with a local decree of the German authorities which was issued in the "Ordinances of the City and District of Piotrkow" (No. 3, October 26, 1939), requested all Jewish producers and merchants of textiles and leather goods, as well as shoemakers, to deliver an inventory of their goods to the city commissar.[35]

The German authorities, at the end of November 1939, ordered all Jews to bring their merchandise to the Jewish Council. Part of the textiles confiscated by the Germans was returned to the Jewish Council for storage, on the pretext that it was for the use of the Jewish population.[36] On March 4th, 1940, the chairman of the Jewish Council announced that all property owners over the age of 21 had until March 10th to register all their property with the Council offices, located at Garntsarska 7.[37]

The German, Ronig, took over the administration of the expropriated Jewish houses which were located outside the ghetto. Jews also worked in this office. The Germans also appointed commissars, among others, to be in charge of Jewish firms and stores. Important Jewish firms thus directed included the Piotrkower Manufacturing Co., the Warshawianka Mill, the Renoma Mill, the P. Goldblum Mill, the Phoenix Glass Works, the Spirit Rectification plant, the Wola Krzysztoporska farm and chemical factory, the Panel Plywood factory, Patzanowski and son, and Joseph Goldfried's vinegar factory.[38]

At the beginning of the occupation, the relations between the Germans and the Jews depended to a large extent on the Jewish Council, that is to say, the larger the bribes that could be paid to the Germans, the more agreeable the relations. The Council, therefore, operated a kind of business which enabled them to satisfy the needs of the Germans for furniture, Persian carpets, furs, paintings, diamonds, etc. They were often ordered to furnish, within a few hours, an apartment for one of Hitler's dignitaries. An undated appeal to the community, found in the Ringelblum Archive, requests the Jewish population to voluntarily declare, in order to avoid requisitions, what furniture they possessed for the apartments which were to be occupied by German military personnel.[39]

At times, the chairman of the Jewish Council succeeded in easing the restrictions by bribery. Many Jewish "transgressions" were dispelled in the warehouse of the community, where all the goods delivered by Jewish merchants were stored. This merchandise was not officially for sale, but the Gestapo, police and other officials constantly "bought" from the storage place. The best Jewish tailors and shoemakers were overrun with work orders for the Germans and their families. Many Jews were thus saved from imprisonment or death for minor transgressions with the help of the community warehouse and the Jewish craftsmen.[40]

A report by Commander-in-Chief Ost, dated February 1940, states that two sergeants of Battery 182/3 in Piotrkow on February 18, 1940, captured two Jewish girls, Miss Machmanowitz, aged 18, and Miss Satanowska, aged 17, and forced them at gunpoint to the Jewish cemetery where they raped them.[41]

Even before the law of compulsory labor, which forced Jews aged 14 to 60 to work as slave laborers, was issued the Jews were exploited for hard tasks. They were ordered to carry out such work as street-cleaning, labor in German military units, in city buildings, etc. German soldiers, Gestapo men, railway clerks and "Selbstschutz" members would enter Jewish houses, search them and capture Jewish men, forcing them to compulsory work. The point of this indignation was often not because the work had to be done, but merely to humiliate them in the cruelest possible manner.[42] Through its employment office, the community regularly delivered a quota of Jewish workers. Jews who were unwilling to work had to pay a weekly fee for each work day they missed. The Jewish Council was known to have made a payment, in February 1940, of 25 zloty per day for 28 work days to 1,000 compulsory workers.[43] Some Germans, however, were unwilling to take on workers from the employment office, and continued to capture Jews for work details, claiming that the capturing of Jews gave them pleasure.[44]

A decree from the city commissar was delivered to the Jewish Council at the end of November 1939, ordering them to deliver 1,000 workers daily under police escort, beginning on December 2, for the urgent task of erecting barracks on the rear square of the synagogue and on Litewska Street. The barracks, 40 meters long and 28 meters wide, had to be completed by December 10 and were to serve as lodging for the masses of displaced Jews who were expected to arrive in Piotrkow.

At the request of City Commissar Drexel, the Jewish Council had to deliver exact registration lists of Jewish inhabitants, according to their addresses, during the first two days of December. Lindner, a German architect, was put in charge of the work of building the barracks and the German police detailed to the job were under the command of Schwapert. The Municipality's technical office supervised the technical execution of the work.

On December 6th, Drexel ordered the community to deliver immediately all materials needed to erect the barracks and to supply material for the restoration of the military barracks (at Curie Skladowska Street) and for the inside equipment (barrack bunk beds) of the synagogue (Jerozolimska Street) and of the Jewish Gymnasium (Peretz Street). In addition to supplying the workers and the material, the community also had to "satisfy the claims of the third parties."[45]

In order to arrange for covering the huge expenses involved in building the barracks, a meeting was arranged for the trustees of wealthy Jewish firms at which it was decided that administered firms belonging to the Jews would make a one-time donation for the benefit of the community. The Piotrkower Manufacturing Co. gave 10,000 zloty, the Warshawianka Mill gave 4,000 zloty, the Renoma Mill 2,000 zloty, the Phoenix Glass Works 4,000 zloty, the Spirit Rectification plant 1,000 zloty, and the Panel Plywood factory 1,000 zloty; in all, 22,000 zloty were collected.[46]

As related by the late Jacob Kurtz, the barracks at Litewska Street remained uncompleted and the second set of barracks were used by the German artillery. However, the bunks erected in the synagogue and the Beth Hamidrash as well as in the Gymnasium served the masses of refugees and deported persons who were driven into the ghetto at Piotrkow.

During the first days of construction of the barracks, the Jewish forced laborers were cruelly beaten and tortured while carrying loads of boards and planks too heavy to bear. The Community had supplied carts for transporting the wood from Zilberstein's sawmill, 3 km. outside the city, but the German insisted that the wood be carried by the workers themselves. Avoidance of this forced labour was considered sabotage and was punishable by death.

Monday, December 4th, 1939, was a dreadful day. The Jews were ordered to run from the sawmill with heavy beams on their backs, Jews unable to do so were bayonetted. The cries and laments of wives, mothers and children who were gathered in the Community building rose to the skies. Immediate steps were taken to put an end to this awful state of affairs, and after a few days the cruelty stopped.[47]

In January of 1940, all men aged 12 to 45 were registered for improvement work in the two nearby swamp villages, Mileyow and Witow, which were under the administration of the trustees. Brigades of Jewish youth arrived daily to dig canals and trenches, removing tons of earth. The work was difficult and exhausting and the laborers worked up to their knees in water all day long. Many of them suffered from rheumatism and lumbago as a result, or contracted pneumonia or tuberculosis. They were forced to work naked and barefooted in winter under the harshest of conditions, without sufficient nourishment. Upon returning home, many of them fell sick and died.[48] The workers were supplied by the Jewish employment office which was managed, except for a brief period, by Shraga (Felix) Poznanski until the great "Action".

Between March 14—19, a special registration for compulsory labor was carried out, of men born between 1914 and 1923.[49] These men were also ordered to register in the office of the Community (23 Pilsudski Street) on March 28th, and to declare their income for the year 1939.

A short time later, 900 laborers aged 16—40 were sent to the notorious Lublin camps — Chechanow, Plazow, Belzetz and Dzikow. There, close to the border, they dug protective trenches and dungeons, under terrible living and working conditions. The workers were transported 15—25 km. to their place of work daily, and were treated terribly. The people in Belzetz died of hunger and filth; laborers in Chechanow (under the command of the S. S. officer Dolf) slept on the ground of a ruined house winter and summer and received a daily food ration consisting of 200 gr. of black bread and a watery soup. Camp prisoners from Piotrkow received food parcels from their families by way of the Jewish Council. A few days before Rosh Hashanah 1940, a delegation from the Jewish Council visited the prisoners in the Lublin camps and distributed clothes, food and money among them. This help was made possible thanks to Mr. Haber and Mr. Spiegel of Lublin, friends of Rabbi M. Ch. Lau of Piotrkow. It did little to alleviate the hardships of the camp prisoners, a number of whom suffered from tuberculosis. Their weight dropped to 30 kg. More than 60 prisoners were shot in the course of the work, but some of the young men succeeded in escaping and crossing the Russian border. The Rabbi of Piotrkow made an appeal for the prisoners before Kol Nidrei on Yom Kippur eve in all the houses of worship, for the head of each household to contribute 10 zloty plus 1 zloty for each member of the family.

With the completion of the fortifications at the Russian-German border at the end of 1940, the camps were dissolved. The functionaries of the community in Piotrkow organized the repatriation of the camp prisoners. Those who carried out the rescue behaved heroically, especially Mr. Gomberg of Lodz, who exposed himself to frequent danger in the process. He died in Buchenwald shortly before the liberation, of a contagious lung disease caught while saving the lives of other prisoners.[50]

During the summer of 1940, about 1,200 Jews worked near Piotrkow, doing river-control work under very difficult conditions. Many of them contracted rheumatism.[51] About 300 camp prisoners worked in Witow from April 1940 at control-work on the Lucianza River, under the supervision of the "Boleslaw Gombinski" firm. The camp in Witow was liquidated in December 1941. The 265 camp prisoners of Chechanow worked together with the Wolborz prisoners, controlling the Wolburka River, under the direction of the E. Yaglinski firm. Many of the workers ran away from the unbearable working and sanitary conditions. The German authorities forced the Jewish Council to use the German Police to catch the escaped camp prisoners.[52]

Some of the people occupied themselves with working small gardens on the Rynek Trybunalski and Platz Tsarnetski. This work was supervised by Jacob Kurtz, a Palestinian, on the instructions of German Burgermeister Buss.[53] The gardens were instituted due to the efforts of

the Jewish Council to employ a greater number of Jewish workers (about 1000) in the vicinity of Piotrkow.[54]

A number of local firms, the "Kara" glass works, "Hortensia", "Phoenix", the "Petrikauer Holzwerke" (wood factory), Dietrich and Fischer (over the Bugaj), "Ostbahn", 'Kreisgenossenschaft", etc., began to employ Jews in 1941 (about a year before the great "Aussiedlung" Action) but young workers were given priority.

The Jews employed in the glass works learned new occupations, but the work itself was very hard. About 1100 Jews worked in the Kara Glass Works as firemen, breakers, can-blowers, glass-blowers, etc. They also loaded soda, coal and other materials. A great many of the afflictions of the Jews working in "Kara" were due to the managers, Fogel, Papielowski and Mrozinski, and to the many foremen, German and Polish, who mistreated the Jews at every opportunity. A giant glass-cistern had to be built and a huge deep pit dug for the purpose. The Jews had to dig the masses of earth from the pit while foremen, armed with sticks, stood by, hurrying the workers. This excavation lasted a year and in the summer of 1943, a new cistern was begun, as well as other building work. Besides digging, the Jewish workers had to carry bricks and stones.

A group of very young boys worked at the Hortensia Glass Works (the director was Christman ; the general manager, Kutschhammer ; and the personnel manager, Herford, who was assisted by three Poles, Woidala, Slomka and Kubara). The work of these boys was to run with glasses, saucers, petrol-flasks, bottles, wine-glasses and other products. Another group of youngsters unloaded wagons or carried bricks and white-wash for the bricklayers. Work at "Hortensia" was not easy, but the conditions were much better than at "Kara".

The workers of the "Petrikauer Holzwerke, Dietrich und Fischer" were recognized as a "productive element". This factory was installed at the site of a textile factory, 'Piotrkower Manufacture", on the Bugaj, which had belonged to Max Zilberstein of Lodz, and which was carried off by the Germans. The "Zegwerke", large mechanical wood-working shops equipped with machinery which had been confiscated from Jewish joineries, produced wooden items mainly for the German military authorities — barracks, tents, plywood and wooden blocks which were used as heating material for generators. The plant employed qualified carpenters as well as apprentices. In all, about 1,000 Jews and 700 Poles worked in the factory, not only at joinery but also at manual work. Paul Erich Dietrich and Fischer, German owners of the factory, were known to be sadistic individuals who mistreated the Jewish workers, especially at the time of the extermination action in the Ghetto.

The Jews managed to smuggle food into the factory with the help of firemen, for the beet soups and moldy bread they got to eat there were not enough on which to subsist. The workshops organized in the "Ort" building by the Jewish Council must also be mentioned. Hundred of skilled craftsmen worked in a series of workshops concentrated there.[55]

As a result of the forced resettlement of Jews, the ghetto became increasingly crowded with the influx of refugees from Gniezno, Tuszyn, Lodz, Pabianitz, the Poznan and Plotsk districts and other areas. The Jews from Gniezno arrived by passenger train. The city commissar informed the Community on February 5, 1940, that many transports of thousands of refugees would shortly arrive as part of the "Umsiedlung" (resettlement). The Community was to take care of the refugees and provide them with shelter. The Jews from Gniezno were settled in the neighborhood of "Maccabee" and on the Platz Tsarnietski ("Judenplatz") where bunks were quickly set up for them. Most of the new arrivals were middle-class Jews, industrialists, merchants, landlords, doctors, engineers, officials and company owners. These families were housed in the ghetto like chickens in coops, each family receiving one tiny cubicle, narrow and so low that one could not stand upright in them.

The Jews of Tuszyn came to Piotrkow in far worse fashion. One cold winter night when the temperature was minus 20°C., all the Jews were expelled from their homes. Many children froze to death during this resettlement. These Jews were housed in the meat market. At the same time, Piotrkow Jews whose houses had been burnt settled in the prayer houses (shtiblech) of Ger, Alexander, Radomsk, Krimelow, Skiernievitz and in Fishel Alexandrowitz' Beth Hamidrash.

The refugees from Lodz were mainly doctors, lawyers, engineers and manufacturers who were first kept for a few days in the Radogoszcz Prison near Lodz.[56] They arrived in Piotrkow during the winter of 1940 in masses, threadbare and barefooted. Even the belongings they had carried on their backs were confiscated during the trip. Many babies died on the way from the freezing cold. A number of Jews also arrived from Warsaw before the closing of the Warsaw Ghetto, most of them refugees from Lodz who had previously escaped to Warsaw.

At the end of the winter of 1940, a large transport arrived from the Poznan and Plotsk districts. The transport consisted of over 3,000 Jews, and shocked the Jews of Piotrkow who had never before faced the problem of resettlement on these dimensions. These Jews had been expelled during the night and were given only 15 minutes to get ready. Among them were some fortunate families who had succeeded in taking some objects of value with them and were later able to use them as their only source of income. In the spring of 1941, about 300 refugees from Skierniewitz and about 700 from Drabin and Sherptz arrived in Piotrkow.[57]

Before the outbreak of the war, the total population of Piotrkow was approximately 50,000, of whom about 15,000 were Jews. The Ghetto's population grew rapidly

with the influx of refugees and numbered 14,100 on June 1, 1940, including 3,625 refugees, according to the official figures of the Jewish Council which was interested in minimizing the numbers for various reasons. On April 1, 1942, official figures listed 16,469 inhabitants, 8,141 of them refugees (mainly from the districts of Poznan, Drabin, Sherpts, Lodz and Skierniewitz, as well as from Kalish, Wielun, Sheradz, Suleyow, Serotsk and a number of villages in Pomorze such as Naklo, Shubin and Bydgoszch).

The number was actually much higher than the official figures and reached about 20,000 persons. According to the late J. Kurtz, the ghetto contained 13,800 permanent inhabitants in 1942. These inhabitants were officially registered according to the rules and carried Jewish passports, "Kenkarten" (yellow booklets in German and Polish, containing a photograph of the owner and bearing a blue Magen David on the first page). Bearers of these cards were given bread cards and other rationed products allotted to Jews. There were also 4,000 "strangers" who had confirmations from the Jewish Council, but were not entitled to bread cards or other rations. In addition, about 2,000 Jews were not registered at all for various reasons. They had found themselves hiding places where they secreted themselves in times of danger.[58]

The refugees were settled by the Housing Department of the Jewish Council in the synagogue and on the balconies of the synagogue, in the prayer-houses, and in other public buildings such as the gymnasium of "Maccabee". Those who could afford it, found accommodation in private houses, and there was not a Jewish house which did not take in some of the refugees. Some of the Jews were resettled in Przyglow in houses which were quite unlivable. Regardless of the great overcrowding, the Community was prepared to take over 1,000 refugees from Krakow in the summer of 1940.[59]

The ghetto contained 182 houses comprising 4,178 rooms. On the average, there were four persons to a room although often as many as eight lived in a room.[60] The streets of the ghetto were always crowded, especially during the summer months. The Rynek Trybunalski and the Platz Tsarnietski ("Judenplatz"), where the Jews gathered to discuss the day's events, was constantly teeming.[61]

The Jewish Council of the Community provided the hordes of refugees with food. The most public-minded and most intelligent of the Jews worked for the Jewish Council and they had an influence on the social life of the ghetto. Other relief organizations were set up, but their possibilities were limited. Many of the Piotrkow Jews volunteered to help the unfortunate refugees and took children or adults home, where they shared their own beds with them.[62]

The Department of Social Welfare became intensly active, giving permanent support where needed as well as emergency help to the wayfarers in Piotrkow and providing the poor with food and clothing. They organized a dental clinic and a pharmacy. A special committee of the Jewish Council collected clothes for the resettled and a nursery was set up in a rented room. The clinic supplied medical care and also ran a kitchen, distributing 180 portions of milk a day and canned goods. There was also a special children's clinic which was very active (it even had sun-lamps).[63]

The local population became poorer and poorer. Work opportunities and earnings of hundreds of Jewish workers were reduced to a minimum, and economic enterprises went bankrupt as a result of the restrictions on Jewish trade. Lawyers, engineers, officials and other members of the free professions were unemployed.[64]

The only source of income for many of the inhabitants was from the sale of personal belongings. As time went on, the number of people who had to be fed by the Community became greater. A social welfare kitchen was organized by a number of public-spirited women (the wife of Rabbi Moshe Chaim Lau organized the kitchen with the cooperation of Mrs. Henia Greenberg, wife of the doctor; Malvina Tenenbaum, sister of Dr. Z. Tenenbaum, and Mrs. Bunem Kaminski) and distributed over 1,000 hot meals daily during the period it functioned.[65]

Two kitchens distributed soup during the summer of 1940, one kitchen for children under the age of 14 and the other for adults. The kitchens were for the refugees and served 600 persons. There was also a kitchen for the "intelligentsia" which distributed free meals for certain persons who were incognito.[66]

The Social Welfare Department wanted to increase the number of meals to 1,200 daily for adults and 1,000 for children. However, the problem of supplies proved to be a hindrance to the scheme. It was impossible to buy more food or more coal, and utensils and space for setting up additional kitchens were also lacking.

The situation was so difficult, even for the wealthier sectors of the population, that any proper social work on the level of what had been done before the war, was impossible. The war damage, the contributions and requisitions, the building of barracks, the reconstruction of the bath house (as part of a de-lousing station) and other expenditures which were financed by the Community, impoverished the permanent tax-payers.[67]

There was a small minority of Jews who managed to have a good time, even in the ghetto. This group consisted mainly of highly skilled craftsmen, tailors, shoemakers and the like, who worked for the Germans. They were not restricted in their movements outside the ghetto, and could trade on the black market. This group spent its evenings in its own exclusive circles or in the cafés of Rama and Jurkiewitz, playing billiards and poker while scores of other Jews, especially the refugees, were dying for lack of bread. During the hunger days, more than 30 deaths were registered daily. Most of the refugees from the Poznan transport camp died, one by one.[68]

The newly established Jewish Social Welfare District Committee appealed to the Jewish population, at the beginning of the summer of 1941, to pledge a regular monthly contribution for feeding poor children.[69] As the poverty of the population increased, children begging in the streets became a common sight and the work of the soup-kitchens operated by the Social Welfare Committee increased greatly. The kitchens distributed 2,100 meals daily during the summer of 1941, while the special kitchen for the "intelligentsia" (including a number of Orthodox Jews) distributed 550 meals a day. The children's kitchen distributed 450 meals a day for children aged 5-12. In addition, the orphanage provided for 72 children.

The Mother-and-Child Clinic of the Social Welfare Committee provided medical care for 200 children, distributing a daily milk ration for children aged 1 to 3. Due to the initiative of the Clinic, the Jewish Council ordered compulsory small-pox vaccinations for children. Injections against measles were also given to children who were 9 months old in 1941 as well as to all children who had never been immunized.[70]

That the condition of the Jews in other towns of the province of Piotrkow was no better was brought out in the protocol of the Conference of Judenrat representatives of the district, which took place in Piotrkow on January 19, 1941, and was presided over by Tenenberg, chairman of the Jewish Council of the entire province. In addition to the representatives of the Piotrkow Jewish Council (Chairman Tenenberg, Vice-chairman Simon Warshawski, Samsonowitz, Director of the Organizational Department, and Mrs. Goldberg, Head of the District Department) the following heads of other town councils participated in the conference: S. Glogowski of Przyglow-Wlodzimierzow; H. Weintraub of Suleyow; Rosenblatt of Wolborz; Sheinfarber of Kaminsk; Kenigstein of Wola Krzysztoporska and Carmiel of Rozprza (to which belonged the two villages of Porzniewitze and Niechcice).

The situation in Suleyow, Przyglow, Kaminsk and Wola Krzysztoporska was very difficult. The Jewish population of Przyglow had consisted of only nine families before the war, though many others spent their summer vacations there. Now some 500 refugees were domiciled in the empty villas. This tiny community, to which Joseph Goldstein was sent in May 1941 as a special emissary to organize help, had no means of its own and a number of people died of starvation as a result of the situation. Accompanying hunger, a typhus epidemic spread in the village and took its toll among the Jews. The Piotrkow community did all it could to ease the situation, but even so, many of those who had survived the epidemic died of starvation.

The situation was just as bad in Wolborz. This community was forced to put up a bath-house on short notice at a cost of 5,000 zloty, by order of Dr. Brashkowski, the district physician. Bread and potatoes were lacking in the winter, and 75% of the community perished. The Jews of Kaminsk were also starved, though some food was bought for them with contributions from the private resources of members of the Jewish Council.

The only help the Piotrkow committee of the Jewish Welfare Department was able to provide for the province, was to give a small allotment of potatoes (30% of 30 tons) which was distributed by the Radom Jewish Welfare Department) to the most afflicted towns, Suleyow, Przyglow, Kaminsk and Wola Krzysztoporska.[71]

Even Jews who had formerly lived from agriculture in the small villages suffered from hunger. In Gieski, for example, some of its 20 families had lived from vegetable farming, while the rest had been officials or workers on the Niechcice farm. The Germans fired all the Jews employed on the Niechice farm and confiscated the small holdings of the Jews in Gieski. These Jews thereafter lived in poverty, together with five refugee families, until they were all expelled to Rozprza. Together with the Jews of Rozprza, they were later transferred to Piotrkow on the eve of the great Action.[72]

By the beginning of 1941, epidemics began to spread in Piotrkow as a result of the shocking housing situation and the bad sanitary conditions (the ghetto was only partly equipped with sewage and drainage systems). The first sporadic cases of contagious disease were partially isolated, with one doctor and two nurses in charge of each ward.

A large number of patients attended the out-patient clinic which was located first in the "Dobroczynnosch" yard and was later moved to the area of the Community offices. All the Jewish doctors of Piotrkow, including those who came from other places during the war, served in the out-patient clinic which was headed by Dr. Leon Weinzieher and included the following: Dr. M. A. Greenberg, Dr. Leon Glatter, Dr. Sigmund Tenenbaum, Dr. Maurice Brahms, Dr. Rattner from Poznan, Dr. Ziegler, Dr. Jacobowitz who had been born in Piotrkow but had practised in Belchatow and in Lodz, Dr. Basior, Dr. Sigmund Greenspan, his wife, Dr. Brass-Greenspan, Dr. Neumark, and Dr. Rosenberg. The dental clinic was staffed by Drs. Rosenberg, Broide and Mila Weinzieher. Three registered nurses, Rosa Israelowitz, Maria Migus and Guta Cederbaum, worked in the clinic in addition to Jacob Abramowitz, medical assistant. The pharmacy of the clinic was managed by Musia Litmanowitz-Magilaner.

The beloved Dr. Rattner worked with exceptional devotion to the sick and the poor. He was later taken away to Treblinka together with his fellow-Jews.

The clinic issued hundreds of chits entitling the sick to special food rations (½ lb. sugar and 1 lb. of flour or barley). The clerks of the clinic frequently forged the signature of the doctors in order to obtain more food for the poor, who were entitled "the sick". The doctors worked under difficult conditions in the out-patient clinic

as they lacked necessary equipment and instruments which had been confiscated by the Germans at the beginning of the invasion.[73]

As the population of the ghetto increased and the overcrowding became worse, the diseases became epidemic. Epidemics of painful skin irritations which were very difficult to localize spread, particularly in the bunk rooms of the synagogue and "Maccabee". Tuberculosis took a terrible toll and in 1941 a typhus epidemic claimed over 1,000 victims.[74]

Some doctors did not report the cases of typhus. The Jewish Council called a conference of all the doctors, sanitary personnel and representatives of the professionals. At the conference it was decided to make an all-out attack on the epidemic. Sanitary cadres were set up whose job it was to see to the hygiene and cleanliness in the ghetto, to find the hidden nests of typhus cases and to transfer the relatives of the sick to other accommodations. These relatives were put up in the building of the former Jewish High School but these precautions failed because of the overcrowding there. The disease was transferred even more widely by those persons who were able to escape from these isolation wards, carrying the disease.

The newly formed Sanitary Committee, headed by Dr. Jacobowitz, introduced compulsory baths and disinfection of clothing every three weeks for the inhabitants of each house. The Sanitary Committee consisted of 60 men including office personnel, the distinfection staff and the "sanitary police". When hats were distributed to the sanitary policemen, they looked just like the regular Jewish policemen. During the "Action" and afterwards, some of the sanitary police, wearing hats with blue badges, carried out the same functions as the ordinary policemen and thus earned for themselves bitter notoriety.[75]

At the beginning of 1942, the sanitary police carried out some successful operations. Sanitary delegates of the house committees were re-organized in January. In order to improve the deplorable situation which existed in whole sections of the ghetto, a one-time cleaning operation was undertaken. The streets, yards, garbage cans and toilets were thoroughly cleaned with the help of workers sent from the employment office of the community and trucks which they managed to obtain from the Compulsory Administration of Jewish Property. The tenants themselves had to clean their own yards, staircases and entrance halls and those who did not do the work themselves had to pay workers to do it for them. The operation, conducted by the heads of the quarters and their assistants with the help of the housing committee and the sanitary services, was a great success.

The typhus epidemic was finally beaten. Fewer people were sent to the isolation house, and homes containing typhus cases were disinfected and isolated. Only a few cases remained in the whole ghetto.[76]

The absence of a hospital for contagious diseases was strongly felt during the epidemics (the existing department was tiny). The Jewish hospital had been occupied at the beginning of the war and integrated into the general hospital. Jewish patients were therefore treated in the municipal hospital and the cost of treatment was borne by the Social Department of the Community. A separate 50-bed Jewish hospital for contagious diseases was created at the beginning of 1942 in the building of the Jewish High School.[77]

Although the Jews of Piotrkow were restricted and oppressed, their situation was comparatively good compared with that of the Jews in other large cities of the occupied areas in the first years of German rule. The situation improved in Piotrkow in the summer of 1940 when the city commissar, the notorious Drexel, was transferred to Kielce, Drexel was succeeded by a new city commissar, Buss, who extorted money and other valuables from the Jews, but who was less oppressive than his predecessor.

The Jewish Council took advantage of what little autonomy was granted it and managed to increase its food reserves to a large extent. The Supply Department bought as much food as it could, in addition to the official rations, even taking a proportion of the rations of the soup-kitchen with the consent of the German authorities. A certain quantity of coal was also obtained by the Jewish Council for the inhabitants.[78]

The Jewish Council became a kind of information center concerning the position of the Jews in the occupied areas of Poland. This was due, to a great extent, to the fact that Piotrkow was located on the border between Occupied Poland and the areas of the West, including Lodz, which had been annexed to Germany. It should be noted here that the Piorkow lawyer, Yitzhak Bogdanski, president of the Belchatow Judenrat, earned the reputation of being an honest and devoted leader who did all in his power to help people.[79]

On Saturday, July 5, 1941, Chairman Tenenberg and a group of "Bund" members of the Jewish Council were suddenly put under arrest, after it was discovered that they were cooperating with the underground movement. These arrests came as a result of the detention of a woman liaison officer of the Polish Socialist Party (P.P.S.) who was traveling on the Warsaw-Katowitz train carrying a suitcase containing confidential Jewish literature. After enduring inhuman tortures, the woman disclosed that the sender of the suitcase was Tanchum Freund. Tenenberg's aide, Yechiel Krzak, broke down during the investigations and disclosed the names of many persons.

Among those arrested by the Gestapo were many prominent persons and members of the Jewish Council, such as Jacob Berliner, the popular "Bund" member in the ghetto who gave himself up to the Gestapo out of loyalty to his comrades ; Zalman Statshewski ; T. Freund and his wife ; Abraham Weishof, former alderman and leader of

the community ; Moshe Adler, former community functionary and city councilman ; Maurice Meirowitz, Yeshaya Weingarten, Shmuel Seiten and Yechiel Fish. Later, Moshe Sternfeld and Yitzhak Saner, one of the most active members of the "Bund" in Piotrkow, were also arrested. At the same time, Esther Wolfstein-Bogdanski, an active "Bund" member, was arested and sent to the women's camp in Ravensbruch where Mrs. Freund was already incarcerated. Poalei Zion members Blachman and S. Gomulinski were arrested as well, as was S. A. Ziegelman, representative of the Socialist Union of Artisans. A member of Poalei Agudat Israel was also arrested. The arrests were not limited to Piotrkow. In Tomashow Mazowietzki, the Gestapo arrested the "Bund" functionary, Kosherowski, and "Bund" members Mr. and Mrs. Blum.

