

*Akkerman  
Benevolent  
Association*

*Golden Anniversary*

*1905-1955*

AKKERMAN  
BENEVOLENT  
ASSOCIATION

1905-1955

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

JANUARY 22, 1955

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Produced and Edited by  
JUDAH B. HELLMAN

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### WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE OUR THANKS TO:

MIRRA KOMAROVSKY HEYMAN for permission to print "The Pogroms in Akkerman," written by Mendel Komarovsky shortly before his death.

RABBI S. GERSHON LEVI of the Jamaica Jewish Center, for the translation of the Komarovsky story.

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PHILIP E. KATZ, Executive Director of the Long Island Zionist Region, for the translation of the Schildkraut Chapter on Akkerman.



## Introduction

By JUDAH B. HELLMAN

**C**ELEBRATION of the Golden Anniversary of the Akkerman Association is an historical event in the life of the Jews in America, taking justifiable pride in its contribution to the three hundred years of Jewish Life in America.

The Akkerman Association was formed half a century ago by a small group of individuals primarily for the purpose of rallying all Akkerman immigrants living in New York and providing them with a medium of social contact and mutual benefit. It was evident from the early period of its existence that local interests alone were not sufficient to sustain the active interest of the membership.

Hence, this glorious record of accomplishments in the field of Relief for our brethren in Akkerman, beginning with the relief for the victims of the 1905 pogrom, the years of famine, the war sufferers in 1914 and followed with the timely aid to the Jewish Co-operative Bank. This constructive aid contributed materially to its financial soundness and helped it to function so as to be of great benefit to the community.

Our effort on behalf of the New Jewish Hospital in Akkerman and its successful completion resulted in raising about \$50,000. After the Hitler holocaust and the return of the remnants to Akkerman, it was necessary to raise funds for food packages and clothing amounting to \$10,000.

As soon as we learned that close to 400 families from Akkerman had settled in Israel, we helped, together with the Bessarabian Federation, to build houses to shelter them.

And, finally, the formation of the Akkerman Association in Israel and the establishment of the Mendel Komarovsky Free Loan Fund, which is our principal project at this time, climaxed the record of achievement and fully justified the reason for our existence.

\* \* \*

In the course of the fifty years of the life of our Association the history of the Jews has been written in blood, beginning with the pogrom in Kishineff at the start of the century and followed by the pogroms of 1905, World War I, the Revolution in Russia, World War II and the Hitler-Roumanian Fascist onslaught resulting in the murder of six millions of our people.

During the same period of fifty years we have witnessed the resurgence of Jewish consciousness and the realization of the great dream of Theodore Herzl and the return of our people to their ancient homeland, where they can live as a free, independent and democratic people, equal with all other free democratic peoples in the world, free from persecution as Jews.

The Akkerman Association is proud of its share in the work and struggle of the Zionist movement in America and in the world. Many of our founders have been the pioneers in the movement and were steeped in the spirit of Herzl and Nordau from its very inception and have continued their active participation in the Zionist movement in America, playing an important role in its leadership.

We are proud of our contributions to and participation in every important fraternal, social and welfare Jewish Organization in America in their effort to preserve America's sacred institutions of freedom and equality.

\* \* \*

We are thankful to our friend Mr. Israel Schildkraut, who with his colleague, the late Shalom Tsalering, is responsible for organizing the Akkerman Association in Israel, for permitting us to reprint in this Golden Anniversary Volume one of the Chapters on Akkerman from his recently published book in Tel-Aviv, "The Destruction of Bessarabia."

We have selected this particular Chapter from his book because it tells the story of the destruction of Akkerman and its Jewry, a respected

Jewish community some five hundred years old, of thousands of Jewish families consigned to oblivion.

Mr. Schildkraut writes in his recent letter to us:

"... I must tell you... that particularly this Chapter I wrote with blood and pain. Here I describe facts, the bitter and tragic facts, of the great misfortune and of the life of the few remaining remnants of Akkerman Jewry who returned after the war, facts which I personally observed and learned...."

Unfortunately, there is a strong tendency on the part of the world, and among our Jewish people, to forget this horrifying phase of history. Recent world events bring us again to the point of repeating the mistakes of yesteryear, by again rearming Germany, who twice in our generation was responsible for nearly destroying our civilization.

The newspapers are full of accounts of the revival of Nazism in Germany. The Adenauer administration is full of men who only yesterday represented the Nazi regime — men who have no use for democracy and are only awaiting the day when they can again resume where they left off when Nazi Germany was defeated. Jewish cemeteries are still being desecrated and at the meetings of the militaristic associations the barbaric songs of Nazism are heard again.

Included among the Government ministers are men who were instrumental in carrying out the Hitler policy of extermination of Jews; men who served the brown-shirted "super-race"; former SS chiefs who now serve the German government.

Should we not be concerned about the danger that there might come the day when those who survived the Nazi horror may again face the fate they escaped once before?

Lord Russell of Liverpool in his recently published book, "The Scourge of the Swastika," reminds us that to put weapons in the hands of those who were responsible for the Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz means still further increasing the danger.

The readers will find the chapter on "The Destruction of Akkerman" a gruesome and heartrending account of the events, 1941-1946. We take this means to keep it on the record.

LEST WE FORGET!!

\* \* \*

Judah Hellman was born in Akkerman December 23, 1887. He came to the United States in February, 1908. He was first introduced into the Herzl and Nordau movement at a very early age, in 1898. As he grew into manhood he naturally gravitated to those movements and organizations which are ever in the front line of the battle for human rights, against oppression and persecution. He was President of the L. I. Division of American Jewish Congress. For many years active in and a Life member of the Zionist Organization of America, in the Jamaica District, in the L. I. Zionist Region as its President for two years, a member of Executive and Administrative Council of the ZOA.

A member of the Jamaica Jewish Center. Actively engaged in the work of United Jewish Appeal, Israel Bonds and Palestine Economic Corporation. Life member Cassia Lodge No. 445 F. & A. M.

He joined the Akkerman Association in 1918. Was president 1926-1932. Honorary Member. Secretary. Relief Committee for 36 years.

His wife Zena was born in Akkerman April 24, 1890. She came to the United States in 1911. She was the youngest and most active member of "Ezra," a student Zionist group, formed by Mendel Komarovsky, Ber Borochov and Chana Meisel, in 1905. She is an ardent Zionist, a member of Hadassah and Sisterhood of Jamaica Jewish Center. A regular contributor and supporter of many worthy Jewish Organizations whose aim is to preserve American freedom and equality. Member of the American Jewish Congress and Z.O.A.

Daughter Lillian is married to Irving Heiman. They have two daughters, Marsha and Helene. Daughter Ruth is married to Lester Troob. They have three sons, Andrew, Charles and Daniel. Son Bernard is married to Rose Reis and they have a son, Jay.

## AKKERMAN and the Akkerman Benevolent Association

By ALEXANDER KORIN, President

### JEWISH LIFE IN OLD RUSSIA

THE GENERAL political situation prevailing in Tsarist Russia had a disastrous effect on Jewish life. The result of the widespread persecution of Jews in old Russia was the creation of the so-called Pale of Settlement (*cherta osedlosti*), composed of fifteen *Gubernias* or states. These states, which included the state of Bessarabia, were for the most part at a low level of industrial development. Into the cities of the Pale were crowded 94 per cent of Russia's six million Jews. After a series of laws, edicts, regulations, and ukases, Jews were banished from Moscow and other cities outside the Pale, and were restricted and subjected to special "attention." This oppression culminated in the regulations of 1882 (a year marked by a wave of pogroms), under which Jews were prohibited from obtaining land and from moving into the villages. Jews who had been living in villages for generations were banished to the cities (as portrayed, for example, by Sholom Aleichem in *Tevye the Milcheker*). Hence, Russian Jews became an urban people, a people of traders and artisans, with just a sprinkling of peasants and industrial workers. Their earnings were miserably low, and they were subject to innumerable restrictions and unprecedented persecution.

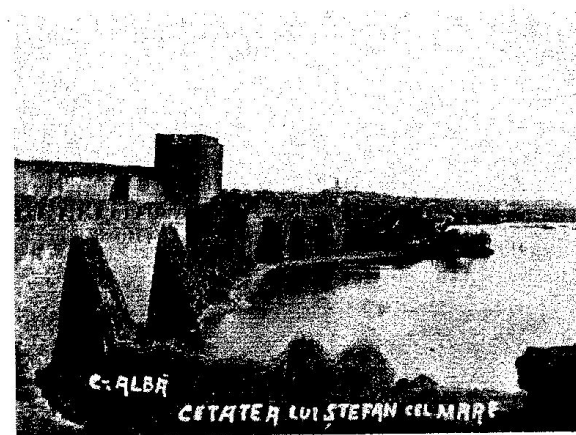
A study of their condition of life conducted in 1888-89 by the Jewish Colonization Society showed that of those studied, 80 per cent earned less than 25 rubles a month, or an equivalent of \$12.50 at the old rate of exchange. The classic Yiddish writers, I. L. Peretz,

Mendele Mocher Sforim, and Sholom Aleichem, portrayed vividly the miserable existence of the Jewish people in Old Russia. A. F. Subotin, in his book on the Pale of Settlement (St. Petersburg, 1888), tells a strange story of the city of Minsk, and gives a glaring example of Jewish "parnoses". This Tsarist municipality sold permits to Jews entitling them to wander about the market place during fairs, sack in hand, to pick up hay which might be dropped from the peasants' wagons.

Thus the majority of the Jews formed a "nation of paupers" subject to Tsarist persecutions too numerous to recount here. All Jews, even the handful of the well-to-do, were, with very few exceptions, persecuted and oppressed. There were strict quotas for Jewish students in the universities. Even in the high schools and trade schools within the Pale, only 10 per cent of all students admitted could be Jews. There were oppressive restrictions on Yiddish books and newspapers, theaters and schools. Life itself was never safe.

With the turn of the century, when the heavy hand of Russian tyranny sought to turn aside the mass discontent of the Russian people by mobilizing them for the unpopular Russo-Japanese War, life for our Jewish people went from bad to worse. These years saw the organization of the *Soyuz Russkavo Naroda* (the Union of Russian People), better known as the *Chernosotnitsi* or Black Hundred. The aim of this organization was to place the blame for the miserable conditions of the Russian people, and the consequent mass uprisings against the Tsar, upon the Jews. The organization's slogan was "*Bey Zhidov yi Spasay Rossiyu*" ("Kill the Jews and Save Russia"). Their propaganda had its effect: there were mass boycotts of Jewish business and intensified discrimination which culminated in a series of pogroms. The most horrible of these was the pogrom in our section of Russia, in Kishenev, Bessarabia, during the Jewish Passover holidays of 1903.

The town of Akkerman is situated on the shores of the Dnestr Liman, the waters of which flow into the Black Sea. On the coast of the Black Sea, only a few hours from Akkerman, lies the great cultural center of Odessa. It was only natural that the progressive ideas and cultural contributions of Odessa should have influenced the thoughts and actions of our people, who were in constant contact with Odessa through personal visits or through visits to Akkerman by prominent



AKKERMAN FORTRESS BY THE SEA

Jewish leaders from Odessa. So we were rather well informed about world affairs, and especially about life in the New World — the United States of America. When conditions in the old country became unbearable, those fortunate ones among our people who had the opportunity and the material means to emigrate left the land of their birth to find a haven in the land of the free.

#### AKKERMAN IN NEW YORK

When they arrived in New York, our people from Akkerman quite naturally set out to find their *Landsleit*, not only to talk about old times, but also to discuss their adjustment to life in their newly adopted country. They found it difficult at first to acclimate themselves to a new language, new customs, and new professions and businesses. At times the obstacles seemed insuperable. But they saw that when they were together, life was more pleasant, and mutual cooperation enabled them to carry on much better.

So in the belief that in unity there is strength, a group of Akkermaner called a meeting for January 21, 1905, at the home of Mr. Pesach Ginsberg, 219 Forsyth Street, Manhattan. Among the Akkermaner present

were: Ben Barkow, H. Chaplin, Bernard Crausman, Joseph Crausman, Chaiya Crausman, Harry Crausman, Nathan Fiedelman, Willie Frachtenberg, Charles Frachtenberg, Pesach Ginsberg, David Goldstein, Morris Govshewitz, Harry Gertzenstein, Kishinevsky, S. Krasner, Isaac Litvak, Akiba Margolin, Perliss, Isaak Rosenblatt, Louis Shectman, Philip Stivelband, H. Shpatzierman, David Tabatchnik and Harry Weinzwieg. The meeting's temporary officers were Ben Barkow, chairman, and Akiba Margolin, recording secretary. Thus, this little group laid the foundation for an Akkerman benevolent organization. They decided to call a special meeting for the election of officers on January 29, 1905, in the shop of Mr. Shpatzierman, 96 Canal Street, Manhattan. On the appointed date the elections were held and the first duly elected officers of the Akkerman Benevolent Association were as follows: — Mr. Kishinevsky, president; Bernard Crausman, vice-president; Mr. Shpatzierman, treasurer; Mr. Gertzenstein, secretary; Akiba Margolin, recording secretary; Mr. Barkow, Mr. Kipnis and Harry Crausman, trustees.

