

As well as the various political parties there were many groups of bandits led by Petlura, Skoropadsky and Makhno. These parasites sided with whichever political party would bring the most benefit to them, time and time again changing their loyalty, but always consistent in one aspect of their activities: persecution of the Jews.

During the Christmas holidays of 1918, ROKHEL and GRIGORY Berchansky with their baby daughter KHAYA (CLARA) travelled from their home Genichesk in the Crimea to Kolonya Engels to visit ROKHEL's parents DINA and AVROM-HILLEL Namakshtansky. It was a happy occasion; the family were glad of the chance of spending some time pleasantly with each other in those hard times when occasions for relaxation were few and far between. This was particularly so, as the family was only just recovering from their grief at the loss of the eldest son KHAIM in 1917.

KHAIM had married his cousin KHAY-ROKHEL, the daughter of Rabbi ZALMEN Komisaruk of Vasilkovka. The couple settled in the village of Nikitovka. However they had not been married long when KHAIM contracted meningitis and died. At that time his sister ROKHEL was due to visit her parents. As she was pregnant at the time, her family were anxious to break the news of her brother's death to her gently. As her husband GRIGORY was serving in the army, her brother PINKHAS came to Genichesk to help her travel home to Engels. Their father AVROM-HILLEL met the train at the station in Konstantinovka and drove them back to the Kolonya. He kept the sad news from ROKHEL and joked with her as was his nature during the journey home. She asked after her brother KHAIM and her father replied that he had not heard from KHAIM for a while. That evening, being Friday night, whilst making Kiddush, AVROM-HILLEL began to weep. Astonished, ROKHEL asked him why and he replied: "From joy my child". Only after the conclusion of the Sabbath did he break the news to her of KHAIM's death. Later the eldest son SHMILIK performed the ceremony of Khalitza whereby he relinquished his rights to marry his brother's widow KHAY-ROKHEL should she chose to remarry. DINA was grief-stricken at her son's death and wrote to her brother Rabbi ZALMEN for consolation. His reply was that such was G-d's will.

Once again, on that December day in 1918, the Namakshtansky family⁽⁷⁴⁾ was gathered together. Little did anyone realise that this day which had started off so happily was to end in tragedy. Suddenly without warning, the peace of that holiday mood was shattered. All chaos broke loose as a band of wild horsemen swept down on the Jewish Kolonya: the Makhnovtzi on one of their numerous raids.

The terrible events of that day were recorded by a witness and reported in a history of the period: 'The Scroll of the Slaughter' by A.D. Rozenal, page 110:

'Trudoliubovka (a Jewish colony, district of Yekaterinoslav):

In the month of May (?) in the year 1919 there burst into the colony Trudoliubovka, a large camp of partisan peasants from the surroundings, about eight hundred armed men. They deployed in the streets, broke into the houses, dragged the Jews outside, clubbed them with the butts of the rifles and drove them to the "Assembly". In one barn they collected about one hundred and fifty people and demanded from them that they should hand over to them the weapons which they possessed. When the Jews handed over to them the small amount of weapons which they had, the partisans closed the barn and set it alight on all its sides. They set guards around the barn. Anyone who tried to escape via the roof, the guards slashed them with their sabres. Six Jews who made an attempt to flee were stabbed and the remainder were all burnt. And whilst one gang was engaged with the burnt ones, another gang was deployed on the houses and raped all the women and young girls who were in the colony. And the weeping and shrieking of the tortured ones mingled with the cries of the burnt ones, and a sharp choking odour of the flesh of the men roasting in the fire was carried in the air.' (75)

(74) This date, as recalled by ROKHEL, is in conflict with that recorded in the report published by Rozenal,

(75) A description of the pogrom by WILLIAM Komesaroff of Melbourne closely follows this report with certain omissions. He claimed that all males over the age of fifteen were collected in the

Word soon reached the Komisaruks in nearby Graftskoy that Kolonya Engels had been attacked. Quickly the men mounted their horses and rode over to see if they could be of any assistance. On arriving, a tragic sight greeted them. An atmosphere of grief hung over the Kolonya as weeping women and children told them how all the adult males had been killed. DINA Namakshtansky could barely compose herself to tell her brothers how her husband AVROM-HILLEL, sons SHMILLIK, PINKHAS and VELVEL, and son-in-law GRIGORY had been murdered. All that remained of her once large family were her younger sons ZALMEN and LEIBL, daughters YOKHVED and ROKHEL, and ROKHEL's baby daughter KHAYA (CLARA).