The investigation lasted ten weeks, and the arrested were cruelly tortured during that time. All intervention was fruitless. On September 13, eleven of those arrested were sent to the concentration camp at Ausschwitz and three (Gomulinski, Blachman and Ziegelman) were set free. A few days after the deportation to Ausschwitz, telegrams were received by their families informing them of the deaths, due to illness, of the deportees.[80]

After this fiasco which shook and dejected the mourning Jews of Piotrkow, a series of investigations were begun in the ghetto, while forced contributions and further arrests burdened and depressed the life of the ghetto Jews. This change in the relations between the German authorities and the Jews was without any doubt another step in the program leading towards the extermination of the Jews, which quickened after the outbreak of the German-Soviet war.

After the first series of arrests, the chairmanship of the Jewish Council was taken over by former Vice-chairman Simon Warshawski, owner of a mill. He chose his associates on the Council, among them Yitzhak Feiner as Vice-chairman, the Teitelbaum brothers-in-law, Broide of Lodz and others. One of his most faithful associates was Dr. Jacobowitz.[81] The presiding members of the Council in 1942 (in addition to the Chairman and Vice-chairman) were the lawyer S. Silverstein, M. Hertz, M. Nordman, P. Lubliner and Abraham Samelson. Another of the 17 members of the Council was Judge Borenstein who was appointed Secretary-General of the Executive Council.[82] A strong and lasting rivalry in the Council sprang up between Warshawski and Feiner. Feiner was shot in the small ghetto after the first Action.[83]

At the end of 1941, the Germans passed an edict prohibiting the Jews from leaving the ghetto. A decree was issued by the governor of the Radom District on December 11, 1941, referring to a similar decree of Governor Frank's, dated October 15, which threatened anyone leaving the Ghetto with the death penalty. Poles who gave aid or succour to the Jews faced the same penalty. On the basis of this decree, the Germans began closing the open ghettos. A special decree issued by the Piotrkow district captain at the beginning of March ordered the closing of the ghetto as of April 1, 1942. As of that date, the ghetto was hermetically sealed : no Jew was henceforth allowed to leave the ghetto and no Christian was allowed to enter it.[84]

Before this date, the ghetto boundaries were considerably narrowed. A special commission of the Municipality dealt with the distribution of apartments for Jews and Christians, but in actuality, bribery and influence were the deciding factors. For a time, before the March 31 deadline, apartments were traded between Jews and non-Jews. Those non-Jews who owned fine apartments and stores in the ghetto tried to have their property set outside the ghetto. The Jews successfully countered these attempts by means of bribes, from which City Commissar Buss became wealthy. In place of the 200 Polish house superintendents, Jewish superintendents were appointed by a special Jewish Qualification Commission.[85]

The Police Department of Piotrkow put up special posters announcing that Jews and Jewish children were forbidden to leave the ghetto : "It is forbidden to buy, sell or trade. Those transgressing this decree will be shot without trial."[86]

It was not only the German police who saw to it that the new decree was executed ; Captain Steigermann, the district representative, also enforced the "law" and saw to it that the poor women and children who endangered their lives to bring in potatoes from the "Aryan" side were chased off.[87]

The requisition of furs in the middle of winter (late December 1941 and early January 1942) was a heavy blow to the inhabitants of the ghetto. The Piotrkow police at first requested the delivery of the coats together with their furs, but after great efforts and the use of "protection", they consented to take only the furs. Nevertheless, many persons became sick as a result of the confiscation of their warm apparal. Other clothes were also requisitioned under cover of the fur requisition decree. The authorities even ordered furs to be taken off people in the middle of the street during the last few days before the deadline of the decree.[88]

Arrests and executions became a daily occurrence during this phase of the extermination program. Every day, the residents of Pilsudski Street heard the bitter cries and lamentations of those Jews who were being transported in the notorious police coach, hands bound and blindfolded, from the prison to the execution place in the Rakow forest — for the crime of crossing the ghetto border, for buying food and frequently for no reason at all. Those arrested included children, women and old people.[89]

Some of the most horrifying experiences the inhabitants of the ghetto had to suffer were the frequent visits of S. S. policeman Williams with his big dog. Williams visited the ghetto together with his Jewish friend, Yona

Levy. On the command of his master, the dog tore pieces of flesh from the bodies of people, especially children. Williams himself, who first appeared in the ghetto in 1941, occupied himself with attacking Jews in their homes and beating them until the blood ran. Wiliams' dog so terrified the children that when they heard, "Willy with the dog", they hid in panic in attics and cellars and could only be taken from their hiding-places by force.[90]

Another source of terror for the Jewish population were the two police officers, Kleter and Beier, both from Breslau. Kleter would beat Jews daily and even shoot them without any reason whatsoever. He once shot a boy at work because he unintentionally broke a glass. He also shot Y. A. Sochatchewski, the merchant, who was running over the Judengasse to bring food to the people hiding in the bunkers in his house.[91]

Leonarchik ("Fatty"), the Polish policeman from the Poznan area, also behaved sadistically towards the Jews, frequently searching and attacking them. He was killed by partisan fighters in 1944.[92]

Beginning in 1941, the Gestapo Chief, Putchala, committed many murders himself. He shot two elderly Jews and a 14-year old boy in the cemetery. In 1942, he sent many Jews to their deaths in Ausschwitz for such "sins" as making horror propaganda : Moshe Kenigstein ; Flatau ; Michael Hertz, the well-known Zionist functionary (whose daughter, Ania, was executed in the Rakow forest) ; Goldblum ; Moshe Sternfeld, the community official ; Lolek Cohen (for being discovered with a song about Hitler and Stalin) ; Glogowski, the president of the Przyglow Community and his secretary. Putchala arrested, in place of well-known Communists who had long ago disappeared from Piotrkow, Jews possessing identical names (Joseph Lefkowitz and Zemel, the religious teacher) as well as merchants, the "bourgeois". All of these were deported to Ausschwitz and shot within a few days. Their relatives received, as a souvenir, an announcement of their deaths together with a numbered suitcase containing the possessions of those murdered.[93]

In addition to being oppressed by the Nazis, the Jews suffered from the Jewish policemen and from informers, both local and from other cities and villages.[94] Some of the Jewish policemen were guilty of heavy sins against their fellow Jews.[95] The Jewish Police consisted of 50 men before the "Action". These Tadeks, Saleks, Janeks, and Mareks, it is to be regretted, stained the honor of the ghetto's population during its dreadful period.[96]

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24 Notice from the Jewish Council, December 20, 1939 (German, Polish) ; Announcement of the Jewish Council (Polish), January 12, 1940, Ringelblum Archive, No. 1/340, 1/1199.

25 Greenbaum, op. cit.; Moshe Kimmelman, Speech delivered at a Yizkor meeting of the Piotrkow Landsmanschaft in Montreal.

26 Decree of Drexel, op. cit. ; J. Greenbaum, "Historical Questionnaire", Yad Vashem Archive, Munich Collection, No. 1915/434 ; Thaddeus Nowakowski, "On the History of the Piotrkow Ghetto" (Polish) ; Gazeta Ziemi Piotrkowskiej, No. 51-52 (13.12.59, 1.6.60).

27 Kurtz, op .cit. ; Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit. ; Rast, "Historical Questionnaire", Yad Vashem Archive, Munich Collection, No. 2144/502.

28 Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.

29 Order of City Commissar Drexel, Ringelbium Archive, No. 1/1199 ; Order of Drexel of October 5, "Wiadomosci Piotrkowskie" No. 5 ; Kurtz, op. cit. (In summer, the hours during which it was permitted to be out in the streets were prolonged.)

30 Dr. Tenenberg, op. cit.; Goldberg, op. cit.

31 "Anordnung der Stadt und Landkreis Petrikau", No. 7, of December 1939, p. 9.

32 Kurtz, op. cit.

33 Tushiner, op. cit.; Migus, op. cit.; Kimmelman, op. cit.; Greenbaum, "Historical Questionnaire", op. cit.; Ben-Giladi, "Piotrkow Youth Under the Whip of the Swastika" (Polish).

34 Manuscript in Ringelblum Archive, No. 1197; Rabbi Huberband writes about a contribution of 50,000 zloty, Kurtz about 75,000 zloty, while Greenbaum speaks of further contributions: October 1 — 10,000 zloty, ten days later, 150,000 zloty. According to Dr. Tenenbaum, Drexel imposed a contribution of 500,000 zloty on the Jewish population, which was paid within three days. In his above-mentioned testimonial, Goldberg reported on further contributions: 20,000 zloty, then 500 sacks of flour, 100 sacks of sugar, 12,000 eggs and 300 kg. of butter. The next contribution was 25,000 zloty and the one after that 35,000. However, Naphtali Lau, who carried the sack of money of the first contribution for his father, Rabbi Lau, the morning after Yom Kippur, to Drexel in his office in the courthouse, recalls that the sum was 25,000 zloty. Drexel shouted that he had demanded 25,000 marks (50,000 zloty), but the rabbi explained to him that he had understood zloty. He also told him that the city was empty and that it had hardly been possible to collect this sum, which had been gathered during the appeal before "Kol Nidrei". Drexel ordered the money to be poured out on his desk, and when he saw the high amount of small change, he didn't even count it. He opened a drawer of his desk, and slid the money into it, throwing the empty sack into Naphtali Lau's hands.

35 Obwieszczenie Gminy Wyznaniowei Zyd do wszystkich wytwóców i sprzedawców towarów tekstylnych, skóry, towarów skórzanych szewców itp. 29.10.39, Ringelblum Archive, No. 1/340.

36 Greenbaum, op. cit.; Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.

37 In this announcement, the Jewish Council referred to the Governor-General's order of 24.1.40 and to the local "Ordnungsblatt" No. 3, 1940.

38 Files of the U.S. (Jewish Social Walfare) No. T/278 in the Archive of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, Manuscript of Ringelblum Archive No. 1197; Tenenbaum, op. cit.; Kurtz, op. cit.; Greenbaum, op. cit.

39 Ringelblum Archive, No. 1199 1/340. Comp. Tenenbaum, op. cit

40 Kurtz, op. cit.; Greenbaum, op. cit.; Tenenbaum, op. cit.; A. Winter, "Destruction of Piotrkow".

41 Yad Vashem Archive, Acts of "Oberbafehlshaber (Commander in-chief) Ost".

42 Kurtz, op. cit.; Greenbaum, op. cit.

43 Migus, op. cit.; A. Rutlowski, "Hitler's Labor Camps in the Radom District"; Bulletin of the Jewish Historical Inst. (Polish), No. 17-18, January—June 1956, p. 108.

44 Kurtz, op. cit.

45 Decree of City Commissar Drexel of December 1, 1939, Manuscript of Ringelblum Archive, No. 1/199; Huberband, op. cit.; Kurtz, op. cit.

46 Protocol of March 11, 1940, signed by the "Selbstschutz-Reichsfuehrer" (his signature is illegible; his S.S. rank is "Hauptstrumfuehrer"), Archive of the Jewish Historical Inst., J. S. Files, T 278.

47 Order of Drexel, see above; also Huberband, op. cit.; Kurtz, op. cit.

48 Ben-Giladi, op. cit.; S. Poznanski, testimony, Yad Vashem Archive; comp. also Report of the Congregation, op. cit.

49 Anouncement of the Jewish Council of the Community, March 15, 1940.

50 "Gazeta Zydowska" No. 19 (24.9.40); Zvi Diamond, testimony, Yad Vashem Archive, Munich Collection, No. 2175/1947. In his testimony (Destruction Archive of IWO), Joseph Freeman states that he was deported with a group of 500 young men from Piotrkow to Belzetz. Comp. also Yechiel Kotkowski, "Underground Work in Piotrkow"; Ben-Giladi, op. cit.; Report of the Congregation, op. cit.; Kurtz estimated the number deported to the Lublin camps at 800, Winter at 700, but the above-mentioned exchange of letters from Piotrkow (printed in the official Jewish organ of Occupied Poland, of September 24, 1940) speaks of 900 prisoners. See also Rutkowski, op. cit., p. 112; see also observations of Naphtali Lau.

51 Winter, op. cit.

52 Rutkowski, op. cit.

53 Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.

54 Rutkowski, op. cit.

55 Ben-Giladi, op. cit.; Kotkowski, op. cit.; Zelman, op. cit.; Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.

56 Files of the J. S., op. cit.; Huberband, op. cit.; Kurtz, op. cit.

57 Migus, op. cit.; Kurtz, op. cit.; Greenbaum, op. cit.; Zelman, op. cit.

58 "Gazeta Zydowska", No. 3 (30.7.40). Census of the Jewish Social Self-Help of May 1942. The report of this census not only minimized the actual number of inhabitants during the occupation but also the Jewish pre-war population. According to the report, the Jewish pre-war population consisted of only 10,240 persons, while in actuality they were 30% of the total population of 50,000. Even the "Gazeta Zydowska", which also kept quiet about the actual number of inhabitants in the ghetto, gave the population figures as 11,217 on September 1, 1939. M. Greenstein (in his testimony) estimated the population at 25,000 in 1942; Blachman at 30,000.

59 "Gazeta Zydowska", op. cit.; also No. 7 (14.8.40); Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit. Blachman, op. cit.; Zelman, op. cit.

60 Census of the Jewish Social Self-Help, op. cit.; Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.

61 Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.

62 Migus, op. cit.; Blachman, op. cit.

63 "Gazeta Zydowska", No. 7 (14.8.40); No. 11 (28.8.40).

64 Rosenblum Manuscript, Ringelblum Archive, No. 1197.

65 Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.; observations of Naphtali Lau.

66 "Gazeta Zydowska", No. 3 (30.7.40).

67 Rosenblum Manuscripts, op. cit.

68 Report of the Congregation, op. cit.; Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.; Ziegelman, op. cit.; Blachman, op. cit.; Migus, op. cit.; J. Galili (Glogowski), "The Story of a Hero," "From the Dark Days," "Thirteen among Many"; Moshe Niechtchitski, Testimony, Yad Vashem Archive.

69 "Gazeta Zydowska", No. 53 (2.7.41).

70 "Gazeta Zydowska", No. 53 (2.7.41).

71 Files of J. S. No. 278 (Archive of the Jewish Historical Inst. in Warsaw); "Gazeta Zydowska", No. 10 (24.8.40) and No. 44 (3.6.41); comp. Kurtz, op. cit.

72 Letter from J. Maltz to Yad Vashem of Dec. 29, 1947, concerning Gieski.

73 "Gazeta Zydowska", No. 3 (30.7.40); Migus, op. cit.; Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.

74 J.S. Census of May 1942; Greenbaum, op. cit.; Stashewski, op. cit.; On April 1, 1942, seventeen typhus cases were reported. It is understood that in addition, there were many more unreported cases (J.S. Census, op. cit.) According to the Report of the Congregation, 80% of the typhus cases died.

75 "Gazeta Zydowska" No. 19 (24.9.40); Migus, op. cit.; Kurtz, op. cit.; Ziegelman, op. cit. The Disinfection Detail included Bunem Yachimowitz, the two Wenglishewski brothers, Israel Weiser, Moshe Chmielnitski, Jacobowitz and others.

76 Kurtz, op. cit.

77 "Gazeta Zydowska" No. 11 (28.8.40), Census of J. S. of May 1942; Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.; Greenbaum, op. cit.; It is characteristic that, before the "Aussiedlung" (deportation to death camps) of the ghetto's population, the inscription on the Jewish Hospital, "Donated by Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Braun" was removed.

78 Kurtz, op. cit.; Migus, op. cit.; Hela (Hannah) Ginsburg-Stashewski, Testimony, Yad Vashem archive.

79 Zeev Blachman, "A Rare Thing". During the April 1942 "Action" in Belchatow, Bogdanski tried to escape with his family in order to avoid fulfilling the orders of the Gestapo. Unfortunately, he was captured together with his wife and her whole family, brought to the Radogoszcz Prison, and all of them were put to death there.

80 M. Migus, "The First Arrest"; Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.; Greenbaum, op. cit.; Kurtz, op. cit.; Report of the Congregation, op. cit.; see also Poznanski, op. cit.; Yitzhak Samsonowitz and Leon Kimmelman managed to avoid arrest by fleeing to Warsaw, while Abraham Weiser and Yankel escaped to Tchenstochow, as did David and Hershel Nissenholz. S. A. Ziegelman, "The Arrest of the Piotrkow Judenrat".

81 Tenenbaum, op. cit.; Ziegelman, op. cit. It is quite true that Warshawski felt an obligation to the wives of the Jewish Council members who had been put to death in Ausschwitz (comp. the chapters, "The Final Extermination", "Actions" and "Aussiedlungen").

82 Kurtz, op. cit.

83 Migus, op. cit.; Poznanski, op. cit.

84 Census of J. S. of May 1942, op. cit.; Tushiner, op. cit.; Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.; A. Rutlowski, "Martyrology, Battle and Doom of the Jewish Population in the Radom District", Bulletin (Polish) of the Jewish Historical Inst., No. 15-16, July—December, 1955, pp. 84-85.

85 Kurtz, op. cit.

86 Rutlowski, op. cit.

87 Kurtz, op. cit.

88 Report of the Congregation, op. cit.; Kurtz, op. cit.

89 Z. W. Blachman, "The Resistance of the 42 in Rakow"; Migus, op. cit.; Moshe Zelman, Testimony.

90 Migus, op. cit.; Kotkowski, op. cit; statement of Yehezkiel Shidlowski; Zelman, op. cit.

91 Zelman, op. cit.; Paula Arluck, "Historical Questionnaire", Yad Vashem Archive, Munich Collection; David Rosenstein, Testimony, Destruction Archive of IWO, reports that Kleter personally shot a large number of Jews.

92 Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.; Kurtz, op. cit.

93 Kurtz, op. cit.

94 Statements of Yehezkiel Shidlowski, Moshe Horowitz and Fishel Neuberg.

95 Galili (Glogowski), op. cit.; Shraga Poznanski, Memoirs, Yad Vashem Archive; comp. Arluck, op. cit.; and observations of Zeev Blachman.

96 Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.; Galili (Glogowski), op. cit.; Blachman, op. cit.; Niechtzitski, op. cit.

II. EXTERMINATION

(*"AUSSIEDLUNG" and "ACTIONS"*)

The first news about the systematic annihilation of Jewish areas of settlement reached the ghetto in the spring of 1942 by way of the refugees who had escaped the Lublin and Sieradz "Actions". Although the Lublin refugees did not known how much of the Jewish population of their city had been exterminated (they only brought with them a little information about the liquidation of the Lublin ghetto and about the concentration of members of the working classes in Maidanek) the refugees from Sieradz and other places which had been incorporated into the Reich (like Kladowa) brought exact details of the mass killings in Chelmno.[1] While the "Aussiedlung" Actions were taking place in Lublin, Krakow, Lwow, Tarnow and Warsaw, the inhabitants of the Piotrkow ghetto streamed, en masse, to the Community building to get information about the fate of the victims of the "liquidation".[2]

The telephone of the Piotrkow Community was constantly in contact with Warsaw, particularly during the "Action" there (July 22 to September 13, 1942). During the course of this long "Action", a great unrest seized the Piotrkow Jews as they gradually became aware of the tragic truth about Treblinka. The sudden "Action" in Radom, capital city of the district, on August 15, 1942, also created great panic.[3]

Some of the people continued to live under the illusion that what had happened in Warsaw and other cities would not happen in Piotrkow.[4] The Jewish Council, however, had information from reliable private sources that the Gestapo was preparing a list of the Jewish population for special purposes.[5] The Council made efforts to provide more work by creating new workshops, including the setting up of a large clothing workshop, close to the border of the ghetto, which made various articles of clothing for the Germans.

Carpentry workshops were set up as well as a linen factory (260 men and women worked at 53 sewing machines), a hosiery workshop, a fur workshop (the only one for which the Germans supplied the materials) and a shoe factory. The Community began an earnest hunt for work orders from the Germans in the belief that the people might be protected from an "Aussiedlung" by becoming a working ghetto, like Lodz.

The shops tried to employ mainly women, as it was deemed more suitable for the men to work in German work places. In point of fact, it was mainly those who had good connections with the community heads who received work in the shops, while the really skilled workers were not employed.[6] The number of positions in the Bugaj Hortensia and Kara factories was limited.[7]

The Gestapo began its preparations for the "Aussiedlung" at the beginning of September 1942, with the creation of a small ghetto. The block of houses beginning with Staro-Warshawska and Garntsarska Streets was fenced in with barbed wire.[8] Reder's house at Jerozolimska 12 was designated for the use of the Jewish Council, the sanitary police and the Jewish police force. All the other working people were assigned 12 houses on the right side of Staro-Warshawska (numbers 3—25).[9] It was rumored that only 3,000 "productive" Jews would remain on this street, out of a total of 25,000 Jews.[10] During the days preceding Rosh Hashana, the Germans began to fence in, with barbed wire 2½ meters high, the so-called "small ghetto

block''. This was actually a square, its east side bounded by Jerozolimska, its west side by the Fary Church, its south side by Garntsarska Street and its north by Staro-Warshawska. The only exits remaining from the ghetto were from the Fary Church and Jerozolimska.[11]

During the Holy Days of 1942, a deep depression came over the inhabitants of the ghetto. All the houses of worship were overflowing as Jews prayed for the destruction of the evil nation. The news that the Tchenstochow ghetto had been surrounded by an "Extermination Commando'' and that an "Action'' had started there, reached Piotrkow at the end of Yom Kippur and deeply shocked the Jews. Not long afterwards, a number of young men from Tchenstochow, who had escaped from Treblinka, arrived in Piotrkow (they were naturally very careful that the Gestapo should know nothing of their existence).

An eye-witness relates that the Jews of Piotrkow foresaw the coming destruction clearly. They had to begin preparing ways of meeting the calamity, the older generation by repentence and prayer, and some of the others by escaping to the "Aryan'' side or by building bunkers.[12] People sold everything possible. Many Christians gladly took away Jewish goods, "to hide'' or as gifts. The main desire was for food articles.[13] A number of girls arranged weddings with Jewish policemen in order to save themselves from the "Aussiedlung''. For parents who could not ensure their children against the coming calamity, their despair and helplessness was overwhelming. An eye-witness writes, "I first experienced the unbelievable power of love of parents for their children in the ghetto during those days.''

All the Jews from the neighboring cities and villages, Gorshkowitz, Suleyow, Rosprza, Wola Krzysztoporska, Srotsk, Wolborz and others, were driven into the Piotrkow ghetto on the eve of the "Action''.[14] Thus, the ghetto contained about 25,000 Jews.

As the date of the "Action'' approached, the tension grew from day to day, especially with the arrival of Jews who had escaped the "Aussiedlung'' in Radom. The situation became hopeless, and the depressed and apathetic Jews simply didn't have the power to organize any means of self-defence.

This situation had been created by the refined tactics of the Germans in preparing for the "Action'', based on the idea that after the victims had been "prepared'' over a long period of time, by hunger, terror, demoralization and complete isolation from the outside world, they would let the Germans do whatever they wished with them, without resistance. Nevertheless, the Jews of Piotrkow sought means to avoid the destruction, at least by passive resistance.

Certain people hid themselves in the hospital and even underwent operations there, in the hope that they would survive the "Action'' in this way. However, during the "Action'', the Germans did not spare these Jews. They were taken out of their beds to the "Samelplatz'' (gathering place for those to be deported) or else were shot instantly. Sick people who could not rise from their beds were generally shot on the spot during the course of the "Action''.

The first Ukranians and "Shaulists'' (sharpshooters), who claimed victims even before the start of the "Action'', appeared in Piotrkow. A shoemaker at the corner of Jerozolimska and Staro-Warshawska was robbed of his goods by a Ukranian and then shot by him.[15]

In the second week of October, they started to put the workers of Bugaj and of the city into barracks.[16] Two days before the "Action'', a living area was prepared in ths Hortensia factory for the workers who were locked in there. Heartbreaking farewell scenes took place in the evening among the families of the 600 workers of the Hortensia and Kara factories.[17] Dietrich and Fischer, the owners of Bugaj, promised to take care of and protect the wives or children of the Jewish workers, but these wives and children were deported during the "Action''.[18]

The tension reached its climax on October 13th. On the night of October 13-14, 1942, (3rd Marcheshvan, 5703), the tragic news was spread that the "Action'' was to begin on the following day. At 2:00 a. m., the Ukranians, together with the "navy-blue'' police, surrounded the ghetto. In those critical hours, a number of people committed suicide ; for instance, Ash, a refugee from Lodz, hanged himself. Dr. Leon Glatter tried to kill himself by giving himself a morphine injection, but he was saved ; likewise, Mr. and Mrs. Adam Shpielfogel, property-owners from Wola Krzysztoporska, tried to poison themselves with luminal, but did not succeed and were attached to the "transport'' the next day. The sought-after poison, cyanide, was not to be found in the ghetto, since so many people wanted it. Many of the Jews hid themselves in the bunkers.

In the dark hours before dawn, the first shots were heard in the ghetto, which was surrounded by the S. S. and the police. The Jewish police were ordered, early in the morning, to drive everyone out of their houses for the roll-call in the gathering place. No one was allowed to remain at home. Bands uf Ukranians patrolled the ghetto and drove everyone out to the selection area on Jerozolimska, opposite the Jewish hospital, where the remains of the Franciscan barracks, which had been burnt down in 1939 during the war, still were left.

The first victims were taken from the block of streets between Garntsarska and Staro-Warshawska. The Jewish police, under the command of the lawyer, S. Zilberstein, participated in the "Action'', accompanying the deportees to the place of assembly.[19] Those assembled on the square were arranged in four rows : workers, craftsmen, officials, doctors, etc. The men in charge of the "Action'', among them Burgermeister Buss, stood in the middle of the square. The Gestapo divided the people into two columns. The

right column was led into the "block", there to wait for a future selection (these were mainly workers in German firms who carried "good" worker-cards stamped with a swastika), while the left column was destined for the deportation to Treblinka. Thus, many families were broken up: children were torn away from their mothers and wives from their husbands. The cries and screams of the children were silenced by the Germans with a kick from their boots or blows from their whips. Often, parents or children who were qualified for the "right" column went over to the other group in order to go to their deaths together with their families. The children from the orphanage at 27, Pilsudski Street, were deported together with the orphanage staff. Four Jewish women who had just given birth at the Holy Ghost Hospital were deported, together with their new-born infants.[20]

The Ukranians walked between the rows of assembled Jews, emptying their pockets of everything they found, in the presence of the Gestapo.[21] The "Action" lasted eight days and was completed on Wednesday, October 21st.[22] Five thousand Jews were deported to Treblinka every other day, squeezed into fully packed freight-cars, 150 people in each.[23] Before the Jews entered the cars, they were ordered to remove their good clothing and shoes by the Germans.[24]

"The deportation was managed," writes Jacob Kurtz, "like a wood transport and not like the transport of human beings. On one day the load was prepared, and on the next the cars were loaded and the train sent away."

From Suleyow and Przyglow, the people were driven directly into the freight-cars. Old, sick or weakened people were shot on the spot and dead bodies were spread out over the whole route.[25] In all, over 20,000 Jews were deported, including many from other places. About 1,000 Jews were shot during the deportation, most of them the old or sick.

The first three transports consisted of Jews who had no special work-cards. When people were lacking to complete the quota for the last transport of Marcheshvan, the owners of the "best" cards were taken from the block, among them members of the Jewish Council (except, understandably, the chairman and his aides, Feiner, Teitelbaum, Braude and others). Rabbi Moshe Chaim Lau, Judge Borenstein and many others were also deported on the last train.[26]

Rabbi Lau, the last rabbi in Piotrkow, gave a fiery sermon just before he was deported, on "Kiddush Hashem", the sanctification of the Holy Name (religious martyrdom of Jews). A witness of the scene later related that he spoke with as much pathos and enthusiasm as he used to do in the good old days, from the pulpit of the synagogue. "Better a living death than a dead life," said the Rabbi, "and every one who is killed as a Jew is a saint." He called upon the Jews "to fulfill the will of God with joy." He succeeded in raising their spirits and exhalting them, although each of them knew that these were the last hours of his life.[26a]

Rabbi Lau, former rabbi of Preshow in Slovakia, refused to acquiesce to the wishes of his students and friends to go to Preshow where they had made arrangements for him, before the "Action", as he did not want to abandon his congregation.

One act of passive resistance is worth mentioning here. During the "Action", the old religious baker, Yehuda Leib Russak (the Kalisher baker) was lying in bed, wrapped in tallis and tefillim, when the Ukranians entered his apartment on October 20th and ordered him to go to the selection area. He answered them that he would not leave his paralyzed wife, and both were immediately shot.[26b]

The 900 workers of Bugaj were kept hidden in the factory shelter under very difficult conditions during the "Action". On a certain day, a selection was made in the big hall of the factory, in the presence of the Gestapo. Dietrich, one of the partners, carried out the selection himself. Those selected for the left side were sent, together with the other deportees, to Treblinka.[27]

Even the Jewish workers in the glass factories experienced deadly terror during the "Action". Rumors were spread, at first, that the Gestapo was going to allow 500 workers to remain out of the 983 presently employed in the two factories. These rumors remained unconfirmed. However, a demand was made to deliver 83 workers. The factory management succeeded in reducing the number to 33, most of them young men, who were delivered into the hands of the murderers.