#### OUR BIRTHDAY

On January 21, 1955, we shall be half a century old. To an individual person, any birthday after you have passed your twenties or thirties brings a little stab of pain as you pass each milestone on the downhill road from the prime of youth. But this cannot be true of an organization such as ours, which performs such vital service. For though the people who work to serve humanity are mortal, there is an endless flow of energy activating them, and it is this great reserve of human potentialities which will give everlasting life to the Akkerman Benevolent Association. But when we look back at our half-century of life and work, we are forced to ask a searching question in this culture which values success and achievements so highly. We must ask ourselves, "What have we done?" The best answer is: "Let's look at the record."

#### 1905—1955

Originally intended to be a local benevolent society to furnish aid to sick and needy members, it was not long before the Akkerman Benevolent Association found itself called upon to enlarge the scope of its activities. With memories of the hardships suffered by their brothers in Akkerman still fresh in their minds, the members of the society were quick to respond to calls for aid originating from the

homeland. Thus, the organization served as a medium to amass funds for the widows and orphans of those Akkermaner who lost their lives in the Russo-Japanese War of 1903-05. Hardly had the society completed this task when shocking news came of the historic October days of 1905 — the defeat of the Russian armies by Imperial Japan and the unsuccessful revolutionary uprising of the Russian people. (As usual, the blame for the 1905 revolution was placed on the Jews.) These events ended with a general pogrom in all Russian cities which had Jewish populations. Akkerman, of course, was no exception. Many of our people were killed and wounded, and the destruction of property left many homeless and without means of subsistence. Once again relief became the battle cry of the organization. Once again mass meetings were held and efforts were doubled and redoubled, with the result that thousands of dollars were sent to the destitute.

These two examples of the early work of the organization proved prophetic of the more difficult work still to come. Only nine short years passed, and it was the summer of 1914, the summer of World War I, bringing with it new suffering and persecution for our people, more war orphans and war widows, and three more years of war culminating in the revolution of February 1917, which overthrew the Tsar and with him the Romanoff dynasty. But even then our people found no peace. The Denikins, Petluras and Semionovs with their pogroms and destruction of Jewish life and property saw to that. With the Bolshevik Revolution of October, 1917, a new social and economic order was introduced which brought an important change in the lives of most of our people, who were primarily of the middle class. But they scarcely had time to adjust to this change when, in November, 1918, Bessarabia was annexed by Roumania, Akkerman became known as Cetatea Alba, and a new order, a new language, and new persecutions were visited upon its people. Instead of the old Russian police (*Ochranka*), they suffered from the new Roumanian *Segurantza*. Many of our people were forced to leave Akkerman, a large number settling in Palestine, some crossing the border to the Soviet Union, and a few coming to the United States, while many others moved to other cities in Roumania. Through this entire period, we of the Akkerman Benevolent Association kept contact with our people in Akkerman. The relief we sent to the needy and to the victims of war and pogroms, and our assistance to numerous organizations there, have marked the Akkermaner in America as truly devoted sons of their homeland.

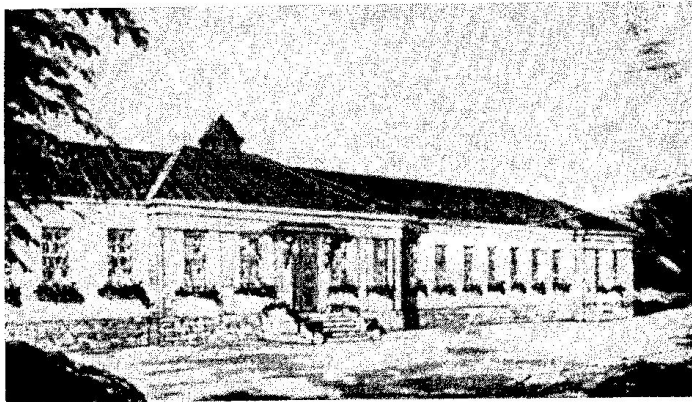


## THE NEW JEWISH HOSPITAL

Another major undertaking on behalf of our less fortunate brethren in Akkerman was the building of a new Jewish Hospital there. When our friend Akiba Margolin and his wife revisited Akkerman in 1924, the necessity for such a hospital was impressed upon them, and they came back to convince us that the building of the hospital was a "must." In 1925 we started a fund-raising campaign which lasted until 1932, and succeeded in raising over fifty thousand dollars for this humanitarian enterprise, which we forwarded to the Hospital Construction Committee in Akkerman.

In September, 1934, we received the following invitation:

"On the eve of the solemn day when the Jewish Hospital is finally transferred to its new buildings, the Construction Committee, speaking in the name of the entire population and of all those in need of medical care, considers it a duty to express our heartfelt gratitude for the inestimable assistance accorded by you in the achievement of the new buildings. We shall never forget the material assistance and, still more, the moral support, which we received from you, true brothers, who never forgot the land of their fathers. It was only your assistance and the courage which you infused into the undertaking that made possible the



erection of this huge building which answers all the requirements of modern science. And it is the same brotherly support that inspires us with faith for the future, with the faith that it will be possible to keep the hospital at a maximum standard of efficiency.

"The Committee begs you to honor us with your presence at the dedication of the new buildings which will take place on October 7th, 1934, at 10 a.m. in the presence of the authorities and the entire population. That day will be our *common* festival, the touching apotheosis of the mutual love between the New World and the Old, materialized in the great monument of the deliverance of our brethren from suffering and death.

CONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE

Cetatea Alba,  
September 16, 1934."

Until 1940 we continued our humanitarian aid to peaceful and constructive activities in Akkerman. One of our most important activities was the timely aid we gave to the Jewish Cooperative Bank there, where by depositing our savings we contributed materially to its effectiveness and the benefit of our people. But in 1940, by a pre-arranged agreement with Nazi Germany, an ally of Roumania, Akkerman was returned to Russia. In the summer of 1940, the Soviet occupation forces took over, which meant a new change in the life of our people. But this did not last long, for 1941 brought World War II and the Bloody Storm.

## THE NAZI INVASION

In 1941, the murderous hordes of the Nazis and Fascists invaded Akkerman to claim its share of the six million of our people they destroyed during the war. They managed to reach 1600 Jews, whom they buried alive, but there was a goodly number who were fortunate enough to have been evacuated in time by the Red Army to distant parts of the Soviet Union. As soon as we obtained information as to their whereabouts, we immediately started a campaign for relief, and sent supplies to them in far-off Siberia and Turkestan. At the conclusion of the war, with the cooperation of the Jewish Council for Russian War Relief, we sent several hundred food packages and several thousand pounds of clothing to the community of Akkerman, which is now known as Belgorod-Dnestrovski. As soon as we began to get some infor-

mation from those survivors among our people who had returned to Akkerman from evacuation or concentration camps (by 1946, there were over 300 families, many of whom are now in Israel), we sent them individual packages of food and clothing, for which we received acknowledgements and expressions of gratitude.

#### AKKERMAN IN ISRAEL

With the establishment of the State of Israel, where over 400 families from Akkerman now live, we started a campaign for the building of houses, working through the organization of Bessarabian Jews in America, and we take pride in our achievement in removing some families from the Maabara to comfortable homes.

An Akkerman Society (Irgun) was organized in Israel, and upon the death of our distinguished member Manuel Komarovsky, we cooperated with this society in establishing a Komarovsky Memorial. This Memorial is a free loan fund where Akkerman needy in Israel can borrow money without interest charges. From the reports we have received, there are scores of people with familiar names from Akkerman who have received aid from this fund, to which we made a substantial contribution.

While we were occupied with work for the welfare of our brethren abroad, we did not for one moment forget or neglect our obligations to our people here in America, or to our membership. The name of the Akkerman Benevolent Association is inscribed in the books of contributors of every worthy Jewish philanthropic organization in the country. Our work for the United Jewish Appeal, the HTAS, the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, and others is well known. Wherever and whenever the appeal for aid is made, the Akkerman Benevolent Association has responded and still responds promptly and generously. Whether it is a Sanatorium in Los Angeles, or the Beth-El Hospital in Brooklyn, no worthy cause has ever appealed to us in vain. At the same time, we have never neglected our own membership. The Sick Benefit Fund, the Emergency Fund, the Endowment Fund and the Old Age Pension Fund have helped hundreds of the needy in our own ranks.

Despite the odds against us — the continuous necessity for balancing the budget, the increasing average age of the members, the halt of immigration from Akkerman, and the economic hurricanes which

have destroyed hundreds of other similar organizations, the Akkerman Benevolent Association has not only survived, but has increased in membership and grown in financial soundness.

Nor have we forgotten those taken from us to Eternity. We have erected an eternal monument to their memory, a beautiful, dignified memorial tablet which hangs in our meeting hall as a constant reminder of those who have passed on. Our annual memorial meetings have become an institution for the expression of our most profound and human feelings. Three splendid cemeteries — the Baron de Hirsch, the new Mount Carmel and the New Montefiore, have been acquired by the organization for those called by the Almighty.

And so, continuing in the spirit and traditions of our founders, we are more than ever assured that on this, our Golden Anniversary, the Akkerman Benevolent Association remains a perpetual monument to their principles. Our success may be attributed to the fact that we have learned to accept reality. An organization such as ours, which includes men from all walks of life and with varied points of view, was able to progress by accepting the fact that life's road is rough, full of a lot of buzz saws and bad bridges. We have learned to take the bad along with the good in a spirit of equanimity, and with unity of purpose we have built an effective, liberal, and humane organization of Akkermaner for the good of our people. And so we take pride in our fifty years of constructive work for humanity, as our part in the three hundred years of Jewish life in America.

In passing our half-century mark, we of the Akkerman Benevolent Association are more than ever determined to work and fight for the rights and welfare of our people, with full faith that we shall continue not only to do our share but to redouble our efforts in behalf of this great cause. We shall press forward, firmly resolved to do all in our power to make this indeed a happier and more secure life for those of our people in need or in danger across the far stretches of the world.



AKIBA MARGOLIN  
Founder of the Akkerman Association



LEO J. MARGOLIN  
His Son

## THE GLASS OF TEA: THIRD DIMENSION IN EDUCATION

By LEO J. MARGOLIN

**E**DUCATION usually has three dimensions. School is the first. A job is usually the second. Not frequently, the most painful dimension in the educational process is the third: experience.

I was fortunate. The third dimension to my education was nominally painless. It was even pleasant. Most of it took place over a glass of tea — with lemon — in the home of my parents.

My father presided with a friendly charm over a long series of unique social gatherings, featuring glasses of tea — with strudel. For a curious youngster with big ears, the course of instruction was extensive and varied. Where else could one get humor, philosophy, geography, religion, economics, literature, politics, sociology, and science in one sitting? And with a glass of tea.

It all happened at my mother's dining room table. It's still going on today over the same glasses, if not the same tea — with home-made

rose jelly. Not all the teachers are the same, for time has taken its toll. Gone are Manuel Komarovsky, Ichid Milstein, Pincus Sheer, Morris Govshewitz, and my uncle, Michael Margolin. Happily, the other instructors are around — my father, Judah Hellman, Alex Korin, Sam and Jacob Barsky, and others.

Long before P. S. 167 plunged me into the mysteries of geography, I could find Bessarabia and Akkerman on our atlas maps. By applying myself diligently to my painless studies over a glass of tea — with spoon inside ("Mix, mix — the sugar's on the bottom") — I solved the vexing problem of why Akkerman was also spelled Ackerman; and why Akkerman was also Cetatae Alba. (For the new generation of glass-of-tea drinkers, it must be hopelessly puzzling to find that Akkerman is now Belgorod-Dnestrovski.)

My education in the geography of Bessarabia proved useful during the war. When the Army Air Force raided the Ploesti oil fields on August 1, 1943, I knew the area by heart and was able to write a geographical description which was used extensively on our propaganda broadcasts to the enemy. All through the war the names which I had heard over glasses of tea came back to mean all the horrors of war — Kishinev, Bucharest, Sevastopol, Lvov.

