

Tante Manya's Vist to Shchedrin in 1935

Adapted by Andrew I. Sverdlove, 03-Dec-2005, from Fred Sorkin's email to Karen Zale, 8 Aug 2005.

In 1935, Tante Manya, lame, with a cane, decided she will go back to Schedrin. Her intinerary was Philadelphia, to New York City, to Southampton, England to Hamburg, Germany, and by train to the nearest rail head to Schedrin.

Only God knows how she managed the rest.

I think the ship from the Port of New York was the *Franconia*.



Figure 1 - 1935 in Shchedrin. Shmerl and Rifka FINKEL'SHTEJN and family received a visit from daughter Manya "Mary" FINKELSTEIN GRAVER (nee' FINKEL'SHTEJN). When President Roosevelt recognized the U.S.S.R. travel to Russia was permitted for the first time in many years.¹¹

She arrived at our house on Newport St., Brownsville, Brooklyn about two weeks before her embarkation. With all her clothing, and a steamer trunk the size of a U-Haul. She was

Stories and Excerpts from *The Bobruisk Yiskor Book*

bringing to Schedrin what she thought would be need most. The trunk contained carpenters tools, nails, a dozen Mickey Mouse watches, knives and forks, shoes (strong shoes), she guessed at sizes - favoring larger sizes, woolen scarves, and woolen hats, and more that I cannot remember.

Then she posted a notice in the *Forverts*^[2] that Manya of Schedrin is going home- and anyone who wants a message delivered should contact her at our house^[3]. Mail, between our countries, was prohibited, before this date.

Two days later, a line formed from our door down the block, with natives of Schedrin, seeking some news of parents, sisters, brothers, and so forth.

They came holding *tzetalech* - slips of papers with the names, some with pictures; and others came with messages by voice only. They couldn't write. Manya sat like a reigning queen and very patiently recorded all requests. Every night for 3 days the line formed.

We saw her off...on the steam ship!!

A very determined, courageous lady, unafraid.

About two months later, she returned to our house. The pictures you have^[4] were what she brought back with her.

She had in the trunk - a huge *samovar*^[5]- silver coated, massive charcoal burning tea maker. Native cheeses shaped like big hockey pucks and harder. And a native *luchshen*^[6] *farfel*^[7] trough like a small canoe. The women sat by this canoe and rubbed and rolled pasta into farfel.

And she had all the replies she could gather for the supplicants.

She told us she had a *shvitz* - a Turkish bath house- built for the community.

She posted a notice in the *Forverts* announcing her return.

And the line returned.

Only this time it was a celebration.

My father got charcoal, the *samovar* was boiling tea , *schnapps*^[8] was freely offered, the

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cheeses had been thawed out, the folks were breaking their teeth and Manya and Shima were at the canoe, with *babushkas*^[9] rolling farfel and singing old songs.

Some folks wept with joy finding out who was alive - and others wept with the news of death.

What a party!!

When she left for Philadelphia we were all crying. This has been imprinted in my head for all these years."

Uncle Fred [Sorkin]

[adopted by Andrew I. Sverdlove, 03-Dec-2005, from Fred Sorkin's email to Karen Zale, 8 Aug 2005.]

^[1] In 1932, Roosevelt won the presidential election in a landslide, carrying 42 states. In his inaugural speech he told Americans, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." His first 100 days in office are famous for the amount of legislation he proposed -- and Congress approved -- to alleviate suffering from the Depression. In international politics, his administration recognized the Soviet Union in November 1933, exchanging diplomatic representatives for the first time since the Russian Revolution of 1917.

^[2] *The Forward* was the venerable Yiddish language socialist newspaper serving New York and, by mail, other cities. It is still published, now on the web and in English as well as Yiddish online. Yiddish. An amalgam of medieval German dialects, Yiddish was first used in the Jewish ghettos of Eastern Europe. By the 20th century over 11 million people spoke Yiddish. In 2005 it was spoken by at least 5 million Jews worldwide.

^[3] The author, Fred Sorkin, is Manya's 17-years-old nephew

^[4] Fred Sorkin is writing to his niece and nephew, Paul and Karen Zale .

^[5] >"The samovar is a traditional thing in Russia. It isn't important to everyone now, but it is an interesting thing. A hundred years ago, the samovar was a very popular and necessary thing in a Russian home. Every Sunday, people went to the *bania*; this is like a sauna. After the *bania*, all the family sat around the table to talk and to drink tea. The samovar stood in the middle of the table." Victoria Filippova, from Russia. Quotes from the web site "Topics" An Online Magazine for Learners of English.

^[6] *Luchshen* is Yiddish for noodle

^[7] *farfel* [FAHR-fuhl] 1. An egg-noodle dough that is grated or minced and used in soups. 2. In Jewish cookery, farfel refers to food-such as dried noodles-broken into small pieces.

^[8] Schnapps, a German word, "is the generic term for all white (clear) brandies distilled from fermented fruits. True Schnapps has no sugar added and is definitely an aquired taste, particularly for nationalities not used to raw distillates." So schnapps are different from liqueurs on two major fronts, they being both fermented and distilled, where liqueurs are simply fruits steeped in an alcohol which has already been fermented and distilled. [Quoated from Gunther Anderson web site]

^[9] Russian, meaning 'grandmother';, diminutive of *baba* old woman. It also meant their head scarfs.

Another version of the beginnings of this ancestral home.

The Founding and Death of Jewish Shchedrin

Beit Hatefusot Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora, March 2000
<http://www.bh.org.il/>

Shchedrin, town in southeast Bobruisk Oblast, Belorussian SSR.

In 1841 [sic], Chayyim Golodetz, a timber dealer, established a Jewish colony on the estate of Shchedrin. Some of the settlers engaged in general agriculture and some in the timber business of the Golodetz family. In 1897, there were 4,022 Jews in Shchedrin (95% of the total population of the town), about 40% of them engaging in agriculture. A decline in the Golodetz family resulted in a general emigration from the town.

In 1926 there were 1,759 Jews (91% of the total population) in Shchedrin. The Soviet government attempted to develop agriculture and in 1930 over half of the 380 remaining Jewish families were engaged in that occupation, about half of them living on the *Kolkhoz*, *Sotsialistishe Veg* ("Socialist Way", in Yiddish).

With the German occupation in 1941, all Jews of Shchedrin were killed.

The Story, As It Is Best Remembered

SHCHEDRIN (Adopted from Jay Epstein's original and weiners.org)

On reaching the river there was a ferry to cross. This was pulled by means of a rope. Paritz [Parichi] was a larger Shtetl with about 1/3 the population being Jewish. Perla Horelick came from here to marry Boruch. Her family, the Horelicks, ran the freight and passenger service from Paritchi to Bobroisk [Babruysk]. Once across the river, were rough unpaved roads. Most traffic used the River by large paddle wheel boats to and from Bobroisk. This was the way to go from Schedrin [Shchedrin] to Paritz and eventually to go to America.

Schedrin itself was created by a family called "Golodetz." They were in the lumber and rope business. They moved in [first to the existing manor house] and setup housing with their children - married and single and brought every craft needed as carpenters - tailors -

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shoemakers - blacksmiths and workers to cut forests and flax to make rope. They separated their homes from the workers. Even most of their domestic help that were married had homes built in the shtetl. Their homes were built in what was referred to as the "Haif." In 1897, there were about 4,000 Jews in Schedrin (and very few non-Jews).

The Haif of the Golodetz family was separated from the shtetl by a buffer zone of large trees which was used as a park - one remembers that it was filled with birds such as Cranes and had a creek running through it that was also one of the boundaries of the Haif. The far end was all apple orchards.

The Golodetz's built large homes with porches and stained glass windows. Every home had a built-in Succah. The center of the Haif had a large circle with a Shul, a public Turkish bath house and homes. To go from the shtetl to the Haif, they had guards who checked you on entering and leaving.

The first house on the road to the shtetl was owned by their tailor, Yosef Chaim Weiner. Across the street was a Russian family who used to do the Sabbath lighting and other chores. This family spoke Yiddish very well. The road led into a circle where Yoseph Chaim's Shul was and various other craftsmen had homesteads. The Gordon family were the shoemakers. This road continued to what was known as the "Lange Gasse." To the right were shops of yard goods owned by Skorman and Aptek (who was the only medical advisor, but not a doctor). To the left it followed into the thickest populated areas where many shops and public baths were located.

The shtetl depended on the Haif when they brought in a Doctor. He usually remained in town for consultations and treatment. Babies were delivered by ones friend helping another. The same was true of the professional teachers or musicians.

As Dr. Chaim Berlin and his sister ran away during the revolution and went to Tel Aviv, Israel. He has a small book with the history of Schedrin and he names most of the people like Motl Horelick who were the postmaster and many others.

Schedrin had many public bathhouses. It was the only all-Jewish town in all of Russia. The streets were not paved. As you went further down the Lange Gasse, they had trenches on both sides of the street that drained off the water and all the dirt after a rain and which had a foul odor.

People in any trade hired themselves out for a bed and board. They often had to pay a stipend for the apprenticeship. The tradesmen were not well to do. However, they put up a front of being the leaders in the community. There were many who began to migrate because of their underground work prior to the revolution. It was known as Socialism. [Bolsheviks and Mensheviks as a faction inside the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party] Many followed other illegal trades. To end up with a tale told about Tevya Horvitz. He did some moon-shining and one Saturday night as Shul was leaving out, Tevya was approached by some government

men on horseback who stopped to ask him where Tevya Horvitz lived. He was wearing his *Talus* [sic] [*Tallit*] around his neck, he looked up and pointed to his home saying "there." They went one way and he ran the other way - all the way to America. He tells of the hardships that he had to endure to get to America. His family never saw him again until he earned enough to send for them. The only ones he knew were the Friedman's in Pittsburgh. Somehow he reached there.

The Friedman's were located on 5th Avenue, near Brady Street. They had a small department store. Most of their income was from lodgers acting as their counselor and taking care of their money while they worked in the steel mills. He spoke several tongues.

At the turn of the 20th century the western world, particularly the United States of America, attracted the ambitious workers in the shtetl to migrate to America. Motl Horelick did not deliver the mail but late in the afternoon. The field in front of his house became crowded with all the families that expected mail from America. Vicariously even those that did not receive mail were listening to the wonders written to their relations and friends. Now the whole shtetl was in the throes of a social upheaval. In the early 1900's the desire to migrate accelerated and the very pattern of living changed. For those who could not read, Motl read the wonders of America out loud.

To migrate was very difficult. Money was the enormous handicap to cope with. However, they became aware of its impact of acceptance by the authorities. Practically everyone left illegally - conniving and bribing all the way.

Boruch Weiner being the eldest son of Yoseph Chaim, and hearing of all the opportunities, accelerated his desire for a change in his pattern of living. After Tevya Horovitz sent for his family, which to Boruch seemed such a short time, it strengthened his attitude for a rapid winding up of his affairs. He sold his house and tailor shop. His family moved into his father's home which was already crowded with Tevya's family. However, Boruch was also worried that his oldest daughter Mary would be taken by the Czarist police for being active in a revolutionary cell from Bobroisk.

