



Baranovich
בארנאָװיטש
The Trilogy

Part II

Baranovich
In Martyrdom & Resistance

בארנאָװיטש

אין אומקום אין ווידערשטאנד



**Memoirs, Documents, and Eye-Witness Accounts,
Dedicated to the Sacred Memory of Our Martyrs & Heroes,
from Baranovich and its Environs, Who Perished
During the Period of the Holocaust**



Gathered, Compiled and Edited by

Joseph Foxman



Volume I

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Foreword

By Mordechai V. Bernstein

Baranovich belongs to those cities that, relatively speaking, was among the earlier ones to publish a *Yizkor* Book. This was indeed a virtue – the scions of Baranovich were among those who were early in commemorating [the tragedy of] the Holocaust. However, this virtue has one shortcoming – When *Sefer Baranovich*, which appeared in Israel in 1953 was prepared for publication, many details were as yet not yet known, and as it was, especially concerning the martyrdom and heroism of the Jews from Baranovich and its vicinity. It is possible that those who produced *Sefer Baranovich* did not have the ability to reach everyone, who could have helped to complete the picture, both of suffering and heroism. It is also possible that many of the survivors, at the time, had no knowledge that such a book was being prepared, or these events were still so fresh in their minds, that they could not yet digest them in order to put them down on paper – for everlasting memory.

Regardless of the reasons, in the fullness of time, a significant amount, and a very important body of material was assembled regarding the Holocaust and resistance period in Baranovich and its vicinity.

This material is of diverse character. Some of it is scattered and dispersed among a variety of anthologies, newspapers, and other publications; part are in the form of documents, such as eye-witness accounts, found in a variety of archives; and the part – the most important part – is still in the minds and hearts of those who were miraculously rescued by chance. It became evident that important details, facts, and events, still remain uncovered. They exist only in the minds of eye-witnesses who, to this day, have not yet been able to ‘unburden’ themselves with the things they lived through in ‘that time.’

It is, indeed, therefore a most fortunate idea, that came to the Baranovich Society in America, which at the initiative of its dynamic president, Joseph Foxman, undertook to collect this related material ‘under one roof,’ in the Collections which is now being prepared as the *Part I*.

It is not only an obligation of truth, for those hundreds who were not mentioned, the forgotten, the abandoned, those martyrs and heroes who, up till now have not been recognized, from Baranovich and its vicinity. The Jewish research into that bloody era, obtains here a treasure of important documents, authentic documents from eye-witnesses, who complete the picture, the total scope – *both of the Annihilation and the Resistance*.

Baranovich – the city and its entire environs – is *sui generis* during the time of the Hitler cataclysm. Here, the resistance element played a very visible role. In the ghetto, in the camps (Koldichevo, Sveržan, Wilejka, etc.), in fields, forests, and swamps, it existed and made an impact, demonstrating the heroism of the Jewish resistance.

Accordingly, this collection contains rare chapters of Jewish heroism, in all its forms, in Baranovich

and its environs. The descriptions are written by those who were present, and took part in these events.

But it is not only the Holocaust era that is brought out in *Part I*. Justifiable, the editor has also included a wonderful section of the Jewish way of life, how its people lived, folklore, and the legends from this territory. These are pearls of Jewish identity, which otherwise would have been lost, if they had not been included within its pages. Accordingly, this work represents a form of double duty.

This ‘confrontation’ with the past, before the extermination, makes that much more distinct, makes even more clear, and more real, that bloody balance of the Nazi ‘Final Solution’ to the Jewish Question.

In this connection, we make an excursion into a vanished society, whose history takes on the appearance of fantastic legends, however, they were very much real. An entire world awaits the [Messianic] Raising of the Dead – Baranovich and Mys; Njasviz and Palonka; Ljahavičy and Stalovičy; Koldichevo and Chepeli; Sveržan and Navahardok; Zuhavičy and Salihorsk. Tens and tens of places with their quaint histories and wondrous Jews.

Those from Baranovich and its vicinity, that survived the slaughter, will truly be grateful to the prime movers of this undertaking. It is especially the researchers, who study the bloody Hitler period as a segment of Jewish history, who will especially find it most valuable. The next part of this collection will be eagerly and impatiently be awaited.

The Heroic Partisan Shlomo'leh Itzkowitz of Baranovich

By: Sh. Gerling

(20 Years After His Heroic Death)

On a frosty February evening, two black boxes were brought to the village of Goluby beside the Neman, by a boat. We took them down, and with great care, set them down by the river bank. According to the information that our *Otryad* received from the nearby peasants, we understood that these two boxes were the coffins of two heroic Jewish fighters, the partisans: Shlomo'leh Itzkowitz from Baranovich (born in 1928), and Ahar'eleh Heydukowsky from Zhetl (born in 1927), who had gone off to carry out a mission on the other side of the Neman [River] and there, they met their death...

There is much to tell about Shlomo'leh Itzkowitz. It is flat out astonishing, how such temerity and fearlessness attached itself to this Jewish boy, who was still a child. Among others, I remember an instance of the following kind:

This was approximately April, 1943. Our *Otryad* had assumed a defensive position along the [banks of the] Neman, protecting itself against the White Poles, who were on the other side. Having spent some time in one location, we decided to send a scout to search out the enemy. And it was Shlomo'leh Itzkowitz, who took this mission upon himself. of his own volition, he presented himself to the group commander, with the request that he be allowed to ford the river to the opposite side. He asked that only one grown man be sent with him, because he is unable to row.

Approaching the other side, his companion remained seated in the vessel, and he, Shlomo'leh, went off into the village. He entered the very first peasant hut that he encountered, and asks immediately, from the threshold, whether any White [Poles] can be found in the village, this from a strange young little boy, on a clear day, with a rifle that is much larger than he is, which elicited a rather understandable consternation from inside the hut. The peasant's wife asks gently:

– What is your name, boy?

To which he replies bluntly and curtly:

– I am a partisan!

At which, the woman peasant screamed in fear:

– Flee! Flee! They are all in the village! The 'Whites'....

However, Shlomo'leh Itzkowitz calmly asks further:

– How many are they, and how often do they come to the river bank?...

And it is to no avail that the peasant woman warns him out of fear that he will depart; and not that she tells him to come out to the river bank and there she will tell him everything...

The little partisan wants to be made immediately made aware of everything, right on the spot. And apart

from that! – Prepare me some food for several partisans, and two pair of underwear! This is for his comrades on the other side of the Neman... and he positions himself at the door:

– No one is to leave the house – otherwise I shoot!

At the time, the whole thing appeared to be comical, but when the little guy took the rifle off his shoulder, flipped the catch, and put his finger on the trigger, and loaded a round into the chamber – everyone in the hut suddenly became very serious.

... They forded back across the river late in the evening. No one in the *Otryad* was asleep. All of them, along with the group commander, lay in the stall, and waited restlessly. Hearing a movement, they move themselves from their positions.

– Who is it?

And a child's voice answers:

–Me!

The joy in the stall was indescribable. He is taken inside, and the commandant is holding him close near to him, with genuine fatherly love.

– *Nu*, tell us!

In the darkness, no one notices that he is holding some sort of package under his arm.... and he reports both calmly and tranquilly, not leaving anything out, about everything that happened to him, and what he was able to learn – and the more he tells, the more he makes the impression of acting in a legendary manner...

This was no small thing – being on the other side, where no one from the units that lay close to the bank dared to go over, and come back unharmed!

And therefore, indeed, there was a group that was filled with a certain skepticism about the entire story, until Shlomo'leh opens his hands, and gives everyone a secret smile:

– Ребята подыхаете кушат!¹

And to everyone's wonderment, he opens the package, which, for all this time, had been in his possession, tied up with a peasant's kerchief, and he drags out a jar of honey, a big hunk of butter, and several small pieces of hard cheese.

He kept the two pair of underwear for himself, and for his friend Heydukowsky.

Now everyone is agape. The admiration is boundless. He is covered with kisses and picked up in the air.

After the feast, like a full-fledged partisan, he is offered a comfortable place to sleep. He refuses:

¹ Guys, you are dying to eat!

– It is my time to stand watch! He quietly explains.

– No! Everyone exclaims spontaneously – Now we will go in your place. You go to sleep!

An order came: to destroy the rail lines throughout all of Byelorussia! Explosives were specially sent by air from Moscow, for this purpose, which were to be used to blow up approximately three-parts of three separate rail lines... Shlomo'leh Itzkowitz and Ahar'el Heydukowsky decided to carry out this mission together. This fortuitous joining in the same mission, caused them to be bonded in friendship even more strongly. From that time on, they were always seen together.

They went as a pair on their last mission. It was January 1944. The Ruzhany-Baranovich rail line which leads to Minsk, and was located in the ambit of our activity – needs to be destroyed at all cost! The difficulty lay not only in the mining of the rails, as much as having to swim across the Neman, and get to the place, where apart from the Germans, the White Poles were also rampaging. Again, because of a shortage of explosive materiel, not everyone could be trusted to carry out such a task. In response to a special call, as to who would undertake so serious a mission, out of three hundred partisans, only two children's voices responded with a call of 'Me!' Shlomo'leh Itzkowitz and Ahar'eleh Heydukowsky... and they went. It was on that very same night, and they were never again seen alive.

Opening the coffins, a frightening picture unfolded before us. The skin on Ahar'eleh Heydukowsky's body was covered in brown and blue marks, and he was shot in several places. It was apparent that he fought fiercely against the enemy. Shlomo'leh Itzkowitz lay at peace, as if he were asleep. A light smile was splayed across his young face.... one had the impression that he would momentarily wake up. Too bad!

They were buried in a common grave, at a crossroads. All the partisans of the Otryad attended, together with its entire leadership. The commandant gave a fiery speech, in which he enumerated the heroic deeds of these two young partisans, who fell for freedom for all humanity, and for the honor of their people.

The coffins are lowered into the grave, and a command is issued:

– Salute!

And the echo of three shots reverberates through the stillness of the forest, from a variety of weapons. A provisional partisan grave marker is placed on the grave, made of wood. On it, the names of the two young Jewish partisans are carved, and the inscription '*Vyechnaya Slava Geroyam.*'

We Flee the Koldichevo Camp to the Partisans

By Pinchas Mordkowsky

Four days after the outbreak of The War, the Germans entered Baranovich. Already, there was no possibility of escape. On the other side, no one could conceive that it would be so bad under the Germans.

Within three months afterwards, the Germans had already created a ghetto in Baranovich, in which approximately twelve thousand Jews were found. A *Judenrat* of 12 people was also created, with Evsei Izikson as the president. Chaim Weltman, a working man and activist, from among the craftsmen, was the

commandant of the Jewish police in the ghetto. An echelon of approximately 300 Czech Jews were also brought to the ghetto. Work contracts were consummated with them, purporting that they were to be sent out to work. The Czech police brought them to Baranovich, In fact, they were brought to be exterminated, and the police, who brought them, were killed.

When the Germans ordered Weltman to provide 25 of his policemen to be sent for 'work,' he refused to do this, because he knew that, in this process, they too would be killed. As a counter offer, he said that all of the police, himself included, should be sent to work. Weltman figured that either they will not send any of his policemen, or if they did, they will not be executed, because they are necessary to the maintenance of order in the ghetto. The Germans took all of the policemen. Weltman also went along with them, and they were all killed.

We had no ombudsmen for us in the Baranovich ghetto. During a rather substantial *aktion*, several hundred Jews hid themselves in the cellars of the workplaces, which were located outside of the ghetto. I was the director of these work places, and it was only with great difficulty that I was able to procure food for them. After the *aktion*, the people, once again, returned to the ghetto.

The *Rebbe* of Slonim, R' Shlomo-David Weinberg was among those who were in our work places. during the *aktion* in the ghetto, he wanted to go in there, in order to learn what had happened to his family, which was hidden there.

It was possible to go out of these work places, because people were taken from there, in order to take out the Jewish dead from the ghetto. When the *Rebbe* of Slonim returned before nightfall, I asked him what he had seen there, and he replied, that precisely at the moment when he found himself by the house of his family, they led his mother out, his wife, and his children.

On 18 December 1942, the Baranovich ghetto was liquidated. The Germans exterminated a part of them, and the remainder was sent to Koldichevo. Koldichevo was a death camp. Jews would be shot there, and the dead would be burned in an oven. The Germans themselves liquidated this camp before the Russians entered it. They even exterminated the police from Koldichevo, in order that no trace of the camp should remain.

At the time we arrived at the camp, we were arrayed naked in rows, and savage dogs attacked us to bite. Afterwards, we were driven into a cold stall, where we spent the first night. On the second day, the camp commandant, Bobko, ordered us to go out into the freezing cold naked, and forced us to dance. Those who could not take it, he beat murderously.

When the snow melted, and a mud hole developed around the stall perimeter, we were ordered to roll around in the mud until such time as the place dried out.

In the camp, we worked at chopping wood in the forest, building barracks, and removing the dead, etc.

Of the several hundred camp inmates, not more than 93 remained. These were only workers – craftsmen, that the Germans needed. We knew that the end would come for us as well. Consequently, we saw only one way to save ourselves – to flee to the partisans. We, the Jewish camp inmates, were separated from the Christians in the camp by only a single, thin wall. And the entire camp was cordoned off with electrically charge wire. In order to work our way out of the camp, we had to make a hole in the camp wall. To accomplish this, we had to work for several months, because we did not have the necessary tools to do this. When the hole was ready, every one of us equipped themselves with a knife and a small quantity of poison.

We obtained this from the material used to tan leather. We also established the sequence in which each of us would escape. On a night of a large snowstorm, we crawled out of the hole. I was the fourteenth one to go out. In order to cut through the electrified wire around the camp, the Jewish electrical technician in the camp made a short circuit, and we then cut the wire fence.

It was a difficult night, and when we were already on the other side, and thought we were already far from the camp, it became apparent that we were not far away at all. We anticipated that they would begin to look for us, and be able to find us rather easily. We then had only one course of action – to hid under the snow. We made holes in the mounds of snow, in order to see what was going on around us, and we lay that way for an entire day. In the evening, we headed in the direction of the forest, where the partisans were to be found.

When we were already in the forest, we encountered three people. This was a partisan scouting group. They assured us, that tomorrow, the commander would come with his support staff. And, indeed, this is what happened. They interrogated us, gave us a plan for the rest of the trip, and told us to wait until morning. We were, however, impatient to continue, and not wait until they would come to get us. The reason they wanted us to wait, was because we were Jews, and they did not want to take us in. The group that was together with me, after several days of straying about the forest, finally arrived in the partisan zone. We were taken into the Janowsky *Otryad* of the Pervomaisk Brigade, where we remained until the end of the war.

The Uprising in the Koldichevo Camp

By Shimon Berkowsky

On one day, while we were working in the carpentry factory in the ghetto at Navahardok, the factory was surrounded to have us removed – 28 men. We were ordered to lie face down in the vehicles, and the vehicles left the ghetto. We were beaten murderously for the entire time of the journey. We were under the impression that we were being taken to death.

When we arrived at our destination, where the Koldichevo camp was located, we were ordered down from the vehicles. After receiving a series of good [severe] blows, we were driven into a cattle barn.

During the course of three days, we cleaned the droppings out the barn, and set up bunk beds for sleeping. The camp was enlarged a little at a time, reaching 120 men, only craftsmen, and with them, less than 10 women.

During the course of seven months, in which the control of the camp was in the hands of the Byelorussians, the situation was very dangerous. We received food to eat once a day, consisting of 50 grams of bread and a bit of water. During the initial period, we were permitted no contact with people outside of the camp. In the four months since the creation of the camp, Jewish workers began to arrive to labor, and those that had families in the ghetto, would receive a bit of food to eat [from them]. In Koldichevo, there was a storage compound, where the Germans put everything that they had confiscated from the Jews in Baranovich and Navahardok – clothing, shoes and furniture.

Every day, executions took place in Koldichevo. Byelorussians [too] were brought into the camp, and were

killed by hanging, and during the execution, all the Jews were driven together and severely beaten. The Jews were forced to witness the executions. Koldichevo was called the ‘death camp.’ In the fall of 1943, 120 Jews were brought to Koldichevo from Baranovich. All the Jews of Koldichevo were surrounded and sorted out into those who were craftsmen and those who were non-skilled. The non-skilled were immediately shot. After this *aktion*, 95 Jews remained [alive].

Apart from the yellow badge, each Jew had to wear white stripes on the front and back of their outer wear.

The camp commander, a German, came and offered us words of solace, saying that if we worked well, no more Jews will be shot. However, no one had any faith in these words of his.

Immediately after the *aktion*, we began to organize ourselves, and to think about how to escape. The work involved was divided up, and everyone was required to fulfill their mission. The carpenters, myself, Shimon Berkowsky, Koren and Ravitzky, had the mission to prepare an opening in the wall, and we prepared such an opening secretly. Close to this block, there was a tannery, where Jews worked. They had the keys to the tannery. We created an opening on the wall, into the tannery. Five meters from the block, and you were already at the barbed wire fencing.

The locksmiths, Gorman, from Warsaw, Kenicky and Romek, had the mission of procuring wire cutters with which to cut the wires. At the end of 1943, Shlomo Kushnir was selected as a group leader, and immediately that same night, we agreed to leave the camp. At exactly 12 midnight, when the Germans were having a ball, and everyone was good and liquored up, we took advantage of the moment to flee. We went out through the exit in the wall of the tannery. There, the tanners with the keys were already waiting for us. And we went off to the wire fence immediately. The locksmiths had already cut the wires, and without any resistance, we went over the perimeter. When all the Jews were already free, meaning, on the other side of the wire fence, two men turned back – Romek and myself – closed the doors of the barracks, so that it will not be evident from the outside, and we planted dynamite beside the doors. When the guards will come to wake the Jews in the morning, it was set to explode. And as we, indeed, later learned, 10 Germans were blown up, and the entire barracks were burned down. Finding ourselves on the free side, we broke up into small groups, and headed off in the direction of *Cyryn*, where Bielski’s *Otryad* was to be found. A group of 17 men lost their way, and after a full night of blundering about, they ended up back at the same place by the camp itself. The Germans immediately captured them, and shot them. Among them were 15 men and 2 women. All the rest arrived at Bielski’s *Otryad* in the forest without any interference, where we were cordially received, and we remained in the forest with the partisans.

The Frightful Tragedy of the Baranovich Jews

By Herman Kruk

Written in the Vilna Ghetto in January 1943

This time, my storyteller is an educated man, a lawyer from Warsaw, and since the outbreak of the War, a refugee, who with his wife and child, managed to reach Baranovich. Now, he is in the role of an ‘*Öber Jude*’ in Rekniamisz² ‘O. T. Lager which is near the small town of

²

Author’s footnote: Oshmianka

Anemsz³ .

The storyteller orients himself precisely, in the societal plight in which we found ourselves. He is an active participant in an array of preparations which are described here. Personally, he lost his wife and child in the Second Aktion in Baranovich, and is committed to everything, if only to die like a man, and not simply slaughtered like some pig.

Up until the ‘cleansing,’ there were about 12,000 Jews in Baranovich. The first ‘cleansing’ took place on 4 March 1942 and lasted that day. Four thousand Jews were killed. About 8,000 souls remain [alive] in the city.

The second ‘cleansing’ took place a day after Yom Kippur, Tuesday, 22 September 1942. This ‘cleansing’ lasted for eight days. Of those eight thousand Jews that had remained alive up to that point, approximately an additional 5,000 Jews were killed. Therefore, in Baranovich, only 3,000 Jews remained alive.

The third ‘cleansing’ began on 17 December 1942, and lasted for three days. The result of this, is that to date, in January 1943, there are up to about 200 [Jews] alive.

And approximately a month after the First Slaughter, it was completely quiet. You might have thought that no further changes will be made here. By 13 April, however, it had become very clear, that this process had not yet ended. Credible reports began to arrive, that in the surrounding towns, the Jewish populace is being liquidated – the entire province is being made *Judenrein*. Many, at that point, began to think about how to not allow themselves to simply be butchered. The thought of mounting a resistance begins to gain popularity.

The first rank of those who embrace this idea are those from whom families had been taken. They begin to gather weaponry, bringing into the ghetto in bulk. This idea of creating a resistance organization becomes more and more ripe. The first among the organizers were Hona Nivogracz⁴, a former military man, who now works as a Pole in Aknaimsz,⁵ then come Yankl Koven⁶. After than come the intelligentsia: Dr. Avra’sheh Yakswamarba , Lola Cziwonirab,⁷, and others. The latter immediately entered the leadership.

The entire organization is divided into groups. The groups [are set up] by streets, the streets into regions, with suitable sub-groups. A group consisted of 25 men, sub-groups of 5 to 10 men. During the flowering of the organization, it consisted of up to 500 persons. A large number of Jewish *gesicilop*⁸ joined up, among them

³ Author’s footnote: Oshmiany (Ašmiany)

⁴ Author’s Footnote: Chargovin

⁵ Author’s Footnote: The Camp at Oshmianka

⁶ Author’s Footnote: Yankl Novak & Dr. Avra’dheh Abramowsky

⁷ Author’s Footnote: Loly’eh Rabinovich

⁸ Author’s Footnote: Policemen

Chief Szywekdar,⁹ his deputies, Repesz¹⁰ (9) and Yaskwashraw (10).¹¹

The entire endeavor is driven underground: under the location of the *Judenrat*, a ‘*podko*’¹² is built out, which also has to serve as a works for the assembly and repair of *reveg*.¹³ Hear [weapons] were tested and cleaned. Also, often allocation is done here. All over the city, a few ammunition dumps were thrown together. One of them was not far from the Jewish hospital. In this magazine, there were approximately 280 grenades, 100 rifles, 10-15 automatic weapons, ‘CKM’¹⁴s,’ machine guns, and thousands upon thousands of rounds of ammunition.

On the Orla Gasse, was a large and long hideout, which also served as a firing range for training. On that same street, there was also a large ammunition dump. Another such ammunition dump was located at *Rabin*¹⁵ in a hiding place.

A unique underground architecture was created here, consisting of ‘raspberries.’ A ‘raspberry’ was dug out under practically every house. The entrance was always from its overhead house, or the residence of surrounding neighbors, that live under the same roof. It therefore gave the appearance such that, if an evening *aktion* were to take place, nobody would have to go out into the street. Most of the entrance ways into these hideouts were put under the floor boards and then camouflaged, as for example, placing it under a bed, and then covered with stacks of wood. It was done this way all over, so that no one would be inclined to take note of it, and as far as possible avoid being seized.

The architecture of these hiding places was as follows: a ‘*Yameh*’ was dug out that was five meters deep. The hideout itself took up two meters of this height. The first thing that was put back, was the remaining three meters of the earth. In order to assure that the ‘*Yameh*’ would not collapse, boards were set up in the form of the letter *Khet* [sic: three sides of a rectangle]. Nevertheless, a fear remained that because of the straight line, the earth will give way, and as a result the idea arose that such tunnels should be dug on a zigzag. According to engineering calculations, the walls become sturdier. And do understand, that the boards, as we have portrayed here, are further formed. The tunnels were provided with flowing water, or water collection points, plumbing, or an effluent point, eventually with pails and electricity. The electricity was tapped from the street in a way that no ‘counter’ should be in motion during an *aktion*. The hideouts were ventilated with the help of chimneys, through pipes of board, which would be pulled in from creeks, camouflage them, in

⁹ Author’s Footnote: Radkewicz

¹⁰ Author’s Footnote: Unknown (The name Szeper is suggested by the reverse encryption)

¹¹ Author’s Footnote: A. Warshawsky

¹² A mineshaft of sorts.

¹³ Author’s Footnote: Reverse of the Yiddish, ‘*gever*’ referring to arms.

¹⁴ Rendered in the Yiddish plural as ‘*Tzekaemen*,’ it is the abbreviation for **Ciężki karabin maszynowy** (a heavy machine gun).

¹⁵ Author’s Footnote: The *Rebbe* of Slonim, Rabbi Shlomo’leh Weinberg, who was later killed in the Koldichevo Camp.

thorns under wood, and just extend them out into the field and camouflaged them with undergrowth, etc. Inside the hideouts, benches and bunk beds were fashioned out of earth. Often, caches for products were arranged here. In part of the places, there were even special side branches for children.

The time that it was possible to do this work was only at night. The work was done from 11 o'clock at night until 4 o'clock in the morning. According to the calculations of the engineers, it should be possible to finish a tunnel of 5 meters depth in that time. It is understood, that only a few such groups worked at a time. However, this was the extent to which the work was systematized and planned out.

In the case of an *aktion*, the following plan of action was developed:

The ghetto has three gates. One gate is permanently locked, the second gate leads to the factories, and the third, is the principal gate through which all the traffic goes. To the right of the principal gate, there is a small side street. In the third house from the side street, is the headquarters of the *Judenrat*, Diagonally opposite the *Judenrat* are the Jewish police. In the event of an '*aktion*,' two eventualities are anticipated:

1. An assault at night when everyone is in the ghetto, eventually also to include Sunday, when practically the entire populace is in the ghetto;
2. A forced entry into the ghetto when the workers are outside the ghetto, at their places of work.

The most active members of the organization were so positioned that they were never very far from the ghetto. Their work places always remained inside the ghetto. Most of them often had service, and regularly stood watch both day and night.

In the first case: an assault at night, or on a day of rest, the right side of the gate opens, and through both of the headquarters, the *Judenrat* and the police, a heavy automatic weapon fire is unleashed. Frightened by this unanticipated 'encounter,' the Germans pull back, while at the same time, two brigades are activated, one puts the ghetto to the torch, and the second leaves the ghetto and attacks the buildings of the *Gebietskomissar* and to the post office: everything is set on fire, and in the tumult and confusion, everyone who can, flees.

In the second case: – in the middle of a working day: the murderers are met with the same storm of gunfire, as in the first case. The ghetto is put to the torch, and this, again, become a signal that all the workers in the city are to set fire to their work places. Again, in the ensuing tumult and confusion, people are to flee to wherever they can.

The leadership was in contact with two external forces – with the partisans and the Poles. The degree of seriousness of these contacts is difficult to judge. The Poles would promise that they are organized, and that at whatever time when they are needed, they will help. A Jew, a '*Vostochnik*'¹⁶, was in contact with the partisans, a lieutenant that had remained with the Jews with his son, and who supported himself in the ghetto.

The drilling activities of the groups did not only consist of learning how to shoot, absorbing discipline, etc. Alarms would be set off for purposes of drills, but these often took place where there was aroused suspicion that 'something is getting ready to happen.' Often, this was connected to not only the gathering of the groups, but also with testing the state of preparedness, the assignments to various posts, *de jours*, etc.

¹⁶ Literally, someone from the East, from the Russian Восток, meaning 'East.'

When the Germans suddenly entered the ghetto with the announcement that they were looking for workers, the ghetto became, as previously said, like dead. On the surface, the only one left was the head of the *Judenrat*, Yankelewicz¹⁷ (13) and two other policemen. Apart from this, the Germans stationed three other men¹⁸ on whom later on, a suspicion was cast, and among other things, those persons remaining in the ghetto, during the course of the *aktion*, received the mission to bury all the dead who had fallen in the ghetto. It was in this way, that about 200 martyrs were buried in this way.

As soon as it became clear that the marched entry of the Germans smelled like an *aktion*, nobody wanted to leave their hideouts. It appears that the Germans knew quite a bit about this, and understood it very well. The desire to first seize the menfolk, and the care they took in trying to uncover the hideouts, created a suspicion that the Germans knew about every jot and tittle of the underground ghetto, and a fairly clear view of the resistance that they could encounter here. The Germans, in an effort to make themselves more comfortable, drove 20 Christian engineers into the ghetto, technicians, and about 200 workers, who with axes, picks, and shovels, were to establish with certainty where these ‘raspberries’ were to be found.

Despite the good preparations, the distance from territorial readiness to the practical question of implementation of decisions, is miles apart. The result of this was a seriously tragic one. Everything remained in a state of battle-readiness, everyone at their post, and from the side of the resistance fighters, no order to fight was issued, and not a shot was fired.

After this *aktion*, which had been described, many of the most active and best, were sent to the camps in the surrounding vicinity. You do understand that among these ‘most active and best’ there were to be found participants of these self-defense groups. For this reason, the organization had become, about July, substantially weakened. Despite this, new people were drawn in, who managed, one way or another to take the place of those who had been sent away. Nevertheless, the organization remained in a weakened state.

The second blow that these self-defense groups received, consisted of the fact that three days prior to the slaughter, one of the prominent leaders, a doctor from Baranovich,¹⁹ left the ghetto, without letting anyone know. It was said that he had gone off to a close lady friend of his, who also was attempting to stay alive herself in that location.

Dr. Yakswamarba²⁰ was designated as the leader of the resistance, who had to carry out the defensive actions from a specific hiding place. His bride, Minna Aksnaivrolov²¹ served him as his personal adjutant. Herself an energetic and vigorous woman, went off to the gate, in her capacity as a nurse, with a revolver under her coat, in order to see what was going on there. Suddenly, she was hit in the head with a stick from behind. She

17 Author’s Footnote: Shmuel Yankelewicz, who is today found in the country of Israel.

18 Author’s Footnote: The names of the three men are given in the original. The editors do not take pride in them

19 Author’s Footnote: Dr. A. Abramowsky

20 Author’s Footnote: Dr. A. Abramowsky

21 Author’s Footnote: Mina Lahozwianska, from Slonim, a nurs with an awarded diploma from the Czysa Hospital in Warsaw.

falls, and is immediately taken into an auto and taken away.

Did someone know about her? And maybe they informed on her?

All posts, for the time being, were manned. Apart from the occupied positions near the gate, there was a well-constructed hideout near the hospital, where machine guns were at the ready, and 60 men, armed from head-to-toe. The Germans react already to the fact that the order doesn't come.

Discipline, and no one wants to fire without an order!

Dr. Yakswamarba,²² upon learning of the frightful end of his nearest, became discouraged, and doesn't give the order. Only now, at six in the evening, when the Germans leave the ghetto, and it became easier to move around, does it become clear that the commandant, Dr. Yaks[wamarba]²³ went over to the second of the hiding places, and it was not possible to locate him.

As already mentioned, the *aktion* lasted eight days. The Germans instituted a normal eight-hour work day:

Every day, at eight in the morning, the Byelorussian, and Latvian police, entered the ghetto singing. After them, came the S. S. troops. Only after all of these, came the groups of Christians who had been mobilized from among the civilian populace. The 'work,' in this fashion, lasted until noon. Then came a midday break. The continuation came from 2 to 6 PM.

The people taken from the uncovered 'raspberries' were taken to the *Judenrat* building, and they would be concentrated there, and led off in groups.

Yankelewicz stands guard. In the dark of the night, he, along with the other remaining people, carry food to these hiding holes. He does this, exactly in this fashion, from Wednesday to Saturday. On Friday, the people who were initially ordered to settle themselves in the smaller ghetto, were ordered to go back to the 'old ghetto' during the course of Saturday and Sunday, in order to transfer their belongings from their former homes. Accordingly, over Saturday and Sunday, the *aktion* was interrupted. In transferring these belongings, many left their hiding places, and 'came along' to the 'small ghetto,' being convinced that the place there, was no longer in any danger. Those on guard did not prevent them from doing so.

On Monday morning, the 'smaller ghetto' was surrounded. Only the craftsmen are permitted to exit, in order to go to work. All the rest are going to liquidation.

Facts that need to be documented:

Fact 1: Yasmn²⁴, a local resident, upon being loaded onto a vehicle, uttered his willingness, that if he were permitted to remain alive, he will reveal hideouts to the Germans, and the Germans consent to this. He is seated, with respect, on a special armchair, and give him a good meal, and only after betraying 15 hideouts, is he sent off to the execution place.

²² Author's Footnote: Dr. A. Abramowsky

²³ Author's Footnote: Dr. A. Abramowsky

²⁴ Author's Footnote: The name is known to the editors, but is being omitted from the text.

Fact 2: At the place where people are being gathered, to transport them to the execution place, a German Major came by once, and took out approximately fifty women and took them along in his vehicle. After the *aktion* came to an end, the same officer brought them back whole and untouched.

After the first day of the *aktion*, exactly on Tuesday at nightfall, when the executioners had left the ghetto, and the armed resistance groups began to look for their superiors, it was found that the last of them had been rooted out from the 'raspberry' that had been allocated for his use, and he was treated in such a way, that there was no real basis for any hope.

For two nights, his disciplined and obedient subordinates waited, as they rarely did, for an order. On these nights, the hospital was under guard – from the top, was the observation point with its full garrison, and below, two men with automatic weapons. When the fighting groups finally grasped the extent of their tragedy, laid bare before them, they came together and decided to leave the ghetto with their weaponry in hand, and head for the forests.

But it happened this way, that in order to get out of the ghetto without engaging in combat, they connected with a Byelorussian policeman, whom they paid twenty thousand rubles. The latter took the money, without offering any conditions. Suddenly, when they arrived at the agreed to place, searchlight beams were shined on them, and under this illumination, they were fired upon. Five of these brothers in battle fell dead, and the rest fled. Those that fled, went 80 km. from Baranovich in the vicinity of Telekhany, and a week later, several other groups went the same way.

The work of uncovering the 'raspberries' in the ghetto, was conducted very carefully by the Germans, out of fear for the concealed firepower, about which they knew. The Christians, who were forced into doing this work, uncovered about 70% of the hideouts present, by the use of their axes, picks and shovels.

During the darkness of the nights, the president of the Judenrat, Shmuel Yankelewicz, and the deputy of the chief of the Jewish police, a local factory worker, A. Warszawsky, are continuously occupied with the conveyance of food to the hideouts, and conveyed people from one part of the ghetto to the other. They conclude an understanding with the Master of the Guard for a bribe of two thousand rubles per capita transferred, and the deal is closed, now with his knowledge and assistance.

A few times, such a 'contraband' transfer succeeded. All of a sudden, when they wanted to transfer the people in the *Rebbe's* hideout, where, among others, the wife and child of our witness was located, all three were suddenly surrounded, as well as everyone else in the hideout. They were detained, and then sent off in an autos.

On the second day, after this occurrence, Warszawsky was brought back to the ghetto, half-naked, barefoot, bloodied and beaten, such that it was difficult to recognize him. There, they demanded of him to reveal the location of the ammunition dumps, the location of the hiding places with people in them, etc. He, along with one other, were taken over into the 'old ghetto,' under very heavy guard. Warszawsky, however, did not lose his presence of mind. He led the executioners to those hiding places from which people were first removed several days previous to this... he was ceaselessly beaten to the end...taking away...the proud idealistic Warszawsky, who betrayed nothing. He stayed loyal to the Jewish masses to his last breath.

Everyone looked on to the finale with great pain, listening to the screams of Warszawsky and his comrades, the helpless imprisoned captives of the second 'smaller ghetto, who had to clench their fists and were

compelled to remain silent.

The *shtetl* was practically cleaned of everyone, since in the initial betrayal, those three²⁵ were primarily guilty.

The third *aktion* against the remaining three thousand Jews, began on 17 December 1942. the *aktion* lasted three days, until the 20th of that month. Our witness, in the capacity of *Öber Jude* from a provincial camp, by circumstance, happened to drive up with his German. Seeing that the ghetto was surrounded, he oriented himself to what it was that was about to take place, and as a result, the German and he rode off immediately, because he feared for his *Öber Jude*...it was only later that our witness found out that everyone from the ghetto was led out of the city, and there, behind the tar works, near the village of Grabowiec, they were shot. According to my reckoning, there are about 200 Jews now left in Baranovich.

Remarks

The sorrowful details, with only a few comments, have been verified by the Baranovich resident Mott'l Yaksnalop,²⁶ a long-time active 'B',²⁷ a member of the local committee of "B" and *Zukunft*, A number of observations of a community nature are original with him.

The remarks about a number of the participants regarding their party affiliation or their standing, also comes from the same source.

The Lublin refugee Namdlog,²⁸ a serious and responsible individual, tells that the manager of the ammunition dump on Sosnowa, was the engineer Cziwobiel²⁹ (25). In that magazine, there could be found two CKMs, 200 hand grenades, 7 pistols, 20 rifles, and 2000 rounds of ammunition.

Now we discover that approximately on 28 March 1943, the eye-witness went off to the partisans with a group of 75 men.

Escape from Camps

By A. Srogowicz

We Escape from the Baranovich Camp

In Baranovich, there were two labor camps: one was under the oversight of the Organization

²⁵ Author's Footnote: The names are omitted

²⁶ Author's Footnote: Polonsky

²⁷ Author's Footnote: *A Bundist*

²⁸ Author's Footnote: Goldman

²⁹ Author's Footnote: Engineer Leibowitz

Todt; the second, which is discussed below, was under the authority of the *Gestapo*.

In September 1942, the Germans liquidated the *Todt* Camp in Baranovich. The Jews, who worked there, were deported to Koldichevo. Rumors were circulating that Jews were being cremated in ovens there.

Two days after the Jews had been brought to Koldichevo, two trucks loaded with peat were sent to us in the camp. When we unloaded the peat, we found discarded photographs of the Jews from the *Todt* camp from which one could conclude what had happened to them in Koldichevo.

We decided to flee the camp sooner rather than later. We wanted to do this in an organized manner, because we knew that when a single individual flees, the Germans resort from imposing a collective responsibility, meaning, that will punish the whole for the transgression of a single individual. We provisioned ourselves with 10 automatic weapons, several pistols, and bribed three peasants who served as our trail scouts to show us the way.

On time, at night, sixteen Jews, not taking into account the remainder, took all of the weaponry that had been acquired, and, by themselves, fled. An additional sixteen people joined them. The peasants led them to the partisans in Kryvošyn-Zalužža. In the camp, 68 Jews remained. We understood only too well what awaited us. One of us, a carpenter, using his sharp knife, slit his own throat. However, he did not do it well, and as a result, suffered in terrible agony. The Germans looked on at the way he was suffering, and declined to interfere and shorten the extent of his suffering. We were barely able to convince a German that he should put an end to the life of this hapless carpenter with a bullet.

On the second day, we were deported to Koldichevo.

We Escape from the Koldichevo Camp

Koldichevo – an estate of the nobility, [lay] 15 km. from Baranovich. The camp was created there, bordered on one side by the Neman River, and was cordoned off with barbed wire and guard houses for those on watch duty. A unit of 120 men on horseback, guarded the camp from assault by partisans, as well as guarding the camp inmates themselves, so they would not flee.

Koldichevo was both a labor camp, and a death camp. There, people worked at digging peat, and also constructed a three-story prison. Koldichevo was a mixed camp. There were political prisoners to be found there, of all nationalities. We Jews were settled into barracks that had been stables. We were together there with the 116 Jews that were previously brought to that location.

At the end of 1943, a rumor reached us, that the Red Army is getting close to us. We knew that this signaled the end of the Germans. They began to act somewhat better towards us, and actually proposed that we escape together. We dealt with them, but didn't trust them. Our barracks had a common wall with the tannery. From there, there was an exit leading to the barbed wire fences. We skillfully bored and hollowed out holes in the wall. At night, we pushed our hands through the holes, cut the wires, and fled.

The Germans organized a pursuit after us, and they succeeded in capturing 46 people. A group of 17 people, that had hidden in the forest, heard the footfall of the Germans. One of them, who had a pistol, wanted to commit suicide. He shot in the direction of his heart. The shot, however, betrayed everyone's presence. Our group was able to reach Bielski's Division (a Jewish Partisan Division), from which about 1200 Jews

remained alive.

Ash..

By Z. Segalovich

Majdanek – Ash has covered everything
Covering the entire ambit of my life
Majdanek – Ash is imbedded
In my mood, and in my food.

Each meal is my last
An the wine in the bottle seems arrogant.
There is no sister, and no brother
Only ash, and ash.... Majdanek – Ash...