The Jewish workers in the factories saw for themselves the destruction created in the ghetto during the 8-day "Action". The second and third trains passed very close to the glass factories at noon. The Jewish workers waited for the transports, and as the trains moved slowly by, heartbreaking scenes took place. The screams and tears even touched the hearts of the Christian spectators, who shed tears. The fourth transport passed in the evening, during a heavy rain ; however, the Jewish workers waited for the train. Nothing could be seen, but horrible screams were heard. Many farewell letters were thrown from the freight cars, and were collected by Christian children who delivered them to the Jewish workers.

After the end of the "Action", about 2,000 "legal" Jews remained in Piotrkow (among them a large number who had escaped or been expelled from other towns and villages) who were working in German factories, as well as policemen and community officials, together with their families. There were also some privileged workers who were employed by the "Befehlstelle" (German Economic Management). Many Jews were employed, under the supervision of the police, emptying all the Jewish houses outside the block and sorting the confiscated goods prior to shipping them to Germany.

To the number of "legals" remaining must be added all those who had hidden themselves away before the deportations. After the "Action", the "legals" were jammed into the block. Posts were set up with barbed wire on them, encompassing the whole block which was guarded by the Ukranians. Traffic within the block took place, not through the streets, but through holes in the walls between the yards.

Ukranian policemen visited the block during the first nights and, at gun-point, robbed money and valuables from the Jews. The inhabitants of the fenced block were taken daily, under police supervision, to the work places near the "Ost Bahnhof", to Hortensia, Kara and Phoenix glass factories, to the Bugaj workshops and to the "Samelstelle" (collection place) where the remaining possessions and belongings of the deported Jews were gathered.[28]

Besides those employed in the factories and workshops, the small ghetto also contained non-employed "illegals" who came out of their hiding places after the "Action", as well as others who returned from the Polish side because they couldn't adjust themselves there.[29] These "illegals", most of them young men, would steal into the block during the night and were often shot while trying to go through the barbed wire. Within a short time, the number of inhabitants of the block grew to 4,000. The German authorities got wind of it and ordered that not more than 2,000 workers were to be allowed in the block.

Not long after the great "Action", a children's "Action" took place. The Gestapo ordered all the children in the block to be given over. When Mrs. Markowitz refused to give up her nursing baby, the assassins cut off her breast and took her away, together with her baby. After this "Action", only a few well-hidden children were left.[30]

Each survivor in the ghetto was like a limb without a body. One had lost his parents, another his wife and children and yet another his brothers and sisters. Housing conditions were terrible, with about 20 persons in each room in the block.[31] The collaborators among the Jews continued their dirty work of finding hidden persons, bringing them into the cellar of the Jewish Police and then gathering them into the synagogue.[32] In this manner, 150 "illegals" were one day assembled, sent to Tomashow Mazowietski and from there transported to Treblinka.[33] Hundreds of people suffered this fate, among them Emmanuel Steinberg who was found together with 12 other persons in their place of concealment.[34]

A series of "Actions" against the "illegals" took place in November-December 1942. They were gathered into the empty synagogue in large groups and brought to the Rakow forest where they were executed. On 11 Kislev 5703, a group of 100, most of them elderly people, who had been found during the course of the previous few weeks, were taken out to the forest and shot. The younger people in this group, among them the Rabbi of Radoshitz and his family, had been taken out of the synagogue before the execution and brought to the block.[35] Those sentenced to death were severely oppressed during their stay in the synagogue. The Nazis amused themselves at the expense of the victims by shooting at them through the windows.[36]

In November 25th, Simon Warshawski appealed, by means of posters, to all the "illegals" to come out and register in order to become legalized. In response to the appeal, most of those hidden in the bunkers left them and registered, but on November 30th, an "Action" was begun against all the newly-registered "illegals" (the so-called December "Action"), who were arrested at the gathering place on the Judengasse and brought to the synagogue.

The first night was horrible. The Ukranians surrounded the building and shot into the synagogue. Among the wounded were the wife and child of Mordechai Hersh Brauner who were shot in front of the synagogue the next morning. New-born babies were burnt in front of the synagogue. An eye-witness, Richard Chentzinski, later described the macabre spectacle. A group of Ukranians, headed by Oberleutnant Lukner, took eight children out of the synagogue and burnt them in basins on a bonfire in front of the synagogue.[37] The shooting and robbery lasted for a few days.[38]

Conditions in the synagogue were terrible. The people were crowded together, without light, without food and without water, and the crying of children and old people filled the air. They had to relieve themselves wherever they happened to be.[39]

Only a few individuals were taken out of the synagogue. At first, skilled workers such as carpenters, watchmakers, etc. were released. Later on, others were released on the basis of lists supplied by the managers of factories and workshops. Actually, a barter was taking place with those held in the synagogue. People were released in exchange for others, who couldn't afford to ransom themselves.[40] There were, on the other hand, instances of heroism and sacrifice. For instance, Yeshayahu and Tova Weinstock gave themselves up and entered the synagogue to change places with their children and thus save their lives at the price of their own. Mrs. Moshe Niechtzitski refused to be ransomed because she did not want to leave her three children behind and she finally remained in the synagogue with them.[41]

Some people tried to escape from the synagogue. The daughter of Benjamin Liebeskind was the first to make the attempt. She jumped out of a window, fell into the hands of the Ukranians and was shot. The brother-in-law of Bela Greenblatt-Geliebter managed to get out of a second story window and stole into the ghetto. There, he took out a large sum of money which he had hidden previously, and succeeded in ransoming his wife and child with it.[42] Mrs. Regina Silver, who had succeeded in jumping out of a second story window and escaping to the block, was discovered, however, and brought back to the synagogue.

Moshe Wohlreich, who had previously escaped from Treblinka, could not escape his fate. He was discovered hiding in the block and was handed over to the Germans.[43]

On Saturday, December 19th, at 9:30 a. m., 42 men, including Hersh Gomulinski who had still managed to survive, were taken out of the synagogue, and led along the Wolborz road. The Gestapo was waiting for them there with a truck and tools. They were given spades and shovels, led into the Rakow forest and ordered to dig five long ditches. The Jews, who worked under the strict surveillance of S. S. men William and Pudel, had decided that if the Nazis tried to shoot them, they would kill them and run away. At 3:30, an enforcement of Germans and Ukranians, led by Oberleutnant Lukner, arrived on the spot. The Jews refused to obey the command to take off their clothes. Some of them attacked the enemy and a few of them managed to escape. All the rest were shot.[44]

That night, the Jews in the synagogue were taken out in groups of 50 and led to the Rakow forest. As they left the synagogue (where the people already knew about the newly-dug graves), some of them tried to escape. The Germans opened fire and many were killed and left lying near the synagogue. The Jews marched to Rakow through the darkness, weeping, reciting psalms and saying the "Shema Israel" as they went to their own funerals.[45] 560 Jews were shot in the Rakow forest that night.[46] Those who were only wounded were buried, together with the dead, in the mass graves. A tale is told of a certain "Saneh", a former abattoir worker, who pulled himself out from among the corpses and, half-naked (before they were shot, everyone had to strip naked), reached the home of a pre-war acquaintance of his, the dog-catcher ("Hitzel"), who was a "Volks Deutsch". This dog-catcher, notwithstanding his previous friendship, gave him over to the Germans. (After the liberation of Piotrkow, the dog-catcher was brought to trial.)

There were other instances of people who managed to get out of the mass graves. The Piotrkow historian, Thaddeus Nowakowski, relates that after one of these mass executions in the Rakow forest, one Jew managed to crawl out from under the mountain of corpses and ran wildly through the streets, bloody and half-naked. When he reached the neighbourhood of the hospital, he was caught by the gendarmes who shot him on the spot. These were not the only such cases.

The Germans prepared the Purim 1943 "Action", which was directed against the "intelligentsia", with a barrage of lies and propaganda. A truck full of gendarmes approached the ghetto. Rumors were spread that they came in order to "exchange" Jews for German citizens who lived abroad or in Sharona (Palestine). This had happened to Jacob Kurtz and to Rosenthal who had been exchanged in October 1942 and permitted to leave for Palestine. They stressed that, for the time being, only a quota of 10 people, who must be holders of university diplomas, would be permitted to go to Palestine.

On that day, there was an unusually great amount of movement in the ghetto. The yard of Reder's house at Jerozolimska 12, where the Jewish Council was located, was full of noise and bustle.[47] Those chosen, among them the lawyer, Dr. Stanislaw Zilberstein (the police commander), and his wife, were told to pack and to wait in the yard at a certain time.[48] They were to be brought first to Radom. At the fixed time, they were met by the commander of the defense police, Oberleutnant Muschala, with a car. They were driven around the city a few times and when night fell, they were brought to the Jewish cemetery where a deep grave had been dug.[49]

S. S. officers and gendarmes armed with machine guns stood at the prepared grave, as did the official Polish representatives of Piotrkow and the district. After listening to the Nazi "speeches", they all began to enjoy themselves and to get drunk. The Jews were ordered to remove their clothing. Mr. and Mrs. Zilberstein, were the first to be shot.[50] At the same time Dr. Maurice Brahms and his wife, his 16-year old daughter and his sister-in-law, Mrs. Kogan (widow of Benzion) were killed, as well as the young lawyer, Simon Stein and his mother, and Dr. Leon Glatter, the psychiatrist.[51] The Jewish watchman of the cemetery and his wife were also included in the brutal blood-shed in order to complete the "minyan" of ten victims who were to symbolically redeem the shame of the "Asseret Bnei Haman" (the 10 sons of Haman who were hanged).[52] Similar bloody spectacles were carried out on the same day, Purim 5703, in other ghettos, in particular, Tschenstochow and Radom.

Not long after the Purim slaughter came another bloody execution which claimed dozens of victims. The authorities had been informed that a group of Jews of the block had succeeded in obtaining "Aryan" documents in preparation for escaping from the ghetto. As a result of this denunciation, the second mass execution (after the Purim "Action") took place in the cemetery on April 21, 1943.[53]

The policy of the Nazi authorities, at that time, was to collect all the remaining selected Jews in occupied territories into S. S. concentration camps. The small ghetto of Piotrkow was therefore doomed to liquidation.

At the beginning of February 1943, 250 people were deported to the ammunition factory in Skarzysko-Kamienna, which the German firm "Hassag" (Hugo Schneider Aktions Gesellschaft) had enlarged. The first transport arrived on February 10th (5th of Adar I). A month later, 250 women were brought as well as a few men (among them, the Rabbi of Radoshitz and his family). The situation of the deportees was very difficult because, in the course of the many searches to which they were subjected, every worthwhile object they possessed had been taken away from them. The factory consisted of three sections: section A, the main "Werke"; section B, where the labor conditions

were most difficult ; and section C, whose workers were the most unfortunate for they worked with Tratil and Picrin, materials which colored their skins yellow and destroyed their internal organs. In the course of time, these deportees succeeded in making contact with others from Piotrkow, with the help of Poles.[54]

During the final liquidation of the small ghetto, the remainder of the selected Jews were divided into three groups. The first group was sent to various concentration camps : Blizin (which produced uniforms for the German army, and whose inmates suffered from hunger and typhus), Pionki, Ostrowitz, Starachowitze and Radom. The second group went to the Kara-Hortensia work camp where several hundred workers, including a few dozen women, were interned. The third group (about 1,000 workers) were interned on the Bugaj in the "Holzewerke Di-Fi" (plywood factory) under uncomfortable conditions. After the liquidation, a small group of workers were sent to the Bugaj, while some of those who remained outside the above work camps were killed by the Schutz police who had jurisdiction over them. These "Schutz police" murdered dozens of children, whose parents had been sent to Blizin, with hand grenades, in a sadistic and barbaric manner.[55]

The fate of the children who had joined their parents at Blizin in the first group in June 1943 was no better. In November 1943, they were the victims of a special children's "Action" at that camp. Mordechai Kaminski, the former sanitary policeman, committed suicide after his two children were taken away from him.[56]

On July 1943, Piotrkow was declared "Judenrein" (free of Jews). After the final liquidation of the ghetto, a sign was put up on the railway station reading "Petrikau ist Judenrein" (Piotrkow is clean of Jews).

The greatest number of survivors of Piotrkow were concentrated in the "Petrikauer Holzwerke Dietrich und Fischer" (on the Bugaj), where Warshawski worked. A large number of skilled workers and their assistants worked in the mechanical joinery. Housing conditions were worse than in the glass factories, but working conditions were better. The directors of the firm were interested in keeping their factory going in order to avoid active army service at the front, so their efforts at productivity and their attempts to publicize the importance of their work can well be understood. The Jewish workers, however, suffered a great deal, and despite the big bribes they gave, the directors used to beat them. Fischer's dog, Ips, often attacked and bit the Jews, while Dietrich once ordered 13 workers shot for coming late to their work shift. These workers were executed on the factory grounds on December 2, 1942, by two gendarmes.[57]

The workers in the glass factories (720 Jews, including a few dozen women and children) were accommodated, after the liquidation of the small ghetto, in a four-story house, plus a few barracks, on the left side of Kara. This house and the barracks were fenced with a high hedge and with barbed wire. The so-called "Werkeschutz" (workwatch) supervised the block, where ten or more people lived in each room. There was about a 300-meter walk from the block to Kara, and it was a little further to Hortensia. Some of the factory managers tried to suck the last bit of strength from the Jews by giving them the most exhausting work to do. The Volksdeutsche, Herford, was one of the most intolerable. Even in 1944, when other, smarter, Germans were improving their behavior towards the Jews, he continued to be as oppressive as ever. The head Jew in the block was Solomon Gomberg of Lodz. A Pole, Kutchamer, was director of Hortensia, and he let himself be influenced to act for the good of the working Jews.[58] In September 1943, a transport of 150 men from Kara was sent to Pionki.[59]

As the Soviet Army approached the Vistula following its great summer offensive, a few of the camps in occupied Poland were liquidated. In July or August of 1944, the inmates of Blizin were evacuated to Ausschwitz. About 3,000 people were evacuated and were soon afterwards put through a "selection". Old people and small children were immediately sent to the gas chambers. On January 18, 1945, on the eve of the liberation of Ausschwitz, the camp's inmates were evacuated to Matthausen and Guzen ; Guzen was liberated on May 5, 1945. Part of those inprisoned in Birkenau-Ausschwitz were sent to the Lipstadt ammunition factory.[60]

The Jews working in the two glass factories and the Bugaj plant were transferred on November 26, 1944.[61] At the Herby train station, the Jews to be transported were divided into two sections ; one group was sent to Tschenstochow and the other to the concentration camps of Germany. The men and boys of the second group were sent to Buchenwald, while the women and girls went to Ravensbrück. The group deported to Ravensbrück spent 4½ days on the way. They arrived at their destination on December 2, and the children among them were treated in an inhuman manner there.[62] One group of women from Ravensbrück was transferred to the Bergen-Belsen extermination camp. On April 15, 1945, Bergen-Belsen and Ravensbrück were liberated, and the surviving women were sent, due to the intervention of Count Bernadotte, to Sweden. Individual women from Piotrkow survived in some of the other camps, among them Ausschwitz.[63]

Upon its arrival in Tschenstochow, the Piotrkow transport was divided into groups which were sent to Warta (a weapon factory equipped with machines transferred from Skarzysko), Rakow, Pelcery and Tschenstochowianka. According to eye-witnesses, the conditions in these camps were worse than in Skarszysko. The law of the jungle ruled ; the people, who were under the constant surveillance of Kapos armed with sticks and whips, lost faith in any other means but their fists as a means of survival. In December, a transport composed mainly of

Piotrkow youths was sent to Germany from Tschenstochow. This transport was sent to Buchenwald and from there to the Dora concentration camp. The final destination of the transport was the Nordhausen extermination camp. This camp was heavily bombed on April 3rd and 4th, during which 90% of the prisoners were killed. On the eve of the arrival of the Soviet armies, two large transports left Tschenstochow for Buchenwald (January 15th and 16th, 1945). They didn't manage to send out one small group of workers, among them about 20 Jews from Piotrkow, so they survived until the arrival of the Soviets on January 17th.[64]

On their arrival in Buchenwald, the people in the transport found conditions entirely different in this camp, where most of the inmates were political prisoners. Internal management lay, for the most part, in the hands of Communist political prisoners under the leadership of Dr. Herzog, former deputy to Parliament. The general situation of the prisoners was therefore somewhat better.[65] Children and young people were in a special block and got better food.[66] Among the many Piotrkow Jews who died of hunger at Buchenwald were the well-known Dr. Leon Weinzieher, former director of the Jewish Hospital in Piotrkow (who had been on the Bugaj previously) and Reb Mordechai Znamirowski, a renowned Talmudic scholar.[66a]

At that time, a "punishment column" operated among the prisoners at Buchenwald, headed by Jewish "Block-captain 66" Gustav. This "punishment column" (also called the "revenge column") carried out death sentences against Jewish collaborators as well as against renegades of other nationalities. As soon as the Piotrkow contingent arrived in Buchenwald, they were asked by the "punishment court" to name those among them who had behaved badly. Those named were tried; the death sentence was carried out against two brothers, Eliahu and Abraham Rosenberg of Sulejow, members of the Jewish Police.[67]

Only a few Piotrkow Jews who had been transported to Buchenwald in November were still there on January 15th and 16th, when the second group from Piotrkow arrived. Most of them had been sent to Schlieben and Plassberg, to the Panzer tank factories. On the 21st of April, the inmates of these camps were brought, under the most horrible conditions, to Theresienstadt. Most of them died on the way, though a few managed to break open the doors of the freight cars and run away.[68] Many people of the January transport were sent to the Dora camp whose administrators had been recruited from among known sadists.[69]

Buchenwald and its branches were liberated on April 11th, and a group of boys from Piotrkow were found there, still alive. After the war, they were sent to France and from there to Palestine. The Theresienstadt camp was liberated on May 8th, and there, too, were found some boys from Piotrkow, who had formerly been evacuated from Buchenwald. They were sent to England after the liberation.

The greatest number of Piotrkow Jews who survived the holacaust were in Bergen-Belsen. Survivors from other camps came there later.[70] After the liberation, about a hundred Jews who had remained hidden gathered together in Piotrkow. The liberation, unfortunately, did not put an end to the lawless taking of Jewish lives. One evening, three Jews, Miss Usherowitz, Mrs. Rolnik and a young man named Maltz were shot to death by Poles. This happened on the same day that Miss Usherowitz had sold her father's house for a substantial sum (about 600 zloty).[71]

A short time after the capitulation of Germany, some of the Jewish survivors from the German camps returned to Piotrkow. Only a very few returned to their destroyed homes; the remainder stayed in German D. P. camps, waiting for the possibility of emigrating to Palestine or to other countries. A group of Piotrkow Jews from the Fehrenwald camp went to Palestine with Aliya B. In 1946, there were about 400 Piotrkow Jews in the D. P. camps. Up to the end of that year, about 600 Jews had registered with the Jewish Committee in Piotrkow, many of them from other places. Most of the survivors did not remain, but emigrated out of Poland. In December 1948, only 150 Jews remained in Piotrkow, most of them physically and mentally broken.[72]

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The destruction of the Jewish community of Piotrkow was almost complete. One of the oldest Jewish communities in Poland had been destroyed. The small Jewish villages in the surrounding areas were also demolished, together with Jewish lives, synagogues, Batei Midrash and even the cemeteries. The great synagogue of Piotrkow, which had been completely renovated before the war by the painter Willenberg, and the Beit Hamidrash were in ruins, lacking floors, doors or windows. The cemetery was also completely demolished. The granite or marble tombstones had been destroyed, a few thousand others had been broken up and used to repair roads, while a few hundred had previously been removed from the graves so that the Germans were unable to take them away.

Hand in hand with the physical destruction of the Jews went, almost in every case, the destruction of their homes, with the exception of houses which could be used by the Aryans.[73]

Except for the cemetery where there are some 18th century tombstones, and the great fortress-like synagogue which had been erected in 1791 and which was renovated after the war by the handful of Jews who were still in Piotrkow, there are no other signs of this historical and famous Jewish community.[74]

SOURCES

1 Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit. ; Kurtz, op. cit.
2 M. Greenstein, Testimony, Yad Vashem Archive. Comp. Blachman, op. cit.
3 Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit. ; Kurtz, op. cit.
4 Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.
5 Jacob Kurtz, Testimony.
6 Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit. ; Blachman, op. cit. ; Kurtz, op. cit.
7 Sendowski, Hersh, "Destruction of Piotrkow Trybunalski", Yiddishe Zeitung, No. 43/55 (25.10.46), p. 5.
8 Historical Questionnaire, No. 2144/502, Yad Vashem Archive, Munich Collection. Comp. Sendowski, op. cit.
9 Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.
10 Greenstein, Testimony, op. cit.
11 Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.; Kurtz, op. cit.; Greenstein, Testimony, op. cit.
12 Greenstein, Testimony, op. cit. ; Kurtz, op. cit. Those who possessed Aryan papers travelled to Warsaw, though it was difficult to get out of the ghetto. Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit. ; neighbors built bunkers cooperatively, for instance the Niechtzitski brothers, the inhabitants of Staro-Warshawska 13, the Sieradski, Windheim, Weinrib, Vincentowski, and Weinstock families, built a bunker in which about 100 people hid (Moshe Niechtzitski, op. cit.). Dozens of Jews were hidden in a bunker behind the grocery of the Dali family (at the corner of Platz Trybunalski and Lazienna-Mokra Street), but the bunker was later discovered (Galili, "The Story of a Hero"). A bunker in which 18 persons hid, including the wife and child of Isaac Blaustein, was constructed at Staro-Warshawska 8. It was created between a double wall and was entered by way of the roof (Ch. Rosenblum-Blaustein, Testimony).
13 Sendowski, op. cit. ; Kurtz, op. cit.
14 Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit. ; Kurtz, op. cit. Before the "Aussiedlung" of the Rosprza Jews to Piotrkow, about 20 families were expelled from Gieski to Rosprza, among them the 103-year old well-known woman farmer, Mrs. Chaya Friedel Brigel (letter of J. Maltz to Yad Vashem, December 29, 1957).
15 Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit. ; Kurtz, op. cit.
16 Kotkowski, op. cit.
17 Kurtz, op. cit.
18 Winter, "Destruction of Piotrkow".
19 M. Greenstein, Testimony. Comp. Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit. ; A. Winter, op. cit. ; also Kotkowski, op. cit. ; speech of Moshe Kimmelman, op. cit.
20 Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit. ; Kurtz, op .cit. ; comp. Ben-Giladi, op. cit. ; Sendowski, op. cit. Upon his arrival in Tel-Aviv, J. Kurtz gave testimony confirming that the "Action" was headed by Commissar Foig who came to Piotrkow with a group of six or seven storm-troopers especially for the purpose. Abraham Goldschmidt, a Jewish policeman, threw away his police hat and voluntarily entered the freight car which carried his parents, among others, to Treblinka (Mina Hershkowitz-Wolkowitz, "Destruction of Piotrkow", "Canada Adler" (Canadian Eagle), October, 21, 1956).
21 Kurtz, op. cit.
22 Ben-Giladi, op. cit.
23 Ibid. ; see also Esther Hipsher-Kaminska, Testimony, Yad Vashem Archive.
24 "The Account of the Jewish Congregation in Piotrkow," Dudek Levkowitz, "A Piotrkowan in Treblinka" (Polish), Yad Vashem Archive ; comp. Zelman, op. cit.
25 Kurtz, op. cit. ; Joseph Freeman, testimony, op. cit. The Jews from Suleyow, Przyglow and Rosprza were also sent with the 3rd transport, while those from Gorshkowitz and Kaminsk were sent with the last transport (Sendowski, op. cit.).
26 Abraham Tushiner estimated the number of deportees at 22,000, Greenbaum at 17,000 and S. Pudlowski at 24,000. The most reliable figures, however, seem to be those of Kurtz who writes that 20,000 Jews were driven out in the four transports. In his testimony (op. cit.), Kurtz estimated the total number of deportees at more than 22,000 Jews (Yad Vashem Archive, Joseph Perelman's Testimony).
26a Greenstein, Testimony, op. cit. In the dark days before the "Action", the shochet (ritual slaughterer), Reb Yedidya, displayed great faith and went around the ghetto encouraging the people (Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.).
26b Greenstein, op. cit. ; Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit. ; Yehezkiel Rositzki, "Upon the Sanctification of the Holy Name" (So perished the old Kalisher baker) ; "Memorial Book to our City, Piotrkow Trybunalski, and Vicinity", contents, p. 21.
27 Ben-Giladi, op. cit. ; letter of J. Galili to Yad Vashem, 22.5.58.
28 Dr. M. Lubliner, Testimony ; Zelman and Blachman, op. cit.; comp. Kurtz, op. cit. ; also "Historical Questionnaires" of S. Greenbaum, H. Biezuner and Abraham Tushiner ; comp. also M. Migus, "The First Arrest" and Ch. Samelson, "The Revolt Which Was not Carried out".
29 Blachman, Testimony, op. cit.
30 Winter, op. cit. ; Zelman, op. cit. ; Arluck, op. cit. ; comp. S. Pudlowski, "The Fate of the Jews in Piotrkow", "Dos Neue Leben", No. 14 (11.12.45). Another version says that 2,000 Jews remained officially, among them 160 women and children, all of them in barracks or blocks.
31 Ben-Giladi, op. cit.
32 Kotkowski, op. cit. ; comp. Ben-Giladi, op. cit.
33 Blachman, Testimony, op. cit. ; comp. Ben-Giladi, op. cit.; Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit. ; Dr. Shantser and his wife (converts to Christianity) were transported to Tomashow ; Sendowski, op. cit.
34 Declaration of Israel Zigreich.
35 Testimonies of Niechtzitski and Blachman, op. cit.
36 Winter, op. cit.
37 Zeev Blachman, "The Resistance of the 42 in Rakow". Comp. testimonies of Niechtzitski and of Chaya Rosenblum-Blaustein, Yad Vashem Archive ; Richard Chentzinski, Testimony, Yad Vashem Archive, Munich Coll. No. 367/287.
38 Niechtzitski, Testimony, op. cit. ; comp. testimonies of Paula Berkowitz, op. cit. ; and Blachman, op .cit. ; also the descriptions by Hersh Gomulinski, op. cit. ; and Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.
39 Blachman, op. cit. ; comp. with the description of Gomulinski, op. cit., who was taken to the synagogue together with his wife and children. Niechtzitski states that Rosenberg, the sanitary policeman, would take food to those imprisoned in the synagogue.
40 Niechtzitski, op. cit. ; Zelman, op. cit.
41 Berkowitz, op. cit. ; Niechtzitski, op. cit.
42 Bela Greenblatt-Geliebter, op. cit. ; Niechtzitski, op. cit. ; Berkowitz, op. cit.
43 Declaration of Moshe Horowitz ; Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit. ; Niechtzitski, op. cit.
44 Blachman ,op. cit. ; also his testimony. Comp. manuscript of Hersh Gomulinski. Among those saved, besides Hersh Gomulinski who was wounded in his right arm and lost consciousness, were Yechiel Gomulinski (now in Israel), Weingarten, Holtz (these two were later in the Blizin camp) and Cymberg. See also the testimony of H. Gomulinski taken down in the protocol at Munich on November 20, 1946, Yad Vashem Archive, Munich Collection, 608/594; Zelman, op. cit.
45 Blachman, op. cit. ; comp. Berkowitz, Testimony, op. cit. ; Among those condemned to be shot were the wife and three children of M. Niechtzitski, his youngest brother's wife (Niech-

tzitski, testimony) and the parents-in-law of Chaya Rosenblum-Blaustein (Rosenblum-Blaustein, Testimony).

46 Pudlowski, op. cit.; comp. Ben-Giladi, op. cit. and Gomulinski, op. cit. Blachman and Rosenblum-Blaustein report that 542 persons perished in the December "Action". The exhumation of the 700 Jews murdered at Rakow was begun two weeks before Rosh Hashana 5707 (1946) and continued until Hoshana Raba. Thirty-two German prisoners were brought from the Piotrkow prison, and they opened the pits, exhumed the bones of the murdered Jews and put them into 10 long chests which were than buried at the entrance to the cemetery. The Piotrkow Jewish Congregation carried out this holy work which was directed by the two Hipsher brothers. Pinchas Hipsher was in charge of the work at the cemetery. He brought over the chests containing the bones of the dead and buried them. Yeshaya Hipsher, a former member of the Chevra Kadisha (Jewish Buriel Society) dealt, with great devotion, with the task of digging out the bodies. A wall was erected around the mass-grave by A. Horowitz. Hershkowitz-Wolkowitz, op. cit.; comp. "From the Rakow Forest to the Grave of Brothers" in the Memorial Book to Our City, Piotrkow Trybunalski, and Vicinity, pp. 8-9.

47 Lubliner, Testimony, op. cit.; comp. Blachman, Testimony, op. cit.

48 Blachman, op. cit.

49 Richard Chentzinski, op. cit.

50 Testimonies of Lubliner, op. cit., Chentzinski, op. cit, and Blachman, op. cit.

51 See also Tushiner, "Historical Questionnaire". Dr. Brahms' daughter ran away from the grave, but the Gestapo forced her father to catch her and bring her back. Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit. (Another version is that the Gestapo chased her among the tombstones until they caught her.).