Over the glasses of tea — in saucers, if you please — I learned the history, the mores and the personalities of the people — their hopes, their fears. The humorous incidents of life in Akkerman were recalled with pleasant, nostalgic laughter. Many of the people discussed were pictured in my imagination only. But Akkerman became a live city to me in many ways.

Of course, much of what transpired over the glasses of tea became ever so much more vivid after my mother, father and sister visited Akkerman in the summer of 1924. I was packed off to camp because I was "too young to appreciate the broadening experience of travel." (I became plenty broadened travel-wise in later years much to my mother's dismay. She still insists that I should "stay put.")

The stories brought home by my parents and my sister were told and re-told over many hundreds of glasses of tea. It seems that my sister's bathing suit, a well-covered version of the year 1924, created something of a sensation at the local Akkerman beach.

The value of the Lei also was the subject of a good deal of conversation. My father went to a local bank to get some Leis for his letter of credit. The bank manager begged him to return at the close of business, because the bank just didn't have the cash on hand to pay out \$1,000

in Leis. It seems that the bank had to wait to get more deposits before the letter of credit could be honored.

I remember distinctly that it was my father — and not the modern Washington statesmen — who was one of the first to set down the policy of "trade not aid," for Akkerman. Perhaps, this new theory of international assistance came as a jolt to some of the Akkermaner, but apparently my father's persuasive powers led to acceptance of the principle without too much misunderstanding.

My father was, and still is, an expert reporter. There were few items missing from his detailed descriptions of life in Akkerman, circa 1924. He gave his avid listeners all the news that was fit to print, and a lot that wasn't.

There seemed to be no end to the tea-table discussions of ways and means to give more help to Akkerman. The ladies were in the act, too. The Charity Daughters of Akkerman, not to be outdone in either tea-drinking or philanthropy by the men, took over their own fundraising efforts with typical feminine gusto. There was no place at the ladies' tea-drinking meetings for me — although my mother always managed to salvage some strudel for me.

When World War II burst over the heads of the world with unprecedented fury, many of us who had enjoyed our tea-drinking at home, found ourselves eating K-rations in a distant part of the world. No matter where I was, I did not lose contact with Akkerman. I watched the maps and the communiques for some word of that distant place responsible for countless sips of tea. Even though I was assigned to some of the best-informed army headquarters, I knew as little of what happened in Akkerman as is known now.

Later, in the displaced persons camps of Germany and Austria, I saw the counterparts of the people of Akkerman. Their homes were gone, their loved ones massacred, but their spirit was uncrushable, and their powers of survival phenomenal.

To those less than humans who participated in the destruction of Akkerman and its people, it should come as a shock — a fatal one, we trust — that they really failed to eradicate the very things that tyrants have been trying to destroy for centuries — the spirit and the memory of people. These were the secret weapons of people which guns could not halt and which flames could not consume.

As long as Akkerman lives in the hearts and minds of men, nothing is destroyed; nothing is changed — except possibly that the tea now comes from tea bags instead of from samovars.

Akiba Margolin was born July 15, 1883. Father — Peisach-Cushe; Mother — Feiga-Rivka. Received traditional Jewish education.

With a group of young men he organized the "Ohavei Zion" after the fourth Zionist Congress in 1902.

Arrived in the U.S.A. March 9, 1904. On January 21, 1905, with a group of others, founded the Akkerman Benevolent Association.

Married in 1908 to Fannie, who in her own right played an important part in the charity work of our Organization through the Charity Daughters of Akkerman, serving as its President for 13 years, and now its honorary president.

Their son Leo Jay with his wife Sally and son Michael reside in New York City.

Daughter Rose is married to Morris A. Fishkin. They have 3 children: Paul S., Rita Lee, and Ely Margolin. Due to Mr. Fishkin's profession as an engineer, the family traveled with him to Providence, Mexico and now to Baltimore. Rose has always engaged in work of the Jewish communities wherever they lived. She is now engaged in Group Therapy at the Levidale Home in Baltimore.

Akiba Margolin is an ardent Zionist, active in United Jewish Appeal, United Hospital Campaign and Federation of Jewish Charities.

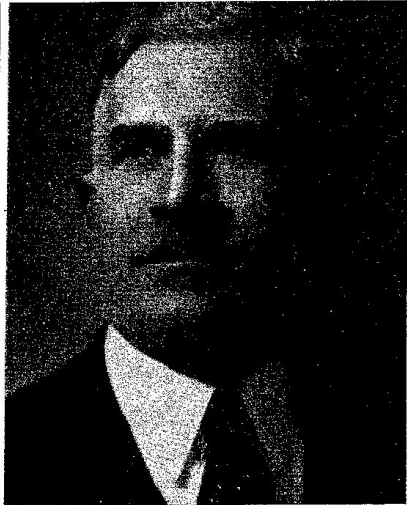
He was vice-president and was chairman of the Building Committee for the erection of the Talmud-Torah Tiphereth Hagro in Brooklyn. He is a Director of the Beth-El Hospital for over 30 years, a member of the Building Committee, and chairman of the House and Improvement Committee; Chairman, Committee on Auxiliaries. Chairman, Selective Service Local Board No. 148; Honorary President, Masons Contractors Assn.; Member, N. Y. State, City and Brooklyn Real Estate Boards and Real Estate Appraisers; B'nai B'rith; Cassia Lodge No. 445, F.&A.M. and a member of the Governing Board of the Brooklyn Jewish Center.

Leo J. Margolin is a publicist whose career spans 28 years during which time he has been a member of the editorial staffs of "The New York Times," "The New York Herald-Tribune," the newspaper PM, and "The Times of India." His stories have been datelined India, Pakistan, Italy, England, Belgium, Greece and Spain, and countries in Central and South America.

Now public relations director of the American Jewish Committee and a lecturer in public administration at New York University, Leo is an acknowledged expert in the use of mass media through world-wide outlets. Immediately after World War II, he served as Chief of Information Operations of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, visiting all the 47 countries who were member nations of UNRRA, including Russia.

During the war, Leo served as news and propaganda consultant to the Psychological Warfare Branch of Allied Force Headquarters on assignment from the U. S. Office of War Information, devising the first public relations program for an occupied country — Italy. Drawing on his war experiences in psychological warfare, he wrote the book "Paper Bullets," a study of the use of propaganda in combat, which later became official text for army, navy, and air officer's training.

For a time during World War II he was a news broadcaster over the United Nations Radio in Algiers and Rome. He has written extensively for magazines, and is a regular contributor to the North American Newspaper Alliance, which distributes its reports to nearly 500 newspapers throughout the world. His latest book, co-authored with Edwin S. Newman is "Fundraising Made Easy" (Oceana Publications: 1951).



My Father --  
Bernard Crausman



By MORRIS CRAUSMAN

**B**ERNARD CRAUSMAN was born 71 years ago in Akkerman. In the 1890's, before he was twenty, he formed a Zionist group in his hometown. He came to the United States in 1904 and settled in New York. After working for a few years he went into the real estate business in 1910 and remained in that business until he passed away on October 28, 1954.

During the course of his life, he was active in many community and philanthropic endeavors. He was one of the founders of the Akkerman Benevolent Society when its Charter was first granted. Later he was its President for approximately five or seven terms.

In 1920, he became the President of the Migdal Zion Synagogue which was, at that time, one of the leading congregations of the Bronx. Many distinguished leaders of Jewish community life in the Bronx were members of that congregation, such as the late Philip Wattenberg, Nathan Linetzky and others. Later, when he moved to the West Bronx, he became the chairman of the Board of the Concourse Center of Israel, which position he held for five years. He was Vice-President at the time of his passing. The Concourse Center of Israel is a very famous congregation and has raised large sums of money for the United Jewish Appeal, Yeshiva University

and the Salanter Yeshivah, in all of which causes, he was closely identified.

In 1920, he was Vice-Chairman of the Keren Hayesod of the Bronx and in 1921 became Chairman of this fund-raising drive for the Bronx. He continued to be Chairman until 1929. During the years when he headed the drive, well over \$1,500,000.00 was raised for the settlement of Jews in what was then Palestine.

In 1923, he was a delegate to the thirteenth World Zionist Congress which was held at Carlsbad. He had with him, of course, my mother and myself. During the later years of the 1930's and 40's and the first half of the 1950's, he was very active in West Bronx Zionist District 39, being its Vice-President for many years and treasurer for five years. He was a delegate to the National Conventions which were held practically every year and was also a delegate to the Bronx Zionist Region Conventions. During the time when he was one of the Vice-Presidents of District 39, I was President of the District.

We can truthfully say that my dearly beloved father led a full life, being active in the business world, societies and organizations, and through philanthropic endeavors. He also had nachos in seeing his only son an active Zionist and an active director of the Concourse Center of Israel, thus following in his footsteps.



### Ichiel Milstein ע"ה

ICHEL MILSTEIN was born in Akkerman in 1883. He arrived in the United States in 1903. Died December 1952.

He spent all of his life in intellectual pursuit. He loved the theatre, music, opera, literature. He was devoted to liberal causes and he supported every democratic endeavor on behalf of American principles of justice and equality.

He joined the Akkerman Association in 1910. He was its president and devoted all of his efforts on behalf of relief to his fellow-Jews in the city of Akkerman. He was chairman of the Relief Committee for twenty-five years.

With his charming and genteel personality he endeared himself in the hearts of his friends and associates. His departure is a great loss to all who knew him.



### PHILIP STIVELBAND

#### Founder

Born in Odessa April 14, 1883. Arrived in New York in 1904. After a short stay he migrated to South America and returned to New York three years later.

Married to Rose Crausman, daughter of Shaya Crausman. They have four daughters and one son — Clara, Sylvia, Pauline, Harry and Sophie. Clara has two children — Anita and Sherry. Pauline has a son William Jay. Harry has two children — Martin and Judy.

Philip Stivelband joined with the other pioneers in 1905 to form the Akkerman Association and was actively engaged in all its relief undertakings. He served as secretary as well as president. He is a member of the Zionist District No. 39, Bronx, and the Young Israel of Kingsbridge, Bronx. He contributes to many charitable institutions.

### NATHAN FIEDELMAN

#### Founder

Born in Akkerman on Rosh Chodesh Tamuz 1887. Arrived in New York, March 1904. Married Bella Milstein on January 1, 1905 (she died November 1952). They have four children. Daughter Anna Saratoff with her son Irving. Son Louis, married, who has two sons Robert and Stewart. Daughter Riva, who served as a Sergeant in the U. S. Army. Daughter Florence.

Nathan Fiedelman joined the other pioneers in forming the Akkerman Association on January 21, 1905. Actively participated in every benevolent and relief undertaking of the organization.





## A Visit to Akkerman in Israel

By DR. A. I. SAPER

*Physician of the Akkerman Society for over thirty years*

MRS. SAPER and I spent five delightful weeks during May-June of 1953 among our Akkerman "landsleute" in Israel; and while there we became acquainted with the activities of both, the Akkerman Society (Irgun) in Israel itself and its affiliate — The Mendel Komarovsky Memorial Foundation.

The Akkerman Society in Israel boasts a membership of 320. The members are scattered all over Israel. The majority, however, about 80 in number, live in Tel-Aviv; then comes Haifa, as second in order, with a membership of about 40; then follows Nathanya with 20 members. The rest live in colonies, Kibutzim and Moshavs, in different parts of the land.

The entire membership is called together only once a year, usually in October, November or December. Actually, it is sort of a Memorial Meeting. A Council of 30 members at the annual meeting elects a Committee consisting of 9 persons, most of whom live in Tel-Aviv. The Council meets two or three times a year; the Committee meets every two to four weeks, as the need arises.

The President of the organization was the very able (late) Dr. S. Zalering, who was the guest of honor at a special meeting of our

Society just a short time before his untimely death. He was a very busy man professionally and he could not very well attend to every minute detail personally, but he had in the person of now well known to us Israel Schildkraut, as Secretary, an indefatigable, conscientious, honest, unselfish worker who carried on his shoulders the entire business and attended to everything pertaining to Society matters, as well as to the activities of the Mendel Komarovsky Fund. At the same time he was engaged in writing, compiling and editing his book on Akkerman.

The business of the Loan Fund is conducted mostly in Tel-Aviv. The moving spirit of it is again Israel Schildkraut, who devotes to it tremendous amounts of time and energy.

Loans are obtained, with no interest charges, for many different purposes, such as expansion of business; buying new furniture, sewing machines or other tools in trade; getting additional funds for acquisition of a shikun (permanent dwelling); for weddings; for births, and for many other needs.

