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CLOUDS IN THE THIRTIES

On Anti-Semitism In Canada 1929 - 1939

A Chapter on Canadian Jewish History

By
David Rome

Final Section, 13

**NATIONAL ARCHIVES
CANADIAN JEWISH CONGRESS**

Montreal, 1981



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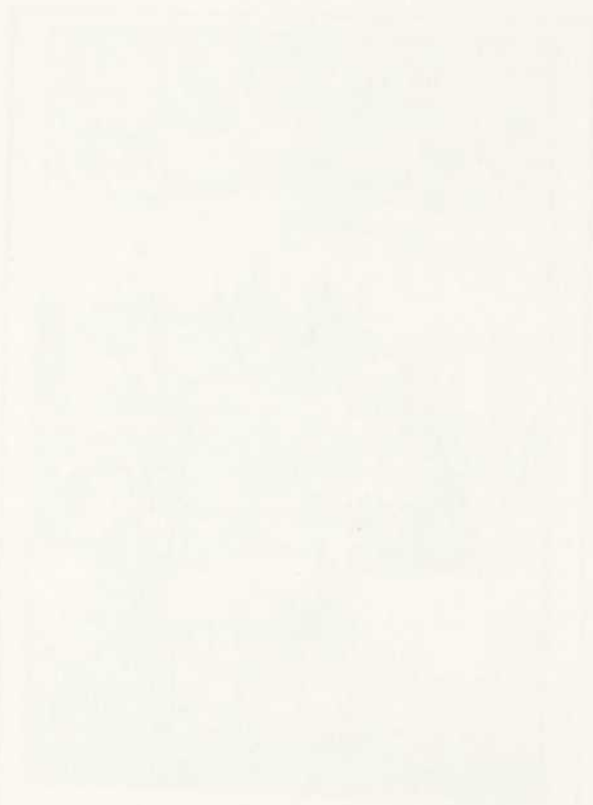
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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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INVIGORATED INITIATIVE

The invigorated initiative came from both the Jewish and the more widely Canadian sides simultaneously, apparently without prearrangement, consultation or even exchange of information or plans.

In Ottawa it seems that the League of Nations Society -- not deeply beloved by Mr. King -- had decided on an educational program. Its executive committee, meeting in Montreal on Oct. 15, 1938, resolved to establish "The Canadian National Committee on Refugees and Victims of Persecution. The purposes of this new committee were to seek to coordinate all efforts in Canada on behalf of refugees, to promote public education and discussion of the refugee problem, and to maintain contact with the Canadian government and voluntary agencies inside and outside the country. The committee was initially under the direction of the Canadian League of Nations Society but this was only an interim association pending the calling of a CNCR founding meeting for those Canadians interested in solving the refugee situation. Senator Cairine Wilson, president of the League of Nations Society, resigned her position to become chairman of the refugee committee, a post she held for the next decade. The senator received assistance from League of Nations Society officers, one of whom was Constance Hayward, who became the executive secretary of the CNCR following the founding meeting in December 1938." (Dirks, P.62)

The Canadian League of Nations Society told the Western Jewish News that "they will place the strength of their entire organization behind a move to aid Jewish refugees in Europe by requesting the Canadian government to take immediate action. This action will consist of allowing a greater flow of Jewish immigration into Canada by organizing Canadian public opinion in favour of a more liberal immigration policy. The move has the support of Senator Carine Wilson, the first woman Senator and president of the Canadian League of Nations Society, who said today that 'We are planning to make aid for victims of political persecution and unprovoked aggression a major feature of our National Peace Action Week beginning November 6th.'" (Oct. 6, 1938)

The Winnipeg weekly also noted in the same issue, "During 1938 Canadian public opinion has been slowly awakening to the need of more immigration to Canada and the humanitarian duty to assist the victims of Nazi and Fascist persecution in Europe. Such organizations as the National Conservative Party, the Canadian Legion, Canadian Association of Chartered Accountants; such individual citizens as Sir Edward Beatty, Sir Henry Page Croft, Keith H. Williams, George Blackmore."

We may note that this initiative was indicated several weeks earlier in the Toronto Congress bulletin of Oct. 7, 1938,

"A large delegation, non-sectarian in character and including some of Canada's most prominent citizens, is being organized with a view to making representations to the Canadian government. The delegation will request from our government, the entry of refugees to Canada from Germany, Austria and possibly other countries, based on humanitarian arguments. More information in this connection will be available shortly."

Indeed, the Canadian Jewish Congress was attempting to set up a non-sectarian delegation to the Prime Minister the very same months of the fall of 1938 that the Canadian National Committee was taking shape. It was planning to seek admission of 300 fiancées of Canadians, presently in Europe; also of fifty prominent doctors in Germany and in Austria, and of a hundred capitalists who wished to settle in Canada and to invest here. The thinking was that these applicants were to be considered by the Canadian authorities as special cases, quite separate from the general humanitarian problem of the refugees. (Minutes of National Refugee Committee, Sept. 11, 1938; letters from H.M. Caiserman to A.A. Heaps, Sept. 23, 1938)

This effort to secure participation beyond the Jewish community did not succeed at this time. The delegation that saw the government represented only the Jewish Congress.

Impatience and directness were the mark of western Jewry. Apparently M.A. Gray made concrete plans for Winnipeg action along these lines, but he was not encouraged by the easterners. Heaps wrote him from Ottawa when he heard that the "Congress have turned down my suggestion that you meet Mr. Crerar when he is in Winnipeg shortly. I am sure you made a mistake.

"However, I spoke to Mr. Crerar this morning and I am now suggesting again and definitely that you arrange for a non-sectarian group of about eight persons to meet him when he comes to Winnipeg. I would suggest that you get about 2 Jews and 6 non-Jews to see him. Don't fail in this. I may say arrangements are going forward for National Committee on the general refugee question. There has been delay on account of appointment of chairman, which is not an easy matter. More on this later, but in the meantime get your committee to see Mr. Crerar, and I have no objection to you giving all publicity after you see Mr. Crerar." (Oct. 31, 1938)

A remarkably clear formulation of the thinking impelling the Canadian National Committee appears in an October 10, 1938 letter from B. Sheps of Winnipeg, who had also consulted A.M. Shinbane, to A.B. Bennett of Toronto, who had been invited to draft a memorandum on this theme. Mr. Sheps suggested,

"We are inclined to the view that any non-sectarian delegation which ultimately would wait upon the Government should be the spokesman of this nation-wide organization. We feel sure that such an organization can be successfully launched throughout Canada, particularly if a lead is given by the Province of Ontario. It is not so much a question of having a large membership, but persons of the right kind. We feel that if such an association were organized in Ontario, with a personality such as, say, Mr. William Mulock as Honorary President, there would be no difficulty in recruiting into its ranks outstanding citizens of all shades of political, social and religious affiliations. Such an association would agitate to provide asylum in Canada for at least a limited number of political and religious victims of European oppression who would not, by reason of their means, or guarantees for their maintenance, become public charges or affect any unemployed now in Canada. You will appreciate, of course, that once a precedent is created of this character, it will be less difficult to widen the scope which such an organization might subsequently set for itself.

"We have in mind a membership which would comprise outstanding business and professional men. By reason of their peculiar position, Members of Parliament, ministers of churches and persons generally who are subject to popular pressure would not from our point of view make the most desirable officers of such an association.

"We are confident that if you made the start in Ontario, we could secure here in Winnipeg influential and outstanding business and professional men to associate themselves with such an organization, and this would provide the starting point for similar groups throughout other

cities in Western Canada. While we feel that ministers and Members of Parliament should perhaps not be officers of such an organization or members of the delegation, such persons by reason of their contacts are often the best people to secure the right type of adherents to such an organization as we have in mind.

"Once such an Association is formed, the delegation representing it could then speak to the Government not only as individuals but as the representatives of an influential and nation-wide body of outstanding citizens.

"Our committee, after discussion, were all of the opinion that it would be a mistake to diffuse our efforts; but that the publicity necessary to develop public sentiment should come not from interested individuals or groups but from this proposed non-sectarian body, and that this publicity should be concentrated at or about the time when the delegation is about to interview the Government."

By mid-October the Canadian League of Nations Society had decided that some "Hundreds of thousands of persons in Europe and Asia, both Aryan and non-Aryan, are being exiled from their homes and places of work; and the prospect for the future is that thousands more must follow. This untold and immeasurable suffering demands alleviation at the hands of the more fortunately-placed nations of the world. The countries which have been temporarily relieved from the spectre of war, such as ours, should not leave the care and rehabilitation of these refugees to those countries which have paid the price of peace, and are now beset with political, social and economic problems almost beyond the capacity of any people.

"Canada as a member of the League of Nations is peculiarly bound to assist, since the League of Nations has been unable to provide the security which the Covenant of the League, if adhered to, might have effected.

"Canada, despite the present untoward economic condition, is still potentially able to render important help and relief, both immediate and permanent, to those unfortunate people, and should do so, thus expressing our share of responsibility for their plight.

"It is desirable to arouse the Canadian people to a sense of the Dominion's share of responsibility for the well-being of these unfortunate people, victims of a world which has turned its back for the time being on the practice of collective security."

The formation of the non-sectarian committee is narrated in a memorandum of the Ontario division of the Congress, probably from the pen of Oscar Cohen,

"It became apparent that a number of non-Jewish bodies were prepared to take some action to secure the entry of refugees to Canada. As a result it was decided that, if possible, the League of Nations Society would be urged to form a national committee for refugees. This committee would be representative of the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish groups in Canada, and would serve to coordinate their activities. The responsibility for the welfare of refugees of any particular category would be vested in that group desirous of bringing the refugees into the country. Thus the Jews would be responsible for the welfare of Jewish refugees, etc. It was also decided that this National Committee would be urged to bring pressure to bear upon the government.

"At a regional meeting of the League of Nations Society in Toronto, the proposals outlined above were agreed upon.

"The executive of the Social Service Council of Canada, representative of the United Church of Canada, the Church of England in Canada, the Baptist Church, the Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., Salvation Army and Society of Friends, endorsed in toto the refugee plans of the League of Nations Society and decided to assist.

"The refugee situation was discussed by the Committee on Jewish-Gentile Relationships.

"On October 16, the Council of the League of Nations Society of Canada met in Ottawa. This meeting was attended by the Rev. Mr. Silcox and Mr. Heaps. Here the action of the League of Nations Society in forming a National Committee was officially approved and it was determined to interview the government as soon as possible."

The small band, sponsored initially by the League of Nations Society in Canada and other liberals, the Canadian National Committee on Refugees was active and moderate, strictly non-sectarian. Patiently its officers placed the case of the victims before the public, the civil service, the government and the cabinet.

Indeed for months the offices of the League of Nations Society were the offices of the Canadian National Committee on Refugees and Victims of Political Persecution, and the secretariat of the Society acted in the same capacity for the committee. Later Mr. P. Hermant made office quarters available.

Its national executive committee formally resolved to establish a National Committee on Refugees and Victims of Political Persecution, to be headed by Sir Robert Falconer as honorary chairman. The search for an active chairman led past James Richardson, Howard Ferguson, the Hon. W.P. Herridge, Chief Justice Lyman Duff. Senator Cairine Wilson, initiator of the project, became its chairman.

Catholic participation was assured early, as the Archbishop of Toronto James Charles (soon Cardinal) McGuigan appointed anglophone Mr. MacDonald of Regina to the Committee. (Memorandum of Nov. 3, 1938)

All members of the staff of the League of Nations Society were placed at the disposal of the committee. Miss Hayward was taken from work as a Field Secretary and Lecturer, and assigned to special duty with the committee. (Minutes of Canadian National Committee on Refugees, July 5, 1939)

The Society of Friends was another godparent.

A Raymond Booth was delegated by the Society of Friends (Quakers) to act as joint secretary with Miss Constance Hayward, and to conduct the campaign for funds.

This sincere Protestant movement spoke up on the Jewish refugee question and on the fate of other victims of German cruelty. It spoke to its considerable communion-constituency and it spoke in their name to the political power that acts for Canadian citizenry.

Heaps was helpful in this work as early as Oct. 21.

At the November meeting of the Jewish Congress Toronto's A.B. Bennett drew attention to the existence of the National Committee on Refugees, "nevertheless a very interesting experiment." A small subsidy to the National Committee was voted with some hesitation.

Rev. Claris Edwin Silcox, who was active in the Committee on Jewish Gentile Relationships, sought to mobilize Ontario Protestants in support of refugee admission. The Social Service Council, which he directed on behalf of the United Church, the Church of England in Canada, the Baptists, the Quakers, the YMCS's and the Salvation Army, endorsed the movement.

In due course Senator Cairine Wilson, Miss Constance Hayward, Senator A.K. Huggesen and Sir Robert Falconer assumed the leading roles in the non-sectarian Canadian National Committee on Refugees. Dirks indicates that it was the plight of the anti-Nazi Sudeten that impelled the formation of the group. (P.62)

This organization is of some interest to students of Canadian society, beyond the record of its achievements.

If it were not for its frantic background of holocaust, the story of the Canadian National Committee on Refugees would itself be a fine case history of democratic civic activism.

Unlike many ad hoc groups formed for a particular social purpose, this group was brought together almost spontaneously and by the strength -- such as it was -- of the conscience and ethical convictions of those who adhered. There is very little on the record of Jewish or other initiative or even communication, especially during its early creative months.

Within a few months a number of propaganda pieces were issued which evoked friendly responses from the English language press hitherto silent. Branches were organized in nearly all Canadian provinces, in a dozen smaller centres, no less than in the large cities. Leader of the Opposition Manion and the All-Canadian Congress of Labor agreed to support the movement.

In the event, it is remarkable and somewhat inexplicable that it should have taken shape when it did -- under what immediate propulstion? Upon whom?

It seems to have been born whole and mature. Among its first documents is a very long list of "selected individuals, presidents of branches of the League of Nations Society in Canada, representatives of national corporate members and representatives of national organizations" -- the whole designated as "Preliminary list of members" (as at November 30, 1938)!

It constituted a roll call of Canadian leadership in business, academe, society, law, religion, publishing and politics, with scarcely a Jew among them (Heaps, Factor, Oscar Cohen) and but a few French Canadians (Col. T.A. Vien, Sen. C.-P. Beaubien, Cardinal Villeneuve, Architect A. Chausse and Dr. A. Beauchesne of the Royal Society).

The organizations are equally far-ranging, from churches to bankers.

By Dec. 13 the list was greatly supplemented.

They were convened briskly by Sen. Cairine R. Wilson and Dr. T.H. Leggett, with Sir Robert Falconer as honorary president.

"We have decided to proceed at once with the establishment of the projected National Committee on Refugees and Victims of Political Persecution (outlined in the attached resolution), and on behalf of the National Executive Committee of the Society we are writing to invite you to become a member and assist with this important work in any way that may be open to you. A list of those now being invited to serve is attached.

"The Committee is called to meet Tuesday next, December 6, at 2.00 p.m. Chateau Laurier, Ottawa. We trust that you will be able to be present or to be represented, and that if neither is possible, you will submit in writing suggestions or recommendations.

"We have arranged for a consultation with Honourable Mr. Crerar at 10.45 Tuesday morning for those members of the Committee who are able to be in Ottawa at that time. We hope that the Government will receive a delegation from the Committee on Wednesday when the Committee's conclusions may be presented.

"We have arranged for Dr. James W. Parkes, distinguished authority on the refugee problem, to sit in with the Committee."

Total cost of the project into Feb. 1939, including salaries, printing, postage and all: \$1,200.

Questions subsist as to why did this institution come into being at this moment; why were these persons so silent hitherto. Later, where were they during the St. Louis?

Clearly it was not a Jewish body. Representatives of the Canadian Jewish Congress from Toronto -- A.B. Bennett, Rabbi M.N. Eisendrath and Oscar Cohen -- attended the first meeting at Ottawa, Dec. 6, but "As a result of a misunderstanding, no Congress representatives were present from Montreal," the national office. A.J. Freiman of the Zionist Organization, Mrs. Lillian Freiman of the Hadassah and Mrs. Beatrice Hayes from the National Council of Jewish Women attended only as observers, the minutes make it clear. Mrs. A.H. Lieff represented the Twentieth Century Liberal Association of Canada; Aaron Goodman for the Lethbridge League of Nations Society and David Lewis for its national executive.

A leaflet by the Canadian National Committee on Refugees and Victims of Political Persecution related the problem to the Virgin Mary fleeing to Egypt with her Babe, "In the Name of These Refugees, Aid all Refugees." It stated clearly,

"It is not a Jewish problem. True, it began there. But today Nazi fulminations are against the 'Judean-Christian tradition.' Protestant clergymen, Catholic prelates, lovers of democracy, men of science and philosophy, the successful in business are all included" among the victims of Naziism seeking refuge. The leaflet notes that there were only a few hundred refugees among the 17,245 immigrants into Canada in 1938.

The temperature of the welcome from liberal sympathisers can be gauged from a column in the Dalhousie Review of July 1939:

"The admission of refugees raises a very practical question of public policy, particularly for the Dominion of Canada. We know that in Germany the Jewish population has been ordered, for the most part, to clear out of the country...The annexation of Austria and Czechoslovakia has been accompanied by a terrorist pogrom against those who were known to be opposed to National Socialist doctrines. The concentration camps are full, and many not incarcerated live in daily terror.

"A problem of great human poignancy has been created. Where are those unfortunate men and women to go? Many of them have been engaged in professional or commercial occupations. Their possessions and properties have been confiscated, and, in any case, they are not allowed to take any personal assets out of the country.

"Naturally, they look with hopeful eyes across the water to the less densely populated countries of the American continent, and especially to Canada. Here they expect not only to find an opportunity to take up the broken threads of their existence, but to find conditions of democratic freedom. Numbers already have flowed into Holland, France and Great Britain, but their admission has been only temporary. Canada has been faced with a question of the policy to be adopted towards these tormented people who have had to fly from their homes, literally in fear of their lives.

"A number of interested people have taken up the refugee cause, and a National Committee has been formed. There is by no means a unanimity of disposition to admit these extruded unfortunates to Canada. The opposition comes from different quarters, and for various reasons. It is pointed out, most properly, that already we have a considerable unemployed population on our hands.

Many of these people come from urban life, and are not suited to take up work on the land. In any case, you need capital to take up farming operations, and many of the exiles have had to flee deprived of all they possess. Out in Western Canada, to which it might be expected that most of the refugees would go, it is pointed out that already great sections of the population are living in distressed conditions on public relief. However sympathetic our hearts may be, the giving of practical assistance is not so easy as might appear.

"There is a good deal of latent anti-Semitism abroad in Canada. It does not go to the vicious lengths of continental Europe, but, nevertheless, in many quarters, the Jew is not wanted. He is regarded as anti-social, a shady man of business, and in every respect an undesirable neighbour. Moreover, it is contended that Canada has enough non-British population to assimilate into her life, without the introduction of new settlers from non-Anglo-Saxon countries. Thus the barriers are erected against refugee immigrants.

"Those who contend for a more liberal policy suggest that Canada needs more population. Our land is thinly settled. And they further suggest that many of those European refugees are just the kind of people we want. They come from the intelligent, less supine elements in the countries under the rule of the dictators. Many of them are skilled workmen, who could introduce new industries. It is even hinted that some have considerable capital which they have contrived to smuggle out of their former homes, and now they are looking for new means of putting their money to work. Besides, it is said, Canada ought to make a gesture of sympathy at a time of acute distress.

"In the past, we have considered ourselves as a land of hope for the outcast and downtrodden. To our shores oppressed minorities have come, and here they have found new homes and new liberty. Long ago the exiled crofters came from the highlands of Scotland to Nova Scotia and Ontario. The United Empire Loyalists are a sturdy stock who maintain their traditions and virtues after the lapse of many generations. In later times, the oppressed have come from Russia, Ukraine, Hungary, Poland and other lands. Our history is largely one of settlement by refugees, and we have not lost in the process.

"The policy of the Government is not in favour of mass admission of refugee people. It is evident that they are willing to give sympathetic consideration to individual cases. The doors are not banged and bolted in the face of hopeless wanderers. What we have the right both to expect and to demand is a sympathetic attitude, if possible a modified policy of immigration, and above all, a welcoming hand for those who are being compelled to leave their native land for the cause of liberty, which every Canadian ought to prize." (by J.S.T., Pp. 242-44)

Even while approaching the public and the government on this problem on a non-sectarian basis, avoiding a Jewish label as much as possible so as not to arouse deep-seated and widespread anti-Jewish bias, the committee was clearly aware of the rampant evil of Jew hatred. As an auxiliary part of the program it distributed literature intended to counter antisemitism in general, and gave wide currency to such work by Dr. James Parkes.

Similarly the minutes are explicit: "No Jewish representatives were present" at the interview with the Minister of Immigration Mr. Crerar.

By the same token it was specified that petitions of support were to be sought from non-Jewish organizations and individuals; yet O.B. Roger of Toronto was named to its campaign committee on March 20, 1939.

Even when the war was on, by Nov. 10, 1939, when the government gave permission to bring a hundred refugee children from England, to relieve the burden upon the British Isles, it was "decided that Jewish applications should not be forthcoming until at least a few non-Jewish applications had been submitted.

"In the meantime, however, it was felt advisable that the Jewish applications, which it is understood will be secured through the Canadian Jewish Committee for Refugees, should be obtained. Inasmuch as Jewish Child Welfare Agencies will be in charge of the Jewish applications, the differences between Welfare workers and the Committee does not affect the Jewish cases only inasmuch as it was planned to present Jewish and non-Jewish cases to the Government at the same time.

"It is my suggestion that we endeavour to secure as many applications as possible. As soon as the applications are forthcoming they can be considered with little delay.

"It should be noted that the Canadian National Committee is still carrying on propaganda activities, most of which is directed toward the creation of better understanding between Jew and non-Jew." (Memorandum from S.J. Zacks to O. Cohen, Nov. 10, 1939)

It tells much of the moral climate of the time that such active Jewish citizens as Mr. Zacks were present at meetings of friends where such decisions were adopted.

Mr. Zacks adds, "within the last few months the situation was greatly complicated by the intrusion of Miss Charlotte Whitton, secretary of the National Welfare Council, Ottawa. Miss Whitton was the person who almost

broke up the inaugural meeting of the Canadian National Committee on Refugees by her insistent opposition and very apparent anti-Semitism. She has been carrying on a guerrilla warfare ever since. She has tried to block the refugee children project, probably because she was not consulted. It is even suspected by Senator Wilson and others that she has spoken to Mr. Blair, Director of Immigration, in this connection.

"Matters were considerably assisted, however, when Senator Wilson was placed in a position wherein Miss Whitton is dependent upon the former's goodwill."

By July 5 the Winnipeg committee had received offers of adoption of seven refugee children from non-Jewish families. These will be presented to the Manitoba government with an equal number of Jewish offers. (Minutes of executive committee, July 5, 1939)

Of course, there is no element of discrimination in any of this. If the National Committee could open doors for refugees, there would never be any exclusion of Jews in any project the Committee would sponsor. The "Aryan" character of the Committee was certainly a strategic device.

With all this clearly understood, the Jewish theme still troubled many of the participants.

Several members of the committee voiced their concern over the anti-Semitic campaign which, it appeared, was being conducted throughout the Dominion. and, on March 20, 1939 the committee decided to consult the Jewish Gentile Committee set up by Lieut.-Gov. Bruce in its program against anti-Semitism. The committee also approved the plan that the Senate investigate anti-Semitic and Fascist activities in Canada.

When a "Gentiles Only" advertisement came to the attention of Miss Constance Hayward, secretary of the committee, she wrote to the management,

"You may be interested to know that churches and other organizations in Canada which want this country to become and remain a civilized place are making a concerted effort to put an end to racial prejudice in the Dominion. In the past you have probably been told by many people that they prefer a resort from which Jews are excluded, and you have formed your policy accordingly. But sentiment is changing rapidly, and it may be better business for you to say next year that you accept only pleasant and well-bred people. For instance, though I happen to be thoroughly Anglo-Saxon myself, I shouldn't think of spending my vacation this year at a resort from which Jews are excluded on racial grounds. Next year, apparently, sentiment will be much stronger than it is this year, and from a business point of view you may be interested to hear of the change.

"If you have served the public any length of time -- as you probably have -- no one needs to remind you that Gentiles are very often very vulgar and rude. If you have always excluded Jews you may not know, on the other hand, that some of Canada's most gentle, imaginative, brilliant and cultured people are Jews. By discriminating against them we lose the opportunity to know them socially. I for one don't want to tie myself down to the company of people among whom I know in advance I shan't be able to find any Jews of this sort. One doesn't expect all fellow-guests at a summer resort to be university professors and their wives and children, but it would add considerably to the pleasure with which I looked forward to spending next summer, say, at....Bay, if I thought there just might be a distinguished Jewish refugee summering there too, with whom I might some time have the honour of conversing for an hour -- or some Canadian Jewish research worker or social worker, or just a Canadian Jew with a very ordinary job whose mind might turn out to be a perpetual delight. During the working

months I have little chance for talking to people; in my vacation I'd like to know there was at least a sporting chance of good talk with well-read people. And it seems as if people who are satisfied to be just Anglo-Saxons and nothing else aren't well-read and are unable to talk interestingly. They're just deadly dull.

"Congeniality among your guests must always be something of a problem to you, I suppose. This is just to point out that next year your public is going to be aware that congeniality cuts across racial divisions -- follows levels of intelligence and good breeding rather than being determined by the countries in which our ancestors happened to live some generations ago." (Bulletin of Canadian National Committee on Refugees, no.5, July 25, 1939)

During the intimate debates within the Committee there was a good variety of attitude. Charlotte Whitton and Sen. James Murdock urged restraint, speaking almost for the Government (the French-Canadian third of Canada's population was not represented on the Committee). Vancouver's Dr. W.G. Black was militant.

A resolution was approved empowering the Committee to undertake a campaign of education to counteract the organized anti-Semitic propaganda which constituted the spearhead of the totalitarian attack on democracy.

Silcox told the Canadian Clubs in Western Canada at this time,

"Jews who had fled the reign of terror of eastern Europe early in the century came for the most part to North America, and it was this migration that brought the majority of the 160,000 Jews who now live in Canada, or their parents, to our shores.

"This brutal story has its own lessons for us. It should remind us, in the first place, that the majority of Canadian Jews came to us little more than thirty years ago with poison in their systems. They had lived under a cruel regime where they could only succeed by cringing or bribery. If they proved sometimes difficult to incorporate into our Canadian life, it is well to remember these facts. The German Jews, on the other hand, have until the advent of Hitler, lived normal lives for several generations and deemed themselves integral parts of Germany. They would be much more easily assimilated. But the story has another lesson. It reminds us that the bureaucracy used the Jews as a scape-goat, and anti-Semitism as a method of crushing the democratic urge. What did the bureaucracy get for it? It got the revolution in 1917. It got Bolshevism. It went down in a sea of blood. Had it concerned itself with the wise extension of democratic principles and practices in 1900 instead of perverting its intelligence with the forging of vain Protocols, it might have avoided the disgrace of the Russo-Japanese debacle, the tragedy of Bloody Sunday and the terror of the Leninists; but it tried the way of falsehood, of intrigue, of barbarity -- and it paid a terrible price for its sin:

"The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small."