52 Dr. Lubliner, op. cit.

53 Among those shot were: the lawyer, Skolnik; Litrowski; Yungster; Aba Brem; Lena Goldach, the tinsmith, Greenspan, and his daughter; and Papier (of the Litmanowitz family). Comp. memoirs of Shraga Posnanski, op. cit.

54 Niechtzitski, op. cit.; comp. Greenbaum, "Historical Questionnaire", op. cit. and Ben-Giladi, op. cit.

55 M. Migus, "The First Arrest", op. cit.; Rosenblum-Blaustein, op. cit.; Blachman, op. cit.; Ben-Giladi, op. cit.; Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.; also Tushiner, Historical Questionnaire, op. cit. Dr. Tenenbaum estimates the number of those who remained on the Bugaj at 1,700, those who worked in the glass factories at 700 and the number of deportees to other camps at 700. Blachman, on the other hand, sets the number of deportees at 500. Among those deported to Skarzysko were a large number of men and a few women who had been working at the "Samelstelle", gathering up the belongings of the deported Jews; Blachman, op. cit.

56 Esther Kaminska-Hipsher, in her testimony, estimated that 40 children had been killed in the "Action" at Blyzin. On the other hand, Mrs. Stashewska, whose own little boy was killed in the "Action", gave the number as 12 in her testimony.

57 Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.; Zelman, op. cit.; Ben-Giladi, op. cit.; comp. Rosenblum-Blaustein, op. cit. Galili gives a description of the execution of the thirteen in his "Thirteen among Many" and in a letter to Yad Vashem (22.5.58). It should be added that Dietrich was tried before the criminal court in Hamburg for his criminal activities in Piotrkow during the war years. Details of Dietrich's execution were given in the testimonies of Mordechai Goldhersh, Yechiel Kurnentz and Aaron Hipsher before the Tel Aviv District Court on 19.3.56. These witnesses remembered "only a few names of the murdered men": Kenigstein, Ziegelman, Blumstein, Abramowitz, Kimmelman and Tornberg.

58 M. Migus, "The First Arrest", op. cit.; Kotkowski, op. cit.; Ben-Giladi, op. cit.; Poznanski, op. cit. Zilber and his family were shot later by Police Commander Elshner, the former pastor; Kotkowski, op. cit.; Poznanski, "Memoirs", op. cit.

59 Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.; Joseph Freeman, Testimony, op. cit.

60 Blachman, op. cit.; Stashewski, op. cit.; Arluck, op. cit.

61 Kotkowski, op. cit. As early as June 1944, one hundred Jews, among them 6 women, were deported from the Bugaj to Tropau (Sudeten). At the end of November, the women were sent to Bergen-Belsen, while the men were evacuated to Hamburg where they were drowned in the port (Sendowski, op. cit.).

62 Rosenblum-Blaustein, op. cit.

63 Ben-Giladi, op. cit.

64 Ben-Giladi, op. cit.; Niechtzitski, op. cit.; Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.; also M. Migus, op. cit.

65 Posnanski, Testimony, op. cit.

66 Ben-Giladi, op. cit.

66a Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.; Greenbaum, "Historical Questionnaire", op. cit.

67 M. Niechtzitski, op. cit.; S. Posnanski, op. cit; Ben-Giladi, op. cit.; comp. also Israel Gutterman, Testimony.

68 S. Pudlowski, op. cit.

69 Ben-Giladi, op. cit.

70 Ibid.

71 Niechtzitski, op. cit. M. Niechtzitski, Eliahu Milstein and Moshe Feiner were in the group which went to Palestine.

72 "Account of the Jewish Congregation in Piotrkow", op. cit. S. Greenbaum, in his "Historical Questionnaire" (op. cit.) estimates the number of survivors at 1,000 of which three to four hundred were camp prisoners while 600 had saved themselves in other ways.

73 "Account of the Jewish Congregation in Piotrkow", op. cit. Comp. with Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.

74. The returned Jews celebrated the inauguration of the reconstructed synagogue on Jerozolimska Street with great festivity. However, the journalist, S. L. Shneiderman, who visited Piotrkow ("Forward", February 27, 1958) reported that for the two years preceding his visit, the synagogue had not even been opened for High Holy Day services because there were not enough Jews in the town interested in attending to make a "minyan" (the ten Jews necessary for public religious services), though there were 15 Jewish families in Piotrkow. Unlike synagogues in other towns and villages which were turned into granaries or movie theatres, however, the Piotrkow synagogue is regarded as a historical monument, at least for the time being.

III. RESISTANCE

Despite the heavy financial loss which the Jews suffered and the heavy contributions they were constantly forced to make, despite living constantly in a morass of oppressions and restrictions, they made desperate efforts to maintain their existence.

Economic resistance and perseverance were expressed in the creation of productive working places, in smuggling food into the ghetto and in establishing contact with the "Aryan" side. Much ingenuity and initiative was required to discover channels through which food could be smuggled into the ghetto, on one hand, and clothes and other goods smuggled out of the ghetto, on the other. The smugglers had to resort to bribery and other techniques in order to avoid confiscation of the goods.

The Jews sold their last sticks of furniture and whatever clothing they could spare, for paltry sums, in order to buy the smuggled overpriced food necessary for their survival. According to the German restrictions, all goods were considered "confiscated" and the selling of textiles, clothes, leather, shoes and "hidden goods" was punishable by death. Nevertheless, the trade with Polish dealers went on, even through the ghetto walls. In addition, many of the Tuszyn refugees carried on a trade in food products, as they had kept up their contacts with the peasants of the neighboring villages. For a time, the Jews of Piotrkow even managed to smuggle in food by means of a small railway. A lively trade in meat continued, for an even longer time, with the town of Kaminsk. The Kaminsk Jews were in a relatively good position until a number of arrests were made. Two shochetim (ritual slaughterers) were deported to Ausschwitz as a result, one of them, Yehoshua Lerner, a shochet in Piotrkow.

One factor which made smuggling easier was that only one side of Pilsudski Street was included in the ghetto. Lively barter went on between the Aryan side and the Jews. In addition, Jewish workers who worked outside the ghetto played an important role in the exchanges of goods and valuables for food.

Poor people, in their desire to save themselves and their families from starvation, smuggled at night, using the by-roads and bringing home grain from the villages. There were hundreds of small mills, the size of coffee grinders, in use in the ghetto, in which flour could be ground, mainly by hand. There were also small baking ovens with a capacity of 4—6 loaves. Small gas ovens which could be dismantled were even improvised for baking bread, but even so, the illegal bakeries were often caught in operation. The large organized bakeries where the rationed bread was baked were much better off, and they were even allowed to bring in firewood. These bakers managed to smuggle flour into the ghetto, under the firewood, paying for it with hundreds of loaves of bread which they distributed among Germans of all types, to the Polish police, etc. In this way, through bribery and conspiracy, the things necessary for survival were brought into the ghetto.

Thanks to the efforts of Rabbi Moshe Chaim Lau, the authorities allowed the Jews to bake matzot for Pesach (5700—5701). Since the quota of flour assigned for the purpose was very small, the Rabbi turned to his friend, Rabbi Dr. Joseph Carlebach, Chief Rabbi of Hamburg-Altona, as well as to his former students, Rabbi Sheinfeld of Zagreb (Yugoslavia) and Rabbi Dr. Grünwald of Lucerne (Switzerland). Due to their help, a quantity of matzot reached the ghetto.

Even after the ghetto was sealed off on April 1, 1942, the Jews continued to cross over to the "Aryan" side to supply themselves with food, though anyone caught was killed for the transgression. Children walked the roads to the surrounding villages to purchase food, though many of them were killed in the process. Dozens of Jews, mainly women, were caught outside the ghetto every day and were shot, after a brief trial by the German Sonder-Gericht (special court). After a time, even this procedure became unnecessary. Every Gestapo man or German policeman felt himself entitled to shoot the Jewish "criminals" who dared to leave the ghetto.[1]

Economic resistance was also expressed in producing various articles for Christian consumers and in providing the raw material for their production at a time when the Jews were cut off from all supplies. The Jews secretly produced leather products, soles and shoes, and even the Germans ordered shoes and boots from them.

The tannery of Moshe Niechtzitski and his brothers, in partnership with a "Volksdeutsche" (a German born in Poland) named Smolinski, was a prospering enterprise until the end of June 1941. The goods they produced were supplied partially to the Jewish community for its needs, by order of Michael Folman, with the approval of the Germans and indeed on their instructions. The permit was revoked by the Germans at the beginning of 1942, but the Niechtzitski brothers succeeded in removing their primitive tools from the tannery in time and transferred them to a cellar on Pilsudski Street where the work continued illegally. This illegal production continued, bringing in good profit, until the "Action" when the brothers had to find themselves official working places to secure themselves from deportation.[2]

Tailoring also flourished in the ghetto. Wool and cotton cloth were brought by various means from Tomashow and Bielsk, some of it even purchased from the "Treuhänder" (trustees) of the mills. All kinds of cotton cloth was brought in from Belchatow. The Jews in the ghetto produced linens, underwear and outer clothing as well as hosiery from both old and new wool and cotton, according to the latest fashions and colors. They also manufactured furs (from the skins of animals shot in the forests by the Germans) and made modern furniture, curtains, knitted articles, gold and silver ware, and various artistic items.

Some of the merchants prospered from their secret trade. Much merchandise was brought in from different cities. Iron goods were brought from Warsaw, Konsk, Tschenstochow and Radom ; textiles from Tomashow, Belchatow, etc. The merchandise often fell into the hands of the German or Polish police but bribery "bought" it back again. The difficult situation, however, often forced the merchants of textiles, linens, leather, etc., to look for new areas of trade ; pastry-shops were opened in many of the former places of business.

Economic contact was maintained with "Aryan" customers, even when the ghetto was sealed off. J. Kurtz writes : "The ghetto is isolated. The Jews are locked into their 'four cubits', watched day and night and searched by the Gestapo, by the German and the Polish police, by

officers and their assistants, by gendarmes and by secret police of all types. They are searched daily, are often caught and often shot. Despite all these obstacles, the Jews manage to produce everything they need in order to survive."[3]

The Jews in the ghetto proved their perseverance and talent in the workshops where they had to operate under extraordinary work conditions; the young people who worked in the Kara and Hortensia glass works quickly learned new skills. Boys of 15 or 16 working in Hortensia, for example, became expert at blowing and forming bottles, glasses and crystal ware, within a few weeks.[4]

The workshops established in the pre-"Action" period (in the former Jewish "Stock Exchange" outside the ghetto), in the belief that they would protect the community against deportation, displayed a good deal of inventiveness in the preparation of materials for production. The tailoring shop was managed by Shmuel Zeiten, a good craftsman, the hosiery workshop by Sender Gotthelf and Hilke Milstein was secretary of all the workshops. The commercial office of the shops was located at Platz Trybunalski, on the other side of the ghetto. The sewing workshop, equipped with 53 sewing-machines, employed 260 people who produced the material from old cloth, made sheets, pillow cases etc., from it and washed and dyed their products. Thirty Jews worked in the laundry and weaving department.

Similarly, the hosiery and hand-knitting workshops produced new goods from old materials (hosiery, sweaters, etc.). The shoemakers' workshop also had to improvise. It would get an order to make slippers for patients, but no raw material, so they made slippers out of dyed rags.[5]

These examples of passive economic resistance express the attitude of the Jews to the German restrictions. The Jews simply did their best to elude and sabotage these restrictions. The authorities found out, for instance, that not all the Jews were wearing the required white badge with a Magen David. The police thereupon arrested the transgressors and brought them before a special court. The chairman of the Jewish Council was ordered to warn all the Jews in his announcement (in Polish and Yiddish) of January 24, 1940, that severe punishment would be imposed on all transgressors of this order.[6]

The Jews found ways of getting out of the ghetto at forbidden hours, by taking spades on their shoulders and going out, supposedly to work for the Germans. Since so many Jews were really going out to work, this could not be checked.[7] A way of getting around the "Sperstunde" (curfew) was also found. Holes were made in the walls, enabling people to cross from yard to yard and to keep in contact, during the forbidden hours, with their friends and neighbors.[8]

In the winter of 1941—42, while the Germans were preparing to reduce the size of the ghetto and to isolate it, the Jews were doing their best to create small gardens and to plant flowers and greenery, even on the tiniest spots, so as to freshen the air in the teeming ghetto. Thanks to the devoted work of a group of functionaries, headed by Jacob Kurtz, a Palestinian, and Russek, an expert gardner, small garden beds were set out in the ghetto. In the square at Platz Zamkowi, in the middle of the ghetto, benches were brought out and a children's playground put up in the center of the square.[9]

One clear example of economic "sabotage" pertained to the orders concerning the confiscation of furs. Despite the severe punishment meted out for not handing over furs on time, many Jews risked their lives to sell furs secretly to the Christians. Others even cut their furs into small pieces and destroyed them, rather than give them over to the enemy.[10] The slogan was "Aushalten und durchhalten!" ("Hold out and endure!").

Any Jew who wanted to live was compelled to break the German "law". The first death sentences and the execution of Jews who were caught on the "Aryan" side therefore failed to deter other Jews who continued to engage in smuggling. This phenomenon was neither lawlessness nor resignation; it only proved the powerful vitality of the Jews in their will to live. The external appearance of the ghetto Jews testified to their inflexible determination to hold out. Not only did the women dress relatively well, the men continued to shave, cut their hair and to dress neatly, never betraying their inner anxiety concerning their fate.

Other examples of passive resistance included the hiding of Jews by Poles in the city and in surrounding villages, as well as the passing of Jews as "Aryans". This question, however, has to do with the whole relationship between Jews and Poles during the extermination period and will be dealt with separately.

The spirit of passive resistance of the religious Jews is best characterized by their behavior during the Holy Days of 5703. Despite the feeling of terror in the ghetto (this was on the eve of the "Action"), they wore their traditional holiday apparal. Some of them did not hesitate to go through the streets to religious services wrapped in telessim (prayer shawls), and to pray "betsibur" (in public) in many places. Three weeks before the "Action", during Succoth, many Jews even sat in the Succah (tabernacle built of boards and covered with leafy branches) in traditional fashion.[11] One group of functionaries ("askonim") carried out a dangerous project during the first period of occupation and succeeded in rescuing a number of Torah scrolls and 300 holy books from German hands.[12]

Cultural activities continued, even in the dreadful atmosphere of the ghetto. Illegal libraries for children and adults operated actively. One such library was discovered by the Gestapo, but a large bribe succeeded in hushing up the "sin".[13] Rabbi Moshe Chaim Lau wrote a monumental

work in the ghetto on "Kiddush Hashem", sanctification of the Holy Name (referring to the religious martyrdom of Jews). Unfortunately, the manuscript was lost during the destruction.

There is also data concerning literary creativeness in the ghetto. Jacob Lieberman wrote a diary in Hebrew, in which he quoted verses of Bialik's "Ir Ha'hariga" (The City of Murder"). This diary, too, was never found. Lolek Cohen wrote poetry on day-to-day topics. During one of the searches in the community building, he was discovered with a poem on Hitler and Stalin. For this crime, he was arrested, put to torture and finally deported to Ausschwitz, where he perished.[14]

The organization of amateur performances, recitals and dances was vitally important to the Jews, and they were always well attended. The drama group, directed by Shmuel Eliahu Ziegelman, Herman, and Shmuel Zeiten, was well-received by the people.[15] These cultural activities in the midst of terror were of great significance in the psychological self-preservation of the Jews and kept them from complete submission to the "dehumanization" methods applied by the Germans towards the ghetto population.

An order concerning Jewish schools in occupied Poland was promulgated on August 31, 1940. According to this order, the Jewish Councils must, in the future, be responsible for Jewish education ; they were obligated to found and keep up a specific number of general schools and they might, in addition, set up vocational and professional schools. In actuality, the opening of schools for Jewish children depended on the local authorities. In certain cities and towns, the local authorities permitted the opening of such schools on condition that the Hebrew language be taught in them.

At the time the new Jewish Council began functioning, a school committee was set up which attemped to open a school in the ghetto. However, the governing committee of the Jewish Council always put off the question, justifying its action on the basis of the lack of a suitable place and the existence of the typhus epidemic. Some of the functionaries declared that the grouping of a large number of children was dangerous.

Nevertheless, many school-groups were set up in the ghetto. They were shut during the typhus epidemic but were afterwards reopened and legalized, with the support of the school committee. There were also many kindergartens, each of which generally contained between 7 and 8 tots.

Secret high school groups (gymnasium and lyceum) were active, and engaged in varied study programs up to the time of the great "Action". Three qualified women teachers, B. Eichner, Hela Rosenblum and Eugenia Rozytzka, were in charge of the high school groups. A larger study group (within the framework of grammer school subjects) was directed by Natalie Stern who had long taught at the Berek Yoselewitz school. The teachers held frequent conferences on matters connected with teaching under abnormal conditions. These study groups would sometimes meet in the orphanage area. Both the parents and the teachers displayed great stubbornness and made sacrifices in order to keep their children studying and obtaining an education, even under the existing conditions.[16]

Due to lack of source material, it is difficult to reconstruct the activities of all the political groups and youth organizations which operated in the ghetto. The Bund carried on its ramified activities under the occupation. Members of the illegal Bund council were : Jacob Berliner, Zalman Tenenberg, Tanchum Freund, Yitzhak Samsonowitz, Maurice Meirowitz and Yeshaya Weingarten. Since Zalman Tenenberg was chairman of the Jewish committee, the Bund had strong influence there. Members of the local Bund council would bring food to people in need who preferred to suffer hunger rather than stand in line to ask for help. A help-fund for party members and sympathizers was at the disposal of a special committee of the Bund's, headed by its treasurer, M. Meirowitz.[17]

Begging children made a mass appearance in the ghetto (the orphanage was overflowing). After great effort on the part of the above-mentioned committee, the community provided a place (Platz Tsarnetski 1) where the children could spend a few hours a day and get a nourishing meal. Many children were placed with private families.[18]

The apartment of Miriam and Tanchum Freund (Ritserska 8) was used for party gatherings and meetings, and illegal literature reached their address. Their apartment was used to put up liaison officers of the Polish underground who came there from the illegal Bund central committee in Warsaw. A number of May 1st celebrations were organized in 1941 at the homes of party members M. Migus, Moshe Adler, J. Berliner, T. Freund and others. The secret Bund center for illegal activities was in the home of Tova Kazanowski-Blumstein. All the Bund party work was concentrated in this modest worker's house, located in the heart of the ghetto (it was hidden in Simon Goldstein's large yard). Confidential radio communiques and illegal publications brought from Warsaw were exchanged here, and it also served as an address for delegates from other cities such as Mrs. Itka Lazar-Mellman (who was officially a delegate of the "Joint" but carried out Bund missions in Warsaw as well), Kosherowski from Tomashow Mazowietski, Rachel Pudlowski from Belchatow and others.[19]

The Bund kept in active contact with its central committee in Warsaw. Tanchum Freund, former member of the community's board of directors, was the main liaison officer since he travelled to Warsaw to the Joint as often as he was permitted to do so, on missions for the Jewish Council. In his capacity as liaison officer of the Bund in Piotrkow, he dealt with all sorts of matters in neighboring cities (Sulejow, Belchatow, Tomashov, Gorzkowitz, Wola Krzysztoporska, Przyscha, etc.). For example, literature

and money were transferred to Tomashow Mazowietski where the Bund was active and did rescue work with large groups of people. Close contact was maintained with Sulejow through the easier forest-way. After Belchatow was incorporated into the Reich, contact with that town gradually ceased.[20]

Other frequent emissaries to Piotrkow from Warsaw included Moshe Kaufman and Yankel Tselemanski ("Cheslaw"). The latter was registered as an official of the Piotrkow community.[21]

When the Gestapo accidently tracked down the illegal Bund activities in Piotrkow, the Bund central committee in Warsaw received a telephone message from Sulejow about the tense situation and the arrest of Bund members who worked in the community.[22] When the other Bund members were arrested on July 5, 1941, Tselemanski, who was also wanted, managed by pure chance to avoid the fate of his comrades.[23] After the arrests, contact with Warsaw was maintained, to a limited degree, by the youth of the organization, headed by Lilka Gutkowitz and Motel Appelowitz. The widespread illegal work which had previously been done was no longer possible.[24] Before May 1, 1942, the Gestapo arrested other Bund members : Moshe Sternfeld, Yitseh Rener, Velvel Weisser, Berish Rosenberg and two others.[25]

Hashomer Hatsair, which had three sections, was also active. The senior members of the organization were Hanka Ziegelman, the Aronowitz brothers, Itzhak Cohen, Gershon Goldberg, Fela Niechtzitski, Paula Pudlowski, Rachel and Meir Zarnowietski and Ruzshka Gutterman. Two other members, Itka Kaminska (now in Israel) and Yankel Hershlikowitz went to Russia at the beginning of the war. The regular meetings of the organization took place, during the war, in the Zarnowietski apartment at Pilsudski 21. In February 1940, Mordechai Anilewitz visited the ghetto and thereafter regular contact was established between the Piotrkow branch and Warsaw headquarters. Jacob Aronowitz, the delegate from Piotrkow, also went to Warsaw. Emissaries who looked "Aryan" came to Piotrkow from Warsaw and smuggled illegal Shomer publications to them.[25a] A secret code was fixed for the correspondence with Warsaw and after the war letters signed by Jacob Aronowitz, Meir Zarnowietski and others were found in the underground archive of the Warsaw ghetto.

The two youth sections of Hashomer Hatsair were led by Jacob Aronowitz, Hanka Ziegelman and Ruzshka Gutterman. The main leaders of the organization during the war were Aronowitz, Ziegelman and Zarnowietski.

At the beginning of 1942, an invitation was received to send a representative to Zarki. Ruzshka Gutterman, who had false identity documents, was sent to the Shomer farm there, where she met with Mordechai Anilewitz and Aryeh Wilner. They suggested to her that the organization members in Piotrkow try to obtain weapons, penetrate German outposts and establish contact with other underground organizations. A few Shomrim managed to sneak into German outposts and to obtain false identity papers. Contact was also established with the local Communists, who were, however, unable to take the Shomrim into the forests with them. The great extermination "Action", during which most of the Shomrim were killed, put an end to their attempts at active resistance.

The "Chanichei Beitar" (Revisionist youth movement) held "silent" meetings at which they frequently discussed "the liberation of the ghetto". Jacob and Eliezer (Lutek) Lieberman, the Goldberg brothers, Abraham Weinrib, David Perlowitz and Chaim Samelson participated in these discussions.[26]

Because of the lack of source material, even less is known about the activities of other groups and youth organizations. What is known, however, is that before the great "Action", secret consultations were initiated by the Zionist youth organizations. These consultations dealt with questions of defence of the ghetto, the use of catacombs within the city and projects to create partisan groups or to find ways to unite with existing groups. Loud exclamations were heard : "I want to be killed, knowing that I have killed at least one German !" "Give us weapons," they shouted, "we don't want to wait until they come to us ! We want to break out of the ghetto ! We want to attack them and capture their arms. We shall fight them to the last drop of blood !"

But the older functionaries, who felt responsible for the youth, restrained these outbursts in the belief that such violence would endanger the lives of the few thousand Jews who were officially allowed to remain in the block, the other thousands who were preparing to hide in cellars and catacombs, and the young and healthy ones who were sent to work-camps. These functionaries insisted, "Any resistance from us will be regarded as a provocation by the Germans to slaughter all the Jews in Piotrkow." On the other hand, these older functionaries approved of uniting with Polish partisan groups. "We should look for ways to approach them, because we ourselves have no arms and are unable to obtain them."[27]

Illegal newspapers were smuggled into the small ghetto, even after the great deportation. The Zionist youth leader, Feivel Steinberg, was one of these "smugglers" who often risked his life. He was possessed of great optimism and often encouraged people who were despondent over the situation.[28]

In the winter of 1943, the Bund central committee again tried to establish contact with Piotrkow. A liaison office (a contact from Tchenstochowa) arrived. He was unfortunately betrayed to the Germans and shot.[29] The Bund central committee managed to get in touch with the Bund group in the Kara glass works, however, by way of an intermediary, a Polish socialist railway official whose son, Watzlaw Barda, worked as a fireman in the factory. Yechiel Kotkowski received a letter from J. Samsonowitz,

the representative of the illegal Warsaw coordinating committee (of the Bund and the Jewish National Zionist Committee).

The coordinating committee made efforts, at that time, to establish contact with the Jews in other camps and to send help to them. Special couriers, Jewish and Christian, were sent out all over the land to gather as much information as possible about Jewish life, and to find ways to smuggle help in to them.

The letters from Warsaw greatly encouraged the Piotrkow camp prisoners. In accordance with instructions from Warsaw, a united committee, composed of all the political trends and leanings was established in the Kara area. Illegal activity now was broadened and became more effective. The young people active in the Bund (Yechiel Kotkowski, Nachum Weglishewski, Motel Appelowitz, Maria Migus and others) were joined by others including Shlomo Meisner, Pinek, Yumeh Kudesh, and Hersh Goldberg. Contact was also established with the Bugaj work-camp, where Leon Shitenberg was in charge of the activities. The camps in Skarzysko and Blizin were also contacted; at the latter camp, Lilka Nutkiewitz was the liaison.[30]

Some time between July and November 1943, Barda, the fireman, brought 20,000 zloty to the Kara camp, from the coordinating committee. This money was distributed among the members of the Bund youth groups. 5,000 zloty were set aside for the Bugaj workers.[31] About two months later, the courageous courier of the coordination committee, Wladka (Feigele Feltel-Miedzishetski) brought 50,000 zloty and conspiratorial literature (among them a publication about Ausschwitz) from Warsaw. This was smuggled into the camp by way of a Polish work-guard (Werkschutz).

Another brave courier, Alia Margolis (daughter of the well-known Bund leader, Dr. Margolis of Lodz) came to Piotrkow on a German passport, bringing 50,000 zloty for the conspiracy group in the work-camp. She managed to get into the factory and to give the money over. However, some Germans who were passing by saw her and detained her. Alia was arrested and accused of moving about in a forbidden area, where Jews were working. The punishment for this crime was death. The Jews, who had just received the money, mobilized all the eleme ts in the camp. By bribing the directors of Hortensia, they managed to get the "innocent Aryan girl" freed. Renia Zaks, who had received 25,000 zloty from Alia Margolis, was also released.[32]

Unfortunately, some of these abortive attempts ended in death. The Jews at Hortensia had succeeded in establishing contact with those deported to Skarzysko through Sigmund Ganera, the Piotrkow fireman, who delivered letters and money for a long time but was finally caught. The Germans tortured him until he revealed the names of Jews who worked with him in Hortensia. The Jews who had been sending letters to Skarzysko were arrested by the Gestapo and executed. Among those shot were Ber Hendel and his son, Leib; Chaim Shmuel Marmor, Libe Sonik, Meir Rosenblum, Tuvya Perlowitz and Margalit. The women in Skarzysko who had been corresponding with their relatives in the work-camp were also shot: the Perlowitz sisters, Miss Itka Hendel, Mrs. Rosenblum, and Mrs Margalit. Two Polish firemen were arrested and sent to Ausschwitz.

After this fiasco, contact between camps or with the outside world was very limited. The courier, Eva Sarnetski, who visited Piotrkow on a mission from the Warsaw underground "Council to Help the Jews" encountered difficulty in transferring letters to the camp and in receiving letters from there. Despite this, some contacts were maintained, even under the existing conditions. For example, Moshe Niechtzitski, a Poalei Zion member interned in Skarzysko, succeeded in contacting his brother, first in Piotrkow and later in Blizin, with the help of a Pole named Shved who was the "brigadier" (leader) of his work group.

The Jews of the Bugaj also kept in contact with the outside world with the help of the local fireman through whom they received the subsidies designated for them by the conspiracy group at the Kara glass factory.[33]

Several acts of sabotage were carried out in the glass factory in the summer of 1944 by the Polish underground fighters of the "Armya Krajowa" (Land Army), with the cooperation of the camp workers. The Polish fighters, however, categorically refused to take with them a number of young Jews who longed to join the partisan units. In any case, the sabotage created a feeling of dread in the Volksdeutsche (Polish German) directors of the plant.[34]

The Jewish conspiracy group received the news of the forthcoming revolt in Warsaw in advance. The group had became enlarged at that time (among those who joined it were Gomberg, the head-Jew, and Yossel Zamel, the Jewish chief-of-police, both of them former army officers) and it maintained close contact with the couriers of the Polish underground.