The details are full of reasons to leave. In Russia every male had to serve in the army and one way or another you bribed to stay out or get out. However to leave the country legally was impossible. One had to get to Bobroisk to find the Travel agents who smuggled you out of Russia by way of Lubov. Boruch was determined to have his family settle in America. He took Mary with him as he sought to establish a new home for his family.

After a tortuous rough course they reached Pittsburgh. By that time Tevya had a hardware store on Robert Street. His family was settled and Boruch and sixteen year old Mary came to live with them. Being a good tailor, Boruch had no difficulty to get work with Lewin Neiman, a department store on 5th Avenue. He worked long hours, except on Sabbath. He managed to save enough and was dedicated to the obligation to send for his wife and other children. This became a Herculean task. The ability to save enough money, his minimal involvement in the

new life style, new values made it difficult to find new ways of becoming adaptable and face a constant continuing change in his feelings. He missed his wife and family. His emotional problems began to multiply and in order to cope with every day life situations he began to vision “why be a little fish in a big pond, he would go home and open a large tailor shop and earn more than here.” At least he would be with his wife and children.

Mary refused to go back. She told her father that he must bring their family to the freedom and opportunities in the United States of America. Boruch returned alone to Schedrin. He could not open a shop in the Haif so he rented a house and moved in with the family and shop. His father and mother were the last to migrate to Pittsburgh. He was the only member of the Weiners who remained in Schedrin.

After awhile it gradually became clear to him that the behavior of individual freedom, of interpersonal relationship and the experiences of the sense and the very patterns of Russian living were greatly altered from what he had envisioned. He loved being with his family but he began to doubt the wisdom of his return. Sam, the oldest son, was age 12 and the other 4 were each 2 years younger and his wife Pearl was with child. The chance for education, the particular impact of their lifestyle evolving society they would live in, made him long to be in Pittsburgh with his family. More and more he kept trying to figure out ways to save enough to migrate to Pittsburgh.

He developed an attitude of wait and see. He had made a choice, and he made up his mind to “grin and bear it.” He learned to cope effectively with the slow processes of saving otherwise the stresses of life would destroy him.

In less than a year a crisis developed. The same night his wife went into labor, the shtetl literally went into a convulsion. There was screaming - dogs barking, knocking on doors and confusion everywhere. A group of drunk Russians broke into the home of his best friend and butchered his wife, 2 children, 2 visitors, and 3 domestics. The husband had left that morning to take his son to school.

Schedrin had no police but some sort of magistrate or tax collector. The men all got lanterns and clubs after a long search caught two of them. All kinds of rumors spread. The next day, the police came from Bobroisk. The town watchmen every night would knock on every shuttered home to see that all was well. People lived in anxiety and fear and encouraged neighbors to utilize their personal strengths. Males of Schedrin formed a militia to protect Jews in the surrounding area from the pogroms which became more common place.

Stories and Excerpts from *The Bobruisk Yiskor Book*



Figure 2 – Portion of 1 of 7 maps.
http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/he/research/ghettos_encyclopedia/maps.pdf

The Founding of Shchedrin

Joseph Schneersohn

The following is excerpted from [*Tzemach Tzedek and the Haskala Movement*](#), by Joseph Schneersohn, ca. 1962, pg. 10.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel [Schneerson] was systematic and an excellent organizer. It was his policy to carry on all his communal activities covertly; only those directly involved were aware of his work. For example, when the Conscription Laws were applied to Jewish youths in 1827, Rabbi Menachem Mendel arranged to have people at the conscripts assembly points, to care for the spiritual needs of the recruits, to encourage them, and inspire them to observance of Judaism, and to resist the blandishments of conversion they would soon face.

He was deeply interested in the material welfare of his people, and encouraged his followers to engage in agriculture; assisting them financially when necessary. Because of the difficulties resulting from official restrictions on Jews, he decided to purchase a large tract of land in the Pale of Settlement, in Minsk province, where Jewish families could settle near existing Jewish communities.

It was about the year 1844 that he purchased some 3600 *desiaten* (about 9700 acres) of forest and farm land laced with brooks, from Prince Schtzedrinov, in Minsk. He invited over 300 Jewish families to settle in the new colony of Schtzedrin, under the supervision of a special board.

The land was distributed to the settlers at no cost, every family receiving enough land for a home and farm buildings, and several acres for cultivation and pasture, besides farm equipment. Some 1700 *desiaten* were thus distributed. The other 1800 *desiaten* of forest were sold to one Efraim Holodetz of Bobruisk, a condition of the sale being that lumber be supplied for homes and stables for the colonists.

The settlers were granted special government privileges, among them a long term loan of 200 rubles, by the Provincial treasury, to be repaid with farm produce. The settlers prospered and were soon able to devote several periods of the year to Torah study. The purchase money paid by Holodetz was used to defray the expenses and debts of colonization. Part of the down-payment was sent by the Rabbi to the Holy Land, and the rest contributed to his regular Charity Fund.

The establishment of the Schtzedrin colony impressed Russian Jewry and Government officials alike. The Governors of Minsk, Vitebsk, and Mogilev provinces wrote laudatory letters to the Minister of the Interior in regard to the officially sanctioned colony. The

Governor of Minsk noted the beneficial effects of the colony in diverting Jews from unstable and insecure petty trading activities.

Though not relevant to Schedrin, the conclusion of this section in Rabbi Schneerson's account is as follows:

He noted that Rabbi Schneersohn of Lubavitch had considerable influence over all segments of Russian Jewry, including former Misnagdim and Chassidim of Vohyln and Poland. They recognized and appreciated his activities on their behalf, not excluding their material welfare, as exemplified in the establishment of the new colony in Minsk Province.

The Governor of Vitebsk, too, notified the Minister of the official registration of "Rabbi Mendel Schachnovitch Schneersohn, son-in-law of Rabbi (Dov-Ber) Schneuri of Lubavitch, grandson of Rabbi (Schneur Zalman) Baruchovitch of Liadi as a citizen of Vitebsk. He described the Rabbi's conduct as faultless, and also remarked upon his influence among the Jews who consulted him regarding their material problems.

Stories and Excerpts from *The Bobruisk Yiskor Book*

The following material is made available by JewishGen, Inc. and the Yizkor Book Project for the purpose of fulfilling their mission of disseminating information about the Holocaust and destroyed Jewish communities.

<http://yizkor.nypl.org/index.php?id=2910> Scan of Original *Yizkor Book of Bobruisk*

<http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/bobruisk/Bysktoc1.html#TOC745> English translation

Fourteenth Chapter: IN THE VILLAGES AROUND BOBRUIK (pp.745-829)

The Town Cemetery

From *Stories of My Shtetl (Shchedrin)*, by Yankev Gorelik, Translated by Odelia Alroy

The cemetery had many names in Yiddish—the house of the graves, house of the living, and the eternal place, and in the town the cemetery was an important and active site. At various times people would go to the cemetery to visit close relatives, to ask that they be good intermediaries for a cure or help with a problem. At the time of a wedding, an orphan would invite the mother or father to the wedding; when moving to another town or land they would go to the cemetery to take one's leave of those close ones buried there. The first several years of the founding of Shchedrin, there was no cemetery and the dead were buried in the cemeteries of the neighboring town of Paritch, near the Berezina River.

It happened that the Berezina overflowed and it wasn't possible to get to the Paritch cemetery for several days with some corpse from Shchedrin. That was when the cemetery was established in Shchedrin on a large tract of land a kilometer from the town where tall trees grew. A burial society was founded and a register was started. With the growth of the town, the cemetery grew. And quite often new monuments were erected. There was also a monument on a family grave or local martyrs who were murdered in a robbery. A young farmer from the nearby village Kuchin, who would graze his horses near the cemetery, would desecrate the monument. The farmer would climb on the monument and do his work...until he was punished. Once when he had climbed on the monument, he suddenly began to scream that he saw a ghost coming toward him. He wanted to jump off the monument and run away but in jumping he fell on a stone, hit his head, and died near the monument.

Beloved Schedrin

By Chayim Yeshinovsky

I was travelling through the countryside and came upon a place where I could rest for the night, a place where Jews lived, the town of Schedrin, Bobruisk *Gubernye*. I was passing down a well-lined street between lovely houses and saw a beautiful synagogue. My soul yearned to know what kind of people lived here. I went to one of the houses and asked if they would take me in as a guest. A crowd of people surrounded me, all of them our brothers, *Bnai Yisrael*. They greeted me and accepted me warmly. One man took my hand and said, "The guest should come to my house. I have a large house. I can provide whatever he wishes since G-d gave me the good earth and my barns are full. I will give him hay for his horses without charge." Another Jew spoke up, saying, "I would like the *mitzvah* of welcoming the guest. He can find whatever he would like at my place. He can eat and drink his fill." He took hold of my horse and servants and guided them to his home. Within a minute the samovar was steaming and the smell of good food cooking came from the stove. I removed my heavy winter garments.

As I was relaxing from the long journey, I said, "How good and pleasant this place is." Three men were standing in front of me. I said, "Jewish brothers, please tell me who you are and what you are doing here. Because I have never heard of the town of Schedrin before." The men said, "We are farmers. Since the order came from Czar Nicolai, G-d bless his soul, to give our brothers of *Bnai Yisrael* land to work and make a living from, our master, the wise Lubavitcher *Rebbe* gathered us together and gave us this land which he purchased with his money." "Here is your land," he said. "Each of you take a piece of land to work it. If your hands are strong and you take pride in your work, G-d will bless your endeavors." And we followed the words of the *tzaddik*. We came here and every man took a field for his home. We, our wives, and our children worked. And the great G-d blessed us with prosperity in whatever we did. We lack for nothing. Our *Rebbe* built us a synagogue where we pray morning and evening.

We didn't leave our Torah. Among us are people who know the Torah and share their knowledge of the Torah of Moses with us and our sons. The same for the *mishna* and *gemara*. Among our brothers are tradesmen, tailors, shoemakers, and all types of craftsmen. We are not like the other farmers. We are Jews and we always remember the wisdom of Solomon: there is a time to work, a time to pray, and a time to study the Torah. We don't need anyone to preach to us not to drink wine, because drinking alcohol would embarrass us. We eat lots of bread but drink wine only sparingly, and we do not forget the blessing of our G-d.