"So the Protocols came to Germany, and soon Germany began to use the Jews as scape-goats, thus forcing them to accept their ancient role." (The Challenge of Anti-Semitism to Democracy, Jan. 1939)

As we look closely at the appeals from the committees on behalf of the refugees and at the welcoming comments in the press and elsewhere, we are inevitably struck by one prominent theme, and by the absence of another: These victims of overseas persecution are of benefit to Canadians; it is practical, selfish policy to admit them; it pays. There is scarcely a word of com-

passion; scarcely a word about refugees whose arrival may not bring profit to the country. And very little about some of them being Jewish. They are all unaffiliated, uncharacteristic "victims of persecution." (e.g., Refugee Industries in Canada, reprinted from the Winnipeg Free Press by the Canadian National Committee on Refugees. 23 p.)

Apparently the Canadian public is not yet adjudged to be prepared for acts of humanity to Jewish sufferers.

Even the mildly spoken Canadian National Committee protested "that the total immigration to this country from all sources for the first six months of 1938" included but 328 Jews.

Compare this with the much later government publication, the Canadian Family Tree (P.19),

"The refugees will come now, not inclined, like Lot's wife, always to cast longing glances at the Sodom and Gomorrah from which they flee, but ready to give us their entire allegiance, knowing no homeland but Canada, eager and ready not only to rehabilitate themselves and their fortunes here, but to make a unique contribution to our national well-being.

"Those whom Nazi Germany is rejecting will help to build a new and more prosperous Canada, and make more solid the broad basis of the justice and freedom of the British Commonwealth of Nations."

With so much anti-Semitism spread through so many levels of the nation, there was dissimulation -- if not worse -- in the record of the non-sectarian committee which proved less fruitful in Jewish life-saving than even some of its own leaders would have wished.

The Canadian National Committee on Refugees and Victims of Political Persecution mobilized forty dominion-wide organizations at an Ottawa conference on December 6, 1938. They consulted Resources Minister Crerar before adopting a general resolution, and arranged to interview the federal cabinet.

Dec. 6, 1938 was the crucial date. That morning a delegation met with Mr. Crerar who "indicated that immigration regulations were already being relaxed with regard to many classes of refugees, mainly those brought out by relatives in Canada and those settling on the land. In addition, leniency was being extended to refugees who possessed visitors' visas: but he warned that the government would exercise the utmost strictness in this connection if the number of refugees coming to Canada on the pretext of visiting here increased to any considerable extent.

"On the whole, Mr. Crerar gave more reason for optimism than at any time in the past. It had been ascertained previously that a number of conferences with the Hon. Charles Dunning had taken place in Ottawa, and that he had finally removed his objection to the admission of refugees. The main opponent of the project in the cabinet is the Hon. Lapointe."

The prime minister told them before the forthcoming meeting with the cabinet that no policy decision can be made clear for five weeks.

The meeting with the cabinet the following day was equally inconclusive. (Canadian Press dispatches, Dec. 6, 7, 1938)

On the morrow a "delegation representing the National Committee met with the Prime Minister and the entire cabinet. This was arranged on Wednesday morning after the press reports of the previous day's conference had appeared.

"The Prime Minister congratulated the delegation on the resolution, and stated that very evidently it had been carefully prepared and was the type which it had been hoped would be forthcoming. The Prime Minister indicated that there was a great deal of sympathy for the request of the delegation, but stated that the public and members of parliament needed considerable education on the question. He stated that he had received a number of letters from members of parliament indicating they would oppose any immigration measure.

"The Prime Minister further indicated that the cabinet was considering this question very carefully and was also giving serious thought to the question of a grant for the settlement of refugees in Canada and elsewhere.

"Following the formal interview, the Prime Minister approached several prominent members of the delegation and spoke most cordially to them, emphasizing again the need for proper education on this question."

Though the committee was headed by Senator Cairine Wilson and spoke in the name of Protestant churches in Canada and of some forty organizations, and though they demanded very little, the hearing they received was very reserved and the results, precious as they were, amounted to little. (Gazette, Dec. 7, 1938)

Senator Cairine Wilson introduced the appeal which Earl Baldwin of Bewdly broadcast over the radio from London on December 8, 1938, the day after the Canadian National Committee on Refugees was rebuffed by the King cabinet. She said,

"The government of the Third Reich is reducing to poverty or forcing flight upon one and a half million persons, less than half of whom, by the way, are Jews. In the world as it stands today we as a people cannot escape a share of responsibility for caring for these unfortunate people."

"We must be big enough and courageous enough to admit to Canada a fair share of the unfortunate men involved...I am convinced that the admission of a certain number of selected refugees would increase employment. Canada's ratio of population to the square mile is the second lowest in the world. Yet she is possessed of enormous wealth in natural resources; and with vigorous and enterprising people is surely able to assume this responsibility which can be defended on economic as well as humanitarian grounds." (The Plight of the Refugees, with introduction by Sen. Wilson. Ottawa, Canadian National Committee on Refugees and Victims of Political Persecution, 1939, 16 p.)

By Feb. 7, 1939 the Committee felt that Sen. Wilson should "arrange for a small delegation from the Committee to interview the Prime Minister and Minister of Immigration. This will be done as soon as possible. It was felt that the Prime Minister should be told that the Committee has followed his suggestion in arousing public opinion. With the exception of Quebec, public opinion in Canada was heartily in favour of admission of selected refugees. The Committee feels that it should be taken into the confidence of the government, especially since it will conduct a campaign for funds and must know what disposal will be made of moneys to be collected.

"It was agreed that if a satisfactory answer was not received from the government drastic action would be taken inasmuch as the Committee could not sit back complacently and permit pressure from French Canada to thwart the will of the majority of the Canadian people.

"According to reports from four sources, the government has arranged for the immigration of up to 8,000 Czech refugees. This is being financed by the fund loaned to Czechoslovakia by Great Britain. There is no indication as to the categories of refugees which will be admitted or the period over which they will come in. Officials in Europe are, however, selecting the people who are mainly social democrats from the Sudeten area. There will probably be a small number of Jews in the group.

"The government feels that public opinion (outside of Quebec) has been aroused over the refugee question and that it would have widespread support if it admitted selected refugees. It appears that the government intends to do something (or has already decided to do something) about the admission of German refugees, but I cannot ascertain what action is being taken...

"The government does not view the Lacroix statement and the St.-Jean Baptiste Society petition seriously. A counter petition was not considered necessary." (Report by Oscar Cohen)

Ottawa spelled it out to Massey on Feb.13, 1939:

"Progress is being made in arrangements for admission of Sudeten German refugees and.... our anxiety lest premature publicity in Ottawa or London prejudice the carrying out of this substantial project. In light of these circumstances and of your knowledge of political history of immigration question in Canada, you will understand why we fear any public statement of policy in respect of reception of refugees will provoke essentially irrelevant controversies which would put in jeopardy what is presently being done through use of discretionary powers under Immigration Act, and what it is hoped may be done for the Sudeten Democrats.

"Until such time as the Government are in a position to submit statement of policy to Parliament there is nothing positive that you can say to Inter-governmental Committee with whose purposes Government have fullest sympathy and in whose work they are prepared to cooperate so far as feasible. It would be most unfortunate if your absence from meetings of Committee were construed as evidence of lack of Canadian interest in its task, and I should therefore be grateful if you would continue to attend as Canadian representative."

The show came to an end. On Feb. 15, Massey telegraphed, "Meetings of Inter-Governmental Committee on refugees concluded yesterday; next meeting to take place probably next July. Subject of Sudeten German refugees lay outside scope of Committee's deliberations which were concerned exclusively with problem of Jewish refugees from Germany." (Public Archives of Canada, King Papers, Pp. 231629-38)

Whether the original concern was with Sudeten or with Jews, its outward face was directed towards those Catholic victims of persecution, Jews were led to believe that this was only a tactic from which they would benefit, but that this concern for the Christians was essential.

The major activity was Sudeten-directed, and the indifferent officials were told that their acquiescence would lessen pressure and conscience occasioned by the Jewish plight. To soothe the conscience of the conscientious members of the committee strenuous efforts would be made to combat anti-Semitism. This new initiative had merit, and was gratefully noted by the Jewish community who were certainly aware of the profound and militant friendship of such activists as Senator Wilson, Mr. Silcox and Miss Constance Hayward. In all these pretensions and sincerities several hundred Jewish refugees slipped through the murderous maze of officialdom; for each of these lives every Jew in Canada was grateful.

After Munich a number of Sudeten Czechs, victims of German aggression and political vengeance, were admitted to Canada. Many of them had some capital; many were vocationally well qualified for conditions in the Dominion. Their adjustment was smooth. In addition, the reception of the group by the press was unusually warm and technically expert. There was nothing there to raise -- or even to confirm -- earlier doubts about the feasibility of opening the gates to Canada.

Abella and Troper note Massey's initiative on behalf of the Social Democratic and Catholic Czech victims of Hitler's invasion,

"Many of them, he told the Prime Minister, were skilled craftsmen, professionals and farmers -- exactly the type of settlers Canada craved. And perhaps even better, only a small percentage of them were Jews. He saw an opportunity to score some public relations points for Canada at minimal cost. Would it not be a wonderful tactic, he suggested to King to 'accept as many as possible Aryan Sudeten Germans'. These, he stated were surely 'more desirable' than other refugees. But more to the point: 'if we could take a substantial number of them it would put us in a much stronger position in relation to later appeals from and on behalf of non-Aryans'. He also pleaded that the Government consider Sudeten Germans 'quite separately from other refugees...(as) they include... many persons who would be much more desirable as Canadian settlers and much more likely to succeed in our country than certain other types of refugees.' And in case the Prime Minister missed the point, Massey emphasized that 'these refugees are of a superior type to certain other categories of refugees who are engaging our attention'.

"Such cynicism was clearly not unappreciated in Ottawa, and Skelton was quick to assure Massey that his suggestions were 'in line' with proposals already before Cabinet. It was not long after the High Commissioner's recommendations arrived that the Government decided to keep out the Jews and let in the Sudeten Germans. Massey was delighted with this decision. He congratulated King and at the same time informed him that there were now a large number of Central Europeans 'of means and education' who would enrich Canada 'in both the material sense and otherwise'

who were finding Canadian immigration laws 'too wooden'. Canada was missing a golden opportunity, he told King, if it did not accept these people. Naturally, he added, he did not have in mind Jews, but rather 'the numerous non-Jewish people who find life quite intolerable under the Nazi regime.' In addition, he urged the Prime Minister to publicly announce that Canada was prepared to admit an unspecified number of non-Jewish German political refugees from the Sudeten.

"Mr. Crerar gave free expression to his thinking on the Jewish aspect. "Action against the Jews in Germany was purely economic. That is, the wealth of the Jews was being seized to assist German finances, and fear was expressed of what might happen if 'Germany got away with it.' Other countries might be tempted to take similar action."

Mr. Crerar's response to Toronto-Rosedale Conservative member H. Clarke was significant. Mr. Clarke had asked whether the Sudeten arrivals had been screened for communism. Mr. Crerar replied: "I am informed that probably 95% of those people are Roman Catholics."

Member for Quebec East Lapointe was satisfied, "Then they could not be communist." (Hansard, P.1699, March 9, 1939)

But, ironically, this reassurance did not still the very Catholic Anatole Vanier of the Société St. Jean-Baptiste.

"Curiously, when the public became alarmed at the news from London of the coming of 3,000 Sudeten to Canada, the same Mr. Crerar, who knows nothing, hurries to assure us that 95% of them are Catholic. As for me, I reserve judgment until they show their baptismal certificates. I relate their coming to a Canadian Press report from Prague of last Jan. 19. That 'happy' news wrote that the Czechoslovak National Bank has created a fund of some \$2,335,000 to permit 5,000 refugee Jews to reach Canada. Questioned on this matter at Ottawa, Mr. Crerar said that this was the first he had heard of it." (Le Devoir, Apr. 14, 1939)

On March 20, 1939 Rabbi Eisendrath told the Canadian National Committee that "following a recent interview with the officials of the Department of Mines and Resources there had been a feeling of hopefulness, but that several test cases submitted to the Department had dissipated this feeling. The Committee had done an excellent job in enlightening the public but the Government had not yet taken adequate action." (Minutes of Committee on Refugees, March 20, 1939, P.5)

Although there were probably very few Jews included in the Sudeten movement of 1939, the story has some significance in Jewish history in the country. The committee's summary for western Canada prepared on Dec. 31, 1939 refers to several Czechoslovak and Sudeten Jewish refugees to whom financial aid is rendered to maintain them until employment will be secured for them in Winnipeg for the winter season (with the consent of the Department of Colonization).

By June 29, 1939 it was expected that some 30 Jewish families would be under C.N.R. auspices in the St. Walburg district of Saskatchewan, and 15 by the C.P.R. in the Peace River block of B.C. (S. Belkin letter to O. Cohen of the Congress in Toronto)

The general good-will and compassion for the refugees extended -- in principle at least -- to Jewish victims as well. Some Jews were among the several hundred engineers permitted into Canada from central Europe.

There is the unanswered question as to who and where made the decision for this major deviation from more than a decade-old policy bolstered by a score of regulations and procedures with which law-abiding governments tied their own hands and craftily claimed helplessness before every appeal to humanity.

There is a feeling that overseas influences were decisive in this process. Not for the last time did overseas forces speak to King. Which ones? Through which channels?

They inevitably raise the much more profound question: are they related to the processes which brought King to a volte face and to a declaration of war against Hitler? Similarly, what of the domestic forces restraining all refugee immigration, particularly Jewish refugees? How were they silenced at this time? At these times?

Dirks traces carefully the secretive evasions of the government which the government felt it needed to implement the movement.

To establish a prudent arm's length relationship the Canadian railroads were brought into the project. On Nov. 4, 1938, the director of non-immigration suddenly wrote them that his minister felt sympathy and interest in the Sudeten refugees and thought some might be acceptable to Canada.

The same day the London men for the railways were informed by cable that this matter is taken so seriously by the Canadian government that "we ask you to drop everything else until this matter is disposed of." All this while repeating proudly that no consideration was being given to widescale admission of refugees.

Of course, this movement did not consist of farmers, though it was presented as such. If the high standards for qualification were strictly applied few would be eligible. No matter in this case.

Objections to scattered families and discontinuous voyage were suddenly waived.

The budgetary provisions proved too low by 50%. The needed funds were made available in a day.

By mid-January the negotiations were all concluded for 1200 families. As events were, in fact, developed by Hitler, only 303 (and 72 single men) came to Canada.

The press, so vigilant as we have seen that they covered non-existent transports of Jewish arrivals, was completely silent. With this extreme confidentiality preliminary discussions with local civic officials were undertaken. The password from Ottawa: You will not refer to the German-Czech movement as refugees.

Railroad land settlement officials in offices from Winnipeg to Victoria began to draw up plans encompassing a range of details including locating suitable agricultural land, acquiring men and materials to prepare these lands for prompt settlement, and contacting various provincial officials to inform them of the projected movement and to ascertain their feelings on the matter.

With eloquent cynicism the King government, when it chose, disregarded absolutely, even discourteously, all regional and provincial feeling.

When it did decide to permit the settlement of the several hundred Sudeten families in Saskatchewan, Premier W.J. Patterson and his cabinet learned of it when they read the newspapers on March 3, 1939.

"I know absolutely nothing about it," he told the press. "We have never been asked to take any action by anyone."

His minister for northern settlement, R.J.M. Parker commented, "It is extraordinary! We have had no intimation from the Canadian government or anyone that this plan was under way."

Manitoba Premier John Bracken was unresponsive to the idea. Alberta Premier Aberhart objected to any of them coming to his province. Nevertheless the movement went on its course, even though old timers who now had new neighbours objected. Some of these protesters were Nazi propagandists.

"Thus shall be done to him whom King would honor."

Dirks discusses "why these refugees were permitted to enter Canada while others, seeking the same permission, continued to be rejected. It may be helpful to assess how the Sudeten refugees differed from other persecuted peoples who desired entry visas.

"In the first place, the Sudeten people, from the beginning of their plight after Munich, had political and financial support from the British government. This, in itself, placed these refugees in a preferred position.

"Secondly, the vast majority of the German Sudeten people were of the Roman Catholic religion, a major distinction from the thousands of Jews who sought entry to Canada.

"Finally, the Sudeten movement could easily be seen to be a short-term commitment limited by the numbers involved. Such a project would, immigration officials argued, have been impossible, if, as in the case of Germany and Austria, the flow of refugees seemed to have no end." (Pp. 72-84)

All of which adds up to a single fact: the Jewish refugees were not wanted.

The case illustrates that this was the only barrier to rescue.

When the Canadian government later wished to open its doors to Jews, a bare eight years later but six million tortured to death later, the same Mackenzie King found no obstacle. The same was true a decade later with Hungarians, and then with Vietnamese, when the humane will was there.

There appear to have been very few Jews among the Czechs and Poles admitted at this time, but this was not publicly stressed, and the general good will and compassion for refugees extended -- in principle at least -- to Jewish victims as well. Some Jews were among the several hundred engineers permitted into Canada from Central Europe.

A historic act of life saving: an applicant "with capital of \$40,000 had been refused entry. Due to the representations by the committee, the decision of the government was reversed" (sometime before March 15). Certainly by November the committee was able to report that "there are some people in Canada today who could not have entered, and others who could not have remained, had it not been for the Refugee Committee."

On the other hand Rabbi M.N. Eisendrath told the committee on March 20, that "following a recent interview with the officials of the Department of Mines and Resources there had been a feeling of hopefulness, but that several test cases submitted to the Department had dissipated this feeling. The Committee had done an excellent job in enlightening the public but the Government had not yet taken adequate action."

With things moving so smoothly, and Jews still being kept out, being born on the bandwagon was the in thing.

Writing in late 1939, Blair stated: "I can say that for the last two years, we have been endeavouring actively but quietly to get as many useful industries as possible from Europe. We did this without any publicity because of the danger that German control of both labour and capital would prevent the exodus of both from German controlled territory."

Canadians doing what they could in the interests of humanity were forced to play down the Jewish phase -- although not to deny it -- and to appeal for the "refugees from political or religious persecution without regard to race, creed or financial position." It was a compromise and a circumlocution in the interests of saving lives, but it tells much in judgment of the audience thus addressed.

When the Canadian National Committee eventually secured permission to bring a hundred refugee children in July 1939 following the urgings of Lord Marley in the name of the Imperial Government, the social welfare agencies of the Dominion helped to elaborate the endless legal and professional prerequisites for action. Their report issued by the Canadian Welfare Council a year later -- in the meantime war had broken out -- makes curious and discouraging reading. The concentration on legal minutiae while the starving died, as so often unhistorically laid to the door of the Pharisees, is illustrated by these sincere technicians of virtue. It is not surprising that the project foundered. In a better climate eight years later a thousand Jewish youths were accepted with the cooperation of the same social work profession.

In point of fact, to cite Dirks, "The government's policy then underwent little change between March 1938, when the anschluss increased the flow of refugees from German controlled regions, and the actual outbreak of war eighteen months later. The Canadian policy endeavoured not to create a purely humanitarian classification for immigrant eligibility and not to alter the existing ratios of nationalities and races already present in Canadian society."

TRADING NASIS FOR REFUGEES?

The desperate trapped Jews in Germany sought to utilize another situation to reach Canada.

In the Canadian west there were a number of Nazis who had been attracted by Germany's new spirit and had decided to return to the Fatherland. The sad fate of these victims of Goebbels' popaganda, including 19 families from St. Walburg and Loon Lake, should be known by all Canadians, but its proper place is elsewhere.

An anti-Nazi German in Montreal commented on the group headed by Hugo Schilling and former residents of the Loon River district in Saskatchewan, leaving for Germany from New York,

"We are very glad to notice that some of Mr. Schilling's supporters and sympathizers have left this Dominion. The sooner they all depart, the better for the tranquillity of the country. We German-Canadians want nothing else but to be permitted to live and earn our livelihood in this our adopted homeland, together with all other Canadians who appreciate the value of citizenship in a country governed by British laws.

"He complains for example that a baker at Loon Lake was threatened with 'boycott' unless he ceased his Nazi activities. But he does not tell the public that it is the German-Canadians of that district who were the ones to threaten the boycott. The German-Canadians are disgusted with the nefarious activities of the Nazi minority in the German colony in Canada." (Canadian Press Montreal dispatch, July 25, 1939)

The later fate of the Loon River migrants is traced in the issues of Saskatchewan History,

"Some of the German citizens of Saskatchewan who have returned to Germany, leaving their families to be cared for by the municipality, are creating a problem in the city of North Battleford. The City Council thus was faced with the problem of what to do with the families of men of German nationality who had been unemployed or casually employed and who had gone back to their native land.

"The families had been left without means to support them and the responsibility was being thrust upon the city.

"The North Battleford council had passed a resolution that every male of German nationality who returns to Germany and who has dependents in this country must either take the family with him or provide maintenance for the family while he is away." (Apr. 8, 1939)

Ironically, it was just in this Loon Lake and St. Walburg area that a number of Sudeten refugees fleeing the Germans settled just when the Nazi sympathizers left Canada. Some 600 Czechoslovak refugees were in the area by July 1939; nine German families left just after the arrival of the refugees, and another six decided to leave at once. (Regina Leader Post, July 20, 1939)

It was logical for a Saskatchewan barrister to attempt "an exchange of property between Jews, desiring to leave Germany, and their own farms in the Loon River district, where they settled in 1929.

"As a result of this proposal representations were made, both to the Canadian and German government, but the scheme failed to materialize due to the unwillingness of the Nazi authorities to deal with the matter.

"The idea was that the Germans in the Loon River district would exchange their farms for property held in Germany by Jews or other persons or families desiring to leave the Reich.

"Because they were members of the Deutsche Bund, they said, 'every hoodlum in the neighbourhood could call us Nazi pigs... Bund branches were known to exist at country points, where members sang the Horst Wessel song, Nazi party anthem, and gave the Nazi salute... One Regina German who returned to the Reich a year or so ago wound up in a concentration camp, according to word in Regina, because of his conduct in Canada. He was a German citizen, and reich officials sent him to a concentration camp because, among other things, he boasted of being a Storm Trooper while in Canada.

"Other Germans who 'went home' from Regina fared better. One, a former cafe worker, is now filling a minor position in the foreign office, having to do with German citizens living outside the Reich. He was a well-educated man. Still another, former brewery worker, got his old job back as a jail guard.

"It is believed that there is some movement among Germans living in rural areas to go back to Germany, although it is not thought to be wide-spread." (Regina Leader Post, July 25, 1939)

There may not have been anything political about the return of Boehnert of Edmonton to Germany. It is a tragic story as his son, Prof. Gunnar Boehnert of Guelph University, recounted it to Beverley Stern,

"The Boehnerts came to Canada from Danzig, Germany in 1921. Settling out west in Edmonton, Alberta, his father prevailed upon his mother to return to Germany during the depression, where Boehnert's father, a journalist, would be able to serve as a free-lance writer for Canadian newspapers.

"Although gainfully employed in Berlin, Boehnert's mother was discomfitted and begged to return to Canada. But by 1939, it was too late for the Boehnerts. For undisclosed reasons (Boehnert's mother refused to ever talk about the war years and Boehnert was too young to know), Boehnert's father was taken to Auschwitz.

"Boehnert and his mother were interned for two years as well. Their release came upon the entreaties of his maternal grandparents with whom Boehnert and his mother lived for the rest of the war years.

"Boehnert never saw his father again. After the war in 1948, he and his mother returned to Canada to build a new life. For his mother, the war was over. It was a subject she would never again address. For Boehnert, her silence left huge gaps in his personal life." (Canadian Jewish News, Jan. 31, 1980, P.4)

Mrs. Cohn, "a visitor" from Germany, a victim of Hitlerism, had a property in Germany which she would like to exchange for one in this country. She accordingly inserted an advertisement in a newspaper and received a reply from a resident of Dorchester, N.B., stating he would entertain a proposition from her.

"Inasmuch as Mrs. Cohn is on a six months visit and will return to Germany I feel we must be very cautious, as, if this party should be a Nazi, he may be in a position to do her some harm." (Letter from Caiserman to N. Shelew, Moncton, N.B., March 3, 1938)

The Obendorff family of Heppenheim had considerable capital. Simon Obendorff came to Regina and negotiated an exchange of their German properties for a drug store and other properties owned by a German family in Regina. Then began the endless efforts to secure entry permits into Canada, invoking D.A. McNiven, M.P., Hon. Dr. J.M. Uhrich, the Hon. J.G. Gardiner and others. (M.A. Gray to Caiserman, March 22, 1938; A.H. Friedgut to Caiserman; A.H. Friedgut to Department of Colonization, March 18, 1938)

In Germany there were Jews who owned farmland and other property; they would have been happy to exchange with these deserters from Canada. The central Union of German Jews organized an Association for the Protection of the Economic Rights of the Jews, (F.W.I.), and this body communicated with the Canadian Jewish Congress and the Jewish Colonization Association to evaluate and examine the Canadian properties and to arrange the transfer, including farms at Regina, Meadstead and Windhorst, and a fox farm in Saskatchewan.

At the same time some of the Canadian landowners were petitioning the federal immigration department to the same effect. (King Papers, July 14, 22, 1939; Pp. 230128-29)

On behalf of the Paris-based Jewish Colonization Association a delegation composed of S. Belkin, Lyon Cohen and S.W. Jacobs called on F.C. Blair, Director of Immigration early in 1937. The Jewish group "was prepared to buy land in the Province of Quebec in the proximity of Montreal. In view of the attitude taken by French Canadians to immigration, Mr. Blair felt that we should make acquisition of land in either Ontario or British Columbia. We then acquainted him with the preliminary investigation which our Manager made in Ontario some years ago and stated that we would prefer to proceed with installations, either in the Niagara Peninsula or in other districts of Southern Ontario. Mr. Blair then suggested that we select the land, take options and come to see him again. He assured us that he would do everything possible to obtain an Order-in-Council for the admission of these families.

"There is still snow on the ground and it may take some time before a thorough examination of land could be made. On the other hand, if the candidates will not be installed in the spring, they will lose a whole season.

"We, therefore, cabled as follows:

Received verbal assurance Department will grant our application when we submit options for land in Southern Ontario stop Preferable select land when snow off ground stop If you desire installations this spring will proceed immediately"

(Report from Jacobs to C.J.A., Paris, Jan. 29, 1937)

It was the Nazis who first rejected the proposals.

1939: WAR IS EVER CLOSER

At this point M.A. Gray, the secretary of the Winnipeg Congress Committee summarized the concern of Canadian Jewry,

"The question of refugees in general, and Jewish refugees in particular has been one of the problems which democratic friendly Governments had to deal with, and one of the most serious problems in which the World Jewry's attention was taken up in the last four or five years.