The remnants of the family were taken back to Graftskoy where they moved in with DINA's brother SIMKHA. There no effort was spared to care for them despite the cramped circumstances of SIMKHA's small house. Once again DINA wrote to her brother Rabbi ZALMEN to tell him the tragic news and once again he replied that such seemed to be G-d's will.

The family in Graftskoy had been fortunate in not being subjected to a similar massacre. It had been Makhno's intention to proceed to Graftskoy after finishing his work in Engels. However a messenger from the battle lines which were engaged with the White Army rode up and announced: "Whilst you've been busy killing Jews here, the Whites have been slaughtering us up ahead"(76). So Makhno quickly gathered his men and rode on to the front, passing through Graftskoy without stopping. It should be noted that certain historians of the Civil War attempted to whitewash Makhno by claiming he was not anti-semitic. This is totally untrue as any member of the Komisaruk family who lived through the Civil War would know. His headquarters in the village of Gulyai-Polye, just past Engels were a base for frequent raids on the Kolonyas. His very name struck terror in the hearts of the Jews. One member of the family actually met him face to face, although without being aware of it. Once KHAIM-VELVEL (WILLIAM) Komisaruk was buying certain produce in the market from a strange, very short man. As he left people told him the man was Makhno whose custom it was to appear incognito in various places to gather information.

The age old feelings of mistrust for the Jews were still deeply ingrained in the minds of the various groups struggling for power in the Civil War. As a result, whenever a Jewish settlement was captured by a particular group, they attacked the Jews for alleged collaboration with the group who had been in command of the village previously. And then another group would capture the village and also attack the Jews. And so it went on; the Jews being accused of treason by all sides. The Jews were driven from pillar to post without letup. ESTER and KHAIM-MOSHE Luban had been living in Melitopol. When the town was captured by one particular group they were ordered to leave and go to Mikhailovka. They led a life filled with sorrow because of the many years they had been separated from their only son ALTER. ESTER wrote the following letter to her nephew ZALMEN in Australia:

My dear and loving children:

I beg anyone into whose hands this letter falls, send me an answer. I do not know where to begin. To speak with you will help me. I hope that I will receive a letter from you. I will write about everything. We were in Melitopol; now we are in Mikhailovka. We were chased out and had to go wherever they told us. I am opening my heart to you with the help of this letter.

With G-d's help and a lot of hard wishing we will get to Harbin and to our only child. He is in America, in Seattle. But G-d will bring us to Harbin. We will soon know all, whatever happens.

My dear ones, I would like to know your address and how you all are living. It can be that maybe you know something more about our close relatives.

(75) continued:

barn and killed. The identity of the group as being Makhnovtzi has also been omitted by Rozental, a fact clearly known to the survivors.

(76) WILLIAM Komesaroff of Melbourne.

I beg you to understand by sorrow.
 Keep well my nephew ZALMEN Komisaruk. I will await your letter.
 This will be my address, write to me quickly there.
 With lots of luck,

ESTER Luban

Harbin Landing
 Yanskaya No.12 Ya.G.Baranov, for Luban '

(The above letter is a translation from Yiddish and Russian)

A furthur insight into the conditions of the times can be gained from a description of of her childhood written by KHAYALA, KHANA-REIZEL Komisaruk's youngest sister who had been left in Russia:

'12/3/1917 in my land was a revolution. The Tsar was disposed of. We walked with flags and cried: 'Hoorah'. It was a very happy day. Furthur the hardship started which affected not only me but the whole land and all the people. On our fatherland from abroad all the capitalists came to help the White Guard. Our village was on the road to the Crimea. The armies went through the village. I went in the morning to the school. The village is quiet. I sit through the classes and I hear rifle shots. We run home but there are bullets flying in all directions. One morning there came the Whites to the village, the next morning the Reds. We lived through a lot of hardship. In the cities the schools had closed but in our village school went on. The crop was bad. The people were starving. It was very cold. No clothes. Father was very sick, especially after one of the Cossacks, a White Guard came to our apartment at night and started to search for some secret papers. I jumped out of the window and mother after me. We ran to a German family we knew to ask for protection. Another Cossack called his officer and said that my father is a spy, that he feeds information to the Reds and that way they are losing their battles. The Cossack put father against a tree and shot at him but missed. We heard the shot and started to cry. We and our acquaintences started to run and cry and that saved father. But father got very bad. After that, hunger and sickness, and in April 1922 he died. He was 56 years old. There was only the two of us left. I left school, couldn't study any more, started to look for work, did anything whatever I could find, peeled potatoes, wound cotton, kept on selling things which were left after father, just to survive those horrid times, not to die. After that was organised in the village an organisation to help the starving. Uncle from New York sent a parcel. Everybody started to live a bit better. Parents started to think that it is time to teach the children. I gave private tuition for which I was paid. We started to live better and at the end of 1923 I received from Roza the first letter' (77)