Hacarmel, 14 Adar I, 5622 (1862)

<http://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/bobruisk/byb804.html#beloved>

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In Schedrin

by Y. L. Katznelson

During *Chol Hamoed Sukkot* of this year (1864), I was travelling from Paritch to the nearby village of Schedrin to be a guest at the house of one of my relatives. This large village was bought by a wealthy *chasid* for the *tzaddik*, Rabbi Mendel Schneerson of Lubavitch, to give him the rights of nobility. And Jews settled there to work the land and watch over it. Only a few of the villagers actually engaged in farming. Those with money were engaged in the timber trade. And the poor people who settled there only to escape army service made a living by tying together logs and sending them down the Berezina and Dnieper Rivers. Only the women and girls worked in the vegetable gardens and fruit orchards. When I went out to have a look at what they were doing, they were embarrassed to be doing farm work, which is felt to not be appropriate work for Jewish women. That day, when I ate a dish of fresh-picked potatoes and cole slaw, and when I tasted the freshly-picked, sweet pears and apples, I first thought of the question, "why can't Jews also be farmers," asked by the author of *T'eudah B'yisrael*. This question bothered me for many days. Only many years later, I devoted my story, *Shirat Hazamir* to this question. And when I was in the land of Judea a few years ago, in the beautiful blooming town of Rehovot, I saw men and women engaging in farming. On their faces wasn't shame, but pride and joy. And then, I felt as if a heavy stone was removed from my heart, and from the depths of my soul, came the words, *Baruch meshane itim umachalif et ha zmanim*. (Blessed be He who changes the times and the seasons).

from *What My Eyes Saw and My Ears Heard*, Jerusalem, 5707 (1946): p.91.

[Page 807 Babruysk Yizkor Book]

The History of Shchedrin

by G. Gankin, Dr. Z. Gordin

Translated by Odelia Alroy

Between two important cities in White Russia, Bobruisk and Homel, lies, torn away from the wide world, a small, poor, Soviet town, Shchedrin—17 *verst* [a little over eleven miles] from the railroad station Krasny-Bereg and 12 *verst* from the town Paritch. Now Shchedrin is a small Gentile village, with pigs and dogs, with graves crossed and uncrossed. Somewhat farther from the village lies a broken wooden fence of rotting boards—open to cattle and pigs: this was the old Jewish cemetery with her toppled monuments and destroyed community.

From the worn down letters one can still read many names. Here lies more than three generations of Shchedrin Jews.

Not far from the cemetery—two great mounds of earth. No path goes to them and no trees grow on that ground. These are the bloody graves of an entire Jewish settlement: all that is left of Shchedrin. In one hour they were all slaughtered by Hitler's beasts. In two big graves, which they forced them to dig themselves, they dumped them. They lie there in their bloody clothes. No one remained to mourn them.

*

In Czarist times was officially counted as a Jewish town. No Gentiles, no church, no graveyards, no young Gentiles, who in all Jewish towns would throw fear unto Jewish children.

Shchedrin was famous thanks to the illustrious, rich family Golodetz who lived there. They were noted as important, honest lumber merchants and philanthropists. Dealers, lumbers, brokers, salesmen, and assorted beggars would often come to their court. The foundation of the colony of the half-village, half-town was tied to the Golodetz family. And with its fate was also connected the decline of Shchedrin after the time of the Russian Revolution.

The ancestor of the Golodetzes was Reb Chaim Golod. When he became rich, he changed his family name to Golodetz (*golod* means hunger in Russian). His interesting biography can serve as a typical example through a historic viewpoint of how a Jewish center developed in Russia due to the outstanding energy of certain people.

The poor family of Golod lived in the small town of Azarich [Ozarichi] with their son Chaim. When Chaim grew up, they apprenticed him to a tradesman. However, he soon showed his great merchant abilities.

In that time—at the end of the first quarter of the 1800s—the lumber trade started to develop in Russia and Chaim, almost without capital, began to deal in wood. He was one of the first who began to drive floats of lumber on the Berioza [Berezina] and on the Suzch into the Dnieper up to Yekaterinoslav and further—until Kherson. He would buy lumber from the landowners, chop it, saw it into boards, bind it into floats and transport it to “Niz” where there were no forests and lumber was precious. The dealings went well and Chaim was a very rich man—a *gevir*.

In 1841 Reb Chaim and a group of Jews who wanted to get involved in agriculture, bought a parcel of land from a landowner which was called Shchedrin. Reb Chaim received the forests and the court where the landowner had lived, and the group of Jews, all of the surrounding fields to sow crops and make a living from the soil. (Reb Chaim's portion was 120 *desyatin* [over 430 acres].)

Since not every Jew could buy permits to work the land, they used the law about Jewish merchants who need a license. But since just buying one in the name of the *gevir* is not good business, they came up with the idea to buy it in the name of the Lubavitcher rebbe, Reb Mendele (the *Zemach tzaddik*) who had the rights of a merchant.

In this manner Shchedrin became a kingdom of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. In 1865, when Reb Chaim himself got a permit, he listed his portion in his own name.

The entire purchase of Shchedrin, we heard, was a mistake. The orchards proved not to be fruitful, they were swampy. It didn't matter to the Golodetzes because by that time they were already rich. The colonists suffered terribly. Many turned to other occupations.

Later, Reb Chaim bought a big estate in Surzhe district, Tchernigov [Chernigov; but actually not in the Carpathian District] area, Lialychi [Lalitchi Palace], which had belonged to the family of the famous Firsh [Pytor] Zavadovsky, the favorite of Catherine II. This purchase was very fortunate. The big, thick forest, the orchards, and the brewery were an unusual source of wealth. Reb Chaim received the historic palace of Lialychi [Lalitchi Palace] which the famous architect Rastelli [1700-1772] built. The palace looked just like the Petersburg Tavrisher [Tauride] Palace where the *dumas* [a government assembly]. Catherine was often a guest in Zavadovsky's palace. It was said in Shchedrin that the palace had 356 rooms so the Czarina should be able to spend each

night in a different room. In truth, there were only 120 rooms. The furniture in the palace was brought to Shchedrin to the Golodetzes and the mahogany was painted a “nice” color.

Reb Chaim had three sons and a daughter: Reb Leib, Reb Ber, Reb Zalman, and a daughter Hinde—Aunt Hinde she was called. She was married off to Eisel Demicovsky, a scholar. Aunt Hinde did not get an inheritance because a dowry was enough for a daughter. Reb Zalman's wife came from the Baal Shem's family—six or seven generations back. The Golodetzes made good matches. They looked for lineage because they had money of their own.

Reb Chaim was a big philanthropist. Relatives, even distant ones, he took under his wing, supported and gave them jobs. He showed a special love to students of Torah. His wife Zlata, Bubbe Zlata, was extremely hospitable. She was buried on the leaves of the table upon which she doled out charity. There good habits the parents imparted to their children.

The number of inhabitants of Shchedrin was quite small. They were for the most part villagers who had a great desire to work the land, but as Jews they couldn't get accepted in the Gentile villages where they lived. These Jews now in Shchedrin called themselves by the names of the villages they had lived in before: Belzer, Perskoder, Tsheluser, Varatiner, etc. There were also tradesmen like Ber the smith, Israel the builder and his sons, Yekusiel the tailor and others like the rabbi, *shochet* Shmul and teachers. Aside from the aforementioned, there were Golodetz's representatives: the Micklins, Ber Pinsky, Shlomo Sheindlin.

The pioneers divided the fields into parcels and divided the profits the way it was done in every village in Russia. The ownership of the parcels was written in a book which the rabbi kept as was done in all Jewish communities. The right to participate in the council was the privilege of the pioneers, their sons and grandsons. They were called “community people.” Those settlers who arrived later had no voice in the community affairs. The main function of the council was to choose a village leader. The position in time became an honor and therefore the contest among the candidates was heated. Nevertheless, for many years the same chief was selected, Abraham Kavkin, because he had many relatives among the “community people.” The first leaders were Akiva Lazer and Dan Falai or Dan the leader.

The life of the court and the town were almost totally separate and lived in their own fashion. Only the religious functionaries, the rabbi, the *shochet* and the doctor were shared. There was one cemetery and the Golodetzes had their own row of graves.

The Jewish laborers took to their work energetically. They bought some livestock (horses, pigs and cattle). They plowed, sowed corn, planted potatoes, beans, cabbage and cucumbers and cut hay. Soon someone built a windmill (a blind horse would turn the wheel) to make oil. The laborers didn't come to anyone for help and there was no job which they couldn't do or which was too hard for them. Too much success from their work they didn't see. The reason was that the land wasn't fertile and the crops were small. There was another problem—they were always far from a town, from a railroad and from a river and it wasn't easy to sell the products. So in the dead of winter, the Jewish worker did not have anything to do and the lumber trade which the Gentiles had wasn't possible because there was no forest. Without a good livelihood it was bitter, especially because the Jew needed more than the Gentile. Indeed, agronomists from the government agency would come to Shchedrin from time to time but they never brought any help. And how is it possible to take advice from strangers? The old-timers could not understand this. Therefore it was no wonder that many stopped farming and the area started to lose its colonial character. They began to lease the fields to the nearby farmers and to receive half of the grain in return. But it went poorly for the Gentiles also because the ground wasn't good and anyway the profits of the Jews decreased. When the Jews stopped farming, they didn't give up the easier land-related work and there were even families who in no way wanted to turn to other occupations. They stubbornly clung to the soil. They were true peasants who saw in the land their food supply. Let us here mention Zalman Starostupiev, a learned Jew who never left the land and performed all the labor himself. He was absorbed in the land, a true idealist and also Berl Levicks, who thoroughly believed that “fortune lies in the plow.” Itche the pale one was very poor, was very absorbed in his plot of land and with great love he did all the work. There were many Jews who didn't like business and busied themselves with the land.

The court where the landowner had previously lived was situated somewhat higher than the town and it was dry there all year long. The Golodetzes' houses were large palaces. In front of each house was a garden and in every court a big orchard with wonderful linden trees left over from the former landowner.

In summer the village was a scenic spot. On one side there were green fields of corn, potatoes, beans and many gardens up to the forest; on the other side, below, were thick carpets of heavy grass and flowers.

The town began to lose its village character more and more. It began to grow and the number of inhabitants reached four thousand. This was due to the large number of messengers and ordinary Jews who were involved in the court life. Appraisers who appraise the lumber; people who row the logs down the river, appointed salespeople in assorted places on the Dnieper and in Riga and in the town of Memel. The number of

people involved in the trade kept increasing as well as tradesmen, storekeepers, teachers and so forth. The socio-economic structure of the colony had to change. The land produced little food. There was no industry. There was no possibility of forming extensive trade with the surrounding villages because the Czarist government did not allow market days in a Jewish village. There were even coarse Jews who wanted a church near Shchedrin in order that on Sunday and holidays when the Gentiles would come there would be trade with them. They suggested to the Gentile people of the area to request permission to build a church almost in Shchedrin. But the Lubavitcher Rebbe did not allow it and the plan came to naught. The Jews of the town were poor. The tradesmen had little work and worked for very little. The storekeepers couldn't earn a living just from the stores which were mostly run by their wives as a side job. And because of the difficulty in earning a living, the Jews became policemen. In the winter, they would work at the river and when the river would thaw they would move the ice or move the logs.

The brokers belonged to the wealthier class of Shchedrin. They brought quite a bit of money into Shchedrin. As long as the Golodetzes and the brokers were “fat cats,” the town could exist. But in the beginning of the current [twentieth] century, business in the court turned down and it was felt in the town and there came a time of great need. Then America was “discovered” and people began to emigrate more and more. Not to find success, just a bit of bread.