"The first problem that had to be considered was the hundreds of thousands of refugees who have fled from Germany during the early part of the Hitler Regime and temporarily admitted by many countries, the major portion by France. And secondly, serious consideration was given to the plight of the Jewish people in Germany and the possibility of saving the existence and lives of as many as possible.

"In the first place, it was necessary for the Relief Organizations in the different countries where the refugees were stranded, to take care of their immediate needs, as they were not allowed to seek employment, and secondly, to try and find a place in the world where they could emigrate. Considerable work was done in this matter by the World Zionist organization, who succeeded in transporting between fifty and sixty thousand German refugees outside of Germany and some from Germany to Palestine. Many have emigrated through the assistance of the HIAS and Jewish Colonization Association to other European

and many South American countries, a large number to America, particularly children of those refugees; not very many to British countries such as Australia and South Africa, and unfortunately very few to Canada.

"When the Austrian tragedy developed, and there is no need for me to spend any time on telling anyone the very tragic situation of the 190,000 Jews in Austria out of the population of 6,760,000 and particularly the 176,000 who lived in Vienna, amongst a population of 2,000,000, Vienna being the centre of the barbaric attack on the Jewish people, not only depriving them of every means of existence, but the actual annihilation of the Jewish people by killing, torturing, concentration camps, etc.

"The whole Jewry being faced with this tragedy made a further attempt for the World Jewish Congress to have democratic friendly governments come to our rescue and then President Roosevelt made an appeal to the civilized world for the cooperation and assistance to save the hundreds of thousands of refugees, not only the Jewish people but others who have been persecuted and prosecuted by the Nazi Regime.

"Thirty-two countries responded and the National Conference is now in progress at Evian. As the main deliberations are being held in camera, we have not got the details, but from information we have, given us by the daily press, it is not too encouraging. However, we will have to hope for the best.

"World organizations, such as the Jewish Agency, the Jewish Deputies of London and the Jewish Colonization Association have submitted a strong memorandum. We have all the Jewish leaders at the Conference watching the situation, men like Dr. Weitzman, Herbert Samuels, Dr. Rupin, representative of the World Jewish Congress and other leaders in Jewish life, and representatives of other denominations who are interested in the refugee movement. So far only two South American countries definitely agreed to accept a number of refugees. We have hopes that America will do her share. There is a possibility that they will

increase their quota from 25,000 to 75,000. However, certain countries have definitely refused, others have not yet made a decision. The Canadian delegation although very sympathetic to our cause, have not yet indicated that they will take in some refugees, on the contrary, they have endeavored to emphasize the economic situation in Canada, and are not prepared to open the doors for too many of the refugees. It is important to note that since the Hitler Regime 400,000 of all nationalities have gone through France and 200,000 remained in France, which shows that we can hope for sympathetic consideration from them.

"The seriousness of the situation is shown when Dr. Rosenberg, Philosopher of the Nazis said the Conference will have to deal with not less than 6,000,000 refugees.

"I may also mention that 40,000 Jews must leave Austria by the end of this month, or they will be imprisoned or sent to slave labor, or perhaps brought to other borders and forced to enter other countries, not knowing whether the other countries will admit them.

"For many months the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society and the three Jewish Members of Parliament have negotiated with the Canadian Government and made considerable progress. Negotiations were carried on confidentially and our representatives feel that Canada is going to do something. They are now awaiting the return of the delegates from Evian, who will report on the general situation.

"Assuming, and we have reason to assume, that the Canadian Government will participate in the world's humanitarian movement, in my opinion, it will be done only under certain conditions; and one of the conditions will undoubtedly be their maintenance, well being and rehabilitation. I think this is possible, provided the Canadian Jewry will realize the seriousness of the situation.

"I think we can put up a strong case to the Canadian Government and endeavor to satisfy them and public opinion with regard to the possibility of any of the refugees becoming factors in the labor market or add to the army of unemployed.

"Besides the humanitarian aspect and saving human lives, in order to enable us to prepare a good case for the Government, and be prepared to face the problem after receiving favorable consideration, I would make the following suggestions. In making them, I want to mention that although the Canadian Jewish Congress was organized for the purpose of representing all Jews in Canada, there are still organizations existing who claim the right to participate in this work, and rather than split our efforts and create a doubt in the mind of the Government that the Canadian Jewry is not united, and therefore, their guarantee may not be accepted in full, I would suggest:

"1. A National Committee be organized which would include the 9 members already appointed by the Canadian Jewish Congress consisting of representatives from the three divisions in Canada to deal with the refugee problem, and three Jewish members of Parliament, representatives of the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society and the Jewish Colonization Association.

"2. That we immediately register all residents of Canada who have relatives in Austria, to ascertain to what extent they are prepared to assist them financially, and also whether they would be prepared to take care of them on their arrival. This would also strengthen our case before the Government, to show that in addition to the Canadian Jewry, there are individual relatives who would take care of them. In my opinion, there are quite a number here, judging by the large number of enquiries I am receiving daily.

"3. That we immediately establish a special refugee committee in every large and small Jewish community in Canada to make an immediate canvass to ascertain as to the number of refugees they would be ready and willing and able to take care of so when they arrive in Canada they would be sent to that particular destination immediately, the same way as we handled the previous refugee movement.

"4. That plans be made for the immediate establishment of a special fund to deal with this problem, and be prepared to assume and guarantee our responsibility to the Canadian Government." (Memorandum to the national office of the Canadian Jewish Congress)

Mr. Crerar and Mr. Blair received a Jewish delegation on February 22, 1939 which was led by O.B. Roger and included Benjamin Robinson, Belkin, M. Garber, Rabbi M.N. Eisendrath and S.H. Hart Green.

The results: for partisan and Quebec reasons, a blank permit for refugees and any change in the immigration were beyond consideration. Crerar and Blair would consider admitting a number of round orphans (fatherless and motherless) and some close relatives of Canadian residents from Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia -- not from Poland or Rumania. (Minutes of Winnipeg Jewish Committee on Refugees, Feb. 28, 1939 and letter from B. Sheps to S. Bronfman, March 2, 1939; Report of the interview submitted by Belkin on Feb. 24, 1939)

In the words of Belkin,

"O.B. Roger opened the discussion and recalled the words of the Prime Minister when he received a large delegation of the Canadian National Committee on Refugees. The Congress was inclined to believe that public opinion had changed for the better and hoped that the Government would now be in a position to make a definite and favorable decision. A general discussion then followed with F.C. Blair taking over the role of spokesman for the Government. The admission of Jewish farming families

was not any particular favor, as they qualified to come under the regulations. To sum up, the delegation returned from Ottawa very much disappointed." (Through Narrow Gates, Pp. 178-79 gives Feb. 28, 1939 as the date of the meeting)

A fuller report by S. Belkin states that, "The Government is unable to grant a quota for the admission of Jewish refugees in the same manner as it did in 1923. This is impossible in view of the opposition in the Province of Quebec. In the hope that the situation might change in about six months or later, the Government, in the meanwhile, is trying to help us by giving a more liberal interpretation to the existing rules and regulations. The Government is favourably considering the admission of remnants of families to Canada, such as brothers and sisters and other immediate relatives, providing that all other members of the family are already in Canada and are able to take care of the immigrants so that they may not become a public charge.

"The Government does not view with favour the admission of capitalists who may establish competitive industries. It will, however, consider favourably the admission of capitalists, export managers and technicians who will establish new industries in this country. As an instance, Mr. Blair cited the recent granting of a permit to a group of people who will establish an Alpine village in the Province of Quebec. Mr. Blair hopes that by establishing new industries in the Province of Quebec, we might change the attitude of the people in the Province toward refugee immigration. However, we feel that the cause of opposition to immigration in the Province of Quebec is not economic but racial and political.

"The Government will also consider favourably the admission of orphan children for adoption providing suitable homes will be found for them in this country and the children are in perfect health. The Government may also consider favourably the admission of old childless refugees who are in possession of sufficient capital to maintain themselves in this country.

"The Government, however, is not prepared to allow those who are in possession of quota numbers for a United States visa to come to Canada as temporary visitors, nor will it allow the admission of children whose parents remain in Germany.

"As to the question of doctors who may install themselves in outlying districts, the Government is investigating this matter but is unable to give any decision.

"Mr. Blair asked the delegation to bear in mind that during 1939 between 250 and 300 Jewish farming families will be admitted to Canada. Many of them will arrive during the month of March. Mr. Blair was then asked whether an agreement had been signed for the admission of 1500 refugee farming families from Sudeten Germany. While he denied that such an agreement had been signed, he admitted that arrangements are being proceeded with for the movement of such families. He assured us that no discrimination will be made against Jews, and that a number of them will be included in the allotment."

These promises were disavowed when the door closed on the delegation. (Letter from H.A. Friedman of Edmonton to Caiserman, March 31, 1939)

In spite of this frustrating interview the western committee of the Congress persisted. As Sheps wrote to Bronfman on March 2,

"It was decided to make a survey in Western Canada how many homes are available for refugee orphans and, when these homes will be secured in a reasonable number, our non-Sectarian Committees will first interview the Provincial Governments in Western Canada and obtain their consent in approval, so that the Federal Government will have no excuse then to object to the admission of them on account of the various provincial governments.

This plan was submitted to each Non-Sectarian as well as the Jewish Refugee Committees of each Province. It was also decided to have a conference of representatives of the Non-Sectarian committees in Western Canada to adopt a unified plan.

"To find out how many locations there would be to settle refugees on the land...We have several offers from Gentiles as well as from Jewish people on land in Western Canada, who are willing to donate same for refugees.

"We discussed the advisability of having a national refugee campaign and the expression was of a divided opinion of some of our members, that while we have not succeeded to attend anything practical with the Government in this matter we have nothing to offer the public for a campaign."

The few Jewish immigrants posed the newly formed Jewish refugee committee with some emergency problems. They had not been expected; they had been selected by Canadian railways overseas agencies; the responsibility of government and of the railways towards the immigrants -- most of them with very limited means -- was very small. The Jewish committee was faced with undeterminate charges, the first such challenge the Jewish community was to face in the decade ahead -- challenges to culminate in the cost of setting up, peopling and defending a state in Israel.

On the Canadian scene, on a smaller scale, the committee headed by Samuel Bronfman faced them, probably for the first time, at their national meeting of Mar. 12, 1939, in Montreal where it was reported that "during the conversation with the Government, which was attended by your representative, a few hundred potential farmers were mentioned, who will arrive during the year, besides the Jews who might be among the Czech quota of the government.

We also studied carefully the educational work which has been done in Canada and which must be continued. This work will cost a great deal of money and the meeting arrived at two decisions:

"To borrow a sum not exceeding \$50,000 to prepare and build carefully what may later become the supreme effort of Canadian Jewry; to deal with the problem, first in relation to Canada and then in relation to our obligation to the world.

"A first class national director must be found for the refugee work, and all the divisions are being urged to make recommendations, if and when they learn of a man who knows Canadian conditions, understands the problem, has personality, good contacts, etc."

A very large committee of 200 men and women was formed by May under the chairmanship of Mr. Bronfman with Michael Garber as Montreal chairman, A.B. Bennett for Toronto and B. Sheps for Winnipeg; S. Belkin, secretary. The committee included representatives of 36 communities from Nova Scotia to Alberta. Committees were set up for negotiation with the federal and provincial governments, for establishing refugees, on finance and public relations.

This advent of Bronfman and Hayes to leadership marks a new chapter in the Jewish effort on behalf of the victims of European, and African anti-Semitism; indeed a chapter in the history of Canadian Jewry which, however, lies almost entirely in the period after Sept. 4, 1939. ("Saul Hayes, O.C., Q.C." in Congress Bulletin, June, 1974)

This Canadian committee for refugees is historic quite aside from its important function. It marked the advent of the Bronfman era in the history of the community. Very quickly an effective team was organized, representative of all Canadian regions, largely of men who had been absent from earlier working of the Canadian Jewish Congress. Mobilized so soon after the 1939 plenary session, it consti-

tuted virtually the entire personnel that was to lead all phases of Canadian Jewish Congress work for over two decades. Yet it worked with remarkable smoothness and mutual respect with those who had founded, and but five years earlier re-organized, the Congress. The relationship over the years between Bronfman and Hayes and H.M. Caiserman and Sheps and L. Zuker and M. Dickstein is representative of a sensitive and statesman-like administrative efficiency as well as of a renewed Jewish idealism born in the challenge of heart-rending crisis.

The committee, which was developed into the Congress committee on refugees, was succeeded, in corporate terms, by the United Jewish Refugee Agencies, the United Jewish Refugee and War Relief Agencies, and by the United Jewish Relief Agencies.

Early in the quickly evolving history of the relief agency Lazarus Phillips outlined the history of what was by then the United Jewish Refugee and War Relief Agencies in a letter to Edgar M. Berliner, at Beverley Hills at this time,

"After the events subsequent to Munich, a large number of refugees from Germany, Austria and Czecho-Slovakia began to reach our shores. Included in this number were many Jewish farmers from Germany, Austria, Memel and Bohemia. In May, 1939, under the presidency of Samuel Bronfman, a Refugee Committee was formed with local sub-committees throughout Canada. The function of this committee was to work with the Department of Immigration for a freer immigration policy, and to aid and assist those refugees, especially farmers, who entered Canada and were in need of assistance.

"It was considered inopportune during the summer of 1939 to go to the public for funds for the refugee programme. Under the circumstances, prominent citizens undertook to borrow monies from the bank for these purposes, on the understanding that in the fall of 1939, when the campaign was to be held, that the first charge on the collected funds was to be the repayment to the banks of all monies lent for refugee purposes.

"War was declared in September, 1939. The J.D.C., the ORT and several collection organizations and the Refugee Committee decided to combine their forces for one campaign, and as one organization. The J.D.C. head office participated in the arrangements and was very pleased that such a co-ordination of forces was able to be undertaken.

"The resultant organization was called the United Jewish Refugee and War Relief Agencies, and conducted a campaign throughout Canada.

"The work of the Agency is two-fold:

"A) It collects money to be distributed in Europe for the relief of Jewry, and does this principally through the Joint Distribution Committee.

"B) It spends monies on a Canadian refugee programme, giving aid by way of loans to refugee farmers who, by the way, have come principally from Germany, Austria, Lithuania and Czecho-Slovakia.

"The campaign objective was set at \$310,000.00, of which about \$285,000.00 will probably be collected, to cover a two-year programme of refugee work, that is, from January 1939 to December 1940, and a one-year effort in the transmission of funds overseas for the relief of European Jewry.

"A News Bulletin issued in May gives in brief the story of what we have tried to do and the extent of our successes. The \$285,000.00 collected will be divided as follows: for relief of overseas Jewry - \$163,000.00, most of which goes to the J.D.C." (June 17, 1941)

It immediately mobilized existing Canadian Jewish resources. Its national executive, at the first meeting on May 7, 1939 at the Montefiore Club in Montreal, was told that "the offices of the Congress have advanced the necessary funds for travelling expenses and for office requirements. The offices have been of help in giving advice to a number of refugee families and in endeavouring to find employment for such as require it.

"The Central Division of the Congress has made a survey of the farms in the vicinity of Hamilton, and after the best farms were chosen, the refugee farmers have been taken to see them and settle if possible. A Sub-Committee on Farm Establishment has been formed to look after those matters for the Central Division, which has also financed, on our behalf, the purchase of agricultural machineries and seeds for the Czechoslovakian group of farmers. The Central Division also advanced funds, on our account, for educational work with regard to the desirability of the admittance of refugees.

"The Western Division of the Canadian Jewish Congress has also provided railway transportation to 10 families, consisting of about 60 souls, from Winnipeg to their destination. Food, shelter, and other necessary assistance was given them. They have also rendered great assistance to the transient groups which passed through Winnipeg on their way to Australia or New Zealand.

"The JIAS and the National Council of Jewish Women received 350 German refugees en route to Australia and New Zealand, and these received and were given every possible care and convenience from the moment of their arrival at Halifax, St. John, or Quebec, until their embarkation at Vancouver.

"The Council of Women assisted transients as well as permanent immigrants, and provided them with food, lodging, clothing, medical care, pocket-money, etc. In the case of several of the farming families, whose admission was approved by the Government but who were unable to leave Europe because of lack of funds for rail transportation from port of landing to their final destination, the JIAS was authorized by our Committee to advance the necessary amounts in order to expedite their departure.

"The JIAS has also interceded on our behalf in a case where a farming family of six was threatened with deportation following the rejection of a minor child on grounds of mental deficiency. After energetic representations to the Government, a compromise was reached permitting the family to remain while the mother was allowed to return to Europe with her child, with the understanding that she would be re-admitted after having placed the child under proper care.

"The Council of Women assisted transients from Europe who remained in Montreal from 5 to 7 days, with temporary lodging, medical and dental aid (given free of charge by local doctors and dentists), with food and clothing (supplied by local manufacturers and private individuals), etc.

"Assistance was given in locating Canadian relatives for refugees wishing to emigrate from Germany and Central Europe."

It was reported that monies were borrowed and advanced, and the Joint Distribution Committee in New York was consulted about a major nation-wide campaign.

The Refugee Committee formally decided to incorporate as the Canadian Jewish Committee for Refugees which would remain an "arm" of the Congress. (Bulletin of the Canadian Jewish Committee for Refugees, no. 1, May 1939)

The New York office of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee was kept closely informed of Canadian developments for many reasons. For one, any plans the J.D.C. may have had to raise funds in Canada would be affected by the arrangements of the Canadian committee; it was clear that any Canadian effort to centralize collections for the relief of needy Jews overseas would recognize the centrality of the J.D.C. in the world plans for such assistance; and the J.D.C. was clearly an ideological centre within the Jewish community on the continent and beyond.

The Congress meeting at this time discussed the J.D.C. role in Canadian relief work. A remarkable summary of the debate survives in a memorandum:

"a) Canadian Jewish Congress was representative of Canadian Jewry.

"b) The Joint Distribution Committee has only operated in Eastern & Central Canada.

"c) The Joint Distribution Committee is connected with the U.S.A. and is therefore subject to restrictions imposed on neutral nations.

"d) Congress leadership would serve to prevent the intended fund-raising activities of irresponsible individuals.

"e) Congress is the only Canadian organization strong enough to assume political responsibility for such a nationwide effort.

"f) The status and importance of the J.D.C. have been changed considerably by the declaration of War.

"g) Under Congress sponsorship the response of Canadian Jewry would be more favourable.

"h) The J.D.C. is not accepted by every Canadian Jew, whereas the democratic body of Congress, elected by Canadian Jewry, is the proper organization to control so vital a problem.

"i) The Congress, for this purpose, is to act in the capacity of a Government. We must be the chief body, responsible for everything.

"j) J.D.C. does not operate in Western Canada; what response could we expect from that section of the country?

"k) Congress must insist upon and maintain the principle that it symbolizes the unified body representing Canadian Jews -- the J.D.C., because of the war has to recognize the inadvisability of assuming the leadership of this proposed campaign.

"Those delegates in favour of J.D.C. leadership based their opinions on the following:

"a) Congress must abide by the agreement which it had with the J.D.C. as is indicated in the minutes of Sunday, June 29th, 1939.

"b) J.D.C. has Congress representation and more suitable machinery for distribution of funds than has the Congress itself.

"c) Congress must merit the leadership for such a nationwide campaign. It is generally known that fund-raising is not one of the most successful activities of Congress.

"d) We must make use of the accumulated experience of the J.D.C.

In view of the overwhelming importance and scope of the J.D.C. program, the new Canadian committee almost inevitably reached an agreement with J.D.C. very

rapidly. On June 25, 1939 an Action Committee representing the Canadian Committee for Refugees, the J.D.C. and the United Palestine Appeal, met at the Montefiore Club to determine "the desirability and feasibility of coordinating the fund raising campaign and the means whereby this objective can be reached. The meeting decided that the Actions Committee be dissolved and that Mr. S. Bronfman call the representatives of the Canadian Jewish Committee for Refugees and the J.D.C. to act on the National Campaign for Refugees." (Memorandum of June 25, 1939)

On July 23 A. Bronfman and B. Sadowski on behalf of the J.D.C. met with Lazarus Phillips and A.B. Bennett of the Canadian Jewish Committee for Refugees and "decided that the objective of the campaign be \$400,000 for refugee aid work; that the first obligation of the campaign is towards refugee work in Canada; that the method of distributing the campaign funds collected be decided further after the consultation with the J.D.C."

Abe Bronfman telephoned Isidor Coons of the J.D.C. on Aug. 2, 1939 to advise him "that the Jewish leaders of Canada have decided upon a unified campaign for the J.D.C. and refugee necessities, and that an intensive Dominion-wide fund-raising effort will be made this fall for \$400,000 to be divided on the basis of \$200,000 for the J.D.C. and \$200,000 for the refugee program. The Canadian United Palestine Appeal was invited to participate, but has declined." (Internal memorandum from Coons to J.C. Hyman of the J.D.C., Aug. 2, 1939)

Coons wrote Bronfman the same week,

"Mr. Paul Baerwald and Rabbi Jonah B. Wise have expressed their delight and complete approval of the arrangements reflected in Canada for conducting a unified campaign this fall for the Joint Distribution Committee and the Canadian Refugee program. They are most eager in behalf of the Joint Distribution Committee for the complete success of the forthcoming effort, and have asked me to say that the J.D.C. will cooperate with enthusiasm and to the fullest extent." (Aug. 7, 1939)

In terms of community structure and power, the new institution was clear-sighted and soon showed aggressivity. Significant is a formulation by Lazarus Phillips in a letter to Samuel Bronfman,

"A major question of policy will have to be determined, as to whether disbursement in the future will be effected through the new Agencies to be incorporated, or, alternatively, whether there will be an appropriation of funds by the Agencies to the constituent bodies forming part thereof, or whether a combination of both plans could be adopted." (Dec. 12, 1939)

The reorganization of the Jewish Committee and the reception of the first refugees to arrive was rendered the more difficult by the absence of government cooperation.

The authorities did not inform the Jewish spokesmen when, if or how many Jewish immigrants would be arriving. As M.A. Gray wrote B. Sheps in Winnipeg after the May 7, 1939 meeting in Montreal,

"There was considerable criticism of the Government and the Railway Companies bringing in families, as they termed it 'dumping them on our doorstep'; to which I took very strong exception; advising them so far no refugees were coming into Canada, that bringing in families here means saving Jewish family life and future, and it also means some other relatives will be coming forward later on, and that no one knows when this class of people will become refugees. I also pointed out that the success of the settlement of these families, will give the Government a good reason for increasing this class of immigrants and perhaps others."

It was becoming impossible to give any credence to the word of a man of government. As Heaps wrote to M.A. Gray on Oct. 21, 1938,

"Re refugees with capital, the department have made a ruling that \$15,000 is amount required. Such cases if you submit them will, I am told, receive favorable consideration although, to give my own frank opinion, I have no faith in anything along this line at present."
(S. Belkin Papers)

Several weeks later he wrote him, "I may say that the officials of the Department of Immigration are terrible in their handling of the refugee cases. This week they wanted to return an 18-year old girl to Berlin, but the Prime Minister said this should not be done"
(Nov. 9, 1938)

A perspicacious note of reserve from H.M. Caiserman: "In all justice I want to inform you that nearly every delegate who saw the government brought back a different impression. Mr. Belkin was the only one who formulated in writing what had taken place, and his disciplined mind and sense of responsibility I have no hesitation in accepting his version as correct." (Letters from H.M. Caiserman to B. Sheps, Winnipeg, March 13 and 14, 1939; to H.A. Friedman, Edmonton, Apr. 3, 1939)

For at this time Friedman, relying on these reports, had taken up the "question of the admission of a number of persons in this class whose admission had been refused a short time ago. In the particular cases I have reference to, the refugees have relatives in Canada and are in a position to bring in large sums of money, in each case in excess of \$25,000, and there would, therefore, be no question as to their financial standing.

"I am now advised that Mr. Crerar denies making any such concession to the delegation on Feb. 22nd and that the Government has no intention of admitting refugees, no matter how much money they have and regardless of the fact that they have first cousins living in Canada." (March 31, 1939)

Some Jewish refugees were beginning to come into Canada. A report from the Congress office dated July 1939 speaks of 656 arriving during the first five months of the year: 32 in January; 74 in February; 120 in March; 230 in April and 200 in May. They constituted 15% of all immigrants during this period. Most of them came to Ontario, a few to the west. Many settled on farms.

A month before the war shut off all possibilities of rescuing one soul from the torture chambers of the holocaust, a despairing Heaps told a Calgary conference of the Jewish Congress, "The attitude of the Canadian government towards the immigration of Jewish refugees is inhuman and almost brutal... No country in the world has done so little for the Jewish victims of persecution in Europe... It is hard to understand the reasons behind the government's refusal to admit Jewish industrialists with money. We have closed our doors to these people because of inhumanitarian reasons."

In April 1939 all the effort began to bear fruit. "The community received 35 families of Jewish farmers who were admitted under the 1939 settlers' quota.

"All these immigrants, transient as well as permanent, were provided with food, lodging, clothing, medical care, pocket-money, etc. In the case of several of the farming families, whose admission was approved by the Government but who were unable to leave Europe because of lack of funds for rail transportation from port of landing to their final place of destination, the J.I.A.S. was authorized by our Committee to advance the necessary amounts in order to expedite their departure."

By the beginning of August, racing the Sept. 4, 1939 fatal deadline, M.A. Gray was able to report to the Calgary conference of the Canadian Jewish Congress of western Canada that "to date 97 Jewish farming families have been admitted into Canada from Poland, Danzig, Austria, Italy, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany and Belgium, and have been settled in various part of the country. Each family was in possession of \$1,000, certainly not sufficient to establish themselves. Fifteen of these families were settled in Manitoba and Saskatchewan." (Israelite Press, Aug. 12, 1932)

A Jewish Colonization Association report for 1938-40 states that 200 Jewish families reached Canada during this period. Of these 135 were settled on farms, 90 of these in eastern Canada.

A well-meant and well-received paragraph in a letter from the superintendent of colonization to S. Belkin of the Jewish Colonization Association accompanying a list of 40 Jewish farmers settled by the company during a year is very revealing.

"I also wish again to ask you to refrain from visiting these people too often and to do what you can to discourage others from visiting them. Constant visits of numerous people are only resulting in a lot of attention being directed towards these people which might result in the long run, in considerable harm being done to the movement generally.

"There is no doubt these settlers have sufficient knowledge of farming to enable them to work out their problems under the supervision we are giving them. It was understood before they left the Old Country that they would not be able to begin over here at the same level as they had attained on the other side. They have

sufficient farming knowledge, and are sufficiently wide awake to understand conditions here for themselves. Most of the visitors, therefore, cannot do very much good except to satisfy their own curiosity; unwittingly they may do much harm." (June 24, 1939)

Thirty-three other farming families were settled by the C.N.R., in addition to some 30 Jewish families among the Sudeten.