During the early stages of the Revolution, one of MENAKHEM-MENDEL's children had a first hand experience of the barbarism which had been unleashed. With the breakdown of all law and order, everyone was free to act as they chose. As a result, many people took the opportunity of 'getting even with' people whom they bore a grudge against. One afternoon, MENAKHEM-MENDEL's youngest son KHAIM-VELVEL (WILLIAM) was in the Shule in Graftskoy during afternoon prayers. As is often the case with young boys, he found his attention wandering. He looked out the window and longed to be able to go outside and enjoy the sunshine. Suddenly he caught sight of a carriage approaching the Kolonya. He could see it travelling along the road outside the plantation. Quickly he finished his prayers and ran outside to investigate. He stood on the side of the road and watched the carriage approach. When it drew

(77) Translated from a letter written in Russian in 1976. In referring to 'father' or 'mother' KHAYALAH means her adoptive parents KHASA and ARON Abramovitch, see page 41.

abreast of him it stopped and a man got out and approached him. He asked KHAIM-VELVEL how to get to Marenfeld. KHAIM-VELVEL gave him the directions but the man could not understand him. "Get in," he said in a commanding tone. KHAIM-VELVEL became frightened and tried to run away. But the man caught him, pulled out a 'Sashka' (sabre) and forced him into the coach. Keeping the blade against his side, the man forced KHAIM-VELVEL to direct the coach to Marenfeld.

On arriving in Marenfeld the coach stopped outside a large house and a few of the men went inside. Shortly afterwards they returned dragging a man between them. The coach started off again, then stopped near a large tree. Everyone got out including KHAIM-VELVEL who was still being guarded by the man with the Sashka. The man they had abducted was tied to the tree and KHAIM-VELVEL was forced to watch as his captor raised the Sashka and slashed the man to pieces. Apparently the man, who was a German, had once been the employer of the men, and their action was revenge for illtreatment at his hands.

After completing their work the men turned to KHAIM-VELVEL and said: "Wait here until we have gone, and if you tell anyone who did this, we will come back and do the same thing to you." Then they rode off. KHAIM-VELVEL ran home terrified to tell his parents of the experience which was to remain forever ingrained on his memory.

Added to the horrors of the Civil War was the First World War. After the initial outbreak of war, the German army had progressed rapidly across southern Russia. This region was particularly valuable because of its resources of coal and wheat. In the region of the Kolonyas, little fighting took place; the main concern of the Germans being to collect as much grain as they could. One of the few incidents which occurred was on Yom Kippur in Graftskoy. This particular year MENAKHEM-MENDEL was sick and unable to go to Shule. So his sons PINKHAS and VELVEL were there without him. During the course of the service, the congregation were shocked to discover that a German soldier had entered. The man walked over to KHAIM-VELVEL and stood next to him. Although terrified at first, KHAIM-VELVEL's fears were soon allayed as the soldier, who was Jewish, commenced praying. Other than this incident there was little contact with the Germans. Eventually, when the Red Army advanced into German held territory, the Germans beat a hasty retreat.

Aside from those who were killed in pogroms, the poor living conditions claimed the lives of many members of the family. On the 9th of Av, 1919, SIMKHA Komisaruk died in Graftskoy, prey to disease rampant at the time. Soon afterwards, consumption claimed the life of his daughter BELLA. Thus his widow KHAIVA-ROKHA was left with her son PINKHAS and daughter KHAYA-GITTEL together with the remnants of the Namakshantsky family who lived with them.

Likewise, Rabbi ZALMEN Komisaruk fell victim to an outbreak of cholera in the town of Vasilkovka. Conditions in that town were so disorganised that his widow MINDL was unable to arrange that he be given a proper Jewish funeral. So the late rabbi of the town was cast into a mass grave together with other victims of the plague. MINDL remained in Vasilkovka with her family of whom MOTTEL, MEIR-YITSKHOK-ELKHONON and ITKA were married. Contact with this branch of the family was lost after the Civil War and it appears that those who survived perished at the hands of the Nazis during the Second World War. *X Survives see MEMOIRS MORDEKAI Komisaruk*

In 1919, MENAKHEM-MENDEL became ill. At first he became hoarse and found it hard to talk properly. Then he began to have trouble eating. His son BENYOMIN, who worked as a cap-maker in Yuzovka, would bring him delicacies when he came to the Kolonya for a visit, but MENAKHEM-MENDEL could not eat them. Gradually his condition worsened; he became physically weak and was unable to continue with the farmwork. Finally he was unable to rise from his bed. On the 24th of Av, 1919, MENAKHEM-MENDEL passed away, two weeks after his brother SIMKHA. Although his family were not aware of the nature of his illness at the time, the symptoms seem to point to cancer of the throat.