*

Uprising in the Old-Wilejka Camp

By Baruch Kudewicky

The Wilejka camp was a labor camp, which was located approximately 100 meters from the train station³⁰. The camp consisted of a single, large barrack, which had been divided into four rooms. One hundred people lived in each room. The camp was cordoned off with barbed wire, and was under constant guard by S. S. troops. Among the 400 men in the camp, there were also 23 women. All the camp inmates were young and healthy people, up to the age of 40. Most of them were Jews. Three hundred of these people were from Baranovich, 80 from Scucyn, 20 from Mezrich-Miedzyrzecz. All 23 of the women were from Baranovich. The S. S. command were the overseers of the camp, but the work was directed by the people from the *Todt* Organization. The work consisted of building a railroad line, fifty kilometers in length, between Molodechno and Braslau. The inmates from the Wilejka camp worked on one side of the line, and the inmates from Stragy (a camp made up of 250 slave laborers) worked on the other side. The people from Wilejka were divided up into the following work commands:

1. *Sondkommado* led by a certain German called Dibus;

³⁰ Wilejka - The city, the district (*Rejon*) center, of Minsk region (*Oblast*), is located on the river Viliya 103 km from Minsk, a stop on the roads to Molodechno, Smorgon', M'adel', Dokshicy, and Pleschenicy; known since 1599 as a town, center of *Vilejka starostva* of Oshmiany *Powiat*, it became part of Russia in 1793, the district city of Vilna Guberniya; in 1797 (of 1270 inhabitants), there were 957 Jews; in 1803 - 1006 Jews (1387), in 1897 - 1328 (3560); in 1921-1939 part of Poland, as *Powiat* center of Vilna *Vojevodztwo*, since 1939 in BSSR, before WWII, 710 Jews lived there; occupied by German armies since June 26, 1941. On July 2, 1944, *Aktionen* to murder the Jewish population were carried out on July 12, 1941, on July 30, 1941 and on September, 6, 1942. During the entire occupation, 6972 people were murdered, and the city was almost completely destroyed.

2. *Forschtrecke Kommand* – by one Koenig;
3. *Stopfkommando* – Bezd
4. *Waldkommando* – Led by an Organization *Todt* man, whose name I did not know. People referred to him as ‘the Blond Vagabond’ or the nickname ‘*Der Szalok*.’³¹
5. *Brickenkommando* – I do not remember the name of its leader;
6. *Werkstübengemeinschaft* made up of construction carpenters, shoemakers, and tailors – led by a certain Schneider;
7. *Schwellenkommando* – The leader was a German, who was called ‘The Blonde.’
8. *Küchenkommando* – Made up only of women;
9. *Weschereikommando* – Also of women. The leader of the previous two commands was ‘Karol;’
10. *Kiesgrubenkommando* – I do not remember the name of the leader;
11. *Transportkommando* – The leader had the nickname ‘*Komalas*.’

The principal chief of the camp was an S. S. man, an engineer, who was called ‘*Szpakulnik*’ because he wore oversized spectacles. His deputy was the S. S. man Sauer.

The chief overseer of the kitchen played a specific role in the camp, a former Soviet Russian woman, who in the camp was called ‘*Vostotnicha*’ (the woman from the east).

Of ‘notoriety’ in the camp was the S. S. man Busch (deputy of Koenig) and Hermann (deputy of Bezd). The latter always spoke to the workers in the camp in Russian.

Apart from the leader of the *Sondkommando*, Diubus, all the other Germans, enumerated above, displayed a human attitude to the people in the camp. The rest were cruel and sadistic. The impression was created in the camp, that the following Germans were attempting to outdo one another in swindling and in cruelty:

Koenig excelled in breaking the bones of the inmates. One day, he literally nearly killed two inmates – Postel and Kowalski.

Bezd would beat people to death with a swagger stick. Every day he had to have at least two victims. He would constantly take pride in his ‘feats.’ One day, he so frightfully beat the inmates Koncewicky and Bernicker, that they could not return to the barrack. They had to be carried away.

The ‘Blonde Vagabond’ or ‘*Der Szalok*’ would beat people in the face until blood flowed.

Also, Schneider was a specialist in torture and beating.

Busch was also a specialist in beating. Hermann was a frightful sadist, especially towards women. ‘The Blonde’ was a murderous beater.

‘Karol’ made himself renowned with his wit and ‘jokes.’ He would shoot into the windows of the barrack, when there were inmates inside, and in this way, he shot three people outright: 1) Chaim Gerszowicz, 2) Velvel Kutinov, and 3) Dobkowsky. In this process, others were seriously wounded. I recollect that one of these was Mota Szklar.

³¹ The Madman.

'*Szpakulnik*' distinguished himself with his roll calls, which lasted for several hours, when the people were dead-tired from a 12-hour workday, and had returned to the camp. One time, he ordered the men to go to work in their underwear. It was in this fashion, that he punished everyone of the four hundred inmates, for the 'misdeed' of a single individual.

Sauer would always barge into the barrack at night to conduct an inspection, in order to determine if everything was in order. And if he found something that was not in accord with the camp rules, he would bloodily beat the first person that came to his hand.

'*Komalas*' beat the people with his rifle. Once, while murderously beating Moshe'l Grabowiecky, he broke the rifle.

When the three hundred Jews were brought from the Baranovich ghetto, to the Wilejka camp, twenty of the weaker and more sickly were selected, and sent back to Baranovich. But along the way, the S. S. troops altered the direction, going towards Molodechno, where they were all killed. These three escaped, and came to the Krasno camp, which was 30 km. from Wilejka. Krasno was the largest camp on the vicinity, with approximately three thousand inmates, all Jews, formerly from the Baranovich ghetto, Scucyn, Ivie, Beniakon, etc., and other locations in the Lida vicinity. (This camp was liquidated on Purim 1943).

Of the remaining 17 that were killed, I can recall the following names: 1) Yankl Szenicky, 2) Yankl Zakheim, 3) Leib Szamuszkowicz, 4) Mattes Israelewicz, 5) Bartkowsky, and 6) Pesach, 'The Tinsmith.'

One time, at night, when the exhausted inmates were returning from work, and made a fire in the yard, in order to bake potatoes, a large contingent of Byelorussian police came running, and with the consent of the S. S. troops, assaulted the inmates, and beat them brutally.

The 'Elder' among the Jews with the title, '*Öber Jude*,' was a certain Yankl Goldberg from Ljahavičy. All the inmates respected him, because he worried about everyone, and did many good things for the Jews. His deputy was a certain Berg, from Baranovich, who was not like his 'Chief.' In fact, he was a collaborator, who cooperated with the S. S. troops. The four 'block Elders' were: Jonah Puczynsky, Wola Lifschitz, and Gurwicz. All had a good name in the camp. The fourth was a certain Kaniewsky.

Thanks to the efforts of the *Öber Jude*, a delegation of camp inmates traveled to Baranovich on two occasions, in order to bring clothing and foodstuffs from the ghetto for the inmates in Wilejka. At that time, the ghetto in Baranovich had the possibility of helping the deportees in the Wilejka camp, with a wagon load of clothing and food. The camp overseer, '*Szpakulnik*,' took ten thousand Soviet rubles for the permission to travel to Baranovich, and also took the right to partake of the clothing and food, that had been designated for the needy camp inmates. He sent these things to his family in Germany.

At the initiative of a number of people from Baranovich, a resistance group was created in the camp, consisting of 40 men, under the leadership of six people. On 9 March 1943, a revolt broke out in the camp, and it was possible for 38 men to escape. Only 16 people were saved: the brothers Baruch and Leib'l Kudewicky, Yaakov Walkin, Kwiat from Slonim, Mott'l Fytelewicz, and others.

There was a spy in the Wilejka camp. He was a member of the resistance group, and took part in the revolt. However, he turned over everything that he knew to the *Gestapo* leadership. His name was Shulsinger, and he came from Scucyn near Lida.

We worked 12 hours a day in winter and summer. In the morning, we drank Rumianka tea, at 12:30PM a pea soup without peas, and in the evening, when everyone had returned from work, again tea, with 300 grams of black bread.

The camp existed between 15 Elul in 1942 unto July 1943, when the camp was liquidated and all the inmates were exterminated to the last one.

Before the 15th of Elul, the camp was a *Stalag* for Soviet war prisoners. all of them were killed and their remains were interred in two pits, that are located about 100 meters from the camp, on a hillock.

This, briefly, is what I recollect of the Wilejka Labor Camp.

Murderers and War Criminals in Baranovich At the Time of the Holocaust

By Yaakov Shereshevsky

During the time of the German occupation of Poland, I was in Baranovich. I was there up to the third bloody 'aktion.' The names of the bloody mass-murderers of twelve thousand Baranovich Jews, remain in my memory. There names are:

1. Baron von Schtackelberg The deputy of the *Gaukomissar* in Byelorussia. He lived in the house of Zarecky, which bordered on the ghetto. From the first floor of the house, he would shoot in the direction of the ghetto. He took part in the bloody 'aktionen.'
2. Werner *Gebietskomissar* of Baranovich. Took an active role in all of the 'aktionen.'
3. Krampe The director of the Jewish Section at the *Gebietskommissariat*.
4. Frau Krampe Took part in all of the bloody 'aktionen,' in Moučadz, on the way between Baranovich and Lida. She personally shot children.
5. Seemann Belonged to the *S. D.*
6. Wolff Deputy of *Kommissar* Werner, took part in all the slaughters.
7. Amelung The leader of the local *S. D.*
8. Bartel An important member of the *S. S.*
9. Steiner (*Kapitan*) Head of the gendarmerie, took part in the first 'aktion.'
10. Hoffer, An employee of the Labor Section, who would conduction the 'selektionen.'
11. Giezecke from the Labor Section, who took part in the first 'aktion.'

12. Meschke, a director of the factory employees in the *Gebietskommissariat*. Issued an order forbidding the entry of food into the ghetto.
13. Otto A *Gestapo* man, who took part in all of the ‘*aktionen*.’ He was a chauffeur by occupation.
14. Fritsch A director with the allocation of labor in the *S. D.* He constantly would be beating the inmates, especially women. I remember one time, at night, he awakened the Jewish lady worker Kornowa, and took her out into the yard, and threw her into the brook. The 120 Jewish laborers who worked for the *S. D.* lived in a house belonging to the Baroness Ber, and her dwelling was from the start, transformed into a concentration camp.
15. Bertmann Director of the Finance Section in the entire jurisdiction. All the manufacturing activity in the ghetto were under his control. He took part in all the ‘*aktionen*.’ When Meir Porecky, a manager of the tailoring works, approached him during an ‘*aktion*,’ asking him to offer protection for his wife and child, not only did Bertmann refuse, but also shot him, even though he was needed to do work.

Poems

By Itzik Manger

Orphans

The golden peacock and the pure-white little kid
 Rock the empty cradles:
 Precious Yankl’eh is no more,
 The rocking is without a melody.

The peacock’s gold is a melancholy gold,
 And that pious little kid –
 Dazzles like a sorrowful snow – both of them
 Orphans of my people.

(from his book, ‘*Lid un Balade*’)

Sullen Anger

R’ Levi Yitzhak is in *Tallit* and *Tefillin*,
 Not moving from his place.
 He stands by the prayer lectern. The Siddur is open,
 However, he utters not a word.
 In his imagination he sees images of the ghetto,
 The death throes, the sorrow, and the derision.

Stubbornly he is silent. The old man is in sullen anger.



A Six Year-Old Child Rescued Herself from a Mass Grave in Baranovich

By Rosa Shereshevsky

The German *Wehrmacht* marched into Baranovich on 27 June 1941. The Jewish population of the city, consisting of twelve thousand Jews, hid itself in their houses, fearing to show themselves in the streets. By the second day, the German soldiers had already begun to do inspections in the Jewish houses, under the pretense of looking for weapons and spies. You can understand that they found no weapons and no spies there. However, they plundered these residences, taking away money, jewelry, fur coats, and anything else of estimable value. In many cases, they murderously beat the Jews.

The wife of Engineer Sterin, director of the local gymnasium, and herself a director of a children's home, was forced to work by the Germans in one of their houses as an overseer at the latrines. Once, while smoking a cigarette, in order to drive off the foul odor of her 'workplace,' she was murderously beaten for this 'infraction,' until she fell to the ground, with no energy left, and never got back up alive.

I, myself, worked in Baranovich, in the 'Gendarmerie-Kontrol.' Once, during the bloody second 'aktion,' in the ghetto (I and two other women, as also did two men, had the benefit of protection in our place of work), when we were doing our work, a Polish woman came into our room, and she told us that a little Jewish girl of 5-6 years of age had come to her, beaten, her little body covered in wounds, and begged her for mercy. The child told her that she saved herself from a pit, that was full of dead bodies. Now, the child needs a place to hide. She, the Polish woman, cannot keep the little girl with her, because of fear. We, you understand, took the little girl to us. We learned from her that her father was Joseph Segal, her mother, and a sister, were shot by the Germans during the Second Slaughter. She was the only one who managed to save herself from the grave.

However, the little girl was no able to be hidden with us for very long. A German soldier took note of her presence, and brought her to the ghetto, where she was later killed in the Third Slaughter.

The Extermination of Two Thousand Czech Jews in Kaupenica near Baranovich

By Lyuba Parzen

In July 1942, a passenger train with two thousand Czech Jews, and their belongings, arrived at the train station in Old-Baranovich, near the storage facility of the '*Spolem*' cooperative. The S. S. troops ordered the Jews to leave the train cars, and directed them to go have their midday meal. But, instead of eating, under a very strict guard of S. S. troops and Byelorussian police, they were led to the Kaupenica forest, 5 km. from Baranovich. There they were all shot, to the very last person. After this, a number of laborers were brought from the Koldichevo camp, to bury the dead. And later on, they too were shot. The Christian police were also shot. On the second day [afterwards], the *Judenrat* designated fifty women to sort out the belongings of the murdered Jews.

The women were set up in a special house on the *Narutowicz Gasse*, where they laid out the effects in categories, and then transferred them to a special ‘storage facility’ under the supervision of an S. S. officer, Klocker, who, by the way, was an awful abuser of the women, and a sadist. The effects were laid out in the following categories: 1) Women’s clothing; 2) Men’s clothing; 3) Women’s underwear; 4) Men’s underwear; 5) Children’s clothing; 6) New shoes; 7) Old shoes; 8) Medicines and Cosmetics; 9) Electrical appliances. Many items were gathered together from each transport, to the extent that it provided work for a year’s time. The officer Klocker treated the women workers sadistically, at each ‘*aktion*’ in the Baranovich ghetto, part of the women, that he personally selected, were killed. Of the 50 women there remained only 12 alive, and at the end, only 5. My good fortune was to have been among those five last workers. Later, when these effects were transported to Germany, and this unit was liquidated, we had to knit woolen items for the families of the S. S. officers, who were in Germany.

Apart from the sadist Klocker, whom I have already mentioned, I wish to recall other German murderers, who helped to kill Baranovich Jews: 1) Schlegel, an S. S. man, who took part in all the bloody executions and in the deportations. 2) Giener, known by the name “Ghetto-Son-in-Law” who was active in all the extermination *aktionen*.

A Small Testimony to our Great Tragedy

By Joseph Szczawinsky

(A Visit to The Children’s Home in Verewald, in the Year 1946)

We open the door, and find them at play. They are occupied with their playthings, and barely take note of us. The governess puts on a questioning look in her eyes.

How does it go with the little children here? – we want to have a conversation, but it doesn’t happen. We treat them to chocolate and candies. They become friendlier, and a bit of childish happiness shines through on their faces, and their little eyes begin to gleam happily. They surround the little table full of snacks.

Initially, I draw a pale little boy to me, with a log, drawn, sad face. His name is Yankl’eh. He does not remember his family name. He only remembers that his mother’s name was Rivka. He is nine years old. With time, he becomes more friendly, and more forthcoming. – Where are you from? – I am from Tereszin, a small town in Hungary.

A charming little girl is standing nearby. She looks at Yankl’eh with a bit of envy. I take her to me, give her a couple of candies, and by a variety of means, with the help of the governess, and the ‘UNRRA’ nurse, I get her to talk. We find out that she is 6 years old, her name is Zelda’leh Abramowicz from Baranovich.

Where is your mother? The child lets down her head. I take her warm child’s hand. – Does this make you recall the Germans? – Yes, she answers with a trembling voice – and I can feel that through her little body, a wave of fear courses through. And where were you? – In the forest, in a *zemlyanka*... me and my *Tateshi*, *Mameshi* and the little brother. My *Mameshi* was so good, always hiding away a bit of bread for me. My *Tateshi* would always run to the villages, bringing potatoes. One time the Germans came – and they shot. My *Mameshi* fell dead. The brothers went away and did not return... my *Tateshi* left everything, the bread, the potatoes... rather, he grabbed me in his arms, and fled. We hid among the trees and bushes. My *Tateshi*

told that the gendarmes had shot one hundred Jews. My fingers were so frozen at the time...

Four Murderers of Jews in Baranovich Are Sentenced to Death

By M. R. Khayet
(Baranovich)

**(The Criminals and Their Murders – Others Fled.)
(One of them Is Found in America.)**

A large trial took place in Baranovich in 1962, against four fascist executioners from the so-called 'Nationalist Defense.' The courtroom could not accommodate the large number of people, who came to see the trial. The entire court building was overfilled as well, when special speakers had been set up. The entire Byelorussian press issued complete reports of the trial.

Who are these murderers and what were they being accused of?

Nikolai Kalko. Immediately at the beginning of the war, he sold himself to the fascists, came into the Minsk German officers school, and after finishing there, was sent with the somber, notorious 13th Battalion of the *Sicherheitsdienst* (S. D.). His hands are drenched with the blood of thousands of men, women, and children. He tortured, shot, and threw half living people into pits. The Germans and their 'Nationalist' accomplices, in Byelorussia, Ostrowski, Kuschel and others, appointed him as the commandant of the Koldichevo death camp (16 km. from Baranovich), where Jews, Byelorussians, Poles, Russians, and Ukrainians were to be found. In the camp, Kalko carried out frightful murders.

In June 1944, when the Red Army neared the camp, the thugs carried out a mass-slaughter of the prisoners. In one night, of the 29th and 30th of June – over 700 people were shot.

Leonid Sienkewicz also served in the 13th Battalion and for his 'accomplishments,' he was appointed as the deputy of the commandant of the Koldichevo camp. He exceeded his superior, the chief, in the extent of his murders. Sienkewicz would strip men and women naked, shoot them, and pile their dead bodies, one on top of the other.

When the Hitlerists retreated, Sienkewicz fled with them, and went through a course in espionage.

Mikhail Kukhta. Carried out execution over the Jewish populace. In the summer of 1942, he was transferred from the police, where he had served right from the first days of the Hitlerist occupation, to the previously mentioned camp.

He also fled with the Hitlerists. After the war, he came back to Byelorussia, and hid for 10 years in the barn of a peasant.

Andrei Karalewicz Took part in the mass slaughters of Jews, among others, in the *shtetl* of Kosovo. In April

1943, he arrived in the Koldichevo camp as an executioner. He has hundreds of victims on his account.

All of these murderers belonged to the 13th Battalion. Wherever the Battalion made an appearance, innocent blood was shed, destruction ensued, and went up in smoke. They hid themselves for many long years. Now they stand before a Soviet court.

The eye-witness testimony of the Baranovich woman, Valentina Izvekova shook everyone up. A large group of Jews – tells Izvekova – men and women, old people and children, were driven by the thugs, out of the city to their death. A large pit had already been prepared for this purpose there. The men were thrown into the pit while still alive, shooting them with automatic weapons, and bullet-emitting weaponry.

– Did this happen? – the chief judge asks the accused Kalko.

– Yes, this did take place. Living people were often thrown into the pits.

– Did you, yourself do any shooting? – the chief judge asks further – Yes, I would shoot with my pistol – the murderer replies.

The thugs made an attempt to avoid the charges, blaming the occupation authorities, one on the other. However none of this was to any avail. Pushed to the wall during the testimony of the witnesses, they were compelled to admit their crimes.

The trial lasted for six days. The four fascist executioners were sentenced to death by a firing squad.

The prosecutor, Colonel Shinkaryov, in his summation said, among other things:

– Let the Ostrowskis and the Kuschels know, as well as the others who served Hitler, that the citizens of the Byelorussian republic, as well as all Soviet citizens – Russians and Byelorussians, Jews and Poles, Ukrainians and others, that we will never forgive these murderous killings. A time will come, when the hand of justice will also reach, and pay back [those who committed] the bloody killing of millions of innocent people.

Meanwhile, still walking around unencumbered and free, on English soil, is the ‘President’ of the ‘Nationalist Régime,’ that the Hitlerists created in Byelorussia, Radoslaw Ostrowski. He is accorded a great deal of respect. In London, Ostrowski created his so-called ‘Byelorussian Immigrants Régime,’ consisting of such murderers as Kuschel, Avramczyk, Khmaro, Rogula, and others.

The murderer, Sergei Gutireiczkyk has found refuge in the United States, a man who butchered people in Baranovich, and also in the Koldichevo camp; Helmut Sauer, the executioner of 40 thousand Pinsk Jews, lives a tranquil life in West Germany....

But that innocent spilled blood will not rest, until these murderers will get their just punishment.

To the Heavens

By Yitzhak Katznelson

And so it began, right at the start... heavens say ‘why?’ Why, oh, do we deserve to be so shamed on this great world of ours? The earth is deaf and dumb, having shut its eyes... but you, the heavens, you saw it nevertheless....

You watched from up there, from on high....

(From ‘*The Song of the Slaughtered People*’)

The Heroes – Vova Kopeliowicz and Shlomo Lansky

By Kh. Lidowsky

After The First Slaughter, when it became clear that the Germans intended to butcher the entire Jewish populace, from small to old, a Jewish partisan camp was organized in Baranovich. A leadership committee of four men stood at the head of this camp. Our first mission was to acquire weaponry. In the course of several months, we managed to wrest from the Germans 70 rifles, 50 pistols, and 500 grenades. With these arms, we went off to the forest. We fought with the fascist murderers for more than two years, blowing up bridges, echelons, attacking bases, in short – we did everything that all able partisans did.

It was not only once that we were surrounded. But, we were fortunate in always being able to break out, and carry on the battle. We lost 21 men in battle. All died an heroic death, and the Germans paid dearly for their lives. Here, I wish to tell about two of these heroes.

Vova Kopeliowicz

Our first victim in battle was our *Vzvod*-Commander, the 26 year-old student, Vova Kopeliowicz. He was a happy, energetic youth, both strong and lean. He was killed in the following manner: a group of partisans received an order to carry out a mission – to reconnoiter the byways of the Lipsk forest. We rode off there in ordinary peasant wagons. But as soon as we showed ourselves at the outline of the forest, we were immediately shot at. There was a German bunker here, with rocket launchers, mortars and automatic weapons.

Our group only had nine rifles, and very few rounds of ammunition. However, we undertook the battle without any hesitation.

Vova hid himself under a wagon; the rest of us partisans, lay ourselves out under the bases of trees. There were many more Germans in number than us, and slowly, they began to encircle us. We drew back, deeper into the forest. Vova remained lying under the wagon. He shot one German that attacked him, but another German emptied an entire clip of automatic fire into him.

Later, we took Vova’s dead body away, and gave him a proper military burial.

Shlomo Lansky

The second victim, in that same unfortunate battle, was Shlomo Lansky – also a *Vzvod*-Commander. Shlomo came from the *shtetl* of Njasviz, and by trade he was a locksmith – a technician, 29 years old.

Shlomo had quite a score to settle with the fascist executioners. He would constantly take of vengeance. Immediately at the beginning of the battle, he fell into the hands of the Germans after being wounded.

For the German scum, this was a great joy: it was no small thing to have captured a partisan alive! True, the partisan was already unable to move any limb, but for the Germans, this was an asset, since it would be easier to beat him. The fascists tortured Sholomo'leh gruesomely. – Tell us, where are the partisans? Shlomo spit in their faces.

The Germans promise to let him live, even to let him go free, and give him money; – all he has to do is tell them where the partisan camp is located, and its command. This low-life offer elicited a contemptuous smile from this great hero. He was additionally subjected to frightful torture. By the time they conveyed him to the shtetl of Hancevičy, the hero looked like a formless bloodied slab of meat. Practically dead, he was brought to be hanged. Despite this, Shlomo Lansky gathered up his last bit of strength before being hanged, and shouted out loud: – Your reign won't last much longer, you louts. Your end is near!

The Baranovich-Kadainov *Rebbetzin*, Perel'eh Perlov, Organizes the Observant Jewish Women in the Vilna Ghetto

By Menashe Ungar

The well-known writer and historian of our great Holocaust, Professor at Bar-Ilan University in Israel, Dr. Mark Dworetzky, provides interesting details, as to how the *Rebbetzin* of Kaidanov was killed.

In a work that he published under the name '*HaChaim HaDati'im b'Geto Vilna*' (Religious Life in the Vilna Ghetto), he writes about the *Rebbetzin* of Kaidanov as follows (here we provide only the Yiddish translation)³²:

'Before a ghetto was created, I lived in Vilna, as a neighbor of R' alter Perlov and his wife, the *Rebbetzin*. We would often visit one another. In addition, when the ghetto was created in Vilna, we thought, in the ghetto, and a door of hope existed, when we would flee from the accursed and frightening ghetto, to some other ghetto.

We had prepared a joint escape plan to the ghetto in Baranovich, where we had relatives. A peasant's wagon stood ready to convey us there. However, on the night of the planned escape, the *Rebbetzin*, Perel'eh Perlov advised us that she would not be able to leave the Vilna ghetto, because she had hidden an amulet of the *Baal Shem-Tov*, in some secret place, and she did not have the spiritual strength to simply abandon the amulet and leave it behind.

And the following morning, the 'aktion' broke out in the ghetto, and from that time on, I never saw the Rabbi and *Rebbetzin* Perlov ever again....

³²

Which is now being translated into English!

The young Rebbetzin of Kaidanov, Perel'eh Perlov, was the daughter of the Siedlce-Biala Rabbi R' Yerakhmiel Zvi Hirsch Rabinovich, who was a son of the Rabbi Yitzhak Yaakov of Biala, as son of R' Nathan David of Siedlce, as son of R' Yerakhmiel Zvi, who was a son of the 'Yid HaKadosh,' of Psyszche. She also was descended from the branch of Rabbi Yehoshua of Ostrowo, and Rabbi R' Shlomo Leib of Łęczna.

The wedding of his brother-in-law, R' Alter'keh Perlov took place in Lodz, in the year 1929, in the courtyard of the bride's stepfather, the Rabbi of Fabianiec, Rabbi R' Emanuel Weltfried. Many Rabbis attended the wedding, rabbis, who almost all were killed in *Sanctification of the Name*, such as: The Rabbi of Kozeniec, ר"ר; The *Rebbe* of Stolin; R' Ahar'eleh Perlov from Warsaw, ר"ר; The Rabbi of Ożarów - Ćmielów, R' Yekhiel Rabinovich (the current *Rebbe* of Biala in the State of Israel, the oldest brother of the bride); The *Rebbe* of Biala from London, R' Nathan David Rabinovich, a brother of the bride, who was a son-in-law to the previous Rabbi of Novo-Minsk in Warsaw. The Rabbi of Biala in London had passed away several years ago, and his son, Zvi Rabinovich, published his last will and testament in Hebrew, Yiddish and English in a small booklet '*Divrei David, Tzava'ah.*' (Printed in London in the Year 5708 [1948]).

This was a huge rabbinical wedding, with many Rabbis and thousands of *Hasidim* [in attendance].

'I also wish to convey an important word that my brother-in-law the martyr, R' Alter'keh ר"ר, said to me--' the current Sosnowiec-Kaidanov *Rebbe*, R' Naphtali Zvi Glickman, writes to me in a letter:

On the Saturday that I was arrested and exiled to Siberia, together with my Rebbetzin and child, and the gathering place was outside of the city, my brother-in-law, R' Alter'keh ר"ר sent us various things by way of his Hasid, Rabbi R' Yaakov Malkhes, who is today in New York, with the following behest:

'Fear not, God is with you, and we only hope that we do not come to envy you!'

The Kaidanov Rebbetzin, Perel'eh, was one of the first to found the '*Women's Bet HaMedrash*' in the Vilna ghetto, which was an organization for observant womenfolk in the ghetto, founded by the renown '*Faygl'eh dem Rov's,*' a daughter of Rabbi Beigel of Trokhinbrod (Wolhynia).

Rather interesting information, about this women's organization, the '*Women's Bet HaMedrash,*' is given to me by the Jewish folklorist and historian, Joseph Foxman, who was in the Vilna ghetto, and saved himself by a miracle, and today is to be found in Brooklyn, New York.

The '*Women's Bet HaMedrash*' had previously been located in the house at Szpitalna Gasse Number 9, in the house of the *Hasidic Shokhet*, R' Aharon Jedidovich ר"ר. Later, the '*Women's Bet HaMedrash*' was transferred over to the home of the Rebbetzin Reis from Lutsk, and even later than that, over to the building that housed the slaughterhouse.

The '*Women's Bet HaMedrash*' was founded by '*Faygl dem Rov's,*' after the Jews were crammed into the walls of the overcrowded ghetto, in the month of September 1941.

'*Faygl dem Rov's*' together with a group of *Bais Yaakov* girls and *Bais Yaakov* lady teachers, from a variety of cities and towns, organized the observant girls and women of the ghetto. The objective of the organization, was to come together at Szpitalna Gasse Number 9, and here pray as a group, and recite *Tehilim* as a group. '*Faygl'eh dem Rov's*' led the prayer and the *Tehilim* recitation.

The first of the women to present themselves to this Observant Women's organization were: Reizl Orlansky from Brisk, Shoshana Starobinetz from Mir, Leah Reis and a sister of hers, from Lutsk, Breindl from Pinsk, Rish'l from Darewno, Bracha and her sister from Bialystok, Malka'leh from Palonka, Berkowicz from Lutsk, Ruth from Frankfurt am Main, the *Rebbetzin* Shuv from Vilna with her daughter, the *Rebbetzin* Berek with her daughter, the *Rebbetzin* Berkowicz, the *Rebbetzin* Epstein, the *Rebbetzin* Perel'eh Perlov from Kaidanov-Baranovich, the *Rebbetzin* Dereczin, the *Rebbetzin* Levitan from Rakishki, and many others.

This Observant Women's Organization, would, on every Sabbath, in the '*Women's Bet HaMedrash*,' study the Torah portion of that week, together with *Rashi*, and also other commentators, *Pirkei Avot*, the laws from the *Shulkhan Arukh*, and a variety of excerpts from books containing the traditional teachings (it is self-evident that this was all in Yiddish).

The popularity of this Observant Women's Organization grew daily, in the ghetto. The number of people attending its Torah and *Mussar* audiences grew.

The residence of the *Shokhet* Jedidovich, where the *Women's Bet HaMedrash* had previously been located, became too small to take in such a large number of women. Accordingly, the *Women's Bet HaMedrash* was moved to the *Yatkova Gasse*, in the house of the *Rebbetzin* Reis from Lutsk. In time, this location too, became too small for the *Women's Bet HaMedrash*, and then, thanks to the intervention of the Rabbis Landau and Jacobson, the common kitchen on the *Deutsche Gasse* was placed at the disposal of the Observant Women's Organization.

The praying, learning, the discussions about Torah and *Mussar*, the recitation of the *Tehilim*, was only for women. 'We are aware, however, of single instances –' writes Mr. Joseph Foxman – 'when '*Faygl'eh dem Rov's*' invited men as well, to be teachers and lecturers. One of these, was R' Yaakov Zelwin (or possibly Zeldin), one of the great exponents of *Mussar* in pre-war Poland.'

A lecture on the theme of: 'Sabbath – the cornerstone and foundation of Yiddishkeit,' was given to the religious women by the young religious poet and martyr, Chaim Siemiaticky, ד"ר י"ח. Yoss'l Bialystoker also appeared there to give an exposition on *Mussar*. Also, Sholom Shuv gave an expository lecture to the religious women about martyrdom. These male speakers were always introduced by '*Faygl'eh dem Rov's*.'

During the time when the meetings of the *Women's Bet HaMedrash* took place at the common kitchen on the *Deutsche Gasse*, Number 31, the walls were decorated with large calligraphic script written by a scribe. A number of them were:

אין הדורות נגאלים אלא בזכות נשים צדקניות שיש בהם.

(The generation are not redeemed, except for the sake of the righteous women among them)

בזכות נשים צדקניות נגאלו ישראל.

(It is for the sake of righteous women, that Israel is redeemed)

לא הרבה ירושלים אלא בשביל שחללו את השבת.

(Jerusalem was not destroyed except specifically because the Sabbath was violated)

קדושים תהיו.

(Be Holy)

היט שבת און דער שבת וועט אייך היטן.

(Guard the Sabbath, and the Sabbath will guard you)

בשכר נשים צדקניות נגאלו ישראל

(It is as a reward to righteous women, that Israel is redeemed).

‘I had, in my possession, two written homilies about the Torah’ – writes Mr. Foxman – from *‘Faygl’eh dem Rov’s,’* which bore the imprimatur and signature of R’ Yaakov Lutsker זצ”ל (Zelwin). One manuscript had the title: ‘And Abraham came to grieve for Sarah and weep for her,’ in connection with the *parsha*, ‘*Chayei Sarah.*’ The second manuscript had the title: ‘And Jacob set a gravestone on her grave,’ in connection with the *parsha* of ‘*Vayishlakh.*’ Both manuscripts are found in the Historical Institute in Warsaw (It is a shame that Mr. Foxman does not have these manuscripts, Were he to approach the Historical Institute in Warsaw, I am certain that the Director of the Institute, Dr. Ber Mark, would send him photostats of these manuscripts, and we hold that Mr. Foxman needs to do this). Another manuscript with the title: ‘All that Sarah says to you, listen to her voice,’ I turned over to the Rabbi of Vilna, after Vilna had been liberated from the German murderers.’

Many of the girls – Faygl’eh’s *Hasidistehs*, would always carry miniature prayer books with them. Also, the *Rebbetzin* Perlov always carries such a miniature prayer book as well. On the innermost sides, the following was written:

‘The heavens and the earth, and all that is on the earth, were not created except to satisfy the needs of man). After that it said:

אֵלֶיךָ ד' נִפְשֵׁי אִשָּׁה

(It is to you, O Lord , that I raise my soul)

...and then came the blessing one must recite if one is to die in *Sanctification of the Name*:

‘Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who has commanded us in His commandments, and commanded us to sanctify His Name, and the Name of All Israel among the many...’

And when the Germans seized the *Rebbetzin* Perlov, she probably took along this little prayer book, and made this blessing, in *Sanctification of the Name*....

‘The largest part of the girls from Faygl’eh’s observant coterie, writes Mr. Foxman, did not work at the German places of work, in order that they not violate the Sabbath. They worked in the ghetto and became ‘protected’ with the so-called protection-passes. Not one of them had a ‘yellow’ pass, which ‘secured’ the life of the owner.

Many of the girls were fictitiously registered as wives of men, who had ‘passes.’ However, they lived separately, despite the fact that according to the ghetto regulations, such ‘couples’ were required to live in one residence...

With the exception of one girl, Breind’l from Pinsk, all of Faygl’s girls were saved from the slaughters. It was on a light, beautiful summer day, in September 1943, that *‘Faygl’eh dem Rov’s’* was seized, by the Germans, may their names be eradicated, with the majority of her girls, they were driven to the *selektion* place under the bayonets of the German, Ukrainian and Lithuanian thugs, on Rossa in Vilna. A number of them were sent to the ‘let.’ *‘Faygl’eh dem Rov’s,’* with the larger part of her soul mates, were sent to the ‘right,’ which indicated – to remain alive....

They were sent off to Riga in sealed and locked cars, like cattle. In the month of July 1944, when the offensive of the Soviet armies reached Latvia, the largest number, who were crammed into the twenty Latvian labor camps, were transferred to that notoriously somber camp, Stutthof, near Danzig.

'*Faygl'eh dem Rov's*' was also brought there from Trokhinbrod, with many of her companions. Only two of them were able to save themselves, the *Rebbetzin* Berkowicz, and her daughter, who today are found in Israel. All the rest died from hunger, and a variety of diseases. '*Faygl'eh dem Rov's*' died immediately after the liberation from spotted typhus.

It was in this manner that, a group of religious girls, managed an observant women's organization in the Vilna ghetto, under the name of the '*Women's Bet HaMedrash*,' among whose members could also be found the *Rebbetzin* Perel'eh Perlov, the wife of the Kaidanov-Baranovich Rabbi, who was killed together with her husband, in *Sanctification of the Name*, in the Vilna Ghetto. ט"ז

Slonim *Hasidim* among the *Daf-Yomi* Resisters In the Vilna Ghetto

By Joseph Foxman

In October 1942, placards were hung in the streets of Vilna, in Polish, Lithuanian and German, signed by *Gebietskomissar* Wolff, that in order to prevent epidemics and disease, the houses of worship of all religions must be locked and sealed.

After the High Holy Days, a sign was also posted, that all schools, *Shtiblakh* and *Batei Medrashim*, must be locked down, and indeed, on that very same day, all the schools in the ghetto were sealed shut by the 'Jewish police.'

In Vilna, however, there was a *Daf-Yomi* cadre, who did not want to give up studying together; it was [the week of the] *parsha* of *Lekh-Lekha*, seven days in *Heshvan*, when the ninth *Yahrzeit* fell, of the *Gaon* and founder of the Lublin Yeshiva, '*Yeshivat Khakhmei Lublin*,' and the cadre of *Daf-Yomi* studiers, under no circumstances, were prepared to sanction an instance of no study of a *Daf-Yomi* in a group session.

And the *Daf-Yomi* session was conducted in '*Jogicheh's shtibl*,' and at the afternoon *Mincha* service, *Kaddish* was recited in memory of the *Gaon*. However, suddenly, a band of 'Jewish police' burst into the place, and with rubber truncheons, began to beat and disperse the gathered crowd. The Jews fled, but 15 men resisted, and did not want to vacate the premises. Beaten, and with clothing torn, they were all forcibly thrown out of the building, and the building was again sealed up.

From a notice of mine, made in the ghetto, I have the names of those members of the *Daf-Yomi* cadre, who stood up to the 'Jewish police,' and did not permit the *shtibl* to be locked up. They were: R' Yaakov Zelwin, R' Yoss'l Bialystoker, R' Nissan Jaffe, Landau, Burko, Kwiat, Weinberg, Lev, Kozlowsky, Epstein, Jacobson, the Slonim *Hasidim* Rabbi R' Moshe Weinberg, and Rabbi R' Abraham Lejzor Kwiat, refugees

from Baranovich. The poet, Chaim Siemiaticky and the renown culture-activist Zelig Kalmanowicz.

Zelig Kalmanowicz was the only one treaded cordially by the 'Jewish police,' and after everyone else was thrown out, he, the last one, went out of the building by himself.

Two days later, it was learned in the ghetto, that all eight of the police sergeants, who took part in this brutal assault against the *Daf-Yomi* cadre, in '*Jogicheh's shtibl'* were, by special order of the 'Ghetto Chairman,' Yaakov Gans, demoted in rank from sergeant for a period of one month's time.

Let the names of some of the Jewish police be set down here. they were: Lutek Zalcwasser from Warsaw, M. Rodoszicky from Warsaw, Juzik Witkowsky from Warsaw, Janek Kalisz, Nikki Dreizin and Zelazo, also 'refugees;' Bernstein and Kaplan, both from Vilna.

The punishment meted out to the sergeants was a result of an intervention made by Zelig Kalmanowicz directly with Gans.

At worst, the poet Chaim Siemiaticky was discouraged from being a protagonist against the police. At night, the Jewish criminal police conducted an inspection of his residence, and took away everything that had any value, that they found in his room.

All those who were assaulted were [eventually] killed. My their sacred memory be forever blessed!