The personnel of the Jewish Colonization Association were helpful with their technical skill and Canadian experience in the evaluation and the purchase of farms, in advising on crops and produce, providing furniture. A group of Hamilton women helped establish a milk and bread route for the 130 refugee farmers in the area.

In Toronto professional social workers were assigned to deal with the complex problems of the newly arrived. Traditional Jewish free loan came to the aid of the immigrants. By July some 70 families were aided by the Establishing Office.

"The refugees who came to the Committee for assistance might be divided into two broad classifications -- first, those who were admitted to Canada as farmers; secondly, urban settlers. It is apparent, therefore, that the needs of these refugees were extremely varied. The following are a few of the services performed for refugees: housing (finding rooms); maintenance while looking for farms; assistance in finding farms; helping to dispose of farm products; supplying household furnishing; supplying clothes; securing social contacts; Jewish education for children; farm loans; technical assistance for farmers; securing expert business advice; business loans; baggage; visa difficulties; etc.

"In establishing refugees, this policy was adopted: that settlement should be on a basis where each family can become self-sufficient in the course of a short space of time. For this purpose a number of loans have been granted to refugees living in Toronto to enable them to establish a business which would be reasonably expected to provide a livelihood."

The presence of S. Belkin in the west on J.C.A. business was of great helpfulness in settling the farmer refugees on the Canadian prairies.

A letter from M.A. Gray, Winnipeg chairman of the Congress committee, to Mrs. M.H. Ginsberg of the local chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women, summarizes the workings of the settlement group.

"During this spring and early summer, it is expected that about one hundred Jewish agricultural families will be coming to Canada for the purpose of farm settlement, with capital of \$1,000 over and above transportation. Four families are sailing from Gdynia today and will be here on or about March 13th.

"The conditions under which they are admitted are that they will be settled on the land, and that the \$1,000 will be deposited with the Canadian National Railways, which amount is to be used solely for their settlement.

"Last Sunday together with the C.N. Land Settlement Manager, I left for Regina where we interviewed Mr. Louis Rosenberg, of the Jewish Colonization Association as to whether we can get four vacant farms with houses near Edenbridge before spring; but meantime they will be coming here.

"I doubt whether the Polish Government would permit them to take out any money other than their transportation and \$1,000 capital; in which case they will require subsistence assistance until such time as they are actually settled on the land. To do this, it will require a certain amount of money to house and maintain them for a month or so. I suggest to send them direct to Edenbridge and endeavour to secure some four farmers who have large homes, to take them in. If the families are not in a position to take care of them for nothing -- and they should not be expected to do so -- then we will pay them a certain amount.

"It may interest you to know that in the last six years, while the farmer family settlement scheme has been in operation, there were no Jewish families allowed on the grounds that there were no Jewish agriculturists. After we proved to the Government that this was not a fact, they agreed to allow as an experiment one hundred families who have been personally investigated overseas and who will have the necessary capital. The successful settlement of these families will no doubt have the proper effect on the Government for next year in granting a larger quota for Jewish farmer families from Poland and other countries, which is solving part of the refugee or immigration problem.

"If you care, I may arrange for transportation for your representative to meet the four families about one hundred or two hundred miles east of Winnipeg, and you could ascertain their immediate needs." (Feb. 28, 1939)

Establishing committees had been set in Montreal and Winnipeg, but more than 70% of the activities were in Toronto, where the office, under the leadership of J. I. Oelbaum, was handling a new immigrant arrival every day.

Community resources were mobilized. The agricultural expertise of the Jewish Colonization Association personnel proved very useful; some 135 persons were settled on farms in the Hamilton area, as W. Agranove reported. The Hebrew Free Loan Societies of Montreal and

Toronto served the newcomers in the centuries-old tradition of honorable mutual aid. (Minutes of Central Region Committee on Economic Problems, June 1, 1939)

The community's Family Welfare Bureau was the central social work agency in this growing project.

Aid to the rescued varied from direct assistance, English lessons, employment, to guidance in business, locating baggage and official documentation. The National Council of Jewish Women entertained 60 at a garden party. (Minutes of Central Division, Canadian Jewish Committee for Refugees, July 13)

For several weeks after the declaration of war a trickle of Jewish refugees continued. S.J. Zacks reported; 130 additional refugee families, consisting of 412 souls, received assistance in Ontario. (Congress Executive Committee minutes, Dec. 11, 1939, and, minutes of meeting of Central Division, Canadian Jewish Committee for Refugees, Dec. 18, 1939, also attended by sociologist Jacob Leshchinsky of New York.)

The Dec. 30, 1939 summary report of the western Jewish refugee committee lists eight families to whom small loans were advanced to help settle in mixed farming near Winnipeg. They had been admitted to Canada under the Land Settlement Association scheme.

At this time the non-sectarian Canadian National Committee on Refugees had secured permission to bring 100 refugee children from Britain to Canada.

When the war broke out "the National Refugee Committee (decided to) meet shortly in order to complete plans for relief work, and the name of the committee will probably be changed to the Canadian Refugee and United Jewish Refugee War Relief Committee." (Congress Bulletin, Toronto, Oct. 19, 1939)

Days before the outbreak of the war M.A. Gray reported to a Calgary meeting of the Western division of the Congress,

"To date, 97 Jewish farmer families have been admitted to Canada from Poland, Danzig, Austria, Italy, Czecho-Slovakia, France, Germany, Belgium, etc., 42 via the C.N.R. and 55 via the C.P.R.

"Out of the 42 settled by the C.N.R. 7 were settled in Saskatchewan, one in British Columbia, 5 in Manitoba, 2 in Nova Scotia, 18 in Eastern Canada, which includes 5 in the Province of Quebec, 7 in Western Canada, their exact location not being known at the moment, and two families not yet definitely settled.

"Of the 55 brought forward through the C.P.R., 48 were settled in Ontario, including 3 in the Province of Quebec, 2 in Nova Scotia, 1 in Alberta and 4 in Manitoba.

"They came here with \$1,000.00 capital which is not sufficient to settle a family, on the ground that they are the first arrivals.

"As Jewish people of Canada who had the fortune of coming here and avoiding the ruthless persecution which faces every Jewish person, it is our duty to see that everything possible be done, first, not to interfere with this present movement of Jewish families to Canada, and secondly, endeavor to make whatever preparation possible to receive a number of other Jewish immigrants to Canada.

"We will have to make a sacrifice, being the price we pay for the fortunate position we find ourselves in, living in a free and democratic country, when hundreds of thousands of others are being tortured with the worst humiliation that ever faced the Jew in modern times.

"Every Jewish family admitted to Canada is a family's life saved, and since we were the fortunate ones in coming here to Canada, living under the British flag, enjoying our political and to a certain extent our economic freedom, it is our duty, as human beings and as members of the Jewish race, to make at least a slight sacrifice for our brethren doomed to the worst inquisition the world has ever known." (Aug. 6, 1939)

Each of the immigrants opened a Canadian chapter in his biography, just as each of those rejected by Canada opened a shorter holocaust chapter writ in fire, drowning and strangulation.

A young lad came with his parents from Memel on a C.P.R. immigration scheme who, it is recalled, was met at the train by the J.I.A.S.' Samuel Kaplan. Nathan Kaplan remembers,

"Before we came to Williamstown as farmers we were well-to-do. We had people working for us. The minute we came here we rolled up our sleeves, and we loved it. The agreement stipulated we would farm for five years. We farmed for 10. Our relatives came later, he recalls.

"Kaplan also has happy memories of his arrival in Ontario. The first week he was here, a French-Canadian neighbor, concerned about the 60 odd miles he would have to travel to the Cornwall synagogue, invited him to come and pray in the local Catholic Church.

"This really made an impression on me. That was something not possible in Europe, that kind of freedom. I really felt I had come to a country where one could live in peace, he says,

"Kaplan left farming after his marriage and used his artistic talents to build up a textile design business in Montreal. He continued to paint and draw all this while." (Montreal Gazette, Apr. 5, 1980)

A NEW HORROR AGE: 1939

By this time war had been declared, and a new horror age of Jewish history had begun.

By the fall of 1939 the stamp of the new leadership was evident and effective. A campaign was conducted for the United Jewish Refugee and War Relief Agencies, in conjunction with the Joint Distribution Committee, the Canadian Jewish Committee for Refugees, the Federation of Polish Jews, the ORT, the Jewish Labor Committee and the People's Relief Committee.

The J.D.C. concern with the Canadian development is reflected in a memorandum from its Isidor Coons to Rabbi Jonah B. Wise and J.C. Hyman,

"Some fifty leaders of Montreal and communities of the Province of Quebec met at the call of Mr. Abe Bronfman in Montreal on Sunday, October 1, to consider fund-raising activities in behalf of suffering Jewry in Europe and refugees in Canada. I represented the Joint Distribution Committee at this meeting.

"It was decided that the Province of Quebec would immediately inaugurate a fund-raising campaign through a Committee having the same name as the Canadian World War Committee bore which is the 'United Jewish War Relief Societies of Canada Campaign' -- in cooperation with the Joint Distribution Committee. It was further decided that all monies so raised in 1939 would be remitted by the communities of the Province to Mr. Abe Bronfman or to someone who will later be designated or elected as Treasurer and that when monies are in hand, they will be disbursed by an Allocations Committee of the united campaign for the Province of Quebec.

"The agencies to be included are the Joint Distribution Committee, the Canadian Refugee Committee, the ORT, the Polish Verband and the Canadian Jewish Congress.

"That which I earnestly sought to accomplish was to carry out the wishes of the Joint Distribution Committee that:

"1. Any fund-raising activities in Canada should be 'in cooperation with the Joint Distribution Committee.'

"2. Until matters are clarified as to the possibility of exporting money from Canada, that funds raised for European relief be earmarked for these purposes and retained in Canada.

"3. Funds raised for European relief be disbursed in consultation with the Joint Distribution Committee.

"All of these objectives were realized at this Montreal meeting.

"High praise was paid by the Montreal leaders at the meeting to the efficiency of the Joint Distribution Committee machinery and the absolute desirability of administering all European aid through our agency, if possible."
(Oct. 2, 1939)

Samuel Bronfman, Michael Garber and Michael Rubinstein of the Jewish Labor Committee met in Toronto with A.B. Bennett and Oscar Cohen on Oct. 25, 1939 and agreed on the revised title of the Canadian Jewish Committee for Refugees: the United Jewish Refugee and War Relief Agencies, operating in conjunction with the J.D.C.

Early in December the refugee committee resolved to halt its limited public relations activities towards the admission of Jewish refugees.

The campaign structure, proceedings, ceremonies, motivations and rewards were significantly ritualistic, carried an ethos all its own, involved a large number of persons -- indeed it quickly became a major definition of contemporary Judaism and a central point of loyalty, its inspiration and activism for the Jewish community.

The institution, local in character, was paralleled in centres across the continent. The interchange of professional personnel and the national assemblies very slowly made it a major ideology and force in world Jewry.

The Canadian Jewish Congress was brought into this tradition with this 1939 campaign. Abe Bronfman was named chairman and substantial contributors and campaign workers assumed various executive functions. The eastern Canadian quota was \$130,000 out of \$310,000 for the nation.

There was an ever more tightly organized structure of zones, and each division had control chairmen; leaders' pressure, and instructions as detailed as possible, were upon each of the responsible men, with the intent that this pressure be passed down the line, eventually to canvassers and prospective contributors. Frequent meetings to examine day by day progress reports were convened not only by the head of the campaign but by section chiefs with maximum attention to campaign progress and to the activity of each of the workers, with inspirational words about the cause. Frequent reminder letters and even telegrams went out to campaign activists, expressing constant concern that the quota may not be met.

The precisely planned operation was, of course, directed at the substantial individual contributors; in point of fact, reaching the larger number of small contributors was scarcely worth the effort. Only in later

years was a "Metropolitan" structure set up to reach these, as were parallel branches for women, for youth, etc. -- as much for moral, missionary and ideological purposes as any other -- with the intention, of course, of securing maximum moral and concrete support for the institution.

Towards the end of the campaign an outstanding personality of broader stature was invited to address the campaign worker; in 1939 it was Lord Marley.

But the populist tradition of fund-raising for overseas, which was exemplified on such an intense scale during the First World War by the People's Relief movement, was not totally forgotten in 1939. The organization was among the charter founders of the new united refugee aid and fund-raising institution, and its delegates -- L. Zuker, M. Dickstein, et alii -- added much that was of value to its working for many years. This was freely recognized by all participants, even though the social changes in the community soon turned the populist groups to only vestigial importance. Yet Lazarus Phillips wrote Samuel Bronfman,

"I believe arrangements could be made, particularly with the Labor organizations and Labor Unions, for the collection of funds on a month-to-month basis, in moderate sums from the poorer sections of Canadian Jewry. This would have the double advantage,

"(a) of making all Jews in Canada conscious of their responsibilities, and

"(b) of providing sums of money which cumulatively might run into large amounts." (Dec. 12, 1939)

Lazarus Phillips reported to Bronfman at the end of 1939 that "The campaigns held in various parts of the country on behalf of this organization have, as you know, met with only moderate success. From one point of view one might be discouraged, but from another point of view one can at least feel that the foundations

have been laid for bigger and better efforts in the future. Unfortunately, the refugee and allied problems will be with us for some time to come, and the Jews of Canada will have ample opportunity to make up in the future for whatever has not been done in the year 1939."

The same Phillips memorandum urges Mr. Bronfman to approve the appointment of a director for the Canadian Jewish refugee program and reflects the mechanics of the consideration of candidates.

Mr. Phillips recalls that a national executive director "should be appointed to take charge of affairs immediately. The importance of this appointment has been pressed so often in discussion between you and myself that it calls for no further elaboration. It is particularly important now because we must have someone to take charge of the outstanding pledges.

"Under this heading the choice seems to have simmered down to two people, one being Mr. Rosenberg, now with the Jewish Colonization Association, and the other, my confrere, Saul Hayes, of Montreal. I have recently had an opportunity of discussing the matter with Mr. Hayes, and he intimated to me that he is ready to take the post, subject to certain terms and conditions which I shall discuss with you when I see you. Mr. Hayes authorized me to discuss the matter with you, Mr. Robinson and Mr. Garber, but with no others, as he feels that if he were not to take the post, he would not like to have it known that he had considered the matter."

Samuel Bronfman, his close advisor Lazarus Phillips (later Senator), Michael Garber and Benjamin Robinson had a clear understanding of the far-reaching importance of this appointment as they were shaping an effective new leadership with Mr. Bronfman that would exert influence for many years.

There was due deliberation. Indeed, when the Ontario division of the Congress met in Toronto on Jan. 7, 1940 Hayes attended in his capacity as national chairman of Congress' youth division (Mr. Bora Laskin was among the discussants on economic problems and research), and A.B. Bennett referred to him as such in his presidential welcoming address.

Yet Hayes was in effect supervising the national program from Montreal for some weeks, because we find Miss Ann Cowan of the Toronto office addressing reports to him as early as Nov. 29, 1939.

Lazarus Phillips wrote on Jan. 11, 1940 to Louis Rosenberg, then secretary of the U.J.R. & W.R.A. Committee in Regina informing him of Mr. Hayes' appointment as executive director of the national agency.

The fateful choice came upon Mr. Hayes. It opened a great chapter in the annals of the administration, and indeed of leadership, in the communality of Canadian Jewry.

On Feb. 1, Hayes wrote to Mrs. Cecilia Razovsky of the National Refugee Service in New York,

"At the present time I am spending my days in organizational and routine work, setting up the National Office and consequently cannot yet devote any attention to the really constructive phase of refugee work in Canada. However, I expect in the very near future to spend some time preparing recommendations for my directors to deal with. This plan will envisage the question of policies with the Government and Colonization branches of the Railways."

His responsibility was extended in 1942 to the direction of the Canadian Jewish Congress, even as its general secretary and co-founder H.M. Caiserman remained in office until his passing late in 1950.

The Bronfman-Hayes partnership which endured for over thirty years constitutes a distinct chapter which must needs have its own place in the annals of history.

THE CLASSIC OF INHUMANITY

The St. Louis is, of course, the classic of mankind's inhumanity -- putting a quietus on libraries-full of man's pretensions to decency.

The Canadian version of the tragedy is summarized by Abella and Troper.

"On May 15, 1939, 907 desperate German Jews set sail from Hamburg on the luxury liner St. Louis. Like many who had sailed on this ship before, these passengers were -- or at least had been -- the cream of German society; distinguished, well-off, educated cultured. Most had contributed much to their native land. All were now penniless. They had been stripped of their possessions, had been hounded out of their homes and businesses, and now their country. Their most prized possession was the entrance visa to Cuba each carried.

"For the Jews of Germany life had become impossible. Countless thousands had been brutalized, murdered or sent off to concentration camps. The Nazis were anxious to empty Germany of its Jews -- but where could they go? Initially neighbouring countries such as Holland, France and later Great Britain had accepted some. But soon the nations of the world had clanged shut their gates before these helpless men, women and children. Germany was determined to throw their Jews out; everyone else seemed just as determined not to let them in.

"A poignant joke at the time says it all. A Jew wishing to travel goes to a Berlin travel agent who places a globe in front of him, whirls it, and says: 'Choose'. After studying the globe for a short time the Jew looks up with a pained expression and asks: 'Do you have anything else?'

"The Jews on the St. Louis considered themselves lucky. They were leaving.

"When they reached Havana on May 30, however, their luck had run out. The Cuban government refused to recognize the entrance visas; none of these wretched men, women and children were allowed to disembark, even when they threatened mass suicide. The search for a haven now began in earnest. Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Panama were approached, in vain, by various Jewish organizations. Within two days all the countries of Latin America had rejected entreaties to allow these Jews to land. On June 2, the St. Louis was forced to leave Havana harbour. The last hope seemed to be either Canada or the United States.

"The latter did not even bother sending a reply. Instead it sent a gunboat to shadow the St. Louis as it made its way north. The American Coast Guard had been ordered to make certain that the St. Louis stayed far enough off shore so that it could not be run aground, nor could any of its frantic passengers attempt to swim ashore. Now only Canada remained uncommitted."

A few Canadians were sensitive to the sardonic situation: the country festive while hundreds of innocent were being sent off to their deaths. Historian George M. Wrong had written earlier that year to Mr. King,

"I am uneasy in mind about refugees. Is not cruelty perhaps the most unpardonable of human vices? But these people are suffering from it in an almost incredible degree. Of all people, we, with vast empty

territory, seem to have a special duty. Can we do anything on an adequate scale? I think public opinion can be stirred here in Toronto, and of this I seem to see beginnings. But we lack organization. Our people have a sense of remoteness from the urgency of the problem. I am puzzled and almost unhappy in mind about it."

King's can't-cant reply might as well have been mimeographed, and might as well have been signed by his friend Goering.

"I wish I could say more by way of reply than that the Government has been giving the most careful consideration to all phases of the question ever since it arose. It has become, as you know, the most baffling of our international problems. We shall seek to make some contribution to its solution, but how far it may be possible to go, without raising a condition which it may be more difficult to meet than the one it is intended to cure, is giving not only the Government, but Parliament itself, great concern.

"I shall not fail to see that your views on the matter are made known to my colleagues in the Cabinet."
(King Papers, Feb. 23, 1939, Pp. 258, 578)

Now Dr. Wrong headed a Toronto petition to the Prime Minister, signed by 44 spokesmen for the Queen City establishment.

"As a mark of gratitude to Almighty God for the pleasure and the gratification which has been vouchsafed the Canadian people through the visit of Their Gracious Majesties King George and Queen Elizabeth, and as evidence of the true Christian charity of the people of this most fortunate and blessed country, we the undersigned, as Christian citizens of Canada, respectfully suggest that, under the powers vested in you as premier of our country, you forthwith offer to the 907 homeless exiles on board the Hamburg American ship St. Louis sanctuary in Canada."

The message reached the Prime Minister on board the royal train on June 8, 1939. With his usual efficiency, designed, among other purposes, to justify his deliberate policy of doing nothing, he telegraphed the plea to Dr. Skelton asking him to assure Dr. Wrong that action was being taken, which, of course, it was not.

King instructed Skelton to "please communicate the contents (of the telegram) immediately to acting Prime Minister and also to Director of Immigration. Would like to be advised immediately as to powers of government to meet suggestion which communication contains. Please advise colleagues that I would like immediate consideration given to suggestion..."

Allan B. Kage notes (in JIAS News, Fall, 1978) "that there were no legal barriers to obstruct the entry into Canada of the Jewish refugees was clear from the outset.

"When Dr. Skelton received the message from King, he immediately got in touch with F.C. Blair, Director of Immigration.

"On the same day, June 8, Blair wrote to Skelton to confirm that the refugees could be admitted to Canada:

"'By a general Order-in-Council such as are passed from week to week for the admission of individual refugees who are named in the order.'

"The Order-in-Council -- the legal title given to a decision taken by the Cabinet would enable the Government to permit the St. Louis to dock in a Canadian port.

"'I understand', F.C. Blair wrote to Dr. O.D. Skelton on June 8, 1939 'that most of the refugees on the S.S. St. Louis are hoping to get into the United States. I suppose if they were admitted to Canada a number of them would smuggle themselves across into the U.S. shortly.'"

Kage notes that "because those on the St. Louis hoped to reach the United States, Blair reasoned, Canada owed them nothing. Moreover, he argued, if the passengers were admitted to Canada and subsequently went to the United States, this would not be appreciated by Canada's neighbour.

"'Since', wrote the Director of Immigration, 'most of these refugees were obviously making their way to the United States, it is not clear why Canada should go out of her way to offer them a home in this country. The outcome of that would have made it possible, I have no doubt, for many to smuggle themselves across the International Boundary which would have been less appreciated by the United States than by ourselves.'

"The second argument made against acting mercifully towards the St. Louis was that the ship represented only the thin edge of the wedge; it was but the first splash of what might grow into a wave of refugee ships. In his June 8, 1939 letter to Skelton, Blair opines that:

"'The readiness with which a German liner took these people on board, in the hope of landing them in some other country, creates the impression that this is but another of Germany's methods to get rid of unwanted refugees, and if this is successful it is likely to be followed by other shiploads.

"'If Canada had invited these refugees, the Director of Immigration warned Skelton in a note dated June 16, 1939,

"'It is probable they would have been followed by others. It is manifestly impossible for any country to open its doors wide enough to take in the hundred of thousands of Jewish people who want to leave Europe; the line must be drawn somewhere.'

"What determined where the line was drawn? The question is a complex one; one to which the documents can provide, at best, partial answers. Blair ends his June 8 missive to Skelton with this comment:

"'While one cannot but feel concerned about the fate of these people, I am afraid the effect of their immediate admission to Canada, while solving their immediate problem, would result in a demand for a closed door on all others.'"

The following day Skelton informed King of the exclusionist nature of the 1930 immigration regulation practically excluding non-British and non-Americans from entry, except for certain groups for whom special orders-in-council could be issued such as capitalists and scientists. Some 700 Jews have been thus admitted since January. Dr. Skelton reminded King that Canada admits no immigrants temporarily, as does Britain.

"Minister of Justice states that he is personally emphatically opposed to proposals in the Toronto telegram... Press states that Saint Louis started on return voyage to Europe Tuesday." (King Papers, Pp. 237,087-89, 237,095-96)

Dr. Skelton wrapped it all up for Mr. King in a letter to Dr. Wrong on June 19 to justify the decisions, (King Papers, Pp. 237,108-11):

"The proposal was given immediate consideration. While every sympathy was felt with the unfortunate position in which the refugees in question found themselves, it was regretted that it was not possible to recommend their admission en bloc into Canada.

"The refugees on board the St. Louis were in practically all cases seeking admission into the United States, and it is understood that a large number of them had already secured immigration visas for entry as visa numbers under the United States quotas became available.

They had secured, or thought they had secured, permission to land in Cuba and remain there temporarily while qualifying for admission to the United States. The Cuban authorities declined to admit them on the ground that their permits had been issued irregularly in Europe; notification of their cancellation was stated by the Cuban authorities to have been notified to the steamship authorities before the vessel sailed. In addition to the St. Louis, other vessels sailing from German ports have recently carried considerable numbers of passengers to American or Asiatic ports who, on arrival, were found ineligible for immediate entry.

"None of the passengers on the St. Louis, so far as our authorities were aware, had previously indicated a desire to enter Canada, and no request for permission to land here was received from the ship or passengers or from the Joint Distribution Committee in charge of their movements. The immediate difficulties in which they found themselves were due to the working of the United States quota system in conjunction with the revision of the Cuban system of temporary admission.

"The Canadian Government has not adopted the quota system of admission as the United States has done. It does not admit immigrants for temporary purposes in order to qualify themselves for entrance to other countries, as has until recently been the practice in Cuba. Neither does it admit immigrants temporarily as was done in a number of the Western European countries subject to the provision that they must not seek employment.

"While the Canadian Government has not adopted any of the policies to which I have referred, it has endeavoured, in conformity with our own system of selective immigration, to admit as many immigrants as can be effectively absorbed under the existing economic conditions. Refugees admitted to Canada come under two heads: first those who can comply with existing immigration regulations, and who are admitted freely without regard to number; second, those who are unable to comply and whose entry must be covered by naming them in special orders-in-council.

"In the first group upwards of 250 families of German Czeck refugees have been admitted within the past few weeks for settlement on the land with the aid of a special fund secured for that purpose, while many other agricultural families are immigrating with their own resources.

"The second group includes:-

"(a) Family remnants in Europe joining families already settled here;

"(b) Persons with considerable capital for investment in productive enterprises;

"(c) Persons coming in connection with the establishment of new industries;

"(d) Scientists and technicians whose admission is likely to be beneficial not only to themselves but to this country.

"Approximately 1,200 in this second group have been approved in the past five months.

"In the circumstances there is reason for feeling that Canada is already making a substantial contribution to the solution of a very distressing problem that presents great difficulties, particularly perhaps in the case of the admission of those who wish to settle in Canadian cities where our own unemployed are mainly congregated."

Dr. Wrong was not set at rest,

"Many thanks," he wrote on June 28, "for your most reasonable letter, which I am handing on in the right quarter.

"This refugee problem haunts my mind. The only solution is either to let these people die off gradually, or for the nations to take up the problem on an adequate scale, commensurate with the magnitude of the problem -- and frankly I am puzzled to see what they can do. After the Russian Revolution I was largely instrumental in bringing in some half dozen refugees.

"Of these one is now on the Ontario Research Foundation, an expert in the Economics of Agriculture in Ontario. Another is now on the staff of Queen's; another is permanently on the staff in Applied Science here; still another has a prominent place here in musical circles.

"Each of these has added something to the mental wealth of the country. Others still to come may do the same. All this is, of course, a mere dribbling. It seems all that can as yet be done.