MENAKHEM-MENDEL had led a hard life. From the time that he was a young man he had had to arise early each morning and work his fingers to the bone until sunset, trying to make a living out of his small farm. He had barely been able to support his large family. But he was an optimist. Where other men would have given up the struggle, MENAKHEM-MENDEL always hoped for a brighter future. He used to say: "What the time brings, the mind cannot imagine." (78) Although a busy man, he never lacked the time to study and attend to his religious duties. Probably due to his hardships he was inclined to be short-tempered. But despite this he was loved and respected by all his family. All his life he had been spurred on by the knowledge that his land would provide for the future security of his children. Therefore it was perhaps one consolation that he never lived to see the destruction of everything he had built up.

Shortly after her father's death, MENAKHEM-MENDEL's daughter YOKHVED married ESAK Sherr. The Sherr family lived in Grafskoy directly across the road from MENAKHEM-MENDEL. ESAK was a soldier in an Ulaný regiment which saw action against the Germans. It was whilst he was serving with his regiment that ESAK first saw evidence of the corruption which precipitated the Revolution. The soldiers, badly in need of equipment, would receive a consignment of rifles and ammunition. These rifles would fire about two shots before exploding in the face of their user. With such ill-made weapons, the Russian soldier was supposed to hold off the German army. ESAK found out that well-made rifles were being sold to the Germans by the Russian officers for great profits. When the hostilities between the Russians and the Germans ceased, the army disintegrated and ESAK took the opportunity of returning to live with his wife in Grafskoy. There the shocking news awaited him that his father had been murdered during a pogrom.

After MENAKHEM-MENDEL's death, life became even worse for his family. BEILA-REEVA was left with the responsibility of looking after the unmarried members of her family. They depended a great deal on the married ones to contribute to the family's upkeep. ZALMEN and YAAKOV-LEIB were sending money from Australia but this took a long time to get through the disrupted mail. Then this too ceased to arrive for about three years and the Komisaruks had no contact with their relatives overseas. In desperation, BEILA-REEVA's younger sons PINKHAS and KHAIM-VELVEL took it upon themselves to support their mother and sisters. Although aged only fourteen and eleven respectively on their father's death, they took over the farmwork. PINKHAS was not very well and could not manage strenuous work, thus leaving most of the laborious jobs to KHAIM-VELVEL. Between them they made sure that the routine work of the farm was continued as far as possible. They tended the animals, planted the crops, and brought in the harvest. Their first problem arose when the ploughing had to be done. Although PINKHAS was the bigger of the two, he could not manage the heavy plough. The job was left to KHAIM-VELVEL. But he was short and could not reach the handles of the plough properly. He had inherited the ingenuity and skill with his hands that his father had been known for and so he devised a platform which he rested across the handles of the plough from which he could steer the horse. Time and time again he fell off the platform as the horse jolted, but undaunted he would pick himself up again and continue ploughing. Little did he realise at the time that had he fallen forwards instead of backwards, he would have fallen under the sharp blade of the plough and been cut to pieces. PINKHAS and KHAIM-VELVEL persevered, knowing that the lives of their mother and sisters depended on every coppeck they could earn from their produce.

The same situation confronted SIMKHA's family. Since his father's death, PINKHAS had to support his mother and sister with the help of the Namakshtansky family who were living with them.

To add to these difficulties, the Kolonyas were constant prey to the many bandits operating in the area. Grafskoy was raided a number of times and luckily the family were able to escape just in time. However, on one occasion MENAKHEM-MENDEL's daughters YOKHVED

(78) WILLIAM Komesaroff of Melbourne.

and BASSIE did not manage to get out of the Kolonya with the rest of the family before the bandits arrived. Terrified of their fate if they were caught, the two women looked for a hiding place. But the house was only small and provided few hiding places. At their wit's end they suddenly had an idea. Their late father's pickle barrel which was in the cellar would provide an excellent hiding place. Quickly they climbed into it and pulled the lid over them. Fortunately the barrel was empty at the time. The bandits raided the Kolonya, looting and smashing furniture. They took whatever was of the slightest value. Miraculously they omitted to look into the pickle barrel. When they had collected as much loot as they could find, they rode out of the Kolonya. The Komisaruks returned expecting to find the worst since they knew YOKHVED and BASSIE had not escaped. But to their relief the two were discovered unharmed in the pickle barrel.