Jewish Resistance in the Sveržan' Camp

By Tevel Rozowsky

In November 1941, a liquidation of the Jewish populace was carried out in Turèc in the Stoubcy area. in this '*aktion,*' Byelorussian police took part under the direction of S. S. officers. In Turèc, the police commandant Serafinovich was very active in liquidating the Jews, having been born in the village of Peretok, in the Stoubcy area. Out of the entire Jewish population, that consisted of 574 souls, only 104 remained alive. The rest were killed out.

The group of 104, consisted of skilled younger men, who were expelled to the slave labor camp in Novy-Sveržan'. There were already Jews their from Stoubcy, Mir, Turèc, and Sveržan, in total, 300. Apart from the Jews, there were also 200 Poles to be found in this camp, and 90 Russian prisoners of war. The overseer of the camp was named Okun, who was the director of the factory works. The guard was manned by German S. S. troops. The Jewish elder over the 300 Jews was Kazik Reichmann, from Lodz.

Those Jews in the camp, who by a miracle survived their experience in the Sveržan camp, and saw the extermination of the Turèc Jews, began to think about resistance. Under their initiative, 150 energetic fighters were organized. This group was led by a staff of three people: Joel Mazurkewicz from Mir, the second was a refugee from Warsaw, and the third – from Stoubcy.

The command staff divided up the people into 6 groups of 25 fighters in a group. Also, the group of 25 was divided internally into fifths. At the head of each 25 and 5 stood the senior. All these seniors were appointed by the command staff.

I was the senior of a group of 25. Our fighting organization bribed and bought weapons from Polish workers. We also provisioned ourselves with axes, knives, shovels and swords, and also benzine and matches. All of this was cached under floorboards. It was agreed, that in the event of an ‘aktion,’ by the Germans, we would mount a resistance, using this weaponry we had procured.

In the summer of the year 1942, rumors reached us that partisans were to be found in the forests around us. We also noted that, the number of Russian prisoners of war was getting smaller from day-to-day. We were told that they were escaping, and going over to the partisans.

The 150 men divided themselves up into four groups, and on the night of 29 January 1943, they all fled into the forest. Apart from this group of 150, a second group of 80 men, fled into the forest. I was to be found in the group of 80. In the camp, 70 people remained, who were immediately executed after this.

The groups that fled, set out on the road to Minsk, Uzda and Mogelnica, where partisan divisions were to be found, of Kapuchin and Bielski, and also the ‘Kalininsky’ and ‘Komsomolsky’ brigades. On the way, in the process of escape, 70 resistance fighters were killed. Of those that managed to reach the forests, and fought in the various partisan divisions, a portion fell in the battles with the Germans, as heroes, and a portion survived to the end of the war.

Concerning the Baranovich Yizkor *Pinkas*

By Daniel Charney

In my childhood years, I would take pride in the fact that when ‘*Yizkor*’ was recited (as is done today), I did not have to exit the synagogue sanctuary, as other children did, who were not orphans.

I would be eager to recite *Yizkor* for my father, creating the illusion that I was already also mature, grown up, like all the other Jews in the synagogue, just not wearing a *Tallit*.

Now too, in my later years, I take special satisfaction in seeing every new Yizkor Book that enriches the Holocaust literature. It is precisely from Yizkor Books of this kind, that we come to know what sort of wondrous people we had in the ‘*alte haym*,’ and thanks to these Yizkor Books, they will remain forever as part of our people’s collective memory.

Just recently, I have received a number of important and substantive books, or better said – *Pinkasim*, which have, once again, bolstered my belief in the everlasting existence of Our People.

This time, I will pause and discuss one such book. that is called ‘Baranovich.’ Even if you do not have roots in Lithuania, or Byelorussia – you would have most certainly heard of such a city, called Baranovich.

In the good old days, Baranovich was written about frequently in newspapers and journals. *Sholom Aleichem* himself, in a parable, refers to the Baranovich train station. Indeed, it is because of *Sholom Aleichem*, that

Baranovich became so popular in all Jewish communities, all over the world. As it happens, it was in Baranovich, that *Sholom Aleichem* was suddenly taken ill, and the entire Jewish world, at that time, focused its eyes on Baranovich.

In the Baranovich Yizkor Book, that recently appeared in Tel-Aviv in Yiddish and Hebrew, Dr. N. Kroshinsky tells us something about *Sholom Aleichem's* visit to Baranovich³³:

In the year 1908, *Sholom Aleichem* undertook a tour of the Jewish Pale of Settlement in Russia, Lithuania and Poland. His visit to Baranovich was set for the beginning of August. For weeks, long before his visit, the city manifested a sense of a great event. In the businesses, factories, and in the street, there was ongoing talk about *Sholom Aleichem*.

The tickets that the welcoming committee had printed, were immediately sold out. On the eve of *Sholom Aleichem's* arrival, the Jews from the surrounding towns, literally streamed into Baranovich. Many walked tens of kilometers on foot. The houses were filled to overflowing with relatives, friends, and other acquaintances from the province. When the important guest finally appeared on the streets of Baranovich, escorted by the welcoming committee, *Sholom Aleichem* himself looked tired, and exhausted from his considerable travel, lecturing, and banquets, during the course of the hot summer months.

After a festive and hearty welcome – Dr. Kroshinsky continues – *Sholom Aleichem* gave a lecture in the summer theater. The hall was overflowing with an enormous crowd. suddenly, in the middle of his lecture, the writer showed signs of not feeling well. He fell down from a hemorrhage in his lungs.

The local doctors immediately had the sick man carried to one of the nicest hotels in the city, the so-called 'Slavic Hotel.' Doctors from Minsk and Vilna were immediately summoned. The condition of the patient was very serious. He needed to spend two consecutive months in bed, from August to the end of September 1908. The mood in the city was very anxious. Every person, who was in attendance that evening, felt as if he was personally responsible for this mishap.

For the two months that *Sholom Aleichem* lay sick in Baranovich, the entire town went on a binge. Every now and then, reporters and photographers would come, from the surrounding cities and towns, and also just plain visitors to comfort the sick, from all over the world. It was in this fashion, that *Sholom Aleichem's* triumphal tour of the cities and towns of Russia, Lithuania and Poland, came to an end, with the catastrophe in Baranovich, from where he then traveled to Nervi (Italy) to convalesce.

At that time, in 1908, *Sholom Aleichem* was just 49 years old, but the city of Baranovich was not more than 23 years old. It was hard to believe that the newly-famous city of Baranovich was first established in 1885.

Before that, Baranovich consisted of a Jewish tavern, and a Polish farm. But when rail lines were put through that vicinity, one called the 'Moscow-Brisk' [Line] and the other – the Polesia [Line], and both lines constructed separate stations – an influx of a variety of Jews commenced, and from the previously Baranovich tavern, a city of approximately twenty thousand people developed.

When *Sholom Aleichem* was asked his opinion about Baranovich, he once offered the reply: 'There are two train stations on either side, and in the middle – a great bog. A second time he answered that Baranovich is

33

Details can be read in Part I of this Trilogy, beginning on page xxx

a ‘A little town that stands outside, a little town of newcomers.’

But precisely these Jewish newcomers, in the course of merely a couple of decades, transformed Baranovich into a great Jewish center of culture, with the complete variety of parties and societies, just like all other cities with venerable Jewish communities that had been in development for a long time. It suffices to say, that Baranovich was visited by all of the important Jewish personalities [sic: of the day] such as Chaim Nachman Bialik, Meir Grossman, Yakir Warszawsky, Ze’ev Jabotinsky, Leib Jaffa, Dr. Gershon Levin, Dr. Yitzhak Szyfer, Professor M. Schorr, others, and others.

In the Warsaw ‘Literary Pages,’ of 1924, M. R. (It is probably Melech Ravitch) tells:

‘In Baranovich, one passport is valid: Yiddish! The entire cadre of Jewish doctors and pharmacists in Baranovich is filled with Yiddishists. For this reason, it is possible to shop in the big city Jewish pharmacy, in the same comfortable homey fashion as workers do in their own professional union.’

But Baranovich also has its own share of Hebraists, Zionists, as well as substantial Yeshivas, with many Torah scholars. It suffices to say that, the Orthodox Jew, R’ Pinchas Kaplan became the Burgomaster of Baranovich. Incidentally, it is the only instance in Poland, where an Orthodox Jew had become Burgomaster.

Five separate weekly newspapers were established and appeared in Baranovich in the years 1928-1937. The editors, employees and publishers were all native to Baranovich.

From where, the question begs, did such an ardent and deep reservoir of traditional *Yiddishkeit*, Hebraism, scholarship, Hasidim, Zionism and socialism come from, in such a young Jewish settlement?

The creative impetus, and the dreamy visions, appear to have been drawn from the neighboring cities and towns, which were much, much older than Baranovich. It suffices to say that, the neighboring *shtetl* of Mys, already had to its credit a history of over eight hundred years of Jewish life and creativity. The nearby town of Ljahavičy had also already been in existence for over five hundred years.

Not far from Baranovich, there were also to be found such familiar Jewish cities, such as Slonim, Volkovysk, and Bialystok. As a consequence, Baranovich too, became a ‘City and Mother in Israel,’ not counting the fact that on the eve of the Slaughter of The Second World War, it had existed barely for fifty-five years!

Yes, on the eve of The Second World War, Baranovich counted about twenty thousand Jews, who on these prior muddy bogs of Polesia, erected a viably functioning Jewish settlement, which sprouted with Torah, wisdom, with force and confidence.

When during the years 1940 -1945, the Jewish settlement of Baranovich was also exterminated – it had not yet achieved sixty years of existence. Seeing that the Jewish settlement in Baranovich was still so new, so vibrant – it also was exterminated with an extraordinary show of heroism and martyrdom, that our keyed up nerves can in no way grasp and properly internalize.

It is a miracle, that a couple of hundred of these people from Baranovich saved themselves, who today are found in Israel, in South Africa, in Argentina, in Chile, and also, understood, in America.

It is this saved remnant, who have now published a sort of bi-lingual Yizkor Book of 670 encyclopedic pages,

that should be read, and must be read, by even those who are not from Baranovich. because it is not written by writers and historians, by simple, ordinary people, that fate decreed – it is they who shall remain alive, and that they should be the ones to prepare such a meaningful monument. which can then be handed down from generation to generation.

Despite the fact that I am not from Baranovich, I have been very much taken by their Yizkor Book, simply because of the fact that I saw that, those who participated in creating of the Baranovich Yizkor Book, remain suffused with that same heroism, and sense of martyrdom, that their fathers and mothers, sisters and brothers, were suffused with, as they went, singing, to the slaughter.

True, today is the second day of Shavuot, when ‘Yizkor’ is recited, and it would be appropriate to insert here, at least a couple of episodes of heroism from the Yizkor [Book] of Baranovich, but I fear for the nerves of my readers and also – of my own kith and kin.

Here, I wish only to thank my active reader, Joseph Foxman of Baranovich, who brought along the sense of martyrdom and heroism of his place of birth, to New York, and it is this very friend of mine, Joseph Foxman, sent me a copy of this Baranovich Yizkor Book, with a sort of companion letter, that looks like a guide through the ‘vale of tears’ of Baranovich, as it is described in the *Pinkas*.

On page 537, my friend Foxman informs me, you will find a description of how my sister Sonya (the fifth in the row), survived the fright of death twice, because she was killed twice. Such a tragic portrait cannot be found in the entire Holocaust literature.

On page 598, the tragedy of a mother is described, who needs to decide which child of her two little girls (six and two years old) she has to surrender to the murderers.

On page 622, the story of the last Hasidic Rabbi, R’ Shlomo’leh Weinberg ^{ש"ת}, is told, and how he goes to his death, singing a *Hasidic Nigun*, being at that time, in his thirties.

It is this way that, my friend Foxman, acquaints me with the all the instances of martyrdom and heroism, which have been affixed in the Baranovich Yizkor Book.

I am, however spent from counting those who were killed, and would better be counting those who remained alive. Accordingly, I look with happiness at the pictures of those Baranovich *landsleit* committees in Israel, in New York, in Argentina, and in Chile, as well as in South Africa. I counted about 150 men and women in these pictures, who carry their past in Baranovich, with pride and a sense of self-worth. It is precisely these living survivors, will not permit the memory of their Baranovich, to be erased from the collective memory of our people.

The same can also be said of all those other *landsmanschaften* that have already memorialized their destroyed homes, by the creation of *Pinkasim* and Yizkor Books.

These Yizkor Books occupy a very prominent place on my bookshelves. Every time the date arrives for the recitation of ‘Yizkor,’ I take down a Holocaust Memorial Book, and read it, just like my mother would read her copy of ‘*Korban-Mincha*.’

If, today, I happened to have taken down the Baranovich book, it is only because Baranovich, at one time

belonged to my own Minsk *Guberniya*, which up till now remains a forgotten *Guberniya*. Apart from that, Baranovich is practically the same age as I am. Baranovich was born in the year 1885, and I – in the year 1887. For what good deeds did I do to exceed the life of an entire city – I do not know. Do you, my friend, Joseph Foxman, perhaps know?

Regardless, right now, at the reading of our Holocaust literature, I feel as high and as elevated as I was in my childhood years, when, during the recitation of ‘Yizkor,’ I was able to remain in the sanctuary with all the other bereaved Jews, wrapped in their prayer shawls, during that time, when all the other children were compelled to go outside.

What was it that *Sholom Aleichem* said: ‘I have it good – I am an orphan!’

Baranovich

By Ben-Zion Goldberg

‘Baranovich Station’ is better known in the Jewish world as plain ‘Baranovich.’

The *Sholom Aleichem* story, ‘Baranovich Station,’ has nothing at all to do with the real Baranovich. The story could have taken place in precisely this fashion, at any other train station. By giving Baranovich this publicity, *Sholom Aleichem* was, in a manner, thanking the Jews of that *shtetl*, the great and heartfelt love that they showed him, during the time when he suddenly fell ill there – having come simply to deliver a lecture, and then forced to be bedridden for several months.

The entire *shtetl* mobilized itself, to help the beloved writer, to crawl out from under the dangerous illness, especially the youth. Young boys stood watch outside, to divert the flow in the street, in order that it not be too tumultuous to the patient. And the young girls organized themselves into volunteer nurses, to help watch him. *Sholom Aleichem* never forgot this love and dedication. He maintained a contact with Baranovich years after he had left that place.

One of those volunteers, that took care of *Sholom Aleichem* in Baranovich – Guta Tetz – happened to find herself in New York, in 1916, at the time that *Sholom Aleichem* lay on his deathbed. *Sholom Aleichem* asked that she come and take care of him. Back then, the lady from Baranovich helped to save him, and he was hoping that perhaps this time, her care would also have the same impact here. The Baranovich woman indeed did come, but the Baranovich ‘touch’ did not help him this time.

Had the antibiotic drugs, we have today, been available at that time, it is possible that this great writer may not have passed away at so young an age. He was barely 57 years old, and was at the height of his creative powers....



However, there also was a *shtetl* called Baranovich – a *shtetl* that is out of doors, without any park, and two railroad stations on either side, and in the middle, a huge bog of mud, as *Sholom Aleichem* attempted to characterize it, in his good-humored way.

And this very *shtetl* was tied to the ‘Baranovich Station,’ the train transfer point. It is possible that some sort

of settlement existed in Baranovich ,much earlier than the tracks of the two train lines passed through there, but Baranovich only first became a city, when the trains came. It is in this sense, that Baranovich was a 'new' city, a young city, with people who came to it – meaning that the largest portion of the populace had come here along with, and after the arrival of the railroad.

A young city with recently arrived residents has its good points and its shortcomings. The shortcoming is that the city lacks seasoning, roots and tradition. The good point is that the city has a freshness, and a sense of life, a tempo, which one does not find in older places, more set in their places. In the case of Baranovich, the good points outweighed the shortcomings. For its size, for its population, Baranovich was very active in many social and cultural areas.

This is the impression that I have from the Baranovich Memorial Book, which I received this summer. It is a large, interesting book, in album format, with a wealth of photographs, which was published by the Baranovich *landsleit* in Israel. The Israeli landsleit were the ones to carry forward the initiative, and the Baranovich societies in America, South America, and South Africa, assumed the burden of the large financial outlays that this undertaking required.

At the same time, it is a Yizkor Book of Baranovich. And like most of the books of this genre, it consists of four principal sections: the very old history, the history of the city, that is summarized; the recent past, the time that the living people from Baranovich today can remember – in length and illustrates; the catastrophe – The Nazi Holocaust and the extermination of the Jewish settlement; and the Baranovich emigration – those *landsleit* in various parts of the world and their accomplishments.

And seeing that it soon becomes a tradition, the Baranovich Yizkor Book was published in Israel, and because of the Israeli influence – a major part of the book is in Hebrew. The language of these Yizkor Books becomes a problem, in order that the current day landsleit be able to read it, it has to be written in Yiddish, but those who have future generations in mind, the notion of making these writings eternal, argue that since Hebrew is the eternal language of the Jewish people, especially now that it has become the language of the Jewish State, therefore, for truly permanent memorialization, it has to be in Hebrew. And in reality, one can say, that the issue is one of 'Yizkor' vs. 'Memorialization.'

The Baranovich Yizkor Book solved this problem by chance. If someone wrote something in Hebrew, it was produced in Hebrew, and if someone wrote in Yiddish, it went in as Yiddish. A better solution, in my view, would have been, instead of relying on the chance choice of Hebrew, everything should have been done in Yiddish, in order that the Yiddish reader should have access to the entire body of the reading material, and a summary of the historical elements should have been created in Hebrew.

As I, personally, am not from Baranovich, and actually never was in Baranovich, we have the greatest interest in the general things, such as, the visits of *Sholom Aleichem*, Ch. N. Bialik, Vladimir Jabotinsky to Baranovich; the Yiddish Press in Baranovich during the period between the two wars; the development of the educational system in the city, the establishment of the various [political] parties – and Baranovich had all kinds of such parties; and the Slonim brand of Hasidism in Baranovich, and its two leading figures, Rabbi Moshe Midner, and Rabbi Abraham Weinberg – is these articles that those who were not Hebrew-speaking, would be drawn to read first of all with great interest.

For those from Baranovich, this book is a treasure filled with information about their city, which will refresh their memories, and their memories of the destruction of Baranovich – which all Jews need to read, in order

that they not forget what the Nazis did to their own flesh and blood, and how heroically the downtrodden Jews managed to fight against the enemy. Would that Jews in today's peacetime, exhibit the sort of energy that they showed during the time of their annihilation.

Dr. N. Kroshinsky is especially thanked in the foreword, and also A. Sh. Stein. they, and those others, that dealt with the creation of this book, deserve recognition for the fine literary manner in which they had the book published, and for the large number of quality photographs, that came out so well. It is a book that every scion of Baranovich will want to have in their house.

The Baranovich Yizkor Book

By Ber Green

A new, important book, has been added to the Holocaust literature – a Yizkor Book: Baranovich.

This Memorial Book (668 pages, in chronological sections) appeared in Yiddish and Hebrew (in Yel-Aviv, 1953), published by the Baranovich *landsleit* in Israel.

This is a moving, heartrending work, about the establishment, rise, life, and denouement of a very special city – a 'Mother' in Israel – a book of remembrances, descriptions, essays, documents, and many photographic images, about a substantive Jewish community, which the Nazi barbarians exterminated in the years 1940-1945.

Who has not heard of our beloved Baranovich? Our beloved *Sholom Aleichem* made it renown among Jews the world over. He permanently memorialized the Baranovich station in the Minsk *Guberniya* in one of his stories. In 1908 (then 49 years old), during a lecture in Baranovich, he was suddenly taken ill. He was bedridden there for the following two months.

In his memoir, 'Under Czarist Russian Rule,' Dr. Nehemiah Kroshinsky tells, in the Yizkor Book, about *Sholom Aleichem's* sudden onset of illness in Baranovich: 'The news of the tragic event spread with lightning speed throughout the city.... the mood of the Jewish populace was very anxious... everyone felt somewhat personally responsible for the misfortune.'

The wondrous and extraordinary reception that *Sholom Aleichem* received, from the Jews of Baranovich, their standing watch beside the bed of the patient, day and night, made a very strong impression on the great classical writer. He very much took Baranovich to his heart. After his going off to Nervi, Italy, to obtain additional cure, he carried on from there, 'for a longer time, a regular correspondence with Baranovich, and sent his pictures.' In his own preciously humorous fashion, *Sholom Aleichem* characterized Baranovich as 'a *shtetl* standing on the outside, a *shtetl* of newcomers;' on another occasion, he said about Baranovich: 'A *shtetl* without a park;' and also: 'There are two large train stations on either side, and in the middle – a large muddy bog.'

Much space is devoted, in the Yizkor Book, to the birth of Baranovich, the city of the two railroad stations, and large muddy bogs – the youngest city in Europe. Baranovich was established in either 1883 or 1885. On the eve of the Holocaust, it had a population of approximately twenty thousand Jews. At that time it was all of sixty years old, when the Hitlerist murderers, in 1944, exterminated them, along with the Jewish

settlement.

In that place, where Baranovich stands today, there once was a forest; near the forest – a saloon; the saloon belonged to the first resident of Baranovich, Shai'keh Baranovich. He was the first Jew that resided on the Baranovich tract, when it was not yet even formally in existence. He was the one who built the first houses, and the saloon, which stood on old-Baranovich. Another pioneer was Yitzhak Berezovsky. In 1868-1869 he was living in the Baranovich forest 'providing cross-ties for the Moscow-Brisk railroad line, which was, at that time, under construction.' Later, in 1880-1883, the Polesia railroad was put through. These two train stations began to attract Jewish 'immigrants,' migrants in general, and 'newcomers,' from the surrounding Jewish towns. On the Polesia swamps, on the former tracts of forest, Jewish laborers, and Jews seeking a way to make a living, built a settlement, Baranovich, which continuously grew, drawing much spiritual capital from the older Jewish cities and towns, such as Mys (in existence for more than 800 years), Ljahavičy (in existence for more than 500 years), Slonim, Haradzišča, and others. 'Jewish Mys' – Dr. Kroshinsky relates – 'Slowly transferred itself to Baranovich, and helped the new settlement.' (P. 27).

The colorful history of this very settlement, is systematically organized and told in this Memorial Book. You can see the pictures, read the writings, memoirs, set down by those survivors who are from Baranovich, and it tears at your heart: before you, you see a young, up-and-coming, burgeoning settlement, with a dynamic, creative, and variegated life, with its own unique face, with a substantive, affectionate, stormy idealistic youth – a youth with dreams, longings, striving, hopes, yearnings, with a pull to the larger, wider world...

The essays, writings and photographs also show a settlement in the process of growing: movements, parties, community endeavors, cultural activities, class conflicts, social struggles, heroism and dedication and resistance and struggle against the Hitlerist murderers.

The book portrays Baranovich as a bulwark of *Hasidism*, and also as a genuine center for Yiddish culture. 'Jews of all persuasion,' are portrayed, 'simple folks,' wondrous folk people, 'tireless workers, factory workers, craftsmen, Torah scholars, Rabbis and *Rebbs*, zealous *Hasidim*, and *Mitnagdim*, observant orthodox Jews, and modern enlightened people, rationalists and people of reason, intellectuals, professionals; misers and monied 'aristocracy;' Yiddishists and Hebraists; Zionists, *Bundists*, communists. Apart from this, there are pen-portraits of colorful personalities, very colorful personalities of individuals, who are etched into memory.

Here, you have many dramatic images and memories of the one-time Baranovich way of life, various aspects and customs; [tales of] Baranovich yeshivas, *Heders*, modern educational institutions, libraries, institutions and organizations, trade unions, beginning in 1903, the growth and development of the local Jewish labor movement; First of May celebrations, assemblies, special articles deal with such issues as philanthropic institutions, and also the Fire-Fighters Association, the Jewish Drama Circle, '*Gemilut Hesed*,' and '*Kleinkredit*' Society, the sports society '*Maccabi*,' etc.

Of great interest, is the article by Aryeh Szamuszkowicz, about the Yiddish Press in Baranovich: six Yiddish weeklies (Baranovich *Leben*, '*Baranovicher Vokh*,' '*Bleu-Weiss*,' '*Dos Freie Vort*,' '*Baranovicher Courier*,' '*Baranovicher Vokhnblatt*') were published in the years of 1928-1937.

The participants in the creation of this very valuable book write, with justifiable pride, about the many important guests that made the effort to visit Baranovich. Among them: Dr. Chaim Zhitlowsky, Ch. N. Bialik, Yakir Warszawsky, Dr. Yitzhak Szyfer, Prof. M. Schorr, Leib Jaffe, etc. It was the ardor of the Baranovich

audience that drew them to come there, its respectfulness, and great deference shown to the ‘icons of that generation.’

Dr. Z. Levinbook’s memoir occupies a central place in the book.: ‘The Destruction of Baranovich Jewry.’ Here are the gruesome images, against which Dante’s ‘*Inferno*’ pales – descriptions of horrifying, blood-congealing episodes, of the Nazi cannibalism in the Baranovich ghetto, in the torture camp of Koldichevo, and in the ghettos of the surrounding towns; what ‘life’ was like in the underground ‘hideouts,’ the three mass-slaughters in Baranovich, the slaughters in Ljahavičy and Slonim; pictures of the mass graves, of the ‘pits’ full of those who were killed.

A. Lidowsky’s description is very moving: ‘The Resistance Organization’ – images and episodes of resolute self-confidence, of strength and heroism, of heroic attempts to organize a resistance against the murderers (a early as 1942!). You learn of the traitorous role of the *Judenrat* member who cooperated with the Nazis. You learn about how, individual Jews, risking their lives, saved themselves from the ghetto, fleeing to the partisan divisions in the forests of Polesia, the swamps of Pinsk, and the Naliboki forests. You read about the partisan Otryad called ‘Molotov,’ about the partisans of the ‘First of May’ Brigade, about the help of the Soviet partisans and the partisan personnel who were liaisons to the Jews in the ghetto; about the heroic part of the Baranovici Jews in the partisan battles against the barbarians.

You also read items written by individuals from the Baranovich landsleit in Israel, Argentina, South Africa, North America, and Chile. Moshe Yudelewicz writes about the Baranovich scions in Chile that, a brother of theirs, and employee of the ‘*Morgen-Freiheit*,’ Abraham Yudin, in his substantive section ‘Memories of Folklore,’ participated with M. Yudelewicz, in an outstanding nostalgia memoir, ‘Extending Hospitality,’ (about Shai’keh Baranovicher).

The Baranovich Boo, has been written, compiled and edited with understanding and skill, with a great deal of dedication, with deep affection and loyalty. In reading this Memorial Book – about that burgeoning Jewish settlement in Baranovich, and about the Nazi extermination of that very settlement (amounting to a third of our people), I get lightning sharp pains in my head and the behest of the heroes and martyrs stands out prominently in my mind: Do not forget, and do not forgive! Remember what the Nazi [Amalek] did to you!

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A Baranovich Bat-Mitzvah in the State of Israel

By A. Sh. Uris

Just like a drop of sea water contains all of the elements of the sea, so is the life of an individual a reflection of an entire generation, in a given historical period. And there certainly has not been such a period in human history in general, in which an individual lived a general life, and had a fate identical to that of the whole, as it was in our time. And if, in the final analysis, the individual escaped the fate of the whole, it was an exception, a miracle. Here, we will describe the story of such an exception, which only confirms the greater tragedy, and illuminates, all the more, the miracle that occurred to an individual.

It is the biography of a Jewish family. The family of Eliezer Lidowsky from Baranovich, a city that was a

‘Mother in Israel,’ a loyal family, that was Zionist. The storm of the Nazi Brown Beast arrived, and in annihilating the Jewish people of Europe, it also eradicated the Lidowsky family, wife and children. Only the head of the family remained alive, because, in the spirit of the Zionist concept, he was able to decide, in a timely fashion, not to ‘passively’ accept the fate that history and the Brown Barbarians had meted out, but rather to actively, with arms in hand, resist Enemy Number One of the Jewish people. It was in this manner that Eliezer Lidowsky joined the partisan brigades in the Polesia forests, and together with other Jewish and non-Jewish partisans, fought the holy war against the Enemy of Humanity, and of the Jewish people. It was in this fashion that Eliezer Lidowsky fought for the human-Jewish dignity of the people of Israel. He had decided that when the storm will pass, and were he to remain alive, he would immediately make *aliyah* to Zion.

The storm did pass, and the régime of tyranny was defeated, but a third of the Jewish people had been annihilated, and along with them, the family of Eliezer Lidowsky. Those who survived could no longer remain in that vast cemetery of the Jewish people in Polish soil, and had only one demand: a return to Zion. But a hostile authority, the Mandate Administration of the mighty global British Empire, locked the doors to the homeland. A continuation of the partisan initiative began, on the seas and on land, on direct and indirect ways to get to Zion, and for a freer *aliyah*.

Fate decreed that our good friend Eliezer found a loyal life’s companion in our [other] friend Rachel, who was prepared to fight alongside him for the right of the Jewish people, and for all Jewish individuals, and for the God-given natural rights to a homeland in Zion. And so it was, that Eliezer and Rachel, despite the fact that she was in the later months of pregnancy, set out by direct and indirect means, on trains and ships, without passports and visas, only with a Zionist vision in their hearts, to reach the shores of the Land of Israel. But that alien and cruel authority, interdicted their entry into the homeland, and relegated them in the Diaspora; the Diaspora of Cyprus.

But here, in Cyprus, a great wonder occurred. With great good fortune, a baby daughter was born to them, and the joy of this evidence of continuity was so great, they could not find any better name for her, other than ‘Aliza.’ For them, it was a symbolic Zionist act. The Brown Beast wanted to exterminate the Jewish people, and it was The Beast that was exterminated, and ‘*Am Yisrael Chai.*’ This little Aliza was, for them, the symbolic and real argument for the continuation of their family, and for the continuity of the people of Israel. Their joy and happiness knew no bounds.

The second miracle was the single humane paragraph in the otherwise inhuman, anti-*aliyah* decree of the English Mandate Authority: the birth of a child on English territory, Cyprus, even though it was an occupied Greek-Turkish island, and even though the child was born in a camp of illegal aliens, gives the child a right to be in the Jewish homeland of Zion. And seeing that a newborn child must have its parents, the entire Lidowsky family was privileged to be granted an exceptional legal entry into the Land of Israel.

That first year in Zion was anything but an easy, tranquil year for the Lidowsky family. They, once again, fell into a period of unrest involving the struggle of the Jewish *Yishuv* to obtain the right for the Jewish people to establish its own state in Zion. Once again, we see our friend Eliezer, with a rifle in his hand, defending Jewish property with life and limb, in *Kibbutz* Netzer, against feral Arab neighbors. Barely five months old, little Aliza must taste the taste of evacuation from *Kibbutz* Ashdod Yaakov, because hostile Egyptian airplanes had set out to annihilate Jewish life in Israel, and to drown the one last hope of the Jewish people for a sovereign Jewish nation, in Jewish blood, and in the process, set themselves to snuff out the life of little Aliza. And then yet another miracle occurred; Aliza was saved, and the Jewish State in Israel was

saved, and in that very same year when Aliza was born, the State of Israel proclaimed its independence.

Little Aliza began to grow and bloom in the free Land of Israel. Barely two years old, and she was already in ‘nursery school,’ and was already showing signs of her artistic talent. She is drawn to the area of music. At age five, she begins to play the piano, and exhibits talent as a pianist that is out of the ordinary. At the age of ten, she receives a stipend of support from the Norman Fund, in order to continue her studies of piano. She is an outstanding student as well, especially in history and literature, and most of all, in *Tanakh*, her favorite area of study. And in this fashion, she was fortunate in reaching the age of Bat-Mitzvah, at the same time as the Bat-mitzvah year for the State of Israel.

Her parents, Eliezer and Rachel Lidowsky, decided to express their happiness, and the happiness of their child, in an artistic fashion, in the form of a piano concert given by little Aliza. Quite a substantial audience came together in the auditorium of the *Agudat HaSofrim*, in the house named for Shaul Tchernikhovsky: former partisans, and young Sabras, writers and performers, politicians and journalists, members of the Knesset, among them also Moshe Sharett. In a word – it was the political-cultural world of Tel-Aviv, and of Israel in general.

The speech of the Director of the Ramat-Gan School, Shmuel Epstein, a friend and fellow fighter alongside Eliezer Lidowsky, was a sort of overture, dedicated to the Lidowsky family, their struggle for survival and *aliyah*, and especially for that great double-miracle, of having the State of Israel and their daughter Aliza born in the same year. Both the State of Israel, and Aliza became Bat-Mitzvah in one and the same year. And when the little Aliza then performed on the piano, playing perfectly the artistic compositions of Bach and Mozart, of the romantic Schumann. and the poetic creations of the impressionists Debussy and the divine Beethoven, and compositions of the Israeli Avidom – one could see in her a future piano virtuoso, and a heavenly spiritual joy imbued all the listeners. It is hard to conceive of a more beautiful celebration of Aliza’s Bat-Mitzvah.

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She Did Not See Death Only Once Before Her Eyes

By Sh. Bank

(The Experiences of a Heroine from Baranovich)

Helen Finn, a 19 year-old girl from Baranovich, saw death before her eyes many times. At the end, though, she dispatched tens of Germans to their eternal rest. She derailed the enemy's trains, and blew up the enemy's bridges. She took revenge for the death of her mother, and for her own frightful suffering.

Helen's brother had left Poland while he was still a young boy. Her father had died when she was only 13 years old. In order to support herself, and her ailing mother, she took on students, while she herself was still in high school. In 1939, when the Soviets took control, Helen went off to study at the Pedagogical Institute.

When the German-Soviet War broke out in 1941, Helen took her 64 year-old mother and went off to Haradzišča, 25 km. from Baranovich.

In September of that year, the Germans carried out a registration of the entire male Jewish population. The Jews then received an order to dig pits, allegedly for military purposes. Afterwards, they were all shot and buried in these pits. Later on, the registration of the women and children began.

Hidden in an Attic

When the women and children were driven to their execution. Helen and her mother escaped. For two days, they hid themselves in a warehouse, and on the third day, when they could no longer hold out because of hunger, they left their hiding place. They learned that on that day, 1,400 women and children were shot to death by the Nazis. Seventy men and ten women who remained alive in Haradzišča, where transferred to small huts were declared by the Nazis to be a Jewish ghetto. Shortly afterwards, however, the Jews there were murdered. Helen Finn and her mother hid themselves in the attic of a house, where the *Gestapo* detained fifteen specialist craftsmen under guard.

'You Are Too Young To Die'

When the pogrom was over, the girl decided to return to Baranovich. However this was dangerously risky, and Helen began to think about committing suicide. However, her mother restrained her, saying: 'My child, you are too young to die yet, you must live!'

Ten Thousand Are Killed

Nevertheless, they did arrive in Baranovich, and for close to a month, they were hidden by a Polish woman, Olympia Bulmer, an old family friend. One day, however, an informer betrayed their presence, and the mother with her daughter were forced to abandon their hiding place, and go off to the ghetto. At the end of 1941, there were about 2,000 Jews in the ghetto. Ten thousand Jews had [already] been killed.

Taken Away in Gas Trucks

On the third day, the Nazis found out about their hiding place, and in the time that the Gestapo man ran to summon the police, six people were able to come up and hide themselves in the same house. From the attic, they were able to see how the police drove out 44 people from a pit, and then threw grenades in there, and how they took off their victims in gas trucks.

Without Food or Water

Only 200 people remained in the ghetto; they were capable craftsmen, so called '*Wert-Juden.*' The Nazis needed them, and had decided to temporarily postpone their death.

At the end of 1942, the Nazis again took to the ghetto. Forty people, who had hidden themselves in a cellar, in fact ended up living their last days there. They chewed on their leather thongs, and drank their own urine. Eight people, including Helen and her mother, who could no longer stand the hunger, filth and thirst, went up to the attic before the pogrom began. Thirty-two people were killed there directly by the Nazis. The eight people had neither food nor water. The November cold arrived. Helen had decided to go into the house, to find food or drink. It was dark, and in the oven, she found a small pot of fresh water. She grabbed a drink and immediately spit it out.... the small pot was full of the soap suds from washing dirty laundry.

Her Mother in Nazi Hands

Quickly, she ran back up to the attic. She saw how Germans were running about, and she saw how they were beating women and children, and raping girls in the streets. Suddenly, one of them turned away, and went to the attic. She hid herself behind a chimney. In the half-darkness, she saw how the German was going from one spot to the next. She heard how he was cursing, and using foul language. Suddenly, his hands touched her mother... He called other Nazis. They dragged people down and murdered them, one after another. They did not find Helen. Miraculously, she saved herself.

Praskovya Ivanovna Munkus, a Byelorussian woman, risking her own life, hid the girl. At the beginning of 1943, she came in contact with partisans. A new life began for her.

Partisan Missions

Apart from Russian and Yiddish, which she speaks fluently, she also knows German and Polish well. Sometimes, she would go dressed as a peasant girl, another time – in elegant urban dress. Occasionally, she would be 'pregnant,' and another time – a 'prostitute.' This was the way she would carry out partisan missions.

She was born and was raised in Baranovich, but no one was able to recognize her origins. With a hairpin, she would mark on her own tanned feet, the place where the enemy's camp was, and as quickly as she would get outside of the city, she would transcribe it onto paper. Looking for the 'birth clinic,' she would circulate through tens of German offices, where she would gather needed intelligence. She took part in blowing up bridges, and derailing trains; she participated in the famous train derailment in Brest-Litovsk.

Today, Helen works as a translator in the Commissariat of Municipal Security.

'I do more here than I do in school' – she says – I help to uncover who the German animals are. God! How

I hate them!

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The Fate of the Jews in Baranovich and Vicinity

By Joseph Ziegelbaum

Four days, after Hitler-Germany attacked Russia, meaning 26 June 1941, Minsk, the capital city of Byelorussia, fell. And it was only several days later, that the Germans reached the territory of Greater Russian Republic.

The just-occupied Byelorussia made a frightening sight. The cities suffered from fires. The population of the cities had hidden themselves in the surrounding forests and villages, or wandered over the roads – some to the east, and others to the west.

The frightening scene, in those hot June days, were manifest on the roads of Byelorussia. All the roads were covered with dead Russian soldiers, civilians, women and children. No one showed any concern about the dead. At the most, they were heaved off the middle of the road into the ravines by the side, in order that they do not impede traffic. Among those killed, were a large number of Jews.

And there was much traffic on the roads. The German military, armed to the teeth, was on the march. Columns of huge tanks lumbered by on their tracks. Thousands upon thousands of refugees, of all nationalities, were wandering all about.

German field command stations were set up in the cities. They initiated their authority by engaging in mass shootings. This took place in almost all the cities, Lida, Baranovich, Slonim, Stolpčy, Minsk, Mozyr, Gomel', etc. It was the Jews who were shot. We are familiar with incidents of that time, that took place in Lida and Baranovich. On one specific day, the Germans, in both cities, dragged seventy-three Jewish men out of bed, led them out to placed in the middle of the city, and shot them to death.

On that same day, after noon, huge placards appeared on the walls of the cities, in which the German field command advised that it had shot 73 Jewish communists, who had been informed on, as being prepared to carry out an underground war with Germany, through espionage, and diversionary tactics.

Among the 73 t5hat were shot in Lida, were two Bundists of note from Warsaw: Natanblit (*Tazhan*), a member of '*Zukunft-Sturm*' and one of the best sportsmen of the Warsaw '*Morgenstern*,' and the second, Israelik, a former functionary of the Warsaw Society, the husband of Kh'teh Chay'keh Levin, who was very well-known in Warsaw, as a sparkplug, futurist, and a very active party member of the time.

After the first *aktion*, the field command began to organize the administrative apparatus. The majority of the volunteers in Byelorussia at that time were the Poles. It was from their ranks that the first of the burgomasters were designated in the cities, and they formed the first of the police cadres that the Germans created.