The loans are issued for one year and are payable through a local Bank in Tel-Aviv. The executives of the Loan Fund could not handle all these transactions by themselves because there would be a 10% loss according to the State of Israel Loan Laws.

The Mendel Komarovsky Loan Fund is a very popular institution in Israel and tends to perpetuate Mendel Komarovsky's name. It acts as an attraction for the entire Akkerman population in Israel.

As mentioned at the outset, Mrs. Saper and I spent five most glorious, enjoyable, delightful and unforgettable weeks among our Akkerman friends in Israel, and the thrill of meeting so many old and dear faces after so many years will forever be engraved in our hearts and minds.

\* \* \*

Dr. Aaron I. Saper was born in Akkerman on January 7, 1888. Studied medicine in Austria and returned to Akkerman to marry Taba Zwicker, daughter of Mordechai Zwicker, in March 1911. They arrived in the United States in May 1921. He joined the Akkerman Association and has been its official physician all through these 34 years.

The Sapers have three children. Daughter Ray is married to Jerome Harmon and has three sons. Son Milton is married to Sylvia Rabinor and has a daughter and two sons. Son Murray is married to Charlotte Fine and has two boys.



## Had Father Been Alive Today . . .

By MIRRA KOMAROVSKY HEYMAN

THE AKKERMAN BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION can take just pride in celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. It is a fine achievement. The Association had been founded in order to give new immigrants some sense of security in their strange environment. But that motive alone could not have sustained the Association beyond those early years and after the adjustments to American life have been made.

One reason for the vitality of the Association lies in the continuous participation of its members in relief and service to others of their brethren, first in Akkerman and then in Israel. Their activities form an impressive record which speaks eloquently of the devotion of the officers and responsiveness of the membership. But apart from the material relief given to others, the continued existence of the Association for fifty years tells another story. It speaks well for certain spiritual qualities of its members who have preserved amidst the distractions of many new interests and ties — the attachment to their heritage. It is a heritage that can command respect. The little Jewish community of Akkerman had been amazingly richly endowed with men and women of idealism, intellectuality, and a sense of social responsibility.

The Akkerman Benevolent Association was very close to the heart of my father, Mendel Komarovsky. He treasured his life-long friendship with many of its members. Akkerman itself was always vivid in father's memory because his own youth was so intimately linked with it. His extraordinary gifts of idealism, eloquence, capacity for selfless devotion found their first expression in its public life.

Father's writings on Akkerman and his desire to preserve records of its past was a reflection of a reverence that he felt for all that was precious in human life. He himself responded with poetic intensity to all that was noble and beautiful, sorrows and joys alike. We, his daughters, always marvelled at the vividness with which he could reconstruct events in our own lives, a childhood joy or a disappointment. He rejoiced whenever he recognized some fine emotion in others. He felt sad and bewildered when faced with a shallow or callous reaction to some significant human experience. "Have you forgotten?" he would ask sadly when we sometimes failed to remember some past episode in our lives. On the other hand, any interest in recapturing the past always gave him pleasure. We once asked him about some street in Akkerman and in no time he drew with his meticulous neatness a plan of the whole neighborhood to help us in reconstructing some event of the past.

Had father been alive today he would have happily joined his good friends in celebrating the 50th Anniversary of this Association. He would have probably written some words for this occasion. And these words, as his words have so often in the past, would again have lifted us and stirred us. They would have again awakened in us some fine emotions and aspirations which all too often we allow to be dulled by preoccupations of our daily lives.



## THE POGROMS IN AKKERMAN — IMPRESSIONS OF AN EYE-WITNESS

By MENDEL KOMAROVSKY

*Translated from the Hebrew by Rabbi S. Gershon Levi*

ALMOST FIFTY YEARS have passed since that fateful 22nd of October in 1905. So much tragic history has filled the intervening half century that we tend to forget the impact of that day's pogroms in Akkerman. That is why the writer, an eyewitness of that event, feels impelled to commit his memories to paper.

The political atmosphere in which the pogroms were brewed — the popular unrest, the bloody parade on January 9th, 1905, to the Czar's palace led by the provocateur Gapon, the naval rebellion at Kronstadt, the radical resolutions of the Zemstvo — all this is well known. Finally, after a disastrous railway strike, the Czar gave in to popular pressure, and announced on October 17th that he would grant the country a constitution.

During all this time the monarchists had not been idle either. They had founded the "Society of the Russian People," popularly known as "The Black Hundred". Their principal tactic was to divert popular antagonism and direct it against the Jews — the classical scapegoat. With the connivance of the government and the support of the "Third Department" of the Interior Ministry, their press advocated anti-Jewish violence day in and day out.

This organization soon opened tea-houses, as meeting places, throughout the Pale of Settlement. These club-houses, of course, attracted the worst riff-raff in the populace. Here they were inflamed with promises of government protection and of booty to be had of the Jews. There was nothing secret about this incitement. It was accompanied by frequent public patriotic parades.

Not only did Akkerman have such a club-house; it was one of the

best-equipped. Its moving spirit was Purishkevitch, an extreme reactionary. Akkerman was apparently supposed to set an example to the other towns in Bessarabia. The choice was a good one; the city had no significant group of liberals; the Black Hundred had practically clear sailing.

### THE JEWISH "SAMO-OBORONA" (SELF-DEFENSE)

We, the young Jews of Akkerman, were fully aware of the situation. We sensed the new malevolence in the attitude of the peasants who began crowding into town on market days in unusually large numbers. Intellectuals, once friendly, suddenly turned into enemies.

Knowing what to expect, we organized our self-defense. It is doubtful whether we really expected our measures to be effective against the pogromchiks. At any rate, I can remember taking the line, in my secret visits to our defense units, that we were vastly outnumbered, but would rather die fighting than submit meekly to the knife. I therefore urged that any who were fearful should withdraw from the organization. To their credit be it said, that not one of them resigned.

Much of this morale was attributable to the rising spirit of Zionism apparent throughout the country. Responsible, too, was the aftermath of the Kishineff pogroms. Bialik's poem "The City of Slaughter," and Jabotinsky's Russian translation, we knew by heart. They taught us pride and courage.

In January of that year our town had been visited by Ber Borochov and Hannah Meisels. He had instructed us in Zionist ideology. She had roused in us the will to action, exhorting us like a veritable Deborah to organize our self-defense.

In spite of all this preparation, the crisis came faster than we had expected. On Monday, October 17, 1905, the Czar's proclamation about a Constitution was made public in Odessa. The public rejoicing did not last long; rioters had attacked before nightfall, and the bloodshed lasted for three days.

In Akkerman we heard about the Constitution on Tuesday, the 18th. The local celebration went off peacefully enough. The boys of the gymnasia even took the day off and held a public meeting — without the slightest opposition.

By Wednesday, the 19th, postal service from Odessa was restored, and Akkerman heard what had happened there. If the metropolis had suffered so, what could we expect?

An emergency meeting at the local City Council led to no result. It seemed there were those who would not face the issue. When Leon Asvaduroff boldly stated that the Black Hundred were plotting pogroms against the Jews, the meeting broke up in disorder.

By Thursday, the 20th, the pogrom organizers were operating in the open. The market places were noisy with the rattle of peasant wagon wheels. Kostya Popov and Dinkovitch kept shuttling between the peasants and the Black Hundred club-house. I toured the city streets. Everywhere Jews stopped me, asked about the situation. My answer was: the crisis is at hand, but the Jewish self-defense is ready. Those who could manage to get a place of safety should do so immediately. Towards evening they began assembling all the weapons in my house. For security's sake the job was assigned to two 12-year olds, Moish'ke Steinberg and Gedalia'ke Levitt. The weapons included rifles, pistols, leather whips, metal whips and bottles of explosives.

Early on Friday, the 21st, a group of the defense force assembled in my house. We were forty strong — some among them older men, some strong muscular young fellows. Headquarters sent word that Matussis was to command our section. We posted a guard, with a secret password, and got busy cleaning the weapons, and assigning them in detail. Messages from Headquarters kept us posted. Rations were delivered, and we all had something to eat.

The guard called me out. Moshe Levitt, the father of one of our runners, wanted to see me. He pleaded with me, tears in his eyes, to discharge Gedalia'ke, his only child. His wife was out of town; she would never forgive him if anything happened to the boy. I explained that service was purely voluntary; that his boy was perfectly free to withdraw. With the commander's permission, I brought the lad out of the house, and left him alone with his father, so as not to exert any influence on his decision. I heard the father pleading, weeping, kissing his 12-year old. The lad wept too, but remained firm in his decision to stay. The father left empty-handed.

I went back indoors. Most of the fellows were in good spirits, as though there were no danger ahead. A few groups were playing cards, and sipping wine. "The Thief of Paris," as one of the men was nicknamed, was lying on his back on the floor, daring anyone to make him move. Four young fellows were tugging at him without success. Simeon "Tchudak" was extracting a variety of tunes from a comb. The mood was far from gaiety or horse-play; but there were no signs of fear or discouragement.

Outside, the rattle of wagon wheels was unceasing. Many of the peasants were roaring drunk. In the churches there had been open incitement to pogroms. Some houses displayed ikons in the windows, to show that Christians lived there. We hear that Jewish houses were being marked with chalk. Headquarters sends word to remain on the alert all night. After dark there is a queer glow in the eastern sky — the town of Ovidiopol is on fire. The tension grows. Then, half an hour after midnight, comes the command to disperse.

#### HOLY DAY IN THE RUSSIAN CHURCH

Saturday, October the 22nd, was a holy day in the Russian Church — sacred to the Virgin of Kazan. This was the day chosen by our Russian neighbors to demonstrate to us their Christian love. The day dawned clear and beautiful — but it seemed to us that the sun was shining for our enemies, not for us. We felt that the heavens themselves were against us. The synagogues, too, were all closed on this Sabbath day. What was happening in each Jewish home? I know what I was doing — I was helping my wife and baby move over to the home of Anna Nikolayevna, principal of the local gymnasia for girls. She had always been friendly to my wife. Herself the daughter of an aristocratic family, from the district of Twir, she was no doubt a monarchist, but obviously too much of a gentlewoman to be associated with the canaille of the Black Hundreds. As for my mother, I took her over to the house of Lavrentiev, which was built like a fortress. Her magnificent spirit encouraged me no end. She was offering her people everything she had: her two sons in the defense force, her daughter in the first aid station. As we parted, she hung a metal tray over my chest, as a breast plate. I made no objection, although I knew that this "armor" might easily turn into a frying pan.

From H.Q. comes the command to give the boys a good meal. Then we hear the chiming bells of the "Sobor" — church services are over. With the chimes are mingled shouts. We can hear, but we can't see. Our scouts tell us that a parade is heading towards the center of town. So far, there has been no violence.

#### THE PRINCIPAL OF THE GYMNASIA

Now the sentry calls me to come outside. The principal of the gymnasia, on her way home from the "Sobor", has stopped her carriage in front of my house and asks for me. This puts me in a quandary.

Etiquette demands that I should invite this grande dame into my house—but how can I? I managed some excuse. She gives me a penetrating look, and says reassuringly that all will be well. Then suddenly, in a casual manner she asks, "A vy hot' horosho vo-oroo-zheni?" (Are you well armed, at least?). I sense her guile, and answer warily: "Mi, sudarinia, na vsio gotovy" (Madame, we are ready for anything). So ends her visit.

Afterwards, I learned that she had joined the parade near the town hall, and had delivered a fiery patriotic speech from the town hall balcony. Now our scouts report that the parade has not dispersed, but is heading towards the Papushoi and Turlaki districts.

Dr. B. M. Scherr now arrives at my house. He had been baptised many years previously, and had always lived among gentiles. Now, in the hour of need, he had returned to his people, and offered his services as commander of a rifle unit. He looks over our outfit and says fondly: "A slavnaya rota!" (Verily, a model army). Then he goes into a huddle with our riflemen, and moves on to another defense point.

Young N. comes over to me and says quietly: "That parade will turn back to town." Poor chap—in the end he went out of his mind; he developed the idea that he must get hold of his sister's ring, and redeem the Jewish people with it.

Orders from H.Q. now arrive in rapid succession. Arms at the ready! On the alert! Password—Torah! Now—march off to the courtyard of the Synagogue!

Matassis divides us into small squads, and sends each by a different route to the assembly point. I go off with the last squad, without even closing the door of my house!

Striding rapidly in military order, we march down Nikolaevsky Street. The street is empty. Somewhere a frightened woman darts across the road and disappears. A simile crosses my mind—like a chaff when a storm is brewing.