Another source of danger was the Mongols. These wild horsemen had penetrated into European Russia and were harassing the inhabitants of the small towns. Unaccustomed to the conveniences of modern life, they were fascinated by the simplest of household devices. On raiding the Kolonyas they demanded to be given watches. They had never examined a watch closely and so the women were able to fool them by giving them small perfume containers which were shaped like watches.

As the stores of grain were depleted, famine set in and sickness soon followed. In KHAIM-VELVEL's case his face swelled and his eyes bulged from their sockets. As his condition worsened, the Feldsher had to be called. He took a knife and cut the skin at the level of the eyebrows to relieve the swelling.

Eventually, because of the difficulty of farming and the constant bandit raids, most of the Komisaruks in Graftskoy and most of the Jews on the Kolonyas were forced to leave their homes and settle in the cities. MENAKHEM-MENDEL's and SIMKHA's families, together with DINA Namakshantsky and her family, as well as their cousin BEREL Komisaruk and his sisters, packed their belongings, closed up their houses, and set off for the town of Yuzovka. Other relatives settled elsewhere, such as SHLOMO-REUVEN Komisaruk who settled in Mariupol. Thus came to an end eighty years of the Komisaruks' residence in Graftskoy.

On arriving in Yuzovka the Komisaruks found shelter together in the same building. There they were joined by REIZEL and KOPPEL Kogan who had come from Kolonya Bachers. Their daughter BASSIE had married BENYOMIN (MENAKHEM-MENDEL's son). But conditions in Yuzovka were not much better than they were on the Kolonyas. By early 1920 the famine had set in in southern Russia; the crops had failed and the country was suffering from a severe winter. Food was very scarce and people existed on a subsistence diet. As a result BEILA-REEVA became very ill and began to visibly wither away. BENYOMIN's wife BASSIE was pregnant at the time and the attention which in normal circumstances would have been given to an expectant mother, was simply not available.

The Komisaruks had brought their cow from the Kolonya and for a while it provided them with milk. However they barely had enough food for themselves let alone for the cow, so they decided to sell it. BEILA-REEVA, her daughter BASSIE and YOKHVED, and KHAIM-VELVEL took the cow to the Yuzovka market. All day long they stood offering the cow to passers-by, but nobody had and money to pay for it nor anything worthwhile to exchange for it. As night fell they gave up and returned home. KHAIM-VELVEL was leading the cow and on the way home a man approached him and offered a few coppecks for the animal. KHAIM-VELVEL had no choice; he had to accept this pittance and part with the animal which had once been one of his father's prized possessions.

As time went it became increasingly difficult for the large family to support themselves. BENYOMIN did the best he could but there was little demand for the caps he made. People were scared to carry money at all for if the Bolsheviks caught anyone with White money they would accuse the bearer of holding sympathies with the Whites. On the other hand if the town was captured by the Whites they would terrorise anyone found with Bolshevik money. To avoid this predicament people had to trade in kind. The Komisaruks tried to

support themselves by doing any jobs that came to hand. They made cigarettes and sold them. Likewise picture frames, small ovens and odds and ends. As KHAVA-ROKHA had been the hairdresser on the Kolonya, she taught this trade to ZALMEN and LEIBL Namakshtansky. In the case of BEILA-REEVA's family, the only adult males were BENYOMIN and ESAK, such that much of the burden had to be born by the younger children.

Eventually the situation became so intolerable that there was only one course left open in order to save their lives. This was to return to the Kolonias in the hope of finding food. BENYOMIN, ESAK, PINKHAS (SIMKHA's son) and a Jewish neighbour gathered together as many of their possessions which they could do without, loaded them onto a cart, and set off for the Kolonias to trade them for food.

They had travelled only a short distance when ESAK developed a toothache. By the time they reached Grafskoy the pain had become so intense that ESAK decided to remain there with his mother whilst the others continued on. It was Friday afternoon on the 25th of Adar as the trio arrived in a particular Kolonya. As Shabbat was about to commence they had to put off their trading until Sunday. The rabbi, who had known MENAKHEM-MENDEL, invited BENYOMIN to stay with him, but BENYOMIN declined the offer as he did not want to leave the others. So they found lodgings at a local inn.