The Polish-German police gave itself considerable license at Jewish expense. Groups of Polish police appeared, with Germans, who robbed Jewish houses. In the process, many Jews fell dead and wounded.

There were young Polish police who were thugs, who threatened, that the streets would quickly be paved with the residue from Jewish heads. In that period, many Byelorussians represented themselves to be Poles.

Two weeks after the German troops marched in, an order came out that Jews must wear a white armband with a yellow Star of David on the left arm, and Jews must live in a special quarter of the cities. Ghettos began to be created – the first stage of the full physical extermination of the Jews.

A new thing happened several weeks after the ghettos were created. Byelorussia was declared as a separate country, with its own administration. The Polish employees were replaced with Byelorussians. Byelorussian signs began to appear on the public buildings. The flag of Byelorussia was raised (White-Red-White) as was the national symbol (A Rider on a Horse). Beside each Byelorussian flag, there also stood a flag flying the swastika.

The Byelorussian police demonstrated that it was no less anti-Semitic than the Polish ones. The guard duty, around the ghetto, was taken over by these police. By contrast with the Polish police, the Byelorussian police were armed.

For the Jews, this was the beginning of a difficult period. An order came out that Jews [now] had to wear two yellow badges: one on the breast, and one on the back. Jews were not allowed to walk on the sidewalk, only in the middle of the street. Jews were not permitted to appear on the Aryan side after 6:00PM. For not obeying this order, many Jews were shot in the street. I was witness to such a scene in Baranovich, where Yankl Zeleznicky was shot, a boy of 16 years of age.

In that period of time the Germans set up *Judenrat* organizations in the ghettos. The *Judenrat*, in turn, created a Jewish police force. The Germans tasked the *Judenrat* with such demands as: if a German made a demand for a certain number of Jewish laborers, they were to provide them. The *Judenrat* also had to deal with providing the food for the ghetto, and also care for the state of health of its residents. And the most important thing: it was the *Judenrat* that had to produce, by a specific deadline, all of the demanded tributes that were levied against the ghetto in question.

In September 1941, the Germans levied their first tribute on the Jews. In Baranovich, the German *Kommissar* of the city, Werner, levied a tribute against the ghetto in the amount of one million Russian rubles, ten kilos of gold, and one hundred kilos of silver. In case this tribute were not paid, *Kommissar* Werner threatened to shoot the entire *Judenrat*.

The demanded amount was gathered in the time required. However, this was only the beginning. Following this, a whole array of tributes were levied against the Baranovich ghetto. The Chairman of the *Judenrat*, the well-known Baranovich merchant, Evsei Izikson, together with his wife, Genya Mann, literally worked miracles, and always were able to produce the demanded sums on time. However-, they were not fated to live for very long.

In the middle of September 1941, a handful of Jews arrived in Baranovich from the small towns of Moučadz' and Ljahavičy. The Jews smuggled themselves in, among the columns of workers that were returning home. The Jews told of frightful things. A day earlier, the ghettos in both towns had been surrounded by Germans, Ukrainians, and Byelorussians (the latter two, as police), Lithuanians and Latvians. All the Jews were led to the cemetery. There, pits had already been dug, in preparation. Beside the pits, the Jews were shot, one part at a time. A few in number managed to save themselves, and it was these, who had come to Baranovich.

Among those who saved themselves, was the Ljahavičy resident Lejzor Segal, who later became the commander of a large partisan *Otryad*. (Today, Lejzor Segal lives in Israel with his wife).

This news made a frightful impression on the Jews in Baranovich. For everyone, the fate of the Jews in the Baranovich ghetto, and that of the Jews, in general, now became very clear. As a result of these incidents, the young people in the ghetto began to look differently at their own fate, and the idea was born, to mount a resistance, and to exact a dear price for one's own life.

The largest part of them worked at a variety of German commands. More than a thousand young people worked in a command called '*Feldzug B*.' This was a command that would gather up the spoils of war, especially [discarded, or abandoned] Soviet weaponry. Jews worked at sorting this weaponry, polishing it, etc. A second large contingent of Jews worked at an airfield, doing similar things. Apart from that, several thousand Jews worked in a variety of factories, workplaces, mills, and in just ordinary German military units.

A day after the news of the events in Ljahavičy and Moučadz' reached Baranovich, twelve young people got together in the evening, to take counsel. Among the twelve were: Tot'keh Ljahavicky (an activist in *Zukunft*, and a former functionary in a Warsaw metal works), Tob'chah Geber (A lady member of the Warsaw *Zukunft*), Foxman (A Warsaw *Bundist* representative man), Blondman (a *Bundist* and typesetter for the Warsaw '*Volks-Zeitung*' and an active member of the Warsaw press union), the writer of these lines, Chaim Stalovičy (a Revisionist, a student from Baranovich), Shlomo Ravitzky (Right-wing *Poalei-Tzionim*, Baranovich), and others. At this consultative meeting, it was decided to organize armed groups with the objective of mounting resistance to the Germans.

It was decided to begin smuggling weaponry into the ghetto. this work was immediately allocated out. Tot'keh Ljahavicky needed to organize the operation of smuggling weaponry out of '*Feldzug B*, because he worked there, and Chaim Stolovicky – was to do the same from the airfield. It was also decided to begin a clandestine recruiting campaign among the young.

The smuggling of weaponry went very well. The Germans in each of the commands, permitted the workers to take away bundles of wood to heat the houses. Part of the time, the German officers permitted whole wagon loads of wood to be brought into the ghetto. And it was in between the pieces of wood, that parts of rifles, and even mortars would be smuggled in, that were later re-assembled inside the ghetto. The sanitation workers of the ghetto also took part in the smuggling operations, who in the empty latrine barrels, would bring in boxes of ammunition and weapons, into the ghetto. Monik Muszinsky, from Częstochowa, was especially good at this work. Monik was personally responsible for bringing in half of the ammunition into the ghetto. Monik later became the commander of a 'diversion-group' and a great hero.

The fighting organization grew very rapidly. About a week after the first meeting, there were already sixty armed members.

Tunnels were built out at a several points in the ghetto, with special caches for the weapons and ammunition. In the long underground corridors, or tunnels, the young ghetto fighters learned how to handle the weapons. This [training] work was carried out under the supervision of the former non-commissioned officer of the Polish army, Moma Kapilowicz (*HaShomer HaTza'ir*, Baranovich). Later, he was killed in the fighting of the partisans. There was also a doctor in the organization, Dr. Arnold Aaronson from Lodz, who put together a sanitation group. Dr. Arnold Aaronson was a famous radiologist from Lodz.

In time, the *Judenrat* and the Jewish police became aware of the organization. Their attitude towards it, from the outset was not a constructive one. However, in time, this changes, and many Jewish policemen joined the organization. Their example brought along several members of the *Judenrat* itself.

News came via people from Slonim, Njasviz, Kleck, and other small towns, that similar groups had been created there as well.

A shameful thing occurred in October. Everything about this undertaking was revealed to the *Gestapo*. The Germans began to conduct searches, based on the indications that were given to them. they found a small amount of weapons, but they arrested a large number of the members of the organization. Several days later, those who had been arrested were hanged. The following were killed: Tot'keh Ljahavicky, Tob'chek Geber, and her husband, Foxman, Franka Goldstein (the daughter of the publisher of the '*Volks Zeitung*,' David Goldstein) with her one year-old son, and others. The writer of these lines was fortunate in being able to flee, together with fifteen Jews, into the Polesia forests.

After these events, many Jews began to escape from the ghetto. Every day, several people would disappear.

At that time, the partisan struggle began to develop in the Baranovich vicinity. News would reach us about German soldiers and officers who had been killed on the roads.

In November, the Germans captured four partisans in a village. Their crime was to have incited the peasants of the surrounding villages, persuading them not to give the Germans the set quantity of grain, meat, etc. This is what was represented in the official German communique.

The Germans hung these four peasants in the middle of the city. Over their chests, signs were hung with the inscription: 'This is the end that will come to anyone that will raise a hand against the Thousand-Year Reich.' The four peasants hung this way, for three days.

This, however, did not frighten the populace, but rather the exact opposite: whether it was among the Jews or the Poles, of the city and its vicinity, resistance organizations were established. The organization was very helpful to the Jews, even with the supply of weaponry.

And so, it continued this way, until March 1942. On 4 March, the *Judenrat* suddenly began to distribute blue cards among the ranks of the more important Jewish workers. with a large letter 'U' in the middle. Whether or not the *Judenrat* knew the meaning of these cards – I do not know. About an hour later, a gendarmerie entered the ghetto, along with the *Gestapo*, and their Byelorussian, Lithuanian, and Latvian accomplices. They divided the ghetto into two parts. All the people with the blue cards were driven into one part of the ghetto, and the second part had those without such a card. In the part where the people had no cards, freight trucks came in, and the Germans and their accomplices began seizing Jews and loading them into the vehicles. The filled trucks would immediately ride off to the 'green bridge,' outside of the city. There, two huge pits had already been dug out. Strong units of Germans, Byelorussians, Lithuanians and Latvians, waited for the Jews. The Jews were forced to strip naked, with no consideration for the bitter cold, and they were then driven into the pits and shot.

On that day, three thousand Jews were murdered.

There were two instances of resistance. the Warsaw worker, Felek Rutkowsky, stabbed a German, and a

Lithuanian was also killed.

During the course of the *aktion*, the Elder of the *Judenrat*, Arnold³⁴ Izikson was murdered in a sadistic fashion, and his previously mentioned wife, Genya Mann.

The resistance organization, de facto, had ceased to exist, because its members, partly were killed, and partly fled to the surrounding forests.

A similar *aktion* took place in the little shtetl of Njasviz at the same time. there, a more substantive, but shorter battle took place between the Germans and the armed Jews. There were over ten Germans killed and several tens wounded. Almost all the Jews were wiped out. (from approximately three-and- a-half thousand, only 25 survived).

After this *aktion*, a new period began for the Jews – the period of partisan warfare.

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The Heroism of the Baranovich Jewish Partisans

By H. Vital

In the Hebrew newspapers in Israel, we find an interview with a Jewish partisan from Baranovich, who in the course of about a half-year, fought in the forests and swamps of Polesia. For personal reasons, his name is not given. In that region, he fought against the German murderers, until the Russian Red Army liberated the region. Soon, after the liberation, this particular partisan left Baranovich, and had just now arrived in Israel.

Before a reporter of the [newspaper] ‘*Davar*,’ he related his impressions of the destruction of Baranovich, and the heroism of the Jewish partisans. and of himself, he tells [as follows]:

‘I took vengeance upon the Germans with everything, with whatever it was that I could use. My arms were soaked with Nazi blood up to the shoulders. On 10 October 1942, I, and other of my comrades fled from the Baranovich ghetto, and we organized a partisan group, which operated with great heroism up to February 1944, until the Red Army entered, and liberated, our entire region. We assumed the burden of many things in the passage of that time. About many of those things, the time has not yet come to tell about them.

The list of the railroad trains and freight trucks that we blew up is a long one; we sent many Germans off to the Other World. The partisans took nothing into consideration, not even their own lives, and they demonstrated substantive heroism, that only embittered people, and people gorged on frustration and disappointment, can stand to bear. And even one of us thirsted for revenge...’

³⁴ It is unclear why this person, usually referred to as ‘Evsei Izikson,’ is referred to as ‘Arnold’ here. It may be an inadvertent confusion with Dr. Arnold Aaronson.

He goes on: 'After the First Slaughter, when 3,500 Jews were led away to the 'green bridge' and were killed there, the ghetto built up a secret fighting organization. In a short time, this organization numbered 180 members, both men and women. Every fighting unit consisted of five people, and it was necessary to be extremely careful not to be caught.'

At the risk of one's life, weaponry was smuggled into the ghetto. The rifles and revolvers would be disassembled into their components, in order that they not be recognizable. In the course of the time, we acquired 80 rifles, two light machine guns, and 12,000 rounds and explosives. Military training was conducted under the most stringent conditions of security.

The Jews prepared hiding places. By accident, a German once uncovered a Jewish hiding place. However, he never left that place.

On 10 October 1942, 19 young men and 3 young women stole out of the ghetto. Among those 19 was the teller of this story. Each was supposed to bring along the weapons to their place of work. Afterwards, they made rendezvous in a small woods, near the air field. There, they waited the entire day, and at night, they set out on the road. They proceeded for three days in this fashion, using a map and compass that they had with them. They traveled for 55 kilometers, until they reached the village of Zalužža. There, the peasants told them that on the other side of the Szczara River, there was a Soviet partisan division, and that the two Jews from Kryvošyn, Zavelowsky and Blum, have just gone over to the partisans.

The bridge was burned, and a Byelorussian peasant ferried them over the river in a small craft. After several days of slogging through the mud, they spied, in the distance, that an armed man, in a German uniform, is drawing near to them. They grabbed their rifles and wanted to shoot in that direction. However, the man began to shout loudly in Russian: 'Что это такой? (Who are you?) And the youths lowered their rifles, when they heard the sound of Russian being spoken.

'I went up to him,' he went on to tell, 'and he approached me: 'You are a Jew, and I am a partisan. My name is Kolya, from the village of Kryvošyn.' He exchanged kisses with me arduously, and shook my hand with vigor. He also conveyed regards from our five comrades, who had left on the 5th of October from the Baranovich ghetto.'

They completed the rest of the journey together, after which they encountered their 5 comrades, who were re-united with them. And the following night, they all went out to 'work,; or to do 'operations' – as it is called in the lingo of the partisans. Their first job was to find food for the partisans.

At the end of 1942, they were joined by 25 additional comrades from the Baranovich ghetto, who told that at the end of December, the murderers had killed the last of the Jews in Baranovich. Hundreds of the men, who had been skilled craftsmen, were crammed into a separate camp, because the Germans still had a use for them. But when the Germans discovered that these hundred men were looking for weapons, they took everyone out to the gas chambers there, and gassed them to death.

'For two months time,' he goes on to tell, 'we occupied ourselves with laying in food stores for the winter. From traitorous peasants, or peasants that were friendly to the Germans, or were known for their hatred of the Jews – we took away everything that they had. If we found any Jewish possessions in the hands of a peasant – we would burn his house down. Once, a band of peasants attacked us. We were traveling to one of the villages to return the wagons, after that, on the previous night, we had confiscated foodstuffs from the

peasants. A battle ensued. Two of our comrades fell in this battle, and one was wounded.

On another occasion, we were attacked by a band of Germans. Moma Kapilowicz from *'HaShomer HaTza'ir'*, fell at that time. We took his remains along, and interred him in the forest with military honors. A salvo of 15 rifles were fired, as he was lowered into his grave. Another comrade, Shlomo Landsky³⁵, was captured alive by the Germans. They tied him to the rear of a horse, and dragged him along that way for a long distance. Despite the frightful tortures, that he suffered, he did not tell the Germans anything.

Three of the lads were given the mission to blow up a factory near Baranovich. One of the youths, whom we referred to as Moshe *'Kotolyik'*³⁶, was caught before they had carried out their mission. The two others fled. Moshe was brought to the interrogator. There, from a hidden place, he took out a hand grenade, and threw it at the interrogator. The hand grenade did not explode, and Moshe was killed on the spot.

A group of three comrades was sent to spy on the railroad line, to see how many trains go by, and what their cargo is. They sat in hiding for three days, and came back with the required information. After this, a second group of three comrades went out, to spy on the rail lines, but only one of them, Mukasey, returned. The other two, Moshe Krawicky, and David Ossowsky, fell into German hands. After that, the Germans chopped down the trees on both sides of the railroad tracks, for a stretch of 200 meters.

New partisan comrades came to join us. However, they had no weaponry. And the problem of weapons and ammunition was the most difficult problem to deal with. At that time, we decided to go out onto the Brisk-Moscow road, in order to rob the necessary weaponry. We left in a band of twelve men, to do this particular *'foray'*, but only two had real rifles. The rest had only staves, that looked like rifles. The *'foray'* succeeded, and we came back with a lot of automatic rifles.

We also confiscated a great deal of ammunition from the peasants. in the villages, and where the peasants were antagonistically inclined to us, we notified them that they have to turn over all their weaponry to us by a certain deadline date. After that, we searched these houses, and if we found any armaments there, they were shot.

Because of their fear of the partisans, the Germans issued an order to their military people, that traffic is to be stopped at night on the Brisk-Moscow road. We then mined the road, and caused them a great deal of damage. the Germans then issued an order that a patrol is to traverse and inspect the road every morning, to see if it is clear of mines. At that time, we decided to take down the patrol on the road. The patrol consisted of ten bicycle riders, On one nice morning, we took them all down. We returned on their bicycles, and with their weaponry. After that, the Germans began to send automobiles to patrol the road. We then sent a larger group, and they wiped out the automobile with its occupants. The Germans then began to send armored cars.

We had a multi-branched level of activity. One night, we went out on a hike of a kilometer and a half, and we tore up telephone wires, and uprooted telephone poles. On another occasion, we blew up a turpentine factory, and factories making other materiel, that were required for the German war effort.

After each *'operation'*, we would relocate our headquarters. We lost track of the days. We were genuine

³⁵ Spelled *'Lansky'* most elsewhere in the book.

³⁶ Possibly derived from the Russian for a *'little tomcat.'*

forest people. Later on, we were joined by Russian partisans. We would get our orders from the general partisan command.

For a variety of political reasons, and differences, 24 of our comrades split off from us, and we organized a separate partisan division. Close to the Passover of 5703 (1943), six peasants informed on us. On one fine morning, we were assaulted by 80 Germans. A very severe battle ensued, and three of our comrades fell, and one was wounded. Also, two of the Germans were killed, and one was wounded. Later on, we found out that the Germans killed 6 peasants, because they had misled them. The peasants told them that the Jews had no weapons. In the following week, we found the bodies of our three comrades: Shary from Kalisz, 'Nioma Yosselewicz, and Szinewsky from Baranovich. We buried them all.'

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Partisan-Resistance Groups in the S. S. Camp In Baranovich and the Koldichevo Camp

By Lyuba Sluczak

In the year 1942, after the ultimate liquidation of the ghetto in Baranovich (*Ostgebiet* of Poland), the Germans organized three Jewish slave labor camps in the city, as follows:

1. The 'Bauleitung' Labor Camp
2. The 'Todt' Labor Camp
3. The S. S. Labor Camp

The S. S. camp, which had been set up in the house of the Baroness Ber on Narutowicz [*Gasse*], there were 125 souls; 103 men, and 22 women. The names of the 22 women were³⁷:

Doba Cirulnik	Myt'eh Cirulnik	Riva Bolszynska	Fela Zukerman
Rachil Dobkowska	Koronowa	Chana Zaturonska	Chaya Rogotinska
Bat-Sheva'leh Badobla (the three year-old daughter of Dr. Hirsch Badobla, who was killed together with his wife in the Stalovičy ghetto)			
		Zablocka	'Lizka'
Leah Mandel	Rachil Winikowska	Yentl Winikowska	Fanya Sternfeld
Lyuba Altschuler	Folya Sawikowska	Mukasey	Nadia
Lucia Mavshovich	Lyuba Sluczak and	Riva Zaturonska.	

The chief of the camp was the S. S. officer, Ginter. The camp Elder was the Jew, Goldberg, from Suwalk. Goldberg, who could foresee the tragic ending for the people in the camp, meaning, liquidation, and being killed (as happened to all the other slave labor camps in the Baranovich ghetto), began to organize a resistance group in the camp. He put himself in touch with people that had contact with partisans, who fought the Germans in the surrounding forests. Goldberg also cemented a relationship with a Byelorussian policeman who was a member of the camp watch, who was able to procure weaponry, for a huge sum of money.

It was decided that, all those interned in the camp, will on a specified night, designated by the leadership, flee the camp for the forests, and join the partisan camps. Part of those interned knew about the plan, but the plan was kept secret from the larger part of the internees, for security reasons. there was, however, an agreement, that on the specified night of the escape, all the people in the camp would be taken along.

Through an informer, however, the S. S. became aware of the plan, and only 45 people were successful in fleeing to the forest. The rest remained in the camp.

Goldberg, who from the start was the initiator of the plan, did not flee with the group. and remained in the camp. After the escape of the 45, the already sorrowful condition of the internees became even worse, and in the end, they were all liquidated. the remaining slave laborers were driven over to the prison-work camp at Koldichevo, where they had to perform their slave labor under the most unbearable circumstances. From

³⁷ Please note that all of these last names are given with their Slavic feminine declensions, so that Rachil Dobkowska is a member of the Dobkowsky family, etc.

time to time, the S. S. also carried out a *selektion*.

A secret resistance group was also organized in the prison-labor camp of Koldichevo. On one night, a group escaped through an underground tunnel exit that had been previously prepared and well-camouflaged – to the partisans in the forests. I fled with this group.

The names of two torturers in the Koldichevo camp have especially become etched into my memory for their cruel handling of the internees. These are:

1. Stepaniuk, a Byelorussian. He was the senior person in the camp. He would murderously beat everyone who came under his hand. He took part in all of the *selektionen*. One time, he forced an inmate, a Byelorussian (in the camp, there were a number of Byelorussians and Poles, incarcerated for political crimes), to eat his own excrement.
2. Viktor Diro, police commandant of the camp, also a Byelorussian. He would torture inmates in a frightful fashion, and take part in all of the *selektionen*.

In the year 1949, the appellate court in Danzig, heard the case of the gruesome murderer, Viktor Diro. He was accused of murderous activity, he carried out during the years 1942-1944 in the Baranovich area.

The bill of accusation against him indicated that, while being a policeman and a member of the criminal Hitlerist organization, '*Sonderdienst*,' he carried out an entire array of cruelties against the civilian Jewish, Polish and Byelorussian populace, as well as against partisans, who operated in the Baranovich area.

And the accused was especially brutal during the liquidation of the Jewish population in a whole array of places throughout Byelorussia. He took part in carrying out mass-murders, and personally murdered, beat and tortured innocent people.

Also, that Diro was the deputy to the commandant of the concentration camp in Koldichevo, where he treated those under arrest in an inhuman fashion.

Witnesses testified that he would, with pleasure, attend the executions, at the shooting and torturing of people, and on the even of the entry of the Red Army into the Baranovich area, Diro took an active part in liquidating the camp. This was confirmed by Jews from Koldichevo that survived.

Recognizing the guilt in its entirety, the court sentences the murderer to death. the sentence was carried out by hanging.

In the destruction of Baranovich, I lost my entire family. A father, a mother, brothers and sisters, single and married with small children. We provided thirteen martyrs to the great Holocaust.

As to the death of my dearest family members, in the Baranovich ghetto, I will however, not hold any of the *Judenrat* members responsible, and none of the Jewish police, because both of these bodies did everything within their power to protect and save the Jews of the ghetto. Everyone in the ghetto saw in the *Judenrat* and police, organizations who had to maintain order in the ghetto, organizing the Jewish forced labor for the German '*plyatzuvkehs*,' in the city, and to see to it how to carry out the orders of the Germans in the realm of the possible.

The first President of the *Judenrat* was the well-know manufacturer-merchant, and President of the Merchants' Society, and community activist, the lawyer, Evsei Izikson. If, during the Polish régime, Izikson was an active 'B.B.' member, during the German occupation, in his position as President of the *Judenrat*, he was a proud, nationalist Jew, beloved by the entire ghetto populace, without respect for class of political persuasion. Everyone related to him with great respect, listened to his opinion, and took it into account. All of his instructions, in his capacity as President of the *Judenrat* were scrupulously carried out. Using much diplomatic wisdom, and tact, he would always strive to fulfill the demands of the Germans.

When he needed people for forced labor, in the city, or outside the city, he attempted to get the Jews to do the work without force, not using drastic means, but always in a decent way, even to the point of getting them to volunteer.

Izikson, told the Jews of the ghetto to always provide a clear account about those dangers that hovered over the unprotected Jews in the ghetto. He would plead, and appeal for people to take counsel, and to deal in a responsible fashion. Evsei Izikson, as also did the other members of the *Judenrat*, such as Zhenya³⁸ Mann, and even though he was not from Baranovich, Idelczyk, Yosh'keh Limon, and also the others, did everything to save the lives of the Jews in the Baranovich ghetto, and many times they managed to succeed.

We relate a number of incidents:

1. In the *aktion* of the 200 young men, out of which none returned. our family suffered the loss of three martyrs, my oldest brother Noah, the little brother Mikh'eleh, and my brother-in-law, Avra'sheh Bass from Hancevičy. And when it came time to distribute the passes for the living on the night before the great Shushan Purim slaughter, in the middle of the night, a Jewish ghetto policeman, came to us, in our '*kolkhoz*' and brought three life passes from the *Judenrat* for our family, saying: the *Judenrat* member Idelczyk send you these three living passes, and wished you good luck.'
2. When the Germans came into the ghetto, and removed the heavier, better, and newer furniture and candelabras, from the Jewish houses, all of the furniture was taken out of the house of my married sister. But the next day, she was called to the *Judenrat*, and the *Judenrat* treasury compensated her for almost the entire cost of the furniture that was taken away.
3. The *Judenrat* extended a great deal of care to those families, whose husbands and fathers had either been killed, or deported to other camps. Our family, too, was in this category. I was assigned to the working post in the *Judenrat* to a group that would go to work outside the ghetto, and to such a group which worked at a location where it was possible to get something to eat, and there was a possibility to buy or barter for foodstuffs, in order that later, this be smuggled into the ghetto for the hungry members of the family.
4. The Jewish police that would stand by the gate, in order to, so to speak, conduct inspections of the Jewish workers returning to the ghetto, so that they not smuggle food inside, did everything they could to assure that as much food got in, as was possible. They would constantly feign unawareness, or that they hadn't seen anything. When my father fell ill in the ghetto, I was even able to smuggle a live chicken inside. The Jewish police saw this, and even went so far as to make it easier for me to bring it in.

38

More often given as 'Genya.'

5. The Baranovich *Judenrat* did not only concern itself for the Jews in the Baranovich ghetto, but also concerned itself for the smaller towns, around Baranovich, even though there were *Judenrat* entities in those locations. The Baranovich *Judenrat* helped out the surrounding towns with the levies that were placed upon them [sic: by the Germans].
6. After the Great Slaughter of Shushan Purim, with its 3,500 victims, the *Judenrat* member Idelczyk came to us in our 'kolkhoz,' to check and see that, God forbid, we had not suffered anymore loss of life.
7. We learned of the decree to transfer the Baranovich ghetto to Ljasnaja, and the *Judenrat* was unable to do anything to avert the decree, so the *Judenrat* sent a women's delegation to the *Gebietskomissar*. At the head of the delegation were the ladies, Chana Mirsky, and Genya Buchhalter, and the intervention of the women did indeed help. The ghetto remained in the city.
8. The larger part of the members of the *Judenrat* and the Jewish ghetto police were the fathers for the Jews in the ghetto, and when we, the survivors from Baranovich light our Yizkor candles on the days we remember the slaughter of the 12,000 martyrs of our Baranovich, we also light candles in memory of Izikson, Mann, Idelczyk, Limon, Warszawsky, Weltman, and the others. May their memory always be held sacred in our hearts.

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A Jewish Trade School in the Nineteenth Century

By Shlomo Foxman

(Hevra Kadisha 'Shokdei Melakha' in Navahardok)

It is known that, the Jewish communities of past years, in our country, developed a proportionate level of support activities in keeping with the needs. The communities in Poland, prior to its independence, had much greater competence than the current ones do. Despite the fact that the Jewish community in its older form was still quite distant from being a democratic institution, its rights and potential were much broader and larger than those of current communities. The one-time communities in Poland would collect government taxes, had the right to impose their own taxes, and oversight and control of Jewish trade unions (in the non-Jewish trade unions, where a fanatic Christian spirit reigned, it is known, that Jews were not permitted to join), regulation of disputes between Jews, as in general, being able to regulate the entire economic life of the Jewish populace.

Thanks to this, the Jewish communities developed a very rich and productive social activity, which encompassed just about every aspect of the neglected and economic aspects of Jewish life. There was practically not a corner of Jewish community life where the community did not penetrate with its rule and activity. The community carried out a blessing-laden work on the social-economic front, for the good of the needy Jewish populace. The large number of paupers, which could be found among the idled Jewish people in Poland – their number being especially large because of the frequent wars, from which the land greatly

suffered ceaselessly – were one hundred percent looked after by the communities. The latter not only looked after their own local poor people, but also itinerant ‘guests.’ The orphans, poor girls without a dowry, the ill, the aged, the homeless – it was these that the community took under its wing as the social ombudsman. It was in the community that they found complete protection and support. The communities in each city had the necessary institutions: ‘*Haknasat-Orkhim*’ for the itinerant poor, ‘Halfway Houses’ for the homeless and the sick, and the like.

However, we have little knowledge, that already in previous generations. Jewish society had already been working on the idea of making all these people productive, that otherwise were being carried on the backs of the community. It is well-known, that Jews, who were paragons of compassion, always donated charity in generous amounts. Also, community activity always carried with it a character of philanthropic charity giving. However, it is almost unknown that in the seventy years of the past [sic: 19th] century, the notion of social assistance in its productive form had already awakened, whose objective was to strive and make everyone who fell down and became a burden, into a productive person, those [pauperized individuals with hands outstretched for charity, those who have to beg – to transform themselves into vibrant, useful citizens, equal and fully enfranchised members of the community.

It will therefore be of interest to prepare a short historical section about the history of the social institution that developed this creative thought already, in the 19th century. This society has the name: ‘*Shokdei Melakha*,³⁹’ and was founded in Navahardok in 1872 (5632). The founder of ‘*Shokdei Melakha*’ was Gershon Harkavy, who dedicated himself entirely to the institution.

What objectives did the ‘*Shokdei Melakha*’ set out for itself? It strove to provide a home for abandoned orphans, and for homeless and abandoned children. In this home, the children must be prepared to assume the responsibilities of life in all respects. They have to be raised, and developed, and receive an elementary education. However, Harkavy was not satisfied with just this. Institutions with such objectives, or once like them, and with attempts to do this, already existed previously. The new home that Harkavy projected, has to prepare the children *economically* for life. They have to receive training in some sort of trade. Each child must be provided with a trade, so that he will not always have to depend on the support of strangers, and that in the future, he will be able to build an independent life.

The children, drawn from the ranks of the poor, who are accepted into the home of ‘*Shokdei Melakha*,’ are provided for in the complete sense. Teachers and *Melamdin* come to the home. The things learned there are necessary and useful. By contrast, a professional education could not be provided in this collective home. Here, each individual was provided with a place in a private workplace of a craftsman in the city. The ‘*Shokdei Melakha*’ mad a contract with the craftsman to which they sent the young boy, where the conditions of employment were documented and signed, describing what training would take place.

The ‘*Shokdei Melakha*’ had many members who helped financially to assure that the institution would meet its objectives. At the general annual meetings, those who were elected became the leaders of the institution. The more elite organs were required to carry out the oversight and inspection of the students, at the location of their masters, as well as generally organizing and leading with the activity of the institution. It was necessary to procure the necessary material means, assuring that good teachers were retained, people who would be inspirational, as well as being skilled, and to provide oversight, that the objectives set forth for a trade-institution will get their just consideration.

³⁹ Hebrew for ‘Those Eager to Work.’

From this institution, a folio was created and kept, in which there were documented all of the amendments, rules of assembly, financial procedures, contracts with the craftsmen, etc.

It is worth becoming a bit more familiar with the amendments of this trade school. Apart from the fact that they contain interesting details about the organizational apparatus, and the range of work of the '*Shokdei Melakha*,' they also shed light on the cultural and social way of life of the Jews of Navahardok of that time period. I will therefore provide a short summary of these amendments, in a Yiddish form:

First of all, the institution in the Pinkas is designated as a 'Sacred Group' ('*Hevra Kadisha Shokdei Melakha*'), which shows us that the work of the institution was considered to be religious in character, and its objectives and obligations carried with it, a religious character.

1. The leadership sets the level of entrance fee for a member. But it may not be less than 1 Ruble and 35 Kopecks.
2. The minimum weekly payment for a member is 2 Kopecks.
3. The membership fee, and all other money collections are encashed by members themselves, who are designated by election. Whoever fails to discharge his obligation three times, will be dropped from membership, and attendant rights, for three years.
4. Elections take place every Saturday evening after Shavuot. The managing personnel are: 2 Directors, 4 managing members (*Gabbaim*), One Trustee, An Audit Committee, and a By-Laws Committee.
5. On the Saturday after *Shavuot* (meaning when the elections were held), all the members must worship together in the large municipal synagogue.
6. Obligations of the leadership: Identifying sources of funds for meeting the objectives, entering into contracts with the craft masters, engaging in all matters pertinent to the institution.
7. Obligations of the membership: Helping the leadership, designating the group of members who will encash the collected membership dues, auditing the account, oversight of the students placed with the craftsmen.
8. The Trustee assumes the position of Treasurer and Bookkeeper. He must not expend more than 1 Ruble without the knowledge of the leadership. The accounts must be ready for inspection at all times.
9. The By-Laws Commission maintains oversight to assure that the activities are conducted in accordance with stature. It must work out new amendments, or modify existing ones, in accordance with the demands of the times. All of this is to be approved by a majority of the members.
10. The Audit Commission has two annual meetings: *Khol HaMoed* Passover, and *Khol HaMoed Sukkot*, and it audits the activities in the treasury, prepared a treasury report for the general meeting, that is to be posted in all houses of worship.
11. Before being turned over to the craftsmen, the children are presented to a commission. After

becoming familiar with their age, skills and interests, the commission designates a trade for each of them.

12. If the Hevra should experience an overflow of candidates and not have the possibility to care for everyone, those who have to go begging from door-to-door (this was how the plague of beggars was dealt with once! – Sh. F.), were designated as a ‘genuine orphan’ that takes preference, in that an orphan gets preference over a non-orphan. If all are of the same standing, then a lottery is used. The leadership has the right to overrule the prevailing statute in this regard.
13. A young lad is given over to a master craftsman for no more than a four year term.
14. The master craftsman pays the leadership for the period of apprenticeship. The *Hevra* must provide footwear and clothing.
15. The Hevra is responsible for the hiring of a *Melamed*, who will learn with the boys who go to work for a craftsman. The *Melamed* learns with the apprentices on the days that they are off from work, especially on the Sabbath, and Festivals, Torah or *Chayei-Adam*, as is appropriately matched to the intellectual grasp of the children.
16. Should a member of the *Hevra*, God forbid, pass away, all the members must take part in his funeral, worshipping for the entire week of the *Shiva* period in the house of the deceased.

This in summary, is a short version of the content of the By-Laws, which richly portrays all the details of the ‘Sacred Group *Shokdei Melakha*’ And contains much worthwhile material about the way of life [of the people], especially as it concerns the procedures in the social institutions of the past.

All of these statutes/amendments, which are followed by 88 signatures, are dated from the Sunday of 10 Kislev of the year ‘*Yitbarakh*⁴⁰’ – 5632 (1872). In the new year 5641, an advisory addendum was added that says the following:

17. Women are also accepted as members of the ‘Sacred Group.’ They are given full rights to express themselves regarding its activities. The women of the Hevra are building their own special group, and will maintain their own folio, which represents a second part of the first folio.

It is interesting to note, that the emblem and the stamp of the ‘*Shokdei Melakha*’ had in it a number of elements similar to the details of the organizational stamp of ‘*Poalei Agudat Israel*.’ On first glance, it appears that there is no difference at all. The emblem of ‘*Shokdei Melakha*,’ has within it, symbols of labor: a scissor, a hammer, a saw, etc.

The ‘*Shokdei Melakha*’ in Navahardok had aspirations to expand its circle of activities to encompass the entirety of the Navahardok Voievodeship, and in time, to even further districts. It strived to become a central union of many branches, with the same objectives and character, in yet other cities and towns. In this connection, we are cognizant of attempts to establish the same type of institutions in Lida, Zhetl, and other

⁴⁰ This is a play on the numerical value of a Hebrew word, where the ‘nominal’ letters are replaced with numerical equivalents, but produces a word with some ritual significance. In this case, letters were selected totaling 5632, but spell out the Hebrew word for ‘will be blessed.’

places. The trade institutions in these previously mentioned places, however, were not privileged have any longevity... in Lida, the 'Shokdei Melakha' was founded there by the local popular activist, Ze'ev Sokolowsky. It existed up to the World War. During the period of its existence, it did demonstrate the capacity to turn over one hundred young boys into productive people.

The first 'Shokdei Melakha' in Navahardok, went through many changes, in its time, and also improvements, which the times demanded. It modernized itself, and aligned itself to the oncoming [sic: newer] demands and needs.

During the time of its existence, the society showed itself capable of winning the sympathy, not only of the city dwellers, but also those outside the limits of the city. For that time, it also was able to create a number of buildings of its own. In the year 1929 (29 December) there was a new building dedication ceremony of their own building, which was transformed into a much larger celebration of Jewish Navahardok. Academies, and other social events, were organized, with the participation of the representatives of central assistance bodies: Melech Neuczat (the 'Joint'), Moshe Shalit ('JeKoPo'), Y. Goldin (The Orphanage Union).

'Shokdei Melakha' did benefit from the support of other central Jewish Aid Societies. It had been subsidized by 'JeKoPo' in Vilna, since 1919, which set for them a stable monthly stipend.

From time-to-time, the society would organize a variety of public presentations, whose purpose was to popularize and also make known the doings and accomplishments of the institution. In the year 1932 (18 October) there was a presentation of its carpentry works. In the celebrations, representatives of the authorities participated, and delegates from 'JeKoPo', the Messrs.: Director Moshe Shalit, and Engineer A. Klebanov. The presentations, which elicited a great deal of admiration, went on for several weeks one after another. The broad swath of Jewish society expressed their recognition and wonder about the achievement of such successful results.

What was the situation of 'Shokdei Melakha' in the year 1937: In its own building, it has two dormitories (separate facilities for boys and girls). However, there is no intimacy of interest shown to it by the community activists of the city. The larger part of them takes an attitude towards such an important productivity-enhancing institution with casualness and indifference. Others even – with an unexpressed antipathy. The few active doers, have emigrated. No others arise to take their place. The few 'last of the Mohicans,' are thinking of throwing in the towel. The craftsmen activists, who common sense would tell you would have related to such an activity with interest, stand on the margins. The young workers, who themselves received their training in crafts from 'Shokdei Melakha,' fight against it today, through the union movement. They, figuratively are throwing stoned into the very running stream from which they drank water in their own time of great thirst.... in short, the institution is vegetating, an important organization, replete with useful obligations, with a past that is rich in activity behind it, nevertheless, went downhill!

When the individual is found, who wished to undertake the thankful task of researching and documenting the history leading up to this religious 'work,' and labor movement, the history of 'Poalei Agudat Israel' – he will have to pause more fully, in describing the role of 'Shokdei Melakha; and its place in the religious labor movement history.

(*'Judische Arbeiter-Stimme,'* Lodz, 1937)

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The First Host of Baranovich

By Moshe Goldman

Some 70-80 years ago, when our isolated colony (later Baranovich) was still tiny, in the literal infancy of its being built, there was a solitary house that stood by the old train station, belonging to the first Baranovich resident, R' Shai'keh Baranovicher. This Jewish man was a scholar, a formidable host, and an ardently faithful *Hasid* of the Kaidanov sect.

The old *Rebbe* of Kaidanov, R' Aharon ר"א, when he would travel through Baranovich, he was always a guest of Shai'keh Baranovicher, who would receive the *Rebbe* in a festive manner, and wanting to fulfill the mitzvah of receiving guests, he would always allocate his two best rooms especially for the *Rebbe*. In those days, it was the *Gaon* of Brisk, R' Yosef Yehoshua ר' י"ש, who was the more popular.