"But the misery of these outcasts in Europe gives me unhappy hours." (P.237,112)

The next day Wrong wrote his friend the prime minister, (June 29, 1939. King Papers, P. 238,585)

"I quite see how difficult is the problem of the Refugees, and I do not envy you your task in dealing with it. For the present, it seems, all that can be done by our group is to deal with individuals. I have an Austrian (Aryan) Refugee in my house and a more charming and intelligent guest it would be hard to find. I hope it can be managed to keep him here permanently. He is an asset and there are others of the same type."

But the seriousness of these representations even from the high-minded Dr. Wrong comes under question when we read another letter from him, this time a political letter, of June 23, (Pp. 238,581-82)

"I am much concerned at the hostile tone to your government which I find among some leading Liberals whom I meet here. They wish you to do something striking that will catch the mind of the country -- easement in regard to immigration, accepting with alacrity the proposals in regard to a great shoe industry; more welcome to Refugees, and other things. I am not an economist and I have no definite proposals to report -- but I am anxious."

Incidentally, or not so incidentally, the figure in the Skelton message seems to conflict with other statistics.

After being tossed on the seas and rejected from port after port, some were given last minute reprieve by Britain. A year later, after Dunkirk, they were among the "German citizens" rounded up those panic days, labelled 18B, and shipped off secretly to Canada.

Not that Canada admitted them, even to help the threatened mother of the Commonwealth. It merely let them languish in Canadian internment, something like Nazi prisoners of war. It took months of intercession by the Canadian Jewish Congress, another major refugee project, to transform entry into Canada as internees to entry into Canada as refugees -- another example of single-minded cruelty by government, this time under the cover of protecting the security of the nation from these Jewish refugees who might be acting for the German government.

It happened that on the same June 8 a resident of Lorne Park, Ont., Isabel Hamilton, wrote to King,

"I have a feeling of shame as a Canadian that our Christian(?) country is doing nothing to provide a home for these" 907 Germans of Jewish descent who had sailed from Hamburg on May 15.

The reply she received on June 12 from H.R.L. Henry, private secretary to the prime minister, was that Justice Minister Lapointe had "carefully noted" her letter.

Erna Paris noted,

"There are two postscripts to the events of the 1930s, the first to the case of the St. Louis.

"In August, 1939, a Vancouver business man called Hugh E. Arnold wrote to the Prime Minister. He had been passing through France and only by chance had seen some of the passengers of the St. Louis being returned to that country. He wrote: 'These people would have been an asset to Canada...They consisted of the best type of business and professional people...They were well-dressed, had expensive luggage and were obviously of the intelligent business and professional class...I think that when the decision was made by your government that these St. Louis refugees were not to be admitted in Canada, there must have been some misunderstanding as to their character...They were not the obviously Jewish type that comes from Russia and Poland, and indeed I had some difficulty in recognizing them at all as Jews...

"'I am not an unqualified admirer of the Jewish people. There are many things about them that I find distasteful. But they are clever, they create, and are not found on "relief".'

"He got an official reply, but he could not forget what he had seen. He wrote again in November, 1939 and once more in July, 1941. Each time he was answered by Blair who denied his accusations that Canada had closed its doors to people who could have made a valuable and necessary contribution to Canada. Eventually, he stopped writing.

"Years later, two Ottawa civil servants came across the St. Louis correspondence and put the pieces together. Their memo of dismay somehow found its way into the file itself.

"PEQ: Here, at last, is the background to the St. Louis shipload of German-Jewish refugees... A brief glance indicates that the merits of admitting them were decided strictly on policy, and that humanitarian needs, although admitted as 'distressing', could not decide the issue.

"FF: I have read this with surprise and shame. There was no apparent effort to determine qualifications of the persons on the St. Louis. Mr. Arnold's letters are intelligent and suggest that we missed a golden opportunity -- not to provide refuge -- but to acquire a group of skilled, educated and moneyed people as Canadian citizens. PEQ November 29, 1965"

In this harshness even the recommendation of the Hon. Vincent Massey was of no help to the widow of a German banker seeking temporary admission. (Feb.14,1939)

Many years later, when the free world was faced with the reality of the drowning Vietnamese boat people, A.W. Wilson evaluated the 1939 record of Canada,

"We have not always been generous to refugees. Canada was a party to one of the most disagreeable anti-refugee actions that preceded World War II when thousands of Jews were forced to flee from Hitler's cruelties. On one occasion, not long before the war started, a boatload of Jewish refugees made its way from port to port, country to country, looking for a place to land. The government of Canada was one of those which turned this tragic group away, with considerably less justification than Thailand or Malaysia have today for seeking to stem the tide of refugees seeking entry. These two Asian countries have at least allowed many thousands in, which we had not done in those pre-war days." (Montreal Star, July 16, 1979)

Even when the war was destroying European civilization; France, the bastion of western decency, was under the Nazi heel; the continent was overtaken by a dark age that was darkness and devil incorporated into a government; when Hitler was clearly the mortal enemy of Britain and of Canada, when all Hitler's friends were clearly Canada's enemies and all Hitler's enemies were Canada's allies -- Dr. Ignacy Schwartzbart of the Polish National Council in Exile, experienced the incredible: on August 6, 1940 he called on Mr. Little, chief immigration officer at Canada House in London, about the evacuation of Polish Jewish children to Canada.

"Mr. Little at first answered that he does not know anything about it, but later he showed me two cables: the first one mentions: '100 German Jewish orphans,' the second: 'Everything is held up until further instructions.'

"On my list were two Roman Catholic children (of Jewish origin). The question of race came under discussion. Mr. Little asked whether they are Roman Catholic Jews. I answered that I do not understand such a question as if someone must be either a Roman Catholic or a Jew.

"He pointed out that the Jews cannot be treated as a nation or as a religious group, but as a race. And the interest of Canada is to prevent people of Jewish race coming to the country. In reply I pointed out that his policy is this of Hitler, and we are supposed to fight for democracy; there is no distinction between Jews and non-Jews.

"Again he answered: 'Never mind what you think, I am telling you what I think and what we want.'

"Through the intervention of the Children's Overseas Reception Board, Major Simpson of Canada House agreed to accept 12 Polish Jewish orphans, and agreed to accept passports as proof of nationality, and not the place of origin. As to the other condition required -- i.e., Canada ought to have been put as the country preferred on the application form; secondly, orphans -- Jewish children must be orphans -- only four children (2 Jewish, 2 Roman Catholics) have been selected for Canada."

Rabbi Stephen S. Wise was incredulous and wrote Samuel Bronfman,

"It is inconceivable to us that Mr. Little speaks with the authority of the Canadian government. The strongest possible representations are in order."

In the meantime, while Canada was so serene in its civic peace, the Jews of Germany -- and now of Austria -- facing indescribable agony, desperate in their search for means of escape, were seeking out every conceivable possibility.

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OSKAR STRAWCZYNSKI

MEMOIRS

TEN MONTHS IN TREBLINKA

(October 5, 1942 - August 2, 1943)

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Copyright of the Yiddish manuscript and
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family of the late Oskar Strawczynski.

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(October 7, 1942 - August 2, 1943)

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The late Oskar Strawczynski wrote these memoirs of Treblinka after he escaped from the camp and sought refuge in the forest. After some time, he was able to join a group of partisans from the Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa (the organization of Jewish fighters). His comrades in this group encouraged him to put his recollections down on paper. They secured writing material for the purpose from a nearby village in April 1944.

Mrs. Hannah Fryshdorf, who was with the group made two copies of the manuscript. In fact, Strawczynski began making the first copy but after a few pages Mrs. Fryshdorf continued.

In July 1944, she had occasion to go to Warsaw and brought one of the copies to Yankel Tzelemensky. This copy survived and was returned to Mrs. Fryshdorf in Lodz when hostilities ended. The original and the other copy were lost in the forest. Mrs. Fryshdorf's copy is in the possession of the Yiddish Scientific Institute (YIVO) in New York.

The document is unusual in several respects. The memoirs were written immediately following the revolt in Treblinka while memories were fresh and vivid. The account was written in isolation, in the forest, free of pressure and outside influences, and while survival itself was still uncertain.

Translated from the Yiddish by Nadia Strawczynski Rotter with the assistance of her daughter Frederika.

Nadia Strawczynski Rotter is the sister of the late Oskar Strawczynski.



Oskar Strawczynski (left) and his brother Zygmunt

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Oskar Strawczynski was born in Lodz, Poland in 1906. He was the oldest son in a large family of seven children. Three sisters and three other brothers reached maturity, and most of them already had families by the time the War broke out. Strawczynski received his primary education in Lodz. He attended a Polish public school as well as a Yiddish cheder. He completed his formal education at about fourteen years of age when he started to work in his father's tinsmith shop. However, he was an avid and enthusiastic reader and maintained a special love of Yiddish literature throughout his life.

Strawczynski learned his trade from his father. He became a skilled and accomplished artisan who took great pride in his work, and whose services were greatly sought after. His abilities as a tinsmith eventually saved his life in Treblinka and also made it possible for him to save the life of his brother Zygmunt.

Strawczynski served in the Polish Army for two years, 1927-29. He married shortly afterwards and had two children. He was a very devoted family man who had a great love and loyalty for his wife and children, as well as for the other members of his immediate family. His bond with Zygmunt, the brother closest to him in age, was particularly strong.

The memoirs are written in a spare, bitter, and ironic style to which it is difficult to do justice in translation. The translation is literal; no effort has been made to edit the work. His account of life in Treblinka is direct and matter of fact — no attempt is made to embellish the events or his own participation in them. His account of the uprising is characterized by the same sparseness and an unwillingness to glorify what occurred. Oskar Strawczynski and his brother, Zygmunt, were two of a tiny handful of Treblinka survivors. After the revolt, Oskar hid in the surrounding forest area where he made contact with the partisan movement. The memoirs were written while he was in the forest, at the request of one of the partisan leaders.

Shortly after the War, it was suggested that the memoirs be published. However, the Jewish community organization in Lodz, Poland, was opposed to publishing the work in its entirety because of the frankness with which the Jewish collaboration in Treblinka was depicted. Strawczynski refused to change or edit his manuscript.

Oskar Strawczynski testified against the Nazis at the trial in Dusseldorf in 1964-65.

Strawczynski's entire immediate family perished during the War — in Treblinka and in Auschwitz — with the exception of his brother, Zygmunt, and his youngest sister.

After the War, Oskar remarried and the surviving family members emigrated to Canada and settled in Montreal. In Canada he made no attempt to publish his memoirs.

He died in Montreal in 1966 leaving a wife and three children.

Nadia Strawczynski Rotter



The children of Oskar Strawczynski who were
murdered in Treblinka.

OSKAR STRAWCZYNSKI

MEMOIRS

TEN MONTHS IN TREBLINKA

(October 5, 1942 - August 2, 1943)

Dedicated to the memory of

My unforgettable wife Anka,

My two dear children Guta and Abus,

Devoted Parents Yoseph and Malke,

Perished in the terrible "Factory"

TREBLINKA

The 5th October, 1942.



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS
CHICAGO, ILL.

Mr. Strawczynski began these memoirs with the following words to his wife who had perished in Treblinka:

My dearest Chanele,

More than eighteen months have passed since we were most brutally parted. During all that time, under the harshest conditions, I never abandoned the thought of perpetuating your memory, my dearest, and the memory of our two small angels, Guta and Abus, as well as that of my beloved parents — Yoseph and Malke. No tombstone can I erect for you. Your sacred bodies were burned in the ovens of Treblinka, along with thousands upon thousands of other Jewish victims.

The remembrance of what I saw and lived through during the ten months in Treblinka — this shall be your memorial, even though I know and already feel with the first words, how the wounds, which will never heal, are torn open again and bleed as in the first days.

Let this be the last bloody page of Jewish History.

Oskar

words to his wife and son, and to his friends.

My dear friend,

I have been thinking of you very much lately, and
wondering how you are getting on. I hope you are
well and happy. I have been very busy lately,
but I have managed to find some time to write
to you. I have been thinking of you very much
lately, and wondering how you are getting on.
I hope you are well and happy. I have been
very busy lately, but I have managed to find
some time to write to you. I have been thinking
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very much lately, and wondering how you are
getting on. I hope you are well and happy.
I have been very busy lately, but I have
managed to find some time to write to you.

I have been thinking of you very much lately,

Yours,

Chapter 1

It was the day after Succoth, October 5, 1942. The morning was bright and sunny. Although utterly exhausted after twenty-four hours in the tightly packed cattle cars, we shivered with terror when the train stopped and we heard frightful shouts: "Out, Out..." Whips fly over our heads... In the eyes of my wife I recognize that finally even she has begun to believe the horrible rumours about the gas factory beyond Malkinia. I can see that now she regrets not having agreed to my plan to hide with the children in our neighbour's hideout. She could not bring herself to believe all the malicious talk. She had wanted to believe that as long as we were together, no evil could reach her or our dear children.

We run out as fast as we can to avoid the whips lashing overhead, and find ourselves on a long, narrow platform, crowded to capacity. All familiar faces — neighbours and acquaintances. The dust so tremendous, it obscures the sunlight. A smell of charred flesh stifles the breath. Unwittingly, I catch a glimpse of the mountains of clothing, shoes, bedding and all kinds of wares that can be seen over the fence. But there is no time to think.... The dense mass of people is pushed toward and jammed through a gate.

At this moment I just have one thought -- not to lose my dearest ones in all this chaos. I succeed in keeping together my wife, two beautiful children, mother and father. Little do I know that these are our last moments together, that behind that gate we would be torn apart and we would never see each other again...

In that great tumult I do not notice that the work on the platform, such as clearing the people and leftover luggage from the trains, and herding and pushing the crowd toward the gate, is performed by a detachment of around thirty Jewish men wearing blue armbands. This is the detachment of "Blues" commanded by Kapo¹ Mayer. On the platform there are also S.S. men, the Ukrainian "Wachmener" (Watchmen) of Treblinka

and also the policemen and guard escorting the train. When the last of the transport passes through the gate, and the wagons are cleared, the escort returns to their wagon and the train leaves the camp. All this happens very quickly, and I noticed the details only later, while working in Treblinka.

Behind the gate we find ourselves in quite a large square with barracks on two sides. Opposite the fence and the gateway through which we had passed is a fence with a small entrance in the corner. This is the gate to the "Alley of Death" which leads to the "baths" in Camp 2. Down this Alley, completely naked, they took their last walk — my dear wife and children, father, mother, brothers and sisters, together with millions of Jewish men and women.... They never came out of the "bath". Their sacred bodies were heaped on stretchers and thrown into the infernal fires.

Later, when I was working on the rooftops of Treblinka, I had many opportunities to watch that last walk of our naked, unfortunate people: Mothers holding their little ones in their arms, older children at their sides, young girls with their hair already shorn, covering their breasts with their hands, or several together, arms linked — all running as quickly as possible through the aisle of Germans and Ukrainians who laugh, and mock them. Quite often, one or another of the victims was struck on the head with a whip or rifle butt and collapsed in a stream of blood. Those were horrible scenes from hell.

I return to the moment when we entered the so-called Transport Square. As we take our first steps we hear shouts that freeze our blood. I stop thinking or feeling. We know only one thing: these are our last moments together. The shouts become louder and more penetrating: "Men to one side, women to the other."

We are completely confused by the lightning speed and terrible noise. I do not, I cannot, say a single word, not even a final farewell to my loved ones. I just hear the sigh of my beloved wife and her last words: "That's it." No one can know how much despair and anguish those words contained. To me they are an abyss of sorrow. I still hear those words ringing in my ears and I will surely not forget them to the last moments of my life.

Writing these words I once again relive the sorrow of our parting. I cannot express the feelings raging within me. Fresh tears well up and the warm forest ground soaks up the hot stream from my eyes.

But there, on that sorrowful Transport Square, there is no time for tears or feelings. I scarcely have time to hand my wife the carefully hidden blanket for the children. A brutal hand grips my shoulder and I am hurled to the other side of the Square. I manage to stay with my gentle father. The place is packed with people. On one side are women with small children, on the opposite side, men, forced to kneel. In the middle there are S.S. men, Ukrainians with weapons in their hands as well as a group of about forty men with red armbands. These are Jews — the detachment of "Reds". In Treblinka slang they are called "Chevra Kedisha" (Society for Last Rites).

Kapo Yurek was their leader, a Warsaw rickshaw² driver, so corrupt and debauched, no deed was too foul for him. This brute would not hesitate to take aside a girl, already naked, on her march to the "bath". Promising to save her, he would do the worst, then push her back into the line. He is dressed elegantly, as that type of person could easily afford to be in Treblinka. He works his whip frequently and with gusto on Jewish heads. As foul and corrupt as he was, his language was even worse. The vernacular of the Warsaw underworld was nothing new in Treblinka. There were great artists in that field, but no one could surpass Yurek. In short, he was quite a notable member of Treblinka's aristocracy. Most of the "Reds" were recruited from the Warsaw underworld, and did not fall far short of their Kapo.

Most prominent among all in the Square is a German officer, a stout man with a short beard, mounted on a beautiful brown horse. He moves haughtily on his horse, in the middle of the Square. At a certain point he turns toward the kneeling men and shouts: "Craftsmen out!" A number of men step out. Most of them however, are sent back. Only a few are stood aside, where an S.S. man makes a further selection, and groups the remaining men in threes. I am kneeling beside my father. My mind is completely blank. No feeling, not a thought. I do not even say a single word to my father.

Among the men with the red armbands, I notice a familiar face. At first I cannot recall who he is, but then I recognize him. He is Aaron Berliner, a worker from the Czystochowa Jewish Community. He too has noticed me. He motions me to come over to him. I stand up, take my father's hand and try to take my bundle also. He orders me to leave my bundle, and orders my father to kneel as before. Aaron leads me to the mounted German. The German looks me over and asks: "What's your trade?" "Tinsmith" I say. He motions me toward the selected group, where Aaron leads me. Now I am completely alone, also parted from my father, without a kiss, without a single farewell...

The group grows to about sixty men — no women. A man of about thirty approaches us. He is tall and broad with strong muscular legs and black hair — a young giant. This is Kapo Rakowski. He shouts a command and leads us away in military formation. Marching through the remaining mass of people I scan the women's side. Perhaps I can catch a last glimpse of my loved ones, perhaps I will again see my two little angels. I do not find them — probably, they are in the barracks.

We are led to an enormous square, piled with mountains of bundles. In the distance is a tall embankment on which a watchman saunters back and forth, his rifle on his arm. From behind the embankment thick smoke bursts as from a volcano.

My brain is still foggy. I see and hear as in a dream. There are no people on the square. Kapo Rakowski leads us towards a mountain of clothing. We collapse against the mountain, exhausted and beaten down. The Kapo delivers a lecture. The words bounce off my ears. He talks about money: "We should give it away. Here you do not need money. You cannot buy a thing with it, anyway." I see people taking their money out and throwing it into valises. My thoughts are still hazy, they wander back to the ones left at the Transport Square. Suddenly, I break into hysterical tears. I bury my head in the mountain of clothing and remain there, sobbing, for a long time.

The square, quiet until now, suddenly becomes very noisy. I lift my head, look around, and see a most bizarre sight: Naked men with bundles pressed to their bodies are running

through an aisle of guards, who whip them on to a horse's gallop. The victims jump up comically when their way is barred by a stick, or when they are whipped on their behinds. The route leads from the Transport Square to the large sorting square. The victims run around one of the mountains of clothing, throw their bundles onto it and, without stopping, run back to the Transport Square. This "dance macabre" has been going on now for over fifteen minutes. From the distance I recognize my neighbours. I see my neighbour Palacz being led to the Lazaret (field hospital), from where shortly afterwards, a shot is heard. Palacz, a rather weak, delicate young man, evidently could not pass the "training". I did not see my father, or any other men his age, among those running.

After depositing their bundles the breathless men are led through the small gate into the "Alley of Death", with their hands raised over their heads. At the gateway is a little hut. There the "Gold Jews" take the victims' valuables, money, and documents, "for deposit only" — until they return from the "bath". A special sign announces that there are no limitations on foreign exchange.

The crowd has passed through and there is silence for a few minutes. Suddenly a smothered mass scream is heard from the distance — a-a-a.... The scream does not last long, it becomes weaker and weaker until it dies away.... I know instinctively that this is the last cry of the unfortunate, condemned victims — among them my own, my loved ones — Again I break into hysterical tears.

After every transport I heard this same last cry, making my blood run cold.

Chapter 2

It is one o'clock. A large crowd marches to the square, led by some men wearing wide, yellow armbands marked "Kapo", and some others with narrower ones, marked "Foreman". Like the Germans, they are carrying whips. The crowd of a few hundred men is returning from lunch, and they immediately start to work. We, the new ones, are assigned to various groups. I am assigned to foreman Neumark, a decent young man from Czystochowa, with whom my brother Zygmunt and I become quite friendly later on.

The square becomes very noisy and appears completely different now. Blankets and tablecloths are spread on the ground and all kinds of goods are collected on them. There is a huge quantity and an astonishing variety: from the most expensive imported textiles, to the cheapest cottons, from the most elegant suits, to the cheapest worn-out rags. There are avenues of suitcases and in them everything imaginable: haberdashery, cosmetics, drugs — it seems there is no article in the world that cannot be found here. The sorted items are brought to one side of the square where they are piled into huge bales. There is also food in enormous amounts: dried noodles, sugar, soap, candles, matches, cigarettes, and sweets. There is no lack of the most expensive canned foods, tea and coffee, but also there are mouldy crusts of bread. Some poor Jews even brought a few potatoes.

A special spot is designated for suitcases with valuables. They are filled with precious gold, jewellery, chains and watches, bracelets, diamond rings and plain gold rings — most of all wedding rings. There are treasures in foreign currency — gold and paper dollars, pounds sterling and old Russian gold coins. Polish money is hardly worth mentioning; it is stacked up in mountains. From time to time the "Gold Jews" who sort these treasures appear. They remove the filled suitcases and replace them with empty ones. These too are quickly filled. From time to time, the watchmen also come by. They look around stealthily,

and if no German is in sight, they hastily empty the contents of a suitcase into their pockets. The entire square gives the impression of a huge bazaar. There is a special area for bottles and crockery. Here too, you can find everything from expensive nickel and aluminum utensils to old broken pots.

I am in a group of about twenty men, most of them acquaintances, who arrived in earlier transports from Czestochowa. Among them I meet Israel Einshindler, a good friend from Lodz. While working, we bewail our bitter fate. He tries as hard as possible to help me with the work with which I am not yet familiar. They have assigned us to sort a pile of Czech luggage. I open a parcel. In it are underwear, stockings, suits, shoes and various other items. I don't know where to start. I am still confused by what I have just experienced and I don't know which pieces belong to which pile: silks, cottons, woollens, etcetera.... Luckily I have Israel nearby. I hand each piece over to him. You have to be fast and keep moving all the time; you must not sit down or rest; you might pay very dearly. Neumark walks back and forth in front of his group, his whip in motion, constantly shouting: "Tempo! Tempo!".... Movement is essential. At the approach of a German, he shouts: "Comrades — Kiewe!" or "Krummer Kopf!"³ Here each German has his own nickname.

The crowd is most terrified at the name "Lalka".⁴ When Lalka appears on the horizon the entire square breaks into feverish activity. Everyone tosses, carries, runs... Lalka is the evil spirit of the camp. A glance from his sharp, glittering eyes sends a shiver down your spine. Untersturmführer⁵ Lalka is the representative of the Camp Commander. He is tall, strong, athletic and good looking, with a round doll-like face and a pair of gleaming eyes. He walks rolling from side to side, haughty and self-satisfied. Barry, his big hairy dog trots behind him lazily. But woe to the person that Lalka points to, saying: "Barry, get him." Many a Jewish behind has been tasted by Barry's teeth.... Lalka never leaves without a parting gift for someone. It is easy to find someone guilty of something, but really it doesn't matter... Lalka is the undisputed master of the "twenty-five" or "fifty" (lashes). He works with pleasure, leisurely; he has his

own technique for raising the whip and then lowering it. Even the head Sharfuhrer⁶ Kiewe, who is also an acknowledged craftsman, cannot equal him. Lalka is also quite a boxer. In order to work up an appetite for his meal, he needs his exercise, and naturally, there is no lack of Jewish heads for the purpose. He grips his object, one hand holding the head straight, in order to aim better, and his aim is rather accurate. It is easy to imagine what that head looks like after Lalka's workout....

One day, Lalka takes a walk along the platform, self-satisfied and arrogant as usual, hunting rifle on his shoulder, Barry following lazily. As it happens, he notices a Jew, Mr. Shtayer, one of my neighbours from Czystochowa. Without a second thought he aims his rifle at the Jewish behind. Shtayer falls, screaming in pain. Lalka approaches him laughing, orders him to get up and pull down his pants, so that he can check his aim. The man doubles up in pain, blood streaming from his lead-filled behind. But Lalka is not satisfied. With a disappointed shrug he mutters: "Damn it! I missed the balls!" He continues his walk looking for a new target.

Almost as vicious is the "Krummer Kopf", Untersharfuhrer⁷ Miete, Treblinka's Angel of Death. He walks calmly through the square, scrutinizing everyone carefully. Whenever he notices someone not looking too well, tired, or weak, he winks at him: "Come here..." He is especially pleased to see a face after Lalka's training, or just after a German whipping. His joy knows no bounds: "Come on..." On they go with him to the Lazaret where Kapo Kurland has his hands full.

The ill-famed Lazaret is in the far corner of the square, surrounded by a barbed-wire fence interwoven with greenery. The first to be taken there are those from the transports who cannot make it to the "bath" on their own: the old, the sick, the crippled, unaccompanied children — as well as the "guilty" from the camp. The victims are taken into a small room and seated on a long, velvet-covered bench. Kapo Kurland talks to and comforts them. It is his special privilege to do so. He helps them to undress. Naked, they pass through a narrow door into the next room, supposedly for medical examination. There, a German with a machine-gun is waiting, and with one round puts them all

out of their misery. They fall into a huge, fire-filled ditch which occupies most of the area. Two of Kurland's helpers try to arrange the piles of corpses so that they burn quickly and completely, in order to make room for the new victims that keep streaming in.

Kurland is a small, skinny fellow, probably over fifty. He wears glasses on his pointed nose, and a wide armband with a red cross and the inscription "Kapo". When we first meet he makes a very bad impression on me. I cannot understand how a man with a human heart and feelings can work in such a Gehenna. Later, when I got to know him a little better, I found him quite an intelligent man and learned he had been a Warsaw wood merchant. To my question: "What induced you to take such a terrible post?" he answered: "I wanted to ease the pain of the unfortunate patients, to prevent the watchmen from torturing them." He talks to the victims and comforts them.

The Germans treat him exceptionally well. They bring him food, drinks and cigarettes. He also receives newspapers from them, which we have to hide very carefully. When the "high season" subsided and he had some free time alone in his "residence", he started writing. In the evening he would read his daily work to a small group of us. There were stories and short plays with the Lazaret as a background. His rhymes had no great literary merit; however, there was no lack of material to work from. He saw more than enough there, in the Lazaret.... In the last months he participated actively in preparations for the uprising in Treblinka.