Shortly after they had settled down for the night there was a loud knocking at the door. BENYOMIN got up and opened it. Outside there was a group of uniformed men who informed BENYOMIN and his companions that they were wanted at 'headquarters'. They did not say which headquarters but they appeared to be such ruffians that BENYOMIN decided not to offer any resistance. After dressing they were taken outside to where a cart awaited them. They were driven off, out of the Kolonya, along a rarely used road. After travelling for quite some time, the cart turned off the main road and headed for a ramshackle house which appeared deserted. The cart pulled up outside the house and one of the men got out and knocked on the door. A man opened the door and a lengthy discussion ensued. By this time BENYOMIN and his companions were feeling quite uneasy about the strange circumstances of their abduction. However there was nothing they could do about it as the men were heavily armed. The discussion ended and the cart drove on. It was taken around the house and down into a deep gully. The intentions of their escort soon became apparent as the three captives were roughly ordered to remove their fur coats, shoes and other valuables. The three of them were lined up with their backs to their escorts, a volley of shots rang out, and the three fell to the ground.

Back in Yuzovka the Komisaruks, and ESAK who had meanwhile returned, anxiously awaited the return of BENYOMIN and PINKHAS. Days passed and they were long overdue. Then one day there was a knock at the door. Outside were some peasants bearing in their arms a bloodstained and horribly mutilated man. On closer investigation the man was discovered to be PINKHAS. He was in a shocking condition. For days he lay, barely alive. When he regained consciousness he was unable to speak. Not knowing what had become of BENYOMIN, the family did everything they could to induce him to speak. But for a long time their efforts were in vain. Gradually PINKHAS' condition improved and by signs and the few words he managed to speak, the whole ghastly story was pieced together.

After the three men were shot, the bandits wasted no time in getting away with their loot. They assumed that the three were dead and didn't bother to check. But they were mistaken. PINKHAS was not dead. Each of the men had been shot through the back of the neck, but in PINKHAS' case the bullet had passed right through without killing him. He had, however, been terribly mutilated as the bullet passed through, tearing away part of his tongue and the lower part of his jaw, thus accounting for the fact that he had difficulty in speaking. For a long while he had remained unconscious; how long, whether it was hours or days, he did not know. When he regained his consciousness he found that he could hardly move because of frostbite. Gradually he dragged himself towards the mute bodies of BENYOMIN and his neighbour. He felt them and found that they were both dead. As his strength returned to him gradually, he managed to crawl to

the main road. Here he again lay for an indeterminable period until some passing peasants found him. Somehow they managed to find out that his family lived in Yuzovka and there they took him.

The family's immediate concern was for BENYOMIN's body. They could not leave it lying out there in the gully. But since it may have been dangerous to return to the scene of the murder, the family found it difficult to arrange for a funeral. Everyone whom they approached with the intention of collecting a group of men to go and reclaim the body, was too frightened to join them. So BENYOMIN's body was to remain where he had fallen, without the benefit of a Jewish burial. Several years later, once the family had left Russia and after the Civil War had ended, a letter together with money was sent to a rabbi in the region with the request that he attempt to locate the remains. But it is doubtful if he succeeded.

The grief of the family was inconsolable. They had been able to survive privation and hunger, but the sudden and brutal death of BENYOMIN plunged them into despair. Everyone who had known BENYOMIN had liked him. When the news of his death eventually reached the relatives in Australia they were particularly grieved at this loss. KHANA-REIZEL recalled the many happy occasions when BENYOMIN had spent a few days with his brother ZALMEN's family in Berdyansk. She had been particularly fond of her brother-in-law whom she remembered as a particularly handsome man, always immaculately dressed and ever amiable.

Shortly after BENYOMIN's death, his wife BASSIE gave birth to the baby he was never to see, a daughter. However due to the lack of medical conditions, the baby was soon to die.

In 1921 yet another member of the family was claimed by the rigours of the times. Since the tragic deaths of most of her family in the pogrom in Engels, DINA Namakshtansky had been subject to inconsolable grief. In addition the constant tensions, lack of food and disease gradually weakened her health. At last she could bear no more and passed away, once more leaving her orphaned children.