R' Yosef Yehoshua ר' י"ש would observe the Diaspora. He would go from city to city, village to village, dressed as a pauper, so that he would not be recognized. Passing through Baranovich on one occasion, he happened to need to spend the night, and not having anyone to turn to, he made his way to R' Shai'keh Baranovicher, and asked for permission to spend the night with him. On that night, Shai'keh Baranovicher was expecting the *Rebbe* of Kaidanov, and as a result, could not accommodate R' Yosef Yehoshua. Shai'keh Baranovicher did not know the *Gaon* of Brisk, and seeing the pauper's clothing, he showed him the antechamber as a place to sleep, saying thereby" 'Here is my ground before you.... the floor is available to you for free.' ...

R' Yosef Yehoshua took a candle out of his traveling bag, pulled out a book, and sat down to quietly study. In the meantime, the *Rebbe* of Kaidanov arrived. R' Shai'keh Baranovicher brought him to his house, and in leading the *Rebbe* to the rooms that had been prepared for him, they had to pass through the antechamber. It was here that the *Rebbe* of Kaidanov saw Yosef Yehoshua. He ran over to him and called out: *Sholom Aleichem*, *Gaon* of Brisk, how are you? The *Rebbe* drew R' Yosef Yehoshua very close to him, and took him under the arm, led him into his room, and instructed Shai'keh Baranovicher to put another bed into his room, for R' Yosef Yehoshua.

Upon seeing the great respect that the Kaidanov *Rebbe* was extending to this seeming pauper, R' Shai'keh Baranovicher went up to him and said: '*Rebbe*, please forgive me, and do not take offense against me, for not appropriately fulfilling the mitzvah of welcoming guests.'

R' Yosef Yehoshua answered him: 'Now the question has been answered for me: the virtue of welcoming guests is a very beautiful virtue. The *Gemara* says: 'It is more significant to welcome a guest than to show deference to the Almighty,' and the first to perform this mitzvah was our Father Abraham. Paying no mind to the fact that it was the third day after circumcision, and he was indisposed⁴¹, seeing three people in the distance, he ran towards them, presented himself, and asked them into his home, to eat and drink. Our Father Abraham truly fulfilled the mitzvah of welcoming guests, and that is why the mitzvah is ascribed to him.

⁴¹

Jewish lore tells us that it is on the third day after a circumcision, when an adult male will feel the most pain and discomfort from the procedure. See for example, Genesis 34: 24-25

So the world asks a question: Did not Lot also fulfill the mitzvah of welcoming guests? The Torah tells us how, the angel came to destroy Sodom, and so Lot ran out to meet them, and invited them into his home, and even to the point of ‘persuading them,’ and went so far in his feeling of welcoming guests, that when the men of Sodom demanded of Lot that he should hand over these guests that had arrived to them, he answered: ‘Here please take my two daughters, who have not known any man, I will bring them out – and you can do what is fit in your eyes, but only do nothing to these men because they have come under the shadow of my wall.’ So Lot, too, was one who welcomed guests, so why is this mitzvah ascribed to the account of Father Abraham? The reply is: Our Father Abraham made no distinction. As we know, he opened the gates of his house on all four sides, and whomever he only encountered, he fulfilled the mitzvah of welcoming guests, while by contrast, Lot only sought angels....

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Portraits, Folklore, and the Way of Life Before the Holocaust

By Joseph Foxman

The Ignored Grave in Mys

In the *Pinkas* of Mys, under the date of 'Av 5634' a decision of the community is recorded, that the funeral of the girl, Sarah, should take place after midnight. The deceased is not to be carried on her bed, but is to be brought to the cemetery in a wagon. Apart from the functionaries of the *Hevra Kadisha*, and the parents, no one is permitted to escort the funeral procession to the cemetery. The *Shammes* may not announce: 'Go to the funeral.' The deceased is to be buried near the 11 graves of the victims of the typhus epidemic of the year 1861. The grave is to remain forever without any marker.

The young researcher and folklorist, Shlomo Foxman, who in the thirties, edited and completed the two Mys *Pinkasim*, researched this matter by talking to the old people in Mys, and this is what he found out:

A daughter of an important family in Mys became pregnant by a young nobleman from the Old-Mys estate. When the parents of the girl found out about this, they confined their 18 year-old daughter to a potato cellar, under their house. They kept her there for several months, giving her only bread and water, and from this [treatment] the girl died.

The community did not punish the parents, who murdered their own daughter deliberately, but rather, punished the unfortunate Sarah, even after her death.

The writer Hillel Malakhowsky who came from the little shtetl of Mys, told the same story, in his autobiographical book, 'A Life of Eighty Years,' which appeared in New York in the forties.

Malakhowsky says, that this did not take place in Mys, but rather in the neighboring *shtetl* of Zhetl.

(*Der Morgen-Zhurnal*, August 22, 1957)

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The 'Clothes for Eternity,' for Use After 120 Years

In the little *shtetl* of Mys, there was a custom, going back generations ago, to prepare, and have burial shrouds on hand, while still alive. Men did not abide by this custom, only the women did.

The reason behind the custom was: first, not to be 'punished' by the frightful imprecation that: 'You should die in some one else's burial shroud,' or 'They should hide you in stranger's clothing.' At one time, this curse was considered one of the most frightening. Second, it was believed that if one prepares the burial shrouds in advance, one lives longer. Third, If one buys the burial shrouds personally, one buys the best linen, and one is able to see that the linen is kosher. Fourth, one sews the correct length. Fifth, this was also considered a mitzvah. And seeing that every year the burial shrouds had to be replaced, one would donate the older,

year-old shrouds to the *Hevra Kadisha* for use on behalf of the deceased poor.

Both the rich and the poor held by this custom, especially the poor. For an entire year, a groschen was saved on top of a groschen, a kopeck on top of a kopeck, and on *Hoshana Rabbah*, as soon as they left the synagogue, after prayers, after beating the *Hoshanot*, the women would go to the clothing stores, to buy kosher cloth. At the time of purchase, the words ‘burial shroud’ were never uttered, but rather indirect mention was made of ‘clothing,’ ‘wear’ or ‘garments.’

My great-grandmother Roch’eh (Rachel) made her own burial shrouds for 41 consecutive years, 41 years she donated them to the *Hevra Kadisha*, and for 41 years bought herself new ‘clothing’ on *Hoshana Rabbah*. On the 42nd year, my [great]-grandmother needed them herself...

In Baranovich, the well-known ‘Minia Aydel’eh the Baker’ also bought burial shrouds for 40 consecutive years, and on the day of *Hoshana Rabbah*, donated them to the *Hevra Kadisha*, and again bought herself new ones.

This custom persisted until fifty-six years ago. It was abandoned on its own. Only a few diehard women still persisted in doing this, and continued to do it right up to the outbreak of the Second World War.

After Hitler’s arrival, there was no need for burial shrouds. The entire Jewish population of Mys was annihilated on a beautiful day in Tammuz, brought to their ‘graves’ without burial shrouds, but only in their blood-soaked, sanctified day-to-day clothing. May God avenge their blood.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, March 8, 1953)

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A Toast to the Messiah in Ljahavičy

In the twenties, the *Bundist* leader A. Litwak was in Baranovich at a lecture on ‘The Concept of the Messiah in the Yiddish Literature,’ and at the end of the lecture, he told of a *Hasidic* episode, that he had heard from a Jew from Karlin.

The *Rebbe*, R’ Mordechai the Second, lived in Ljahavičy, at the same time that the *Rebbe* R’ Aharon lived in Karlin.

These two *Rebbeim* were very good friends, one with the other. R’ Mord’kheleh of Ljahavičy would travel to Karlin and then both of these *Rebbeim* would have a joint ‘*Tisch*,’ and when R’ Aharon of Karlin would come to Ljahavičy, the ‘*Hasidic Tisch*’ was also a joint one, presided over by both of them.

On one occasion of such a joint ‘*Tisch*’ in Ljahavičy, the Karlin *Rebbe* calls out to the Ljahavičy *Rebbe*, saying: Let us drink a toast in honor of the Messiah.

The Ljahavičy *Rebbe* stubbornly refuses to drink this ‘*L’Chaim*’ in honor of the Messiah.

The Karlin *Rebbe* said – ‘Listen to me, and drink this ‘*L’Chaim*’ – I am, after all, Aharon of Karlin, the grandson of R’ Aharon the Great of Karlin. and I know whereof I speak.’

‘No, I will not drink this ‘*L’Chaim*’ – the *Rebbe* of Ljahavičy replied, I am Mottl’eh of Ljahavičy the person who has taken the place of the first Mord’kheleh of Ljahavičy, the ‘*Saba Kadisha*,’ on the rabbinical seat.’ I have it handed down by received tradition, that when the tread of the Messiah is heard, indicating that he is coming, then Hasidim must refrain from drink, and must all be fasting clean, because if that is not the case, the Messiah will lead us out of the Exile of *Edom*, and into the Exile of *Amalek*. We will raise a toast to the Messiah only when we finally are in the Land of Israel.’

I retold this story to my grandfather R’ Abraham Foxman מ”צ from Mys, whom the author of ‘*Yesod HaAvodah*’ of Slonim⁴² had selected as a groom to marry a grandchild of his, and my grandfather answered, that the story is known to him, but rather, that its origin is from the camp of the *Mitnagdim*, who aver that *Hasidim* are drunkards.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, January 2, 1960)

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A ‘Donkey’s Burial’ in the Little *Shtetl* of Stalovičy

Among the Slavic people, there is a belief, that a person can sell his soul to the spirits of the underworld. Jews, who lived among the Slavic peoples for more than a thousand years, adopted this belief, from which is derived the expression: ‘he sold his soul to the devil.’

About a half century ago, in Byelorussia, there was a very famous miracle worker, the Rabbi, R’ Shlom’keh of Wilejka. A faithful disciple of the first *Rebbe* of Ljahavičy, R’ Mordkheh’leh, who said of R’ Shlom’keh of Wilejka, that he is a ‘man possessed of the Holy Spirit.’

One time, an apparition came to R’ Shlom’keh of Wilejka in a dream, of the Miller from Stalovičy, Chaim-Leib, who was already dead and buried, which said to him, that in *kashering* his mill for Passover, he was caught between the millstones, and was ground up and killed. Paying no mind to the fact that he had died while attempting to fulfill a *mitzvah*, because he was *kashering* the mill for the use of the entire Jewish community of the *shtetl* in general, the *Hevra Kadisha* in Stalovičy gave him a ‘donkey’s burial’ behind the wall of the cemetery.

R’ Shlom’keh of Wilejka, who was born in Stalovičy, came there to the *shtetl*, to investigate the matter, together with R’ Yekhiel’keh of Mys. The community presented the argument, that Chaim-Leib the Miller consorted with underworld spirits, and ‘no-goods,’ and there were ‘bad forces’ at work within him, which

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This would be Rabbi Abraham of Slonim, a disciple of Rabbi Noah of Ljahavičy, and Rabbi Moshe of Kobrin.

merited that he should be given a ‘donkey’s burial.’

Rabbi Shlom’keh of Wilejka, and R’ Yekhiel’keh of Mys invited a ‘third’ to join them, the Rabbi of Haradzišča, and as a [fully constituted] *Bet-Din* of three, they ruled, after hearing all the witnesses, that Chaim-Leib the Miller, never sold his soul to the devil, and that he was killed while acting to perform a *mitzvah*, and therefore is deserving of a respected place on the cemetery.

The *Hevra Kadisha* then came to the cemetery, and begged the deceased for forgiveness, in the name of the entire community of the shtetl, and moved the wall of the cemetery three aisles over from the grave, and in this manner, Chaim-Leib the Miller received his right, and was absolved of a false accusation, that he had sold his soul to the devil, and that there was ‘no good’ residing within him.

This story was recorded in the *Pinkas* of Stalovičy, and additional details are known to me from my family, who are descended from Chaim-Leib the Miller.

(*Der Tog- Morgen Zhurnal*, June 19, 1958)

The Hidden *Tzaddik*, Called the ‘Barefoot Melamed’

In Lithuania, during the time of the Vilna *Gaon*, there was a Hidden *Tzaddik*, and a wondrous scholar, who was called the ‘Barefoot *Melamed*,’ whose name was R’ Moshe of Ivie, and he was revealed by the Vilna *Gaon* himself.

R’ Moshe of Ivie, before he was revealed to be a Hidden *Tzaddik*, was a ‘journeyman *Melamed*.’ He would go from village to village, always in bare feet, and learn the *aleph-bet* with the children of the village residents, teach them to pray, and Pentateuch. When he would find out about a Jewish wedding, he would come to the wedding, feigning the role of a simpleton, and enliven and gladden the bride and groom, and their parents. Being at such a Jewish wedding in Zuhavičy, R’ Shia of Zuhavičy, recognized in him, as a disguised *Tzaddik*, and the disguised *Melamed* wept before R’ Shia, asking that he not tell anyone, and not give him any publicity. R’ Shia promised him, but under the condition that he always be his guest at Passover Seders.

One time, however, the ‘Barefoot *Melamed*’ was on an ‘annual’ visit to the Vilna *Gaon*, in order to personally represent that he is no *Tzaddik*, and no scholar. He was then exposed by the Vilna *Gaon*, and from that time on, became prominent as R’ Moshe of Ivie.

R’ Moshe of Ivie was a constant guest at the home of R’ Shia of Zuhavičy, who was a very great extender of his hospitality.

R’ Shia of Zuhavičy built a small wooden *Bet HaMedrash* in Zuhavičy, at his own expense, in which the settlers in the area would come to pray.

After the passing of R’ Shia of Zuhavičy, the small *Bet HaMedrash* burned down. The prayer quorum in Zuhavičy continued to function until after The First World War.

R’ Shia was renown for his Passover Seders, which he would hold in his large tavern. All of the settlers from

Mal. Zuhavičy, and Vjal. Zuhavičy, Zhazewia, Raskosza, Burzewicz, Prosczy, Dobrocic, Njasviz, Sruličy, Mahil'na, Paruczyn, and all of the other surrounding villages, and hamlets.

Among the permanent guests at R' Shia's Seders, there also was the Hidden *Tzaddik*, R' Leib'leh of Malahowiec, who was called the 37th *Lamed-Vovnik*' and R' Moshe of Ivie.

(*Der Tog Morgen-Zhurnal*, May 8, 1958)

Permission from a *Hasidic Dayan* in Baranovich to Build a New House

There was a custom, that one did not construct any new house on a piece of property where no house had stood before, and if one wanted to build a new house, it was necessary to obtain permission from Rabbis.

An instance of this sort is indeed documented in the *Pinkas* of Mys, where the sitting Rabbi of the town issued such a permission to a certain Jew, to permit the construction of a house on a location, where previously there had not been a house before.

In the year 1920, my father had bought a parcel in Baranovich on which he wanted to build a house. The parcel was covered in forest trees, because the entire area, on which the city of Baranovich was later built, was a large, thickly wooded forest of pine trees. It was certain that no house had ever stood on this parcel. So my father ^{ר' נ}, went to pose this question to the *Hasidic Dayan* of the Slonim *shtibl*, Rabbi *Gaon* R' Nissan Scheinberg, ^{ר' נ}.

The *Hasidic Dayan* ruled, that he was unaware of any such prohibition, or remark to that effect, that forbids the construction of a house on a parcel that previously did not have a house built on it. What he did know, is the matter in the *Mys Pinkas*. It was therefore his opinion, that permission needs to be formally granted.

The Rabbi, R' Nissan Scheinberg, issued his permission in writing, and cited motivations containing 10 points. The most important of them were:

1. 'Exposure to Carnality' – It is undesirable that a family of 9 people, with members of both genders, should be living in a smaller and more crowded domicile, and a new house with more rooms can ameliorate such a situation;
2. 'Saving Lives' – The owner of the house where we used to live, a butcher who was uncouth, once got drunk, and with an axe in hand, came into our premises as a 'guest'...
3. 'Respect for the Torah' – Every Jewish residence added to the city, not only represents a beautification of the city, but also honors Baranovich, which had already become known and famous in the Jewish world, as a 'City and Mother in Israel,' a city of schools, study houses, *Shtiblakh*, *Heders*, *Talmud Torahs*, and Yeshivas.

The *Dayan* ordered the written permission placed inside a bottle and to bury it in the niche, under a threshold, when the foundation of the house is poured. and indeed, that is how it was done. The ceremony took place on a Tuesday, in the presence of Rabbi R' Nissan Scheinberg, and a minyan of Jews. A '*L'Chaim*' was drunk, followed by a piece of honey cake, and the wish was made that 'within these new walls, let the *balebatim* know only of 'joy and happiness,' and never have any sorrow.'

In the year 1945, I was in the process of taking my leave of Baranovich, and I found the house intact, and not damaged. Of those, that lived in this house up to the Holocaust, no one remained alive. ט"ו.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, April 15, 1958)

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R' Pini'eh, 'The Guest Ombudsman' of Baranovich

The first *Bet HaMedrash* in Baranovich, which later became popularly known as 'The Old *Bet HaMedrash*,' had in its by-laws, a point that, apart from a *Gabbai* and *Shammes*, the *Bet HaMedrash* must have a 'Designee,' who would provide, for poor people that were traveling through Baranovich, food, drink and a night's lodging, and 'provisions for the road.' In these by-laws, it is noted that this 'Designee' shall not be an employee, but rather a 'congregational volunteer.'

In later years, when Baranovich grew to become a 'City and Mother in Israel,' with schools, prayer houses, *shitblakh*, and houses of study, this specific by-law of the Old *Bet HaMedrash* was stringently observed as a custom, by all the houses of worship in the city.

The most popular 'Designee' in the city, was the 'Designee' of the Great *Bet HaMedrash*, where the sitting Rabbi of the city worshiped, R' David Weitzel. Over the course of several decades, the position of 'Designee' was the exclusive franchise of a worshiper of that congregation, the orchard keeper and butcher of kosher meat, R' Pini'eh Kudewicky.

R' Pini'eh the 'Designee' who would say, that the greatest mitzvah in the Torah is 'And you shall take hold of him,' and the *Dvar Torah* of R' Aharon of Karlin: 'Look after the dignity of the poor, on every Sabbath and Festival, to the extent that is possible,' – broadened the role of 'Designee' throughout his life, not only to provide for and provision the poor itinerants, but also disciples of Rabbis, emissaries, itinerant preachers, coordinators, and victims of fires, and in general, all Jews that were traveling through the city, that needed some help or support.

R' Pini'eh quickly became popular in the country as the 'Ombudsman of Guests.' And everyone who came to the city, and needed help, came to R' Pini'eh with their 'letters of reference,' and he would take care of them all.

There were instances, when in the Great *Bet HaMedrash*, there would be a Sabbath where there were more poor people as guests, than there were *balebatim*, who had the means to take such a guest home with them, and then R' Pini'eh would divide up the guests placing them in inns, and later pay for them out of his own pocket.

During the time of The First World War, the Baranovich garrison was substantially enlarged, and it was then that R' Pini'eh, with heart and soul, threw himself into the task of taking care of the Jewish soldiers with kosher food, especially on the Sabbath and the Festivals.

On Shavuot of the year 1915, Russian gendarmes came to R' Pini'eh's house, and arrested him under the charge of attempting to persuade and encourage Jewish soldiers to desert. This was a very serious charge, and R' Pini'eh was threatened with a very severe punishment by a military court. Tow Jewish soldiers were also arrested under the same charge.

This blood libel, against R' Pini'eh the 'Ombudsman' and the two soldiers, greatly shook up the city. An energetic intervention at the supreme headquarters of the Russian front, which had its seat in Baranovich, by the Rabbi of the city, Rabbi R' David Weitzel, and the famous intermediary, R' Pini'eh Kaplan (the grandfather of the former Israel Minister Chisling), produced good results, and the arrested ones were set free.

R' Pini'eh, the tireless emissary for good deeds, carried on in his work as the 'Designee' until the great global Holocaust, and even then, when the Baranovich Jews were crammed into the ghetto, he committed his entire energy to the principle of 'And you shall take hold of him.'

On Yom Kippur 1942, R' Pini'eh was killed in *Sanctification of the Name*. His martyred and bullet-riddled body, is to be found in the sacred mass grave on the air field in Baranovich.

May his memory be for a blessing.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, January 24, 1958)

Leib'eh the Miller from Kuncevičy

The burial shrouds, that the Jews of Byelorussia would prepare while they were still living, had many names, such as: 'Clothes for Eternity,' 'Clothes for the Other World,' 'The Priestly Clothes,' 'Messiah's Clothes,' 'Execution,' and Eighteen Measures of Linen.'

In the small *shtetl* of Mys, the women would buy the linen on '*Hoshana Rabbah*,' and the men on *Shusan Purim*.

My grandmother, Esther-Dvosh'eh from the little *shtetl* of Mys, who had a dry goods store, would always give the following blessing to the lady buyer of this 'kosher linen.' 'May the worms eat this up in your commode, and may you come back [sic: next year] to buy other linen...'

She would bless the men by saying: 'May you live to see the coming of the Messiah.' As an act of good will, each year, the old 'Eternal Clothing,' would be donated to the *Hevra Kadisha*, for those poor deceased, and new clothing would be purchased.

In the little *shtetl* of Mys, there were special seamstresses, and tailors for these type of garments. Approximately 70 years ago, the following frightening incident took place, regarding burial shrouds prepared in advance.

Leib'eh the Miller from Kuncevičy, bought 18 measures of kosher linen from my grandmother's dry goods store, to make these 'clothes,' and 6 measures to make a *kittel*. Afterwards, he went off to Micah the Tailor of Mys (Micah of Zablocz), who was the town 'specialist' for these 'Clothes of Eternity.'

Micah the Tailor, as was his custom, on taking an ‘order’ for white clothing, hoisted a ‘L’Chaim’ with Leib’eh of Kuncevičy, reciting the sentence: ‘so long as there are white clothing, a man does not know his time.’ He then took the ‘measure’ of the customer by eye, and told him to come back in a week’s time.

A week later, when Leib’eh of Kuncevičy came for his ‘Clothes of Eternity,’ a glass was drunk another time. However, the ‘L’Chaim’ was of a strong spirit, and Leib’eh the Miller threw off his clothing, that he normally wore during the week, which he had one, donned the white burial shrouds, and merrily did a dance, singing the song of Micah, the Tailor of Burial Shrouds: ‘ In woven [goods] does one die, and is taken to the cemetery, in tailored [clothing] one lives forever, and you [also] get taken to the cemetery.’

Later, he put on his regular weekday clothes over the ‘white clothing,’ and traveled off to Kuncevičy. Later that day, a tumult broke out in the little *shtetl* of Mys: ‘Leib’eh the Miller died of apoplexy, while still being dressed in burial shrouds.’

The matter was brought before a Bet-Din of the Rabbis of Mys – R’ Lejzor-Yud’l, R’ Yitzhak-Yaakov, and they ruled: the deceased is to have the already prepared burial shrouds taken off, the body is to undergo ritual purification, new burial shrouds are to be sewn, and those he had previously prepared, are to be interred in his grave.

After this tragic incident, Micah the Tailor lost all of his clientele in the shtetl, and became a custom tailor for the village peasants.

Beyrakh the *Melamed* documented this story in the ‘Mys *Pinkas*.’

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, April 25, 1962)

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The Great Conclave Wedding in Baranovich

When the last Baranovich Rabbi, the Rabbi R’ David Weitzel ז”ר, married off his daughter to one of the best students at the Yeshiva of Mir, R’ Asher from Zhaludok ז”ר, many Rabbis-*Gaonim* and renown Yeshiva headmasters, were invited, and for this reason, in Baranovich, this was called the ‘Great Conclave Wedding.’

The world famous Gaon, R’ Elchanan Wasserman ז”ר participated in the wedding, the renown *Mashgiach* of the Yeshiva of Mir, R’ Yerucham Leibowitz ז”ר, as did the Headmaster of the single *Hasidic* Yeshiva, R’ Shmuel Hirszowicz ז”ר, the Rabbi *Tzaddik* R’ Israel Lubczansky ז”ר, the Rabbi R’ Zvi Gutman ז”ר, the Kaidanov Rabbi, R’ Alter’keh Perlov ז”ר, The Slonim *Rebbe* R’ Avrem’eleh ז”ר, the future Slonim *Rebbe* R’ Shlomo’leh, ז”ר, and many other great and outstanding Jewish figures.

On the Sabbath of the wedding, the *Rebbe* of Slonim made *Kiddush* in the Slonim *Hasidim shtibl*, and went off for the Sabbath feast to the home of R’ ?? David Weitzel. Many Slonim *Hasidim* accompanied the *Rebbe* from Slonim.

As was the custom, refreshments are then served, and in that process, a fresh hot *kugel* is brought, which the Rebbe of Slonim crumbled up with his fingers, and begins to distribute the ‘*shirayim*⁴³’ you understand, by hand, to all those around him. The Slonim *Rebbe* also handed a portion of the *kugel-shirayim* to R’ Yerucham, the *Mashgiach* of the Yeshiva of Mir. Quite deliberately, R’ Yerucham turns away, not taking the *shirayim* from the *Rebbe*’s hand, explaining, that he doesn’t eat ‘cold’ (the *kugel*, because of being crumbled, and having lain on the table for a longer time, had become cold).

The Slonim *Rebbe* then gives an order to the *Hasidim*, saying out loud that R’ Yerucham does not eat ‘cold.’ Well, I should be brought something that is ‘warm.’ In the blink of an eye, a large warm *kugel* appears, and the first hot piece is given to R’ Yerucham.

However, the clever R’ Yerucham replies: ‘It isn’t new’ (the *kugel* however, was a new, fresh, *kugel*). The Rebbe of Slonim then heaved a heavy sigh, and said: R’ Yerucham, don’t you know that when a *Tzaddik* eats, he helps to ‘rectify’ a lost and blundering Jewish soul with his act of eating, and the place where he does this eating, bears witness in the World to Come, and that all those who eat the *shirayim* along with the *Tzaddik*, will also bear witness, as it is written in the Holy Torah: ‘And Jacob called it *Gal’ed*’ (a witnessing stele). And in general, R’ Yerucham, I believe that it is time for *Hasidim* and *Mitnagdim* to eat together from one dish.’

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, September 11, 1962)

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R’ Leib’eleh of Malakhowiec – The 37th *Lamed-Vovnik*

There is a legend among the Jews, that the world is sustained because of the *Lamed-Vov* (36) ‘Hidden *Tzaddikim*.’

There was, however, a hidden *Tzaddik*, who was called the 37th *Lamed-Vovnik*, and this was R’ Leib’leh of Malakhowiec.

It was about this hidden *Tzaddik*, that R’ Alter Woronowsky wrote a work called ‘R’ Leib the Customs Man, ש"סא. And the young historian and researcher, Shlomo Foxman ש"סא [wrote]: ‘The *Seder* of the 3 *Lamed-Vovniks*’ (printed in the periodical ‘*Blau-Weiss*,’ under the pseudonym Sh. Eideles).

And here is what is told about that 37th *Lamed-Vovnik*, R’ Leib’leh of Malakhowiec:

R’ Leib’leh of Malakhowiec was an innkeeper on the tract of Stalovičy and Mys, in which his inn was an open and cost-free lodging for all transient Jews who would be passing through. The inn was run by his wife, and he always sat in the upstairs small room, and studied. From time to time, he would take a stick in hand, and go off to the villages, to teach the [sic: Jewish] settlers a special bit of *Yiddishkeit*.

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Among the *Hasidim*, the spiritual leader (usually the *Rebbe*) would distribute these so-called ‘left-overs’ as a sign of his generosity, and the recipients sought this handout as being of special significance, because of who provided it.

On one Friday, a fire broke out, and the entire inn was burned down to its foundation, and it was not possible to save a single thing from the fire. Then, R' Leib'leh rented a boat from a peasant, and went off to the river to catch fish, and he later cooked the fish on the embers of his burned down premises, in order that the Sabbath still be graced with one meal worthy of the Sabbath, and that this possibility not be prevented.

R' Leib'leh of Malakhowiec. was a steady guest at the home of the Tzaddik, R' Shia of Zuhavičy, who was a rich estate manager, and under his management, he had both a mill and an inn in the village of Zuhavičy, which at that time, was in the possession of the nobleman Wendorf, of the house of Zhazewia.

R' Shia constantly had guests in his inn (he did not take money from Jews), and always recited the blessings after the meal with the minimum 3-person quorum (e.g. a *mezuman*). R' Shia had a custom, that he would always recite the blessings himself, and never give away the honor of doing so, even to the 37th *Lamed-Vovnik*, R' Leib'leh of Malakhowiec. R' Shia personally was the 'mezuman leader' and he would always recite the line 'with the permission of the 'Master of the House,' meaning the Master of the Universe...

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, May 11, 1958)

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Customs of the *Hevra Kadisha* in Ljahavičy

My grandfather, R' Gedalyahu Miletsky, ג'דאליהו מילעטסקי, was the First *Gabbai*, Treasurer, and Recorder of the Ljahavičy *Hevra Kadisha*. He held these positions from 1876 to 1916. Before my grandfather took over these positions, they were for many years in the possession and were a franchise of my great-grandfather, R' Chaim-Leib Miletsky, ח'יים לייב מילעטסקי.

I was a frequent guest at my grandfather's, and in the years of 1914, 1915, and 1916 – practically a 'tenant' in his home, and it is because of this, that these customs are known to me.

According to the old by-laws of the Ljahavičy *Hevra Kadisha*, the *Hevra* had the following composition: 'A First *Gabbai*,' 'Treasurer,' 'Recorder,' and one [sic: additional] person. There were two people designated as a 'Deputy (Second) *Gabbai*,' and two additional people as 'Assistant Deputy (Third) *Gabbai*.' All the others were designated as 'those who engage in the *mitzvah*.'

No one who desecrated the Sabbath was permitted to be a member of the *Hevra Kadisha*, nor those who did not observe family purity, and also not anyone who shaved their hair. It was also a point, that the members all had to be married men.

On one Sabbath during the year, all of the members of the *Hevra* were required to pray together in one synagogue, and take all the *aliyot* for that week's *parsha*. This was the Sabbath in which the *parsha* of *Re'eyh* was read, because there were specific sentences in the *parsha* of *Re'eyh* which were read on the final day of Passover, the Second Day of *Shavuot*, and on *Shemini Atzeret*, when *Yizkor* was recited. The sixth *aliyah* (*shishi*) was reserved for the First *Gabbai*; The third *aliyah* (*shlishi*) and 'Maftir' – the *aliyot* for the two Deputy *Gabbaim*, and in this order, according to the titles of the *Hevra* leadership. Also 'Opening the Ark,' 'Hagbah' and 'Glilah' belonged to the members of the *Hevra Kadisha* on that Sabbath.

Four complete feasts were arranged for by the *Hevra Kadisha* throughout each year: Hanukkah, Passover, *Shavuot*, and *Sukkot*. They also sponsored the *Kiddush* on the Sabbath of *parsha Re'eyh*. The five *Gabbaim* held the franchise for these festive events. The Hanukkah feast was sponsored by the First *Gabbai*, R' Gedalyahu Miletsky in his house. All the expenses associated with this festive event, were covered by the First *Gabbai* out of his own pocket. The expenses of the other four events were covered by funds from the *Hevra*.

Apart from the *Gabbaim*, and 'those who engage in the *mitzvah*,' there were also those characterized as 'taking part,' who would be paid for their work, and would participate in all meetings and all festivities of the *Hevra*.

Among the most important of the by-laws of the *Hevra*, it is necessary to recall that those residents of Ljahavičy, after one hundred and twenty years, must be brought to their final rest in Ljahavičy, and may not be taken out of the city. An exception was made for those deceased, who were guests in the city.

In the *Pinkas* of the *Hevra Kadisha*, are recorded all those who died in the past 300 years. The *Pinkas* was a very accurate 'address book,' for the 'residents' of the new cemetery, and a little also for the old cemetery, which was on the '*Toter Gasse*.'

The *Pinkas* of the *Hevra Kadisha* was divided into ten-year chapters. After each ten years, there would be an empty page, and later on, a page on which a variety of [sic: biblical] sentences were written, such as: 'Remember the days of old – understand the years of your generations;' 'And they sprouted from the city – like the grass of the ground,' and others like this.

My grandfather, the First *Gabbai* of the *Hevra Kadisha*, took extremely great care of a rather simple iron key, which lay in a silver *Etrug* Box from the Land of Israel. This key was the most valuable possession of the *Hevra Kadisha*. My grandfather obtained this key from his father, who also was a First *Gabbai*. According to the oral tradition, this was the key to the very old cemetery in Ljahavičy, which used to be placed under the pillow of Jewish women going into labor. This cemetery key was treated as an amulet, safeguarding the delivering woman from any sort of, God forbid, misfortune.

It is now many, many years, that this key is no longer used for this purpose. Despite this, it is guarded like a sacred relic.

During The First World War, in the year 1916, when the expulsion from Ljahavičy took place, the *Hevra Kadisha* placed the key and the *Pinkas* in the custody of my grandfather, to be taken along with him.

Any trace of the key was lost in Bezhentvo, and in the year 1929, I gave the *Pinkas* to the YIVO archive in Vilna.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, April 5, 1956)

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The '*Pinkas* - Wedding' in Mys

Among the Jews, certain kinds of weddings obtained a variety of designations. For example, there was a

‘Quiet Wedding’ (that is what a wedding was called in Galicia, if a wedding took place involving someone divorced, or if there was a widow or widower involved). A ‘Quiet Wedding’ was also one in which the groom was deemed to be too young and was not permitted to wed (as in the case of not having yet served in the military). There was also a ‘Cemetery Wedding,’ when there was a plague raging, and as an amulet against disaster, the town would arrange for the wedding canopy to be placed in the cemetery for a bride and groom without the financial means on their own to marry.

In the little *shtetl* of Mys, a wedding involving the wealthy, or the well-connected (by pedigree) would be called a ‘*Pinkas*-Wedding.’

The expression, ‘*Pinkas*-Wedding,’ has its roots in the following story: In the year 1832, the richest man in the little *shtetl* of Palonka. Lejzor Bialogursky, sought a union through marriage with the richest of the settlers in the area, Hirsch’l-Zvi of Chernigov. Both the bride and the groom were 12 year-olds. The Rabbi of Palonka did not want to preside over a wedding ceremony, because the bride and groom were too young.

The parents of the couple then had the wedding performed in Mys, where it took place with considerable fanfare. The matter was recorded in the Mys *Pinkas*, under the name: ‘The *Chuppah* from the Outside.’

One hundred and ten years ago, an additional wedding was recorded in the Mys *Pinkas*. In this instance, as well, the bride and groom were also 12 year-olds.

The bride was the grandchild of the first Rabbi of Slonim, R’ Abraham, the author of the books, ‘*Yesod HaAvodah*,’ ‘*Hesed L’Avraham*,’ and other books. The groom was the son of Moshe-Yitzhak of [Stary] Domanowo, near the small *shtetl* of Byten.

From that time on, no more weddings were recorded in the Mys *Pinkas*. Despite this, every expensive wedding in the *shtetl* was called a ‘*Pinkas*-Wedding.’

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, May 27, 1962)

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Two *Lamed-Vov* Tzaddikim

R’ Shia of Zuhavičy and R’ Joel’keh of Ščepličy

One of them lived during the time of the Vilna *Gaon*. He was called Shia of Zuhavičy. He was an estate manager in the Zuhavičy estate between the towns of Mir and Polonieczka. He was held as being holy as a ‘*Lamed-Vovnik*’ not only among the Jews, but was also renown among the Christians in the entire area of Byelorussia.

The young historical researcher, Shlomo Foxman, ש'למה פוקסמן gathered over one hundred legends surrounding Shia of Zuhavičy. A number of them were published in the regional Jewish press of Byelorussia. I have ten such stories about him, in my possession.

The wondrous legends of Shia of Zuhavičy were told with the same fervor whether by *Mitnagdim* or *Hasidim*. The *Mitnagdim* say, that Shia of Zuhavičy was a *Mitnaged*, and a disciple of the Vilna *Gaon*, to whom he would often make journeys. In opposition to this, the *Hasidim* say, that Shia of Zuhavičy was a *Hasid*. In the world, there were four Jews who do not make trips to visit a *Rebbe*, nevertheless, they are well acquainted with the *Hasidic* way of life, and conduct their lives in the *Hasidic* way. One of these four was Shia of Zuhavičy, and he would travel to the Vilna *Gaon*, in order to defend the *Hasidim*, and constantly worked to extinguish the disputes between *Mitnagdim* and the *Hasidim*. He would also travel often to his neighbor, R' Israel of Ivenets, a fiery, and avowed opponent of *Hasidim*. He saw to influence him [R' Israel] not to be so antagonistic in his attacks against *Hasidim*.

However, it was R' Joel'keh of Ščepličy, the *Lamed-Vovnik*, who was more renowned as a miracle worker. He was an estate manager in the village of Ščepličy, between the small towns of Ljahavičy and Kleck, which was in the possession of the well-known wealthy family of Reitan.

When R' Aharon of Karlin made his first journey through the cities and towns of Byelorussia, R' Joel'keh was among the first who welcomed him. Later on, he became a *Hasid*, of R' Mordkhe'leh of Ljahavičy, and with the latter, would travel together to Karlin.

The usual outfit worn by R' Joel'keh was a coarse cloth jacket, high boots, a cap with a visor, and the jacket was tied around with a rope. While riding a horse, he would travel between all of the settlers in the villages. He would teach them Judaism, and later on, the *Hasidic* way. He would inspect the *mezuzot*, and with the children – their fringed garments, and he taught the women the specific laws that pertain to them. With a variety of medicaments and amulets, he would heal the sick.

The village Jews called him 'Joel'keh *Ness Gadol*,⁴⁴ and the peasants called him 'Joel'keh *Nasz Godel*. They elided the [Hebrew word] 'Ness,' into the [Polish] '*Nasz*,' rendering the meaning 'Joel'keh, *Our Great One*.'

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, April 16, 1956)

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The Four Feasts of the *Hevra Kadisha* in Baranovich

The various *Hevra Kadisha* organizations in Byelorussia were known for their frequent festivities, which they would put on at every opportunity.

Apart from the various regular opportunities to hold a banquet, the *Hevra Kadisha* in Baranovich had four traditional feasts, as recorded in the *Hevra Kadisha Pinkas*, which were obligatory for all the members and those involved in its work. The dates of these feasts were as follows: 15 Kislev; 7 Adar, The Last Day of Passover, and *Lag B'Omer*. The first three of these feasts were paid for out of the *Hevra Kadisha* treasury. The fourth, which was called 'The Feast of the Maintenance of *Lag B'Omer*' was paid for entirely by the community. The Rabbi of the city would attend this feast, as well as the most prominent of the *balebatim* of

⁴⁴ Joel'keh the Great Miracle [Worker]

the city.

In the morning, immediately following prayers, everyone would go out to the cemetery, examining and reviewing all of the headstones, to see if they were in good condition. Also, the fence around the cemetery was inspected, and see to it that everything was in order. Afterwards, they would all return to the Workers' *Bet HaMedrash*, near the house of the sitting Rabbi of the city. There, a banquet would be proffered and funds collected for the 'Maintenance of the Fence.' It was from here, that the feast took its name of 'Maintenance of *Lag B'Omer*.'

The Jewish settlement of Baranovich no longer exists, The cemetery, about which the dedicated members of the *Hevra Kadisha* took so much care, is today abandoned, and neglected, without a fence, and without any 'maintenance.'

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, July 30, 1962)

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By-Laws from the Mys *Pinkas*

The following by-laws are recorded in the Mys *Pinkas*:

When the Rabbi of the *shtetl* would rule that a slaughtered fowl was ritually unfit for consumption [sic: *trayf*], he would give the *Shokhet* a note, that he is to slaughter the second fowl presented without being paid his usual fee.

When someone would build a new house, he was obligated to give a 'tithe' and 'charity' to the community.