It was “good” in Shchedrin only for a short time after the fire in Paritch when the wealthy from there came to Shchedrin. But they soon went back to Paritch and the good times ended. In better times, when Jews had work, America, where you had to work on Shabbos, was strange and distant, even a fright for the town Jews.

The first to leave were those who fled the draft. No one wanted to serve the Czar and eat unkosher food. The Golodetzes were exempt and didn't serve but the village Jews, when they couldn't be released, had to flee to America. Those who ran away were regarded as unfortunate because they were torn from their families, they believed, forever. Little by little the people got used to America and they stopped crying as one mourns for someone who has died, when someone went to the new land.

When the Golodetzes began to sell their houses and relocate, the town was left without a livelihood. The brokers lost their income. The storekeepers were left without sales, the tradesmen had no work, the drivers no passengers, the butchers could no live off their butchering. People felt the earth quaking under their feet and they didn't know where to turn. It was the first time that fathers allowed their daughters to go to America. More

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tickets were received from America. With sorrow, each would depart from Shchedrin and rivers of tears were spilled at leave-taking.

Reb Abraham Ber, the treasurer, plowed the court and he himself, the old dear official, began to work the land.

That was the end of an honorable history of a Jewish colony which for a long time was remarkable for her quiet assorted toilers, full-time and part-time land workers and her famous rich men, big business and great charity.

The crisis in the court did not come suddenly but occurred gradually and stemmed from two causes: (1) the great forests of White Russia had little by little been cut down and the sale of lumber became harder because of the union of the forest traders. The lumber business began to diminish and (2) because a railroad had been built and it connected the north and south of Russia and they began to use the larger northern forests.

At the time of the first World War, the emigration to America stopped and the few young people who remained in the town left for other parts of Russia. Only a few old people stayed and some land workers who didn't want and didn't have the opportunity to move. Many of them would get stipends from their relatives in North America, Canada and South Africa.

After the Bolshevik Revolution, the government paid much attention to the Shchedrin land workers and the support was noticeable. But when Shchedrin was formed into a collective farm, the number of Jewish land workers became a minority among the Gentiles, who had come from the surrounding villages. Heading the collective were Jewish Shchedrin young men whose authority came down especially hard on the heads of the Jews whose lands had been confiscated.

In the second World War, Hitler's murderers killed all the Jews. Among them: Abraham Yosef Akiva Lazars and his entire family, Nachum Pinsky, Berl Skorman, the slaughterer who was a woman and her daughters and others whom no one will know who they were.

For a hundred years there existed a Jewish settlement and such a dismal end!

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The History of the Family Golodetz

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<http://www.anapsid.org/schedrin/golodetzhistory.html>

Quite sometime ago it occurred to me to pen my recollections about Shtchedrin and the family Golodetz, but I never had the opportunity to do it. However, chance brought about this situation: In the fall of 1946 I traveled from New York to Palestine on a freight boat, the trip taking four weeks. This forced idleness suggested the idea that I devote the time to writing my recollections about Shtchedrin. Thus the following notes came into being.

I feel called upon to write the history of the Golodetz family because in my youth I was a witness to the "flowering" of that family (1860-1904) and because these recollections have impressed themselves upon my memory. They have been with me and I have been sustained by them all my life. These notes should be of interest, in the first place, to my relatives, who like myself spent their youth in Shtchedrin. Besides, these notes should also be of interest to outsiders, for the mode of life of the Golodetz family was typical of Jewish families in Russia. Since Russian and Polish Jewries were decimated during the war and many places of fond memory were destroyed, it is incumbent upon us, from the point of view of folklore, to record the rise and history of entire Jewish families and thus preserve them from oblivion.

The history of the Golodetz family comprises four generations, and represents their rise, flowering and decline. It is an interesting history, perhaps not as fascinating as that of the Buddenbrooks family in the version of Thomas Mann, but sufficiently attractive to be preserved. Shmaryahu Levine described his book his childhood and youth in Swistocz. That book aroused great interest. I am of the opinion that Shtchedrin is of no less interest, if not more. Regrettably, I lack the literary genius of Shmaryahu Levine. Recollections that have passed through the vision of a gifted writer receive an artistic stamp, a fascinating form and a psychological cast. I am utterly lacking in this gift of presentation. What I can offer is a true description of the milieu of that period, a simple representation of the conditions at that time, as they have impressed themselves upon my mind. My notes cannot therefore lay claims to any literary-artistic merits. They may be able to interest a limited circle of people.

The place from which the family Golodetz hailed is called Shtchedrin. It is in the district of Minsk, six miles from the river Berezina, and some thirteen miles from the Dnieper. One will look in vain in the usual maps for this place. However, in the large maps it is

recorded, but erroneously as Shtchedrino. In the vicinity Shtchedrin many battles are said to have taken place at the time of the retreat of Napoleon's army in 1812, and many square knolls are pointed out as mass graves of French soldiers. In my childhood I heard much about this, there is, however, no historical evidence for it. As far as I know, Shtchedrin was purchased around 1830 [1] as an estate in the name of Lubavitcher "Rebbe" Mendel Shneerson, so that the famous rabbis should have a right to the hereditary title of honorary citizen, which at that time carried with it certain privileges. In reality the land belonged to a large group of Jewish colonists, who in addition to being artisans engaged in extensive farming operations. Shtchedrin was considered a Jewish colony. A considerable part of the land, several hundred acres, belonged to Chaim Golodetz, the founder of the family. That land was on a hill, about a third of a mile from the township of Shtchedrin, and was said to have been the estate of the previous owner, a wealthy nobleman. There was a spacious park here, with select fruit trees and magnificent walks, such as one finds on wealthy estates. The official transfer of the part designated as "estate" to Golodetz took place in 1865. I have in my possession the documents in question. According to them, Michlin, as agent of Rabbi Mendel Scheerson [sic], turned over 325 acres to Chaim Golodetz.

Great-grandfather Chaim Golodetz died around 1876, shortly before my birth. In his will he left each grandchild and great-grandchild a definite amount. I was not the recipient of this gift. I did really know the founder of our family. He is reputed to have been an unusually clever person of impressive appearance, a good businessman and very charitable. I know little about his origin. Earlier he had lived in Azaritch, some 27 miles beyond Paritch, and came in his thirties to Shtchedrin, when that place was purchased for the rabbi of Lubavitch, whose follower he was. Chaim's name was first Golod and was later changed to Golodetz. The history of the family therefore begins with the founder, Chaim. He lived in a large house on the "estate" with a synagogue near by, and maintained a large household. His sons and, later, their descendents built houses nearby and settled in them, so that in my time the "estate" was a T-shaped assembly of some twenty large wooden houses, erected on three streets, with a population of several hundred people, all members of the Golodetz family. [2] It was a real court, which had dominion over the township of Shtchedrin, and in its way comparable to a dynastic residence. Such a family grouping was at that time a rare occurrence among Russian Jews. Few families can point to such a concentration, only the family Seldovitch in Berezin and the family Hornstein in Radomisl.

The said founder of the family, Chaim Golodetz, engaged in timber cutting operations and became wealthy. He purchased forests in various parts of the country, had them felled in winter and had the logs hauled to a river, where they floated in the Spring southward and were sold to the owners of sawmills. The lumber business was at that time an interesting and complicated enterprise which I shall describe in a special chapter.

Chaim Golodetz was the first to ship timber to the South on a large scale. This was not only due to his own competence, but also to the cooperation of very clever and honorable collaborators. Thus I still vividly recall old Yoshe Rochlin, a tall, broad-shouldered man

with his patriarchal beard, who could discourse cleverly and was exceedingly popular with the landowners. He was an adviser to prominent gentry, and enjoyed their full confidence. Other top employees were Nahum Sklovsky and Isaac Ber Kevesh, both of them interesting people. Industry, great ability, good relations with the landowners, and also honesty and propriety made Chaim Golodetz a rich man and gave him the reputation of a prominent "gevir."

His descendents: Chaim had three sons who continued the business and brought it to a considerable height: Leyb (my grandfather), Ber and Zalman. They were prolific. Leyb had two sons (one of them my father) and three daughters. Ber had four sons and four daughters, and Zalman had five sons and six daughters. [3] The sons took wives, and the daughters were married. Outsiders came into the family. The family grew. Contraceptives were unknown. Thus the court grew to include several hundred people in one spot. To the glory of the Golodetz family, it must be said that in contracting marriages money was no consideration. On the contrary, respectable families were preferred to those of wealth. Thus good and fresh blood was added to the family from outside. Through marriage, such names as Eliasch, Bernstein, Friedman, Greenberg, Landau, Monosohn, Lurie, Aberdam, Ginzberg, Kadinsky, and others - all names of high repute - came into the family.

GRANDFATHER LEYB

Grandfather Leyb died in 1888, shortly before my Bar Mitzva. I was his favorite grandson and shown preference in that I was invited to dine with him on Friday night and Sabbath morning, and sang Zmiros in his honor. My friends were jealous because of the favor shown me.

Grandfather Leyb was a kind of nobleman and had the manners of a pampered rich man. He had expensive clothes and fur coats, an expensive shtraymel for the Sabbath, and a very beautiful silver snuffbox. In his old age he maintained a magnificent team of horses for rides, since the physician had recommended such rides. Frequently he graciously took along one of the grandchildren, which was deemed a special honor. Two years before his death, at the age of seventy and some, Grandfather Leyb suffered a stroke that resulted in paralysis and a deterioration of his mental capacities. He was then lodged in the large living room. Two young men were assigned to take care of him day and night. This illness lasted, as stated, two years. The patient was mentally disturbed, highly irritable and gave us a good deal of trouble.

In this connection I should like to say something about medical conditions and care in Shtchedrin. The township had a permanent physician, employed by the community. The "court" had its own "feldsher", whose name was Sholem Mordechai. If someone in "court" took sick, the feldsher was called, who attempted to affect a cure with his own medical preparations. If the patient took a turn for the worse, the physician was brought in from the township. If the condition of the patient became worse still, a physician, Dr. Feiertag,

was summoned by telegram from Bobruisk, or Dr. Bloch from Gomel, both experts in their field. When Grandfather Leyb took sick and his illness assumed a grave character, the family was not content with the above physicians. It was customary then in wealthy Jewish homes in the case of illness of the head of the family to summon a professor from a distant part. And so it happened that the well-known Professor Tritschild, of Kiev, was called for consultation and treatment of grandfather. This was an expensive proposition. Professor Tritschild asked 500 rubles per day. The trip from Kiev to Shtchedrin and the return trip took two days. It was planned that Professor Tritschild was to stay in Shtchedrin only one day. Traveling expenses amounted to 300 rubles. Thus Tritschild's visit cost 1800 rubles, a relatively enormous sum for those days, the expenditure of which in the light of the otherwise modest living can only be explained by the fact that Jews cling stubbornly to life and do not hesitate to spend large amounts for the preservation of their health.

Professor Tritschild did not cure Grandfather. His condition became worse. The local physicians were of the opinion that only a neurologist could be of help in this case and suggested calling the famous neurologist, Professor Sykorsky, from Kiev. This was also done. His visit was slightly less expensive, as he charged only 300 rubles a day.