Early in 1921, unexpectedly there was a glimmer of hope. A messenger came to BEILA-REEVA telling her that if she went to the railway station she could collect a letter from her son who was in London. The family were excited by this news as well as mystified as to who was in London. Since the station was not in the city but about three miles outside it near the coal mines, the family were frightened to go there. For all they knew the entire story may have been fabricated and they might have been ambushed and killed on the way to the station. In the end they decided to take a chance and YOKHVED and BASSIE went to the station and picked up the letter. On reading it they discovered that it was YAAKOV-LEIB who was in London. However they were disappointed when he made no mention of any attempt to get them out of Russia. They made enquiries from an official on the train, which was controlled by the Red Cross, but he could tell them very little. Since the Red Cross was a neutral organisation he was not at liberty to assist them in escaping from Russia. All he was able to do was to hint that there was the possibility of escape. "If you can manage to get to Moscow you will hear more from your brother there".

By 1921 YAAKOV-LEIB had managed to save enough money to enable him to attempt to rejoin his family in Russia and to see if he could bring them to Australia. Through an immigration official in Sydney he had managed to arrange visas for his wife BASSIE and son NEYKE (NORMAN). Although he had originally intended only bringing his wife and son out of Russia, he was persuaded by ZALMEN to bring his mother and the rest of the brothers and sisters. YAAKOV-LEIB left his shop in Ballarat in ZALMEN's hands and set sail for Europe. Meanwhile ZALMEN obtained entry visas from the Australian authorities and set about making the necessary arrangements to receive the family.

On arriving in London, YAAKOV-LEIB made enquiries about getting into Russia and contacting his family. However, he was informed that this was impossible. The only way he could get them out was for them to travel to Moscow. Once there, they would have to wait until transport could be arranged to take them to Riga in Latvia where YAAKOV-LEIB could meet them and take them to London.

In Yuzovka the family did not know what to do for the best. The letter from YAAKOV-LEIB was so vague that they were hesitant about taking such drastic action as travelling all the way to Moscow on the off-chance that something might eventuate there. They knew that the journey was a long and hazardous one which could take its toll on the lives of the sick and young members of the family. After much deliberation they decided that to remain in Yuzovka would mean almost certain death by starvation, so, having nothing to lose, they would make the journey to Moscow.

The journey had to be delayed briefly since YOKHVED was pregnant. In May 1921 she gave birth to a son, MENDEL-BENYOMIN. As soon as she was fit to travel the family packed their few remaining belongings and set off for Moscow. With the easing of the Civil War, hundreds of thousands of refugees were taking the opportunity to flee from Russia. Because of this, transport was difficult to obtain. There were no regular railway services and as the number of refugees increased, the trains could no longer cope with them. Therefore they did not stop at places where they knew refugees were waiting. In some places, when the train was known to be approaching, thousands of refugees would lie across the tracks to force the train to stop. One day, one of the younger members of the family overheard two officials discussing a plan whereby the trains were to stop a few miles before the station to refuel. Quickly he informed the rest of the family and they were able to board the train secretly at the refuelling point.

Because of the size of the family they were not always able to travel together. There were ten of them: BEILA-REEVA, BASSIE and NEYKA (YAAKOV-LEIB's wife and son), YOKHVED and ESAK Sherr with their infant son MENDEL-BENYOMIN, BASSIE, ZLATR, PINKHAS and KHAIM-VELVEL. BENYOMIN's widow BASSIE had decided to remain in Yuzovka with her parents, REIZEL and KOPPEL Kogan. On occasions there was room for only two or three on the train. If they waited until there was room for all of them, too much time would be wasted and they might miss the chance of getting passage on a ship. So it was decided that advantage would be taken of any place available, even if it meant leaving somebody behind. There were times when the family was dispersed over many miles. The anxiety was very high, not knowing whether somebody would be left behind permanently, unable to catch up with the rest.

One such incident occurred as the train bearing the family was approaching Kharkov. They were split into three groups. One group consisted of BEILA-REEVA and her grandson NEYKA. A few wagons down the train was another group, and still further the remainder. As usual the train did not stop in the city but passed straight through and came to a halt a mile or so further on. There BEILA-REEVA decided to disembark. She and NEYKA jumped down, but to her horror the train started to move off before the others realised she was no longer aboard.

It travelled on for a short distance and stopped again. This time the others decided to check on their mother and were horrified to find her missing. They were in a quandary as to the best course open to them. They were frantic with worry about BEILA-REEVA who was sick and NEYKA who was after all a mere eight year old. So they loaded their belongings on their backs, no easy task as included were their bedding ('Perenes') as well as a Samovar, and headed back along the railway line by foot. It took them most of the night before they saw the lights of the city ahead. As they got closer they saw a figure sitting huddled against a pile of clothes. It was BEILA-REEVA. As for NEYKA, far from being frightened he was busying himself looking after his grandmother. He had made sure that she was settled down comfortably and then went off to find her a warm drink. As they arrived he was boiling water over a small fire he had made, full of importance at the responsibility thrust upon him. The family settled down on the station. There they spent about six days until another train arrived to take them on their journey.