If a groom is poor, the gift of the community is to be *Tallit*; if the bride is poor, then the gift of the community is to be a set of candlesticks for blessing lit candles.

Burial of a deceased is to take place on the same day of passing. The community is to be informed of the death, and the *Shammes* of the *Hevra Kadisha* is to lead the funeral cortège, and intone: 'Go to the funeral.'

The *Maftir aliyah* for the Sabbath of the Hanukkah week is to be given to someone named 'Benjamin.'

The *Maftir aliyah* of the week of the *parsha Vayigash*, is to be given to someone whose name is Gedalyahu. In the year 1869, an entry was made in the *Pinkas*, that no 'Purim-Rabbi' will be selected.

Beside each '*Get*' that was recorded in the *Pinkas*, the following saying was entered: 'For him who divorces his first wife, even The Altar weeps for him.'

In the *Pinkas*, it was recorded that the Rabbi of Mys, R' Lejzor-Yud'l gave out slaps to a certain Yankl

Jonas's for not being willing to comply with a rabbinical ruling (in the text, the [Hebrew] word '*malkot*⁴⁵' is used, believed to signify slaps).

The same Rabbi, R' Lejzor-Yud'l, one time, in the middle of prayers, ejected an informer from the *shtibl*, using his elbows, and ordered that it be recorded that it is forbidden to include this informer in counting for a *minyan* of worshippers.

In the *Pinkas*, several instances of 'handshake' [agreements] are recorded. One of them is: That Nathan-Neta, Meir'keh's gave a 'handshake' at the open grave of his deceased father, Meir'keh Nathan-Neta's, indicating that he will take his bride to wife under a *Chuppah*, and not in any way shame a young lady.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, May 27, 1962)

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The Will of a Jewish Tailor from Mys

The Tailor, 'R' David the Levi' as he was called in Mys, got his extra name because all the *Kohanim* of the *Bet HaMedrash*, where R' David prayed, wanted R' David to be the one, to pour water over their hands, prior to their administration of the Priestly Blessing.

David the Tailor was very gifted musically, and was very good at leading services, but he seldom took the pulpit to lead such prayers.

David the Tailor made his living from tailoring. However, he spent more time in the *Bet HaMedrash* than he did in his tailor shop. For his entire life, he scrupulously made sure to participate in the first morning *minyan* for *Shakharit*. He would always make sure that he always prayed with a minyan, and not alone, and to be someone who would be sitting by the table during the study periods in the *Bet HaMedrash* after *Shakharit*, and also between *Mincha* and *Maariv*.

All the outer garments that David the Tailor sewed buttoned on the left side. – To button on the right side, David the Tailor said, is the custom of 'all nations,' and therefore, Jews should button their clothes on the left side of the garment.

When, in old age, David the Tailor fell sick, and he sensed that he was 'tending towards death,' he sent for the *Gabbaim* of the *Hevra Kadisha*. and charged them, that he is communicating to them, in the form of a will, that when he dies, he wants the planks for his coffin to be made from his work table in his tailor shop, which in the 'World to Come, will be his witnesses that for his entire life, he derived his sustenance for his family from the 'exhausting labor of his own hands,' and that the boards will further testify that he lived a decent life, and never took so much as a groschen inappropriately.

When 'R' David the Levi' died, his will was scrupulously carried out, just as he had demanded before his

⁴⁵ Conceivably could have been a flogging.

death.

His son, Shlomo the Tailor, as a young lad, acquired the name, ‘Shlomo, Shlomo’s,’ because his father left him a behest, to thrice daily recite the 13 attributes of ‘*Ani Ma’amin*.’ Later on, he obtained the appellation of ‘Shlomo the *Dayan*,’ because, just like his father, he never missed one occasion for either learning or praying.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, April 2, 1958)

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A *Din-Torah* with a Deceased Person in Stalovičy

In the Yiddish literature of tales, one can find a variety of legends, having to do with calling back a person from the dead, to participate in a legal process [sic: *Din-Torah*], as did R’ Itzik’l Horowitz, the Rabbi of Brody (Later on the Rabbi of Hamburg), in calling a deceased person to such a *Din-Torah* (See ‘*Die Khasidishe Velt*’ by Menashe Unger, pp. 210-212).

In the municipal *Pinkas* of Stalovičy, a *Din-Torah* with a deceased person is recorded, which can serve as the source of Sh. Ansky’s famous drama, ‘*Der Dybbuk*.’

The small *shtetl* of Stalovičy, was one of the few such towns in the one-time Pale of Settlement, which kept a chronological *Pinkas*. Everything that happened, and took place in their area, was recorded for the benefit of future generations.

One of the most interesting pages in the Stalovičy *Pinkas*, is the story of the deceased, who was called to a *Din-Torah*. The story is as follows:

Approximately 140 years ago, the daughter of the richest man in Stalovičy, broke off her intended marriage with a groom, who was the son of a Stalovičy craftsman who had already passed away. The father, of the embarrassed groom, took upon himself to defend the honor of his son, who was so shamed, and entered the bride in the form of a *Dybbuk*.

The parents of the bride, took their stricken daughter to all the great professors and doctors. Nobody was able to help. They took her to all of the ‘Good Jews’ of that time, but none of them was able to help.

The renown R’ Yekhiel’keh of Mys, who was selected to be the Chief Rabbi of Mys in the year 1811, was the first *Hasidic* Rabbi in Byelorussia, was, at that time, a guest in the little *shtetl* of Stalovičy. The father of the unfortunate girl, came to R’ Yekhiel’keh, and with tears in his eyes, beseeched him, asking R’ Yekhiel’keh, who already had a reputation as a miracle worker, to drive the *Dybbuk* out of his daughter.

R’ Yekhiel’keh sent a *minyán* of Jews to the cemetery, to invite the dead craftsman to a *Din-Torah*. The deceased came to the *Bet-Din shtibl*, and stood behind a linen curtain, which had been ordered in accordance with R’ Yekhiel’keh’s instructions.

After carrying out an argument with the deceased, R’ Yekhiel’keh made the *Dybbuk* swear to go out from

the young lady who was to be a bride, and that he should return to his [eternal] rest.

On that same day, the young girl returned to good health, and in that same week, with great fanfare, the wedding of this girl and her previously spurned groom took place.

The Baranovich Yizkor Book also relates this story from a different perspective.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, February 12, 1958)

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The Inauguration of the Baranovich Cemetery in 1888

In the 70's and 80's of the previous [sic: 19th] century, about 5 km from the small *shtetl* of Mys, a Jewish settlement began to develop, near the Moscow-Brisk railroad line. It grew to become the Jewish *shtetl* of Razwodowo. The *shtetl* grew to become the city that is widely known in the world by the name, of Baranovich.

Graf Rozwadowski the owner of the entire lands of Baranovich and its environs, donated a parcel of land to the first Jewish settlement, near the village of 'Znaiec,' for use as a cemetery, for the small Jewish population.

This gift was transacted officially in Navahardok, in the name of two members of the already existing *Hevra Kadisha*.

The first Rabbi of Baranovich, the Rabbi *Gaon*, Tzaddik, Chaim-Leib Lubczansky ח"צ"ל, a related by marriage to the renown R' Yuz'l *Harif*⁴⁶, opposed the gift, because a burial place is to be purchased and needs to be a purchased asset of the Jewish settlement.

At the beginning, the members of the *Hevra Kadisha* were opposed. In the end, however, they approached Graf Rozwadowski, indicating that they want to pay for this gift. The Graf was insulted. However, he was agreeable to transforming the 'gift' into a 'fully paid for parcel for burial.' The second act also took place in Navahardok, because in Razwodo-Baranovich, there was not even a single official entity.

But even after the cemetery was already in possession of the Jewish community, and had already been enclosed with a fence, it remained unused for many years.

Then, a dispute arose between the *Hevra Kadisha* and the Rabbi. The members of the *Hevra Kadisha* wanted to inaugurate the cemetery with a single deceased person to be interred. The Rabbi, however, was opposed to breaking a tradition, that such an inauguration is to take place with the interment of two deceased. And

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From the Hebrew word for 'sharp,' indicating someone gifted in analytical thinking.

so, the Rabbi of Ljahavičy, the Rabbi *Gaon*, R' Simcha HaLevi Hurwitz, was invited to come to Razwodo-Baranovich, to rule in the matter of this dispute. The Rabbi of Ljahavičy ruled, that a tradition is tantamount to a law, and a tradition cannot, and should not, be broken.

The deceased from Baranovich were, once again, taken to Mys for burial. In the year 1888, a tragic misfortune occurred in Baranovich: two little boys, in a mid-week day, when the bath house was locked, stole into the bath house. and were drowned in the newly-constructed *mikva*.

The two drowned little boys were brought to their final rest on the same day. This common grave, is the first grave in the Baranovich cemetery. Their grave was the inauguration of the cemetery in Baranovich.

The Rabbis from all of the surrounding towns came to attend the inauguration of the cemetery, all of whom delivered eulogies.

On the gate [of the cemetery] was hung a writing as follows: 'This is the Gate dedicated to the Lord, Through which the Righteous Shall Enter.' A year later, this writing was altered to read: 'A Resting Place to All the Living.'

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, February 4, 1954)

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Well-Known *Hasidic* Leaders of Prayer from Mys and Telekhany

A hundred years ago, the *Baal Tefilah*⁴⁷ R' Nathan-Neta of Mys, a son of 'Shma Yaakov' of Navahardok, was renown through all of Byelorussia.

R' Nathan-Neta was a very accomplished scholar, a wondrously learned man, and famous for his command of liturgical music. R' Nathan-Neta held the franchise of the 'prayer pulpit' for a bit under 50 years, of all Sabbaths and Festivals. His sweet voice, he delectable rendition of the prayers, would cause everyone going by the synagogue to pause.

R' Nathan-Neta did not make a living by being a *Baal Tefilah*, but rather as a *Shokhet*. When he would have a 'good week,' and earned more than he needed for his expenses, he would divide up the 'excess' among the poor on Friday.

In Mys, it was held that R' Nathan-Neta has a spark of the melodies of the Rabbi, R' Aharon of Karlin.

R' Nathan-Neta passed away sixty years ago. The Rabbis of the surrounding towns all eulogized him.

The *Baal Tefilah*, R' Yankl of Telekhany, was also renown throughout all of Byelorussia and Polesia. R' Yankl of Telekhany was not only a renown *Baal Tefilah*, but also a famous composer of *Hasidic* melodies.

⁴⁷ One who leads prayer, but is not officially a Cantor, or *Hazzan*.

His style in the *Hasidic* melody form, and music, was very pleasing. His melodies were sung in all of the ‘courtyards’ of all the Rabbis of Lithuania and Byelorussia: Ljahavičy, Kobrin, Slonim, Stolin, Karlin, and Kaidanov. His melodies are still sung in America, by those remnants of *Hasidim*, from these previously mentioned *Hasidic* ‘courts.’ Two of the melodies composed by R’ Yankl of Telekhany were ‘borrowed’ and applied to the lyrics of two Yiddish songs, and are played on records.

The *Baal Tefilah*, R’ Yaakov-Moshe of Mys, was also renown in the entire territory of Byelorussia, who was blind, but was able to chant even the entire service for *Rosh Hashana* and *Yom Kippur* from memory. R’ Yaakov-Moshe was a Slonim *Hasid*. His rendition of the prayers was done with exceptional ardor.

I, personally, knew R’ Yaakov-Moshe the *Baal Tefilah*, and heard his wonderful rendition of the prayers. When he would step down from the prayer pulpit, there would be a river of tears beside that pulpit. His weeping would last from *Kol Nidre* to after *Ne’ila*.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, September 21, 1956)

The Will of Sarah-Risha ר"ש, the Charitable Woman of Mys

A few years before The First World War, the *Hasidic* woman, Sarah-Risha Steinberg, passed away at the age of 90 years of age, and she left behind a will that all of the metal charity boxes she had, were to be buried along with her, in which every day, after ritually washing her nails, she would drop coins for a variety of Jewish charities, and along with them, to include all the receipts that she had gotten from the various Yeshivas and Talmud Torahs, and also her little notebook, in which she had itemized her private donations, and donations that she had made in secret.

The family of the deceased then went off to the *Hasidic Rebbe*, R’ Lejzor-Yud’l ר"ל, to ask his opinion, about what is to be done regarding this will, seeking advice as to whether the will should be carried out as written, or not. The *Hasidic Rebbe*, R’ Lejzor-Yud’l ruled that everything that the deceased had requested in the will, must be carried out exactly and precisely as indicated.

For the *Gabbaim* of the *Hevra Kadisha*, who were *Mitnagdim*, the ruling of the *Hasidic Rebbe* was insufficient, and they went off to ask the Rabbi of Mys, who was the Rabbi of the *Mitnagdim* of the *shtetl*, but also the Rabbi of the *Mitnagdim*, R’ Yitzhak-Yaakov ר"י, ruled that there is nothing in the will that is against Jewish law, and must be carried out exactly as indicated by the family via the *Hevra Kadisha*.

There was even a proposal, that because of her admirable philanthropy, that the deceased be ‘hidden’ near the grave of the legendary righteous woman, Dvora’leh the *Gabbait*, in the very old cemetery. However, they refrained from doing this, because there was no more room there for an additional grave.

The righteous woman, Sarah-Risha ר"ש, indicated in her last words, that everything that will remain after her, should be divided among poor families. Her candlesticks, in which she blessed candles for 90 years, she ordered be given as a gift to a poor bride. For her daughter, Rachu’sheh, a daughter-in-law to the *Starosta* of Mys, R’ Shmuel-Yoss’l, ר"י, she left only her *Korban-Mincha Siddur*.

The deceased Sarah-Risha Steinberg, who dedicated her entire life to fulfilling the mitzvah of giving *Tzedakah*, was a simple woman of the people, who would deny herself, in order to be able to give what was

needed, to a second party.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, March 1, 1956)

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Residential Nicknames Attached 37 Towns in Byelorussia

1. Slonim – The Slonim Fools
2. Lida -- The Lida Drunkards
3. Bobruisk -- The Arrested of Bobruisk
4. Sluck – The Sluck Fruitcakes
5. Kapyl’ – The Kapyl’ Blabbermouths
6. Kleck -- The Kleck Pigs
7. Palonka – The Palonka Billy Goats
8. Kazluščyna - The Kazluščyna Nanny Goats
9. Belica – The Belica Thieves
10. Haradzišča – The Haradzišča High Pressure Salesmen
11. Dvarec – The Dvarec Intestines
12. Eishyshok – The Eishyshok Big Shots
13. Moučadz – The Sour Milk from Moučadz
14. Karelity – The Karelity Dissenters
15. Oran – The Oran Corpses
16. Lotwa – The Lotwa Gentile Thugs
17. Navael’nja – The Navael’nja Cover-ups
18. Krynki – The Krynki Thieves
19. Bialystok – The Bialystok Bread Roll Gorgers
20. Sokolka – The Siberians 9sic: criminals) from Sokolka
21. Wasilkow – The Wasilkow Billy Goats
22. Svislucz -- The Sislevich Nanny Goats.

People from Baranovich Had Five Nicknames

23. Baranovich Over-Eaters
24. Baranovich Guzzlers
25. Baranovich Egotists
26. Baranovich Self-Promoters
27. Baranovich Snobs

Ljahavičy Had a Host of Nicknames. the Most Popular Were:

28. The Ljahavičy Fur Coats
29. The Ljahavičy Pickpockets
30. The Ljahavičy Hatters
31. The Ljahavičy Ass Whippers
32. The Ljahavičy Cucumbers, and many other nicknames

Mys Had Five Nicknames

33. The Mys Barley Soup Makers
34. The Mys Critics
35. The Sniff of Tobacco from Mys
36. The Mys ‘Midget’
37. Kiss me in my Mys

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, November 25, 1959)

The Will of a Jewish Horse Thief

There was a time when the Jewish community of Baranovich did not have its own cemetery, and at that time, the Jewish deceased were buried in Mys. And even after the time, when Baranovich had its own cemetery, Jews left behind wills, indicating that they were to be buried in Mys, because they wanted to be interred beside their parents. Such a will was left behind by ‘Nathan-Neta The Regretter,’ who was also called ‘Noss’keh the Horse Thief.’

The will was written by the Shammes of the *Bet-Din* of Baranovich, signed by the decedent, the horse thief, R’ Noss’keh. The witnesses were: The members of the *Hevra Kadisha*, the shoemaker, Dark Moshe’keh, and the shoemaker, Abraham’l Zeldin, and the two sons of the horse thief, Shaul’keh and Hirsch’keh.

The writer of the will, a literate Jew, embellished the will with a sentence from the Pentateuch: ‘... *that you will show me kindness and faithfulness. Do not bury me in Egypt, but when I rest with my fathers, carry me out of Egypt and bury me where they are buried.*’⁴⁸

R’ Noss’keh the Horse Thief authorized a second will, to be written in the Russian language, by the well-known ‘Jonah the Lawyer.’

When the writer of the will passed away, the Baranovich *Hevra Kadisha* were happy to escort him to another place for burial. In the will, Noss’keh requested that he be eulogized by the Rabbi of Mys, and seeing that he did not obey the commandment ‘Thou Shalt Not Steal,’ he, nevertheless, for his entire life fulfilled the *mitzvah* of wearing *Tzitzit*, and putting on *Tefillin*, the *mitzvah* of praying three times a day, the *mitzvah* of observing the Sabbath, he said his prayers while wearing a *gartl*, he did not defile his beard, even with a small scissor, wore side locks, and was the first one, on Purim, after the reading of the *Megillah*, to donate his *Maot-Khittim*, for the poor.

The Rabbis in Mys, one was *Hasidic*, and the second – a worldly person, could not arrive at an understanding of which one of them should give the eulogy. Each one offered this ‘honor’ to the other. In the end, both of the Rabbis gave a eulogy.

Afterwards, it was told in Mys, that Noss’keh’s two sons stole a horse, saying, that they needed to pay the *Hevra Kadisha* for the burial plot of their father...

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, November 12, 1962)

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The 'Sacred Stone' of Ljahavičy

On the *Schulhof* in Ljahavičy, a 'Sacred Stone' stood for generations at a time, on which the *skhakh*⁴⁹ was burned after *Sukkot*, and also wedding canopies were set up near this stone.

A folk legend tells, that the *Mitnagdim* once seized the Rabbi R' Mordkhe'leh, and whipped him on the stone, near the synagogue.

The *Mitnagdim* had become incensed by R' Israel-Leib'l of Navahardok, the author of the anti-*Hasidic* book, '*HaVikuakh*⁵⁰,'

When the *Hasidim* found out about this, what the *Mitnagdim* had done to their Rabbi, they sent out a general call to all *Hasidim*, that they should bring the books of R' Israel-Leib'l to Ljahavičy.

A day after *Sukkot*, the *skhakh* was taken off of the *sukkah* of R' Mordkhe'leh, and placed on the stone, near the synagogue. *Hasidim* also brought the *skhakh* from their *Sukkot*, and a great fire was lit in the synagogue, and in the fire, all of R' Israel-Leib'l's books were burned.

From that time on, a custom was initiated to burn on the *skhakh* on this stone.

Following this, a practice was initiated to set up a wedding canopy beside the stone where R' Mordechai'leh of Ljahavičy had been whipped.

In the course of time, this stone was sanctified also by the *Mitnagdim*, and during a funeral procession, the deceased was eulogized at the site of this very 'Sacred Stone.'

During the time of The First World War, the shtetl of Ljahavičy was destroyed, and the 'Sacred Stone' disappeared.

The *Gaon*, R' Meir of Karelincy, a brother of the renown '*Khazon Ish*,' who in the years of the 20's was the sitting Rabbi in Ljahavičy, once, during *Sukkot*, held forth in an oration, and beseeched the Jews, that if they knew where this 'Sacred Stone' was to be found, that they should inform the Rabbi, but nobody knew what had become of the 'Sacred Stone.'

This 'Sacred Stone' had existed in Ljahavičy for 124 years, surrounded by these wonderful legends and customs, and now, only the legend remains, but there is no stone, just like there are no longer any of those who held it to be sacred.

(*Der Morgen Zhurnal*)

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49 The roof thatching on the temporary booths constructed for this holiday celebration.

50 The Discussion, or The Debate.

A Rosh Hashana 'Rebbe' in Mys

In the little *shtetl* of Mys, the most prized *aliyah* was that of *Maftir* on the First Day of *Rosh Hashana*. Namely: The *Haftarah* of I Samuel 1.

The purchaser of the right to chant the *Maftir* on the First Day of *Rosh Hashana*, was crowned with the title of '*Rosh Hashana Rebbe*,' for the entire year, from one *Rosh Hashana* to the next *Rosh Hashana*.

This *aliyah*, the *Maftir* on the First Day of *Rosh Hashana*, and the title of '*Rosh Hashana Rebbe*,' was auctioned off at the '*Bet HaMedrash* of the Rabbi, in the synagogue, where the sitting Rabbi of the *shtetl* prayed.

The elite among the *balebatim*, the wealthy, the more aristocratic, the Torah scholars, never bothered to pursue this '*aliyah*.' Second of all, it would not be of any help to them, in any event, even if they bid a huge sum, because this '*aliyah*' was considered to be the exclusive franchise of the 'common folk.'

It happened quite often, that the person who bought the *Maftir* of the First Day of *Rosh Hashana*, did not even know the Hebrew in the *Haftarah* very well. Despite this, he was crowned with the title of '*Rosh Hashana Rebbe*.'

Before the *Maftir* was auctioned off, there would be a recess declared in the *Bet HaMedrash* of the Rabbi, in order to make it possible for those worshipping in other houses of prayer, to come and bid on the *Maftir*.

The worshipers at the *Hasidic shtibl* in Mys, never attended the auction of the *Maftir*, and never bought the *Maftir*.

The one who purchased the *Maftir*, who was crowned with the title of '*Rebbe*,' served for an entire year as an intercessor for Jewish pregnant women.

When a Jewish expectant mother began to feel the onset of labor pains, before even going to summon the midwife, one would go to the '*Rebbe*.' The '*Rosh Hashana Rebbe*,' immediately would come running with the *Mahzor* for *Rosh Hashana*, and would read the entire *Haftarah* from I Samuel in front of the expectant mother.

This '*Reader of the Maftir*' received no pay from the community, nor any fee from the family of the expectant mother.

Among the 'common people,' it was considered a great honor to attain the prestige and the association of being the '*Reader of the Rosh Hashana Maftir*' in the *Bet HaMedrash* of the Rabbi.

My grandfather told me, that this custom existed in Mys for many centuries, and in the 80's of the past [sic: 19th] century, a wagon driver from Mys held the 'franchise' for this *aliyah* for a stretch of a full 10 years. For this, the wagon driver paid for a full year's worth of heating of the *Bet HaMedrash*, and at the level of this price, he had no competition.

During the 80's of the past [sic: 19th] century, when a new settlement began being created and developed 5 km from Mys, later known as Baranovich, and whose first residents were from Mys, this custom was

transferred to Baranovich.

This custom was continued in Baranovich until the outbreak of The Second World War.

In Baranovich, the 'franchise' to auction off the I Samuel *Haftarah*, did not belong to the Rabbi's *Bet HaMedrash*, but rather to the 'Old Bet HaMedrash,' which was the first *Bet HaMedrash* built in Baranovich.

I know people in America, former residents of Baranovich, who would buy the *aliyah*, and were called as a good-luck presence to visit expectant mothers going into labor.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*)

A Rich Man's Will Breaks an Old Custom of the *Hevra Kadisha* in Mys

There was an old custom in the little *shtetl* of Mys, that deceased men were interred separately from the women in the cemetery.

The old cemetery in Mys, which was closed in the year 1790, was divided into separate areas – a separate plot for men, for women, and for children. In a far corner, there was a separate plot with graves that had no markers or headstones. These were graves for those who had transgressed against the community, such as informers, people who flouted their violation of the Sabbath, who were then 'hidden away' in a 'donkey's grave,' and the community did not permit memorial stones to be placed on their graves.

In the new cemetery, which had existed since the year 1777 as a *Hasidic* cemetery, was, in the year 1790, renovated by the community and made a general cemetery both for *Hasidim* and *Mitnagdim*, and it too, was divided into separate aisles for men, aisles for women and aisles for children.

In the year 5601 (1850), a wealthy man passed away in Mys, who was also a substantial Torah scholar. The deceased had left a will in which he requested that he be interred beside the grave of his deceased wife, and because this will went against the existing custom that was observed in Mys for generations on end, that men and women must lie in separate areas, a *Bet-Din* of three Rabbis was empaneled: The Rabbi of Stalovičy, The Rabbi of Palonka, and the Rabbi of Mys, R' Yekhiel'keh ^{5"צ}י. The ruling of the *Bet-Din* was that it is necessary to carry out the terms of the will exactly as ordered by the deceased, even though it is not in accordance with existing custom.

Some time after this, an indigent shoemaker died in Mys, who shortly before his death, in front of witnesses, expressed his wish that also he is to be 'hidden' near the grave of his deceased wife.

The *Hevra Kadisha* and community were opposed to carrying out the will of this poor shoemaker, R' Yekhiel'keh, however, ruled that the prior ruling of the three Rabbis about the wealthy man held sway in connection with the will of this poor shoemaker. This will was also carried out, and from that time on, for all practical purposes, the very ancient custom that had been in force for generation on end, that there be separate aisles of burial for men and women, was broken. And here, we present the following event that took

place in Mys:

In the year 5631 [1870] a certain Hurwitz died in Mys, who was the Jewish manager of the local noble's water mill in Palatewicz, who in his will, had ordered that he be buried near his wife. However, the deceased had two wives, both of whom were already deceased and buried, and in his will, he did not specify which of these wives he wanted to be buried next to. A dispute erupted between the children he had by both wives. Each side of the children argued that their father had intended their mother specifically.

The children went off to the Rabbi of Mys, R' Yaakov-Moshe ז"ל (the author of 'Be'er Yitzhak,' 'Bet David,' and 'Nakhalat David') and the Rabbi issued the following ruling: 'It is not clear from the will, next to which of his two wives the deceased wish to be buried, and in order not to bring shame on one or the other of them, the will cannot be implemented, and the deceased is to be interred in the cemetery of the nearest *shtetl*, Palonka.'

All of these facts are taken from the community Pinkas of Mys, and the writings of R' Yitzhak-Matos Miskin (a grandson of the 'Yesod HaAvodah'⁵¹, ז"ל), and the stories of my grandfather, Rabbi Abraham Foxman ז"ל, who passed away 35 years ago, at 80 years of age.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, April 21, 1955)

A *Shokhet* Strike in Baranovich

Worker strikes against *balebatim* in Baranovich took place very rarely. Among the strikes that did take place, the *Shokhet* strike was perhaps the most interesting and most original.

The strike was proclaimed by the ritual slaughterers in the year 1923, and went on for a long number of weeks.

At that time, the ritual slaughterers had a collective agreement with the butchers, as to how much they were to receive for the slaughter of cattle, and how much for a calf. However, because the Polish zloty fell in value, the ritual slaughterers demanded a raise. The butchers did not want to give this raise, and as a consequence, the three ritual slaughterers, R' Menachem Kaplan, R' Ephraim Kopeliowicz, and R' Itcheh (a Slonim Hasid), went on strike.

Then, the butchers approached the two ritual slaughterers in the city, who slaughtered fowl, asking them to undertake slaughter on their behalf in the large slaughterhouse. The fowl slaughterers agreed, and on one weekend, 70 'living items' (cattle) were slaughtered.

⁵¹ Abraham (I) Weinberg of Slonim (1804—1883), the first titular *Rebbe* of Slonim, serving from 1858, who was primarily responsible for establishing the sect's unique doctrine, one that came to be deeply influenced by the *Misnagdic* yeshiva culture dominating nineteenth-century Jewish Lithuania and Byelorussia.

The sitting Rabbi of Baranovich, R' David Weitzel took the side of the three veteran ritual slaughterers, against the butchers, and declared all seventy of the slaughtered animals ritually unfit for consumption [e.g. *trayf*].

The butchers were then compelled to concede, and sold the meat to the unkosher sausage manufacturers at half price.

Arbitrators were then empaneled. The 'third man' was – Rabbi Fein of Slonim. Both sides came, each with their arguments. The dispute was resolved, and the original strike was ended.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, April 26, 1957)

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The *Hevra 'Shomrei Shabbat'* in Baranovich

In Poland, after The First World War, it was already possible to find individual Jews in Poland, who permitted themselves the option of keeping their businesses open on the Sabbath.

In order to interdict this desecration of the Sabbath, a number of cities established Societies of Sabbath Observers [e.g. *Hevra Shomrei Shabbat*].

In Baranovich too, during the decade of the twenties, a *Hevra Shomrei Shabbat* was established. The following distinguished *Gaonim* stood at the head of the *Hevra*: Rabbi Elchanan Wasserman ז"ל, and the Rabbi R' Israel-Yaakov Lubczansky ז"ל.

Under the influence of the *Hevra Shomrei Shabbat*, those businesses that had opened on the Sabbath and Festivals, once again, chose to close, and the *balebatim* who owned these businesses signed pledges to observe the sanctity of the Sabbath. From its side, the *Hevra Shomrei Shabbat* would publish notices that such-and-such a business, which previously had desecrated the Sabbath, were, from this day forward, recognized as having returned to the fold. These notices would be put up in all the synagogues, study houses, and *shtiblakh*, and also in the regional press.

My son, who has just now returned from a visit to Israel, brought me a variety of interesting documents, relating to the history of Baranovich. Among the documents is an original notice from the *Hevra Shomrei Shabbat* with the following content: 'Notice,' we have the honor to advise all Jews of Baranovich and vicinity, that the management of the 'Pluto's' chocolate business, Mr. Hirsch ZELIKOVICH, and Mr. Moshe Grabowiecky, came to the local *Bet-Din* of Righteousness, and expressed their regret for their past desecration of the Sabbath, declaring, that they had been misled because of threats regarding possible loss of their business. They assumed the ongoing obligation not to keep the store open on the Sabbath and Festivals, God forbid. And because of their sincere assurance that they will stick to their promise, in return for their observance of the Sabbath, may they earn the blessings of success, thereby remaining in business among their fellow Jews, and may they, and all others who observe the Sabbath, be blessed because of the Sabbath [observance] with good luck, *selah*. The writers and signatories, in honor of the Sabbath. The Rabbi

and [Senior] of the Bet-Din of Righteousness in Baranovich. *Hevra Shomrei Shabbat* of Baranovich, published on Thursday, *Matot-u'Mas'ei*, 29 Tammuz, 5694, in Baranovich.

(*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, 1960)

‘At Weddings, At Ritual Circumcisions’...

In the little *shtetl* of Mys, years ago, there was a custom: when dogs would bark at night, the womenfolk would go to the threshold of the doorway entrance, bang on the door lintel, and say: ‘At Weddings, At Ritual Circumcisions’...

Where does this saying come from?

My grandfather, Rabbi Abraham Foxman ^{ר"מ אב"ר}, himself having been born in Mys, and knowledgeable in the local customs, explained it as follows:

In the Gemara, it is stated: ‘If dogs cavort – Elijah the Prophet is coming to the city, If dogs cry – the Angel of Death is coming to the city.’

So, in times gone by, there was a Jewish custom in Mys: When dogs are heard crying at night, indicating that the Angel of Death is then in the city, one should go to the door and recite the prayer: ‘*Hob khass auf dyneh B'nai-Briss*’ (Show mercy to the sons of Your Covenant;’ meaning, to show mercy to the Jewish children).

When, upon hearing the Hebrew words ‘*Khass*’ and ‘*B'nai Briss*,’ the Jewish women did not grasp the correct meaning, they erroneously altered the prayer to ‘*Auf Khassenehs, auf Brissn...*’ (‘At Weddings, At Ritual Circumcisions’)...

Shlomo Foxman
(‘*Yiddish far Alleh*’ August-September, 1938)

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‘God’s Street’ in Baranovich

The Szeptycka *Gasse* in Baranovich, to this day, is called *Marinska* by the Jews – in line with its pre-war Russian name, ‘*Marinskaya*.’

A number of the elders tell that the Russian name is taken from ‘*Maria*,’ – which was the name of the daughter of Graf Rozwadowski, the master of the land, on which the city was built.

Other hold that the name comes from ‘*Holy Mary*’ and it was for this reason, indeed, that the Jews before

The First World War, altered the name to ‘God’s Street.’

In Baranovich, it was once told that a curious person once asked a Jewish woman: ‘What street do you live on?’ She replied: ‘ I live on the street where I have not yet washed my hands...’ (This is how the elderly women would express themselves in our area, not wanting to speak the name of God).

I am also aware of a second interpretation of the name ‘God’s Street:’ it was on that street where the largest buildings were located, and the richest businesses, and where the wealthy of the city lived, ‘God’s Street’ then means: it is the street on which God has bestowed His plenty and blessing.

It is the principal street in our location, and during the German occupation of 1915 - 1918, it was called ‘*Hauptstrasse*.’

Shlomo Foxman
(‘*Yiddish far Alleh*’ January, 1939)

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A Forgotten Province That Made Our People Great

By Daniel Charney

Only two cities in the Minsk *Guberniya* were privileged to be memorialized through two substantive memorial books, and these are Baranovich and Pinsk

(Reprinted from ‘*Der Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, 9 July, 1955)

My respected colleagues and *landsleit*, H. Leivick and Daniel Persky, recently registered complaints with the various *Landsmanschaften* of the Minsk *Guberniya*, as to why none of them, to date, had published even a single Yizkor Book?

Their justifiable complaints touched me personally, because I am a scion of the Minsk *Guberniya*.

So I leafed through the book, ‘*Landsmanschaften* of New York,’ which the I. L. Peretz Literary Society had published in the year 1938, and I noticed, that the city of Minsk alone, had 19 societies, of various sorts, in New York.

One such Minsk *Landsmanschaft*, which recently celebrated its 50th Jubilee, even boasted that it had resources of \$160M.

What this means, is there was not any shortage of funds, with regard to publishing a Yizkor Book about the mother city of Minsk.

No shortage of people to do the work would exist as well, because just for the *Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*, there

are six writers there, any one of which would be qualified to be the editor of a Minsk Yizkor Book.

Here they are in [sic: Hebrew] alphabetical order: Daniel Charney, H. Leivick, the one who is alive, Sh. Niger, Dr. Shlomo Simon, and Aharon Zeitlin (and Daniel Persky of 'HaDoar,' who also has something to offer).

But perhaps Minsk is one of those provinces of Byelorussia that may not have produced too many Jewish personalities, who would be worth memorializing in special Yizkor Book?

So I was not lax, and I perused all four thick volumes of Zalman Reisen's Lexicon, and... wonder of wonders!

I counted about one hundred and some sixty Yiddish and Hebrew writers, who come from sixty cities and towns, that were part of what was at one time the Minsk *Guberniya*.

It suffices to say, that the first classical writer of the modern Yiddish literature comes from Kapyl' in the Minsk *Guberniya*. This is *Mendele Mocher Sforim*, who died exactly one month after the October Revolution, and 20 years later, this self-same October Revolution killed the first Yiddish-Soviet poet, [Yitzhak] Izi Kharik⁵², who also comes from the Minsk *Guberniya*.

But Izi Kharik no longer figures in Zalman Reisen's Lexicon, because the Lexicon was published barely thirty years ago.

Understand, that in the years of 1920 - 1940, when Yiddish-Soviet culture still flourished, tens of other writers, talented people, artists, and people who brought culture, came to the Minsk *Guberniya*, who made the Minsk *Guberniya* even greater, but all of these are not accounted for in Reisen's Lexicon, and they also can no longer be found in the new Soviet Lexicons and encyclopedias, because, quite simply, they were erased from there.

The sole Yiddish writer that the Soviet encyclopedia did leave in, was *Mendele Mocher Sforim*, because after his death, he was titled as a 'proletarian' writer.

It is, indeed, for this reason, that the recently deceased Israeli ambassador in Moscow, Shmuel Eliashiv, could, under no circumstances, persuade the communists to allow *Mendele's* remains to be transferred from Odessa to Israel.

However, apart from the 160 Yiddish and Hebrew writers, that it is still possible to find in Zalman Reisen's Lexicon, which appeared thirty years ago, the Minsk *Guberniya* also produced a large number of important personalities, not in the literary sphere, who became renown the world over, and not only in Jewish circles alone.

Do you know that General David Sarnoff, President of the Radio Corporation [of America] comes from the small *shtetl* of Uzlyany, not far from Minsk, and not more than 20 *viorst* from my own home town *shtetl* of

⁵² Kharik, Izi (Yitzhak; 1898—1937), Soviet Yiddish poet. Born in Zemin, Byelorussia, he began publishing Yiddish poetry in 1920. In June 1937, at the peak of his career, he was arrested, and killed later that year, as part of the Great Purges that decimated the Soviet cultural elite. His work was not republished until the late 1950s after his rehabilitation following Stalin's death.

Dukora?

By the way, the well-known American writer in English, Eugene Lyons⁵³, whose real name is Mosh'keh Gebeleyev, also comes from the same *shtetl* of Uzlyany.

Do you know that the world-famous artist, Chaim Soutine⁵⁴, for whose paintings, one pays millions of francs, comes from the little *shtetl* of Smilavičy, which is all of ten *viorst* from my own little *shtetl* of Dukora?

Do you know that the first President of the State of Israel, Prof. Chaim Weizmann comes from the little *shtetl* of Motal, near Pinsk, in the Minsk *Guberniya*?

Do you know that the renown revolutionary, Gershuni, who is already woven into legend, comes from Minsk⁵⁵?

Do you know that Manya Shokhat⁵⁶, the former Manya Wilbuszewicz, who in the years 1902-1903 aroused the Jewish labor movement to a frenzy with her 'Zubatovščina'⁵⁷, comes from Minsk?

⁵³ Eugene Lyons (1898—1985) was an American journalist and writer. A fellow traveler of the Communist Party in his younger years, Lyons became highly critical of the Soviet Union after having lived there for several years as a correspondent of United Press International. Lyons is remembered by many as a biographer of President Herbert Hoover. Eugene Lyons was born July 1, 1898 to a Jewish family in the town of Uzlyany, now part of Belarus but then part of the Russian empire. His parents were Nathan Lyons and Minnie Privin. He grew up on the East side of New York City among the teeming and odoriferous tenements of Sidney Kingsley's Dead End.

⁵⁴ Chaim Soutine (January 13, 1893 — August 9, 1943) was a Jewish painter from what is now Belarus. Soutine made a major contribution to the expressionist movement while living in Paris. Soutine was born in Smilavičy near Minsk, (modern day) Belarus (then part of the Russian Empire). He was the tenth of eleven children. From 1910—1913 he studied in Vilnius at the Vilna Academy of Fine Arts. In 1913, with his friends Pinchus Kremegne (1890—1981), and Michel Kikoine (1892—1968), he emigrated to Paris, where he studied at the École des Beaux-Arts under Fernand Cormon. He soon developed a highly personal vision and painting technique.

⁵⁵ Grigory Andreyevich Gershuni (September 29 [o.s. September 17] 1870—March 29 [o.s. March 16] 1908) was a Russian revolutionary and one of the founders of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party. Born in Kovno, Russia 1870 to Jewish peasants. Gershuni studied as a pharmacist at Kiev University and later opened his own bacteriological laboratory in Minsk.

⁵⁶ Manya Shochat (or Mania Shohat), née Wilbuszewicz, (1880* — 1961) was Russian Jewish politician and the "mother" of the collective settlement in Palestine, the forerunner of the kibbutz movement.

⁵⁷ Named for Sergei Vasilyevich Zubatov, a Russian revolutionary turned informant for the Czarist secret police, the *Okhrana*. Despite his deeply held monarchist convictions, Zubatov earnestly believed that repression alone could not crush the revolutionary movement. He therefore also promoted the organization of pro-government trade unions to channel protest away from agitation between 1901 and 1903, a practice named *police socialism* or lambasted by revolutionary activists as *Zubatovščina* after him, which gained support from Moscow Governor General, Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich.