Suddenly a lone carriage heads our way. I was thunderstruck to see in it my wife and the baby, heading for our abandoned house. Quickly I took them out of the carriage and rejoined the ranks with them. In snatches my wife told me what had happened. The principal had come home from church and said sweetly: "Tell me, my dear, aren't you afraid to stay here?" My wife had promptly fainted, and when she came to, had cleared out.

Our column now approaches the corner of Nikolaevsky and Yevreisky. The only open door is that of Vilkomirsky's pharmacy, where

we have set up our first aid post. Here I deposit my wife and child, and march on with my squad to the synagogue.

In the courtyard are assembled all the defense units. We hear that the entire force will be reorganized. The uncertainty creates some confusion. Kisilevsky tries to set up a combat squad, without success: Soon, however, there is heard a loud command from Yasha Brodsky: "Form three groups!" He ordered one company to stay under the pillars of the big synagogue. The other two were to take up positions in the courtyard. Now Brodsky appears in the centre of things, with Leon Asvadoroff and Dr. Scherr. He demands, and gets, absolute silence and strict discipline.

As runners bring information to Brodsky, he keeps the rest of us informed. Most of the scouts are young Christians who can mix safely with the mob. But outstanding among them is Beibik Braunstein, a fearless little fellow who never loses his smile. After one mission he came back riding a horse he had unharnessed from a wagon, while its peasant owner was busy looting.

Among the volunteers in my squad is a wine merchant from Warsaw, who happened to be in town on business. It occurs to him that he had better make his will. I fetch a pencil, one of the fellows lights a series of matches, and the stranger writes rapidly in his memo book.

Meanwhile, things are happening fast. We hear the wild roar of thousands of voices. We can even make out words: "Vanka, siuda!" "Bey, Vaska!" (Come here, Vanka; Hit, Vaska). Sounds like explosions and breaking glass reach us. West and south of our position the glow of flames is visible.

Self-restraint now becomes impossible. Grumbling goes through the ranks. When do we get into action?

Brodsky commands: "Silence. Everything is under control. Just a few fires. No casualties yet. At Vilkomirsky's pharmacy one of the pogromchiks got poisoned."

The truth was, that at Vilkomirsky's pharmacy, young Fanya Steinberg had just taken her own life.

## THE HOLOCAUST

Brodsky calls a few of us into consultation. As a result, one third of the force is sent out towards Ismailsky Street, under command of Dr. Scherr. As we start our march he orders us to fire one shot into the air. The psychological effect is electrifying. Now we feel like

an army ready to kill and be killed. At the corner of Sofievsky Street we encounter a flock of pogromchiks, and we fire. Two of them fall, the rest scatter. From those houses and stores not yet burning we remove the tinder. The market place is a holocaust. We can hardly stand the heat. Piles of merchandise lie on the street corners. We see the booters darting to and fro with loads of booty. Whenever we approach, they flee. Here and there we pass a corpse.

We split up into two groups. One section heads down Izmailsky to Georgievsky Street. Our section turns left down Moskovsky Street, then left again on Nikolaevsky. At the corner of Sofiovsky we come upon a mob looting Gutnik's store. Their ringleader is Kostya Popov. Later we heard that his mother had begged him not to set fire to the building, since his father's store was in it, and the building belonged to a Christian. His answer was: "Nye vashe dielo, mamotchka; nye mieshaites" (It's not your business, mama; don't mix in).

Now the third company is ordered into action, under command of Liuba Shapiro and Diuba Lifschitz. We are getting less information than before. There is a report that Kusnetzov, the chief constable, has been fired for interfering with the rioters. It seems the military have taken over. The police have joined the looters. One squad comes back carrying Michael Sternberg, found dead in the street.

Again my company is ordered out. Some sixty strong, we advance cautiously. Near Druze's fish store we see a queer figure wandering among the flames. It turns out to be a Jew half-crazed by the pogroms. We take him under our wing.

We cross the market square from southwest to northeast. As we approach, the rioters flee. We hear them: "Tikaetye, oborona idyi" (run, here come the defense). Once again we go down Nikolaevsky. This quarter is in as bad shape as the market square—houses in flames, goods strewn on the streets. Passing Kogan's hat store, already half burnt, we hear the screams of a woman. The sounds come from a shed in the back, tightly locked, its roof already aflame. We break in the door and take twenty women together with their infants and children. We leave them at Vilkomirsky's pharmacy.

Now we are in direct contact with the enemy. Nuta Lifschitz's store is wide open, and looters are picking over the merchandise in leisurely fashion. Among them we see even "intellectuals"—high school teachers and the like. A few shots, and they scatter. But some stubborn pogromchiks take cover in nearby buildings. Some of the men are dispatched to ferret them out. Meanwhile, two of our men come in with a prisoner

—the rascal Diukovitch, agent of the Black Hundred. It seems he almost succeeded in setting fire to the pharmacy, where our wounded men and women were. How we would have liked to tie him hand and foot and throw him into the flames. But orders are to blindfold him and take him to the synagogue.

Our unit advances, first to Michalovsky Street, then to Starobazarny Street, then left to Izmailsky Street, on our way back to the defense post. Behind us we hear the beat of army drums. Seems like the regular army is behind us. We fan out to the sides of the street, and quicken our pace. The first rows had reached the corner of Yevroisky Street, when three rapid volleys of rifle fire caught us. Joshua Appel, Nuna Cohen, Moshe Klarfeld and Pinkhos Shrira were wounded severely; Zvi Weisser less seriously.

Our return to the synagogue increases the tension. All the other units have returned, too. What will the military do now? Will they attack us in the synagogue? Brodsky orders us to lie down on the damp earth and to keep absolutely silent. In the darkness I try to find Lavovitz, and to spread some cloth under him, because of his T.B. What impelled this young Christian, son of a farmer from Beyramtcha, to join our defense volunteers, sick as he was? How pure must have been his ethical principles, his love of justice, if he could take sides against his own brethren? I too claim to be fighting for the right; but I wonder whether I could risk my life if my own survival and that of my people were not at stake. No; Lavovitz is far superior to me.

I step into the hospital to check on the progress of medical aid. In the hallway I see the corpse of Michael Sternberg. Inside, all is efficient bustle. Dr. Isaac Osipovitch Shapiro operates incessantly, all night long. I watch him turn aside between operations to wipe the sweat from his forehead. His usually grim visage has changed; his face is now suffused with gentle compassion.

#### THE CALM INTERMISSION

The soldiery does not attack the synagogue. The pogrom activities also abate. It looks like an intermission until tomorrow. Brodsky orders us all inside, to rest and warm up. Then he and Leon Asvadurov approach me. He sticks a piece of bread into my hand and orders me to stand watch for the rest of the night.

I take up my post, the courtyard is empty. All is quiet. It is hard to get used to the silence. And it seems like ages since the whole dust-

ness started. Like Joshua with the sun and the moon — only this time, to our disadvantage.

Suddenly, footsteps approach. I challenge the shadowy figure. He gives the password as "To-do-ra" instead of Torah — but this is because he is shivering, either from cold or excitement. He turns out to be one of the scouts — Marcus, son of the teacher and Zionist of that name. He had been wounded in the Russo-Japanese war, and had recently come home. His stepmotherland had certainly given him a warm welcome home!

Comes the dawn. All is still quiet. I wonder who is looking after Lavonitz, and who is standing guard over the murderous Diukovitch. Two gentiles — what a contrast!

Across the street I hear two Russians chatting, on their way from the banks of the Leman into town. They talk about fishing and other ordinary subjects — as though nothing had happened.

Now fatigue overcomes me. Even as I fight it off, I hear Brodsky approaching. Now that it is known the town is under martial law, it has been decided to disperse the defense volunteers. This is to start immediately. The men are to leave by twos at stated intervals, and to separate immediately. Before this manoeuvre has been completed, fathers and mothers crowd fearfully around the synagogue, fearfully seeking their sons. How good it is when I can assure them that their sons are alive.

Now it is my turn to leave. Together with my brother I head for the Lavrentiev house, where my family is. Just before I got there, it seems, my wife and mother had sent out a man to find me. He had gone to my empty house and returned with a cap and a pair of rubbers. These were taken as a signal for grief, only interrupted by my appearance.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1905

Leon Asvadoroff has turned over his roomy house on Nikolaevsky street to pogrom sufferers. He also tried to get the large hall of the Zemstvo assigned to this purpose. Nobody knows yet how many families have been affected. Some are still in hiding in the countryside; some in gentile houses, although there were those among the latter who had to meet stepped-up demands for payment during the night, in return for refuge. In the centre of town, several hundreds of families have suffered, and property losses ran into the hundreds of thousands. In the suburbs, there is Ephraim Leib Fishman, horribly put to death; the homes of Moshe Pecker in Papushoy, of the brothers Schon in

Turlaki, and the Krichevsky mill — all burned to the ground. Are there any other fatalities? We don't know. The streets are full of curious gentiles. On Novobazarny Street, Simha Itzkovitch comes out of his house. A big, husky fellow, he suddenly approaches a crowd of gentiles and rips off his shirt. "Here, shoot, you low-down cowards," he shouts at them. They back away from him and scatter.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 24, 1905

Only today have we managed to organize food distribution to the sufferers. It is handled by women, with the Synagogue as headquarters. Some of the Hassidim disapprove, but I soon hush them up.

In the market place I see Benzion Gurion and Moshe Reifman picking over the ruins of their destroyed stores. I dare not comfort them.

Shlomo Serper, a short, bearded fellow, comes along. His face is shining. Quietly he says: "Brethren, be comforted. Don't you see that these happenings are the prologue to Messianic days?"

It no longer appears likely that there will be any organized pogroms; but we have to guard against isolated attacks. So on each street men volunteer to stand watch all night.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 1905

There is a rumor that the Post Office is full of telegrams from America that can't be delivered, because the addressees are not at their usual residences. I hurried over and found a telegram for me, and also helped a number of others get theirs. The knowledge that far away, in the land of security, there were those who were concerned about us — this was a great comfort.

During the day, my wife's sister, together with her husband and the rest of the Cershsen family, finally arrived in town. Their homes in the village of Divizia had been burned down, and all their property looted. For three days and nights they had hidden among the rocks along the shores of the Black Sea.

Late that night the guards stopped two wagons that had arrived from Baeramcha. In one sat my aunt Chayke, pillowing her wounded husband, my uncle Gabriel Wolman. In the second sat Sarah, daughter of the shochet Samson Kleinman, supporting her wounded husband Israel Boganov. These two men had fought back like heroes. Now they were being brought to the hospital.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1905

Dr. Trachtman tells me that Uncle Gabriel has only a few hours to live. Trembling I stand at his bedside, watching his tortured suffering, comforting myself with the thought that he is unconscious. Suddenly he opens his eyes, sees me, and cries out "Ai, Mendel, s'iz bitter" — and loses consciousness.

I went back to see Dr. Trachtman again — but he could offer no hope. This same Dr. Trachtman — an assimilationist from way back — what could he be feeling, now that his world had crashed down around his ears. How could he, the brilliant, Russified intellectual, ever again attend one of those soirees at the home of Anna Nikolaevna?

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1905

Uncle Gabriel died, a hero who had given his life in defense of his community. The local authorities, however, demand an autopsy. My efforts to forestall this are in vain. I remove the corpse to one of the abandoned stores, light the traditional candles, and summon a group of psalm-readers.

Uncle Gabriel's funeral was another horror to be lived through. A handful of us bore him to the cemetery. There we awaited Dr. Kostiorin and his assistant Sties — two of the worst antisemites in town, ringleaders of the Black Hundred. It was these two who performed the required autopsy. I could hardly bear to watch. I felt as though Uncle Gabriel were dying a second death.

Alongside the fresh graves of Ephraim Leib Fishman, Michael Sternberg and Fania Steinberg, there yawned a newly opened hole in the ground. Gently we lowered my uncle and filled in the grave.

Back in town — night was falling. The synagogues were open, worshippers could be seen entering them.

Later, that section of the cemetery was fixed up as a memorial. It had eight monuments, for the martyrs: Efros, Buh'agov, Greenstein, Wolman, Fishman, Steruberg, Fania Steinberg — and the desecrated Torah scrolls. I say "had" — because, after what happened in World War II, there is nothing left.

The pogroms in Akkerman and in more than 100 other cities in Southern Russia shocked the Jews in Western countries. The first

organized help came from the Hilfsverein in Berlin. In that city, there were many prominent Zionists who took over the task of collecting documentary evidence and data on the pogroms. Motzkin was the head of this project. The writer Abraham Ludvipol came to Akkerman for this purpose and spent two weeks gathering statistics, information and photographs. He claimed the material was to be published in a book to be printed outside of Russia. I have heard that such a book appeared, but I have never seen it.