Not far from the Lazaret yet another fire blazed. Here they burned not people, but their documents and photos, taken on different occasions in their lives. When you looked at these mountains of photographs — literally millions of them — you could clearly feel and understand the immense horror and brutality of what was taking place. All these people looking out at you from the pictures; just a while ago they too were alive and full of hope. All these lives suddenly turned to ashes.... It was too hard to get used to the idea. The Germans were particularly strict about having all the documents and photographs carefully burned, so that no evidence of their enormous crime would remain.

On the square everything is in perpetual motion: We at work — and there by the evergrowing mountain of clothing, naked men with their bundles still run around. As soon as one group has left the square, another arrives and starts running, and so on, endlessly, until the evening. It is 6 o'clock when a whistle sounds. Everyone drops work and goes to the platform, where we are lined up in fives along the ramp. The Kapos count their men and report to the "camp elder",⁸ Engineer Galewski, a tall, good looking man of about forty, wearing a brown sport suit. Something is wrong and they count and re-count, over and over. Finally the order comes: "Achtung!" and Engineer Galewski reports to the head Sharfuhrer Kiewe. Kiewe is tall and slim with a severe, unsmiling face: an officer devoted to the service, energetic and very mobile. He is Lalka's equal in the arts of torture and beating — a sadist without a spark of compassion. During my ten months in Treblinka I saw more than enough of his bloody performances — all done in the name of order and discipline.

Finally the report is complete and we march to the kitchen where we get coffee. There are piles of bread; everyone takes as much as he wants. After the meal, we are led back to the Transport Square and are admitted into an empty barracks. There are several hundred of us. The barracks is crowded to the limit. Some comrades light candles which they brought from the Square, and we try to settle down to sleep. We are lying on the sandy earth, practically one on top of another, unable to move. The doors are open but it is forbidden to go out. Outside, the guards are patrolling, and on the roof opposite us there is a guard with a machine gun on the ready.

It is still dark when we get up. There is a water-well in the yard, but only a few of us can get to it to wash. We again get bread and coffee in the kitchen and from there we march to the ramp for another head count. We are divided into groups for different tasks. The gate opens and the first transports are pushed in. A few faces crowd at the small wired windows. They look at us, on the other side, with curiosity and horror. We back away quickly. Only the "Blues" and the Germans are left. Brooms are ready along the length of the platform. It is not long before the "dance macabre"

begins again, to go on continually until the evening. Transports arrive from towns and cities all over Poland. As well some arrive from Germany and Czechoslovakia. These Jews from outside of Poland enjoy better transportation than the Polish Jews. Instead of our packed cattle cars, they come in passenger coaches with numbered seats and special baggage cars. In contrast to the Polish Jews, these people have not the slightest notion of what kind of a place Treblinka is.

During an average day about three transports arrive each containing about 6,000 people. The "production" is smooth and well-organized. Each train stops at Treblinka station, about three kilometers from the camp. The prisoners are divided into three sections and each third is brought into the camp separately.

With few exceptions the people are quiet and resigned; no sign of resistance or revolt. They go like sheep to the slaughter. This was probably due to the years of terror and the might of the Germans, as well as to the fact that until the last moment no one wanted to believe that he was being led to his death. The spark of hope flickered in each heart until the very last moment.

However, there were some cases where people single-handedly attacked the Germans. A woman with a knife attacked one of the "Reds". He was wounded and died soon after. Another time, a young man hit a German on the head with a bottle. After some time at the hospital, the German returned cured, to continue practicing his trade. Once, someone threw a grenade, killing a German guard instantly, and wounding many "Reds" -- some of them quite seriously.

The transports from Bialystok and Grodno were an exception to the rule. These people were bold and militant. They almost succeeded in blowing up the entire camp once, and would have done so if not for the treachery of the "Reds". This happened at the end of December. Usually, the transports were finished off during the day. This time, however, the Germans brought in part of the transport during the evening. The workers were already shut in their barracks. Only the "Blues" were on the platform and the "Reds" were alone on the Transport Square. It was a transport from Bialystok -- men and women, tall and strong. "Tell us the truth" they begged the "Blues", and later, on the Square, they begged the

"Reds". "You are Jews like us. Is this Treblinka? Are we going to our death? We are ready — We will free us all." Instead of telling them the truth, encouraging them, and perhaps, helping — the "Reds" told them that this was just a transit camp — that tomorrow they would be transported to other camps for labour. With great difficulty, they convinced them to undress. Only when most of the crowd had passed through the little gate to Camp 2, those remaining, about forty men, realized they had been betrayed. But it was too late. With their bare hands, they threw themselves upon the Germans, the Ukrainians, and the "Reds". Great commotion and shooting followed. At last they were pushed into Camp 2, and all was still.... After that, no more transports were allowed in in the evening.

It is about noon. A sudden commotion breaks out at the Square. The Kapos shout: "Everyone to the wagons!" Nobody wants to go. People hide in the barracks, burrow into the piles of the rags wherever they can. But it is no use. The Kapos and foremen are after us with their whips. Already I can see the first men running back in groups of four, dragging sheets, blankets, even tablecloths, all piled with corpses. They run through the Square to the Lazaret. The picture freezes my blood. I try to hide, but I am discovered, and I too must run to the wagons. I arrive at the platform — horror — dead bodies, piled one on top of the other. Their clothing ripped and filthy with excrement. I feel sick.... This transport is from far away. Cramped in the cattle wagons for forty-eight hours without food or water, and with no air, most of the victims arrive dead! The Germans and the Kapos yell: "Faster! Faster!" and their whips fly overhead. I grab one end of a blanket which is already filled and run towards the Lazaret. We throw the corpses into the great fire. The huge ditch is already full. Piles of corpses are heaped on the ground, men on top of women, children... a real Gehenna! The Kapo and his helpers run around commanding: "Throw them here! Throw them there!" They work to keep the fire alive, since it is constantly being smothered by the fresh bodies thrown in. The work at the Square makes me feel sick. The job of sorting the rags is strange to me, and carrying the dead bodies fills me with horror and disgust.

At this time there were a few small workshops at Treblinka — a tailor's shop, a shoemaker's, a carpenter's, a locksmith's and a blacksmith's. The tradesmen in these shops were mostly people from the neighbouring towns: Kasow, Stoczek, Wegrow, and others. They were brought in before the regular transports started arriving. It was they who helped build the "bath", and they formed a kind of privileged caste called "Hofe Juden" or "Court Jews". They were marked by a yellow triangle on their right pant-leg. They lived in a barracks with bunks and electric lights. Their food supply was better, and they also received clean clothes weekly from the Jewish laundry. They did not mix with the rest of the Jews working on the square, and rather looked down on them, as if Treblinka was somehow theirs....

There is no tinsmith's shop. I speak to Engineer Galewski about the possibility of being employed in my trade. He thinks it over and proposes that since all the barracks have broken roofs and they leak when it rains, he will speak to the head Sharfuhrer about letting me do the repairs. The next morning after the roll call, when everyone is assigned to different jobs, I do not go back to the square. I am sent to the smithy to get the necessary tools and materials for my task. There is no lack of tools, but there are no materials at all. What should I do? How can I start to work without a single nail? I do not want to go back to the square. I can see that the workers here live in relative peace, and they have less fear of the whips. The Germans rarely come here, and when they do, their attitude to the men here is different than to those at the square. It is quiet here, nobody shouts, nobody rushes you. A German comes in, orders what he needs, and leaves. At that time four people were working in the smithy: Efraim Bodnik and his brother Leibish from Nowy Dwor and Itzhok, David and Yosif from Stoczek. They do not receive me with too much friendliness. They would not let me help with the tinsmith work, which they were not very good at -- they were probably afraid of the competition.

I get to work on the roofs. As I mentioned there are no materials, but still I am not willing to give up the work. I have no alternative. I pull nails from one section of the roof and hammer them into another — anything to keep busy! This gets me through a few days. Meanwhile various tinsmith jobs come to the smithy. The people there are having trouble, especially with the soldering, and willingly or not, they have to hand these jobs over to me. Construction is booming in Treblinka, the work comes in every day. In a little while I am assigned a place to set up a tinsmith's shop. I too become one of the "Court Jews" — a great achievement in Treblinka. I can now also choose my own help.

Meanwhile, out there, transports arrive continuously from Radomsko, Piotrkow, Opatow, as well as another from Czestochowa. This one contains the last of the Czestochowa Jews, dragged from their hideouts by the Jewish police, whom they had trusted and by whom they were betrayed. Some were holders of special papers from Degenhart himself, the chief of the Czestochowa Gestapo. For example, my landlord Miska had a certificate exempting him and his family from "Resettlement". There is even Weinrib who worked as the overseer for the Gestapo and S.S., as well as most of the Jewish police and their families. Finally, there are all the people from the hideout to which my wife refused to go. Silverberg, who came from the hideout along with thirty other people, has been assigned to the workshops. I am curious to know how the hideout, which was so well concealed, was discovered. He tells me the story: "As you know, we had an understanding with Samuel Miska, a policeman and a big wheel at the Gestapo. He promised to get us out for 30,000 zlotys, to legalize us after the "Aktion"⁹ was finished. After a few days he comes back, breaks open the wall and calls: 'Comrades, come out you are saved!' As soon as we came out we were surrounded by the German and Jewish police and brought to the trains with the others."

A friend of Silverberg's, Radziejewski, who knew full well where they were going, broke the little window in the car, first tossed out his child and then jumped from the moving train himself. Silverberg also told me that the traitor Miska had noticed that I was not there with my family. Believing that I was still hiding, he broke into my house and searched it thoroughly. Silverberg became a foreman, but he did not last long. He fell ill, and was finished off in the Lazaret.

It is Sunday, the tenth of October. The work in Treblinka continues as usual. We cannot afford a day of rest. Transports keep arriving without any break. Towards the evening, another transport arrives from Radomsko. I am in my workshop and I do not want to know what's going on out there. The whistle sounds for the end of the work day. Israel Einshindler comes running into the shop, visibly shocked and frightened. To my: "What has happened?" he answers: "Zygmunt is here!" I cannot believe this! My brother Zygmunt? The man who I believed could succeed under any circumstances? The one who could ride on the trains like a free man, who always had enough money and connections? I never expected him to end up in Treblinka. I am not ready for this. I run with Israel. At the Square I see him, my own dearest brother! How terrible he looks, his face long and thin, his eyes red from tears, completely depressed and broken. We fall upon each other and cry and cry....

I bring him into my workshop and he tells his tragic story. After receiving my letter from Czystochowa (sent during the time of the "Aktion" there) he, along with members of his wife's family and some friends, started building a huge hideout. It was, however, denounced even before they had finished building it. They were afraid to rely on the president of the Jewish Community, Gutchard. Therefore, with great effort and at great expense, they managed to obtain permits for train travel for themselves, and the women and children. Their goal was Bochnia where the "Aktion" was over and where they had hoped to legalize themselves, again at a very high price. En route however, something occurred to scare them and they got off the train in some little town. They intended to continue in a different direction the next day. However, during the night the town was surrounded and all the Jews were transported to Radomsko and straight into the wagons to Treblinka. Zygmunt's wife and little daughter, his brother-in-law Daniel Eichner and Eichner's family, all went straight to the "bath". Zygmunt himself, Hershel Kaczkewicz, Jakob Goncarski and Chaskiel were left to work at the square. Two days later Zygmunt's mother and father-in-law, who had been in hiding, also arrived at Treblinka.

CHAPTER 3

The next day Zygmunt went to work at the square. I was in terror lest something bad happen to him. They constantly took people from the square to work at the "Death Camp". This was what I feared most because it meant death. We could not have any contact with Camp 2, and the workers there did not last long. I wanted him to work with me at my shop. However, from the first day that he arrived he thought of nothing but escape. Several possibilities existed at that time. People formed small groups at work, and while they were piling up the sorted garments they would burrow holes in the mounds of clothing. In the evening they would hide there. A good friend would cover them, and in the middle of the night the group would leave, jump over the fence, and into the "world". Others left the camp while working at loading the trains with the clothing.

For example, Einshindler left in the following way: We were standing in line for coffee. It was early morning — still dark. He believed strongly in getting out. He was going to steal up to the wall, he told me, to see if it was possible to leave that way. He went and probably saw an opening, did not hesitate long — and left. A few days later Chaskiel comes over for advice. What should he do? He wants to go with Zygmunt and there is an opportunity tomorrow. We advise him not to wait, if he is determined to go, and if there really is a good chance. He actually went the next morning.

At that time about thirty to forty people escaped daily. However, most of them returned to Treblinka, recaptured in "Aktions" in different cities and towns. I had a number of friends who escaped with great sums of money. But once outside, they were again exposed to fear, wandering from place to place without finding shelter, and inevitably, they were brought back to Treblinka. Being well acquainted with the camp organization, they knew how to mix with the workers and avoid the "bath".

At that time, all that was still possible — Treblinka was still in its infancy and there was not, as yet, much discipline and order in the camp. If one of the camp elders noticed that some "guests" were missing, he himself would smuggle in newcomers from the transports to fill the gaps. All the energy of the leadership was directed towards the "factory", in order to make it run smoothly. There was little interest in the workers in the camp. As already mentioned, every day large groups were shot or sent to Camp 2, and in their place new arrivals were employed. There was no worry about a shortage of "material". Therefore, we were left to sleep in conditions worse than pigs, without water to wash and often none to drink, and we received no medical attention whatsoever. On the contrary, if anyone was stricken with a disease or an infection, he had to hide it carefully.

However, when the escapes started to assume a mass character, and the Germans noticed barbed wires cut in a different place every day, they started various attacks. They really did not care too much about the few runaway Jews. They could have no exact knowledge of how many there were. Besides, they knew that most of them would be back, sooner or later. Their main concern was something else: that the secret of the "resettled" Jews should not become known to the outside world. As was well known, the Germans had been spreading rumours that the resettled Jews were being sent to the Ukraine for farm work. In the beginning, there was even a sign in Treblinka to this effect. Later on, once the "machinery" was working well and the transports were being dispatched quickly, there was no further need for this deception, and the sign disappeared. If the truth were to sink in among the remaining Jews, they might disperse, try to hide, or even worse, try to organize resistance -- thus making the work that up until now had gone so smoothly, much harder for the poor Germans.

At first they tried to influence us with kind words and promises. An "important personage" came from the central office in Lublin. We were all assembled and he preached a little sermon to us. 'A 'Juden Staat' (Jewish state) is being set up where the Jews will have full autonomy. If we do our jobs well, behave obediently and earn their trust, we will, of course, have the best positions in the future 'Juden Staat'. We will become the leaders and elders.'

When these kind words failed, the Germans began to threaten: they would strip us and force us to work completely naked. Any attempt to escape would result in torture and death. To convince us that this was no idle threat, two boys were caught the next day for allegedly trying to escape. In the middle of the square a gallows was erected around which all the camp workers were gathered. The Commandant gives a short lecture and the two victims, naked, are hung by the feet. For half an hour two Germans worked their whips on the still living, swaying bodies, until finally one of them takes out his revolver and shoots them.

Seeing that all this did not help, the administration slowly introduced some order and "stability" to camp life. They somehow understood that the prisoners who were allowed to work for a longer time were more productive, having had more experience than new arrivals. It was preferable to keep them on as long as they were useful, rather than constantly replacing them.

Two barracks in the courtyard near the workshops were emptied. They were provided with benches to sleep on, and electric lights were installed. The workers were divided into three blocks (one already existed). In this way, all of the work force was concentrated in one area, and Treblinka now had its own "Ghetto".

Numbers were introduced. Each sleeping place was marked with a number. The occupant of the sleeping place wore the same number on a coloured red triangle — each block had a different colour. The number system was designed to prevent people from the new transports from being smuggled in. Each prisoner was responsible for his two neighbours, i.e., his bunkmates on either side, and so each prisoner was forced to watch the others. The number system was useful in yet another way: if you committed a "crime", you could be sure that aside from paying for it on the spot, your number would be remembered at the evening roll call, and you would not be spared the "twenty-five" or "fifty" (lashes).

At nine in the evening the barracks were locked from the outside by the day guard, and a night guard remained inside. In addition to the camp elder, three block elders were also designated. Each block also had a German leader who was very well informed regarding the state of his block. We now had to enter by blocks, the block elder reporting to his leader, and the leader in turn reporting to the main Sharfuhrer.

This roll call ceremony took place twice daily, in the morning before work and in the evening after work had ended. A fairly large area around the barracks was encircled by a tall barbed wire fence with a gate in the middle, which was locked and guarded as soon as the columns returned from work. Now the Ghetto in Treblinka was complete. Our barracks were also thickly surrounded with red electric lights which illuminated the entire square all night long. As an added precaution, the wall around the camp was reinforced with heavy iron blocks interwoven with a net of thin steel wire. Roll call was not held at the ramp as it had been previously, but on the square in the Ghetto. At the morning roll call, each Kapo and foreman was assigned his group of men, for whom he was responsible during the day. It took some time until all these new rules and regulations worked properly. Meanwhile, no one procrastinated and whoever could disappear did so in whatever way possible.

Still, no opportunity presented itself to Zygmunt. The situation became more difficult every day. He and his three closest friends, Maniek, Sevek and Jakob Goncarski were supposed to leave together. They had made all kinds of plans, but every time something went wrong. I personally did not believe in "running". I did not see the slightest possibility of surviving once outside. There was no sense or purpose to returning to the ghetto — I had nobody left there. I had no Christian friends on the Aryan side on whose help I could rely. Zygmunt wanted me to go with him, but he could not convince me. On the other hand, I could not advise him not to go. Days and weeks pass. While working on the square sorting "rags", he prepares a large amount of money, gold and jewelery, which he gives to me to hide. I have no place to hide it. It is necessary to be extremely careful. The slightest suspicion means not only the Lazaret, but also a "generous helping" beforehand. I categorically forbid him to bring any more. At a suitable moment, I bury the treasure in the workshop, and may it rest there until the right moment comes. Zygmunt is still not willing to give up his plans and therefore does not want to come work with me in the shop. In case of a foul-up, he does not want me to bear the responsibility. For the same reason we are careful not to reveal to too many people that we are brothers. Then I bring into my shop Nachum Eljaszewicz, a tinsmith from Czestochowa.

November and December passed. There were still transports arriving but the tempo had slackened somewhat. They were now mostly from places in the east, like Bialystok, Grodno, and their surroundings. The sight of these men, women, and little children, trembling naked in the frost and snow, was unbearable. The little children shiver and cry: "Mama, I'm cold..." More than once, I almost felt glad that my wife and children had already passed this way and would not have to go through this again...

Some transports are also still arriving from Warsaw, and some are trickling in from smaller places like Kasow, Wegrow, and other places and camps. They become less frequent, until in January they almost stop. The big sorting square also becomes emptier and emptier. The goods are packed, loaded, and sent off. Rumours spread about a forthcoming selection. There are no more opportunities for individual escape. One last group tried its luck, but could not get through and returned to the barracks. This event could have been hushed up if not for block elder Kuba, the worst bootlicker and informer, a stupid young fellow who tried hard to win the favour of the Germans. Hundreds of Jews went to the Lazaret because of Kuba's campaign against "speculation" in Treblinka — but that is another chapter. This time again he could not resist the temptation to inform the Germans — at the cost of the lives of eight victims.

The winter was settling in with frosts and snow. The work at the Square became unbearable. Finally, Zygmunt agreed to come work with me in the workshop and wait for an opportunity to "go" together. I succeeded in getting him and Nachum admitted to the ranks of the "Court Jews". Now we were finally reunited; we even slept together.

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CHAPTER 4

Life in the workshop was fairly comfortable. We suffered no hunger. We even arranged to cook a bit for ourselves. In the beginning there were plenty of supplies like noodles, beans, flour, fats and so on. We only had to be careful not to be caught by a German. Later, when no provisions were brought by the transports, we would steal potatoes from the cellars and boil them. Even though we were extremely careful, we could not avoid being caught occasionally and receiving the "twenty-five" on the behind. Still, we could not give up our cooking. It was impossible to survive on the food from the camp kitchen. Bread was no longer available in abundance, but was rationed at a $\frac{1}{4}$ kg. daily. Quite often however, even this was not delivered. People became hungry. On the square there was no more money, but almost everyone had something tucked away, and slowly a trade developed — the Treblinka "Speculation", or black market. It had gone on before but on a smaller scale, the merchandise being mainly luxury items like ham, vodka and so forth. Now it became a trade in necessities. The columns of workers going to work outside in the forests would smuggle out money and valuables. The peasants from the surrounding villages, eager to make a fat profit, supplied the best of everything. The prices were outrageous and the peasants in the area became rich. As mentioned, money was no object in Treblinka. If they could not manage to spend the money outside, the workers preferred to throw it away rather than bring it back.

The guards knew about these goings-on. Not only did they not interfere, they actually cooperated, naturally skinning the cream for themselves. It is hard to imagine the luxury enjoyed by the Germans and the Treblinka guards. Eventually, they grew unwilling to have all that money and gold smuggled out of the camp. Moreover, they wanted to reduce us to living on what was provided by the camp kitchen alone. This would soon bring about our "liquidation" thus saving them the extra work. So, it was forbidden, on pain

of death, not only "to speculate", but also to remove bread or other food from the transports. Up until now this practice had been looked upon as almost "kosher".

And the Germans made no idle threats. Shots were fired left and right. The slightest suspicion was enough to put away prisoners singly and in groups. It became a field-day for the worst elements; the informers, administrative helper Chaskiel and block elder Kuba at the fore. Not only the prisoners, but even the Kapos and some Germans were afraid of Chaskiel, a sleazy, vile creature from the Warsaw underworld, a stupid and conceited youth. All day he would run around in the square and in the workshops like a wild animal in search of prey, peering into every corner. He even searched bread-bags and pockets. Woe to the one whom he caught with something not "kosher", or cooking or napping on the job! (We dread him more than the Germans.) Nothing would help, neither tears nor the intervention of his own "comrades". The matter was sure to be brought to the attention of the administration. When the look-out, posted in each shop, signalled Chaskiel's approach, everything was speedily and carefully cleaned up and work began at a healthy tempo. He enjoyed the complete confidence of the administration. He was the custodian of the keys to the storehouses and gorged himself on the best of everything. He claimed that the Germans had even promised to take him along to Berlin after the war. He really believed it and talked about it proudly at every occasion. His insolence was so great that he actually dared to give orders on his own. The pious Jews had organized a "Minyan" (quorum for prayers) and held prayers early in the morning and in the evening at the carpentry shop. Chaskiel begrudged them even this pleasure and disbanded the Minyan. Only after an intervention with the administration was the Minyan reconvened.

The other extremely active informer was block elder Kuba, an "intellectual" from Lodz. He would constantly run around attempting to please and serve the Germans, at the expense of single prisoners as well as groups, and he was never satisfied that he had done enough. For example: when there were no more transports, and the goods had all been sorted and sent off, the groups of "Reds", "Blues" and others were transferred to work inside the Ghetto. A group of "Reds" was assigned to do the resurfacing of our square

yard. As the first shovelfuls of earth were lifted, the usual Treblinka garbage pit was uncovered. Among the garbage and shit, are piles of photographs, documents, treasures in gold and jewelery, as well as human corpses. We beg the workers: "Cover it up and keep quiet, let's try to preserve at least these remains of the slaughtered Jewish people." Kapo Yurek, another fine man, finally relents, but Kuba would not stand for it. He runs around searching until he finds the Obersharfuhrer.¹⁰ A detachment of garbage sorters is set up. Each photo and document is carefully exhumed and burned. Money, gold and valuables are cleaned and set aside in strong boxes. The corpses are dug out and burned at the Lazaret so that no sign remains — God forbid — of the destruction of the Jews.

Kuba also excelled in the fight against "speculation". It became virtually impossible to get money out and to bring food in. Workers leaving the camp and returning were searched. Moreover, each group leaving with a "Blue" guard was now also assigned a German. But even the Germans were not immune to large bribes. No matter how hard and risky it was, money was still smuggled out. The guards would do the purchasing and the German would do the distribution, naturally in such a way that he would not be short-changed. People also tried to deal with the guards inside the camp. They would give a sum of money to a watchman with whom they were familiar and he would leave a package at an appointed place. Often the guard would take the money but leave no package. Many took the risk of buying directly from the guards....³⁰ American dollars or 15 gold rubles bought 1 kg. of bread, 100 cigarettes, or $\frac{1}{2}$ litre of vodka. For 5000 zlotys you might sometimes get a bit of butter.

Kuba, Chaskiel and their agents had everyone under surveillance. They would constantly search around and under the bunks and in the bread bags, and were often successful.

The traitor Kuba also organized a special guard around our wire fence, through which some watchmen used to trade and hand parcels over to their Jews. Nevertheless, despite all these difficulties the trade did not stop.

In time, three levels of society were established similar to the life outside.

The upper class — the aristocracy — was composed of the commandants, kapos, warehouse supervisors and doctors. They lived in luxury, indulged in wild parties, got drunk, and sank ever deeper in debauchery. There were about thirty women in Treblinka. Most of them were employed in the German, Ukrainian and Jewish laundries. Some sewed underwear, one was a dentist, one was a doctor and one a nurse in the Ukrainian infirmary. A few of the women were employed at various handicrafts like knitting, crocheting and so on. The women did not work hard; they dressed luxuriously and behaved disgracefully.

Five of the women had husbands in the camp and their behaviour was irreproachable. The rest, without exception, the young ones as well as the older ones had "admirers" selected from the Treblinka aristocracy. These rich admirers supplied them with the best of everything. The women went to the parties, got drunk, and enjoyed themselves to the utmost. Not only did they behave in a despicable manner, but they also used the most lewd and obscene language. They — our Treblinka women — were not squeamish even about Germans or Ukrainians! They were not subject to any physical punishment. Generally they were punished with housework; they were forced to remain in their barracks during their free time. They were not allowed to meet with their lovers or attend the wild parties. Indeed, this punishment was very hard to bear!

In a few difficult cases some women were sent to Camp 2. During my time in Treblinka there were no cases of any of the working women being sent to the Lazaret.

The middle class in Treblinka consisted of the tradesmen in the workshops as well as some of the more ingenious "Speculators".

The workshops had the advantage of having a stove or kitchen, and that helped a great deal in making life easier. Because the tradesmen would do all kinds of jobs for the guards, they often received bread, meat, cigarettes, and occasionally even whiskey. And so, in the workshops, even at the worst times, we did not suffer too severely.

However, the lower class, the regular mass of the camp workers, could not cope. Each tried as he could, but the hunger and misery grew worse daily.