Do you know that Esther Frumkin, the former *Bund* leader, and the founder and progenitor of the modern Yiddish education system, and later on a Communist, who was killed in a Soviet prison, was from Minsk?

Do you know that the world-famous philosopher, and Enlightened Thinker, Shlomo Maimon (1754 - 1800) the close friend and disciple of Moses Mendelssohn, the founder of the *Haskalah* movement, comes from Njasviz in the Minsk *Guberniya*?

Incidentally, the well-known Yiddish and Hebrew writers, such as Dr. Mordechai Ze'ev Reisen, the Rabbi of Paterson, Dr. L. Fogelman, co-editor of the '*Forverts*,' and Shlomo Damesek of Lakewood, also come from that same *shtetl* of Njasviz.

Do you know that the poet and publicist, David Einhorn, comes from Karelidy?; The Yiddish-Hebrew writer Y. D. Berkowicz (a son-in-law to *Sholom Aleichem*), whose dramas '*Mosh'keleh Khazer*' and '*Landsleit*,' were produced by Maurice Schwartz in New York, with great success, comes from Sluck; The well-known actor, Ben-Ami, is also from the Minsk *Guberniya*; Shaul Ginsberg, the editor of the first Yiddish periodical in Russia, '*Der Fraynd*' is from Minsk; Dr. Yaakov Wigodsky, whom the Nazis killed in Vilna, is from Bobruisk; Baruch Wladek (Charney) comes from the little *shtetl* of Dukora; Alexander Zeldin, the former employee of the '*Tog*' comes from the little *shtetl* of Lelcyc; Sh. Janovsky, the former editor of the '*Freier Arbeiter Stimme*' comes from Pinsk; the well-known writer YHL"l (Yehuda Leib Levin) and YaKNeHoZ (Y. Goldberg) are from Minsk; Nahum Chanin, the General Secretary of the Workmen's Circle, comes from Holopeniec; A. Litwin (Sh. Hurwicz) – from Minsk; The Living One (Chaim Gutman) – from Piotrkow; A. Liesin, the former director of '*Zukunft*' – from Minsk; The Hebrew poet Ephraim Lisitzky, who won the Lamer Prize, comes from the Minsk *Guberniya*; The reverend, Zvi Hirsch Masliansky, comes from Sluck; Yaakov Marinov, former editor of '*Kundes*' comes from Sernik; The literature and drama critic, Dr. Kh. Mokdoni, comes from Ljahavičy; Vladimir Medess, the renown leader of the *Bund*, is from Minsk; *Mendele Mokher Sforim*, as I have already mentioned, comes from Kapyl'; Sh. Niger, as you know, comes from the little *shtetl* of Dukora; Yitzhak Neufach, former Chief Justice from Tel-Aviv, comes from Minsk; Dr. Shlomo Saymon, and employee of the '*Tog-Morgen-Zhurnal*,' comes from Kalinovičy; Dr. Aharon Singalowsky, the President of the Old World 'ORT' Society, comes from Pinsk; The beloved Mendl Elkin, who directs the library at YIVO, comes from Bobruisk; The literary and theater critic, Joel Entin, comes from Pohost; Daniel Persky, the foresworn Hebraist, supporting the Ashkenazic style, and the perpetual employee of the weekly '*HaDoar*,' in New York, comes from Minsk; Aharon Zeitlin, the perpetual employee of the '*Tog-Morgen Zhurnal*,' comes from Ovorovičy; Eliezer Kaplan, the first Finance Minister of the State of Israel, comes from Minsk; Ber'l Katznelson, the former leader of the *Mapai* Party in Israel, comes from Bialystok;⁵⁸ The martyred poet, Yitzhak Katznelson, who left us the poem, '*Dos Lied fun mayn Oysgehargetn Folk*' comes from Karelidy; Dr. Yaakov Klatzkin, the philosopher, who spent the years of the slaughter of The Second World War in New York, and went off to die in his beloved Switzerland, comes from Kartuz-Bereza; Leo Koenig, the well-known essayist, who lastly took up residence in Tel-Aviv, comes from Salen, near Bobruisk; Hillel Rogoff, the Editor-in-Chief of '*Der Forverts*' comes from Berezin; Menachem Mendl Rosenbaum, the Yiddish essayist and Zionist, who recently died in Israel, comes from, Pleščeničy; the poet, Joseph Rolnik, who for many long years was a proofreader for '*Der Tog*,' comes from Zuhavičy; Shneur-Zalman Rubashov (Shazar), the first Education Minister of the State of Israel, comes from the little *shtetl* of Mir; Abraham Reisen and Zalman Reisen, come from Kaidanov; The manufacturing director, Joseph Schlossberg, whose 80th birthday is currently being celebrated both here in America and in Israel, also comes from Kaidanov; the famous novelist Shomer (Shykevich) comes from Njasviz; his son, Abraham Shomer,

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Since Bialystok is not in the Minsk *Guberniya*, it is not clear why this is included here.

is from Pinsk.

Here, I have alphabetically [sic: by Hebrew] listed not more than several tens of names, which are very well known to everyone, without commentary.

At the end, I also wish to recollect, that the Minsk Guberniya also produced a fine number of women storytellers and poets. Here they are (again in [sic: Hebrew] alphabetical order):

Rachel Berachot from Minsk; Tzil'ia Drapkin from Bobruisk; Yehudit (Rachel Bernstein), from Minsk; Bertha Kling, from Navahardok; Sarah Reisen from Kaidanov.

If there is anyone of my colleagues that I have inadvertently omitted, it is not my fault. They are not to be found in Zalman Reisen's Lexicon.

There are certainly additional Yiddish and Hebrew writers from the Minsk Guberniya, who took up this art after the time that Zalman Reisen's Lexicon was frozen, some thirty years ago. I would be grateful to them, if they contact me in due course, in order that I be able to include them in the list of the creative Jewish personalities, that are to appear in my forthcoming planned book. '*The Forgotten Guberniya*.'

In this context, I have omitted all of the great Rabbis and other clergy from the Minsk Guberniya, beginning from the 'Great One' of Minsk, until, may he live long years, Rabbi Nissan Telushkin, from Brooklyn-Dukora. Regrettably, I do not have access to the book of Rabbi Ben-Zion Eisenstadt, '*Minsk and its Sages*.' However, the future publishers of a Yizkor Book, about the mother city of Minsk, will be able to find Rabbi Eisenstadt's book in the library of the Schechter's Teacher Seminary.

I say 'the future publishers,' of a Minsk Yizkor Book, but I really mean, as you understand, the immediate, the publishers who will publish tomorrow, because I cannot conceive that the well endowed, and many *Landsmanschaften* from the Minsk Guberniya, will be indifferent to their destroyed homes, and rely on 'future' historians, who, you can understand, will never materialize...

In ten to fifteen years, all the above-mentioned writers, who still have something to contribute to such a Minsk *Pinkas*, will no longer have the wherewithal to undertake such a task, and so, one asks the question of one's self, who is it that can take their place?

Therefore, I, indeed, appeal now, along with my colleagues, H. Levik and Daniel Persky, to all of the *Landsmanschaften* of the Minsk Guberniya, that they should accelerate the publication, and produce a Yizkor Book however more quickly, whether in the form of a *Pinkas*, or as a Lexicon about our Guberniya that has been destroyed, which raised our generation to greatness, and elevated our people.

Only two cities in the Minsk Guberniya have thus far been privileged to be memorialized through such substantive memorial books, these being Baranovich and Pinsk.

These two memorial books can serve as models for all the other cities and towns, of the Minsk Guberniya⁵⁹.

⁵⁹ The Yizkor Book *Minsk, Ir va-'em: Korot, Ma'asim, Ishim, Havai* [Minsk; Jewish Mother City: A Memorial Anthology], edited by David Kohen and Shlomo Even-Shoshan. (Jerusalem, 1975-1985).

The first volume (693 pages) was published in Jerusalem in 1975 by the *Irgun yotse Minsk u-venoteha be-Yisrael*

A Seder Night Without Matzos in a Soviet Prison in Baranovich

By Fishl Ludmirer

On 12 Nissan, it became 4 months that we were incarcerated in prison. God in heaven – how many incidents of imprisonment did we already go through in these short four months. In Mockiszky and Soleczinek near Lida, we still believed that we would only be detained for a few days, as some of those who tried to cross the border before us, and we would be summarily released. In the Lida prison, we were still being assured: you Torah scholars will certainly be released, but in the second pavilion of the Baranovich prison, in cell number 81⁶⁰, there we were, 38 people, for more than 3 months, and tomorrow is the day to clean out the *Hametz*, and the day after, in the evening, is the night of the first *Seder*.... we are prohibited from eating any *Hametz*. And so, what is to be done about Matzos?

Ach! If those dear Baranovich Jews only knew, that here in the prison, in their own city, there are 25 Jews, among them 10 Torah scholars, and that all, as one, including Yankl'eh the Communist from Kovno, decided that on the first *Seder* night, they will eat no *Hametz*, they would most certainly have sent in Matzos. But the Baranovich Jews do not know, and they are kept from being informed as to who is languishing in their city, behind the walls of the prison...

We have no contact with the outside world. For us, only number 31 exists, where there are 17 cots, where in the old days, 17 genuine criminals would sleep, and here 38 people are crammed together, who wanted to leave this 'liberated Garden of Eden'...

[It is] the Eve of Passover. Through the bars in the elevated prison windows, that reach practically up to the soffit, the bright rays of the sun shine in, and a piece of the blue sky can be seen.

Leib'leh Ber'ish from the Bialystok Yeshiva, is still certain, that the Creator of the Universe can still perform a miracle, and have all of us Jews set free. It will be, he says, our genuine festival of liberation. But the day moves on. On the western wall one can see the shadows of two large barred windows. It becomes evident...Leib'leh's confidence is not justified, and not even the belief that we will get Matzos sent in at the last minute. It was yet another miracle, that we had, early on, sold off our 'bundles' of bread to the gentiles for 8 portions of sugar (Leib'l among us), and were it not for that, we would have transgressed in possessing *Hametz* by default...

Night begins to fall. Spontaneously, all 25 of the Jews gather on two of the beds, on which the Torah scholars

[Association of *Olim* from Minsk and its Surroundings in Israel]. It covers the history of Minsk through 1917. The second volume (504 pages) covers the period after 1917 and was published in 1985, also in Jerusalem. Both volumes are in Hebrew and each has a separate table of contents and separate name indices. The name indices are not necrologies, but contain the names of people mentioned in the volumes, both Jews and Gentiles.

⁶⁰

Seemingly a typographical error, since the cell number is subsequently given consistently as 31.

are sleeping. The Lawyer, Marek Cahan (a former syndic of the Polish periodical '*Moment*'), and Yankl'eh Riback, also come over, and set themselves to begin the *Maariv* prayer for Festivals.

As the oldest of the Torah scholars, it falls to me to have the honor of leading the services. The heart is pained by a heavy weight of suffering, oppression, and indescribable feelings of sorrow; a minute earlier, I noticed that the perpetually hopeful young lad from Rawa-Ruska – Moshe Gruber, dissolved into whining tears...

I quickly run over to his bed, on which he had thrown himself, and buried his head in the prison-issued blanket. 'What is the matter, Moshe?' – I ask him – 'Are you too beginning to break down? You, who are the one to always be the one to cheer us up? Is this what your *Rebbe* of Belz taught you?...' Moshe quickly raises his head, wipes away the last of his tears, from his tear-stained face, and slightly embarrassed replies – 'I reminded myself of my father's *Seder*. And as you can see, it possessed me entirely. – But it's over. –' 'Well, pick yourself up, we are getting ready to pray,' I say to him, and I immediately begin the prayer using the Festival melody: '*Barchu et HaShem HaMevorakh.*' and the congregation responds '*Baruch HaShem HaMevorakh LeOlam VaEd....*'

The guard then raps on the door to cell number 31, and shouts out loud: 'Прекратит Шум.'⁶¹ We pray more quietly. We recite the *Hallel* in unison, *Hallel* behind prison walls... a wellspring of tears erupts from each of us. The Jewish heart [in each of us] is crying, which in no way can encompass the suffering that his people have endured innocently, and beseeched the Father in Heaven – Oh Lord, deliver my soul, compassionate God, who is righteous....

The Jewish mind takes pride in the words of – *the very stone, rejected by the builders has become the keystone – in the Lord's name, we will cut them down and we will live through this.* The congregation repeats, with great fervor, praying louder and louder... and we take no note of how, through the peep window, the guard is looking in, and immediately unlocks the heavy iron door, and remains standing there, agape. It is truly a rare sight! Jews praying in a Soviet prison... 'What is going on here?' he asks. The lawyer Cahan steps out of the throng, and explains something to him in Russian. The guard heads for the exit, and the words 'Только без шуму'⁶² reach my ears, along with a strong scraping sound of the keys in the iron door.

After wishing each other '*Gut Yom Tov,*' we sit down to the *Seder*. We all seat ourselves about on our cots, which are in the southeastern corner of the cell. 'My dear brethren in common woe' – I say to them – 'In this year, we will emulate the *Seder* of Mordechai'... I explain to them more precisely. We read in the *Megillah*, 'And Mordechai passed – so what exactly did he pass over? – Our Sages tell us that – he fasted on Passover.. and we now face the need' – I say further – 'to perform such a *Seder*, but without Matzos....children! Whoever knows the *Haggadah* by heart, should begin, and we will listen'. With a quiet whispering from all the surrounding Jews, and from the entire gentile cell, all of whom are looking at our corner with bated breath, Leib'leh begins the recitation of the *Haggadah*, with a strong complaint to Our Father in Heaven: 'Why is this night different from all other nights? In our minds, all of us ask this same very pressing question – why is this *Seder*-night different from all other *Seder*-nights, that we have already lived through?...And so comes that ancient response, 'We were slaves...' slaves to alien Pharaohs... and we feel that this, indeed, is the appropriate reply. This is why our ancestors suffered, and this is why we suffer... our

⁶¹ 'Cut out the noise.'

⁶² 'Do this without noise.'

eternal tribulation, slaves and servants to foreign rulers, in alien kingdoms, but not in our own land, for ourselves... Leib'leh reads the *Haggadah* continuously, as if it came straight out of the *Siddur*, and we hear this, and get lost in our own thoughts. But with a start, Leib'leh awakens us from our daydreaming. He is already at the end, the completion of the Passover Seder... *Liberated to Zion, your city, in song* – he ends. All of us awaken, even Yankl the Communist shouted, literally shouted: ‘*Next Year in Jerusalem!*’

The door to the cell is vigorously opened. The guard runs in with a shout: ‘Go to sleep already, if not, you will all go into the dungeon.’ But who is listening to him at that moment. As soon as he leaves, we all begin to sing ‘*Adir Hu...*’ May he build His House Soon... Quickly...Quickly... In Our Day...Soon... Lord, Build....’

Mendele Gersztner, from Tarnow, sings all of the Passover songs: – *Ekhad Mi Yodea, Chad Gadya*, and just plain other cantorial pieces. We all feel a little more lively. We have gotten ourselves drunk on hope, on this very *Seder*-night, without Matzos. We have a goal before our eyes... the future is so close, and lit by a clear and shining sun... and so who is really missing the Matzos on this very *Seder*-night in prison, seeing that here, at hand, we have that very day that God has given us, so let us be happy with it – *This is the day that the Lord hath made, let us be happy and rejoice in it...*

Let us make a very significant point: On that *Seder*-night, Yankl Riback the Communist, became a Zionist, a religious-nationalist Jew...

Shavuot in the Slonim Shtibl in Baranovich

By Fishl Ludmirer

(Those on High rejoiced, and those Below made merry, on receiving the Torah)

Hordes of people, *balebatim*, scholars, young men from the Yeshiva of the *Mitnagdim*, little children from the various *Heders*, and the elementary level Yeshivas, are being drawn to the large, wooden *Bet HaMedrash*, on the Minsk *Gasse*, built out of large long blocks, piled one on top of another, up to the roof above. All are going in the direction of the Slonim *shtibl*, to see the *Rebbe* and the *Hasidim* at their *Shavuot* Festival prayers, and the receiving of the Torah. By the time you reach Rog Senatorska, you can hear that ‘voice striking with tongues of fire,⁶³’ that is carried to you through the open windows of the Slonim *shtibl*, and when you get closer to the *shtibl*, its exterior gives the appearance of a tall, high pauper, dressed in weekday clothing. The walls of the *shtibl* accost the eye, with no color, no levity. Here and there, pieces of moss and cotton protrude from under the beams that have been tossed together – you are left, in that first glance, especially after you see the *Bet HaMedrash* for the first time – standing agape. Really? Is this the spacious Slonim *shtibl* of Baranovich?

So you come into the courtyard of the *Bet HaMedrash*, through which you push yourself, because Hasidim are already standing here crammed in, and with effort, you force yourself inside, into the *shtibl* interior, from which a wave of heat emanates, and a cloud of humid air, and you are immediately drenched in sweat – the

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A biblical allusion: see Psalms 29:7

prayer shawls of the *Hasidim*, which make the more rapid impression by virtue of wrapping their heads in them, seeming to be black tarred neck adornments, which are worn by the Slonim [*Hasidim*], analogous to the silver neck adornments of the *Hasidim* from Galicia and Poland; so you stand for a minute, and you hear the Slonim style melody, with their whining-like tearful cry, and hoarse voice, such that the beasts themselves might expire. You stand for a minute, and you see how Jews hold up their heads, covered in sweat, wet prayer shawls, and who cry out so often: ‘Oy, Sweet Father, have mercy [on us]’ and who gurgle hoarsely this way, in the back of their throats, some with glazed over eyes, as if they were about to die, and others gesturing with their hands, and knocking with their fingers; then a fear and terror seizes you, and genuine feelings of holiness take control of you. But now, you hear how the *Rebbe* is leading services at the pulpit, his voice sounding rusty and hoarse, and it is hard to hear the words, because each word is accompanied by an entirely long series of *ay, ay, ay...* and hear I can distinguish the sound of ‘*Tashuv Enosh Daka, ... ay, ay, ... VaTomar Shuvu B’nai Adam – ay, ay*’,... the words coming out is such a whining manner, that a chill passes through your bones...between the hand-waving of the *Hasidim*, and the choked whisper – ‘Oh hear us, Father in Heaven, have pity’ – with beards and side locks raised upwards, the sweat that covers your face becomes literally cold. And even if you were a person with iron nerves, a robot without any feelings, such a picture would sweep you away, and who knows if it would not introduce a touch of repentance as well...

The reading of the Torah. The *Rebbe* himself reads, in that same hoarse style, without musical notes, without any reading style. Jewish *Mitnagdim*, who are fastidious about ritual, are simply turned off by such reading. *Ach!* They shrug their shoulders, such reading does not satisfy the requirement...

But when you hear from the *Rebbe*, either ‘*That shalt not kill....*’ or ‘*Thou shalt not covet...*’ and you remind yourself, that you once did try to sin... and in your ears, there echoes that sorrowful ‘Sweet Father, show mercy, show mercy,’ from the *Hasidim*, as a soft reply to the ‘*Tashuv Enosh Dka*’ coming from the *Rebbe* – then it is specifically this type of Torah reading that gives you a shove to your soul, and a rip, a frightening rip to your heart....

Fervent Jews, Jews full of heart, Slonim *Hasidim*, where are you on the Shavuot of today? Was it the Voice of God ‘striking tongues of flame’ that consumed you – or the fiery crematoria ovens of Auschwitz?....



Who is it that sways in prayer with the Slonim *Bet HaMedrash*? Who there raises the soffit, and makes merry with the floor? Why is it that the window panes tremble so in the window frames of the *shtibl*? And who is this Jer, with the white socks, and white trousers, that peer out from under his black silk *kapote*? Who is this Jew with his face aflame, eyes shut, his head thrown back, and his crushed and bared heart? And for what is he whirling himself about so, in the wild dance of the rollicking throng? And oh, how they dance! With feet tapping, hands thrown around each others shoulders, and backs, faces all sweaty, and the black edges of the *kapotes* throw themselves about, long white fringes, and throats rattle as if these were death throes taking place at a last stand, using up the last of one’s energy. What are they mumbling so incoherently, with whom are they speaking? Are they here, or are they in the Other World? But do I nevertheless not hear our own holy words? What, you don’t hear them? Well, do you not, listen carefully to the chant of this very same old man, with the white beard, who is dancing near you? Do you finally hear? ‘Those on High rejoiced, and those Below made merry, on receiving the Torah,’ *ay, ay, ay...* Do you not see the joy, to the point of forgetting one’s self, here ‘Below’ on our insignificant little world, with receiving the Torah. And indeed, that is how those ‘Above’ rejoiced, the angels. But, perhaps are not all of these Jews angels, who have come down ‘Below’ and rejoice and dance with the Receiving of the Torah?....

And where are you, you Slonim Jews, today at the time of the Receiving of the Torah? Your *Bet HaMedrash* is burned down. There is only an empty space that is left where it used to stand. Your *Rebbe*, R' Abraham'leh זצ"ל, still had the privilege for a few years before the *Great Destruction*, to literally dance with those from 'Above,' not here on this sinful, forsaken earth, but [up] there, where unclean human hands can no longer reach them with their Holocaust. Who knows if their technology would enable them to reach up into the heavens, that they would not attempt to destroy, and to reach even your *Rebbe* in heaven to exterminate him as well. Only one miracle remains to us, that he who dwells in the heavens may rejoice, and laugh at all the human terrorists.... so dance then, all you people from Slonim, with your *Rebbe* in heaven, a dance in honor of the giving of the Torah! Unimpeded, joyfully, take yourselves around in a circle in that Slonim *shtibl* in the heavens, and dance, with your hoarse voice, and laugh in the face of the one who murdered you and your *Bet HaMedrash*. Sing, and stomp your feet, so that the heavens themselves might tremble: Yesterday, those 'Below' rejoiced in receiving the Torah — today it is those 'Above' who make merry in receiving the Torah...

R' Moshe'leh, *Hasid* from Slonim ⁶⁴

By Yekhiel Granatstein

(Reprinted from 'b'Sha'ar' Paris, *Rosh Hodesh Kislev 5709* [December 2/3, 1948])

The little wooden house, in which he lived for all his years, stood on a hillock, in the *Schulhof*, together with the totality of the poverty that was crammed into those crowded and filthy side streets.

Apart from an attic room, this old, broken down house on the ground floor, abandoned, and never occupied.

The windows of the rear rooms were always wide open, as though after a fire. On the wooden beams that hung down from the walls, and which bend under rains and snow, huge mushrooms sprouted, and corroded the wood until it collapsed.

From this emptiness, and while the rooms served other purposes, fetid odors would waft over the *Schulhof*, so pungent, that it was necessary to hold one's nose, in order not to inhale it while passing by.

In spring and fall, this wreckage served as a meeting place for the cats in the entire *Schulhof*, and also from the other streets. They would spend entire nights roaming around there, meowing, and committing all manner of mischief. The dogs in the city, mostly those who had no owners to control them, would hide there, with all manner of things they had stolen, especially pieces of meat, which they would drag off the slaughterhouse blocks from the nearby slaughterhouse street.

And if one wanted to go upstairs to R' Moshe'leh, first one had to negotiate the wreckage, and from there, work your way into the dark yard, where there was not much more room than for a pail for slops, and an outhouse. Here, a broken ladder led up to the attic room, which was somewhat larger than a large animal pen, with a small window, which had two panes, that were never washed.

Here, R' Moshe'leh lived with his wife, who, in her younger years did not bear any children, and remained permanently childless.

Over the years, the sloping roof of this hut, became entirely crooked, and bent itself away from the other houses of the *Schulhof*, as if it wanted to have nothing to do with them. The roof remained hanging like a cap with a visor, blocking off the sun with its shingles, and never permitting even a shred of light to come into the attic room.

Day and night, R' Moshe'leh sat over his books and learned. His oil lamp constantly sputtered, and on the floor, there were round black hoops, like iron bars, as if they were supporting the weak soffit from falling to the ground.

R' Moshe'leh was a puzzle to the people of the city. Nobody knew how he made a living, how he feeds himself and his wife, and what sort of person he was in general. In contrast to this, women, who were good Jewish ladies, not even religious, spread various stories, that here, we are dealing with an esoteric type of

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R' Moshe'leh *Hasid*, was the son of the Slonim *Shokhet*, R' Yud'l Foxman ל"צ

Tzaddik, a sort of *Lamed-Vovnik*, who is not readily understood by common folk. And despite the fact that he would drive people away from himself, people would come to him in time of trouble, when there was a difficult labor and delivery, a dangerous sleepiness, God forbid, and other situations. In those situations, the women would want to leave something behind, in order to relieve some of the poverty in that household. but R' Moshe'leh does not want to hear of this, puts on an angry demeanor, in silence, keeping his large brown almond-shaped eyes shut, over which stiff thick eyebrows hung.

In his middle years, Moshe'leh would show himself in the street more frequently.

In returning from the mikva on Friday evening, before the Sabbath, with is soaked beard, and long side locks, and his ruddy face, R' Moshe'leh would run through the streets, in the middle of the road, and shout into the tumult:

– *Shabbes....*

– *Yidd' lekh, Shabbes....*

But as it grows late, he wishes to discharge his duty not only with shouting, and he leaps into each place of business, bangs on the posts, the doors, some getting annoyed, others sneering at him, but no one dares to say anything, because they are afraid... they fear his rigor in observance...

On one sunny day, it was a Sunday, the tranquility was suddenly broken, and mortars began to rain shells and shrapnel on us that we had not heard in a long time. They created desolation in the city, igniting fires. At night, the Germans entered the city. R' Moshe'leh did not come out of his house until Friday. Allowing sufficient time before the lighting of the candles, he descended from his dwelling, to go, as usual, to the municipal baths. Having gone part of the way, several German soldiers approached him from the opposite direction. The latter took hold of him by his arms, like one takes hold of a pack of matches, and took him into the Jewish barbershop. At the beginning, he did not grasp what was taking place here, and what is wanted of him. But they then did what they wanted to, cutting off half his beard, and with lit splints, burned his long side locks.

The Germans beat him with their rifle butts, dragged and pulled him by his half beard, yet he remained silent. When they threw him out of the premises, R' Moshe'leh uttered a few words to the barber, as if it was in the good old days:

‘Shlomo’leh, it is almost time to light the candles, close up the store, it is *Shabbes*.’

From that Friday onwards, he no longer went out into the street.

* * *

God’s wrath poured out over the city of Slonim. On each day, Jewish lives were consumed. The Germans permitted themselves every license, torturing Jews with all manner of brutality, but R' Moshe'leh did not come in contact with any other person, and did not know about everything [that was going on]. His pale face became yellow with sorrow and hunger, and for half days, he would go about in his prayer shawl and phylacteries, and fasted from one Sabbath to the next.

A half year went by in this manner, and a hard and frightful winter drew nigh.

After the first frosts, the Szczara River froze. The gentiles, who lived in the area, each morning, would test the thickness of the ice sheet. Wagons and sleds began to haul their loads, bypassing the bridges, and both sides of the city became closer to one another. Along the entire length of the frozen river, Polish school children would skate and frolic, while Jewish *Heder* students looked out and knew that they were not allowed to come out.

* * *

It is Friday, after the noon hour. The frost has rendered the windows of houses opaque, and few people can be seen out in the street. From time-to-time, convoys of Jewish groups are marched through the bridge, from and to places of work. They walk stooped, with their heads hung down to the ground, and both on their backs and fronts, the yellow Star of David stands out.

When the sun began to set in the west, then, R' Moshe'leh came down from his attic room, slogged through the Schulhof, and with quick steps, went to the river. The streets were practically empty, and there were no Germans to be seen within eyesight. And so, he calmly went, as he had done in previous times, until he came to the same place, where in the winter time, he would make his ablutions.

From under his kapote, he took out a small axe, and found a thin patch in the ice, cut out a hole, and quickly undressed.

R' Moshe'leh didn't waste any time. The thin, pole-skinny body immersed itself in the ice-cold water, once and again, leapt out, pulled on his Sabbath underwear, his outer clothing, and raising his eyes heavenward, offered praise to the Master of the Universe for the boon that her enabled him to perform this ablution in honor of the Sabbath.

He ran back home the same way he had come, and... when he arrived at the *Schulhof*, it was full of Germans. He was still intent on running to his home, and to get into the dark yard, not hearing how two German soldiers were shouting at him with wild voices:

– *Halt, stehen bleiben, du verfluchter Jude* ⁶⁵ ...

The soldiers ran after the footprints in the snow. R' Moshe'leh stood on the first run of the ladder, and wanted to enter into his house. However, the thugs continue to harry him with swinish shouts, cursing and shouting:

– *Herunter, du verdamter, du dre... Jude* ⁶⁶ ...

R' Moshe'leh didn't understand everything very well, again, not understanding what was happening, and why they were shouting like this in his small and dark yard. He paid no heed to these wild voices, and went up a further rung.

⁶⁵ Halt, stand there, you despicable Jew...

⁶⁶ Get down here, you damned, you Jew.

And at this point, the entire house shook, as if it were about to collapse. Both soldiers fired their weapons simultaneously. R' Moshe'leh did a quick clamber up the ladder, as a result of which the skinny body suddenly let go, and he fell head first onto the outhouse. The blood that ran out of his mouth ran into the waste pit. He was still able to say a few words, words which the Germans did not understand. Minutes later, R' Moshe'leh lay there with open, vacantly staring eyes, with a splayed beard, on which there were congealed clots of blood.

The sun set on the city of Slonim. Night fell, and covered this otherwise also naturally dark little yard of R' Moshe'leh's house. His wife sat beside his dead body, and cried, not knowing that on that very same night, a slaughter was carried out of over ten thousand Jews, who were led out of the city, and thrown into pits, prepared by the Germans during the past week.

She sat and stared at the sky, looked at her husband, who was no longer alive, and no longer wanted to go up into the attic room.

R' Israel Zalman Szelowsky ז"ל from Moucadz'

By A. Rosen

Many residents of Jerusalem still remember the tall, old Hasid, R' Israel Zalman Szelowsky. He was the aide to the Slonim Chief Rabbi, R' Shmuel ז"ל, one of the greatest of the Chief Rabbis of his generation and among the founders of *Agudat-Israel* in Russia and Lithuania. R' Israel Zalmon was greatly beloved by the *Hasidic* world in Jerusalem. Despite the fact that quite a number of years have passed since his death – he died at the age of 85 years – he nevertheless remains remembered. Hasidim loved to be in his ambit, to listen to what he had to say, to the conversations surrounding a Hasidic Elder, who was yet privileged to follow about in the shadow of the first Slonim Chief Rabbi, the author of '*Yesod HaAvodah*.'

R' Israel Zalman was not like the usual run of people who served as either a *Gabbai* or a *Shammes* to Chief Rabbis or *Tzaddikim*. It was the *Rebbe* himself who appointed him to this position, and he did so, because R' Israel Zalman's entire being spoke of integrity and truth, and in observing him, the Hasidim, by association, would be reminded of the story of R' Mendele of Nemerow. R' Mendele was once asked why he allows himself to be served by his own student, R' Zvi the *Tzaddik*, and the *Rebbe* replied: It is said explicitly in Holy Writ: 'He who walks in the way of integrity, he will be the one to serve me.'⁶⁷

When the *Rebbe* notified R' Israel Zalman, that he had selected him to be his *Shammes*, R' Israel demurred, and made the excuse that he feared his faith in the Sages might be compromised, because the way of those who serve as a *Shammes* is that he keep his mind clear – and his heart coarse. It can happen that through becoming accustomed, a *Shammes* can forget who he is, himself, and who is the *Rebbe*... the *Rebbe*, however, promised R' Israel Zalman, that such pride will not affect him. It was only then, that R' Israel Zalman consented to take on this position as *Shammes*.

And indeed, such hubris did not affect him. He served the *Rebbe* as a devoted servant, looked after all of his household concerns with full commitment of heart and soul, and even accompanied him on his journeys. On

⁶⁷ See Psalms 15: 1,2

the Sabbath and Festivals, he directed the preparation of the *Rebbe's Tisch*, served the Sabbath feast, and looked after the mass of guest so that they not go hungry, called out the names of those *Hasidim* who had provided drink, and reminded everyone of the names of the sick and the weak, who were in need of help.

R' Israel Zalman had a special mission at the *Rebbe's Tisch*. He had to listen very carefully, and apprehend the *Divrei-Torah* of the *Rebbe*. On Saturday nigh [e.g. after the Sabbath], R' Israel had to write them down. This particular obligation of his, was one of the most difficult. He needed to pay attention to every detail, and change nothing of what the *Rebbe* had said. the *Rebbe* would personally review his writing. One time, out of tiredness, R' Israel Zalman didn't exactly record what the *Rebbe* had said: 'You need to be whipped.' R' Israel became frightened at these words from the *Rebbe*, and had a great deal of aggravation. Friday, in the bath, the *Rebbe* smote R' Israel Zalman with a broom over his neck. R' Israel breathed easily, regained his composure, and felt like a severe decree hanging over him, had been torn up.

Years went by. The Chief Rabbi, R' Shmuel passed on, and R' Israel Zalman, hid his handwritten transcriptions as if they were a precious treasure. He hid it in his home, in Moucadz, and only very privileged people were allowed to look into these writings.

In his older years, before the outbreak of The Second World War, R' Israel Zalman made *aliyah* to the Land of Israel. For an unknown reason, he left these writings that contained the *Rebbe's* disquisitions, in his home in Moucadz. When the awful news of the European Holocaust reached the Land of Israel, about Jewish communities that had been completely eradicated from under the sun, the destruction of Moucadz was also revealed. R' Israel Zalman's pain was doubled, his heart which cried for the destruction of his city, the annihilation of the Jews, among whom were members of his family, and for the loss of his writings containing the *Rebbe's* disquisitions, which, to him, were dearer than anything else in the world. Having no alternative, he simply gave up on the writings.

An here, a great wonder took place. A grandson of R' Israel Zalman, who survived all seven furnaces of Hell, by a miracle had been saved from being killed. He escaped from the Koldichevo Labor Camp, and joined up with the partisans. Immediately after the war, R' Israel Zalman's grandson – himself a veteran of the Slonim *Hasidim* in the Diaspora, today in Israel – risked his life, went off to Moucadz, which, at that time, was already under the communists, and visited the destroyed remains of his grandfather's house. To his great astonishment, among the burned out effects of the house, he saw a bundle of paper, rotted and dissembled. It was his grandfather's hand written transcription of the sacred disquisitions of the *Rebbe* זצ"ל. This paper had been shoved into a corner, and was untouched by anyone.

The grandson left Moucadz, and continued his wandering. Arriving in the Land of Israel, he found his elderly grandfather still alive, and turned over his writings to him. R' Israel Zalman's joy, you can understand, was indescribable. He rejoiced at this find, and he guarded these writings like the apple of his eye, until his last day.

As it becomes evident, this handwritten record was to undergo added tribulations. On the day that R' Israel Zalman died, this handwritten record again disappeared. The sorrow of the Slonim *Hasidim* was very great. They harbored the intention to have these precious and sacred words of the *Rebbe* זצ"ל printed, and published in a book. However, the handwritten manuscript was found again, and turned over to R' Israel Zalman's grandson.

The 'Institute for the Publication of Books of the Torah and Hasidism' which is a part of the Yeshiva Bet

Abraham of the Slonim Hasidim, will engage in preparing this handwritten manuscript for publication. May R' Israel Zalman rest easily, knowing that his work has not been in vain, and was not lost.

(From the Hebrew: David Bass)

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My Father's Boots

By Yeshaya Spiegel

My father's boots –
Patched,
Forged –
Still lie in the sand
Of that mountain in Auschwitz.

The heels –
White,
Shined –
Blend into the sand
Of that mountain in Auschwitz.

From your sacred, patched boots,
From those sacred shined heels
I can still hear your voice, within me:
-My son, with this kind of patched boots
And with these sorts of shined heels –
I will go out to meet even the Messiah....

* *
*

Our Grandfather, the *Gaon* R' Elchanan Wasserman זצ"ל

By Minna Chana & Elchanan Meir Wasserman

When we were little, we wondered and were dismayed that we did not have a grandfather the way the other children, with whom we played, had one. We would long for a grandfather who would play with us and tell

us lovely stories. At that time, it was difficult for our parents to explain to us, the cruelty with which our grandfather had been stolen from us. As we grew older a bit, we began to understand the greatness of that loss, not only to us, from whom a grandfather was stolen, with a number of stories, but also for world Jewry in general, which was robbed of a teacher of Torah and a leader of the people.

From the stories that we heard about our grandfather from those of his pupils that we met, and from the praise offered to his name and memory, that people would express, when they hear that we were grandchildren of the Rabbi *Gaon* R' Elchanan Wasserman ז"ל, an image of our grandfather, began to take form before our eyes, that was more realistic; it was the persona of a teacher loyal to hundreds of students, of which, those that survived, praised his name and memory, and evinced pride that they had the privilege to be one of his students; it was the image of a leader of his people, who foresaw from the outset, the terrible calamity that was gathering force, to come upon the European Jewish Diaspora, and his attempt to arouse them to repentance in his speeches and sermons, and also in his book '*Akavta D'Meshikha*,'⁶⁸ that he published here, in America, a short time before the outbreak of The War.

During the thirties, when there was a huge protest meeting in the Great *Bet HaMedrash* in Baranovich, against the persecution of Jews in Germany, our grandfather explained the situation with the parable of a man who is beating a dog with a stick, and the dog jumps and tries to bite the stick, and in his canine comprehension, the dog is unable to understand that it is not the stick that is hitting him, but rather the man who is raising the stick to hit him. This, he said, is the same with our plight, in which we are protesting against Hitler, and we do not understand that Hitler is the Scourge of God's wrath, to which we are being subject for straying from the path of the Torah.

When our grandfather was in America, a short time before The War, those who admired him attempted to persuade him not to return to Poland, because of the impending and foreseeable danger. However, our grandfather refused, and explained to his son, our Uncle, R' Simcha, that despite the fact that he knows the impending danger to be one of total annihilation, with all that, he decided that his responsibility was to be together with the students of his Yeshiva at the time of such an extermination. This incident displays for us, his love, and commitment to his students, like a father would have to his sons. This was the characteristic way our grandfather behaved for all his life, to do that which was placed on him [as an obligation] according to the dictates of the Torah, without giving consideration to the difficulties and dangers that were also embodied in that which was required for him to discharge his responsibility.

Our father told us, that when he was a boy of five in Brisk, where our grandfather was the Headmaster of the Yeshiva, our father had fallen sick with a gastrointestinal malady, and was seriously ill. Grandfather would sit next to his child's bed all night, and in the morning, he would go off to lead the lesson he gave at the Yeshiva. One time, our father's illness worsened, and all the doctors in Brisk gave up, telling our grandfather that there was nothing left to do but throw one's self on the mercy of God. When the time for the lesson arrived, grandfather left the side of our father's bed, and went off to the Yeshiva. In the meantime, one of the doctors came, and did something that alleviated the worsening condition, and rescued our father from danger. A messenger was sent to convey this good news to our grandfather. Our grandfather immediately took not when the door to the Yeshiva was opened, and a man entered heading for him, and could not discern the emotion of the messenger from his face, as to whether the news was good or not. Grandfather interrupted his lesson, and said to his students: 'I fear that I will not be able to continue the lesson, because I believe I have just become bereaved.' This story left a very strong impression on us, in that it demonstrated how strong

⁶⁸

In the Wake of the Messiah.

our grandfather was in his perception, and to maintain control over his inner emotions, and not permit them to interfere with fulfilling his responsibility and the demands of his position.