The second wave of help came from the Akkerman Society in New York, which was organized immediately after the shocking news arrived, and continued for almost fifty years to be in close touch with the Jewish community in Akkerman, always ready with material and moral support.

The funds received were distributed openly, with full public discussion and agreement by all concerned. A certain sum was set aside as capital for a communal bank for loans and savings, which institution served for decades as an economic bulwark in the community. Credit for the idea goes to Isaiah Brodsky, who also was one of its directors all his life.

Many of the victims of the pogroms emigrated to America that winter. Those who stayed on began to rebuild their lives. For one more generation, the Jewish community flourished, until along came the Hitler epoch, and erased the memory of these earlier sorrows.



J. M. KELBER AND FAMILY

## The Saga of an Akkermaner and American Cattle in Israel

By LEO J. MARGOLIN

THE BEEF CATTLE which roam the plains of Israel are there because of the vision and dedication of a son of Akkerman. He is J. M. Kelber, now an Ontario, California, cattle rancher who in a few short weeks celebrates the 50th anniversary of his arrival in the United States from Akkerman.

The story of Israel's beef cattle is best told by telling the story of J. M. Kelber and his journey from Akkerman to California, via Philadelphia, New York, and North Dakota.

Mr. Kelber left Akkerman for the United States in the spring of 1905. In Akkerman, he had been educated in the local public schools and received his Hebrew education from private teachers. He was a

charter member of the Youth Zionist Organization, founded by Chaim Axelrood, which met in Israel Trachtenbroit's home. He recalls vividly that in 1904, as a trained metal worker, he helped make swords in secret for use in self-defense during the pogrom in the fall of that year.

When he arrived in the United States, Mr. Kelber made his home briefly with his uncle, aunt, and cousins in Philadelphia. His plans to enter the New Jersey Agricultural School at Woodbine were frustrated when a student strike closed the school.

Early in 1906 he got a job as a metal worker in New York, attending night school to learn English. Like many Akkermaner before and after him, Mr. Kelber scrimped and saved from his \$16-a-week wage to send for his parents and sister still in Akkerman.

After they arrived in New York, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society settled them on a 160-acre homestead in North Dakota. The next year, 1908, Mr. Kelber joined the family, but thereafter tragedy struck the hardy pioneers from Akkerman. His mother died after an operation in a Rochester, Minn., hospital.

The North Dakota weather, particularly its sub-zero winters, is not made for "softies." More than a half-century ago, the battle against the



J. M. KELBER, RIGHT, PRESENTS CHECK FOR THE PURCHASE OF CATTLE TO BE SHIPPED TO ISRAEL.

elements, against the virgin land, and against weariness was more than most pioneers could take. But the remaining Kelbers stayed to make their homestead into a thriving cattle ranch.

In 1915, Mr. Kelber came to New York, married Rose Henken, and returned with his bride to the North Dakota prairies. Five daughters and a son were born to them.

Only the lack of school in the Dakota prairies prompted the Kelbers to give up their prospering ranch. They sold their land and their cattle in 1925, moving to a 20-acre peach grove and chicken ranch in Ontario, California. Four years later, they turned the peach grove into a cattle ranch.

Mr. Kelber is a leading citizen of his California community. He is not just a joiner. He is an organizer and diligent worker for those causes in which he believes. The Orthodox Hebrew Congregation in the Ontario-Pomona district is one such cause. He organized the congregation in 1944. Another equally important cause is the United Jewish Appeal, to which he devotes much of his time.

The cattle for Israel came into Mr. Kelber's useful life in 1951 when he organized the Relief Corporation for Israel, a non-profit California corporation whose sole function is shipping beef breeding stock to Israel with money raised by contributions or with cattle donated outright.

In March, 1952, Mr. Kelber, accompanied by his wife, went to Israel to see for himself the conditions under which beef cattle are raised on Israel's ranges. With the cooperation of the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture, he literally "rode the ranges" from Metula to Elath. What he saw filled him with an even greater inspiration and dedication to carry out his very special project.

Two years ago, when an Israeli Cattle Commission arrived in the United States to buy beef breeding cattle with funds from United States Government grants-in-aid, Mr. Kelber was invited by the Mission to join them as an expert in choosing the breeding stock for shipment to Israel.

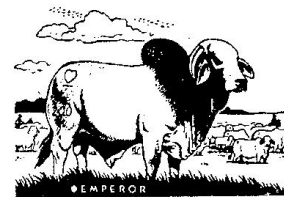
This was an irresistible challenge to Mr. Kelber. Travelling at his own expense, he traversed the length and breadth of America's vast cattle country, picking the breeding stock which may some day make Israel self-sufficient in beef.

The fruits of Mr. Kelber's labors took on a most tangible aspect when a cargo ship loaded with 750 head of Brahman and Hereford cattle sailed from the port of Baltimore for Israel's port of Haifa.

In this same shipment was a very special surprise for the Israeli agricultural authorities. Mr. Kelber's cattle-for-Israel corporation included in this shipment the first pedigreed Brahman bulls and Heifers for Israel's foundation stock. These comprised some of the finest blood lines in the United States — the best blood lines of the greatest cattle country in the world.

And so to Israel sailed the results of an Akkerman's three years labor of love. In Israel, Mr. Kelber's cattle-for-Israel organization was promptly inscribed by the Israeli Cattle Breeders Association in the Golden Book of the Keren Kayemeth.

The story does not end here. Soon, there will be another shipment of blooded cattle for Israel, and the man behind the idea which launched the cattle-for-Israel movement and which will ship this boat load — and many others to come — is J. M. Kelber, graduate of the city of Akkerman, class of '05.





## AKKERMAN

By CHARLES S. H. LOCKMAN

**A**KKERMAN is a town or city in Southeastern Europe, located in the province of Bessarabia, constituting at various times politically a part of Russia or Roumania, depending on the fortunes of war and of the Peace Conference.

Were I asked to place it on the map, to give its ancient history or its population, I would, frankly, falter. I know that its recent name, Cetatea Alba, given it by Roumania following the latter's invasion during the First World War, is presumably a literal translation of the community's ancient name of Weissburg. I feel, however, that the meaning of Akkerman transcends geography, history and statistics.

I am, of course, aware of its physical impact on me. It is the place of my birth, which occurred, confidentially, in the year 1896, in the village of Krivda, officially part of the community known as Passad Turlack, on the Kishinevskaia, the road leading to the city. This event, important to one other than myself, took place at the home of my maternal grandfather, Moishe Pekker. Passad Turlack was in the environs of the city of Akkerman and embraced also the village of Papushoi where my grandfather's brick plant was located. It was here that my parents resided during the first two years of my life, in the house fronting on the Kishinevskaia, built originally as a dwelling and office for the supervisor of the plant.

Akkerman, specifically Krivda, was also our vacation home. It was there that I spent each of the summers after we moved to Odessa until 1906, when we came to the United States following the pogroms of October, 1905.

Incidentally, passage between Odessa and Akkerman was either by Steamer ("Parochod") Turgeniev or by a rather roundabout overland route going through, by or around "Mayak."

However, the significance of Akkerman to me is far above those mundane experiences. Akkerman is, to me, a mode of living, of feeling, and of spirit. Akkerman was typified by the friendship of its people, its spirit of "live and let live." Every day, every contact, every experience in Akkerman and its environs was illustrative of that mode of life, that feeling, and that spirit.

It is with pardonable pride that I mention my grandfather Pekker as one of the people exemplifying these qualities. He was, incidentally, the subject of all of my hero worship. He was a patriarchal man of majestic mien and appearance, kindly in manner and wise and just in his dealings with his fellowmen. It was small wonder that such a man attracted friendly people — Benyamin Feldman, a gentleman well blessed with the world's means and even more blessed with a fine family; Pesach Margolin, father of our own Akiba Margolin and his family; Milstein, and countless others whose names escape me.

The more I look back to that period, particularly to those annual trips to Akkerman, those enchanting vacations, the more I realize that those kindly people whom I visited with grandfather or met in his company at the "Birzha" (grain exchanges) were not isolated cases. They were not exceptions. They typified Akkerman. The spirit prevailing in their homes pervaded the entire community.

The sons and daughters of Akkerman brought that spirit with them when they migrated to this country. That was the spirit which impelled those men and women to organize the Akkerman Benevolent Association fifty years ago. Only with such indomitable will could a group, small in number and with limited means, accomplish the gigantic tasks which it undertook, not once — not twice — but over and over again, year in and year out, during that continuing period of fifty glorious years. What else could account for the continuing period of fifty glorious years. What else could account for the building and equipping of a hospital to cure the sick thousands of miles away, or giving financial and moral aid to people, often strangers, there and here?

The economic and political upheavals and even more the religious persecution in Europe, particularly in Eastern Europe, resulted in numbers of its best citizens coming to this country. Here many organizations, many societies were formed, doing undoubtedly excellent work for their home communities and their "landsleit" who followed the founders, but I know of no group comparable in number or means to the Akkerman Benevolent Association, which achieved the phenomenal results of this organization.

Is it any wonder that the sons and daughters of Akkerman are so proud of their origin and their associates? Is it any wonder that the Fiftieth Anniversary of the founding of their society is celebrated by them as a major holiday — a “YOM TOV GODOL”? Justifiably, the pride and enthusiasm of all Akkermanians on this occasion is, without bounds, an enthusiasm which presages a future even more glorious than the Jubilee period now coming to a close, an era which will be marked by even greater accomplishment. Such enthusiasm must and will lead to greater achievement during the years ahead so long as aid shall be needed by any son or daughter of Akkerman.

*Mr. Charles S. H. Lockman was born in Krivda (Passad Turlak), outskirts of Akkerman, on June 12, 1896. His father was Rev. Moses Lockman, a native of Kilyah. His mother Bertha was the daughter of Moses and Sara Pecker of Akkerman.*

*Mr. Lockman arrived in New York City in 1906. Moved to Baltimore, where he finally made his permanent home after living in Philadelphia, Providence and New York City, between 1906 and 1917. In 1920 he married Sadie Durst of Philadelphia.*

*The Lockmans have three children. Daughter Charlotte is married to Dr. Leonard Karel of Baltimore. The Karels have three children — two sons and a daughter.*

*Son B. David is married to Helen Tenner of Chicago. They have two sons. The youngest son Alan is married to Geraldine Bruce of Baltimore.*

*Mr. Lockman was educated at Jefferson College, Philadelphia; University of Baltimore, Law; formerly of the faculty of the Law School.*

*He is a member of the Zionist Organization of America for many years and Vice-President and Director of the Baltimore Zionist District. Active with the American Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee, B'nai B'rith and his synagogue, the Petach Tikvah Congregation, of which he is an officer and board member. President of the Tifereth Zion Society and founder and First President of Kadimah, a Zionist Club. Participated in numerous fund raising campaigns of the Zionist and local, national and world Jewish relief organizations.*



Dr. Shalom  
Tsalering שליח

**D**R. SHALOM TSALERING was a young man of 65. His youthful spirit and his love for his people made him beloved by everyone who ever came in contact with him. All through his life, in his early years in Switzerland, in Akkerman — then through his many years as resident in Palestine — he was the guardian angel to all who needed help. In Israel he was known as the Ambassador from Akkerman.

It was through his efforts, with the assistance of his colleague Israel Schildkraut, that we were able to contact some 400 families in Israel, scattered in every corner of the land. He was the leader and guiding spirit in the formation of the Akkerman Association in Israel. Dr. Tsalering became its first President.

When our friend and brother Mendel Komarovsky passed away we suggested to Dr. Tsalering and his Organization in Israel that we would like to establish a Memorial Foundation in the name of Mendel Komarovsky. This suggestion was enthusiastically received, because Mendel Komarovsky was well known to them for his great literary contributions to the Hebrew speaking world. As a result of these negotiations The Mendel Komarovsky Cemilath Hesed Fund was estab-

lished in Israel, and many of our newcomers from Akkerman have benefitted by it.

Dr. Shalom Tsalering was a sincere Zionist all his life. Therefore, it is not merely by accident that he and his wife and children settled in Palestine more than twenty years ago. Living in Palestine in the pioneering days they have experienced all the hardships during the period of the British mandate. Also during the time of the Hitler era, when our suffering brethren were brought into Palestine as "illegals" in broken down leaking boats which sank in the harbor, and our heroes in Palestine watched their arrival in the vigil of the night and rushed in these poor souls, evading the British guards — the Tsalering family was there on the job.