CHAPTER 5

As there was less and less bread, there was more and more music. A small band had been organized in the camp right from the beginning, with some professional musicians like the three Sherman brothers from Warsaw, one Schnitzer, and others. However, they did not achieve great success. Early in the winter the well-known musician and composer Arthur Gold arrived, and recommended by his Warsaw admirers, he and some other musicians were taken from the transport. The Germans admired him greatly and gave him the task of setting up an orchestra Treblinka could be proud of. Gold devoted all his energies to the assignment. The Germans helped in whatever way possible. There was no lack of instruments. These were left on the square when their owners went to the "bath". Only a few jazz instruments were missing. The cymbals and drumsticks were brought in by the Hauptsharfuhrer¹¹ when he returned from his vacation. The drum was constructed in the camp and — what luck — we have a jazz section also. An excellent percussionist arrived in the same transport with Gold.

A mixed choir of men and women is established. A Czech Jew writes the lyrics and Gold composes the music. He also composes some beautiful pieces for his orchestra. To complete the scene we also have a soloist — a Warsaw artist, several amateurs, and Jerzyk — a cabaret dancer.

On Lalka's orders the tailor shop furnishes costumes for all the orchestra members: white jackets with blue collars and lapels. Gold appears in white tails with the same trimmings, striped pants perfectly pressed, black patent leather shoes and a white dress shirt and bow tie. Treblinka can afford it all. There were even elegantly painted music stands with the insignia: "Gold Orchestra". You could not ask for anything better in the finest resort.

As I mentioned earlier, Lalka was a great devotee of boxing. He could not, therefore, let Treblinka lag in that field. A superb boxing ring was built, and boxing gloves and equipment were supplied, according to the rules of the sport.

At the end of April, after the German "Victory" in the Warsaw Ghetto, new transports arrived with some good boxers and an instructor. A boxing craze spread through Treblinka. In the free evening hours you could spot small groups of people surrounding two fools, sporting swollen noses and black eyes.

A show would be held almost every second Saturday: concerts, boxing, athletic competitions...The ring was erected in the middle of the Ghetto Square. Armchairs for the rulers — the Germans — were placed in the front. Everybody came — from the Obersturmfuhrer¹² to the Unterscharfuhrer. To heighten their enjoyment, the Germans never failed to bring along beer, chocolate and lemonade. On one side of the ring there were long benches for women, kapos and foremen. On the other side, the common crowd would push and shove. Everyone had to attend the show. No one was allowed to stay in the barracks or the workshops, much less leave the Ghetto. The gate was locked, and the wire fence was surrounded by watchmen. The Germans received nicely decorated programmes.

The show usually opened with Gold's Orchestra. They would play arias from famous operas as well as Gold's own compositions. Salver, a Warsaw cantor newly arrived, would sing arias and lieder. After this, humorous sketches were performed, naturally in German, with some mild ironies about the "resort" Treblinka. Then Jerzyk presented his cabaret repertoire. The choir would also participate.

Finally came the boxing and athletics. Initially the fights were kept to a reasonably decent level. The boxers were members of Warsaw sport clubs. Lalka, however, wanted different fights. In later shows, special pairs of fighters were chosen, as for example, two barbers who served the Germans, neither young, and both great idiots.

Of course neither had any notion of boxing, and cheered on by the Germans, they battered each other until the blood streamed like water. Lalka almost fell off his armchair doubled over with laughter. The Germans, and the entire crowd enjoyed it as well.

The lot of the toilet cleaners was no better. And so it went on — there was no shortage of dunces to fight, the onlookers had fun; and, on the other side of the fence, in the death camp, the fires burned constantly to devour the new exhumed corpses of the first victims of the Warsaw Ghetto.

The show closed with Gold's Orchestra again.

Gold celebrated his fortieth birthday with great pomp and ceremony. In the tailor shop the tables were laden with the best of everything. The Treblinka bakery supplied pastries, the German warehouse supplied drinks and sweets. Gold arranged a special program for the occasion. The hall was beautifully decorated and the orchestra was in gala attire. Special invitations were issued to all the Germans and the Jewish camp aristocracy. Toasts were drunk to the German victory. Gold reached his peak with his oration in which he praised the Germans for their benevolence, and declared that their handling of the Jews was understandable and in the interests of the German people. I have no idea what the Germans could have thought of that speech... I only know that from that moment on, for me and for most of us, Gold lost all his charm and the trust he had commanded. We also lost our respect for his artistic abilities.

Gold was even mean to his own musicians. Until his arrival, the musicians who used to play during the soirees and banquets arranged by the Germans to honor their guests, would receive food, drinks, and cigarettes. These were divided fairly among them. But Gold grabbed everything for himself, and his colleagues could hardly get anything at all from him. As a result, the musicians suffered from hunger like everyone else, while Gold was swimming in wealth.

The orchestra, attired in regular clothing, played every night at the evening roll call. The choir sang to musical accompaniment. Everyone had to join in singing the specially composed song "Treblinka" during the evening roll call, and while on the march.

At the same ceremony the lashes were also paid out to those workers who had "earned" them during the day. The lightest punishment was twenty-five or fifty lashes. A special whipping bench and a whip were set aside for this purpose. The victim was tied to the bench with a strap over his shoulders. His legs were tucked under and tied up so that his bottom was taut, and the whips most effective. At first the victims were allowed to keep their pants on. Once, however, while Lalka was working on a young man, the sound of the lashes did not seem quite right to him. He ordered the lad to take his pants off and... there was a towel. For this crime the victim was stripped naked. He was beaten to an unrecognizable mass of red flesh and then, finally, shot at the Lazaret. From then on, the lashes were "delivered" on the naked bottom, and Lalka was sure he was not being cheated. Usually Lalka would personally administer the beatings. This work was a constant source of pleasure to him. Kiewe took second place. However, when there was so much work that these two poor souls could not handle it alone, to their deep chagrin, they had to share some of it with the other Sharfuhrers who were not nearly as competent craftsmen.

The victims reacted to the lashes in different ways; the majority, with clenched teeth. Others screamed and thrashed breaking the bench, and had to be restrained with iron bonds in order to endure the punishment. The most terrifying of all was the beating of youngsters. There were some twelve to fourteen year old boys staying with their fathers in Treblinka. With the first few lashes on their naked flesh, these children's screams and cries, their shrieks "Mama", would reach to heaven. The most hardened among us would cry with them. Kiewe however, was not affected — on the contrary — the more heartbreaking the screams, the more he enjoyed his job.

After settling the daily accounts, the bench and whip were removed to the storeroom. Gold steps up to the podium and the concert begins with some light classics like "Cavaleria Rusticana" or something similar. After that the choir performs, and then the entire crowd sings "Treblinka" until finally we hear the long-awaited command:

"Uptretten" (step out). We breathe a sigh of relief. Gold and his band move to the side and play a lively march. Block by block we parade before the authorities, down to the kitchen for supper. You have to be extremely careful to keep in step, otherwise you will still get a few lashes over the head from Kiewe.

After supper we have music again. This time in the tailor shop, the biggest and nicest hall in the Ghetto. Outside, the sky around the camp turns red from the infernal flames of the huge newly-built oven. The wind carries the evil smell of burnt and rotting human flesh and bones. It is impossible to breathe outside.

In the tailor shop our aristocracy is gathered with their girlfriends. Some bored Germans and train guards also come by. Our ladies and gentlemen dance to the lovely music of the well-rehearsed Gold Orchestra, entertain each other and get drunk...night after night. Later, in warmer weather, the Orchestra plays outside near the closed gates. On the other side of the gate, groups of Ukrainians present their folk dances. This is the daily picture of Treblinka.

As mentioned earlier, we lacked only bread — we had more than enough music, lashes, and death...

CHAPTER 6

The first Warsaw transports brought two doctors to the camp: Dr. Chorazycki, the well-known laryngologist, and a female doctor called Irka. The two doctors started to practise, but they were not allowed to attend to any Jews. Dr. Chorazycki looked after the Germans and Dr. Irka attended the Ukrainian guards. Jews were not allowed to be sick. The moment a German (especially the Krummer Kopf) noticed that someone was a bit out of sorts, he removed him to the Lazaret right away, where the patient was instantly "cured".

There were over a thousand people working in Camp 1, and about three hundred in Camp 2. A large number of people suffered from skin infections which often needed surgery. Of course this had to be kept strictly secret. In the evenings the two doctors would come with medication and help the sick people. If surgery had to be performed, Dr. Irka and the patient were surrounded by a group of people singing loudly, in order to drown out the screams of the patient.

After many appeals to the camp administration, the camp elder, Engineer Galewski, succeeded in gaining permission to distribute fifteen passes every morning to sick workers. Dr. Chorazycki could then officially treat these people.

As time passed, conditions stabilized somewhat and two new doctors were assigned to the Jewish workers: Dr. P. Bak of Warsaw, and Dr. Reizman of Tomaszow. The latter arrived with the transport from Rawa. A small space was set aside in the first barracks as a makeshift infirmary where the patients were examined in the evening.

With the onset of winter, typhus started to break out. It soon was spreading in a frightening way, and claiming many victims. There were no means to combat it. In the first place, we could not allow the Germans to learn of the epidemic. In the second place, there was no way to isolate the sick. After great efforts, the doctors finally succeeded in gaining the right to have the very sick patients relieved from work. The number, however, was limited to a maximum of twenty per day. The doctors had to report the number of patients in the sickroom at every morning roll call. If the number exceeded the maximum, Lalka, Kiewe, but most often the Krummer Kopf, would invade the barrack and clean out the bunks, leaving only a few favourites.

The physicians found themselves in a very precarious situation — between the hammer and the anvil: on one hand, the fear of exceeding the norm, and on the other, the great number of very sick people with fevers of 40° C. or more. The sickroom was now filled with the camp aristocracy: Engineer Galewski, Kapo Rakowski, Ober-kapo Bloch, and the informers Kuba and Chaskiel. The Germans were particularly concerned for these last two and supplied them with food from their kitchen — apples, oranges and so on... Moreover, since the administration was afraid that the doctors would send their beloved patients to greener pastures a little before their time (which we tried to convince the doctors to do), a report on their condition was demanded daily. The few remaining places in the sickroom were filled with the most ill patients, who were only admitted after the sixth or seventh day of high fever when they were no longer able to remain on their feet. They were sent out again as soon as the fever started to drop. The doctors could not leave anybody to die a natural death. The Chevra-Kedisha — "the Reds" — would come for the hopeless cases and take them to the Lazaret, where they were shot by a German and put on the fire to "fry". Only the aristocracy was exempt. If one of them died, a funeral was arranged according to Jewish tradition, with a "Kaddish" and "El mola rachamin" (prayers for the dead), conducted by Kapo Meyer.

In spite of all their efforts, it was not possible for the doctors to maintain the quota. Great numbers of people, both singly and in groups, were removed daily to the Lazaret by the Chevra-Kedisha. Afraid, the sick were no longer willing to go to the infirmary. They would drag themselves

to work with fevers of 40°C. or more. A great number survived the illness without ever going to the sickroom. The doctors would try to influence the Kapos to treat the sick a little better, not to beat them, and whenever possible give them easier work. At the square, of course, you had to be in constant motion and it was impossible to sit. The toilet therefore became the haven for the sick and they would sit there for many hours. The Kapos looked the other way. However, for Kiewe this was too much, and so he appointed a "toilet guard". The "toilet guard" was dressed like a synagogue cantor with an eight-cornered hat. On Lalka's orders he grew a small pointed beard. On his chest he wore a big alarm clock and in his hand he carried a whip. He had to make sure that no more than five people occupied the toilet at the same time. The process of relieving oneself was not to last longer than two minutes. The "toilet guard" was authorized to use his whip to his heart's content, and in cases of serious disobedience to report the culprits number to Kiewe. Thus the Treblinka toilet-sanatorium was shut down.

One of the first sick, in the beginning of winter, was our friend from Radomsko, Hershl Kackewicz. He suffered through a prolonged and severe illness. However, he had the special attention of Dr. Reizman whom he knew from home and who covered for him in the sickroom for a long time. Zygmunt and I tried our best to get him everything he needed. We cooked especially for him and looked after him. He finally recovered enough to go back to work, but was very weak. Dr. Reizman intervened with Kapo Rakowski who got him a job sitting down in the barracks, ripping apart furs. Some days passed. He would usually spend the evenings with us in our workshop. We continued to look after him as much as we could so that he would regain his strength as quickly as possible.

One evening, probably in January, Hershl does not come for supper. We go out to look for him and find out!... Hershl will never come to us for supper again... The Krummer Kopf has taken him and a group of others off to the Lazaret.

Our co-worker Nachum Eljaszewicz also went through a severe case of typhus. He only avoided the sharp claws of the Krummer Kopf thanks to the fact that he belonged to the workshop at that time.

At the end of March, I too came down with a high fever. We understood that I had also joined the "party". My brother was terribly worried about me. I was trembling with fear and sure I would drag him down with me. We slept together. Somehow though he was spared. I carried on for six days, but on the seventh day I had to go to the sickroom. My legs would no longer support me. As one of the tradesmen and "Court Jews", I could feel a bit safer in the sickroom. In a few weeks, I recovered sufficiently to go back to my workshop, although I was still hardly able to stand on my own.

At the beginning of April, while Dr. Chorazycki was busy in his office, there was an incident between him and Lalka. Lalka allegedly found some money on the doctor. What really happened there remains a secret... Chorazycki ran outside, took some poison which he carried on himself, and dropped dead on the spot. I saw him, already dead, being dragged by the feet all over the camp, with his head in the mud. He was left on the square until evening, lying there filthy and muddy, like a heap of dirt. At the evening roll call Lalka told everyone that he had found money on the doctor and that Chorazycki was probably preparing to escape. This was certainly a gross lie. Chorazycki, already an elderly man, was one of the decent people in Treblinka. Dressed very modestly, he would avoid company, not even mixing with the other doctors. He would spend his evenings alone on his bunk. He would advise a sick person quietly and practically, and when necessary, he would give him some medication.

His place in the infirmary was taken by Dr. Rybak, who was the exact opposite of Chorazycki. He was elegantly dressed, always in a good mood, he worked fast and with zest. He participated in all the receptions and entertainments, and even managed to fall in love with a young woman dentist from Bialystok. Following the example of Kapo Yurek and informer Chaskiel, he went so far as to celebrate a wedding with great ceremony, music and dancing -- naturally with the help and approval of the Germans. All the German S.S. and Jewish elite were present. A wedding canopy was set up, with Kapo Meyer officiating and singing cantorial chants. Gold and his orchestra rose to the occasion.

CHAPTER 7

As mentioned before, as the year 1943 began, the number of transports decreased. A few Bulgarian transports arrived. The empty barracks and warehouses were once again filled with clothing, foodstuffs and cigarettes, brought in large amounts by the Bulgarians. However, it was all sorted and sent out quickly.

The number of camp workers was reduced to about seven hundred and fifty. The work was all done and new work had to be found for the remaining inmates. The administration, and in particular Lalka, came up with the idea of sprucing up Treblinka, transforming it into a showplace to be proud of. New streets and avenues are paved with stone and given various names — for example: Kurt Zeidl Strasse, named after the chief of the "street-builders" brigade, and Zidlerstrasse (Settlers Street), leading towards Camp 2, and so on. New blocks and barracks are built for the Ukrainians. Over the entrance to the beautifully laid out courtyard is a large sign: "Max Biela Barracks" — a tribute to the S.S. man who was killed by the Warsaw Jew, Isaak Berliner.

This happened in September 1942 at an evening roll call. All the working Jews, as well as the Ukrainians and Germans, were gathered on the square. Suddenly Isaak Berliner, a man of about fifty who worked with the "Gold Jews", stepped out of the column, quickly approached one of the S.S. men and plunged a knife into his back. The German fell dead on the spot. All the Germans ran from the square, thinking it was an organized revolt. The first to return was Lalka, carrying a hand grenade. However, the Jews on the square remained standing quietly. Berliner was then simply torn apart with pitchforks, and now the Ukrainian barracks were named after the killed S.S. man.

The Germans arranged their living quarters very comfortably and even had special guest rooms. A large bathhouse was built with a tower for the waterworks. The black S.S. flag floated from the high tower. Spacious modern stalls for horses and cows were built, as well as a pigsty for the pigs. There was a large yard with a pond and a poultry run. A park with a zoo and a beautiful enclosure for the animals and birds was constructed. Around the entire camp, a vegetable garden was planted in the space between the fence and the barbed wire. The work was done by a detachment of gardeners led by Sudawicz, a Jewish agronomist from Czystochowa; and a German commander. Two new wells were also dug: one in the Ukrainian courtyard and one in the Jewish Ghetto. This was not an easy task in Treblinka because the terrain was high and sandy. Chaim Mika, a building contractor from Nowy Dwor, supervised this work. He also constructed cellars for storing ice and potatoes. Generally, he led the detachment that was responsible for the storage of potatoes. Treblinka, once covered by an old pine forest, became a different place. All the streets and squares were planned and paved. The ramp where the transports used to arrive was renovated with particular care. Its entire length was made as smooth as a table top, paved over and secured with barbed wire. This work was done by Berl Kot from Czystochowa, an excellent mechanic and welder.

On the orders of the Unterscharführer Schmidt, the commander of the metalworks and the chief builder of the factory in Treblinka, Berl Kot also constructed a special iron cupboard. Inside it were some metal shelves like a grating. On a special shelf there was a little bottle of gasoline and some matches, and underneath was a large glass bottle containing several litres of gasoline. Over it hung a weight tied to a rope which was fastened outside the cupboard.

This cupboard was placed in the administrative office and the secret documents of Treblinka were kept on the grated shelves. A pipe from the cupboard went through the roof as though from a stove. It served the following purpose: in case of a sudden unexpected attack, all those inconvenient documents could be burned instantly and completely. In that event, the contents of the small bottle would be spilled and ignited, the doors of the cupboard hermetically sealed, the rope loosened causing the weight to fall and break the large bottle. The gasoline would then catch fire and the documents would be burnt.

The whole ramp and entrance Square is decorated with special purpose. For example, at the entrance there is a large sign: "Station 'Obermajdan' — not Treblinka. A big arrow points toward the gate of the Transport Square indicating: "Connections to Bialystok and Wolkowysk". The doors and windows of the barracks that line the ramp and serve as storehouses for the clothing and other goods from the transports, are decorated with signs reading: "First Class Waiting Room, Second Class, Third Class". Over one of the larger windows is a sign: "Tickets". On the side there is a large route map of the Station Obermajdan. On other windows the signs: "Information", "Station Manager" and so forth appear. On the walls big arrows point: "To the Washrooms", "To the Parking Garage". A false door is hammered to the wall, on it a sign indicating: "Station Master". In a prominent spot a fake clock is hung which has a diameter of 70 cm. All this decoration understandably served to disorient the new arrivals, to give them the momentary impression that they have simply come to a transit station.

For Lalka all this is still not enough. He is constantly searching among the new arrivals for engravers. In January, he finally finds two in a transport from Warsaw. One of them is a very talented craftsman. His first assignment is to create illustrated signposts which are erected on the streets and roads of Treblinka. On the street leading to the ramp there is a signpost: "To the Station", engraved with a picture of Jews, bearded and bespectacled, dragging their belongings to the station. On the road to the animal pens there is a signpost with cows, hens and a shepherd — reading: "To the Livestock". The signpost to "Kazarme" (barracks) depicts marching soldiers. On the road leading to our quarters the signpost: "To the Ghetto" is decorated with a picture of Jews carrying shovels, hammers and pickaxes. All the enterprises on the main street — the Kurt Zeidl Strasse — are provided with finely crafted emblems in medieval style. For example, in front of the bakery, recently built and equipped with care and luxury, a great crescent roll dangles. It is made of wood and finished to create the impression of the real thing. In front of the German barber shop there are three beautifully polished copper plates: at the dentist's, a large sculpted molar, and so on. At the entrance to the poultry enclosure stands a beautifully carved wooden

rooster. Now our sculptor is working on a stone frog to be placed in the middle of a pond in the zoo, with a fountain spraying from the frog's mouth. The frog was finished and was a beautiful piece of work, but while they were hewing the stone border which was to surround the pond, the revolt broke out. Treblinka went up in smoke, and all of poor Lalka's lovely plans and dreams were ruined.

In spite of the fact that we had over fifty men working in the various trades in Camp 1, the construction-master Wiernik — an artist in his field — was brought in daily from Camp 2 with his two helpers. They started building the guardhouse and main entrance gate. The work was completed and was a sight worth seeing. The guardhouse and the gate with two small entrances were really wonderful. Everything was built in medieval style and even the interiors were decorated in that fashion. We, in the tinsmith shop, hammered out special lanterns from thick sheet metal which were hung from heavy iron chains over the gateway and over the entrance to the guardhouse. On top of the gate there was a beautiful iron decoration which cost our master-smith, Hershel Jablkowsky from Stoczek, many hours of effort and work.

Just as the Germans had previously put all their enthusiasm into building the "factory", so they did now in the beautifying work. The Hauptsharfuhrer himself, would visit us in the workshop, give instructions and supervise the course of our labour. The Germans did not, God forbid, have to buy any of the necessary building materials; everything was put together from emptied Jewish stores and houses from the nearby town of Kasow. I don't think it necessary to add that all the work was done exclusively by Jewish hands.

CHAPTER 8

While we in Camp 1 were busy building and beautifying, the work of exhuming and burning the bodies of the first victims of the Warsaw Ghetto continued intensively in Camp 2. There were a few fantastically huge mass graves, each one filled with tens of thousands of murdered people. The layers of corpses were covered with chlorine. At the beginning, the chlorine used to arrive in wagonloads. The bodies were now being dug out and burnt in order to erase all the evidence. It was not an easy job. For many months three bulldozers growled away from 4 o'clock in the morning until nightfall. The work went on with great intensity, in two shifts. The bulldozers would constantly dig up earth mixed with the remains of human bodies which had to be carefully picked out and taken on wooden carriers to be burnt in the great ovens. When one of the mass graves was emptied, the earth was replaced and carefully smoothed over, to appear as though nothing had ever been there. The Germans would celebrate by bringing whiskey and drinking a toast: "until the last Jew", and would finish up with a three-gun salute.

The graves could never be emptied entirely because blood mixed with water accumulated at the bottom. Motorized pumps were set up to draw it out. However, they could never manage to drain the bottom few metres, and so the graves were simply covered over.

Over in Camp 2 there was also the "bath"... It was a large concrete building standing on a cement platform. On its roof, and visible from a distance, was a wooden Star of David. Running through the middle of the building was a corridor. The entrance was covered with a red curtain. Off the corridor there were doors leading to small cubicles into which the arrivals from the transport were introduced. Outside, over the platform, there were large openings covered by panels hinged at the top and fastened with steel bands.

Inside the cubicles smooth tiles covered the slightly slanted floors and went halfway up the walls. On the ceiling a few shower heads were mounted. There was also a small window in the middle of the ceiling.

As mentioned before, the people leave all their belongings in Camp 1. Everyone is undressed there. The women, already naked, are seated on a long bench and their hair is cut off. This is accomplished by about forty "hair-dressers". The hair is then cleaned with steam, using a steam kettle brought especially for this purpose. The hair is then packed in bales, and sent out along with the clothing and other wares.

The victims come into Camp 2 already naked and shorn, and are immediately squeezed into the cubicles. There is no more division: men, women and children are all pressed together in the small cubicles so tightly that this alone would be enough to suffocate them. The doors are hermetically sealed, the motors start to work. The air from inside is sucked out and fumes from burnt gasoline forced in. The cries from inside can be heard for about ten minutes and then it becomes silent. The entire process, from the arrival at the camp to the oven, lasts only about half an hour. Most of the victims in the cubicles start to hemorrhage. A German controls the progress of the "work" through the little windows in the ceiling. When he is sure that everyone inside is dead, he opens the side panels, and the corpses fall out onto the cement platform. An elderly Jew from Czystochowa called "the dentist" checks the bodies for gold or metal teeth, which he pulls out. The bodies are then piled onto stretchers and carried to the oven where they are flung into the fire and burned. The blood that has collected in the cabins, streams out into specially dug ditches. The "bath" contained ten cubicles: four big ones and six smaller ones.

As I mentioned before, we in Camp 1 were strictly forbidden to enter Camp 2. If anyone crossed over into Camp 2 by accident, he had to remain there — there was no return to Camp 1. I received the information about the arrangements and procedures in Camp 2 mainly from Hershel Jablowski, a solid and decent man, with whom I worked for many months in the workshop: he as a smith and I as a tinsmith. He arrived

at Treblinka on June 18, 1942 — a considerable time before the first transports. According to him, the first transport arrived on Tisha B'Av in 1942 (July 23). He participated in digging the first mass grave. At that time there was no bulldozer. Later, as a smith, he was employed in building the "bath". It was all one camp then. The day before the first transport arrived, the division was made between Camp 1 and Camp 2. As a skilled tradesman, Jablkowski was sent to Camp 1. I also received some information about Camp 2 from Shimon Goldberg, a carpenter from Radomsko, who worked in Camp 2 for four months. He escaped during the uprising and we met in the forest ten months later.

CHAPTER 9

The idea and ever stronger will to somehow escape from the Treblinka Gehenna never stopped gnawing at the minds of most of us. In the beginning, when the transports were still arriving regularly, the "Court Jews", who had special privileges and were better treated, did not think favourably of escape. Later on however, they saw that they too were only Jews, and eventually, because of their greater possibilities, they became the most active organizers of the uprising.

In the first winter months we started to get together in the evenings in the carpentry shop. We were a tight group of friends: Mordechai, a decent and quite clever young man from Legionowo who worked in Chaim Mika's potato column; and Berl Borenstein and his father, also from Legionowo, a carpenter from the workshop. The latter, a very quiet and good man, became ill with typhus to which he succumbed. There was Simcha Wilk from Warsaw, also a carpenter, quite militant and not a stupid fellow; the foreman, Adolf from Lodz, a shrewd man over thirty, well travelled, who finally also ended up in Treblinka.

During one of these evenings, Mordechai came up with the following plan to escape from the camp: Almost every evening some Germans used to come to the tailor shop for music and entertainment. We should, therefore, organize a "fighting group" among us, and post a watch at the door of the tailor shop in order not to let in too many people and undesirable guests. The watch would not be too suspicious as it was often practiced. At a given moment the group would attack the Germans, kill them quietly, and take their weapons. Then one of us would dress in a German uniform and call in one of the Ukrainian guards, kill him, then call in a second, and a third. After getting rid of the guards, we would quietly assemble everyone and slip out

of the camp. This plan seemed a bit like a fantasy and did not gain too many supporters. However, with the passage of time, it was not so much this plan as the idea of an armed revolt that slowly started to mature. A small committee was formed which considered different plans. At the end of March a decision was finally taken in favour of an armed uprising.

Between the two German barracks there was a small brick building which contained the German bathhouse, as well as the armory which was shut with a heavy iron door. The door and lock had been constructed in our locksmith's. At the same time a spare key was made which was later given to the committee. This allowed the door of the armory to be opened and closed without attracting any outside attention. We had only to watch carefully for any approaching German, and especially for Kiewe who was always riding around on his bicycle and turning up at every corner.