Conditions for those travelling on the trains were appalling. Most of the carriages were no more than cattle trucks which provided no protection from the cold and the rain. The only attempt made to

improve conditions was the provision of fires on some trains as well as large buckets of disinfectant. Because of the unsettled political situation it was dangerous to travel by day. Thus the trains had to try and sneak through by night. This meant that it was difficult for the refugees to sleep. Often they had to spend the night sleeping on the station.

On one occasion, calamity struck the family: NEYKA contracted measles. He was placed by the authorities in a quarantine tent. It was rumoured amongst the refugees that anyone who was put in this tent was never seen again. So one night KHAIM-VELVEL took matters into his own hands. He crept up to the quarantine tent, crawled under the side, found NEYKA and dragged him out to safety.

Throughout the journey they were in constant danger from marauding bandits. Since ESAK was the only adult male he had to protect the other members of the family. In order to do so more effectively he grew an immense beard to make himself look tough and so make would-be assailants wary of attacking.

In all, the journey from Yuzovka to Moscow took over four months. On arriving in Moscow the family went immediately to the British Trade Mission (whom they had been told to contact) to see if a letter from YAAKOV-LEIB awaited them. But there was no word from him. They had no choice other than to settle down in Moscow and wait for a letter. Every day two of them went to the Trade Mission and sat outside all day in case a letter arrived. They were fed since YAAKOV-LEIB had deposited money in London for this purpose.

When YAAKOV-LEIB heard through the Trade Mission that the family had arrived, he left London and went to Berlin. There he had to remain for a time before proceeding to Riga.

After the family had been in Moscow about two months, there was a knock at the door one night. It was a messenger from the Trade Mission informing them that he had arranged places on a train to Riga. Quickly they packed their belongings and were taken to the station. The train travelled all night across northern Russia. In the morning they found themselves in Riga, freedom at last.

When YAAKOV-LEIB first saw his family he was horrified. He could hardly recognise them. Years of near starvation and the uncertainty and terror of the Civil War had left them looking like scarecrows. His mother whom he remembered as a tall, well-built woman, was now thin and haggard, as were the rest of the family. They were in such a state that if they had arrived a few weeks later, they would probably have died of exhaustion and exposure. After a joyful reunion with his wife and son whom he had not seen for seven years, YAAKOV-LEIB made plans for the rest of the journey.

The first thing he did was to collect all their bundles of Perenes (bedding) and burn them. The family were shocked at this since they had dragged them right across Russia only to be burned at the journey's end. But YAAKOV-LEIB knew that they were of no value and were lice-infested. He had bought a suit of clothing for each member of the family however he had not realised how short KHAIM-VELVEL was and had some difficulty in finding clothes to fit him. Anxious not to delay longer than necessary, YAAKOV-LEIB took his brother to the market where he had a suit made for him overnight.

Having acquired Polish visas, the family boarded a train leaving Riga for the West. Once again a long journey ensued, across Lithuania and northern Poland, then into Germany, arriving at Berlin. They spent another month in Berlin, during which they celebrated the festival of Chanukah. This delay was again due to the difficulties of arranging transport.

At some stage during the journey KHAIM-VELVEL reached the age of Barmitzvah, but due to the difficulties under which they were travelling, it was not possible to arrange a proper Barmitzvah.

Eventually transport was arranged to London. The family set off again, across Germany and Belgium to Ostend. There they boarded a ship which took them to London. A month was spent in London before they boarded a ship on the 1st of January, 1922, which was to take them on the last leg of their journey to freedom.

In March 1922, the family arrived in Adelaide, Australia, thus ending their terrible journey which had taken about eleven months. The ship was met at Adelaide by ZALMEN. After a joyful reunion, they travelled by train to Melbourne.

On arriving in Melbourne ZALMEN took the family to his home where all the family were gathered, eagerly waiting to see the family from whom they had been separated for so long. When ZALMEN's children saw their grandmother, they were so frightened by her haggard appearance that they ran away and hid behind a couch.

Soon after the family's arrival, the news spread throughout Melbourne that the first family to come to Australia from Russia after the Revolution had arrived. Newspaper reporters interviewed the family and a photo was printed in the major evening paper, the 'Herald'. The family had little chance to settle down as they were besieged by Russians living in Melbourne anxious for news of their families left in Russia. Gradually the excitement died down and the family were able to settle into the house ZALMEN had provided for them in Hawthorn, a suburb of Melbourne.