In some unknown manner, "several people from the factories got away and joined the partisans." They fell upon a work-guard officer, Matchiewski, and took two revolvers from him.[35] One partisan unit was hidden in the woods behind Piotrkow. It consisted of 40 men, among them several Jews from the work-camp.[36]

The attempt at active resistance of the Beitar youth group, the Goldberg brothers and their friends, unfortunnately ended in failure. The Goldberg brothers got in touch with a foreman at their place of work who promised to buy revolvers for them at a high price and to put them in touch with the "Armja Krajowa" (A. K.). This man actually sold them four revolvers at a high price, but the guns were equipped with blank cartridges. On his instructions, the Goldberg brothers and the Lieberman brothers disguised themselves as firemen. The Christian who introduced himself as a member of the A. K. led them into

the Paradise Forest by little-known side roads, and left them alone there. They were instantly surrounded by Gestapo men. The Jews tried to defend themselves, but the bullets were, of course, blanks. The next day, the Gestapo brought the four Jews, all of them wounded, to the Polish hospital. They were investigated under torture for several days and were finally brought to the Piotrkow cemetery, shot and buried in a common grave. Shmuel Katz, who had sewed the firemen's hats for them, and Shimek Niss, the Jewish policeman who had brought them out of the ghetto, were also killed with them.[37]

It is worth mentioning, at this point, the highly dangerous but important sabotage acts carried out in the Skarzysko camp by Moshe Niechtzitski. He helped Stanislaw Shved, Polish brigadier of a camp unit (who afterwards turned out to be one of the chief commanders of the Polish underground movement in the Skarzysko district) to steal cases of bullets from the factory for the partisans. On Shved's instructions, Niechtzitski would take out five cases of bullets every fortnight. Another Jew, Chaim Kopel of Stopnitz, later worked in Shved's unit as well. Once, Niechtzitski and Kopel took 150 cases of bullets out of the storage places. Such hauls were made only a few times, but from time to time they were able to take away 5—10 boxes at a time, in cars and on carts.[38]

As can be seen, no organized active resistance of the Piotrkow Jews ever materialized. There are a number of objective reasons which made any such attempts impracticable at the time when most of the Jewish population was still concentrated in the ghetto. One factor was the complete isolation of the population which lived, from the beginning, in a constant state of siege, in an atmosphere of nervous strain, indescribable terror and helpless frustration. They had to put up with constant searches, plundering and the taking of prisoners, which always ended in bloodshed. The tactics of the enemy, designed to gradually liquidate the ghetto, confused all tries at resistance.

Feelings of responsibility toward the population in the certain knowledge that the Nazis applied the principle of collective responsibility in all cases of resistance, often restrained the more active elements from any undertakings against the enemy. Those in favor of active resistance were faced with a tragic dilemma : did they have the right to expose to certain death people who perhaps would otherwise survive ? Thus, those who strived towards resistance were paralyzed by the possibility that they might be responsible for total extermination of the entire Jewish population by the Nazis in revenge for any action against them. Another factor was the awareness that no help from outside the ghetto walls could be hoped for. It is for these reasons that the people let themselves be taken off to Treblinka without even a try at resistance.[39]

Finally, it should be stressed that any way of joining the partisans was practically closed for a Jew from Piotrkow. This was stated by a delegate ("Stephan") to the meeting of the "Council to Help the Jews" on November 16, 1943. He declared that Jews could be rescued from the Piotrkow ghetto, but that temporary living space, weapons and food were lacking for those who wanted to escape to the forests.

The Polish resistance movement was split into groups, most of them composed of Fascists and anti-Semites, who would shoot at any Jew who came to join them. There were rare cases where they succeeded in joining the partisans, for instance, if the escapee succeeded in meeting with a democratic resistance group or if he didn't look Jewish. All other such attempts, such as the previously mentioned case of the Goldberg and Lieberman brothers, ended in death.[40]

In summary, it can be said that the Jewish masses, downtrodden and broken by the years of cruel German oppression and surrounded by an atmosphere of wantonness, of horror and death, with no hope of help from anywhere, passed out of existence without an attempt at armed opposition. However, the above-mentioned cases of passive resistance and the few attempts at active resistance light up the gloom of the martyrdom and destruction of Piotrkow Jewry.

SOURCES

1 Kurtz, op. cit. ; Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit. ; Blachman, op. cit. ; Rosenblum-Blaustein, testimony, op. cit. ; Report of the Congregation, op. cit. ; N. Lau, Observations, op. cit.
2 M. Niechtzitski, Testimony, op. cit. ; Kurtz, op. cit.
3 Kurtz, op. cit.
4 Kotkowski, op. cit.
5 Kurtz, op. cit. ; Migus, op. cit. ; Arluck, op. cit. ; M. Niechtzitski, Testimony, op. cit.
6 Ringelblum Archive, No. 1/340.
7 Kurtz, op. cit.
8 Ben-Giladi, op. cit.
9 Kurtz, op. cit.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Huberband, op. cit.
13 Kurtz, op. cit.
14 Ibid.
15 Migus, "In the Underground," op. cit.
16 Kurtz, op. cit. ; Eugenia Rozytzka, "Illegal Studies in the Piotrkow Ghetto" (Polish).
17 Migus, op. cit. ; Kotkowski, op. cit. ; Comp. Bernard Goldstein, "Five Years in the Warsaw Ghetto," New York, "Unser Tseit" ("Our Time"), 1947, No. 128/129 ; also M. Migus, "Unser Fon" ("Our Flag"), from the Piotrkow ghetto and "Unser Shtimeh" ("Our Voice"), Paris, Jubilee edition, November, 1955.
18 Migus, "In the Underground", op. cit.
19 Migus, "Celebrations in the Ghetto" ; Migus, "Unzer Fon", op. cit.
20 Migus, "In the Underground", op. cit.; Kotkowski, op. cit.
21 Ibid.
22 Migus, "The First Arrest", op. cit.
23 Migus, "In the Underground," op. cit.
24 Kotkowski, op. cit. ; Goldstein, op. cit., p. 129.
25 Migus, "The First Arrest", op. cit. ; M. Kushnir, "The Activity of the Bund during the Hitler Occupation" ; excerpts

from the report of L. Brenner in the book, "In the Years of the Jewish Destruction. The Voice of the Underground Bund," New York, "Unzer Tsteit", 1948, pp. 295, 309-310.

25a Letter from Meir Zarnowietski to S. A. Ziegelman (undated), Manuscript 7.

26 Samelson, op. cit.

27 Kurtz, op. cit.

28 Dr. Lubliner, op. cit.

29 Migus, op. cit.; Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.

30 Migus, op. cit.; Kotkowski, op. cit.

31 Kotkowski, op. cit. Comp. report of the underground Bund to the Bund leadership in London, on the period from July to November 1943. In the book, "In the Years of the Jewish Destruction. The Voice of the Underground Bund" (op. cit., p. 79) it is reported that the Piotrkow Bundists wrote to Warsaw upon receiving the money, "This was the finest moment of our lives." They included names of people with whom it would be worth while to communicate and also reported on passing the money to Skarzysko.

32 Kotkowski, op. cit.; Migus, op. cit. Comp. Wladka (Feigele Feltel Miedzirzetski), "From Both Sides of the Ghetto Wall", New York, Educational Committee of the Arbeter Ring (Workmen's Circle), 1948. Comp. Goldstein, op. cit., p. 402.

33 Blachman, op. cit.; Dr. Tenenbaum, op. cit.; Niechtzitski, op. cit. Report No. 4 by Thaddeus Sarnetski in a lecture on matters in the provinces of the "Council to Help Jews", August 25, 1943 (Files of "Zegata", Yad Vashem Archive).

34 Migus, op. cit.; Kotkowski, op. cit.

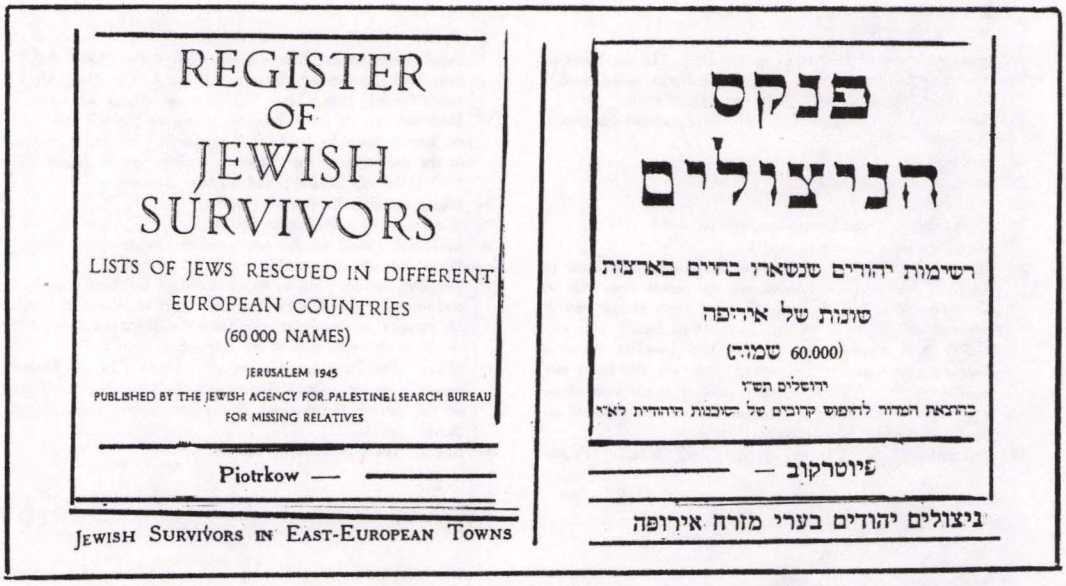
35 Winter, op. cit.; Pudlowski, op. cit.

36 Rutlowski (based on the testimony of Thaddeus Sarnetski of "Zegata"), op. cit., p. 134.

37 Samelson, op. cit.; Migus, op. cit.; Joseph Goldberg, the third and surviving son of Abraham Goldberg, is at present in Israel. He escaped to the Aryan side from the Skarzysko camp, but the Poles delivered him to the Gestapo.

39 Migus, "The First Arrest", op. cit.; Migus, "In the Underground", op. cit.; Dr. Lubliner, op. cit. Comp. "In the Years of the Jewish Destruction. The Voice of the Underground Bund," op. cit.

40 Migus, "The First Arrest," op. cit.



The "Survivor's Register Book" was published by the Jewish Agency for Palestine in Jerusalem in 1945. This list represents only people registered in the first month or so just after liberation.

The Beginning

Piotrkow was liberated on January 16, 1945 by the Soviet Army. People who survived in Auschwitz, Czestochowa, on the Aryan side, etc., came back home. They registered in the Gmina. Most of them left Piotrkow shortly afterward. On the next page is the list of these people taken from the "Survivor's Register Book."

(Our thanks to Rafi Weiser and Rivka Staszewska-Plesser of the Jerusalem University Library for this important historical material.)



The Committee—Dr. Zygmunt Tenenbaum, President and Ewa Borzykowska, Secretary. The others are: attorney Esterka Flattau and Szer.

PIOTRKOW TRYBUNALSKI

Adelberg *Sabina*
Anic *Jura*
Adler *Dawid*
Albus *Genia*

Bank *Mania*
Beczkowska *Ita*
Brawman *Daniel*
Butkowska *Bluma*
Butkowska *Rywka*
Birenbaum *Bola*
Burak *Hersz*
Brandwajn *Majer*
Brandwajn *Abram*
Brandwajn *Josek*
Berger *Szmul*
Borzykowska *Ewa*
Blumsztejn *Moszek*
Blumsztein *Rachela*
Bram (Listanowska) *Anna*
Bialowas *Icek*
Bialowas *Majer*
Borman *Henryk*
Borman *Cela*
Bryl *Kalman*
Berger *Danka*
Bem *Emilja*
Bulwa *Hanka*
Bendet *Aron*
Bogdanski *Moszek*

Cichy *Szmul*
Cymberknopf *Icek*

Dzialowski *Icek*
Dessau *Szulim*
Dessau *Rachmil*
Dessau *Mordka*
Dzialowski *Moszek*
Dzialowski *Srul*
Dubiecki *Aron Wolf*
Dubiecka *Tania*
Dubiecka *Rachela*
Dubiecka *Szulamit*
Dubiecka *Wanda*
Dzialowska *Rajzla*
Dzialowski *Idel*
Dzialowska *Hinda*
Dessau *Berek*

Englard *Gitla*
Edelman *Regina*
Edelman *Pola*
Englard *Ala*
Englard *Ita*

Fisz *Sala*
Folman *Aron*
Folman *Rozia*
Folman *Szaja*
Fajngold-Leszman & *daugh from Niechcice*
Fajwlowicz *Gucia*
Fajwlowicz *Michal*
Frenkiel *Hinda Laja*
Frenkiel *Chil*
Frenkiel *Srul Icek*
Fuks
Fuks *Bajla*
Fuks *Nechuma*
Fuks *Esperanca*

Gleiwicer *Moszek*
Goldfreid *Mumek*
Goldfreid *Lodzia*
Goldstein *Dawid*
Goldstein *Dina*
Goldszmidt *Genia*
Goldszmidt *Sala*
Grinberg *Miecyszlaw dr.*
Grinberg *Henia, wife*
Grinberg *Henryk, son*
Goldstein *Abram*
Goldberg *Abram*
Grinbaum *Henoch*
Grosberg (Gomolinska *Rachela*
Goldhersz *Saba*
Gutman *Frania*
Gutman *Henia*
Gomolinski *Abram*
Grosberg *Hela*
Gomolinski *Idel*
Gomolinska *Sala*
Gomolinski *Abram Chil*
Grinbaum *Berek*
Goldstein *Fajga*
Goldblum *Leon*
Grabowski *Lajbus,*
Grabowska *Fajga*
Grinberg (Rotsztein) *Masza*
Grinberg *Irata*
Glogowska *Maria*
Goldbreg *Ludwik*
Glajch *Abram*
Goldberg *Zosia*
Goldstein *Hela*

Horowicz *Majer*
Henig *Kajla*
Henochowicz *Bluma*
Herszlikowicz *Feliks*
Helfgot *Ita*

Jolowicz *Majer*

Kolf *Abram*
Kuszer *Binem*
Klajer *Sura*
Knobel *Fajga*
Kneman *Rózia*
Kojfczyk *Ruta*
Krajtman *Cyrla*
Kozlowski *Abram Moszek*
Kuszynski *Lajb*
Kalinska *Tamar*
Kimmelman *Michal*
Korman *Frania*
Kirszbaum *Fiszel*
Kirszbaum *Chaim*
Kirszbaum *Moszek*

Litmanowiczowa *Hela*
Leczycka *Tamara*
Lewental *Motek*
Langfus *Abram, Bedzin*
Langfus (Lichtenstein) *F*
Langfus *Sylwia*
Lewkowicz *Dudek*
Lewkowicz *Icek*
Lewin *Dawid*
Leber *Jankiel*
Libeskind *Mendel*
Libeskind *Genia*
Libeskind *Salomon*
Libeskind *Moszek*
Libeskind *Abram*
Libeskind *Jesek*
Libeskind *Cela*
Libeskind *Frania*
Lipszyc *Chaja*
Lipszyc *Pola*
Liberman *Symcha-Tanchum*

Mekler *Rózia*
Milioner *Pola*
Milioner *Jozef*
Majzner *Fela*
Milsztein *Jakob*
Mortkowicz *Heniek*
Mortenfeld *Jakob*
Malc *Rachmil*
Mortkowicz *Salomon*

Niechcicki *Moszek*
Nutkowicz *Moszek*
Nyss *Ala*
Nyss *Prywa*
Nyss *(Koenigstein) Frania*
Nissensohn *Mendel*
Nissensohn (Ritterband) *Cela*
Perl *Maria*
Plachcinska *Zofia*
Poznanski *Sewek*
Poznanski *Janek*
Poznanski *Icek*
Pinczewski *Jakow*
Pacanowska *Gucia*
Plucer *Chana*
Pacanowski *Hersz*
Pinkuszewicz *Moszek*
Parzenczewski *Jakob*
Parzecka
Przybylska *Rózia*

Rozenblum *Henia*
Rozenstein *Abram*
Rozenbaum *Lutka*
Rozental *Renia*
Rozenwald *Bluma*
Rozenwald *Izrael*
Rozenwald *Pinkus*
Rozenblum *Berek*
Rafalowicz *Rózia*
Rokman *Gucia*
Rozencweig *Dawid*
Rajchman *Lajb*
Rozenberg *Estera*
Rozenberg *Juda*
Rzechtowa *Anna*
Szwarcberg *Estera*
Satowna *Estera*
Sztroweis *Moryc*
Spielbaum *Irena from Warsz*
Steinberg *Aller*
Szytenberg *Abram*
Szmaragd *Izrael*
Spiro *Wolf*
Szydłowski *Chaim*
Sandowski *Jakob*
Sandowski *Moszek*
Szydlowski *Chaskiel*
Staszewska *Hela*
Szwarc *Motek*
Szmulewicz *Fiszel*
Szmulewicz *Szaja*
Szmulewicz *Josek*
Szmulewicz *Dawid*
Steinberg *Klara*
Steinberg *Nuta dr.*
Szmulewicz *Mania*
Sieradzki *Chaskiel*
Sieradzki *Lajzer Mordka*
Sandowska *Cilla*
Szmulewicz *Sala*
Szmulewicz *Rachela*
Sztern *Rachela*
Szeroszewska *Edwarda* & *2 children Szeroszewski*
Spielfogel *Markus dr.* & *w*
Spielfogel *Maciek*
Spielfogel *Tuska*
Spielfogel *Henrykowa*
Tenenbaum *Ezriel dr.*
Tygierówna *Tuba*
Tygierówna *Chana*
Tenenbaum *Maria*
Torenberg *Jakob Jozef*
Uszerowicz *Sala*
Ufner (Glogowska) *Gustawa*

Wajshof *Cela*
Wajser *Mania*
Wendel *Nuta*
Wurcel *Symcha*

Zylberminc *Mania*
Zimnowoda *Rachela*
Zyskind *Sonia*
Zaks *Renia*
Zammel *Frania*
Zylber *Cesia*
Zucker *Ewa*
Zucker *Irena*
Zyskind *Pinkus*
Zyskind *Szymon dr.*

Wechsler (?) *Ida*
Zammel *Josek*
Fajwlowicz *Pinkus*
Apfelrgin *Bernard*
Apfelgrin (Freitag) *Maria, Belchatow*
Apfelgrin *Ryszard, son*
Pytowski *Izrael*
Pytowski (Margulies), *Lozd*
Pytowska *Frania, daughter*
Muszynski *Mojzesz, Lodz*
Hampel *Ita* & *child, Lodz*
Hampel *Iska, Lodz*

The register of survivors in Piotrkow just after liberation—beginning of 1945.

CENTRALA ZIOMKOWSTW PIOTRKOWSKICH

TEL. 1249 — IMIENIA RAYMONDA FRACKMANA w PIOTRKOWIE, UL. PIŁSUDSKIEGO 23 — TEL. 1249

Centrala
Przewodniczący
dr. Tenenbaum Zygmunt
Wiceprzewodniczący
Waiser Izrael
Sekretarz
Horowicz Aron

Oddział Łódź
Przewodniczący
dr. Rozenberg Zygmunt
Wiceprzewodniczący
Kornfeld Izrael
Sekretarz
Waiser Izrael
Skarbnik
Rozensztajn Szymon

Oddział Dolny Śląsk
Przewodniczący
Sztern Szymon
Sekretarz
Rozencwajg Artur
Skarbnik
Erlich Jan

Oddział Piotrków
Przewodniczący
dr. Tenenbaum Zygmunt
Członkowie Zarządu:
Hipszer Pinkus
Horowicz Aron

L.Dz.207/47 — Piotrkow, dnia 24 lipca 1947 r.

Drodzy Bracia.

Podaję do Waszej wiadomości, że instrumenty lekarskie do operacyj usznych otrzymaliśmy, za ktore serdecznie dziękuję. Otrzymaliśmy rownież odzież, zapowiedzianą przez Was jeszcze w jesieni ubiegłego roku, o czem już pisałem i osobiście p. Wolraichowi dziękowałem/widocznie list zaginął/.

Obszerne sprawozdanie z podziału odzieży zostanie przesłane Wam w przyszłym tygodniu, jesteśmy bowiem na ukonczeniu rozdawnictwa.

Dziękujemy jeszcze raz za waszą hojną pomoc, którą tak ofiarnie i stale nam okazujecie. Łączymy serdeczne pozdrowienia dla wszystkich Ziomków.

/Dr. Tenenbaum Zygmunt/

Sekretarz - korespondent Ewa Borzykowska, Al. 3-go Maja 23

A letter from the Jewish Committee in Piotrkow to the Relief Association in New York—1947 (translation follows).

Dear Brothers:

I just like to let you know that we've received the medical instruments and we thank you very much.

We've also received the clothing parcels that you previously mentioned. I wrote to Mr. Wolreich a "thank you" letter—apparently the letter got lost in the mail.

A detailed report regarding the apportionment of the clothing will be sent to you next week; we are just finishing the distribution.

We thank you again for your abundant help that you so generously and steadily bestow upon us. We extend our heartfelt regards to all our landsmen.

Dr. Zygmunt Tenenbaum
(signature)

Corresponding secretary, Ewa Borzykowska
AL. 3-GO Maja 23

Here and Now—Far and Wide

The Piotrkow Trybunalski Relief Association A Centennial

In their search for a safe and decent place to live, free from repression and persecution, some Jews from Piotrkow emigrated to the United States as early as the mid-1800's. In 1858, Michael Heilprin, a linguist, scholar, encyclopedist and author, came with his family to America and settled in Brooklyn.

The First Society

A group of new immigrants from our home town organized the first Piotrkower Society in New York in 1881. The first President was A. Davis and the Secretary, Berlinski. There were 35 members initially. However, more and more Piotrkower immigrants joined the ranks. Due to harsh economic conditions, the Society established an assistance fund in order to help our *Landsleit* in time of need. This Relief Committee was actually the beginning of a noble tradition. During the next century, the Piotrkow Relief Society served an important role in helping their brethren in the U.S. and abroad. The first recorded charitable activity was the purchase of a large piece of land at the old Washington Cemetery in Brooklyn, called the "Piotrkower Beit Olam." There, over the years, more than 600 of our "landsmen" were laid to rest. A "Hevra Kadisha" was formed under the leadership of Shmuel Zainvel Davis, who organized the Second Generation of Piotrkower immigrants in America and served as their secretary general starting in 1909. At the turn of the 20th century, most of the working class among the Jewish immigrants arriving in the U.S. was socialistically oriented. However, among the Jewish people of those times, the idea of Zionism had started to sprout everywhere. Thus, in America, a large group of *Landsleit* broke away from the mainstream and organized a movement following the visions of Dr. Theodor Herzl.

Ahavath Zion

In 1901, the Zionist–Socialist movement, called "Ahavath Zion," was established and some Piotrkower promptly joined the new organization. During the turbulent, revolutionary period of 1904–1907, a new wave of immigrants arrived at New York Harbor. Various political associations came into existence. In 1906, a group of new-comers from Piotrkow, members of the Bund, founded the "Piotrkower Young Men's Club" and the "Piotrkower Young Ladies Club." These clubs conducted lively cultural



The Piotrkow Trybunalski Relief Association Committee—New York, 1945.

and political activities among the working class Piotrkower. Shortly after, however, in 1904, the important "Workmen's Circle" came into existence; both clubs formed the prestigious "Piotrkower 368 Arbeiter Ring Branch."

Branch 368

This long-lasting, vital society served as an important role in the lives of many Piotrkower in the United States. This group also emerged as the main pillar of consolation and support for the struggling and suffering Jewish community in our hometown, Piotrkow. The first task of the 368 Branch was to establish a Relief Committee, which, from 1910 to 1918, the years of the first Jewish boycotts in Poland, and throughout World War I, helped enormously in easing the hunger and poverty among their *Landsleit* back in Piotrkow.

During World War I, quite a number of Piotrkower immigrants served in he U.S. Army. Some received medals and commendations, among them Chaim Prais, Hyman Solomon, Schlomo Berger, Itzie Oizerowitz, H. Rabinowitz, and others. Especially honored was our "landsman" George Wald, who achieved the rank of Major and was the subject of many articles in the American press praising his heroism.

Our people were also active in forming the famous "Jewish Legion." Some of them,

under the leadership of Abraham Grabowski, went to the battlefields of Egypt in 1917 and were among the first to reach Eretz Israel with the vanguard of the Jewish Legion. The war didn't deter the activities and vitality of the Piotrkower in New York. In 1917, the Piotrkower self-educational club was formed.

In November of 1918, when the war ended and the tragic situation of our brethren in Piotrkow, who were plagued by poverty and anti-Semitism became apparent, our people in America started their energetic crusade again. They formed their own "Piotrkower Relief Organization," sending thousands of food packages and the so-much-needed proper emigration papers to relatives and friends in Piotrkow. When the post-war immigrants arrived in New York, the Relief helped to find shelter and jobs. During the 1920's, scores of newcomers came from the old country and, after a period of adjustment, became productive and thriving citizens who, in turn, helped others come over and settle in the New World. In the early 1930's the Piotrkower in New York continued to consolidate and coordinate their noble activities. Important developments in Europe after Hitler came to power; the resurgence of rabid anti-Semitism in Germany and other European countries, placed the objectives of the Piotrkower Relief in a new perspective. Joel Wolreich came from Piotrkow to New York. He presently resides in Silver Springs, MD, with his wife Helen. He is the only living witness who participated in the assistance campaigns and actions just before, during and after the war. Here are his recollections about these turbulent times.

> I arrived in the United States of America in October 1936. It took me some time to adjust to the new life. My wife Helen (Tolep), who was also born in Piotrkow, made my adjustment to the new life a lot easier. She had come to the U.S.A. with her mother, brother, and sister to meet their father who had come earlier, before World War I. Helen knew the Piotrkow *Landsleit* and their activities. Together we attended their functions. This gave me the opportunity to get to know the Society and the Ladies Auxiliary.
>
> In 1937, we received alarming letters about outbursts of anti-Semitism. During the years 1937–1945, Mrs. Frackman and Mrs. Lang of the Ladies Auxiliary raised funds to help by organizing door-to-door campaigns and various benefits. When the war broke out in September, 1939, Piotrkow was one of the first cities occupied by the Nazis. During the war, we had no contact, but we were able to send some aid through underground channels before the United States entered the war. By 1941, an enlarged relief committee was organized, consisting of landsleit belonging to several organizations. These included the Ladies Circle consisting of Beatrice Charmatz (president), Helen Frackman, Gosi Freeman, Feli Lang, Hena Berliner, Celia Berger, Golda Borenstein, and Helen Shulman; the Branch W.C. 368 consisting of Sam Ozer, Max Frackman, Harry L. Berman, Ben Weinberg, Pincus, Barney Freeman, Morris Berliner, Max Grossman, and

Louis Grossman; the Benevolent Society consisting of Sam Bleiwas, Issac Rosenblum, David Kingstein, Sol Berger, G. Schwartz (treasurer), Jacob Fish, Sara Zisholtz, and Joel Wolraich (corresponding secretary).

After the war ended in 1945, some survivors began returning to Piotrkow. I was the first to receive mail from them. I read about the horror they lived through to survive and the finding out the full extent of the Holocaust. They described their pain and agony at finding out that they were the only surviving members of their families. I felt some of the pain with them because I was the only survivor in my family. As more members returned, they formed a committee with Dr. Zygmunt Tenenbaum as the chairman, and Eva Borzykowska as the secretary.

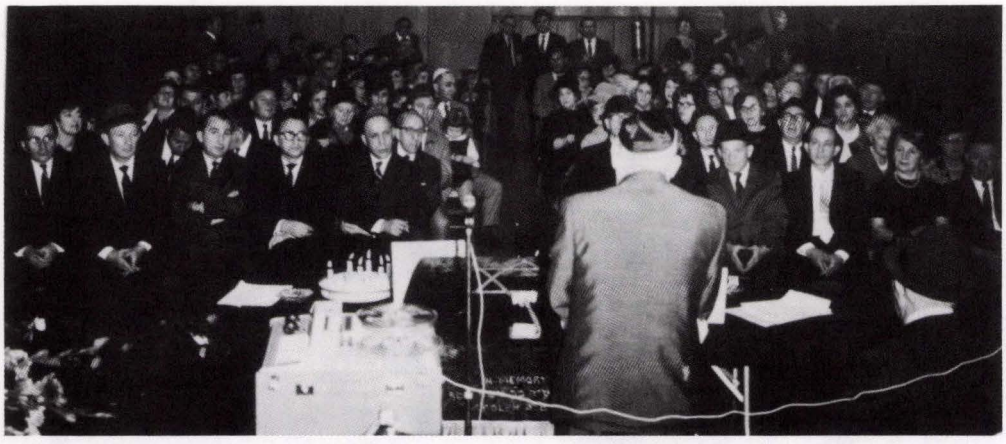
The Relief Committee from here immediately sent clothing, food, money and other things. Dr. Zygmunt Tenenbaum who was an ear, nose, and throat specialist, requested instruments so he could begin to practice again. We immediately sent him a medical catalog so that he could indicate the instruments he needed. The Relief Organization sent him those instruments so that he could begin his practice. The survivors set up a system of signing for the aid they received to make sure that everyone received his or her share.

Later some of the survivors came to the United States. Some of these were helped in their immigration by the Relief Committee. Upon their arrival, they were also helped by the Relief Committee with finding housing and employment. Some of these survivors remained in the D.P. camps. The Relief Committee sent help to them. More survivors immigrated to the United States in 1946 and 1947. As they arrived, we received them with open arms, warmth, and understanding. From 1946 to 1959, many more survivors came to the United States and established themselves. They are now a part of the Piotrkower Relief Association and doing a fine job.