A Pity for Him Whom We Lost, and We Will Not Forget Him

*

*'O Compassionate One, look down from the heights,
at the spilled blood of the righteous and their very lifeblood,
see from Your chamber, and remove the stains [of sin],
O King, Who sits in the Throne of Mercy!'*

(Closing lines of the *Yom Kippur* Martyrology)

Baranovich – The ‘Tel-Aviv’ of Lithuanian Poland

By Moshe Yudelewicz

I am not going to write specifically about the Holocaust, nor tell of the tragic epic of blood and fire, because I am not an eye witness to the frightful tribulations that occurred then. It is entirely possible, if not certain, that at that same moment, when my father and mother, sisters, brothers and other relatives, were condemned to frightful torture, hunger and death, I, am here in America, and may have been sitting at a well-provisioned table, together with good brethren, amused by some good witticism, or entirely possible at some banquet or another, a Jubilee celebration, an *‘Oneg Shabbat,’* as it were, or at other unique community events – celebrating in a carefree manner – but regardless – it is important to confess – that we were very far from that Vale of Tears. We lived in a well-fed and tranquil world, to which the painful screams of the martyrs did not reach...and in order not to disrupt our condition of well-fed tranquility, we consciously chose not to look the horrifying truth right in the face, and it is possible that the real impact was simply above our ability as humans to grasp, but no matter what it was, we did not see the smoke coming from the fire. – – –

However, I do remember their life and joy, their song and hopes, their spirit and their labor. They remain in my memory, as if they are still alive, just as I left them that long time ago.

I remember how my little *shtetl* of Baranovich built itself, and how it grew.

There was something about this original Jewish settlement, that set it apart from the other Jewish settlements that were destroyed.

The Jewish cities and towns, of the *‘alte haym,’* were full of historical relics, with living witnesses of times gone by, that testified to ancient occupation, and times gone by. Jews lived their entire lives together. Generations lived out their lives on the same little side street, in the same little hut, a legacy handed down from some great-grandmother. And it was this very intimacy that accompanied the Jew from his cradle, until advanced old age, and eventually to the grave.

And the cemetery? Grandfathers and great-grandfathers, under old headstones, found their eternal rest there, the sanctuaries of ancient good Jewish men and their Rabbis.

Baranovich? There were no old cemeteries there, no old Jewish synagogues, there was nothing there to bear witness to times gone by, fathers did not transmit anything to their children, and no one went there to pay their respects to the dead. In this settlement of fifteen thousand Jews, there was not a single person who was 50 years old, that had been born there.

It was a new Jewish settlement, the youngest in all of Eastern Europe, a city in which all the Jews came there from somewhere else, a sort of ‘ingathering of exiles’ in the middle of a Diaspora city.

Propelled by decrees, harassment and expulsions, the Jewish spirit of taking the initiative, in its ever-present search for survival, contributed to the creation and the building of newer and newer places to live.

It is for this reason, that Baranovich is through-and-through, symbolic of that Jewish spirit of initiative and dynamism, that stands for Jewish destiny and character, this being true of its rise, and destruction, which was [also] symbolic of all the other Jewish settlements that were destroyed, because the new, only recently constructed Jewish homes, just freshly built, which enjoyed so little happiness, and that saw so little light, is no more!

In the same generation – It was built up, and then destroyed!

At the beginning of the 70's of the previous [sic: 19th] century, Baranovich Was an insignificant village consisting of a few peasant huts. The railroad line, from Moscow to Brisk, which cuts through Byelorussian territory from east to west, is the first that can be found in this village, lost between the Polesia forests belonging to the Russian *Graf* Rozwadowski.

At a distance, without abutting the village, the first railroad station was cut out of the forest, where, in the long winter nights, hungry wolves would prowl and carry on. An old inn that stood across from it, was the sole building, which during the night, through its half-sunken windows, gave evidence, that there was human habitation.

‘Shai’keh Baranovicher’ – that is what the single, solitary Jew of Baranovich, at that time, was called – and he was an estate manager, who managed the inn for the Graf, an ancient building, with a high four-sided straw and moss-covered roof. This was a sort of lodging place, for transient passengers, and a saloon, where the village peasants and lumberjacks could come to get a drink of whiskey, with marinated Russian *Taran*⁶⁹ as a bite to eat.

Until the development of the train interchange, the village of Baranovich was way off to the side of the old, wide tract, that cut through the vicinity in the direction of Minsk, through Stalovičy and Snov, entirely bypassing the forests of *Graf* Rozwadowski. This tract, called ‘Catherine’s Road’ was the living interchange nerve center of that one-time world, and it was through here that ‘Catherine the Great,’ and [Czar] Alexander I traveled to Poland.

For a while after the establishment of the train interchange, ‘Catherine’s Road’ continued to hold on to its prestige as the ‘Royal Road.’ With the passage of time, however, the people became more accustomed to the use of the railroad, rather than the old royal stretch, over which, at one time, Napoleon’s soldiers marched,

⁶⁹ *Leuciscus rutilus*, a fish indigenous to Russian waters, in the carp family, akin to the American chub.

initiating his period of decline, and leading to his complete downfall. Its clay-dried boards become overgrown with wild grasses, and only the old markers, that stand to this day, on both sides of the road, testify to its former greatness.

‘Baranovich Station’ becomes the new travel center. The number of passengers, coming and going rise, and Shai’keh Baranovich prospers.

New York, Lodz, Baranovich, it is not important what the scale is, but the reasons are same, driven by the same destiny, the force of Jewish initiative, with its temperament, which was characteristic in its creation and building.

Baranovich, which was built almost exclusively by Jews, was a sort of Tel-Aviv in Lithuanian Poland.

The Baranovich area is the first sandy elevation at the edge of the Polesia swamp, an area of pine forests, and of yule bushes, grown over fields, a mix of fields and forest. With the hilly *Oyezd* of Novogrudok to the north, and the Polesia swamps to the south, destiny decreed that on this dry flat sandy terrain, was where the new roads would be cut.

Added to the Moscow-Brisk rail line, a second is added immediately: the Vilna- Zdolbuniv line, which runs by the swamps, in the direction of Rovno and Pinsk, Wolhynia. These two referenced, important lines, cut through Baranovich. Later, a third line comes through: the so-called central-line. which cuts through Slonim, Zelva, Volkovysk, Pruzhany, towards Bialystok.

Baranovich is transformed into the largest railroad center of Byelorussia.

In between, the Russian military authorities build a large ammunition dump and the ‘Сухарни Завод,’⁷⁰ one of the largest military production facilities of its kind in Russia.

The first-class strategic significance of the one far-flung forests of the *Graf*, transform Baranovich into a new source of livelihood for the Jewish merchant and craftsman, from the thick net of Jewish settlements that are around it.

Graf Rozwadowski takes advantage of the opportunity, that these new circumstances present, for his heretofore out-of-the-way land holdings. He transforms the village into a ‘Мястечко’ in order that Jews be permitted to enter. He swiftly cuts down the forests, cleans off the land, and sells parcels on an instalment payment basis.

With the expulsions from the villages in the 80's, a significant Jewish immigration begins, to the new and growing settlement.

Former estate managers, saloon keepers, millers, orchard keepers, factors, and others, leave their Byelorussian villages, and en masse, come to find refuge in the ‘Мястечко’ finding a home for themselves there, and a means to make a living.

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A bread-biscuit factory

Instead of New York, Johannesburg and Buenos Aires, Jews traveled to Baranovich. If there was an unemployed craftsman, was there one of the *balebatim*, who went broke, was the enlightened son-in-law done drawing support from his wife's parents, and didn't have any productive work to turn to, or if there happened to have been a disastrous fire in a *shtetl*, no matter what misfortune arose, Jews left, and headed for Baranovich. They bought parcels from the Graf, somewhere or another, on the 'city outskirts,' but very quickly, new Jews arrived, and caused further cuts to be made into the forest, which continued to retreat in the face of the newly cleared land.

The slender pines of the *Graf's* forests became quickly thinned out, but from every freshly felled tree, a new completed roof was fashioned, and a bunch of freshly sanded boards. The hum of the saws of the carpenters along with the echo of the sharp axes, in the hands of the Jewish lumberjacks, carried on the wind, together with the strong odor of pitch and turpentine from the cut down lumber.

One after another, the new Jewish houses were put up, from which freshness and joy emanated. The dry air from the forest remained a permanent part of the massive wooden woodwork in the Baranovich houses.

The mixture of nature and the city, forest and settlement, during those first days of Baranovich, left behind its characteristic marks on the city up to its destruction. One of these signs, were the massive walls of the Baranovich houses. Apart from the natural lack of use, in a newly thrown together settlement, the danger of wolves, for which the area was famous, always lurked during the first phase of the city's construction, especially on winter nights. The older residents would tell, that fear reigned there, regarding going out during the night. The settlement was full of isolated pockets of forest, and no one literally knew, where the center of the city was, and where were the outskirts.

The great folklorist *Sholom Aleichem*, who, incidentally, resided in Baranovich for a period of time, had an expression – as the Baranovich residents tell – that 'Baranovich is out on the street' (or a second version, 'is outside'). In comparison with the old and crowded Jewish ghetto-towns, Baranovich truly stood 'on the street.' In the year 1908, the writer visited Baranovich. In the middle of an address, which he was giving there, the writer became indisposed, and fell down from a burst blood vessel in his lungs, a consequence of a virulent infection of tuberculosis. He lay in Baranovich for two months, from which he then traveled on to Italy. But Baranovich was the home for the *Sholom Aleichem* family for over a year's time. His son-in-law, the writer, *Y. D. Berkowicz* included. (More information about this period in the life of *Sholom Aleichem* can be found in the Baranovich Yizkor Book, published by the Organization of Baranovich Émigrés, Tel-Aviv, 5714, in which Dr. Nehemiah Kroshinsky related interesting details about the great writer, which, up to that time, were not generally known in the wider world).

However, Baranovich did not 'stand outside' for very long. The Jewish temperament built up and created sources of livelihood, in this strategic military center, and new horizons for trade and the enclaves of forest rapidly vanished and were built over, creating a compact, solid settlement.

'Little Warsaw,' the Jews of the vicinity called it. The old trading centers of Minsk and Vilna, began to feel the existence of this new competition. The new railways opened up the world for tens of isolated settlements of the communities without rail service, in Novogrudok, Slonim and Sluck regions. The warehouses of the Baranovich general traders became full of good luck and blessings from the great Russian land. Huge barrels of rice-oil from the rich Ukrainian fields, packaged flour from Bondary, oil from the Caucasus, stone-hard, white-blue 'sugar loaves' from the Kiev works, smoked fish from the Volga, the most expensive Baltic herring, and tens of other manufactured articles, would, on a daily basis, be drawn on peasant carts and the

wagons of teamsters, from the Baranovich train station to the dense network of Jewish settlements in the area.

In every new settlement, where people come together from various directions and places, problems arise that do not exist in settlements of long standing.

Social isolation, and the absence of family intimacy, are, without a doubt, one of the burdens that people in a new settlement must endure. It has, however, the virtue that relationships between people are on an equal footing, without any preconceived personal judgements, which are characteristic of an older settlement. In a place where people don't know each other particularly well, one doesn't really know who is who. Who deserves an important aliyah, and who requires reproof, who is a 'Big Shot,' and who, God forbid, has some skeleton in the family closet. Baranovich, for this reason, immediately in its first phase of development, had the impersonal character of a large city, that is to say, nobody looked with any care into a second person's business: neighbors, many times, did not even know one another. Such a situation must have had an unavoidable influence on community social activities. In a place where local patriotism is absent, where there are no professional opinion makers, where there are no arguments in front of Rabbis and Cantors, where each individual goes his own way, there is no driving force for community organization. However, there was a case of: 'each found his own kind.' Learned Jewish people immediately identified one to each other, and as to Hasidim, it goes without saying. The same to place in Zionist and Haskalah circles. And it happened that everything that was created in the social, community, religious and political arenas, has a healthy and untrammelled idealistic core.

One after another, Yeshivas, *Batei Medrashim*, charity institutions, and general cultural and political institutions, came into being, that blossomed and grew together with the settlement. This occurrence, in a settlement of Jews who had newly come together, and in particular in the idealistically pure cultural level of the community development, was not just an accident in Baranovich. Baranovich was the loyal custodian, and the essence, of the dense circle of the old Jewish settlement out of which it grew.

This circle spread out from Novogrudok and Lida in the north, to Luniniec and Pinsk in the south, from Njasviz, and Sluck in the east, to Slonim, Volkovysk and Pruzhany in the west, in the center of which the city of Baranovich grew. This was one of the most lively, and colorful 'Jewish' provinces in the one time 'Pale of Settlement.' an area that lay on the crossroads of Lithuania, Byelorussia, Poland and Wolhynia, and manifested the spiritual attributes of all of these together.

Here, the Lithuanian asceticism and dryness was laced with Byelorussian breadth, and Wolhynian completeness, the scholarship of the Mitnagdim, and analytic style of Mir and Volozhin – [intermingled] with the spirit of Polish mysticism. The greatest Yeshiva centers, on the side of the fervent believers from Karlin, and of Chabad Hasidism, from the extreme mystics, from R' Yuz'l Mussar acolytes in Novogrudok, and the 'good Jews' of Slonim, to the modern Yeshiva of Rabbi Reines in Lida, and in one assemblage – the awakening Enlightenment, and the progressive nationalist and socialist movements. It was a dense collection of colorful Jewish settlements, nests of Torah, Hasidism and wisdom, and this was the fountainhead from which Baranovich suckled itself in general, and from which it obtained its creative sense of tolerance in specific.

However, Baranovich reached its greatest strategic momentum in the year 1915, during the time of The First World War, when it becomes, in the summer of that year, transformed into the seat of the supreme headquarters of the Russian Army, with Nikolai Nikolayevich at its head. The most mysterious persona of

all Russia, the Czar, Nicholas II, is often a guest there, where he spends weeks at a time (for the country, it was presented that the king had traveled to the front...), traveling about, taking walks through the surrounding towns, traveling twice a week to bathe in the famous lake 'Sviechanka' (In Polish 'Switez'), the legendary place where Poland's greatest poet [Adam] Mickiewicz, dreamt and creates his literary poems.

There is an interesting sidelight, regarding the new venue for the 'Little Father' of all Russia: for the first time, Nicholas works up the energy to freely stroll through the streets of this Jewish city, and permits himself to be seen by everyone, Jews among them, who, in this sense, are treated equally like the other citizens. In the little town of Haradzišča, where the king would travel through twice a week on his trip to Switez, the Jews of the shtetl would array themselves in a long row, to await and greet the Czar, who would respond to this with a military salute, sitting in his open auto, and looking with great interest at the Jews, with their beards and side locks, giving the impression, that this was the first time that Nicholas had the opportunity to look face-to-face at these, his Jewish subjects, not having any fear of an attempted assassination... the majority of the religious Jews held the opinion that it is a mitzvah to use the opportunity to recite the blessing: 'Blessed is He, who has allocated to flesh and blood, a part of his glory.' There were, however, Jews, who let down the coverings over their windows, not wanting to look at his countenance, because, 'it is forbidden to view the face of a tyrant.'

In Baranovich, where the highest level of administrative and military authority would have been the Russian *Pristav*, in normal times, suddenly became filled with the greatest personalities of the Russian nobility. On the sidewalk of the main street, you could see Jews, with their prayer shawls under their arms, returning from prayers, side by side with Russian generals, and members of the royal entourage.

Sh. Zakif, whose son visited Chile several years ago, and whose name previously was Shmuel Zhukhowicky, known in Israel as 'Aluf Magdiel,' and was in fact its founder, tells in his memoirs in the Baranovich Yizkor Book, that at that time, the Moscow Chief Rabbi MZA" H, came to Baranovich in order, with the help of the local community leaders, to find a way to approach the monarch, or the supreme commander, Nikolai Nikolayevich, and to undertake the effort to cause a cessation of the expulsion of Jews, and the leveling of accusations of 'Jewish espionage.' *Sh. Zakif* related interesting details about this, among others, that the Rabbi MZA" H came into indirect contact with the supreme commander through the intercession of the Russian church, and thanks to that, was able to ameliorate the situation a little at a time (see *The Baranovich Memorial Book*, Sh. Zakif 'During the First World War').

Regrettably, this period was the apogee of the period of good will and progress for the Jews of Baranovich. No times came afterward that were better than that Czarist period. Before the time of the Polish hegemony, this lively railroad center becomes transformed into something of a sort of Polish 'Siberia.' One no longer hears the frequent sounds of train signals, in the night, and the huge country of Russia is cut off, and there are Jewish 'voyagers' from Odessa, Moscow, Kiev, Kharkov, and other Russian centers, no longer travel through 'Baranovich Station.'

In its short existence, the main street of Baranovich was privileged to carry many names. During the Czarist times, it was known as 'Marinskaya Ulica.' In 1916, during the time of the German occupation, it was 'Hindenburg Strasse,' afterwards, 'Leninskaya,' and a short time afterwards, it bore Pilsudski's name, and then, again, 'Leninskaya.' In that same year, it becomes 'General Szeptycki,' a name it keeps until The Second World War. Then come: 'Stalinskaya,' 'Hitler-Strasse,' then again 'Stalinskaya,' and now will it become 'Khrushchevskaya?' And who knows how many other names this street is destined to have in the future. But, the future fate of this once entirely Jewish street, no longer interests us, being without any Jews

For the Sin I Have Committed

By Fyvel Blank

For the sin I have committed, that I transgressed,
When you sat imprisoned in the camp.
And I was hidden with a non-Jew,
Crammed away, but through the cracks –
My gaze climbed up to the sky so blue –
For the sin I committed, for taking this pleasure.

For the sin that I committed, when naked and in want,
You wandered in an even greater solitude,
Swollen from hunger, suffering from cold –
While I still had an item of clothing to wear,
Still having a loaf of bread on my table –
For the sin I committed, for this bit of satisfaction.

* *
*

The Hideout of the 71 in the Baranovich Ghetto

By Isaac Fayglstein

I was in the Baranovich ghetto from the first day of its establishment, until the third day of the Third Slaughter, which coincided with the liquidation of the ghetto.

I worked for the entire time at the goat mill, where I had the opportunity to be in contact with the peasants of the surrounding villages, who would come to the mill, and I would trade clothing with them for ‘products.’

Thanks to my employment at the mill, all 71 residents of Grabowiecky’s ‘*Kolkhoz*’ on the Hubar *Gasse*, had food to eat and drink.

Grabowiecky’s ‘*Kolkhoz*’

Grabowiecky’s ‘*Kolkhoz*’ which was in his own house on the Hubar *Gasse*, between the houses of the *Shokhet* from Palonka (Kaplan) and Steinberg, had a well constructed and secured hideout, with an entrance from the ghetto, and an exit outside of the ghetto. During the times of the slaughter aktionen, the hideout provided a home and sanctuary to 71 people, among them: the family of Leib’keh Grabowiecky – 9 people, Itchek Berkowicz – 7 people, Matos Fidel – 6 people, Gavza – 2 people, Hirsch’l Kaplansky – 4 people, Fayglstein – 4 people, Asher Elstein, and others.

During the time of the Second Slaughter, the hideout was uncovered, and all 71 of those in hiding were taken away to the mass graves, where they were all shot to death.

In the hideout, were also my wife, my child, and a brother of mine, all of whom were killed. Only I was

fortunate enough to be able to save myself. Together with the brothers Yekhiel and Moshe Wolokhwiansky, we fled the ghetto during the Third Slaughter.

Being Quartered and Helped by Christians

Not having had any connections prepared in advance, with people in the forest, we went off to the village of Mlinek, where we knew a Christian named Zielinski. The latter gave us food, drink and a place to sleep. In the morning, following what Zielinski showed us to do, we went off to the forest to the partisans. The younger of the Wolokhwiansky brothers, injured his foot along the way, and could not proceed further.

Risking our lives, we entered the first, best hut between the villages of Luki and Ostrowa, and requested that the Christian there hide us, until his injured foot would heal. He led us into the stable, and hid us in the hay. When the foot got better, the peasant gave us exact instructions as to where we should go, in order to reach the partisan base without undue stress.

Being in the forest later, we heard shouts: – *Kto Tam? Stoi! Ruki V'verkh!* And how great was our joy, when we saw a partisan patrol near us, and a Jew, no less, and who? Misha Zalmanowicz from the Baranovich ghetto.

At the Partisans

Misha Zalmanowicz led us off to the Pugachev *Otryad*. 'The leader' arrived, and we were examined and found to be satisfactory. One of them called out, 'a fine lot,' 'good human materiel,' but after a short and private counsel, we were inspected, and after they took away from us the only pistol we had, we were assigned to the partisan 'family-camp,' where there were many Jews from the Baranovich ghetto, but all unarmed.

The commander of the *Otryad* was an 'Easterner' who was known only by his first name, Misha.

A week later, all of the armed partisan groups went off further to the east, and the 'Misha-Group' was left abandoned, without any form of protection. The group had only one rifle, and this was in Misha's possession.

One of us then had the thought of making fake rifles out of wood, dyeing them with soot, and with this 'fake' weaponry, make an 'expedition' to the nearest village to obtain food.

My First '*Zadania*'⁷¹

With permission from Misha, I went off to Baranovich, in order to find out if it would be possible to procure weapons for money. I met with Khat'chek, and for a good price, he got me several rifles and two pistols.

The liaison, Khat'chek, which whom I was in contact, was a Pole, who worked at transporting waste out of Baranovich. Many times, he would utilize the barrels that contained the waste, to save the Jews from the ghetto, and from other places. A larger part of the Jews, who survived, did so with his help. and he didn't

⁷¹

From the Russian, *заданя*, meaning job, or task (i.e. mission)

do this for pay.

Thanks to Khat'chek, the 'Family-*Otryad*' in the forests of Switez, was able to arm itself with a bit of weaponry. A larger number of the young people, later were adopted into the fighting brigades, as fully-fledged partisans.

The weaponry was divided up within the *Otryad*, among the young and skilled partisans. A day later, while on 'Бомбёшка'⁷² in a village, to obtain food, we were surrounded by a group of armed 'Zhorkintzeks'⁷³, who not only took away our weapons, but also our boots. We were happy to get away with our lives, because in many instances, the 'Zhorkintzeks' would take away the arms from the Jewish partisans, and their lives as well.

The 'Zhorkintzeks'

There were many Russian partisan groups in the Byelorussian forests, who fought against the Germans, and also murdered Jews. The notorious among them were the partisan murder-bands of: 'Yermovtzehs,' 'Kurbanovtzehs,' 'Danilovtzehs,' and others.

The partisans, who murdered Jews in the Switez forests called themselves 'Zhorkintzeks.' the 'Zhorkintzeks' were notoriously well-known in the entire vicinity. The Jewish partisans would be on guard against the 'Zhorkintzeks' just the same as if they were Germans.

Tens and tens of Jewish partisans were killed at their hands. From the summer of 1942, to the middle of the summer of 1943, they were a source of disruption, and rampaged without regard.

The Jews, who fled from the ghettos and camps, were without any protections, and fell victim to their tragic, barbaric acts. The situation improved in the summer of 1943, when Moscow instituted contact with the partisan brigades in Byelorussia.

'Troops' arrived from the east. A partisan staff command was organized, with more-or-less accountable military officers, who took over control of the small brigades and groups. They instilled an order into the operation against the Germans. They accorded a great deal of attention to the 'semianikehs,' looked after the 'proviants,' and also gave them assistance.

The 'One-Fifth' Jewish Partisan Group on a Weapons Mission

Designated by Misha as a scout, I learned through a contact in the city, that the engineer Sharon, the manager of the construction of the new Minsk-Baranovich rail line, and who lives in Baranovich in the 'Kolonija Uzhendicheh'⁷⁴, near the 'Bank Polski,' has, in his possession, several 'pieces' of armament.

⁷² A raid, taken from the description of a 'bombing run.'

⁷³ Bandits, from the Russian Жаркий, meaning 'violent.'

⁷⁴ This appears to be the latter day *Uschodni Pasiolak*.

A group of five partisans then went off with me to Baranovich, with the objective of taking possession of these arms.

The partisan heroine, Sar'keh Rabinovich, posing as a village gentile woman, with a box of eggs, went off to the engineer at his house, and engaging in the 'haggling' over the eggs, she carefully and accurately cased the inside layout of the house, and late at night, the five Jewish partisans surrounded the engineer's house. Two of them, Sar'keh Rabinovich, and Isaac Fayglstein, went into the house through a window, and the remaining three, Medresh-Kacap, Traub'eh, and Monik Dobkowsky, stood watch outside the house.

Everything went peacefully, and apart from the arms, we also took away boots, warm underwear, and other necessities, which were important to the partisans.

Mulya Yankelewicz

A couple of days later, I was again in the city, and brought out five Jews that had fled the Third Slaughter. Among them, was the former President of the *Judenrat*, Mulya Yankelewicz, who was beloved and respected by all the Jews of the ghetto, for his dedicated work to rescue Jews from the ghetto.

The Partisan 'Special-Group' and its Commander, Orlovsky

On one day, a new partisan group appeared in our vicinity, that was comprised of 40-50 people.

At the head of this group, stood someone sent by Moscow, named Orlovsky. Before the war, he was known in Byelorussia by the name 'Mukha-Mikhaelski.'

Orlovsky was a straightforward and decent person with a solid character and an iron will. As soon as he arrived, he began to institute order among all of the partisan groups. He took special interest in the fate of the Jewish '*Semain-Otryad*' and with the remaining Jewish groups in the Miszuk forests, and in the swamps of Switez.

He ordered that the '*Semain-Otryad*' be given food by way of the cooperative product base of the armed partisan brigades. It was Orlovsky, who was the one, who put an end to the hooliganism of the '*Zhorkintzehs*,' and of the predations of Gypsies against the Jewish partisans. He took in many of the Jews from these separate groups in those places, into his group, and the rest, he took under his aegis, and gave them protection.

During his tenure as commander, better conditions were created for the Jewish partisan groups, and the atmosphere was cleared of enmity, distrust, and insecurity.

When the German general Penz and his entourage was being pursued in the forests of Miszuk, A well-planned assault against the Germans was organized by Orlovsky, and they were all wiped out.

At that time, Orlovsky lost both his hands, and was called back to Moscow.

Commander Nikolski

After Orlovsky was recalled to Moscow, his deputy, Nikolski became commander, Nikolski was also sent by Moscow, and took great care of the Jewish groups in the region.

On a certain day, a new partisan group, with its commander, Mironov, came into the forests of Miszuk. They came as guest for a few days, but in the end, they became residents, and were absorbed into Nikolski's group.

Mironov was a virulent anti-Semite, and the Jewish partisans began to sense a different attitude towards them. The previous friendliness, was quickly exchanged for an open hostility.

It was clear to everyone, that the death sentence meted out to three Jewish partisans, for, so to speak, taking away a new machine from a peasant, was inspired by Mironov. The death sentence was carried out against Peretz Plocky, and Yitzhak Lobozywsky. For the third partisan, the death sentence was exchanged for undertaking a dangerous 'Zadania.' his mission was to blow up a certain 'object' in the city, which he carried out successfully, and remained alive.

The 'Zadania' of the Partisans

There were ten Jews in Nikolski's group. Almost all of them had taken part in all the missions against the enemy. I remember the names of the following Jewish partisans: Lejzor Segal, Pin'keh Jasinowsky, Mul'yeh Yankelewicz, Sar'keh Rabinovich, Philip Penczansky, Rosa Penczansky, and others.

Our Otryad made three assaults against German patrols in Kryvošyn, and also other attacks, and always successful. without any victims on the side of the partisans.

I, personally, was the leader of the scouting detail, and went on a 'Zadania' more than twenty times. While still being in Misha's 'Semain-Otryad,' we assaulted the village of Luki, where there was one German and one Byelorussian policeman. the following took part in the attack: Eli'yeh Lipnik, David Molowicky, Kiwelewicz, Yosselewicz from Slonim, Isaac Fayglstein, and Tuvia Cyrynsky.

We shot the German. the [Byelorussian] policeman was able to flee, and Tuvia Cyrynsky was then mortally wounded, and later died.

We took him with us, into the forest, and buried him beside the grave of Dr. Avra'sheh Abramowsky, who was murdered by the 'Zhorkintzehs.'

The Partisan Zone

Our partisan zone was surrounded on all sides by deep swampland. The territory was so thickly covered by swamps, and a horse could not walk through. It was not only once, that our boots remained stuck in the mud. In the wintertime, when the swamps would freeze over, we had to withstand 'blockades' and attacks.

The peasants from the villages of Zalužža, Switez, Razdielowičy, Lipsk, Miszuky and others around our partisan zone, were, for the most part, friendly to us, because they saw that the Germans were their enemies and oppressors.

Also, the intensity, and many instances of truly needy moments, when the partisans stood to defend individuals and also entire villages, was an influential impetus to engendering their 'friendliness' to us.

Sar'keh Rabinovich – the Partisan Heroine

Apart from myself as the scout, in the service of Mikulski⁷⁵, after the time when Orlovsky was called back to Russia, and he took his place as commander, there was also the heroic Jewish partisan woman, Sar'keh Rabinovich. She played a very significant role in the diversion work of the partisan 'special-group.' She was the most reliable liaison in the special-group, and also among the security people in Baranovich. Tens of times, she went on dangerous and complicated missions, of great importance, and consistently carried out her missions completely.

She was alert, capable, and endowed with an ability to get quickly oriented in the most dangerous of situations. Sar'keh Rabinovich was the most popular woman partisan in the Switz forests; beloved by the command, by the commander, and by the entire partisan group.

Commander Lejzor Segal

Lejzor Segal was one of the most popular of the partisans in our area. He was beloved by all the partisans in the forests. Whether the partisans, or the local village Christian population, they all called him 'Барка' ('Father').

When the ghetto was liquidated in Hancevičy, he had an opportunity to save himself. As a craftsman who worked in the forest products works, he knew the forest terrain in that area very well, where he had worked for many years as a lumberman, and he went off into the forest with a few Jews. Later on, additional Jews joined them, and he was designated as the commander of this group by the leadership.

Lejzor Segal was very talented, energetic, and a practical man. He was the best specialist in matters pertaining to manufacturing operations, and was highly successful. Segal had many friends among the local Christian populace, who would give him accurate and reliable information, necessary for the partisan command.

Commander Yud'l Wisznia

'Yud'l Partisan' was also very popular – our beloved Yud'l Wisznia from Baranovich. He came to the forests with a group that had fled from the Baranovich ghetto. Later on, he went on missions, and brought back more Jews.

Yud'l Wisznia was the liaison between the 'Family-Camp' and the leadership of the brigade. He would take care of all issues. It also became possible to get the permission of the leadership, for the 'Family Camp' to procure its own foodstuffs.

Yud'l Wisznia was the oldest in age, among the Jews in the forest. But, he was among the best and most outstanding of the partisans.

Yud'l Wisznia brought many needed things to the Jewish partisans, which they greatly appreciated, loved him, and respected him. Yud'l Wisznia was the one, who, in the forest, organized a *minyán* for prayer on

⁷⁵

Previous to this, the name had been given as 'Nikolski.'

Yom Kippur, and led the ‘*Kol Nidre*’ services.

‘Rosa Бойевая’⁷⁶

Philip Penczansky, and his wife, Rosa Penczansky, were outstanding partisans – Rosa, the commander of the women, was known by the name, ‘Rosa Бойевая.’

Medals for the Jewish Partisans

The Jewish partisans in the various groups, *Otryads*, and brigades, showed what Jews are capable of doing, at a time when they are given the opportunity to fight.

Many Jewish partisans fell in battle with the enemy. Many Jewish partisans were cited with medals for heroism.

In May 1944, when our area was liberated by the Red Army, many of the Jewish partisans were nominated to receive citations and medals for their heroic deeds in the fight against the Germans.

The Baranovich *Judenrat*

Twenty years have gone by, from that moment, when we, the Jewish remnants from Baranovich and the forests were liberated.

Two decades is sufficient time to make some kind of assessment and give an accounting about certain specific issues of the ghetto period. The accounting is indeed done by historical chroniclers, and writers, but very few of them lived during that period in heart and soul. Many of them are very subjective, and flawed in their analysis, especially when it comes to dealing with the problem of the *Judenrats* and the ‘Ghetto Police.’

In almost all instances, the *Judenrats* are designated as institutions that collaborated with the Germans, and betrayed their Jewish brethren in the ghettos.

There are no lack of people, fortunately only single individuals, who compile a blacklist of traitors, that also includes names from the Baranovich *Judenrat*.

As a ghetto Jew, from the first day of the establishment of the ghetto in Baranovich, until the final liquidation, I wish to set the record straight, that all the members and employees of the *Judenrat* in Baranovich, acted decently, and with full awareness, and complete commitment, feeling it was their mission to do what was best for their fellow brother Jews, as their representatives to the German authorities.

I remember the following names: Eysei Izikson, Zhenya Mann, Mul’yeh Yankelewicz, Joseph Limon, Abba Zakin, Mikhl Mukasey, Mendl Goldberg, Chaim Zukerman, Chaim Weltman, Mordechai Schiff, Joseph Kurinieć, Fishl Svjacicky, Dr. Svjacic, Izzie Fiedler, Moshe Litvak, Idelczyk, Baruch Galay, Beloskurnik, and Warszawsky.

⁷⁶

‘Fighting Rosa.’

Was anyone among them a collaborator? Was anyone among them a traitor or informer? No.

Almost all of them sacrificed their own lives for the greater good. A few of them actually died a martyr's death, ד"ר.

The position of the Baranovich *Judenrat* was, that a group of 200 people, whether they are called resistance fighters, battlers or partisans, has no moral right to seek a way to save themselves, by fleeing into the forest to the partisans, and by saving themselves, place ten thousand Jewish lives in the ghetto at risk.

They were also opposed to resistance, because this would give the Germans a pretext for liquidations. Only Jewish decency, and a profound sense of responsibility for each individual and for the totality of the whole in the ghetto, compelled the greater number of the *Judenrat* members to fight against the rebels and resistance fighters.

The entire Jewish populace of the ghetto was on the side of the *Judenrat*, and also the populace in the ghetto knew that every act of revolt, even by a small group, would lead to the liquidation of the ghetto. It was clear, that even if a single individual were to go off into the forest, and if the *Gestapo* were to find out about it, then all the members of the individual's family came under the threat of a death sentence; everyone that had the same [last] name; everyone who lived in the same residential quarters, or house of the escapee, and also all those who worked with him in the same workplace. It was a system of 'Watch out for me, and I will watch out for you.' because I am responsible for you both for you as an individual, and for everyone in general.

It must not be forgotten that both the *Judenrat*, and the ghetto police, did underground work in the Baranovich ghetto, not for 100 individuals, and not for 200 individuals, but for everyone. It is sufficient to recall the instance of Evsei Izikson and Zhenya Mann; the example of Chaim Weltman and the 40 Jewish policemen.

The *Judenrat* was the go-between vehicle, and representative of the working Jewish people in the ghetto, opposite the Germans. It was the objective of the *Judenrat* to assure that the demands and instructions of the authorities, in matters of internal administration, the allocation of ration cards, concern over foodstuffs, providing labor for the German workplaces, social help, oversight regarding sanitation and order in the ghetto – should be precisely and accurately carried out.

The Jewish police in the ghetto assisted the *Judenrat* in carrying out its mission, and took care that, all of the innermost demands of the *Judenrat* were implemented and observed.

The *Judenrat* was energetic and proud to turn back the demand of the German authorities to give up all the old and sick people. The answer was: we have given you everything that you have demanded from us, but Jews – that we will not give you, because we are not the masters of human life.

The response of the *Judenrat* was also energetic and proud when the *Gestapo* asked for 60 young Jewish girls for the German houses of prostitution in the city.

It is necessary to document the fact that the Jewish ghetto police were subordinate exclusively to the *Judenrat*, and carried out orders only from the *Judenrat*, but at no time ever, did they carry out orders from the Germans.

The conscience of the *Judenrat* and the Jewish police in the Baranovich ghetto, was clear, from any blame for Jewish victims.

Those of them that were killed were martyrs and were pure.

Those that, bu some miracle, managed to survive, were heroes.

*

The 22nd Day of Remembrance for the Martyrs of Baranovich

Vizkor

The sacred Baranovich community, who at the hands of the German murderers, with its accomplices, servants and partners – the Poles, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, and Lithuanians – was annihilated.

Vizkor

Those dear Jews, who were tortured, abused, and killed in the slaughters and expulsions.

Vizkor

Those pure and innocent souls of our sacred fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, wives and children, whose creative lives were cut off, and whose souls demand vengeance to be exacted from their torturers and murderers.

Vizkor

The innocent Jewish children, who were killed in front of the eyes of their hapless parents.

Vizkor

Our dear Baranovich scions, who were killed in the camps of: Koldichevo, Wilejka, Bezdony, Oshmiany, Rzesza, Kena, Radom, and others.

Vizkor

Those who fell in the forests and fields, killed by German bullets, or by traitorous hands.

Vizkor

Those who expired from hunger and cold, in their hiding places, in the ‘caches’ and could not hold out until the liberation.

Vizkor

The familiar and the unfamiliar, those we have mentioned and those we have forgotten!

We, who by some miracle, or by chance, who happened to remain alive, those who with their own eyes witnessed the torture and killing of our nearest and dearest, we will never forget them, we will not permit the world to forget.

With a holy trembling in our souls and hearts, we honor the memory of our Baranovich martyrs.

The Baranovich Society in America

Joseph Foxman

President

Members: **Itcheh Estreich, Isaac Fayglstein, David Wasserman,
Min'keh Leibowitz. Solya Kurkhin, Ely'eh Abramowicz**

A list of fallen fighters, resistance personnel, and partisans from the Baranovich Resistance Movement. The list has been assembled on the basis of tens of eye witnesses, memories, notices, and post-war publications.

[Note: The Original Hebrew Alphabetical Order Has Been Preserved]

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Abramowsky, Abraham, Dr. | 31. Mazurek |
| 2. Osowski, Chaim | 32. Molczadsky |
| 3. Ordianska | 33. Mukasey |
| 4. Oszerowsky, Yitzhak | 34. Mordukhowicz, Yerakhmiel |
| 5. Oszerowsky, Leib'l | 35. Mordkowska, Sarah |
| 6. Itzkowitz, Shlomo | 36. Muszinsky, Monik |
| 7. Brzezinsky | 37. Newakhowsky |
| 8. Braverman | 38. Novak |
| 9. Gurwicz, Vova | 39. Sabak |
| 10. Gurwicz, Mot'ik | 40. Sabavkewicz |
| 11. Gursky, Aharon, | 41. Slucky, Peretz |
| 12. Gursky, Aryeh | 42. Polonsky, Mott'l |
| 13. Glinik | 43. Florans, Itchek |
| 14. Green | 44. Cyrynsky, Tuvia |
| 15. Dors, Abraham | 45. Kagan, Yaakov, Dr. |
| 16. Wolinsky-Epstein, Saul | 46. Kaplinsky, Khatzkel |
| 17. Wiszniewsky, Esther | 47. Karelity, L. |
| 18. Zolotursky, Mott'l | 48. Kapilowicz, Mom'eh |
| 19. Zilberman, Moshe | 49. Rabinovich |
| 20. Zilberstein, Moshe | 50. Ruzhansky, Mosh'keh |
| 21. Zalmanowicz | 51. Rosengam, Mendl |
| 22. Yosselewicz, 'Nioma | 52. Rayak, Siam'keh |
| 23. Loboowsky, Yitzhak | 53. Khaitowicz, David |
| 24. Lansky, Shlomo | 54. Shari, Israel |
| 25. Lubranicky, Vaclav, Dr. | 55. Swec, Ruzh'keh |
| 26. Lipnik, Moshe-Aharon | 56. Shifris |
| 27. Lipnik (Brother) | 57. Schleifman, Yaakov |
| 28. Lipnik, (Brother) | 58. Szereszewska, Bluma |
| 29. Molowicky, David | |
| 30. Molowicky, Yitzhak | |

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