The visit of these two professors created quite a sensation in Shtchedrin and impressed me in particular. The news of their arrival spread in the vicinity. Many of the ailing in the neighboring communities (Rogatchev, Paritchi) hastened to Shtchedrin in order to be examined and obtain relief. The congestion was terrific and the examination could hardly take place. Tritschild as well as Sykorsky had long office hours and the entire procedure kept the population breathless.

The famous Kiev professors could bring no healing to Grandfather, and his condition grew worse. One day one of our employees, Sushe Baberower, came to my father and told him in eloquent words of the miracles of a certain Rabbi in Karelits (near Vilna) who cured the sick and who had become very famous on account of it. It would be a good idea to have him come to Grandfather. My father was a Hassid, a follower of the Kopyst "Rebbe", and as such hardly one to seek the aid of a Misnagdic rabbi. But what would not one do when his father is seriously ill and suffering? The Rabbi of Karelits was invited (about his remuneration I cannot say anything) and he came. I shall never forget his appearance. An old man of medium height, with a remarkably handsome face, surrounded by a white beard, bright piercing eyes, and a kindly expression. An imposing figure! Immediately upon his arrival he was led to the patient. Then he ordered something for the patient (I do not know what it was). The fact, however, is that there-after Grandfather's condition improved noticeably. The joy and enthusiasm of the family at this improvement were great. The arrival of the Rabbi of Karelits was even a greater sensation than the arrival of the Kiev professors. Again the ailing, old men, women and children, from the township of Shtchedrin as well as the vicinity flocked to the Rabbi to obtain his aid for their suffering. They came in the hundreds, filled all the rooms in Grandfather's house, and crowded at the door of the room in which the Rabbi received his callers. The congestion grew apace and assumed a dangerous form. The people were

seized by an unmistakable psychosis and fought like mad to gain entrance to the Rabbi. In vain did Asher Kevesh, who was standing at the door, attempt to regulate their entry. The pushing and shouting became progressively fiercer. It went on from morning to late at night. Most of the people did not get in and kept on pressing forward. The Rabbi had to return to Karelits, but in view of the large number of people pressing forward he could not leave Grandfather's house. The situation became critical. Then it occurred to Asher Kevesh to lower the Rabbi in the dark of the night through the window and to place him in a coach that took him to the nearest railroad station, where he boarded a train for his home town. This was a daring enterprise. Had the sick people noticed it, they would not have let the Rabbi go. They would have unharnessed the horses and thrown themselves upon the Rabbi in supplication. In this manner, however, he escaped and they were disappointed. I describe all this for it casts a glaring light on the mentality and morals of those days.

Now the Rabbi of Karelits was gone. The improvement resulting from his treatment, which was at first remarkable, did not last. Several months passed and Grandfather died at the age of 75, I believe. His death made a deep impression. He was buried with great honor. Interment, however, did not take place without incident. This incident, which impressed me deeply, I would like describe. Interment was naturally the affair of the "Hevra Kadisha" which consisted of a number of people from the township. When the news of Grandfather's death became known a revolt broke out within the ranks of that organization. The members declared that they would not proceed with the interment unless the family Golodetz contributed a large sum for the benefit of the township. They demanded something like 5,000 or 10,000 rubles, presumably for the building of a new bathhouse for the community. Such demands on the part of the "Hevra Kadisha" when a wealthy Jew died were not a rare occurrence at that time. They were made, however, only on such men as had done nothing or very little during their lifetime for their fellow man, and now the opportunity was utilized to exert pressure on their families. Incidents of this nature were generally regarded as a grievous insult, a humiliation to the name of the deceased. The "revolt" that broke out at Grandfather's funeral was a surprise and completely unjustified, for the family Golodetz had done very much for the township. Most of its inhabitants (officials, artisans, and shopkeepers) lived from the "court." There was no reason for exerting pressure on the family. But at that time the spirit of hostility and of envy, the reaction against the social use of the people of the "court," stirred up the hotheads of the township and prompted them to insist upon their demands. Thus interment was denied until a specified sum was given. (Among Jews burial must not be delayed.) Negotiations were brief, a compromise was effected. As far as I can recall, my father signed a note for 3,000 rubles and handed it to the spokesman of the "Hevra Kadisha." Later the anger and resentment at the action of the "Hevra Kadisha" was very great. Uncle Abraham Joseph and my father raged against the spokesmen and threatened counter-measures such as economic sanctions. I believe, however, that time anger passed quickly. Nothing happened. The thing was soon forgotten.

Now I wish to bring forward several members of the family circle.

Grandmother Dvoyra

Grandmother survived Grandfather by some fifteen years. She occupied the main rooms in the large rouse together with us, and died about 1903, an aged woman, quite clever but old-fashioned. All her life was spent in the house and in household duties. She never left Shtchedrin. The reason we occupied Grandfather's house was that our own was completely destroyed by fire. This is how the thing came about:

One evening I sat in my room studying. I must have been at the time about 17. Suddenly my mother came in and asked me to come to her aid. The hanging lamp in one of the rooms, which had been freshly filled with kerosene, caught fire because of some defect in the wick. I went over, detached the lamp from its frame and placed it, at the request of Mother, on the floor. But the lamp could not stand and tipped over. The kerosene was spilled and the fire spread rapidly. In vain did Mother and I, and later on also other people that rushed over, attempt to put out the fire. It was beyond control and the whole house consisting of ten rooms went up in flames. Practically nothing of the appointments was saved. This incident, in which I figured as partly responsible, is vivid before my eyes. After the fire our family moved into Grandfather's house, which was now occupied by Grandmother. That must have been in 1893. I remained in that house till 1897, when I left for Leipzig.

Uncle Ber

About Uncle Ber, my Grandfather's brother, I do not know much. He was a stout, rather blunt old gentleman, who was frequently quite disagreeable, so that people were afraid of him.

Uncle Zalman

The third brother, Uncle Zalman, was a handsome man. He was the real manager of the lumber business, and the most important representative of the family. His wife was a descendent of the Baal Shem, the founder of Hasidism. She is said to have brought 17 children into the world, of whom eleven survived (see attached table). I never knew her, for she died comparatively young. The kinship with the family of the Baal Shem was noticeable in the frequent visits of members of that family, generally men of impressive appearance, to Shtchedrin, in order to receive aid from their wealthy relatives. Their prominent ancestry lent them a certain dignity. At the age of 50, Zalman married a second time. His wife, Rivke Feygel, the daughter of Rabbi Byk of Volhynia, was a beautiful and very clever woman, who knew how to manage a large house and how to be a good stepmother to the still small children. As the wife of one of the three heads of the family she played a prominent role in the "court." Then came the time for her confinement. The event was awaited with great tension. But the good fortune of bearing an heir was not fated for the woman. Despite all the efforts of the physicians (Dr. Feiertag and Dr. Bevel were naturally called), the child was born dead. The union bore no fruit. Several years later, when Zalman died, Rivke Feygel left Shtchedrin with great leave-taking and her role was gradually forgotten.

Something should be said to characterize the members of the second generation, i.e. the

children of the three heads of the family, namely Leyb, Ber and Zalman. But these people are not sufficiently interesting to be described individually within this framework. They were simple folk with some Jewish knowledge but very little secular education. They could not even speak Russian correctly. They were pious - always wore headgear and long coats - primitive, exceedingly honest people. Three from among them came to the fore, inasmuch as they were active in the business and played a leading role. They represented the three branches of the family: My father Moses (son of Leyb), Israel Elye (son of Ber), and Areyeh Leyb (son of Zalman). Along with Uncle Zalman they managed the business and worked busily in the office. In the summer they were in Southern Russia, where the timber transports were sold.

The business was a partnership in which each of the brothers had an equal share, and after his demise was bequeathed to his children. I cannot now evaluate fully the scope of the business, for different criteria were operative then. But it must have been quite a large and complicated one. There were forests in various parts of Western Russia and the Ukraine which belonged to the firm, and the transportation of the timber to the South was a large enterprise. There were some 30 to 40 superintendents who were active in various places. The main office was in Shtchedrin. Two men were engaged in bookkeeping - the old respectable Isaac Treiwus and his son-in-law Elye Efros. In addition there was a special controller, Abram Donskoy. The bookkeeping, which was very meticulous, was done in Hebrew. The large, massive folios on the shelves made a great impression. Also the correspondence with Jewish merchants and employees was carried on in Hebrew (with a slight admixture of Yiddish). At that time Russian was not popular and was considered a foreign language, to be employed only with "goyim". My father used to say: "To know Russian is, of course, desirable, but a knowledge of Hebrew is indispensable, for this is the language of business correspondence and bookkeeping." In later years we laughed at this instruction of father. We lived in Germany for many decades, quite removed from this type of conception about the practical value of the Hebrew language. Now, after 50 years I have come to Palestine, and I conduct my correspondence and bookkeeping to a large degree in Hebrew, as my father had pictured it in olden days. We have here the return to the source. The chain is closed.

As mentioned, Shtchedrin was about eleven miles from the railway station Krasny-Bereg. This station remained unforgettably in my memory. It formed the point of contact with the world. Krasny-Bereg was a station on the line Libava-Romny and was between Bobruisk and Gomel. Bobruisk was toward the West, toward Germany, the land of culture. Gomel lead toward the Ukraine, to Kiev and the interior of Russia. In my imagination Krasny-Bereg was the point that formed the boundary between East and West, almost the crossroads of two different culture spheres.

Since the population of the "court" was pretty large, and travel for personal or business purposes was gaining in popularity, a lively communication between Shtchedrin and Krasny-Bereg developed. People came and went. To facilitate this travel horses and wagons were kept in readiness. The stables of the Golodetz family were in the courtyard of the office. Four and frequently six horses were at the disposal of those traveling to and

from the station. As a rule, the coaches would go to the station twice a day, once at noon to make the train for Bobruisk and Minsk, which left at 3 p.m., and a second time at 1 a.m. to make the train going in the opposite direction. The entire transportation business was in the hands of two Jewish coachmen who had run it for years. One was named Sushe, the other Yankel. Since everything that has to do with horses impresses itself upon a child's mind with particular strength, the recollection of the two coachmen - the constant companions on the trips to and from the station - remained vivid. They were simple men, but interesting in their own way. It would be worth while to describe them in greater detail, but for this my powers of description are inadequate. Thus I have to refrain from it.

LIFE IN SHTCHEDRIN

When you consider that a clan consisting of hundreds of people lived in an isolated area, that the people had no special worries, that women and young girls and also men and boys had little to do, that there were enough servants - then you will understand that in this narrow space, where men and things impinged upon one another, there was an exciting life. Each family lived in its own household, and in addition led a collective existence. People strolled through the streets, gossiped and amused themselves in their own way. The differentiation of the people was expressed in dividing the families into three groups - according to the grandfathers - and that correspondingly there prevailed a kind of a rivalry and petty jealousy, and occasionally also outright hostility, as is the case in so many families. On the whole, however, life was somewhat primitive though not uninteresting. Often people came to town - friends and relatives of sons and daughters who had married to Shtchedrin. Relations thus reached out to Warsaw, St. Petersburg, Minsk and Vilna. Many came for a visit and remained for weeks. There came merchants, matchmakers, collectors for various charitable institutions, booksellers, etc., people came and went--all through Kransy-Bereg. All these people aroused interest and brought a change into the regularity of life. My father was not altogether wrong when he would say: "Life in a large city is indeed comfortable and pleasant, but in a small place like Shtchedrin it is interesting, lively and exciting."