During the struggle of our people against the British reign and persecutions, when the Hagana played such an important role in the fight for liberation, the Tsalering family played its part.

When the UN decision came for the establishment of the Jewish State and the State of Israel became a reality, and the Arab hordes, in violation of the UN decision, attacked our people — the Tsalering family was in the very thick of the struggle.

Such was the nature of this quiet, modest, unassuming gentleman. As a physician he gave of himself, of his energy, to the welfare of his fellow-men — sometimes to the detriment of his own welfare.

A great loss to the family, to our people and to our Akkerman community in Israel, he will be missed on all fronts of Jewish life.

Dr. Tsalering died January 22, 1953, at the home of his children Dr. and Mrs. Bernard Rogoff in Forest Hills, N. Y. He was temporarily interned at the cemetery of the Akkerman Association. His remains were shipped to Israel, December 30, 1954.

His widow Clara resides in Tel-Aviv and is now taking an active interest in the Akkerman Association at Tel-Aviv, as well as in the Mendel Komarovsky Foundation.

The Tsalering's younger daughter, Naomi, with her husband, Ronnie Henreck, reside in Jerusalem.



*Israel Schildkraut addressing a Memorial meeting in Tel-Aviv. Seated right to left: Leib Stambul, Dr. Shalom Tsalering, Cantor Feldman, Rabbi Ingerleib and N. Horowitz.*

## The Storm Gathers

BY ISRAEL SCHILDKRAUT



*Akkerman Landsleit, coming from all parts of Israel, assembled at the Memorial meeting in Tel-Aviv.*

## 1940-46 — THE STORM GATHIERS

Excerpts from "THE DESTRUCTION OF Bessarabia"  
by Israel Schildkraut, translated from the Hebrew  
by Philip E. Katz.

THE TROUBLE began in 1940, when Soviet Russia annexed Bessarabia. Together with the entire Bessarabian population, Akkerman, too, was forced to offer up its sacrifice on the altar of the "House Cleaning" decreed by the new Soviet rulers immediately upon their assumption of power. At first many of the Akkerman Jews were arrested and tried for all sorts of "crimes" ostensibly committed. One for being a merchant or capitalist, the other for Zionist affiliations or for some other political "crime" and the third for having been at one time or another a faithful public servant in the Jewish Community.

Jewish and national cultural life ceased in Akkerman as in all cities, and all Jewish public institutions passed into the hands of the new rulers until finally the entire picture of Jewish life was irrevocably disfigured. Yet, all these inhuman and severe decrees of the Soviet rule in Bessarabia, which the Jews endured as an integral part of the general community, were infinitesimal compared to the barbarous and terrible liquidation process which was introduced in the early days of the outbreak of World War II in 1941. It assumed then, under the Fascist Germano-Roumanian rule, murderous and barbaric proportions which brought well-known misfortune upon the Jewish population of Bessarabia and Akkerman.

### THE GREAT FRIGHT

The greatest sacrifice of Akkerman's Jewry was made by the city of Odessa. There the Nazi horrors were unleashed on the Jews through the Germano-Roumanian fascists. Jews fled to Odessa like into a haven, hoping to last out their plight — they thought it was enough to leave the Bessarabian front line, or depart from the sector successfully occupied by the Romano-German fascist army in June-July of 1941 to escape harm at the hands of the Nazi barbarians — for, they reasoned, the enemy will not dare to advance beyond Bessarabia. All one had to do, they believed, is to reach the natural border between Bessarabia and Soviet Ukraine, the Dniester-Leman, and from there the

way is clear to safety — from there the way is open to Odessa, the great port city. There, under the protection of great Russia, they reckoned, it will be possible to wait out in relative tranquility the day — not too far off — when the war will end and all can return home in peace.

The village of Ovidiopol, across Akkerman on the left bank of the Leman on the Soviet side, glistened into the scared and despondent faces of Akkerman's Jewry, and with "beacons of salvation" wooed them to come hither from where the road to the "free city" of Odessa is secure and open. The unfortunate, frightened Jews of Akkerman fled in hordes — by truck, by horse-pulled wagon — running or trudging along the city streets "to the sea." Out of sheer fright and fear, each man clutched to him everything at hand. Some with despair and haste *disowned* all possessions, and merely sought refuge in Dubrow. Others, the "practical" ones, dragged along carts loaded with household goods. They dragged pots, pitchers, teapots, samovars, baby carriages, chandeliers, sacks of flour, onions and potatoes. One took nickel-plated beds, a second a mattress, and all "this" struggled for space in Dubrow. All "this" pushed, jostled, grabbed and fought for a corner for their family, for the sacks of potatoes and onions, for their pitchers, candlesticks, and chiffoniers. Finally, all "this" arrived in Odessa after long, hard trials and superhuman exertions, carried by the hope of breathing freely and the desire to somehow settle there temporarily, until the trouble passed.

But there in Odessa the "bloody sword" was already drawn for these unfortunate wanderers. There the Fascist vampire was already preparing for his blood feast. By the time these unfortunate Jews fleeing to Odessa realized their fateful mistake, it was too late and too difficult to escape from this new Gehenna (inferno) which was surrounded on all sides by the awful enemy thirsting for blood; and all routes to safety were closed.

Yet there were still those who were shortsighted and were not sure of the approaching great tragedy. All they knew was that the road to Great Russia was a long, arduous, and tortuous road, full of hazards and dangers. Some of the frightened, fearful and oppressed Jews, and many of the shortsighted ones, to their great misfortune, stayed on in Odessa in the days when escape from there was still possible. These unfortunates, because of their bitter mistake, remained in Odessa in the "blood pincer," to be annihilated most brutally at the hands of the Nazi murderers.

Thousands of Akkerman Jews remained in Odessa willingly or otherwise, and there in 1942-44 shared the bitter lot of some 200,000 Bessarabian and Ukrainian Jews escaping to that city only to die there . . .

Most of our sisters and brothers of Akkerman passed away in Odessa in the most brutal and cruel manner. There the unfortunates remained forever, and to this day there is no knowing where their bones were dispersed. There they remained with their great pain in their hearts, with their holy secrets which were cremated with them.

In cellars full of ashes they were burned alive. On telegraph posts they were hung by the hundreds. Into the renowned catacombs of Odessa fled the desperate unfortunates to save their lives, and there the enemy reaching them and, closing all subterranean exits, killed them by suffocation.

Human bodies "adorned" the balconies of houses like climbing vines — a method singularly brutal and exclusively Odessan. By this method, hundreds of Jews were taken to be hanged by the Fascist killers, ten to each balcony, thus "adorning" with tens of human corpses hundreds of balconies of the many-storied houses of Odessa.

The Fascist commandoes of Odessa did their repulsive work systematically with orderliness. They selected their victims according to their size and the length of their bodies. Each balcony had a given number of human "vine," all of the same size.

In spite of this, a "tragic error" did occur, and Yudel Brand, a youngster of Akkerman, committed the unpardonably "big sin" of being included by mistake with his unusual height among bodies much smaller in size. And so he hung for several days squeezed in between smaller bodies, creating a "disturbing disproportion" in this bloody adornment.

Thus were these unfortunates hung on lamp posts and sign posts by day and by night, their bodies tortured, contorted and disfigured for the pleasure of the bestially brutal Nazis — and thus were the unfortunate Jews of Odessa annihilated.

Even those that escaped in time from the inferno of Odessa where the German bandits conducted their daily "flying Jew hunts" — even those "fortunates" taking to the roads into the distant interiors of Russia hoping for miracles and searching for a way to save their lives — were cut down on their long treks by hunger, sickness, and pestilence. The TNT the Germans rained from the skies on the generous Allies supply convoys caught the running Jews, sowing death and destruction among them. Many of them remained forever on the roads, their bodies strewn all over for weeks and months till they disintegrated.

## CAPTAIN OKISHOR — "ANGEL OF DEATH"

Not all the Jews of Akkerman ran away in those days to Odessa, the city of destruction. Not all of them started out with the "evacuation" for the road to inner Russia. Many Jewish families remained at home in Akkerman, and when the Red Army left Bessarabia in 1941 they did not run away and were not deported. Some of them thought that there was no use in leaving the old home hearth and that among the old friendly Roumanian neighbors no harm could befall them. All these people fell into the hands of the brutal Roumano-German rule and died most tragically.

The Roumano-German fascists took the reins into their bestial, blood-thirsty hands and began their devils' game. Jewish life became a free-for-all and on the streets of Akkerman appeared the angel of death stalking the city in the person of the well-known Jew-hater, a sadistic and brutal henchman, the Roumanian Captain Okishor. This murderer set himself the task of annihilating by any means the remnants of Akkerman Jewry.

Word went out from the "Angel of Death," Captain Okishor, on the annihilation of the Jews and that this was to be accomplished by the "heroic" hands of Roumanians. But Chaim Herlich, the "fresh" pharmacist, tried to bypass the Nazi law by attempting suicide. Seeing the failings of his death machine, Captain Okishor became enraged and went out of his way to assure the full recovery of this transgressor, thus making sure that he would not be discredited by a Jew inflicting upon himself the death which should only come through "clean, pure," Aryan hands.

Several pure Aryan Roumanians, men of influence, among them the chief of the Akkerman County Department of Sanitation, Dr. Sufkin, interceded in behalf of Herlich, but to no avail. He could not be saved from the murderous grip of Captain Okishor, who would not let his prey loose until he and his family were killed.

Once, when the heart of a Roumanian soldier of peasant stock was moved by an impulse of human mercy and he refused the order of his superior to shoot the wife and child of Syoma Grushman, the engineer, Captain Okishor grabbed the weapon out of the hands of the "soft-hearted" soldier and with his own hands took the life of the woman and child. In this manner did this man-eater catch and kill in the street Yitzchok Arbit and his wife, Yitzchok Kaminker and his wife, and

scores of other Akkerman Jews who roamed the streets in desperate search of a haven.

The aged woman Malkin, bedridden and near death, in agony was ordered by Captain Okishor to be brought to "Death Square," so that



MORDECHAI FEIGIN

her natural death could be prevented by a "good, pure" Aryan killing.

Venerable Mordechai Feigin, the best-looking Jew in town with his long, wide silvery beard, had to pay a special price for his insistence to reach his ninth decade. For this effrontery, for holding on tenaciously to his famed beard, he had to endure awful suf-

ferings, when he was handed over by the henchman to the drunkard, "Big Fists," who often drank tea in "Feigin's Tractir" (tea house). He was driven around town naked as on the day of his birth, then put to death with inhuman tortures when they cut live pieces out of his old broken flesh until he gave up his pure soul.

Not even the invalids or the halfwits were spared. In vain did the Christian coachmen, friends of long standing, hide Chaim the "half-wit," or Yoshke Gazetshik, the half-dumb, roaming the streets with his wobbly, stunted legs and his contorted hands spread like wings, crying with mad, boar-like sounds, in his broken unintelligible, animal-like tongue. They too were reached and killed by the marauding hands of Okishor.

Thus wrought the murderer who in his mercilessness forgave none and who with his coterie of killers drove back and forth in town in his thirst for blood, rounding up his victims from their homes and hiding places, shouting decrees of death left and right.

Despaired and hopeless without knowing how to save their souls, these innocent "offerings" wandered about on the streets crowded with hooligans . . . and there on the streets they were lit by the bullets . . . the bullets that at last relieved them from their suffering, and delivered them from the nightmare of the constant expectation of death.

They were "decorating" the streets with their bodies in a variety of poses: one felled with his hands stretched out in front of himself, one with his legs spread, this one doubled over from pain, that one standing upright with his arms frozen into the embrace with which he clutched his friend he accosted as he was running with deadly fear into the street from which the other one was seeking escape, both meeting their death in their embrace.

Perplexed, this unhappy lot walked the streets, the bent of their bodies indicating the direction wherefrom and whither they were running in their despair trying to find shelter from death, ruthlessly stalking the streets of the city.

Their bodies were lying around, pasted to the cobblestone with their coagulated blood seeping deep into the ground beneath the stones, remaining there indelible by water, wind or time, as an eternal remembrance!

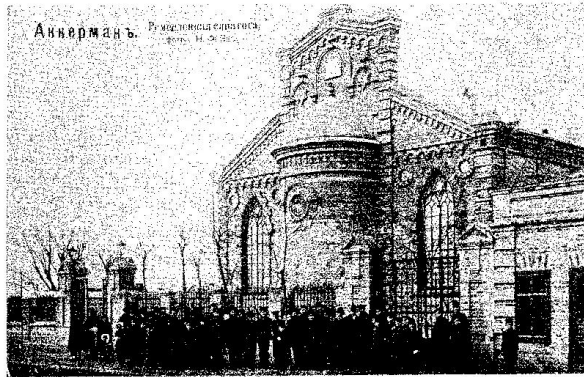
But when the "wild beast" became tired of this "piece of work" of hunting down people individually, he herded all those still alive into the Remesyline Synagogue, locked them inside the cold, thick walls,

with the windows closed and stuffed under the scrutiny of belligerent guards.