Our People in the Spotlight

It is important to mention our gifted and talented writers and actors of this era. Among them were Samuel Torenberg, a prolific linguist and dramaturgist, and the renowned actor Gold-Geladi, who performed with the Adlers and other famous ensembles. The names of Jack Rechtzeit, the president of the Jewish Actors' Alliance, and of his brother's Seymour Rexite who is the husband of the famous Miriam Kressyn, were and are known to every Jewish theatergoer.

The poems and short stories of Moshe Korman, based mostly on his young, lean years in Piotrkow, were read by many. Hershel Novak, the talented author, was widely



Annual Hazkara of the Association in the early sixties.

heard of among Jewish readers. His book, *My Young Years*, were warmly praised by the critics.

The Beginning of a New Era

On February 11, 1960, a new committee, consisting mostly of survivors, was elected. Max Frackman was the chairman, Ben James was co-chairman, together with Sol Berger and David Strick. The financial secretary was Isadore Pincus, the recording secretary Henry Rosenstein, and foreign secretary Moshe Israel Sochachevsky. H. Windman became the corresponding secretary and the trustees were Morris Berliner, Sam Weltman, Al Rosenstein, Vitek Blachman and Barney Freeman. On October 30, 1960, the first fully coordinated Hazkarah was organized by the association. A few months later, on May 7, 1961, the Piotrkower in New York celebrated the 13th anniversary of Israel's Independence with an elaborate gathering arranged by the Committee and the Ladies Auxiliary.

A lively Purim party held on March 24, 1962 at the Adelphi Hall started a joyous tradition and brought together most of our "landsmen" in the tri-state area.

In the early sixties, the Association expanded its relief activities, sending help to Poland, Israel and South America. Several substantial donations were sent to the Israeli Committee toward the publication of the Izkor Book.

On May 16, 1965, an important general meeting was held at the Atran Cultural House. Under a modified charter, a Fraternal Society was created and a proposal was set forth to acquire a substantial number of cemetery plots. Most of the present members immediately contributed generously to the project. A new cemetery committee was elected; Max Frackman, Henry Rosenstein, Jack Ajzenberg, Alex Koslowsky, and Ben James. In 1966, the Association bought 60 cemetery plots at the Beth Israel Cemetery in Woodbridge, New Jersey and then decided to erect a monument at the site in honor of the 28,000 Martyrs of Piotrkow who perished in the Holocaust.

In 1967, a new committee was elected, consisting of Max Faywlowicz (chairman), Alex Koslovsky (cashier), Henry Rosenstein (secretary), Ben James (financial secretary), Pinchas Seidenberg (vice chairman), along with other members—Mike



Past and present committee members of the Association within the last three decades.



Ladies Auxiliary Committee members past and present.

Faywlowicz, Max Frackman, Abram Jolinger, Juda Rosenblum, Joe Freiman and Al Rosenstein.

On May 25, 1967, all Association members participated in the Emergency Rally held at 72 Street and Riverside Drive in Manhattan on the Eve of the Israel's Six Day War.

In 1969 the Association gathered to dedicate the newly erected memorial at the Beth Israel cemetery in tribute to the 28,000 Martyrs of Piotrkow. The efforts of the Association were crowned by this impressive achievement.

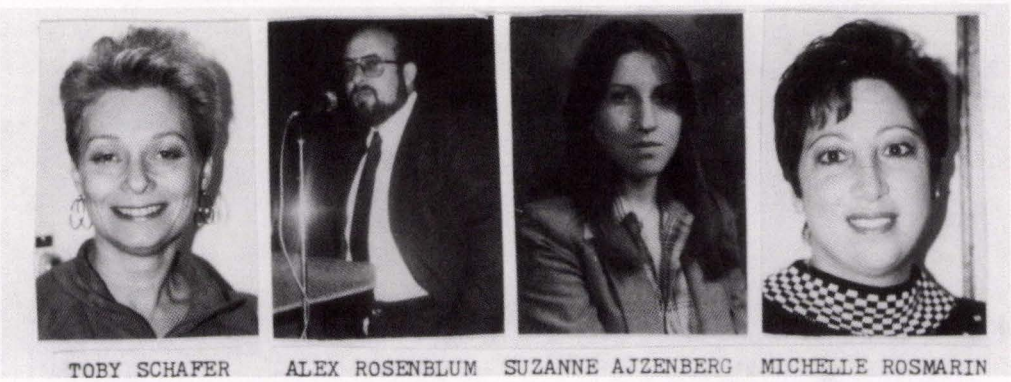
During the early seventies. the Association was quite active, periodically organizing traditional events such as the Purim and Hannukah Parties and frequent benefits and meetings. Israel Bonds were bought in larger and larger quantities. Packages and money were generously dispensed to needy *landsleit* in Poland, Israel and elsewhere. Donations to various charities were made on a steady basis. In 1975, a surgical room at the Tel Hashomer Hospital in Israel was dedicated in the name of the Piotrkow Trybunalski Relief Association.

In 1976, the new chairman, Abram Jolinger, proposed a drive to include the Second Generation in the activities of the Association. This was really the beginning of a new era, one of getting the children involved—a move so successfully implemented in later years with the advent of the New Bulletin. In 1977, the noble tradition of "Kever Avoth," the annual visit to the cemetery during "Yamin Noraim," was initiated.

During the late seventies, the Association in New York sensed a stagnation in its development. Some of the senior *Landsleit* had passed away during the years. In addition, a considerable number of active members had moved away to Florida. Despite these difficulties, the Society continued to carry on its important work and tradition.

The New Bulletin Era

After the death of Roman Mogilanski in 1981, the old Bulletin, published since 1965, first by the Piotrkow and Vicinity Society and then by the Nazi Victims of Piotrkow, ceased to exist. Calls and letters from our *Landsleit* everywhere were pouring in. They all expressed concern and asked that the Bulletin should continue. In order to fulfill the wish of the people, the Association asked Ben Giladi, the former associate editor of the



The Executive Committee of our Second Generation

old Bulletin, to resume his work under the sponsorship of the Association. In June 1982, the New Bulletin was born.

From the beginning, this publication was a great success. Unity had finally set in. More and more readers embraced the new magazine, sharing the common goal of remembrance and identity. At present there are over 600 subscribers, which means over 1,000 readers, considering spouses and other family members. The Second Generation represents approximately one-third of the readership. The achievement of the Association, unknown to wider circles till now, finally started to surface. The cover of the first New Bulletin issue proudly displayed the impressive monument erected by the Association in memory of our Martyrs. The various Israel achievement awards, frequently presented to the Association, the Committee members, or to such extraordinary contributors as the Freimans, the Lustigs, and other members, were duly recorded—all for their outstanding participation in the Israeli Bond Program. It became a tradition that the annual Purim party would generate an intense Bond drive that showed the awareness, pride and compassion of the Association members toward our beloved homeland, Israel.

Pictures and reports of such Purim and other parties, events and gatherings, printed in the New Bulletin, reflected the true active life and vitality of the Association. In 1983, the wonderful Second Generation movement initiated by Alex Rosenblum started and grew. A group of devoted young people like Toby Schafer, Suzanne Ajzenberg, and others put toward their best efforts to organize and maintain contact with the children of Piotrkow survivors and other children as well. In 1983, at the Washington, D.C. Gathering, there were many Piotrkower parents and children. Our Second Generation was amply represented at the First International conference of Children of Jewish Holocaust Survivors held in New York in 1984. The pages of the Bulletin proudly displayed reports on the professional, intellectual and artistic achievements not only of our survivors but also of their children. The annual Hazkarah, now widely attended by our people from the entire northeast region of the U.S. became a traditional symbol of remembrance. The representatives of the present committee are Jack Ajzenberg (president), Abram Jolinger (chairman), Mike Faywlowicz (vice president), Joe Gold (secretary), Henry Rosenstein (corresponding secretary), Mendel Kozlowski (Hevra Kadisha), and Paul Nash (treasurer). Ben Giladi is the editor of the New Bulletin. Several committee members passed away during recent years, namely Max Faywlowicz, Al Rosenstein and Max Milioner. The present Social Committee of the Ladies Auxiliary consists of Vera Ajzenberg, Frania Faywlowicz, Guta Giladi, Regina Gold, Jadzia Jolinger, Esther Nash, Hannah Kozlowski, Ruth Rosenstein and Anita Waksman. The ladies are very active and doing a remarkable job at the various events and functions of the Association. In general, during the last decade, the New York Association became, next to the Irgun Yotzei Piotrkow in Israel, the center for the entire world Piotrkower community. The most important achievement, however, is the wonderful relationship between both generations. There is a solemn legacy embraced by the children and their spouses, who are willing to continue the tradition which started more than a century ago. Even the third generation becomes more involved by writing moving poems and essays for the

Bulletin, visiting our city, Piotrkow, with their parents and attending our events. In 1989, the monumental Book Project became a reality. The Association assumed the sponsorship of this so-important enterprise without hesitation. Now the pages of this Book, a profound legacy for future generations, are a jewel in the crown of achievements of the Piotrkow Trybunalski Relief Association in New York.

Compiled by B.G.



Annual Hazkara in New York—1987.



Ben Giladi,
the editor of the
New Bulletin.

The Second Generation

List of Active Participants

Alex Rosenblum, Esq., NY
Toby Schafer-Faywlowicz, NJ
Suzanne Ajzenberg, NY
Michelle Rosmarin-Rosenberg, NJ
Dr. Rhonda Aizenberg, CA
Iris Bush-Giladi, NY
Tamar Bat Zion-Hess, Jerusalem
Brenda Epstein-Rosenstein, NY
Dr. Jenny Freiman, NY
Dr. Terry Gotthelf, NY
Mark Gold, NY
Sammy Gold, NY
Felicia Gipsman-Hershey, CA
James Jolinger, NJ
Adele Kadet-Jolinger, NJ
Harry Krakowski, NY
Mina Lippman-Faywlowicz, MD
Roberta Meisels-Koslovsky, FL
Sheine Mankowsky-Goldstein, Canada
Pola Rosenstein, NY
Celia Rosenblatt-Freiman, NY
Rochelle Socken-Ash, Canada
Barbara Schwartz-Ajzenberg, FL

The Second Generation

Harvey Ash, Toronto
Renee Bauchner-Wendel, NY
Jerry Baum, Toronto
Ruth Bowman-Weltman, NY
James Bright, MO
Zohara Boyd-Mushinski, NC
Edward Belz, MA
Dr. Nathan Birnbaum, MA
Dr. Georges Birnbaum, KY
Eileen Berger-Neiberg, CA
Dr. Henry Brem, MD
Miriam Cohen-Katz, NY
Howard Dessau, NJ
Joseph Falowitz, FL
Ahuva Erez-Bar On, Rechovot
Bluma Fiscus-Jakubowicz, IL
Joe Faywlowicz, Canada
Lili Floyd-Wolkowicz, NJ
Hindy Friedman, Canada
Nanci Feerst-Steinberg, NY
Maurice Frenkel, Australia
Freda Greenbaum-Faywlowicz, FL
Shirl Halpern-Tarko, IL
Nancy Hersh, NY
Sol Henechowicz, Toronto
Doris Hefler-Small, CA
Janet Jakubowicz, KY
Ida Jones-Henig, NY
Esther Itzkovitz, NY
Miriam Jacobs-Frankel, NY
Mike Jackson, Toronto
Menachem Katz, MD
Samuel Jurkiewicz, FL
Esther Krisman, CA
Esther Kamenetzky-Reichman, NJ
Helen Katz, Toronto
Hannah Kliger, MA
Sidney Koslovsky, FL
Larry Kramer, IL
Paul Kramer, IL

Nathan Kryss, CO
Susan Klein-Henechowicz, Canada
Dr. Steven Koslowski, Wash., DC
Rita Koslowski, NY
Morris Grunzweig, Canada
Mark Geliebter, NY
Dr. Joseph Geliebter, NY
Rivka Gershowitz, WI
Jerry Greenbaum, TX
Michael Lipszyc, Belgium
Mark Lewkowicz, IL
Irving Miljoner, NY
Sherry Miljoner, NY
Aviva Osri-Fuks, Israel
Steve Pudlowski, NY
Sonia Pilcer, NY
Ida Prince-Wierzhowski, Canada
Joanne Preston-Maslawski, NY
Joseph Rosenblum, NY
Dr. Saul Rosenblum, NY
Sonia Rubin-Moss, NJ
Rachel Rudman-Garfinkel, WI
Ann Reinglass, TX
Sara Rapaport, Israel
Debora Rudman, FL
Morley Rosenbloom, Canada
Sam Rosenwald, CA
Marsha Reines-Gersh, NY
Rosalie Rochman, Australia
Selma Rubinstein-Weltman, NY
Liz Samelson, NY
Joseph Lipnicki, CA
Sy Lipnicki, CA
Abby Lerner-Henig, Esq., NY
Miriam Leber, Paris
Selena Leneman-Rosenstein, NY
Rose Stern-Dessau, FL
Mina Stark--Faywlowicz, Canada
Arik Shevach, CA
Daniel Sosnowski, CT
Lilli Stawski-Krakowski, NY
Morton Stein, Canada
Judy Searle-Rosenbloom, Canada
Miriam Teichner-Rosenzweig, FL
Jeffrey Tribich, London
Dr. Mark Wolreich, TN
Linda Wroblowski, Esq., NY
Larry Waksman, MA
Mellisa Waksman, NY
Sarah Wertheim-Ezer, FL
Joseph Wolkowicz, MN
Nathan Wolkowicz, TX
Millie Wolkowicz, CO
Dr. Henry Wolkowicz, Canada
Bruce Wendel, IN
Doris Weinstock, PA
Ellen Windheim, Canada
Lucy Wolkove-Weinberg, Canada
Vivian Zammel, MA
Rita Silverstein-Wolreich, MD
Pearl Szajkiewicz-Smulevitz, CA
Gloria Sugar-Ash, Canada
Allan Silberstein, NJ
Martin S. Solomon, C.P.A., NY
Mary Sheydwasser-Rozprza, NJ
Annie Schaffer-Rozprza, Canada
Eta Siretzki-Rosenstein, NY
John Zlotnick, CA

The Voice of the Third Generation
The Children Who Express Their Feelings

Ian Schafer, NJ
Marissa Schafer, NJ
Stacy Greenbaum, FL
Sarah Zamel, MA
Lisa Miljoner, NY
Joshua Meisels, FL
Jonathan Meisels, FL
Marissa Rosenblum, NY
Jessica Schwartz, FL
Andrea Kamenetzky, NJ

Our People in the Land of Israel

Elazar Prashker—Jerusalem

The yearning for the land of Israel was deeply rooted in the hearts of the Jews of Piotrkow as it was since time immemorial in the hearts of all Jews everywhere, who would daily recite before their Maker with great fervor and devotion: "Blow the great shofar for our deliverance, and raise the banner for the ingathering of our exiles, and bring us speedily from the four corners of the earth to our land."

This yearning of the Jews of Piotrkow was first given a practical expression during the spread of the Hibat Zion (love of Zion) movement. Rabbi Haim Elazar Wax, the author of the *Nefesh Haya*, the rabbi of Piotrkow during 1884–1889, was the president of the Warsaw Kolel in the land of Israel, and in this capacity did a great deal for the Jewish community in the holy land. In 1886 he traveled to Eretz Israel to exhort the members of the Warsaw Kolel to dedicate themselves to agriculture. He planted an etrog orchard and conducted intensive propaganda among the Jews of Europe to use etrogs from the land of Israel instead of the Korfu etrogs. He considered it the first blossoming of the revival of Jewish settlement in the land of Israel. On his journey he was accompanied by the well-known leader of the Piotrkow community, Pinhas Horowicz, and the *shamash* of the Piotrkow rabbinical court, Moshe Wald. When Rabbi Wax passed away, Motl Tzvi Halevi Horowicz, also of Piotrkow, known for his learning and wealth, was chosen president of the Warsaw-Poland Kolel. He continued the life's work of the author of the *Nefesh Haya*, by settling in the land of Israel. In 1891 he sent his confidant, Moshe Yaakov Mortfeld to buy land and plant orchards. The latter was extremely successful in his mission, and the idea that it was a great mitzvah to use etrogs from the land of Israel (at first rabbinical and conservative circles opposed the idea, since they were used to etrogs from Korfu, which were considered of high quality), penetrated ever growing circles in the Diaspora which gave a push to settlement of Jews in their land.

Several natives of Piotrkow settled in the land of Israel at the beginning of the century, including Dov Berish Cohen, Yehoshua Korman, Berl Butkovsky, and Dov Ber Flato.

Following the Balfour Declaration at the close of World War I, the first five pioneers from Piotrkow settled in Eretz Israel, having joined the renowned 105 Group. They were: Two Blumstein brothers, Herman Yarost, Haim Elazar Korman, and Yaakov Witorz.

The massive immigration of Piotrkow Jews to their land began after World War I. Between the wars, some 500 families of Piotrkow Jews settled there. Some arrived legally, carrying certificates, but most came with the illegal Aliyah Bet. Piotrkow Jews became well integrated in all walks of the new Jewish community, in towns, in moshavim, and kibbutzim, and made a significant contribution to the upbuilding and defense of the country. Pioneers from Piotrkow took part in the founding of many moshavim and kibbutzim. They paved roads, built housing projects, helped establish



Members of the first council in Israel.

industrial and cultural enterprises, organized cooperatives, and played a major part in the character of the new Jewish society. They also distinguished themselves in defending the Yishuv. Eliyahu Blumstein of the 105 Group fought at Tel Hai alongside Yosef Trumpeldor. In the 1921 riots, Mordecai Finkelstein was killed by Arab marauders while defending the immigrant house in Jaffa. A Christian Pole from Piotrkow, Stanislaw Sluga, was killed by the Arabs in the riots of 1937. He was a member of the Histadrut and urged his Jewish friends to organize a defense against the Arab rioters. In the 1939 riots, during an Arab attack, a guard named Yaakov Yosef Milioner, of the religious Kibbutz of Tirat Tzvi, was killed.

During World War II, many Piotrkow Jews in Palestine joined the British Army's Jewish Brigade. This brigade distinguished itself in the battles against the Germans and the Italians, and its first members were decorated for their bravery on the battlefield. In May 1945 the members of the Jewish Brigade met for the first time the Holocaust survivors in Italy. Now the Brigade became a magnet for concentration camp and ghetto survivors. In addition to their military missions, the members of the Brigade started helping survivors throughout Europe, providing clothing, teaching children, and smuggling people across borders to the land of Israel. Members of our town who took part in those activities were Aryeh and Natan Sandowski, Efraim Klein, and Yosef Katz.

In the Israeli War of Independence and during the following wars—the Sinai Campaign, the Six Day War, the Yom Kippur War, and the Lebanon War, the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of Piotrkow Jewry wrote some glorious pages.

More than half of Piotrkow's Jewish survivors arrived in Israel after the war by unimaginable routes, and their number is now estimated in over one thousand families. This constitutes close to a third of the Jews who lived in Piotrkow before the Catastrophe.

At first, when the number of Piotrkow immigrants in Israel was still small, they were all close to one another, having known one another from the old country, and they helped one another during the period of absorption in the new land. They would take care of a friend who was sick or out of work. The togetherness of our town's people was natural, without any organizational structure. Ties were close. On Sabbaths and holidays people would gather in the home of one of the families. Passover Seders brought us together. Yet in wishing to become integrated in the new Jewish society, people refused almost instinctively to form the familiar organizational group known as *Landsmanschaft*.

But as immigration increased, new problems rose which could only be solved



Committee and council members of Irgun Yotzei Piotrkow in Israel since inception. I



Committee and council members of Irgun Yotzei Piotrkow in Israel since inception. II

through an organization. Thus in 1924 a mutual fund was started to help new immigrants from our town, headed by Haim Elazar Korman and Levi Hertzkowicz. But the attempts at that time to form an organization of Piotrkow Jews in Eretz Israel did not succeed. It appears that the idea of a Landsmanschaft raised the specter of ghettoization, of which people were deeply afraid. During that time Michael Szydlowski was the "institution" of our compatriots in the land of Israel. He was the address for both the old-timers and the newcomers. He kept in touch with Piotrkow before the war, as well as Piotrkowers around the world. Every new immigrant from Piotrkow first turned to him, to be registered, to receive advice, guidance and help as needed. Our town's people referred to him fondly as the "consul."

Only in late 1942, when Yaakov Kurtz was able miraculously to return to Palestine from Piotrkow (he went there for a visit right before the war started and was stuck), and gave first-hand reports about the systematic massacres of Polish Jewry, a meeting of our people took place, during which Kurtz gave a report about the annihilation of Piotrkow



In the hills of Jerusalem, April 1953. A group of Piotrkower participate in the dedication of the "Yar Kedoshei Polania," the Forest of the Jewish Martyrs of Poland.



The Matzeva at Yad Vashem, unveiled by Irgun Yotzei Piotrkow in 1963.

Jews, and a committee to rescue the remaining Jews of Piotrkow was organized on the spot. The first activity of the committee was to publish Kurtz's *Sefer Edut* (Book of Testimony), which was the first book to be published about the slaughter of Polish Jews. The book was published by Am Oved and shocked the Yishuv in the land of Israel.

The first committee of Piotrkow Jews in Israel was headed, of course, by Yaakov Maltz. The committee collected over 800 pounds (a huge sum in those days) to buy food, clothes, medicine, etc. When the word arrived at the end of the war that hundreds of survivors had returned to Piotrkow from the death camps, the bunkers and the "Aryan" side, large crates were sent via Teheran with provisions. Food packages were also sent by air to Piotrkow. The committee kept in touch through mail and messengers with the survivors in Piotrkow and in the UNNRA and Joint camps in Europe. Hundreds of replies were sent to inquiries about relatives, immigration, etc. Immigrants from our town who arrived in Israel were received warmly and were given help. The organization arranged loans for settlement and housing, and helped find work. (It should be mentioned that all the loans were repaid, which shows that our town's people were successfully settled.)

Piotrkow Jews in Israel did not forget their town or their loved ones who perished in Europe. Each year, on the second of the month of Heshvan, the date of the final liquidation of the Piotrkow community, a memorial service is held for the Martyrs of Piotrkow, attended by a large crowd of our people.

The organization of Piotrkow Jews in Israel has established a number of commemorative enterprises to perpetuate the memory of the victims.

- As part of the Jewish National Fund forestration campaign in memory of the lost Jewish communities, in 1953, on Holocaust Memorial Day, 1,500 trees in memory of Piotrkow Jews were planted in the Martyrs Forest in Jerusalem, to which 200 members of our organization contributed.
- On Tisha BeAv 1963, at the Holocaust Cellar on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, a memorial was erected for the Piotrkow community which perished between 1939 and 1945.
- In February 1952 the committee of the Piotrkow Jews in Israel decided to publish a memorial book for Piotrkow and nearby villages. It took over 13 years to prepare the book. Yaakov Maltz, the driving force behind the book, along with his assistants headed by Naftali Lau-Lavie, issued the book as a living memorial to a major Jewish community. After years of strenuous work, they were able to collect invaluable historical material about Piotrkow and the Jewish communities around it, which resulted in a volume of both quantity and quality, which, in the opinion of experts, is one of the best if not the best Yiskor book of its kind. The book had prompted hundreds of our people to contribute of their knowledge, memories and experience, to enrich the contents of the book. The result is truly a collective masterpiece of a surviving generation of Piotrkowers.

  The Piotrkow Book is the most reliable source for any information about the town. It is the result of years of research which offers us and all future generations a living picture of Piotrkow Jewry in all its glory. On each page one can feel the



Our people in Jerusalem at the unveiling.



The monument erected in memory of the Martyrs of Piotrkow at the Holon, Israel cemetery in 1980.

loving hand that took care of every detail. It is the love of Yaakov Maltz for his town, Piotrkow, having invested his entire soul in it, along with his vast knowledge of Jewish Piotrkow, and the meticulous editing of Naftali Lau-Lavie, which gave birth to this monumental book. The book was published in 1965 and was warmly received by the press.

- Three years after the Piotrkow Book was published, the first issue of the Piotrkow Bulletin came out. For years it was edited by Yosef Goldberg, who felt that the book was not the last word, since there was so much to tell about Piotrkow before the Catastrophe, nor was the story of the Catastrophe fully told. (Is it within human power to even exhaust the subject of the Catastrophe?) The bulletin created a living bond between Piotrkow compatriots everywhere, and was enthusiastically received by our people, as can be seen in the letters to the editor.
- Before the memorial service on November 1974, the 11th edition of the bulletin was issued in a new format, edited by Elazar Prashker. The new creation was named *Heidim* (echoes), and was printed (its predecessor was stenciled). *Heidim* continued the bulletin tradition. It became a forum to all those who had something to



Henia Grinberg, the Honorary President of the Irgun Yotzei Piotrkow. She headed the organization for the past 15 years until 1989 when she was succeeded by Yechezkel Gideoni.



Elazar Prashker, the Editor-in-Chief of the periodical *Heidim.*

tell about the Piotrkow community, its rich past, culture, folks, customs and the story of the destruction. Each issue of *Heidim* added a building block to the memorialization project of our community as a whole and of every individual member. *Heidim* is a source of information for the Piotrkower regarding all that might interest them about the common origin. The 14 issues of *Heidim* which have thus far appeared contain a great deal of interesting material about the Piotrkow community—descriptions, memories, and anecdotes which, like pieces of a puzzle, add up to a picture of the unique Jewish culture that existed in that Polish town.

- Our compatriots in Israel had a special experience during April 5th to the 15th, 1980. During that time the second world convention of Piotrkow Jewry took place in Israel, and was attended by hundreds of our compatriots from around the world. The main event of the convention was the unveiling of the monument in memory of the Jews of Piotrkow and environs, erected at the cemetery in Holon. The monument, created by the Piotrkow-born painter and sculptor, Moshe Bromberg-Baram, is a scale model of the main synagogue of Piotrkow going up in flames. Inside the monument, the ashes of Piotrkow Martyrs especially brought back from the valley of death were deposited. The unveiling took place on the Day of the Shoah and the Heroism, and was attended by a large crowd of Piotrkower from Israel and abroad. Rabbi Israel Lau spoke. The cantor chanted El Maleh Rahamim, and the assemblage said Kaddish. For a long time all stood silent, heads bent, before the small sanctuary of the Jews of Piotrkow, a monument to their world which was destroyed.

  The memorial—the synagogue of the Jews of Piotrkow going up in flames, now stands in the holy land on the sacred soil of the cemetery in the holy community

of Holon, and for generations to come it will serve as a center for the Jews of Piotrkow and their descendants to come and commune with the memory of the holy Martyrs. Here one must mention Henia Grinberg, who for the past 15 years headed the organization of the Piotrkow Jews in Israel and who, through her energy, faith and enthusiasm was able to motivate others and make the monument a reality. Henia Grinberg is also responsible for two other memorialization undertakings of great importance—the Piotrkow archives and the scroll of the Martyrs of Piotrkow at Yad Vashem, in Heichal Hashemoth.

- Yaakov Maltz collected during his entire life every shred of document and every photograph which remained from rich heritage of Jewish Piotrkow. All this material which was preserved under adverse conditions, was handed to the director of the archives of the Institute for the Study of the Diaspora at Tel Aviv University, Professor Yoel Raba, who, along with his assistants, have sorted out the material and catalogued it. The Institute's report for 1982–1983 mentions the historical collection of the Piotrkow community in the list of archival collections of Tel Aviv University, recognized by historical archives throughout the world. The archive is kept for the moment at Tel Aviv University, but according to an agreement between the University and the organization of Piotrkow Jews in Israel, the archive can be transferred to the Piotrkow House when it is completed. Part of the archive had been exhibited in the building for the research of the Catastrophe of the university under the title "The Community that Was and Is No More."
- The second thing—perhaps the most important one—which was brought to fruition, was the enterprise of memorializing the victims of our community at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem . On November 17, 1985 the annual memorial service for the Martyrs took place at the Yizkor Tent in Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, and the unveiling of the parchment scroll containing the names of our Martyrs took place. An enlarged photograph of the scroll was hanging on the wall of the Sanctuary of Names at Yad Vashem, and a multitude of people from our town crowded at the wall to look for names of their loved ones. Order was perfect. Catalogues had been prepared with alphabetized names of each victim, with a number referencing the scroll, so that each person could easily find the names of his relatives recorded in the scroll.

  The scroll itself, made of specially prepared parchment, was fashioned by an artist to look like a Torah scroll, and a Torah scribe entered the names of the Martyrs. It was placed at the Sanctuary of Names at a special place planned by an architect in coordination with Yad Vashem. Thus we eternalized at Yad Vashem the memory of those most dear to us who were lost in the Catastrophe. It should be mentioned that the Piotrkow community is the only one that was memorialized in this manner at Yad Vashem. The event was widely echoed among the public in Israel, and on June 5, 1985, Israeli television presented the traditional speech of our rabbi, Rabbi Israel Lau, dedicated to the Day of Remembrance of the Catastrophe and the Heroism, against the backdrop of the parchment scroll of the Piotrkow Martyrs at Sanctuary of Names of Yad Vashem, and the main topic of the speech was the scroll.