The Lumber Business

The timber business, which lent to the Golodetz family name and position, was in its way very interesting and deserves, I believe, to be mentioned in the framework of these notes.

As mentioned, the business was so constituted that entire forests in the districts of White Russia and the Ukraine were purchased for the purpose of clearing and transporting the timber to Southern Russia. The purchases were made on the basis of a survey and estimation on the part of experts. The clearing was done in winter by peasants engaged for the purpose. The logs were hauled on sleds to the nearest bank of a river that emptied into the Dnieper. When the winter was over and the thaw began, the logs were tied together into a raft, which consisted of about 200 such logs. Ten to twelve rafts formed a "lot" - a unit of transport. The transport was led by a responsible Jewish supervisor delegated from the main office in Shtchedrin and several assistants. The transport was towed by several special large boats, so-called "dubs," which had six men to row them and a coxswain ("*dubovik*"). The boats also had an iron anchor aboard. Two rafts required one

boat. The entire party thus required a fleet of 5 to 6 boats (some 40 people), directed by a chief "*dubovik*." As soon as high tide occurred the party sailed. One of the rafts carried a little log house, consisting of several rooms, which served as an office for the supervisor and his assistants, and from which the direction of the transports came. When one considers that each lot had over 100 workers and employees, who had to be fed for months, one can easily imagine what organization and labor as well as financial outlays were required to carry out the enterprise. The local superintendents in the forests were responsible for the management of their particular areas and decisions rested with them. Only the most important instructions came from the main office in Shtchedrin. From there also came the money for the expenditures.

A word about the finances. In those days money was not sent by mail nor by a bank. If the "shipping station" (*pristani*) was somewhere in the country far from a larger place, it was supplied with money - and occasionally the sums were considerable, running into thousands of rubles - from Shtchedrin by messenger. For this purpose reliable Jewish men were chosen. The money was sewn into wide linen girdles, which the messenger girded underneath his coat. He departed on foot to the frequently distant shipping places. It was not noticeable that the messenger carried such large amounts of money. Never was there a robbery - nor an embezzlement. Firstly, the messengers were honest; secondly, where could the simple messengers have fled to?

And now back to the shipping stations. There feverish activity was going on. The rafting and transporting of the "lot" had to be done quickly and for this reason: The logs were destined for the Southern cities Kremenchug, Ekaterinoslav and Kherson. The highest prices were paid in Kherson, and each merchant strove to bring his logs to Kherson. The reason for this was that between Ekaterinoslav and Kherson there were more strong rapids (which recently have become generally known through the gigantic hydroelectric station Dnieprostroy, which the Soviet Government has erected). The rafts had to pass through this rapid current, a distance of some 70 kilometers, to reach Kitchukus, where the normal current began, and from thence go on to Kherson. The rapids could be negotiated only at high tide and in absolutely calm weather. Under these conditions the distance of 70 kilometers could be covered in 8 to 10 hours. In case of wind, it was necessary to wait. But this waiting meant the passing of the high tide, which made it impossible to navigate the river. In such inauspicious cases, the rafts had to be untied and shipped in smaller portions through an artificial canal built alongside. This was very costly and meant a great loss. The transports gathering before the rapids, south of Ekaterinoslav, when the winds were low, were arranged according to the time of their arrival and dispatched on their dangerous route. This circumstance makes it understandable why each transport was anxious to arrive as quickly as possible in Ekaterinoslav and at the rapid currents, in order not to miss its turn. On such critical days - sometime in May - when the rafts stood before the rapids and waited to be dispatched, there was great excitement. People looked skyward and longed for calm weather. The Golodetz family in Shtchedrin knew the situation. If calm weather prevailed in the morning in Shtchedrin, the same weather also prevailed in Ekaterinoslav and the dispatch of the rafts could be expected. As a rule, a telegram would actually arrive with the joyous news: such and such "lot" has safely reached Kitchkus. The people were satisfied then. But it also happened

that the wind blew constantly for a long time, then one knew that the game was lost.

In May-June the lots designated for Kremenchug, Ekaterinoslav and Kherson had arrived and the Golodetzes departed for these cities to realize the business, i.e. to sell the logs. This lasted two to three months. In the fall the people returned home. Then the next season set in and the cycle began anew. From the South, after the sale of the logs, the merchants brought back promissory notes due in twelve months that could be discounted in case of need of cash. The discounting was always done by Isaac Levine in Minsk, the banker to the Golodetz family. It was a question of many hundreds of thousands of rubles. Levine was an agent and broker for the banks of Minsk, a reliable man and worthy of confidence. The business was remunerative. When I was in Minsk, as a child, I saw Isaac Levine's chief bookkeeper and agent of Joshua Benenson - a handsome, impressive man. He was then one of the well-known Hoveve Zion. Later he went to Palestine and became the founder of many settlements in the country.

The Golodetz family in Shtchedrin was reckoned among the first timber merchants in the 1880's and 1890's, in so far as trade with the South was considered. Their transports, generally 10 to 12 during the season, went through the rivers Sosh, Beresina and Dnieper, and were visible to the inhabitants of the adjoining places. When the rafts passed and the people on the banks asked: "Whose raft?" the answer was mostly "Golodetz." Small wonder that the name of the family was well-known in the western parts of Russia. Hundreds of people found employment in the lumber business with the Golodetzes.

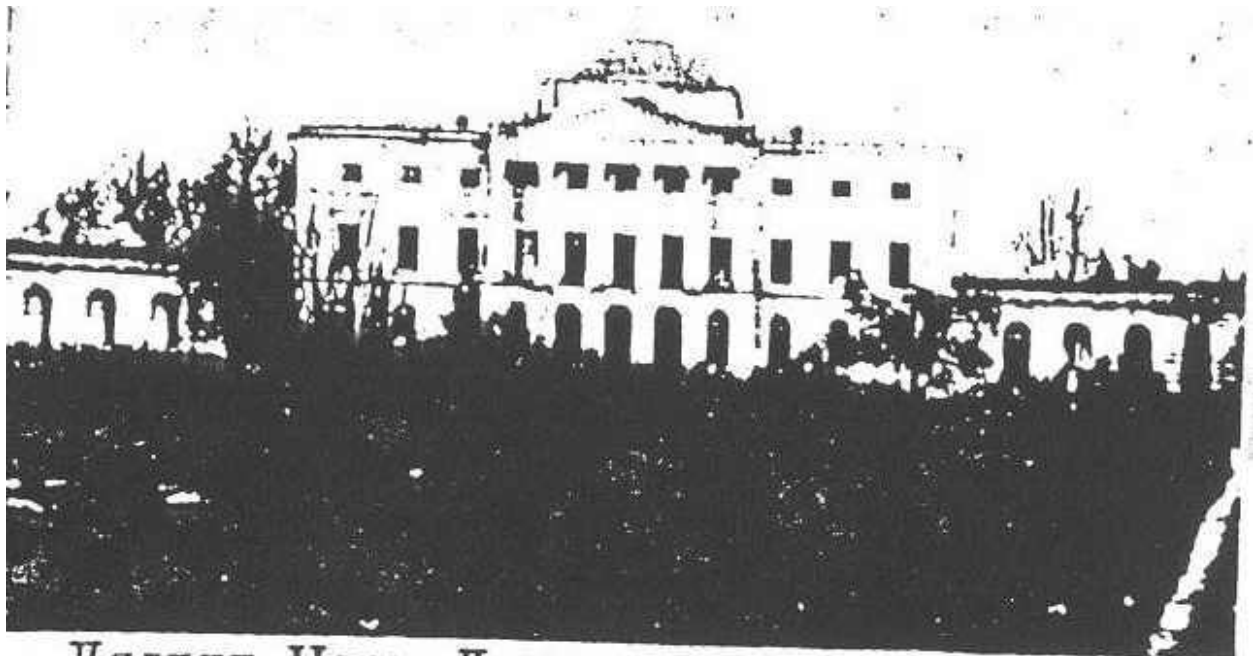
For those who know something about the timber business, I would like to add that the average measurement of the logs shipped to the South was then 13.8 meters in length and 27 centimeters in diameter at the top. The stems also attained sometimes a length of 18 meters, and 45 centimeters in diameter at the top. Later the forests no longer yielded such favorable measurements.

I cannot say anything definite about the size of the Golodetz wealth. I was too small then to grasp these things. What clung to my memory is the fact that when Grandfather died in 1887 the estate left to the two sons, Abraham Joseph and my father, amounted to some 400,000 rubles. Since this constituted about a third of the wealth of the entire family this latter must have been over a million rubles, which was a very considerable amount for those days. How things went after 1887 I don't know exactly. They were probably good years. After 1900 things took a turn for the worse. A depression set in in the lumber business in Ekaterinoslav and Kherson. The notes of the southern merchants were not honored and the Golodetzes suffered heavy losses. Bad times began. Then it was suddenly recalled that there still was Lalitchi, which could be utilized for something. Interest turned to this estate.

Lalitchi

The estate of Lalitchi was purchased by the Golodetzes in 1880 and registered in the

name of Chaim's three sons. As is well known, the discriminatory laws against the Jews were passed in 1882, among them the prohibition against buying land [see ALEXANDER III, The May Laws (May 3, 1882)], so that in this case the purchase could still be recorded in the name of a Jew. The estate was in the district of Chernigov, 10 kilometers from the city of Surazh and 15 kilometers from the railway station Unyetcha. It was a great distance from Shtchedrin, 24 hours journey by train. Hence in the first years there was little communication between Shtchedrin and Lalitchi.



Ляличы, Черн. Дворецъ врем. Имп. Екатерины

The estate had an historical past and was very famous. It once belonged to Count [Pyotr] Zavadovsky, a Favorite of Catherine the Great. In the center of a large park he had a palatial mansion erected by no less an artist than the Italian Rastrelli, who also had built the palace in which the Duma [4] met. Both edifices are in the same style. Rastrelli invited many Italian artists to adorn parts of the palace in Lalitchi with figures of Greek mythology. The palace, a three-story structure, with symmetrically arranged semi-circular wings on both sides, was very impressive. Zavadovsky ordered the most expensive furniture and appointments from Paris. The palace had 120 rooms, among them the bedroom of Catherine, who is said to have spent there three days. That was in the 18th century. After the death of Zavadovsky the estate changed owners. The last one was Nicholas Alexeyvitch Atriganyev, who led a very extravagant life. I still have in my possession a number of the "*Birzheviya Vyedomosti*" of August 30, 1899, with a story of Lalitchi by Breshko-Breshkovsky, in which he describes the dissolute life of Atriganiyev and his lavish entertainment. The man ruined the estate and brought it under the hammer. The appointments, furniture, rugs and the like, of the highest artistic value, were purchased by various people, undoubtedly at ridiculous prices and carried away to distant parts. The estate, however, including the palace and appurtenances came into the

possession of the Golodetz family. The purchase was not made because of artistic interests, but on account of the extensive forests which belonged to the estate, and which were destined to be cleared and fall victim to the lumber business. This took place in the following years. The forests disappeared. Only the magnificent park surrounding the palace and in turn surrounded by a stone wall of a 7 kilometer perimeter, was spared. While the clearing was in progress the estate was put under the management of Abraham Khurgin, son of the Shtchedrin colonist, Jonah Khurgin. He had some idea of farming, and was an honorable man who called forth respect. He maintained good relations with the neighboring land-owners and managed the place independently, since the owners in Shtchedrin knew nothing about farming and had full confidence in their manager. Thus it went on for decades. The estate, of some 5,000 desyatins, produced a large potato crop and Khurgin built a distillery, which utilized profitably the potatoes and provided an opportunity for the feeding of cattle - an enterprise that brought good profits. This was a huge enterprise run entirely by Khurgin.