There sat this helpless lot, waiting for its bitter fate — clinging close to the stone walls of the "Workman's Synagogue," choking into the walls its deep pain, the bitter wailing of the pure, the despaired cry of the old men and women, and the bitter heartrending cry of their babes.

And though they were so close to their Maker, stretching out their arms in despair toward the Holy Ark, praying to the Lord for mercy, still they shared their fate with all the six million Jews who died for the sanctity of His Holy Name.

The "Workman's Synagogue" was the last stop of life. From there the murderer led them beyond the last path to death.



*The Workman's Synagogue in Akkerman.*

### THE KERNITCHKA

On the twisting road between Akkerman and Shaabo near the port of the Leman, on land richly covered with green, one finds an old abandoned well. This piece of land with its old well tripping into the still waters of the Leman was called Kernitchka. This was a place of rest and of pleasant walks for the inhabitants of Akkerman and Shaabo.

There to the Kernitchka came the youngsters of the Cheder on "Lag B'Omer" Day with their bows and arrows. Jewish teachers

led them on their outing of frolicking and singing. There youngsters of the Bet-ha-Midrash, on their Sabbath afternoon walks in the summer, passed the Sabbath limit line and wandered all the way to the Kernitchka stretching out on the lush green grass and under a ceiling of blue skies, and drank in the fresh clean summery air.

When business called the inhabitants of Shaabo into the city and finding no carriage they set out on foot for Akkerman, then on their way back along the seven twisting kilometers, Kernitchka was the resting place for these weary "foot soldiers" reclining on the lush green of the grass near the well.

This well known Kernitchka was chosen by Captain Okishor as the site of his cruel blood bath.

From the "Workman's Synagogue" the unfortunate sacrifices were led to the Kernitchka. There he decreed death on them with perverted pleasure, and with his own filthy hands pulled the triggers, killing them all with his pistol.

To the same Kernitchka, where singing and frolicking Jewish children were led on their outings, spending their time in laughter and gaiety, scores of Jewish children were now led to die a tragic death with their parents.

### THE ESCAPED REMNANTS RETURN

In 1945, the remaining survivors began trickling back from their long tortuous wanderings. The conflagration that the man-eater Hitler and his followers set off was finally subdued. The great blood-bath — the war — ended after all. The Fascist camps gave out their last gasp and the persecuted, oppressed and pained Jews, driven from their homes, began returning to their destroyed nests.

The Jews of Akkerman too — after Roumania was brought to her knees by the superior Red Army — began trickling back to their home town to resettle there and to rebuild its ruins.

Most of those returning were those who were evacuated to the Asiatic parts of Russia, where, having escaped annihilation, they survived peacefully the harsh days of war. The perfect blood machines of the dreaded Captain Okishor still had some flaws. Some miraculously succeeded in escaping from the murderous clutches of this infamous Captain Okishor and survived.

Even from the hell of Odessa, the site of the great destruction where thousands of Akkerman Jews fell so tragically — even from this

frightful place some Jews succeeded in escaping and came out alive. Even Siberia didn't succeed in the undoing of all of Akkerman's Jewry, who were evacuated there, in spite of the infamy of this severe land, from where travelers do not return.

These Jews who in mysterious ways escaped the "seven fires of Gehenna" are now among the remnants who returned to Akkerman. From all parts of the globe they reassembled in Akkerman, 300 people returning there in 1945 and 1946 with broken families and broken hearts. Three hundred orphaned Jews—children of the people of Israel thirsting for life in spite of all. Three hundred broken, blood-soaked joints of a Jewish community once numbering five thousand. Numbered individuals, sundered members, separated from the body of their families, a mourning "left-over" banded together to reestablish a Jewish community and rebuild their old destroyed nests.

On the day of their return they were greeted by the bloodstains indelibly left by the horribly frightful nightmare in which their sisters and brothers were so tragically destroyed. The suffocating odor of burnt houses and streets has not yet subsided. In the smell of blood—of Jewish blood—the vengeful work of the brutal "Volachs" with the full assistance of "Karilis" and the murderous "Ivans" from the nearby villages was still clearly discernible. The red bloodstains soaked into the streets and alleyways where those remaining for safety bathed the stones with their blood were still pockmarking the streets, left there when bloodthirsty eyes were lurking from every twist and turn.

There still rang in their ears the wailing cry which broke forth from the "Workman's Synagogue" like a last fading sign of the tragic happenings and terrible sufferings inflicted on the flesh and body of their sisters and brothers in the final fateful hours of their lives, when after being closeted in the synagogue they were taken to their death.

#### HOPES AND FRUSTRATIONS

With aching hearts the survivors returned to their ruined home town in the hope that they would find regret and humility among the local Christian population—feelings of regret and humility for the murderous happenings of the not too distant past. But just the opposite happened. The expression of the Christians was as if they were asking with wonder and surprise: "What? Are you here again? You did survive? Did you come to seek out your lost families? They are dead long

ago and their bones are scattered on the road between Akkerman and Shaabo. Are you looking for your belongings which you so hurriedly abandoned to God's mercy? That was carried off long ago to the nearby villages, where you dare not go.

"Why did you return, you remnants? Why did you come back?"

And yet they returned to their old home town, the orphaned survivors of a Jewish community, wishing to rebuild the ruins of their destroyed homes. Who are these mourners—remnants of the glory that was Akkerman's Jewry? Who from among the community leaders and cultural workers of Akkerman remained alive and returned? All too few! Almost none. There circles like a dazed fly (like a beaten Shaana) aged Dr. Feldstein, who walks today even as in olden days with a pair of goloshes on his shoes and his neck entwined with a woolen scarf in the middle of the summer, lest he catch a cold in these hot days, and wails and moans over the loss of his musical manuscripts.

Alive and back in Akkerman also is a leader of "Eze" and President of the "Maccabee," Dr. E. Willkomirsky, silent and withdrawn.

In the starting days the tasks of community work were assumed by Ben Chayil, like Baruch Boyene, once a peddler of old clothes. He became temporarily the "provider" of human needs to whom one turned from time to time. Only three altogether from among the learned of the "Bet Hamidrash" came back to Akkerman. Rabbi David Berkowitch, who in spite of his advanced age stayed vigorous and acted as the Chief Spokesman of the returnees, Leibel Shochet and Mendel Gelman, the two "shochtin" who survived out of the four formerly in Akkerman. Neither of the two Rabbis of the town returned, and Rabbi E. Engelberg, who during the last few years lived in Bucharest did not come back either. The Rabbi Rab Moshe Zuckerman found his resting place in a cemetery in far-off, parched Tashkent. Torn from his family, lost during the wandering, he arrived in Tashkent, Soviet Uzbekistan's metropolis, with some of his flock. There he whiled away his time in the cemetery, reciting Kaddish and El Mole Rachamim under the scorching sun. At night he slept on a hard bench. Thus he suffered, dejected and forlorn, rolling in a daze of pain and hunger. He swelled up from hunger, did not digest any food, and help was to no avail. From need and hunger, silently and in loneliness, he expired. A committee of the Tashkent community assigned him a respectable plot in the cemetery and unveiled a modest tombstone with the following inscription:



HERE LIES  
THE EXALTED RABBI REB MOSHE  
SON OF THE EXALTED RABBI REB YITZCHOK ZUCKERMAN  
RABBI OF THE HOLY COMMUNITY OF AKKERMAN, BESSARABIA

The second Rabbi, Reb Mendl Roller, son of the exalted Rabbi of Nemetz, managed to get to Poland with a stream of the Polish Jewish refugees returning to their homeland when the war ended. From there, after wandering through many lands, he came to Australia where fortune shined on him, putting him in a respected position through election to the Chief Rabbinate.

Rabbi E. Engelberg (Cur Aryeh), author of the "Shlomo's House" and "Golden Chain" found his way to Israel in 1948, where he died of a heart attack and was brought to eternal rest in Tel Aviv.

HOLIDAYS IN THE HOMETOWN RUINS

From among the four Houses of Worship in town, all of them destroyed in the bloody Roumano-German reign, with great effort and exertion, the ruins of but one — the little house quartering the Klaus — were cleared away and the place made fit for community worship. After years of wandering, during which they faced death daily and survived miraculously, the Jews of Akkerman reassembled during the High Holy Days and filled the little Klaus to the rafters with men, women and children.

They prayed with dedication and their hearts and souls welled up with emotion. They eulogized the departed of their dearly-beloved families and bemoaned the death of their friends near and far. In those Holy Days, choked-up Jewish hearts burst open and rivers of tears flowed in God's House in supplication for surcease and succor, and in their loneliness, they sought safety and reassurance in closeness to each other.

The sermon of the day was delivered by Reb David Berkowitz who consoled the ruined community saddened by its terrible calamity.

One of the grandsons of Reb Moshe Aaron Getzi, who returned with a Ukrainian wife, deeply touched by his words, or moved by the remembrance of his God-fearing grandfather, ran home and came back with his Christian spouse. Covering her head with a shawl, he deposited her among the weary and tearful Jewish women. What these weary and tearful Jewish women felt, with this Ukrainian woman,

seated in the Klaus, like at a strange wedding, one cannot fathom. But one can well imagine that the orphaned and widowed Jewish women around did not feel quite at ease in the company of one whose very presence awakened painful memories of the terrible murders inflicted upon the Jews by the Ukrainian-Hitlerite Death Commandos.

On Yom Kippur with heartrending lamentations they memorialized all the departed souls of Akkerman. Among those remembered with an El Moleh Rachamim was the young cantor of the Klaus, Ephraim Jacobson, who was believed to have fallen at the front. Immediately, God signified his presence to the Jews of Akkerman by a resurrection — and Cantor Jacobson returned hale and hearty on the day following Yom Kippur.

The joy was great and the wonder beyond comprehension. The pious saw "God's finger" in this apparition and the frivolous were given material for their mockery. On the Feast of the Torah they were joyous; as it is commended that in this season of joy all be jolly with the joy of the Torah, even if the heart is laden with distress from pain and indignation.

There was just a single scroll of the Law on hand which, like its adherents, tossed about the hard and long road of wandering. This scroll was several times saved from destruction by the self-sacrifice of A. Itzkowitz, a Jew from the nearby village of Tulza, who rescued it from the German's crematoria. With the Torah he was later evacuated to a Kolkhoz in far-off Soviet Uzbekistan. Like the pupils of his eyes, he safeguarded the Torah. Then, after the evacuation, he presented it to the Jewish community of Akkerman. With this solitary rescued Torah they made the traditional rounds of the Hakafot.

It made a pathetically dreary picture: a procession of lonely orphaned Jewish survivors, remnants of a great holocaust, wearily dragging themselves after the solitary holy scroll in closed ranks by the dim light of a few wax candles, making the rounds of the Hakafot, all the while sighing and greeting each other with "May we be worthy of better years to come . . ."

In Akkerman, much like everywhere else, the villainous Nazis joined hands with bands of local hooligans for their criminal deeds, and when finished with living Jews, they started on the dead. They desecrated, defiled, and destroyed completely the Jewish cemetery of Akkerman, leaving no trace of even the fence around it. There was just an open desolate plot left in their tracks, through which paths to the nearby streets had been cut by their rumbling boots. Not a sign

remained of the collective gravestone for those felled in the 1905 pogrom, or of the marker for — Torah scrolls buried there. Gone were the many beautiful and ornamented gravestones, together with plain stone markers of the simple folk. Strewn all around, sticking halfway in open graves or lying on the sides of the now open plot were pieces of headstones with dry human bones and skulls torn out of their graves and rolled to their sides.

Destroyed was the crypt, desecrated thousands of graves and headstones, marking the earthy remains of an old Jewish community. Only one stone amid the destruction — only one in this deserted world of the dead remained standing in its completeness. This one marking the grave of pious Reb Moshe Feivel in this desolate world of eternity, like a rare and lonely old tree, stood there ancient and simple, alone and orphaned.

Thus was destroyed a respected Jewish community some five hundred years old, a community once numbering many with families living in a thousand Jewish homes in Akkerman, declined, consigned to oblivion. And the handful of Jews that did return to their home town are separated from the Jewish world and from their sisters, their brothers, and their friends, now dispersed to the four corners of the earth.