During the daytime the German barracks were almost empty as the Germans were busy at their posts. There were only a few Ukrainian women working in the kitchen and cleaning the rooms, and a few Jewish youngsters polishing boots. Among them was Marcus, a brave and energetic twenty year old from Warsaw.

The day and hour were decided. In the early morning Marcus took two boxes of hand grenades from the general stock then stored in the armory, and gave them to the committee. At that time the committee was composed of Kapo Kurland, Chaim Tik and Zalcborg — a clothing merchant from Kielce, a very smart and experienced man of about forty who worked in the tailor shop. His two sons were with him in Treblinka: Heniek about 13, who polished boots in the German barracks and Velvl about 17, who worked in the Jewish laundry. Engineer Galewski and the Kapos did not cooperate, but they did not interfere with the committee.

The news about the action, which was set for 5 o'clock in the afternoon, spread through the camp like lightning. Because almost the entire camp knew about it there was a great danger that the plan would be leaked. But there was no leak.

Treblinka was seething; everyone was preparing to fight with whatever weapon was available. The workshops feverishly fashioned any fighting tools they could. The nervous tension was unbearable. The smith Hershel Jablowski, a quiet and reliable man, spent all day sharpening knives and axes and turning metal files into daggers. We made large numbers of watering cans and filled glass flasks with vitriol which we had been accumulating, supposedly for cleaning the kettles. Even though I had just come out of the sickroom and could hardly stand on my feet, I worked with great intensity at finishing the watering cans, which were distributed with the flasks. At the last moment however, the action was called off. First because we discovered that the hand grenades which we had taken were useless, since the fuses had been left in a third box which remained in the armory; Second, some groups refused to cooperate for various reasons. A large number of us were bitter and disappointed at this outcome. Others however, received the news with relief.

At the end of April, or perhaps at the beginning of May (I don't recall exactly), a day was again set for the revolt. As it happened, on this day the last transport arrived, after the liquidation of the Jewish Ghetto in Warsaw. A large group of men and women from that transport were assigned to work with us. They gave us details of the fight in Warsaw; they were dispirited and pessimistic. There is nowhere to escape to or hide. The German power is overwhelming. In a word, they completely discouraged us and all remained as before.

Afterwards, it became quiet. There was no more talk about an uprising — nobody believed it would succeed. Again we started spinning out individual plans for escape.

Zygmunt, myself, and our friend Maniek Herszkowicz, formerly the owner of a cannery in Lodz, decided to escape. At that time the fence surrounding our ghetto had been completed. Electric lights around our barracks were also up, but not yet connected. We would take advantage of the darkness. While working on the roofs, I pulled the nails from the skylight window in the tailor's shop so it would then

be easy to open from the inside. I also installed hooks at various points on the roof to suspend ropes from them. Zygmunt and I were supposed to leave our barracks at midnight when everyone was asleep. We would go through the wall made of blankets covering wooden posts between which there was enough space for a man to pass. From there we would pass through the neighbouring storehouse into the tailor's shop where Maniek, having hidden from the foreman, would be waiting for us. Maniek slept in the second barracks across the road from us and would not have been able to get to the tailor's shop during the night. We had everything prepared: money, ropes to use to climb down from the roof, a wire cutter and so on. However, Herszkowicz was unable to hide in the tailor's shop. The German on duty found him while checking the place before locking up. Zygmunt wanted the two of us to go; I could not decide and at the last moment my courage failed me...

Some time later a group of comrades came to us with the following proposal: Since the Ukrainians who lived on the other side of our workshop wall were being transferred to barracks newly built for them, we should cut through the wooden wall, or dig a passage under it. Two Ukrainian watchmen would be bribed for the one evening. All the participants (around 15 people) would meet in the workshop before closing time. The bribed watchmen would signal us, lead us through the barbed wire, and supply us with some weapons.

Rakowski was at the head of this undertaking. At that time, due to his connections with the Germans, he was camp elder while Engineer Galewski was Kapo. Rakowski had an extremely good relationship with the Ukrainians. They supplied him with anything he wanted, and as he once told us, they tried to take him out of the camp almost against his will. He was therefore our guarantee that this job could succeed. As fate would have it, at that time, the Krummer Kopf comes into our shop and takes Hershel, the master smith, with him to the Kapo room to measure the windows for gratings. In the room, at the breakfast table he sees Rakowski seated with his girlfriend. On the table there is a bottle of whiskey, white bread, ham and so on. The Krummer Kopf speaks in his normal voice, quietly and with a little smirk: "So Rakowski, you too speculate a bit." Rakowski explains that he got the food from a guard. Hershel takes the measurements; the Krummer Kopf leaves.

Rakowski is not worried. He finishes his breakfast and as camp elder goes out to check what's happening. But there is no fooling around with the Krummer Kopf. He runs to the office and tells all. In a little while he is back with two train guards — most of the train guards are Ukrainian Volks-Deutsche (nationals of German origin). There is no one in the Kapo room. They search the bed, they strip off the wall coverings and find a veritable treasure — bags filled with gold and money. Rakowski is brought in. He tries to defend himself, he doesn't know anything — it was probably Chorazycki who hid the money. Dr. Chorazycki had been recently sharing the room, but by now he was no longer alive. But it is of no use. Rakowski is kept guarded until evening and then under heavy guard is escorted by several train guards and Germans to the Lazaret, where he is shot.

All that money had probably been accumulated to bribe the guards, and to take on the road. It had never occurred to him that anyone would dare to search him — Rakowski — the darling of Treblinka. He was in fact lucky that Lalka was away at the time, otherwise he would surely have experienced the same fate as Stern. Stern was a strong young man from Warsaw who worked as one of the "Gold Jews". He was accused of "speculating" with the Ukrainians and giving them money. Unceremoniously, Lalka took him out in the morning, fixed him up as only he could do, and set him squatting with his hands over his head at the entrance to the ghetto so that all passersby could see him. On his orders, the block elder Kuba, the informer, hovered over him to prevent him from changing his position. Lalka would come back every few minutes, throw the victim to the ground and kick and whip him. Nothing was left of the man but a swollen mass of bloody flesh which Lalka would again put in a squatting position; and this went on until the evening. It is impossible to understand how the man lived through a day like that. At the evening roll call he was treated to another "fifty" and finally sent off to the Lazaret.

After Rakowski's death the guards refused to deal with any of us and so the whole business came to nothing. Engineer Galewski once again became the camp elder.

May and June come and go and all is quiet in Treblinka... that is, the Committee is quiet. The screams of the beaten and tortured victims can be heard as often as ever. Kiewe somehow becomes even wilder. On the other side of the wall from our shop, in the barracks emptied by the Ukrainians, worked a division of upholsterers led by a certain Piasek. He was an ugly creature. He had come to Treblinka with a wife and six children, but behaved like a street brat, singing dirty songs, gorging himself, getting drunk and molesting women who tried to avoid him. Kiewe, always everywhere, comes to the upholstery shop and finds two of the boys guilty of something or other. He makes them strip naked, lines them up on the ground — head to head — and starts working them over with his whip. Their terrible screams of pain are heard in our workshop, and they are so fearful and horrible it makes our flesh crawl. We have never heard such heartbreaking cries, even in Treblinka.

On that same day Kiewe also fixed my friend Mordechai and two others whom he suspected of stealing some potatoes from the potato cellar, although they in fact had not done so. Single-handedly he fixed all three of them so that they were impossible to recognize. He let them off thanks only to the intervention of the Hauptsharfuhrer, since there was evidence that they had not stolen the potatoes. If not for that lucky coincidence, they would have left his clutches only to end up in the Lazaret. It is impossible to relate even a small part of the atrocities. In Treblinka they were a daily occurrence and numbered in the hundreds.

July is approaching. From the newspapers stolen by Marcus from the Germans and read in great secrecy by a close circle of friends in the shop, we learn of the defeat of Mussolini and the great victories of the Soviet armies. The general conviction is that Germany will collapse any day now. We are certain however that no matter what the outcome of the war, we will never leave Treblinka alive. Therefore we have nothing to lose. The ones who had kept aloof until now, and even those who had been opposed to revolt are won over. Only a few of the worst elements, those who felt "safe" and thought of nothing

but gorging themselves, getting drunk and having women, are left out. Also Camp 2 is in a constant state of alarm since the work there is ending, and then... who knows what will happen?

The earlier committee is now strengthened by Engineer Galewski and the Kapo of the "Court Jews", Maniek, a young lad of about twenty but quite smart, energetic, and quick-thinking. A few other young and energetic people joined in. Chaim Tik was excluded from the committee because of his somewhat reluctant and conservative attitude. The meetings were mostly held in our workshop. The conspiracy was kept as strictly as was possible in Treblinka, where so many people were packed together in so small a space. Still the work of the committee was kept secret from the masses until the last moment. A detailed plan of action was worked out. All the participating members were divided into groups of five, each with a group leader. Each group had its place of operation and its specific task. The entire action would take place quietly and consist of sudden and unexpected attacks on the Germans.

Before the beginning of the action the armory would have been emptied, the weapons secretly brought to the sorting Square, distributed and hidden. At the start of the action each group of five, with their leader, would leave the workshop separately and go to the empty German barracks, take the weapons found there and then take their positions. To all outward appearances, camp work would proceed normally lest the Germans discover that something was brewing. If a German wandered into a barracks workshop, or into some other position he would be quietly killed on the spot by the group assigned to that location, as would the next one to come along. The real revolt would start after a large number of Germans had been eliminated in this way. The Administration office would then be attacked, the Germans killed, the telephone lines cut. The oil and gasoline barrels would be emptied and the camp set afire. The groups which were supposed to be watching the Ukrainian barracks from their hiding places, would then enter the barracks, disarm the Ukrainians and lock them up in the storehouse under guard. At the same time the watchtowers would be fired on, and the guards forced to leave them.

According to Kurland's plan, we would also station machine guns at the gate leading to the [Polish] work camp Treblinka, two kilometers away, stop the incoming train, disarm the Germans and guards, and free the workers. At the end we would all march out of the camp in an organized formation. It was understood that the inhabitants of Camp 2 would be informed and obviously, at the time of the action, there would be no more division between Camps 1 and 2. That was what was supposed to happen, according to plan. The reality was altogether different.

Before noon on August 2nd the armory was emptied — this time down to the last piece of equipment. The construction brigade loaded the weapons on their wagons, beneath piles of timber, mortar and bricks, and brought them to the sorting square to be distributed. The work in the shops again goes on intensively. Knives, axes, anything that can be used is hastily prepared. The tension is great. The camp work however appears to proceed as usual.

The revolt was set to start at 5 p.m. At that time we of the workshops were supposed to go to the German barracks, pick up our weapons and take our positions. At about 4 o'clock, Kiewe comes into our courtyard. The block elder standing at the door of Barracks #2 calls Kiewe in and they remain there for some time. We are all sure that information is being leaked about the revolt. What are we to do? How do you handle the situation? Salcberg, a committee member, comes running into our workshop terribly upset. In his opinion we have to finish Kiewe off right away before it is too late. This eventuality had not been foreseen in the plan. We cannot attack Kiewe unexpectedly now; we do not even have weapons. Therefore one of the men runs to the square, where the weapons are already being distributed. Meanwhile Kiewe leaves the barracks and goes off in the direction of the storehouse located in the Ghetto, at the roll call square.

I did not notice Kiewe being unusually careful on leaving the barracks. I also did not see a revolver in his hand. He did not look around and went straight ahead, unperturbed. It is therefore possible that Kuba did not spill any information about the revolt, or perhaps Kiewe simply did not believe that the Jews were capable of such a thing. In any case, as he is

approaching the storehouse, Wolowanczyk, probably already equipped with a machine gun, comes running from the square, and a few shots are heard, one after another.

Wolowanczyk was a notorious figure in the Warsaw underworld. He was tall and blond, around twenty years old, very strong, energetic, and extremely tough. I once witnessed Lalka dealing with him. As usual he started boxing with him. Wolowanczyk however was so nimble that he managed to avoid every punch. Lalka became very angry, grabbed him by the lapel and tried with all his strength to punch him in the head. The boy flung himself to the ground and Lalka missed his punch, lost his footing and also landed flat on the ground. Lalka's rage then had no limits. He pelted him with stones and bricks, threw the boy to the ground, and kicked and beat him mercilessly. I was watching the scene from the roof and was convinced that Wolowanczyk had been murdered. But no, he stood up, gave himself a shake and walked off to work as though nothing had happened.

The first shots heard from the entrance square were the signal for the beginning of the revolt. Shortly afterwards we heard terrible sounds of cannon fire and several explosions from the big square. The entire stretch of camp which contained the German barracks, the food storehouses, the bakery, and the shack containing the barrels of oil and gasoline, was now engulfed by a huge fire. The flames reached and blocked our gate. Our whole plan of action was wiped out. The people in our courtyard — around three hundred — are overcome by panic. No groups of five, no leaders — everyone now strives, at any cost, to escape from the blocked courtyard. A large crowd gathers in the locksmith's and carpenter's shops. We break the iron bars in the windows and jump out. With pliers and axes we cut the barbed wire, and break down the fences of the Ghetto and the barriers farther on. The tightly packed mass of people runs in the direction of Camp 2. We pass through a small gate. There, in Camp 2, everything is in flames. There is no time to look around. I pay attention to only one thing: not to lose my brother in the crowd. I see people jumping through the flames towards an opening in the fence. Zygmunt and I do the same and find ourselves in an open space. We must overcome one

more obstacle — the thickly tangled barbed wire. We run on with the crowd. At one point the wires have been trampled by so many feet that we scramble through without great difficulty. I notice a Ukrainian shooting from a distance at the running crowd. Maniele falls — a fine, decent woman. She was in Treblinka with her husband Chaim, nicknamed "Malpe" (monkey). Chaim runs on, wringing his hands and crying: "Maniele is killed!"

Running through practically all of Camps 1 and 2, we never saw another guard — neither German nor Ukrainian. Most probably they all ran off and hid right at the beginning of the revolt. There were normally about forty Germans and about one hundred and fifty guards working in both camps. (For them it was actually only one camp — the division was just for the inmates.) One third of the Germans were usually on leave. It was very rare that everyone was there at the same time. As well, Lalka himself was quite often absent for a few days, for administrative reasons. The day of the revolt was carefully chosen so that some of the Germans were away on leave and Lalka, whom we feared most as the most daring and dangerous of them all, was also absent.

Once outside of the camp, the mass of people broke apart into smaller groups, running off in different directions. There are about twelve of us running eastwards. We run for a long time, straining to the limits of our endurance. We cut across a village, railway tracks, fields, and swamps. Finally, exhausted and breathless, we find a ditch sheltered on both sides by thick shrubbery. We lie down and wait for dusk to fall. In the distance we hear single shots and the humming of car engines.

FOOTNOTES

1. KAPO - A prisoner placed in charge of a group of fellow prisoners.
2. RICKSHAW - In the Warsaw Ghetto rickshaws were used for transportation.
3. KRUMMER KOPF - Literally crooked head; the nickname of Unterscharfuhrer August Miete.
4. LALKA - Literally doll; the nickname of Untersturmfuhrer Kurt Hubert Franz, the Deputy Commandant of Treblinka.
5. UNTERSTURMFUHRER - S.S. rank approximately equivalent to a 2nd Lieutenant.
6. SHARFUHRER - S.S. rank approximately equivalent to a Staff Sergeant.
7. UNTERSCHARFUHRER - S.S. rank approximately equivalent to a Sergeant.
8. CAMP ELDER - The chief Jewish administrative official responsible for the Kapos and the other prisoners of Treblinka.
9. AKTION - A round-up of Jews for the purpose of "Resettlement".
10. OBERSCHARFUHRER - S.S. rank approximately equivalent to a Quartermaster-Sergeant.
11. HAUPTSHARFUHRER - S.S. rank approximately equivalent to a Sergeant-Major.
12. OBERSTURMFUHRER - S.S. rank approximately equivalent to a Lieutenant.

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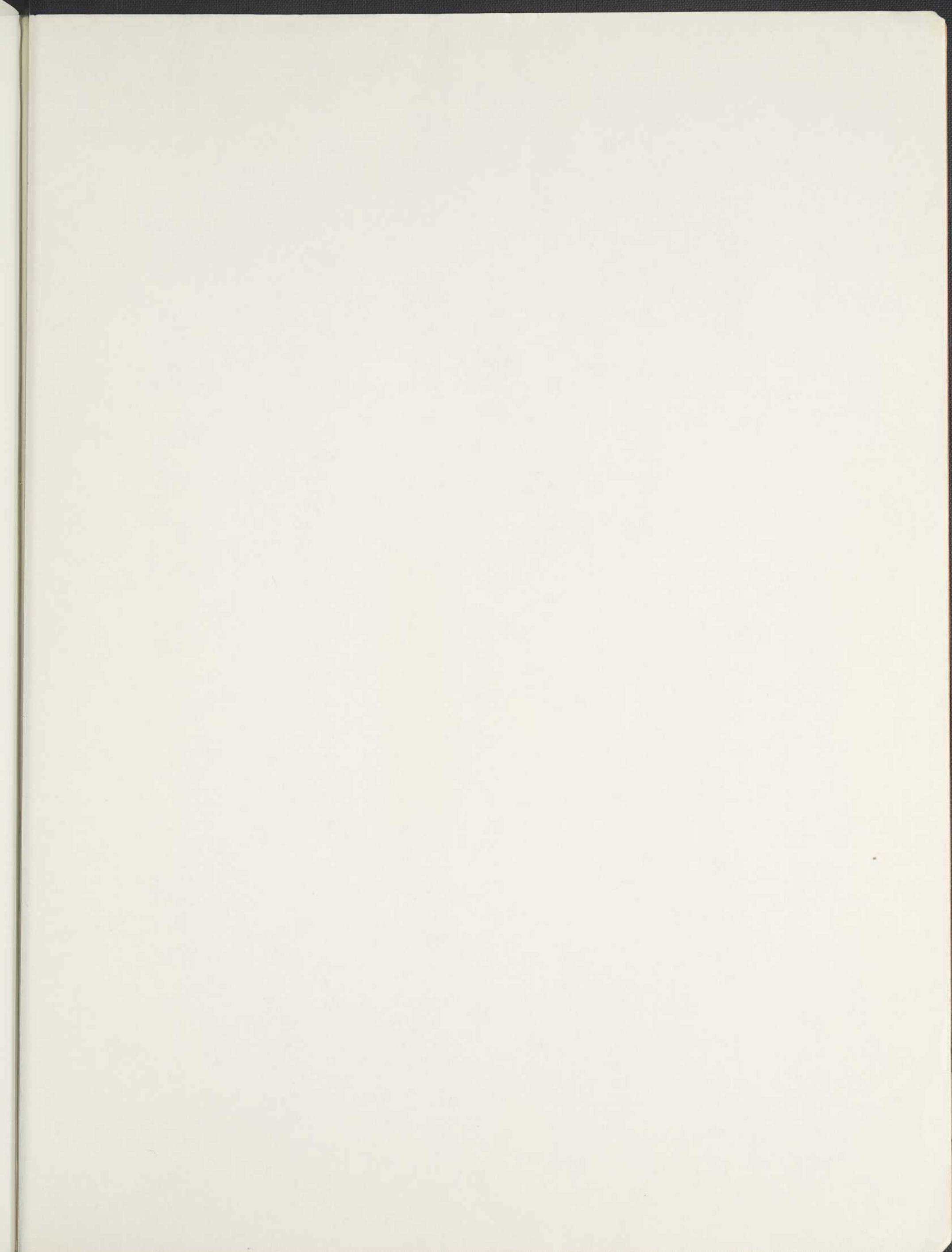
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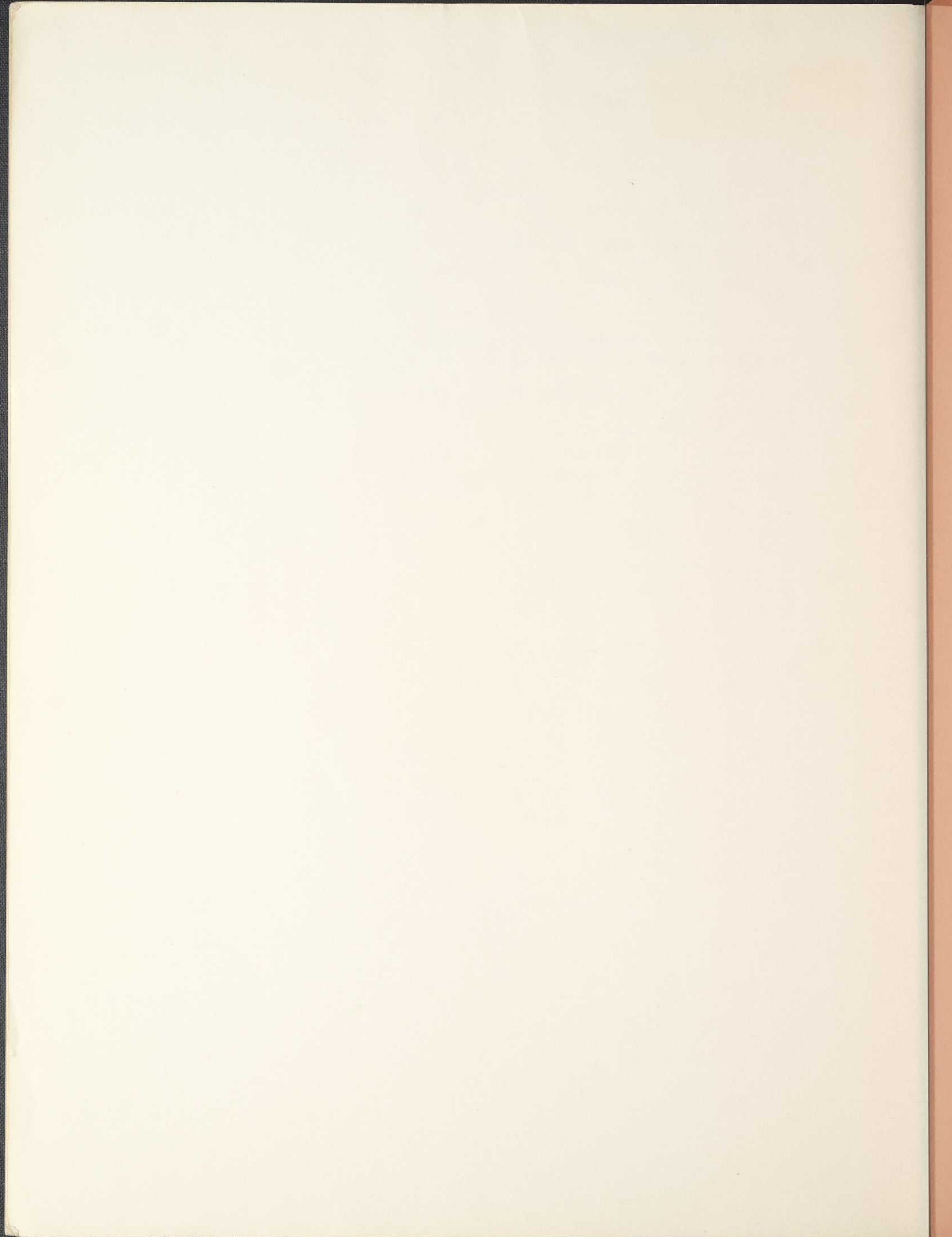
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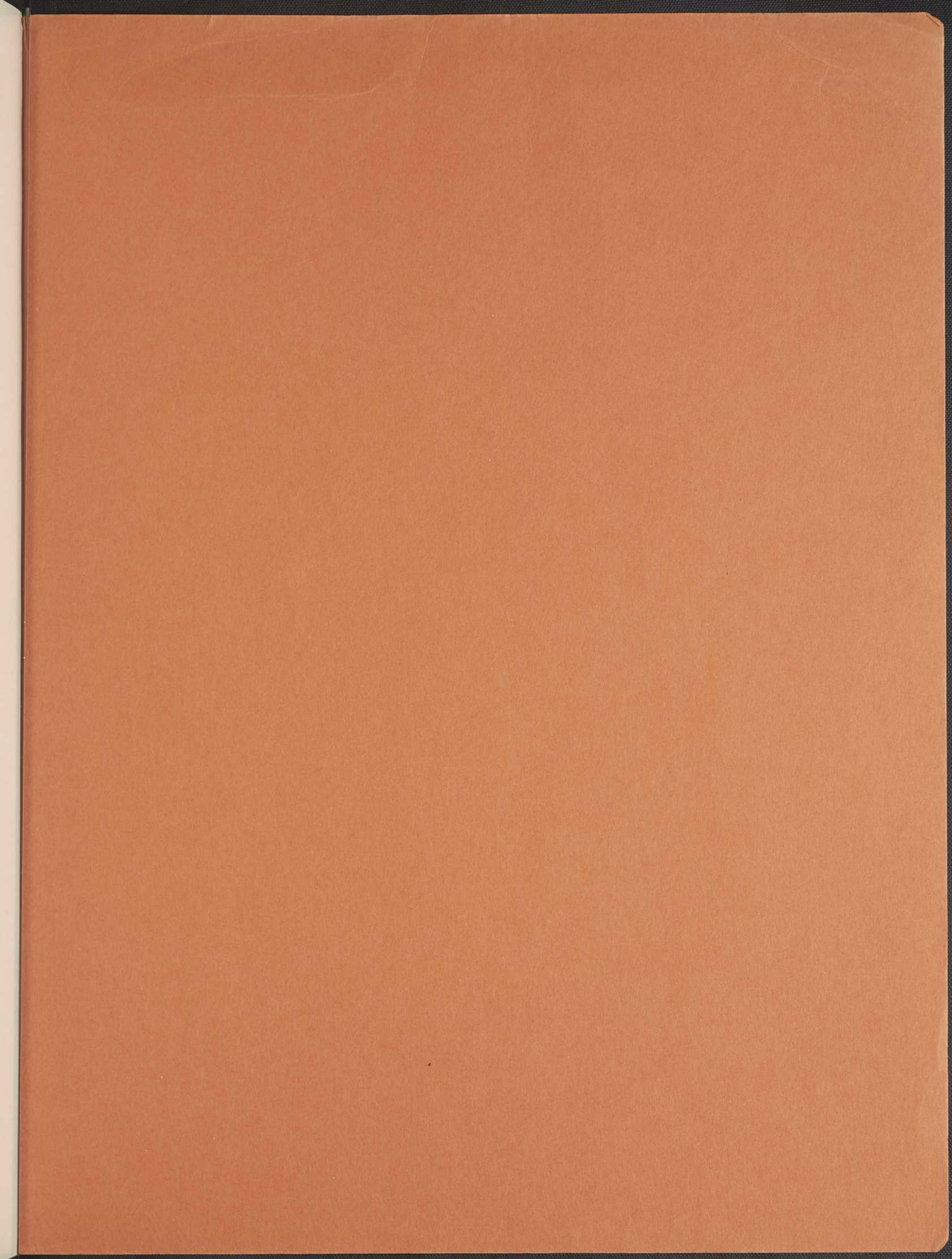
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