Now about the palace. When the estate was taken over it was still more or less intact. Maintenance, however, demanded very large expenditures. The mere repairs to the roof called for large outlays. No one was interested in it. The estate was only purchased for the sake of the forest. Every thing else was of no interest. And so the beautiful park was left to fate. The roof deteriorated progressively; rain penetrated the rooms and ruined them. The parquet floor made of expensive oak was torn out and sold. The magnificent marble sills were given to the governor when he visited the palace and asked for them. I do not know what the governor thought of this vandalism provoked by himself.

I saw the palace for the first time in 1894, when I came to Lalitchi in connection with my duties. At that time the palace was still in such a condition that one could go through the rooms and still see some of the vanishing splendor. The decorations over the staircase - at that time I understood very little of the symbolic representations of Greek mythology - were still intact. After many years everything fell into decay. Only the proud structure remained standing. As stated, when the estate was taken over the appointments and inner furnishings were there no longer. Only in a corner there were still a few pieces of furniture and these were shipped to Shtchedrin. I recall these pieces quite well: a living room set, in Catherine the Great style, of exquisite mahogany upholstered in expensive silk, a table, a large sofa and chairs. This furniture was put into Grandfather's room. After his death the furniture was used by Grandmother and her "little godchildren." No one understood the value of the furniture and cared for its preservation. In the course of years the furniture was completely worn and ruined. Only a magnificent secretary of most beautiful mahogany was left. This beautiful piece came into possession of Aunt Eva Eliash, who, treasured it, first in Shtchedrin and later in Kiev. What became of the secretary after the Bolsheviks seized Kiev no one knows. Lastly, I should like to mention the large bookcases of light unstained oak that were brought from Lalitchi to Shtchedrin ((how these gigantic bookcases standing some 4-5 meters were transported is still a puzzle to me) and distributed among the three brothers. The cases were so high that they could not be brought into the rooms. The headpieces had to be removed.

All these pieces of furniture - remains of an old palace - appear to me now retrospectively in a beautiful aspect. At that time both the others and I understood very little about antique furniture and had no idea of their value.

In 1880-1900 we lived in Shtchedrin without thinking much of Lalitchi. It was rarely mentioned and never visited. It was too far. Only in 1904, when business reverses set in and money became scarce, it was decided to sell the estate and to convert it unto a source of income. The relationship among the members of the family was then rather loose. The business was no longer conducted as a partnership. Everyone was for himself. Lalitchi could no longer be sold as a whole, it was necessary to divide it into three parts among the descendants of the three heads of the family. These were eleven in number (two descendants of Leyb, four of Ber, and five of Zalman) who had to negotiate among themselves. Now, it is a well-known fact that a rationally managed estate (fields, meadows, distillery, forests) can hardly be divided, for the whole thing represents an organic unit, which cannot be separated. Consequently, many and various suggestions were made. For years the three groups of heirs negotiated with one another and could not reach an agreement. Each group believed that the other was getting the better part of the bargain. The tension grew. In all likelihood no accord would have been reached had not the condition of the individual families become so critical that the division appeared as an absolute necessity, a question of life and death. Thus, in 1908 the division was officially carried out. It was, as stated, a division into three parts, and a later division among the members of the groups in question. My father had to come to an understanding with the heirs of his brother Abraham Joseph. His share included the distillery and palace, at that time half in ruin. In 1912, Maklakov, then governor of Tchernigov and later Minister of the Interior, "persuaded" my father to rent the palace - for 15,000 rubles, I believe - for purposes of a theological seminary. My father agreed. In 1917 the Bolsheviki confiscated the entire estate for the benefit of the peasants. Thus came to an end the period of Lalitchi in the position of the Golodetz family. My father's deed to Lalitchi is still in my possession. It is worthless.

MATCHMAKERS

The concept of the "*shadken*" [a marriage broker] is familiar with us Jews. He is the man engaged in the arranging of matches. As a rule it was an avocation with people who wanted to earn a little extra money. But there were also those who devoted themselves exclusively to this profession. The business, if successful, was highly lucrative. If a match was successfully concluded the matchmaker received a fee of 2% of the dowry from the bridegroom as well as the bride. The matchmakers guild consisted of men that operated locally and of such as operated all over Russia and Poland - the so-called "world matchmakers." Several representatives of the latter category are vivid in my memory: a certain Mirsky, tall, stately, very handsome, urbane, well-mannered, was always on the road in the pursuit of his business. Here he was in St. Petersburg, then in Moscow, Kiev and Berlin. In the summer he was in Marienbad or Karlsbad, constantly striving to unite in matrimony sons and daughters of wealthy Jewish families. He was a welcome visitor

and because of his influence and contacts well received by the heads of the families. From time to time Mirsky also came to Shtchedrin, where there were many candidates of both sexes. As a child, I admired his poise and good manners. Whereas other matchmakers were frequently regarded as annoying visitors and were treated accordingly, Mirsky was regarded with respect and "offers" were discussed with him. He came, as a rule for one to two days, visited the houses of the candidates and left. This applied also to the other matchmakers, although they did not enjoy the reputation of Mirsky.

In Shtchedrin, we too had a "world matchmaker", Yerahmiel Kanoorovitz. He was most of the time on journeys through the various parts of Western Russia. An unusually clever person and highly skilled in his profession, he frequently came to our house and engaged in long conversations with my parents. His stories about people and places, family conditions, his experiences on his long journeys were always exciting and held the audience spellbound. He conducted an extensive correspondence with his clients. I saw him frequently writing for hours and mailing piles of letters, which impressed me greatly.

Weddings in Shtchedrin

Weddings always introduced sensation and change into the workaday life. The large number of families in Shtchedrin provided about two weddings a year. These were celebrated with great pomp. Several weeks prior to the event came the "sarver" (caterer) Ysroel Eyle from Bobruisk and immediately began to prepare the colossal amounts of food. Fish were bailed in huge caldrons over an open fire in the courtyard. Everything was prepared in large quantities. The Shtchedrin music band (klezmer) was of course not sufficient for a Golodetz wedding: a big orchestra (20 to 25 players) were brought from Bobruisk. With it came a famous *badchen*, a merrymaker, who was the master of ceremonies and entertained the guests. At the head of the orchestra were two violinists, who were good musicians. One was named Artche and the other Osher. Both filled the audience with enthusiasm, but there was no agreement as to who was the better player. The predominant opinion was that Osher was the greater virtuoso, but Artche excelled him in improvisation. The music of the latter touched the heart and moved the audience.



Weddings lasted, as a rule, one week. There came "*mekhutonim*" (in-laws) and relatives, occasionally quite interesting, more or less "cultured" women from various parts of Russia. The arrivals were lodged in the houses of the various families and were the subject of curiosity and admiration.

Weddings took place usually on Tuesday. Before and after came banquets for the *mekhutonim* and close relatives. Monday evening was always set aside for a "banquet for the poor." Hundreds of poor from Shtchedrin and vicinity would profit from the wedding. The people were generously received and feted. It was considered the proper thing in the family to mingle among the poor and to serve them. After the sumptuous meal money was distributed among the poor. Someone with a sack full of coins stood and distributed the gifts, amidst great tumult and shouts, among the poor.

The "*khupa*" and the wedding evening were conducted in the traditional manner. I particularly recall the wedding of my sister Bella, perhaps because of an unusual event in the general program of things. Attracted by the news of the approaching wedding, three actors, professionals from a Yiddish theatre in a neighboring city, came to town. One of them was named Byelogolovsky. The men offered to present after the wedding meal several dramatic sketches. My father was in a good mood (the match between Bella and Israel, the son of Uncle Zalman, was to his liking) and he agreed. After the meal the actors appeared masked as a "*rebbe*" and Hasidim. They sang, danced and presented various scenes. The success was extraordinary. The older people and the guests knew as yet nothing of theatre and were fascinated. Old and young stood crowded, some mounted benches and chairs in order to have a better view of the presentation. So great was the actors' success that they were permitted to give a special performance. They were richly rewarded. I understood at that time nothing about the theatre, but Byelogolovsky, with his disguise and mimicry impressed me greatly and remained in my memory. He was probably a lot more than an artist.

TEACHERS

Of our "*melamedim*" (teachers) the following remained in my memory: Shaye Zavel, my first teacher, who taught me the reading of Hebrew, a harmless and kindly man. In addition to becoming a teacher, he was for many decades a cantor and reader of the Torah in the Golodetz synagogue, a central figure in the house of prayer. He had a good voice and discharged his duties as the main cantor on Sabbath and the holidays in an excellent manner. He practically never made a mistake during the services on the Holy Days and during the reading of the Torah.

Shmerl, my second teacher, who taught me mainly the Bible, is of no special interest. His instruction was given within the framework of the "*kheder*". Six to eight children were instructed jointly in one room, which was put at his disposal by one of the parents. Each boy in his turn had to bring kerosene for illuminating the room. Shmerl was frequently

strict and occasionally even "aggressive." On the whole, however, he was considerate with the "court" children. I do not recall that that we were ever beaten, as was elsewhere often the case. The intervals between the terms (sof hazman) were wonderful: one did not attend kheder and could enjoy himself.

After Shmerl came Zalman Shimen, my last melamed who was supposed to teach us the Talmud. He was not very successful. I believe I was the only one of the students who learned something, inasmuch as I went through several tractates of the Talmud and even attained the study of the Codes. I do not, however, recall much of it.

Far more interesting was the circle of teachers who instructed us in secular subjects. In the first place, let me mention Motodetsky. I did not know him, since he had been in Shtchedrin in the 1870's. He was a true revolutionary. He is said often to have expressed the intention to assassinate the Minister Trepov, the one who throttled the Russian revolution. One day he actually left Shtchedrin and went to St. Petersburg where he made an attempt on the life of the minister. He was apprehended and condemned to death.