- In 1987, the 45th anniversary of the final liquidation of the Piotrkow community was observed. The Organization of Piotrkow Jews in Israel proclaimed it the year of the memorial scroll of the people of Piotrkow, and a world convention was organized (the third). It took place in Israel during the first week of May, 1987, between the Day of Memory and Israel's Independence Day. At the convention it was decided in the name of all the survivors of our community to take the scroll under our patronage and to make a commitment to locate the thousands of names of those who perished and were yet to be found, and exhort our town's people to fill the pages with the names of their relatives, friends, and neighbors who were lost, so that not a single name would be missing from the scroll. A particularly moving moment occurred during the convention when, after the ceremony at the Yad Vashem auditorium ended, the large crowd moved to the Sanctuary of Names where, in the presence of all, Rabbi Israel Lau handed the scroll to Henia Grinberg who, in the name of all the Jews of Piotrkow gave the scroll with the names of our Martyrs to the director of Yad Vashem, Dr. Yitzhak Arad, for perpetual safekeeping at the Sanctuary of Names on the Memorial Mountain in Jerusalem .

  This is not the place to mention all those who stood by Henia Grinberg's side in accomplishing all those tasks, but one should at least mention the contribution of Yitzchak Goldfried, Shaya Pudlowsky, and Moshe Ish-Horowicz. Goldfried—in helping to erect the monument in Holon. Pudlowsky—in establishing the archive and preparing the memorial pages for the scroll, and Moshe Ish-Horowicz, who together with Naftali Lau-Lavie, Rabbi Israel Lau, and Elazar Prashker helped Henia Grinberg persuade Yad Vashem to agree to place the scroll of the Piotrkow Martyrs at the Sanctuary of Names at Yad Vashem, and labored hard and long to make the idea a reality.

This, then, is a brief summary of the link between the community of Piotrkow and its sons and daughters in Israel.

Jerusalem—April 1991

Across the Continents

The Piotrkower in the United States

After World War II, wherever a Piotrkower settled, his *Landsleit* followed and proceeded to create their own *Landsmanschaften.* In locations where there were only a few of them, they would maintain close contact with their compatriots in the vicinity and elsewhere.

The largest Piotrkower community in the United States settled in New York, where a strongly organized association functions to this day. The *Landsleit* who live dispersed throughout the Northeast, in New Jersey, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, remain in constant touch with their counterparts in New York, attend their events and generally contribute to the social and cultural well-being of their respective communities not only locally, but also in the great cities of Boston and Philadelphia.

Another branch of the Society of Piotrkow and Vicinity was established in California in the early 1950's by about 70 survivors of Piotrkow, Belchatow, Sulejow, Wolborz, etc. A group of Piotrkower still resides in Los Angeles. They are a close-knit community but socialize throughout the world.

In the Southeast Region of the U.S., a relatively large group of Piotrkower and their



The Los Angeles Society in the fifties.

compatriots lives in Florida, predominantly in the Miami Beach area. Needless to say, many *Landsleit* converge on the sunny beaches to relax and bask in the warm climate, coming from as far away as Canada and other distant areas. It is surprising, therefore, that the natives of Miami, despite many opportunities and doubtlessly good intentions, have been unsuccessful in forming their own organization and association. Albeit very active socially, the residents of Miami and their visitors are consequently forced to join the activities of other *Landsmanschaften.* Nevertheless, there is still hope that the Piotrkower of Florida will establish a vibrant and thriving Society.

Some Piotrkower live in the state of Georgia, others still further north in the area of Washington, DC, mainly in Silver Springs, Maryland. Several groups reside in the Chicago region, others south from there in St. Louis. Our compatriots in that area remain in lively contact with one another and with us; we hear from them and from our *Landsleit* in neighboring states such as Indiana, Ohio, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Kansas. Several Piotrkower can be found further north, in Wisconsin, Michigan, and Minnesota, while others reside in the Southwest, in Texas and Arizona. With the exclusion of metropolitan New York City, approximately two hundred subscribers to the *New Bulletin* are scattered throughout the United States.

Piotrkower in Canada

The period of mass emigration to the shores of America began early in the twentieth century. Several Piotrkower who were unable to gain entry to the United States temporarily settled in Canada.

No accurate records are available concerning those early emigrants who settled but left Canada as quickly as they were able to immigrate to the United States. The permanent and thriving communities of Piotrkower were established in Canada after World War II, when the survivors of the Nazi Holocaust escaped from Europe. Mindful of their past in Piotrkow, concerned for their future and with the preservation of their dignity, they reconstructed their lives on the foundations of their forefathers. The first post-war *Landsleit* in Canada formed their own *Landsmanschaften* in Canada's major cities in the East, Montreal and Toronto.

The Piotrkow Trybunalski Landsmanschaft in Montreal

The Piotrkower of Montreal play an important role in the Jewish community there. They are a close-knit group, well established and very active in all cultural and social events of Jewish life. One of their most important achievements in Montreal is the nurturing and maintenance of the Holocaust Memorial Centre and the Jewish Public Library. Their annual *Hazkarah*, in memory of the Holocaust Martyrs, is a solemn and dignified affair. This meaningful tradition was founded years ago and throughout those years *Hazkarah* participants would bring old photographs, documents, arts, crafts, and other mementos of the past to the proceedings.



The *Landsmanschaft* in Montreal some 35 years ago.



Piotrkower in Toronto some 35 years ago.

The Piotrkow, Tomaszow, Belchatow and Vicinity in Toronto

As the consequence of a unique event, the survivors of our home town region who had settled in Toronto joined forces there some years ago and established the Piotrkow, Tomaszow, Belchatow and Vicinity Society. This organization also figures prominently in the life of the Jewish community in Ontario. Of their important achievements, special mention must be made of their erecting an impressive monument to the memory of our *Kedoshim*. All members actively participate in the activities of the Holocaust Remembrance Committee, the Memorial Centre of Toronto and in Holocaust Education.

The second generation of Piotrkower in Canada carries the torch of their parents' legacies. The relationship between parents and children is remarkably close. It is also important to mention that the few Piotrkower who live in Winnipeg maintain truly close ties with other *Landsleit* throughout Canada, as well as with those in the United States and Israel.



The very first *Hazkarah* after the war in Landsberg, Germany—1946.

Piotrkower in Europe

Following World War II, the once vibrant Piotrkower communities practically ceased to exist in Europe.

As soon as the liberated survivors from concentration camps had regained some of their strength, they began their search for survivors and remnants of their families. Most of them settled, temporarily, with repatriates from Russia in Displaced Persons' Camps in Germany, Austria, and Italy. Very few remained in Piotrkow; all soon made plans for their future. A great number decided to end the Diaspora and emigrated to Israel. Others set their hopes on the Western hemisphere, on such countries as the United States, Canada, Australia, and all of South America. A smaller number resettled in the various countries of Europe.

Regardless of where fate had tossed the Piotrkower, they proved themselves to be assets to their adoptive countries, never, however, forgetting that their hearts belonged to Piotrkow while becoming avid, loyal supporters of Israel.



A group of girls from Piotrkow in Sweden after the war.

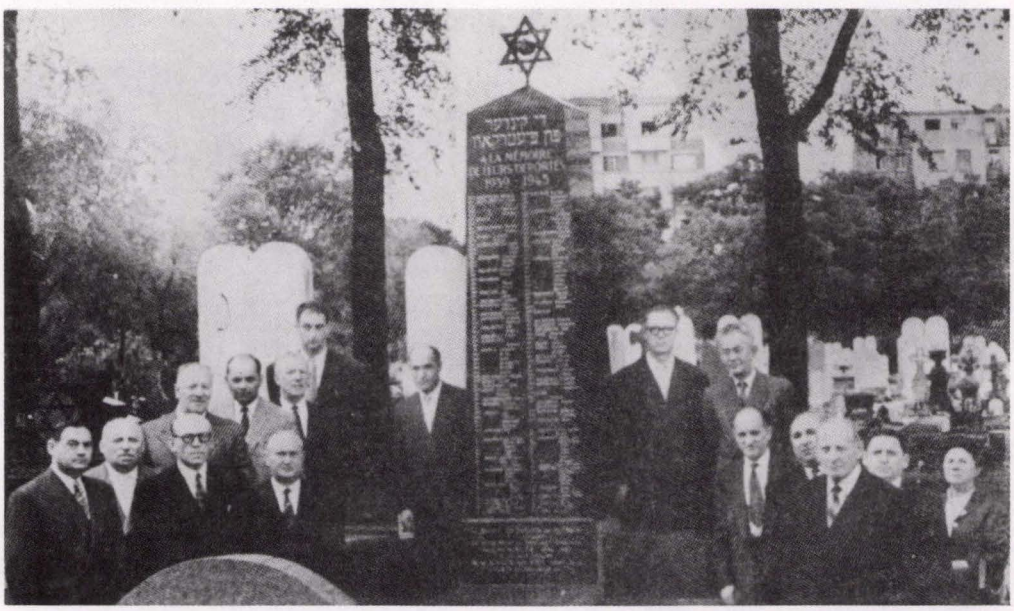
The Piotrkower in Sweden

The first Piotrkower to set foot on Swedish soil were female survivors of the Ravensbruck Concentration Camp in Germany. They had been saved and transported to Sweden by the Red Cross under the auspices of Count Folke-Bernadotte just prior to the end of World War II. After the general liberation of survivors from concentration camps such as Bergen-Belsen and others, they were sent to Sweden for rehabilitation. Some emigrated to other countries over the years. The majority, however, settled in Sweden, where they were absorbed in the mainstream of Swedish life.

Regrettably, one must note that during the 1950's and 1960's, anti-Semitism and discrimination against Jews ran rampant in Poland, whereupon a number of our *Landsleit* left the country to seek refuge and a safe haven in Sweden and in Denmark. To this day, the Piotrkower in Sweden have remained in close contact with their compatriots in Israel as well as in other parts of the world.

The Piotrkower in France

The emigrants from Piotrkow who had left for France during the years between World Wars I and II were for the most part working people who had left in search of a better life. Most settled in Paris. The pre-war, sluggish economy there made life difficult for the immigrants, who had little time for socializing. The struggle for existence absorbed them completely. Consequently, the first Piotrkower *Landsmanschaft* was founded in France only after World War II, when the small remnants of our *Landsleit* had returned to their homes. Many had fought with the French Resistance. These



Piotrkower in France gather at the "Les Enfants de Piotrkow"
(The Children of Piotrkow) monument in Paris.



The Piotrkower Committee in England.

Piotrkower extended their hands and aided their surviving countrymen as they arrived in Paris in search of a new life. Soon they began to meet frequently, at first for the annual Commemorative Gatherings, and then for mutually productive cultural events.

One of the great achievements of this particular branch of Piotrkower was the building of a monument to honor "Les Enfants de Piotrkow" (The Children of Piotrkow). It was built to commemorate their demise as the hands of the Nazi persecutors. To this day, a small community of Piotrkower continues its activities and remains in contact with their *Landsleit* in Israel and in other parts of the world.

The Piotrkower of England

The emigration of Jews from Piotrkow to England began early in the nineteenth century, when Ernestine Rose-Potovsky, the famous feminist and co-founder of the Women's Suffrage Society, departed Piotrkow to live in London in 1832. Her worldwide activities are well documented in the annals of the women's emancipation movement. She left England for the United States in 1836 but returned to London in 1869.

The first really significant emigration from Piotrkow to England started at the end of the nineteenth century. For most of the new arrivals, the ultimate dream was to eventually reach the "Golden Land," the United States of America. Those for whom this dream remained unobtainable remained in England and founded the first Piotrkower Circle in the city of London.

It is important to note that the London *Landsleit* remained in touch with their less fortunate brethren in Piotrkow and generously supported their efforts at rehabilitation and survival there, or, conversely, aided them in emigrating and establishing themselves

in England as refugees. The first *Landsmanschaft* was founded by Moshe Gelade, Bunim Bromberg, and Nathan Glogowski in London in 1924.

After the end of World War II, the Piotrkow Society of London resumed close contact with their *Landsleit* in Israel. Their representatives frequently visited the Jewish State, where they were always welcomed warmly by the *Irgun Yotzei Piotrkow*.

One momentous event must be related and remembered. It is the story of forty-one youngsters from Piotrkow who survived the Holocaust and were liberated from the concentration camp of Theresienstadt in 1945. They were rescued and sent to England in August 1945, together with the first group of three hundred children who were similarly fortunate. Nearly all were orphaned. Only four of the Piotrkow group had at least one parent who had survived.

The devotion and compassion of England's Jews accelerated the healing process for these children; it was a difficult and arduous one. After a few years they were rehabilitated and absorbed into the mainstream of English life. Their integration into British community events was complete.

These children, now adults, have grown to become respected members of the Jewish community in England. Their successes, economically and socially, are remarkable. They represent an important part of the prestigious "Forty-Five Aid Society." The longtime chairman of that Society is the versatile and devoted Ben Helfgott, a genuine and true Piotrkower. He also chairs the Yad Vashem Society in the United Kingdom.

Not only is Chairman Helfgott a leading member of the community, he is also an essayist. One of his essays, entitled, "From Piotrkow to London," is being published in this book. In it, he unravels, with penetrating insight, the saga of the children from Piotrkow and how they managed to return unscathed to life with renewed confidence and dignity, in their new land and home of England.

The Piotrkower in Belgium

The Piotrkower who emigrated to Belgium were motivated, much like those who departed for France, to achieve a higher standard of living, and by their desire for freedom.

Prior to World War II, there were several families from Piotrkow who had settled in Bruxelles, Belgium. Most of them were tailors. Only a handful escaped Nazi oppression and persecution there. After the war, some survivors from Piotrkow joined them to begin a new life.

A rather small community of Piotrkower remains in Bruxelles at this time; it is a closely-knit, friendly group who avidly participates in Jewish community life. Needless to say, their eminent concern is for the continuance of activities to aid the survivor group of the Holocaust in their newly adopted country, Belgium, and its Holocaust Organization. They also maintain close ties with compatriots all over the world.

The Piotrkower in Germany

Quite a number of Piotrkower lived in Germany prior to Hitler's coming to power. All had been well-established there without, however, having any connection with their

countrymen, who were scattered all over, in contrast to communities founded in other countries. During the late 1930's, all Piotrkower in Germany were deported back to Poland by the Nazis via Zbaszyn. Most returned to Piotrkow. After World War II, Piotrkower were to be found in nearly every Displaced Persons' Camp, primarily in those concentrated in Bergen-Belsen, Landsberg, Feldafing, and Salsheim. Later, some made their homes in Berlin, Munich, Hanover, and Frankfurt. At this time there are still a few families from Piotrkow living in Munich and Frankfurt. Most, however, maintain second residences in Israel.

The Piotrkower in Poland

Only a very few Piotrkower still live in Warsaw and Lodz, although completely assimilated. Only one last Jew remains in Piotrkow itself.

The Piotrkower in South America

The Trisker–Gruszkowski families were the first from Piotrkow to arrive in South America and live in Argentina in the early 1920's.

In 1928, Motl-Mordechai Lenczycki, the gifted amateur actor and director, and one of the founders of the "Hazomir," left Piotrkow for Buenos Aires.

Upon his arrival there, together with the Triskers, he organized a Drama Circle which remained active for many years. The *Landsleit* of Piotrkow in Argentina kept contact with one another, and also with their families in Piotrkow and Israel. A Piotrkower



Piotrkower in Argentina—early 1950's.

Landsmanschaft was officially established in the early 1950's. All *Landsleit* in Argentina contributed generously to the publication of the *Piotrkower Izkor Book*, which was brought to life in Israel.

Sadly, during the following years, the pioneer, senior generation gradually faded from view; less and less was heard from our compatriots. Thus, at present there is no contact whatsoever with the younger generation or the children of the original emigrants to Argentina.

Nevertheless, we shall continue our search. We have asked our *Landsman*, Saul Dessau, a prominent businessman and industrialist in Buenos Aires, to endeavor to locate our *Landsleit* and to see if new ties could be forged. We hope to hear from our compatriots in Argentina in the near future.

Several Piotrkower are located in Brazil and Uruguay. Unfortunately, the senior members of this group have passed away in recent years. We do maintain contact with a few of our people in Brazil and lately have obtained addresses of several Piotrkower who live in Montevideo, Uruguay.

The Piotrkower in Australia

Although minimal in membership, the Piotrkower community in Australia nevertheless has made, and is still making, impressive contributions to Jewish life in that country.

It all started with the Jacobs family in 1858, when they arrived in Melbourne from Piotrkow via Plymouth, England. According to Sir Asher Joel of Sydney, a Knight of the British Empire and a highly respected and distinguished personality, his maternal great-grandparents had the foresight to leave Europe long ago to start a new, wonderful life of service in the Victorian Jewish community with his grandfather, the Rev. Joseph Jacobs, as a spiritual leader.

During the ensuing century, the Jacobs, Israelewicz and Joel families remained prominent in the life of Jewish congregations in Australia.

Very few families from Piotrkow reached the Australian continent before World War II. After hostilities had ended, however, a large group of survivors from Piotrkow settled there, mostly in the Melbourne area with only a few traveling to Sydney.

Our people in Australia remain the guardians of tradition, remembrance and Yiddishkeit. They are ardent supporters of the Holocaust Centre in Melbourne and fervently participate in every phase of Jewish life. A significant factor is the drive to preserve the Yiddish language. Our *Landsleit* cheerfully participate in the activities of Jewish institutions such as *Kadimah*, a center of Yiddish culture, literature, and Yiddish theater.

The children of Piotrkow survivors in Melbourne attended the thriving Yiddish Sunday Schools; their grandchildren now follow in their parents' footsteps. They continue with their ambitious efforts to preserve their proud heritage, the Remembrance, and the growth and security of the State of Israel. The Piotrkower of Australia continue their life there in the noble tradition of their parents, their grandparents, and their forefathers.

Compiled by B.G.

From Piotrkow to London—Genesis of the '45 Aid Society

Ben Helfgott—London

As the momentum of the Nazi defeat was gathering pace, the final denouement of the tragedy of the Jewish people was being played out in the concentration camps and death marches taking place in Germany and Czechoslovakia. In retrospect, it is difficult to comprehend how anyone could have survived such inhuman and unbearable conditions. For over five years we had experienced the most unimaginable suffering, cruelty and atrocities. We had survived the bombings; the random killings; the periodic roundups; the filthy conditions in the ghetto; the hunger; the constant fear; the typhoid epidemics; the selections and deportations to the gas chambers; the harsh regimen in the labor camps. We thought we had reached the limits of our endurance. However, the events of the last few months of the war surpassed the combined total of all these excesses. The little that was left over of our civilized life was completely stripped from us. We were literally reduced to the level of animals, without, however, the care that human beings usually bestow on their pets. We were subjected to long hours of hard and tedious work; lacking warm and protective clothing, we were freezing to death; we were infested and eaten up by bugs and lice; and, worst of all, we were steadily becoming demented as a result of the starvation rations. The acquisition of a piece of bread or an extra plate of soup was our main preoccupation. The war was coming to an end, yet our persecutors, even in defeat, had not had their fill and were relentlessly and pitilessly extracting a great toll on us, shooting those who collapsed along the way from hunger, cold, thirst or exhaustion. It was not surprising that the few who had, so far, evaded death through sheer luck or by dint of perseverance were rapidly dwindling away.

Liberation found us in a stupor, in a state of utter exhaustion and emaciation. It took a while to awaken from our five and half year nightmare. As long as we had been struggling for survival and had lived from hour to hour, we had not entertained any thoughts about the enormity of our loss or about our future. Now, it gradually began to dawn upon us that we were, at last, free and that freedom necessitated a complete readjustment. But how does one readjust without either family support or a home? We suddenly realized that we were alone. Those who had reason to believe that some members of their family may have survived attempted to return to their respective home towns, and some emotional reunions took place. However, for the majority this was a disappointing and painless experience. To confound their agony, they were met by a hostile population. Indeed, having been fortunate enough to survive the Nazis' bestialities, many met their deaths at the hands of their Polish compatriots.

The experience of denudation and anguish was felt even more acutely by the relatively few youngsters who had survived. Of the six million Jews who had been killed, one and a half million were under the age of sixteen. Children were, as a rule, automatically selected for the gas chambers, as the Nazis had no use for them. Ironically, the chances of survival for those children who were saved from the selections were better

than for their elders. Once snatched from the burning, they were, in the main, protected, and some were not even sent out to work in either labor or concentration camps. This was particularly true in the case of the Piotrkow children. It would appear that, miraculously, relatively more children survived from the Piotrkow Ghetto than from any other ghetto in Poland. How did this happen? To begin with, toward the end of 1941 the glass factory, "Huta Hortensia," was set up to employ boys 12 years old and up. The deportations had not yet started and there was no urgency to find a job unless it was necessary for one's immediate needs. The factory offered a meal and a modest payment, and this was a strong incentive for a considerable number of boys who had been living below the subsistence level. Later on, a number of boys were also employed in Bugaj, at the Dietrich–Fisher Holzwerke. Most of them were subsequently saved from the deportation, as were a number of children whose parents worked in the Jewish administration. There were also those who were hidden and were fortunate enough to evade the nightmarish round-ups that followed the deportation. When the small ghetto was finally liquidated, they were all sent to the Huta Hortensia-Kara or to Bugaj, where the very young ones were not ordered to go out to work. This was also the case when the boys were later sent to Buchenwald and the girls to Ravensbruck. We were also lucky to escape the dreaded selection for the gas chambers of Auschwitz, since by the time of our deportation from Piotrkow, the SS was already preparing to destroy all traces of their heinous crimes.

Among those who were liberated from Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen and Theresienstadt were many children and youngsters from Piotrkow. Those liberated from Bergen-Belsen were sent to Sweden. Those from Buchenwald were sent to France and those from Theresienstadt to England. At the beginning of 1945, a Committee for the



Just after the liberation—Freedom at last! It is assumed that there are some of our boys in this picture taken from the Forty-Five Aid Society Journal of 1975.

Care of Children from the concentration Camps was set up under the auspices of the Central British Fund, an organization that had been responsible for bringing tens of thousands of Jewish refugees to England before the war. They obtained permission from the Home Office to bring a thousand orphaned children to England for recuperation. The first group of three hundred came from Theresienstadt and, later on, many were collected from different camps; eventually, seven hundred and thirty-two youngsters arrived in England, among whom were forty-one from Piotrkow; thirty-seven boys and four girls.It seems that there were not enough teenagers to fill the full quota of one thousand.

The large majority of youngsters had lost their parents—only four from the Piotrkow group were left with a surviving parent. Quite a large number had no family or relatives anywhere in the world; there had been a complete and utter loss of family.

Under the circumstances, the organizers were faced with a formidable and mammoth task. They expected to receive children, but, instead, they were confronted with "mature adults" whose stabilizing framework, the family pattern, had long been lost. The twin pillars of independence and security which play such an important part in the mental development of young people were deplorably absent. We were no ordinary orphans: we were in great need of guidance and care, and the process of rehabilitation seemed daunting to the organizers. The late Leonard G. Montefiore, a great humanitarian, philanthropist, and Chairman of C.C.C.C., described us as follows:

> They have been in close contact with every kind of vice and wickedness that the mind can conceive. Each of them represents a human tragedy, nonetheless a tragedy, because it was common and suffered by millions. Their lives have been twisted and abnormal. So the acceptance of what we in this country regard as normal standards of behavior, the usual codes of honesty and fair dealing, represent a very considerable individual effort. For them during the whole of their childhood honesty was the very worst policy. It led immediately to destruction. How then can they be expected to learn in a short while the reverse of the maxim taught them by bitter experience?

In another context he wrote, "An immensely difficult educational problem was presented. One must imagine a very large school, with an age range from 3 to 23, where pupils speak a variety of foreign languages and on entering the school are uniformly ignorant of English. Of the 600 boys and girls, 80% are probably post-typhus cases, there are many tuberculosis suspects and some active cases; no toothbrush has been seen for the past five years and there are general symptoms of severe malnutrition. Scabies, impetigo, and other skin diseases are frequent. Again, the pupils in this strange school are all orphans, some of whom, at least, have seen their parents brutally murdered, and who have themselves been beaten time and again. Thus the school authorities have to minister not merely to bodies but to minds diseased. Authority is in itself suspect, to be cajoled or threatened as seems most likely to produce results.

"Again, account has to be taken of all shades of religious and non-religious opinion. A large number feel at home in Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox surroundings, but there

are others who are resentful of an attempt to impost religious rules or restrictions. There are some eager for advanced education, others want industrial training, while some display no desire for any kind of work."

This may have been an exaggerated view; it may even have applied to a number of the boys, but nevertheless, this is how we were generally regarded.

As it turned out, our rehabilitation proceeded at a fast pace. The perceived wisdom of Dr. Oscar Friedman, a psychologist and the director of the C.C.C.C., was that the goal was to make us independent as quickly as possible; on the whole, his policy proved to be successful. After an initial screening, we were dispersed to hostels in various parts of Great Britain. We were offered a choice between hostels which catered to our religious or Zionist inclinations. Here we began to retrieve our lost years of education. We learned English in a furious hurry, studied mathematics, Jewish history, general history, as well as Hebrew and Zionism. We played football and volleyball, went cycling and swimming, and visited the cinemas as often as possible. Here we cemented the friendships that were to develop into an extended family. We served as props for each other and were nurtured by the security which derived from our deep friendship. It was the therapy that we needed and it was a happy and carefree time for us.

When the time came, the hostels were disbanded and we moved into apartments. Oscar Friedman felt that it was necessary to form a club which would serve as a center where we could meet and participate in social, cultural and athletic activities. Membership of the "Primrose" Club was open to the local youth. We were soon competing against other Jewish and non-Jewish youth organizations and became one of the leading Jewish youth clubs in London. All this helped to accelerate our rehabilitation and integration into the community.

As we grew older, the Primrose Club was dissolved and we formed ourselves into a society—the 45 Aid Society—which, over the years, has grown stronger and stronger. Not only do we help members who are in need, we also play an important part in the work of the community. From being yesterday's recipients we have become today's donors. Those who feared the worst from us have been pleasantly rewarded. We have not only been integrated into normal society, we have surpassed all expectations. We have achieved success in most areas of economic and social endeavor; our occupations include shopkeepers, manufacturers, property developers, architects, engineers, accountants, lawyers, doctors, dentists, lecturers, rabbis—the list is almost endless; we could almost be a self-sufficient community!

In spite of the fact that nearly five hundred of us emigrated from England, we keep in close touch with each other and remain probably the most cohesive survivor group. We meet often, attend each other's "simchas," laugh and cry together, take a keen interest in the fortunes and well-being of our extended families. In addition to our many activities, we hold a reunion once a year, when we focus our thoughts on the six million of our brethren who were murdered. We share the memory of those whom we loved and knew so well so many years ago and permit our personal traumas to merge with those of the collective. We are, in fact, like a large family united by a common bond that springs from our backgrounds and similar experiences, forged in the concentration camps. These experiences have always been fresh and vivid in our minds. The shadows of the

Holocaust which have darkened our consciousness and the consciousness of the Jewish People have never left us.

Like most survivors, we have not allowed Hitler to enjoy a posthumous triumph over us. We have shown that the misery, cruelty, despair and injustice that were inflicted on us did not break our indomitable spirit. We did not become consumed with hatred to the point of destroying our own and other people's lives. We did not become terrorists; we did not kill innocent people; we did not even pursue or kill our persecutors.

However, with the passage of time, most of us are inexorably coming to the realization that it is not enough to have harnessed all our energies for, and concentrated all our efforts on, rebuilding and revitalizing our lifeline and spiritual revival. In recent years, like most survivors worldwide, we have become increasingly aware of our responsibility for transmitting to the present and future generations the tragedy and the lessons of the Holocaust. In order to prevent the Holocaust from happening again to anyone ever, its memory must be kept alive by reminding the world of the atrocities that were committed and by deterring future evil-doers, who must be made to see that murder does not pay. It is a task that our members are addressing very seriously; they are a driving force in the community.

London—February 1991

New York's Society of Piotrkow and Vicinity

In 1965, the Society of Piotrkow and Vicinity was founded in New York by a group of Piotrkower. Their cultural and social activities during the sixteen years of their existence were intense and their achievements quite impressive.

Possibly, the most important of the many accomplishment of this Society was the publication of a bulletin which played a vital role in the lives of a segment of its *Landsleit* in New York and elsewhere.

The creators of the Bulletin were Moshe Mushinski, Roman Mogilanski (Abram Mogilaner), Marian Maslawski (Motl Szwarc), and Vitek Blachman. Ben Giladi joined its editorial board in 1967. Another notable act of this Society was the donation to Israel of a "Magen David Adom" ambulance for the municipality of the town of Holon. Through a strange twist of fate, General Moshe Dayan was rescued by this ambulance and its staff when he was almost buried alive in an accidental cave-in at the site of an archaeological excavation near Holon.

The fruitful existence of the Bulletin came to an end when the last of the original founders, Roman Mogilanski, met an untimely death in 1981. Shortly thereafter, the Society of Piotrkow and Vicinity, later known as the Nazi Victims of Piotrkow Trybunalski, also ceased to exist.

In 1982, a quarterly magazine, the *New Bulletin*, under the sponsorship of the Piotrkow Trybunalski Relief Association and with Ben Giladi as editor, began publication. It now reaches well over one thousand readers around the world, including the second generation of Piotrkower.

With reverence and deep affection, we remember the former members of the Society of Piotrkow and Vicinity, as well as all the activists who have passed away over the years.



Piotrkow and Vicinity Society in New York donates an ambulance for the Red Magen David in Israel—late sixties.

The Jewish Nazi Victims Organization of America

Founded and Led by Two Piotrkower

In 1957, two dynamic Piotrkower survivors founded the crucially important organization of Jewish Nazi Victims. The late Moshe Israel Sochachevski became its first President and Felix Lasky was its Secretary-General. The three main objectives of the Organization were:

1. To always remember the Nazi crimes.



Moshe Israel Sochachevski and Felix Lasky holding the pen with which President John Fitzgerald Kennedy signed the historical Yom Hashoa—The Holocaust Memorial Day Proclamation in 1962.

2. To offer help and guidance to Jewish Survivors.
3. To strengthen the ties between the Sherit Hapleita and the State of Israel.

Sochachevski and Lasky emerged immediately as untiring champions of Jewish rights and leaders of the Survivors. We, the Piotrkower, were so proud to hear them on the radio, to see them on television or to read about their work in the newspapers. They were the first to intervene against discrimination against the Jewish People in countries such as Iraq, Syria, Russia, Argentina or Uruguay.

Among their most remarkable achievements were these important acts: In 1962, they led a delegation of Nazi Victims and important, political New York personalities (Dr. James B. Donovan, Rep. Emanuel Celler and U.S. Attorney Robert Morse) to see President John F. Kennedy. As a result, the President issued the historical proclamation of Yom Hashoa—the Holocaust Memorial Day, to be observed on Khav-Zain of the month of Nissan. On May 9, 1965, on the 20th anniversary of the end of World War II, Moshe and Felix organized the first major commemoration held in New York. Thousands of survivors assembled at Hunter College to pay tribute to our martyrs. This commemoration started a noble tradition for years to come.

In March of 1960, Moshe and Felix met with German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer for the first time when he came to meet President Eisenhower in Washington. This meeting was arranged by Senator Kenneth Keating and by then Vice-President Richard M. Nixon. Thanks to their efforts, the Bonn Government adopted a more serious and urgent attitude toward the forthcoming reparation claims by the Nazi Victims. Moshe Israel Sochachevski and Felix Lasky made numerous trips to Germany, where Moshe spoke in the Bundestag. They fought successfully for the extension of the Statute of Limitations defining the period within which the Nazi criminals could be prosecuted.

Over the years, these men were always helping people—former Nazi Victims offering guidance, advice and intervention, and never accepting a fee for their services. In 1969, on Yom Hashoa, they organized a giant memorial service held in Madison Square Garden.

A few months later, Moshe Israel Sochachevski passed away suddenly. His untimely death shocked the entire Jewish Community. He was laid to rest in Jerusalem, Hayir Hakodesh.

Felix Lasky continues till today his gallant activities as the Organization's Secretary. Notable personalities, such as Dr. Hilel Seidman, Rabbi Yechezkel Besser, the Attorney Milton Kestenberg and others were and remain active in the noble endeavors of the Organization. We all look back with great appreciation and fondness at the important achievements of our compatriots in their faithful work on behalf of the Nazi Victims.

Folklore

Elazar Prashker—Jerusalem

The Last of the Eglonim (Coachmen)

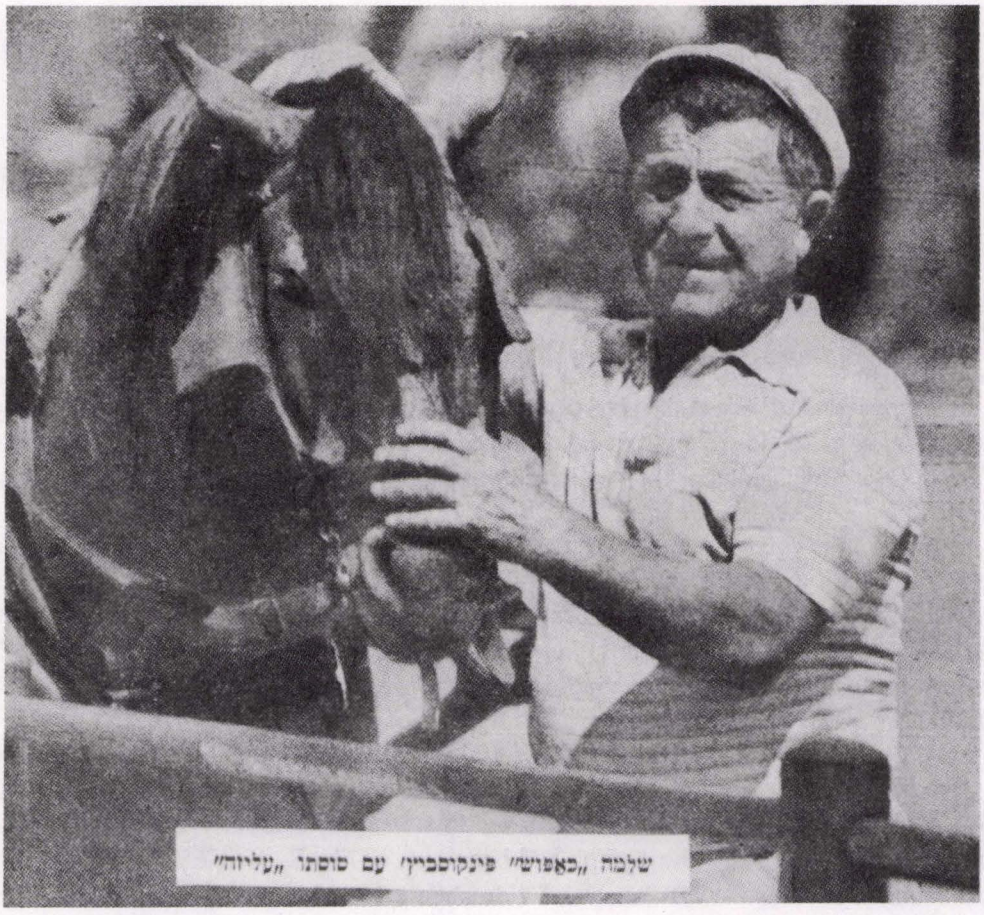
"Three old-time coachmen can still be seen on the streets of Rishon Le Zion"

I happened to glance at the above quotation under a picture in an article describing a vanished world. The article in question appeared in *Kol Rishon Le Zion* in 1983. One of the "old-world characters" in the picture was Shlomo (Hapush) Pinkusewicz with his horse, Aliza.

As you who lived in Piotrkow have, no doubt, guessed by now, the image shows none other than our own townsman of the well-known Hapuchis tribe, who inherited the profession from his father and grandfather. All of us remember Shlomo perched atop his wagon in the fashion of his father, Hershel Hapush, and his grandfather, Wolf Hapush. Shlomo immigrated to Israel in the 1950's and has since then carried on his honorable profession on the highways and byways of Rishon.

Seeing the article in *Kol Rishon Le Zion* reminded me of an old picture published by *The New Piotrkow Bulletin* of Sept.–Oct. 1982. In that photograph, a fine group of old-time coachmen—the droshka drivers we all so well remember—assume a formal pose for the camera. The photograph had been sent to *The Bulletin* by Jack Bulwa of California, who himself was the son of a droshka driver; his father is pictured in the group. Ben Giladi, editor of *The Bulletin*, added a sorrowful sentence to accompany the picture: "A scene from what was and is no more." How right you were, Ben, my friend. This is indeed a world that has vanished, a tragic void and loss for which we will never cease mourning. The sudden and brutal cruelty of our tragedy is an everlasting pain in the lives of those of us who survived.

It is important for us survivors to hold onto memories, not only in order to soothe our sorrow, but also for a sense of roots and belonging. I find myself looking at this "graduation picture" of the droshka drivers and suddenly I am transported back to a childhood of which these colorful figures were an inseparable part. Although Jack Bulwa didn't mention who took the picture or when it was taken, I can assume almost with certainty that it must have been taken at the studio of Ben Zion Kogan, originally located on Narutowicza Street and later on the Avenue of the Third of May. My guess is based on studying the fashions worn in the photo as well as on the quality of the photography. As I study this photograph, I am most impressed by the well-pressed and elegant holiday attire worn on this important occasion by the hardy crew that is pictured. These folks were hardly ever seen out of their work clothes. Their attire speaks of a sense of self-respect and declares, "This is what we were really like!"—and, truly, they were.



Shlomo "Hapush" Pinkusewicz with his horse Aliza on the streets of Rishon Le Zion in 1983.

The society of these coachmen indeed formed a closed social circle within the Jewish world of Piotrkow. The profession stayed within certain families and was passed on from father to son.

Although the somewhat snobbish society of middle-class Jews may have looked down on these fellows, the "droshkazes" took pride in their work and simply ignored the opinion of elitist society.

It is certainly true that the coachmen were a rough crew, permeated as they were by the perfumes of horseflesh and leather. They were, however, never rude or vulgar. They were certain of their appointed place in the scheme of things and they also knew how to show as well as how to command respect.

The coachmen socialized mostly among themselves. Each of their families had a special coded nickname. In town they were known mostly by these. They were as proud of these code names as any nobleman might be of his crest and title. Few people in town knew their original family names. They lived mostly in Wielka Wies and Chazir Market. Their wagons took up position in the Chazir Market and on the Platz Zamkowy, while their carriages waited for customers at the railroad station and in Piotrkow's central spot,



Images of the Past. The above photo was sent by Jack Bulwa of Turlock, California. Here are the coachmen of Piotrkow (dorozkarze). Top row standing, left to right: Moishe Szwarc, Itzik Sandowski, Itzik Kepele, Yosel Mishkitz, Chuno "Mizelik" Belzacki, Jack's father Bulwa, and Chuno "Bendlmacher" Gutman. Sitting, bottom row, left to right: Michuel "Mencennik" Huberman, Hershel "Bendlmacher" Gutman, David "Sheygec" Fisz, Meyer Rozpszer, and Yosel Pitzer. The "droshkes" played an important role in the dreams of our youthful minds. It was a big thrill for us kids to hitch a ride or, better yet, to be given the "leitzn" and be able to lead the horse. Let's stop for a moment and ponder when looking at this photo of these strong, honest men. A photo which is only an image of the past and nothing more...

Rynek Trybunalski. On workdays, and only then, the carriages were parked along one side of Rynek Trybunalski, patiently waiting for customers.

Behind the droshkas, I can still quite clearly see in my mind's eye, the row of shops—Grabowskis's pharmacy, Tennenbaum's pub, Rabbi Schlomo Fuch's leather goods store, Weishoff's shoe shop, Shmaragd's paint store. I see the tired horses doze with their heads down, while the drivers, in their uniforms with shiny brass buttons and special peaked caps, rest peacefully atop their elevated seats. The restful pose does not prevent their ever-watchful eyes from keeping a lookout for the approaching "kurs," and when such a potential passenger appears, every slumbering muscle springs into action. Whips flick, ears perk up, and the horses step impatiently in their place as if they were the horses of shining knights readying themselves for a joust. Like arrows from a bow, the carriages fly out to "catch the 'kurs.' " First come, first served!

Making a living was never easy. The coachmen worked hard from dawn to dusk, in the heat of summer as well as in the snow and sleet of winter. Each day had its own

uncompromising workload. The horses had to be fed and tended. The carriages and wagons had to be repaired and made presentable. But on the Sabbath and on holidays, the coachmen would dress in their very finest and promenade at their ease to the synagogue.

I grew up in the house of Berl Scenick Zygmuntowicz, my grandfather; it was located in the vicinity of Wielka Wies, close to the quarters of the coachmen. From early childhood I learned to like and respect them and their trade. In the old photograph, I recognize Yosef Moskowitz of the Myshkis family. He and his brother Moshe, together with their parents and an unmarried sister, were our neighbors. Their large yard had enough room for their entire business inventory, both animate and inanimate. There was a stable for the horses and a shelter for the carriages and sleds. And a wooden shed for storage of discarded harnesses, wheels and other lovely junk—what a heavenly playground for us kids!

My younger brother Hershelle (known as "the mazik-menace") and I had the yard all to ourselves. We explored every nook and cranny of it. We "helped" the wagoners to repair carriages and take care of the horses. We also learned how to turn the hay cutter. This was indeed our favorite game.

Surely such small rascals must have disturbed these rough-and-ready fellows in their work; they certainly had to keep an eye out for any mischief we might get into. But the bachelor brothers treated us gently and patiently. Never once do I recall them scolding us. As a reward for our "help," they allowed us to sit next to them on the drivers' seats and hold onto the reins and whip as they drove out past the large gate on their way to another day's toil.

Winter, with its snowfalls, provided our greatest pleasures. This was the time for sleds to emerge. We were permitted to glide on the snow, accompanied by the jolly sound of the jingle bells which had been attached to the harness.

Here in the old photograph I also recognize the full figure of Michael Mentzenik. Is there anyone from our town who still recalls that this fellow's real family name was actually Huberman? Michael owned a gigantic lumber wagon and a heavy Belgian work horse with an impressive posterior. Man, horse and wagon appeared eminently well suited to each other. When Michael took his place on the driver's seat, his own immense shape filled two places and competed with the girth of his horse.

My father used to tell the story of a coachman who seemed to have taken out a lease on transporting the young brides of our town to the wedding hall on the day of their nuptials. If ever the unfortunate bride dared to be a few seconds late for the occasion, the whole street would reverberate with the voice of the wagoner: "Pisherin, vi lang velech varten oyf dir?" ("You little squirt of a bride! How long do you expect me to hang around waiting for you?")

My memory fails me. Was Michael Mentzenik the hero of my father's story or was it someone else? After all, I was only a youngster when I first heard my father tell this story. Many years have gone by and, when I heard it, I never dreamed that one day I would want to write about it. Still, the description of the shouting wagoner does seem to fit the heavy-set Michael perfectly.

In the center of the old photograph sits a fellow who appears to own the world—

David Fish, alias David Sheigitz, the P.R. person for the wagoners. In Yiddish, David was known as a "gantzer Kochlefl." Because education was not exactly the strong point of this crew and because they were neither great scholars nor strong on rhetoric, David Sheigitz was useful to them. He possessed both temerity and charisma. He could think on his feet and knew how to get things done. David was a frequent guest in our yard because some of his relatives lived at my grandfather's. I clearly remember one of the family, a wizened, cheerful tailor, Meir'l Schneider, and his wife, a large, clumsy and confused woman who went by the strange nickname of "Meir, Meir-Copenhagen." I doubt that anyone knew her real name.

David usually was cheerful. He joked with us children, told funny stories, chatted with my grandfather and my uncles, and whispered business secrets to Moshe and Yosef. As a rule, he had something pleasant to say to everyone. That's why the story I am about to tell surprised us.

It happened about ten years later, just as our community was in the throes of a rabbinical election. After the death of Rabbi David Temkin, Piotrkow was without a rabbi for a whole year. Rabbi Yankele Dayan was temporarily in charge of synagogue business. No Jewish community can last long without a rabbi, and eventually the town elders decided that our community would have to elect a new rabbi. The Piotrkow rabbinate was considered a serious position. The town was known for its Talmud scholarship, as well as for its successful business activity. We had been blessed with "gaonim" and learned Torah scholars. Small wonder, then, that some of Poland's mosts promising rabbinical talents competed for the job. The position in the past had been held by such luminaries as "Brit Avraham," "Nefesh Chaya" and "Ora V'Simcha."

One of the contenders for the position was Rabbi Schmuel Brott, the leader of "Mizrachi." He was later elected rabbi of Tomashow, our neighboring town, and later on became a rabbi in Antwerp.

Agudat Israel, as well as most "Chassidim," including the "Gur Chassidim" in our town were backing Rabbi Meir Shapira, an upcoming star among the ultra-orthodox. Young as he was, Rabbi Shapira had already been one of the leaders of Agudat Israel and the representative of this group at the Polish "Sejm" (parliament).

The "Chassidim" of Sochachew preferred their own leader—the Admor Rabbi David Bornstein. Yankele Dayan was also a candidate. He was strongly supported by the Alexander Chassidim and by the men in the street. Needless to say, the Gur Chassidim were the most influential. In 1924, all Jewish males of age voted for a rabbi. Women, or course, did not vote—what does a woman know about selecting a rabbi?! Electing a rabbi was no simple matter. As a matter of fact, it turned into a serious struggle. There were assemblies and there was burning eloquence. The Aguda brought in Itzik Ber Ackerman, editor of the Warsaw Aguda newspaper, *Der Yid.* Ackerman was invited in order to help organize the campaign of Rabbi Shapira. Does anyone still recall Avremelle Leventhal? He caused quite a stir by marrying Baruch Cimbler's daughter. Baruch was a well-known horse trader. During the elections for Rabbi of Piotrkow, Avremelle served as chief P.R. man for Rav Yankele Dayan. He appeared at all the rallies and spoke with intense enthusiasm. People went to election rallies the way one goes to the theater. It was amusing to hear the fiery debates between Avremelle and Itzik Ber Ackerman. In short, everyone enjoyed himself!

Rabbi Shapira's personality captured the heart of my father, who soon became one of his most avid followers. My father joined the Shapira forces and the "election headquarters" run by Itzik Ber Ackerman found their way to our house. By this time we were no longer living at my grandfather's, but on Pilsudski Street, opposite the prison.

At this time Yerubal, in *Unzer Zeitung,* published a parody which poked fun at the entire campaign and especially its chief protagonists. Among those singled out for special ridicule were my father and Ber Ackerman.

(I quote from by best recollection as unfortunately I have not been able to lay my hands on the relevant copy of *Unzer Zeitung.* Sixty years have gone by, yet I still clearly recall the black-bearded Itzik Ber Ackerman. In my mind's eye I see his fiery, penetrating eyes. I see him dressed—not as was the custom among the Chassidim—in a short jacket and soft hat. I see him chain-smoking and incessantly drinking strong tea. His glass had to be constantly refilled up to the brim like a wine glass for "kiddush.")

Ber Ackerman sipped his tea, pulled on a cigarette, made lists, and received reports from campaign workers who wandered in and out. He ordered people around and, finally, as evening set in, he departed for a lively political assembly, where he and his opposite number, Leventhal, would bash each other.

Once, on a bright afternoon, when work at "headquarters" was going full steam, the door opened and David Sheigitz, in the company of two heavyweights from the tribe of wagoners, appeared. My father was, at first, a bit taken aback. Nevertheless, he managed to greet David with his usual friendliness: "Hello David, what's new?"

David Sheigitz dispensed with preliminaries and went straight to the heart of the matter.

"Listen here, Rav Yankel. I've got something serious to tell you. We the coachmen have reached a decision. We are convinced that only Rabbi Yankele Dayan is worthy of the noble office of Rabbi of Piotrkow. Let me make myself perfectly clear. If you fellows don't stop your support of a stranger, we'll simply have to break your bones."

He was addressing my father in the plural since, even as he threatened violence, he didn't have it in him to be disrespectful. My poor father turned pale and started stuttering. "David, what is this? What is the matter? Have you gone out of your mind?"

David, however, stuck to his original message. "Rav Yankele, that's it. Remember that you have been warned!"

Then the three musketeers turned on their heels and left without so much as a word of farewell. For months and years later, David Sheigitz avoided both me and my father. (I had been present at the crucial explosion.) Perhaps he was embarrassed. Perhaps he felt sorry or guilty. Perhaps he just could not look us in the eyes again. This was a Jewish Sheigitz, after all.

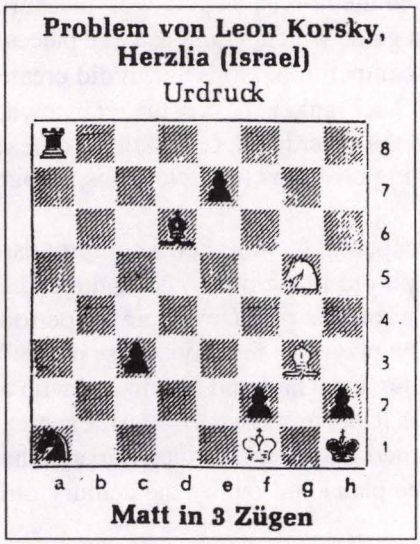
Such are the echoes of recollection brought about by an old photograph—my memories of the Piotrkow wagoners. I saw a picture of one of them plying his old-world trade in *Rishon Le Zion* and my thoughts wandered all the way to the election of a rabbi in Piotrkow. All in all, just a web of images from a long-gone childhood; threads of fabric of reflection.

Heidim

Chess—The Jewish Game in Piotrkow

Elazar Prashker—Jerusalem

Glancing through an old issue of *Stern* magazine (23/1972), I happened to come across the following chess problem (note drawing):



A chess problem published by the well-known German magazine *Stern* in 1972. The author is no one else but Leibl Kornfeld of Piotrkow.

The creator of this interesting chess arrangement was none other than Leon Korski, better known to residents of Piotrkow as Leibel Kornfeld, an enthusiastic chess player in our town. Many a time did I test my own chess ability against his, but not once did I even dream of winning. The "discovery" in *Stern* reminded me that the game of the kings was certainly one of the favored cultural and recreational activities of Jewish Piotrkow. This surely was natural, since chess had always been a popular Jewish game. For some reason or other, this aspect of our lives in Piotrkow was totally overlooked in the original volume of our Izkor Book. This is particularly strange, considering that Jacob Maltz, the initiator and editor of the volume, was, in addition to his many social and political functions, an enthusiastic and dedicated chess player who took part in several competitions in our town. I well remember several of these contests.

At the beginning of the 1920's, the best Jewish chess players held a great, and perhaps the original, chess competition in town. The games were held in the "Tarbut" auditorium on 9 Bykowska Street. The top three places, my memory tells me, were won by Mordechai Frankel, Yakow Maltz and Binem Oppenheim. The judge was Levi Hertzkovitz. Even yours truly participated in the competition as the youngest player, and proudly reached the bottom of the charts.

In the early 20's, "Hashomer Hatzair" also organized the first public game in our

town in the yard of the Dobroczynnosc. Yacov Maltz and Mordechai Frankel sat on high platforms on the sides of the playing field, which had been arranged as a chessboard. Hashomer children, dressed in home-designed, colorful costumes, served as live pawns, and I was assigned the job of moving the chess pieces as needed. A large crowd enjoyed the spectacle and the profits went to the summer camp organized by our "ken."

I will now divulge a secret which Yacow Maltz told me about this game. I never promised to keep his secret and thus I feel free to share it. After all, even state secrets are revealed after a 30-year period, and this particular game at the time of this writing, was played more than 55 years ago. And this is what happened.

Mordechai Frankel and Yakow Maltz, of blessed memory, accepted with pleasure the invitation of "Hashomer Hatzair" to join a chess game which would use live pieces. Everyone in town was extremely interested in the competition. However, it did create certain problems. Who would be the winner? Mordechai Frankel, the best player in town, certainly could not afford to lose. Yakow Maltz, on the other hand, feared that a defeat would wreck his political chances in the approaching elections (and elections, in our town, were always "approaching."

Diplomatic contacts were made between the competing factions and a compromise was reached. The parties discovered a chess game played in the previous century. The game and its results had been written about in *Niva*, a Russian magazine from the period of the Czar. This, it was decided, was the game to be played in the "live chess pieces" contest. The game would be pursued for about an hour and a half and terminated with a tie. The deal was made! Everyone involved signed on it and promised to keep the secret. And that is how the chess players actually were turned into actors as they pursued the game with straight faces, all the while following the plans laid out by the century-old game in *Niva*.

As I consider *Niva*, I am reminded of how, in our old home in Piotrkow, I once discovered a whole treasury of old periodicals. They were among the first that had been published in Hebrew: the yearly *Luach Hachiasaf; Hatsfira* (Dawn), edited by Slonimski and Nachum Sokolow; and many issues of *Niva*. Looking through *Niva*, I took a particular interest in the many chess problems it featured and I attempted to solve them.

As it turned out, the game of live chess pieces we had in Piotrkow was not the only one of its kind. In *Unzer Zeitung* (34/August 28, 1936), I discovered the following tidbit:

The Live Chess Match

> On Sunday, at 3:30 PM, a live chess match sponsored by the sport club "Shomria" drew a considerable audience. The match was played at the Dobroczynnosc Platz between our very own, very known chess player, Mr. Oppenheim and an out of town guest, Mr. Drozdow. The colorful costumes of the "live " chess pieces were quite impressive. The winner of the match, after an interesting exchange of wits, was Mr. Oppenheim.

Who was Mr. Drozdow? Was he a Jew? Did Jews and Poles ever play chess together in Piotrkow? I don't know the answer, but I am sure that the interest in chess was lively

among Jews. In issue No. 37 (Sept. 16, 1936) of *Unzer Zeitung*. I discovered a column named *Chess*. I only have a few issues, and I am therefore, not sure whether this was the only appearance of the column or whether there was a continuation of it. At any rate, I would like to return to Leon Korski's chess problem, which triggered my memories. This sophisticated problem may be enjoyed by any chess fans.

Shmulik in Piotrkow

In 1916, in the middle of World War I, Shmulik Reshevski (Der Kleiner Shmulik) arrived in Piotrkow. He was then six years old and he participated in simultaneous games with Piotrkow's chess players. At the Hertz auditorium on 7 Garncarska Street, Shmulik faced forty chess players, all of the Mosaic persuasion. He also participated in a simultaneous match in the Krakowianka coffee house on Platz Kosciuszki. Here, too, there existed total religious segregation. That is to say, everyone present was not Jewish—with the exception of the protagonist, little Shmulik.

Shmulik became the sensation of both sides of our town. Jews told marvels about him—he was their chief pleasure. This was almost as true among the Poles, who grew effusive about "Maly Shmulik" (Little Shmulik). Dr. Sobanski, a well-known doctor in Piotrkow and an enthusiastic chess player, published a lengthy article in the town's daily, *Dziennik Narodowy*, predicting a great chess career for "Maly Shmulik." The prophecy, was, indeed realized: he became a famous grandmaster.

Heidim



Four young men in Piotrkow circa 1915. Who are they? The game of chess was quite popular in our hometown. (From the archives of the "Heker Hatefutzoth Institute," University of Tel Aviv.)



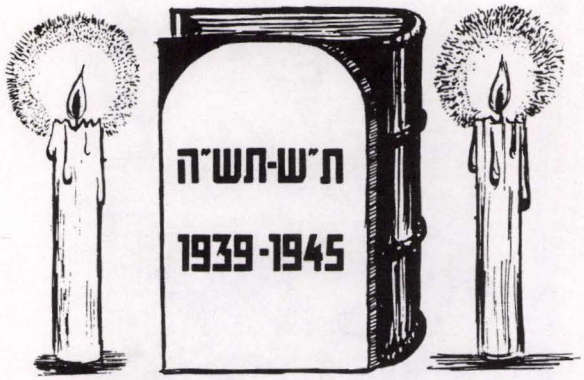
The monument in memory of our Martyrs erected in 1969 by the Piotrkow Trybunalski



BACK RIGHT SIDE

WOODBRIDGE, NEW JERSEY

Relief Association at the Beth Israel Cemetery in Woodbridge, New Jersey.



In Heichal Hashemoth

In the Hall of Names

By Shayek Pudlowski

ש. פּודלאָווסקי

אינעם „היכל השמות"

אַ ים מיט נעמען פון קדושים
אין „יד ושם" דאָ כ׳גיי פאַרבייַ,
דאָס איינציקע פון זיי דער זכר,
אַז נישט פאַרגעסן וועט מען זיי.

אַ טאָג גענוגן דאָ מיט אַ נאַכט
כ׳בין אין „היכל" פון די נעמען.
איך זע זיי אַלע דאָ אַצינד,
ווי מעג מען דאָ פאַרגעסן וועמען.

ברויט צו זעט גענוגן אַ חלום —
זיך אַליין כ׳וואָלט אויפגעגעסן.
אויסגעדאַרט, נאָר הויט און ביין —
ווי זשע קען מען דאָס פאַרגעסן.

דער טויט אויף מיר האָט אויסגעקוקט,
ביי מיין שוועל ער איז געזעסן.
געווען בין איך שוין לויטער שאָטן —
דאָס כ׳וועל זיכער נישט פאַרגעסן.

איצט אויף דורות דאָ פאַרשריבן
איז אין „היכל השמות",
יעדער קדוש מיט זיין נאָמען
און וווּ זיי אומגעבראַכט מען האָט.

יונג און אַלט פאַרפרעסט אין שטייגן
מיר ליגן דאָ גאַנצע מעת־לעתן.
דער לעצטער זאָג צו מיר מיין חברס:
געדענק, דו זאָלסט מיך נישט פאַרגעסן!

און אין די נעכט, ווען אַלע שלאָפן,
ווי מיט האַמערס קלאַפּט אין מוח —
ליג איך מיט די אויגן אָפן —
פון נישט פאַרגעסן ס׳איז דער כוח.

1986

We see a sea of sacred names
In Yad Vashem–when passing by,
The only way to show regard;
Their memory to sanctify.

From early day to latest night
We roam this Hall so full of souls.
We see them all–when we recall,
The holy names on holy scrolls.

A loaf of bread –this was a dream
For us martyrs, misbegotten.
The blood and tears–the pain and screams,
How could all this be forgotten?

Death was waiting in the shadows,
We were smoldering like an ember.
Now we pledge on holy ashes,
To recall and to remember.

You are all inscribed forever
In this sacred hall of names.
We will not forget you!–ever!
Kindling the eternal flames.

Old and young, in chains and cages
Lay in wait so taint and rotten.
Hearing whispers of the sages:
"How could all this be forgotten?"

And in the night, when all is still,
When thoughts like hammers pound my mind,
Remembrance friends, we shall instill.
For earth, for heaven–for mankind.

Heidim, no. 26, 1986
Translated from Yiddish by Ben Giladi