Other teachers - of the older generation - whom I recall only vaguely were Weinberg and Pollak. They were teachers of Russian and German. I was too small to retain any impressions of them. All I know is that they were highly regarded. In my days came to the fore:

Eskin, who taught Russian, geography and arithmetic - a typical teacher. He was there for many years and practically all the young of Shtchedrin were taught by him. His wife, a passably intelligent woman, established in her house a lending library. It contained many of the Russian classics: Turgenyev, Goncharov, Pissemsky, Tolstoy and others. Also periodicals were available: "Ruskaya Mysl," "Vyestnik Europi" and others. All books were wrapped and bound in linen covers and were thus circulated from hand to hand. This library brought to the young people in the Golodetz family an acquaintance with Russian literature. We read the books very avidly. A new world came within our vision. The characters Bazarov, Rudin, Oblomov, etc., occupied our minds and brought the outer world nearer to us. In this sense it may well be said: Mrs. Eskin did more for the education of the Golodetz youth at that time than many a teacher.

We must also mention Shadur. This man is of interest because of his unique history. He was the son of a simple tanner in Shtchedrin. In his youth, he had left Shtchedrin and somehow made his way to Berlin. For many years, he was not heard of and was considered a lost son. Rumor had it that he was studying at the University of Berlin. One day came the news that he was returning to Shtchedrin. The report was received with great interest, since he was viewed as a very suitable teacher for German. Shadur came back changed beyond recognition. Not a trace of the Shtchedrin "bokher" remained in him. Instead, there appeared a thoroughly German-looking young man with Berlin manners and a Berlin dialect. He no longer spoke Yiddish. His past was as if obliterated. There was nothing Jewish about him, he appeared a real German. The people of

Shtchedrin were amazed at him and laughed at his peculiarities. For a long time, he was a popular subject of conversation. An additional factor heightened the amazement over him: he was a strict vegetarian. He ate neither meat nor fish, nor eggs, neither butter or milk, but only vegetables. Such a thing was unknown in Shtchedrin and the people could not get over their surprise. He ordered a large quantity of soup and hash of vegetables for one time and this lasted him for several days. Someone coined the *bon mot*: "What my goat refuses to eat today, the teacher Shadur will eat tomorrow and the day after." At that Shadur looked very health and had a fresh skin. He spent several years in Shtchedrin as a teacher of German, and later went to Uman (district of Kiev). Nothing was heard from him after that.

Other noteworthy teachers were Batalin and Shigalin, men of excellent education and systematic knowledge. However, I cannot say much about them, since they taught pupils of a younger generation and consequently I had little contact with them.

A teacher of whom I think with admiration, love and reverence was Ghenin. He was engaged by my mother as a tutor for our family and lived in our house. He was at that time about 28. He was a short, stocky individual, with an abnormally large head. His intelligent face was surrounded by a little black beard. He had completed his studies in the Jewish Teachers Seminary in Zhitomir. What this institution meant for the education of Jewish youth is well known. The students were given there a thorough education and later as teachers disseminated knowledge and culture among the Jewish masses. Ghenin wanted to enroll at a university, but his application was refused because of the Jewish quota regulations. He even traveled to St. Petersburg, where he was received by the Minister Delyanov, but did not succeed in gaining admission to the university. But he did not give up his efforts. To keep the wolf from the door, he took a position as tutor. He lived in our house for about two years, and I must say that he gave us much in that time. He was a versatile man and a keen thinker who acquainted us with much Russian literature. He read with us the Russian critics Byelinsky, Dobrolubov, Pisarev, and others, and in his conversations transmitted to us much of the world of general ideas. He was, moreover, musically inclined and helped up advance along these lines. From Shtchedrin he went to Borisov, where he graduated as an "*evtern*", the Demidov Lyceum (a law school) and became state rabbi in that city. He died comparatively young.

After Ghenin came to us De Boer, an elderly man, a gentile. He, too, lived in our house and taught German, English and, surprisingly, bookkeeping. He was from Holland and had come to Russia in 1878, at the time of the Russo-Turkish war, as a newspaper correspondent. After the war he remained in Moscow and was employed here and there as a teacher. Fate brought him to us in Shtchedrin. He was then somewhat over sixty, a tall, slender figure with a gray Vandyke beard. He spoke only German. For some reason or other, he was particularly interested in the Talmud and studied the German translation of the tractate Berakot. I frequently saw him absorbed in the study of this book. Frequently he discussed Jewish problems with my father. At that time I understood very little of such things and am therefore in no position to report on them.

De Boer was with us for only about a year. He was a believer in the "cold cure" and insisted that his pupils likewise submit to this "cure". In the middle of winter we were rubbed with snow every morning. I was the first to object to this barbarous treatment. My brother Benjamin continued the "cure" for a while but stopped it ultimately. Only De Boer continued it. One winter day he went to Minsk. He caught cold, possibly because of the snow rubbing, developed pneumonia and shortly thereafter passed away. Thus the tutelage of this remarkable man came to an end. De Boer was my last teacher in Shtchedrin. Then came other times and other teachers.

MILITARY SERVICE

Something should be said about the arrangements in the Golodetz family for military service. To be a soldier was considered the worst calamity. Up to that time no one in the Golodetz family had served in the army. The young people obtained somehow - naturally through bribery - exemptions from military service. One of the means was the "*Kvitantsya*", a certificate possessing the miraculous property of exempting its owner from further military service. These certificates were issued in the time of Nikolai I to those young men who volunteered for military service, and read that that young soldier in question had purchased freedom from the military service for another young person who would be drafted. These certificates, so to speak, were a release from military service for money. They were expensive, some 5,000 rubles, a high sum for those days. But a rich Jew, concerned for his family, paid that sum in order to keep his son from military service. The original *kvitantsyas* could be entered in any name. It could be later be transferred, but only to a brother or cousin. At the request of our mother, our father had purchased a *kvitantsya* for the seven sons, in the eventuality that their release could not be obtained in the ordinary manner. In reality, all seven sons slipped through without being called into military service. The *kvitantsya* held in reserve was never utilized. What happened to it I cannot say. I was freed in Surash, near Lalitchi, by drawing a high number. How that happened has remained the secret of the people involved in the procedure. In order that my brother Benjamin receive "*Igota*" (a special prerogative) my birth certificate was postdated by one year.

THE MAIL

Halfway between the "court" and the township was the meeting point of old and young. This took place daily, in the afternoon when Motel, the mailman, distributed the mail. Letters were the means of communication between little Shtchedrin and the great world, and consequently there was excitement at the time of the distribution of the mail. Recipients of letters communicated news and told of other events. At any rate the recipients of letters and newspapers belonged to the most interesting moments in the daily life of the people of Shtchedrin.

Very vivid is the memory of the great fire in Paritchi around 1889. Practically all the

homes were burned down and the victims came in the hundreds to Shtchedrin, where they found shelter. The increase in population, the influx of new people, changed the entire appearance of Shtchedrin and aroused great interest. Here I should like to point to something that was typical in the life of the Jews in olden days. Rich Jews went in summer to spas such as Karlsbad and Marienbad. This was considered the proper thing.

To travel in the vicinity, to make outings out of pure interest in the neighborhood, as is customary in other parts of Europe, was unknown in Shtchedrin. It appeared to be superfluous and unseemly to travel for no apparent reason except curiosity. Tourism was unknown. Thus I never got to see Paritchi, a township of only 10 kilometers from Shtchedrin. I know the place only from hearsay. Why it never occurred to anyone to go over there - there was regular communications between the two towns - I do not know. This was part of the backwardsness of those days. The same applies to Bobruisk, the county seat. People went there only when it was necessary, but never for pleasure or entertainment.

REMINISCENCES

When my thoughts turn on the wings of memory to old Shtchedrin they dwell over a number of people and events, which I would like to record in these notes.

One of them is our other grandfather, Chaim Korngold, the father of our mother. He was a handsome, slender man, with fine features and a white beard. He lived with us in a specially furnished room. I see him before me, bowed over folios of the Talmud, studying the Talmud in a sing-song, and occasionally writing elucidations and commentaries to the works of the scholars. The table was covered with manuscripts. I vividly recall his exposition of the Song of Songs on Passover night after the Seder. His sing-song accompanying the most beautiful passages of the book touched the heart and fascinated the audience. In 1890, at the age of 60, he went together with the rabbi of Simferopol to Jerusalem to end his days there, as was the custom. There he married an elderly woman about whom I know nothing more. After a year or two, he came to Shtchedrin to visit his children. Here he took sick with uremia and suffered greatly. Dr. Feirtag and Dr. Bloch were called in. They treated him by means of cathartics, but without results. He died after three days and was buried in Shtchedrin, not in Palestine as he had hoped. He was a jolly old man, full of fun, who played with his grandchildren as with his equals. When he came back from Palestine he told us about the difficult journey, of the trip between Jerusalem and Jaffa that required several days, of the difficulty of landing in Jaffa and of the water shortage in Jerusalem. When I juxtapose this to the landing in Haifa now, the auto line Tel Aviv-Jerusalem, the houses with all the modern improvements in Rehovia, the colossal progress that the country has made since 1890 becomes evident.

For the portrayal of Grandfather Chaim Korngold I include here a photograph taken some 70 years ago, representing the family with Grandmother at the head, the sons in frock coats, white trousers and cylinder, the daughters in the Biedermeier style. My

parents are also in this picture. [5]

My memory also dwells upon Moyshe Yavelov. He came to Shtchedrin from Minsk as the son-in-law of Israel Elye. He was a young man of some general education, spoke Russian well and knew literature, both Russian and Foreign. He had the gift of satirizing people in poems and aphorisms. He composed excellent lampoons, mostly in Yiddish, about persons and events of the day. The poems were striking, full of biting irony. The songs were received with great interest by the "court" society, were frequently rendered and remained "hits" for a long time. Some members of the family still remember and recite fragments of them. Yavelov may be regarded as our "court poet" and satirist of that time.

I also recall Isaac Ber Kevesh. He was one of the most important managers, a contact man between the office and the authorities and landowners. He lived in Bobruisk and came frequently to Shtchedrin where he was our guest. He could tell much about the life of the Russians and Polish aristocracy, about counts and dukes of olden and more recent days, narrate episodes and describe scenes. His stories of life in the higher circles fascinated and stirred the imagination. People listened to him very eagerly.

A town figure, not without interest, was Blumke, the wife of Moyshe the Shames (beadle). Moyshe was all his life *beadle* of the Golodetz synagogue, and manager of the bathhouse and the *mikva*. Women know what the *mikva* was in olden days. Blumke had only one aim in life: to do good, to help the poor and needy. That was her hobby; it filled out her existence. She ran from house to house and collected money and things for the poor and sick. She was indefatigable and helped as much as she could, not merely out of kindness but to a certain degree out of selfishness. Every good deed was a *mitzva*. Blumke was determined to acquire as many *mitzvas* as possible and to prepare adequately for the hereafter. That was the meaning of her actions. She used to say, "*Mitvas*, good deeds, are like precious stones on the journey. Who can pass by without thinking of filling his pockets with them?" Thus the woman lived with one thought - to be good to others and thus provide herself with *mitzvas*, the currency of the hereafter.

Other characters come to mind.

Abraham Ber, the messenger, the father of my friend Gankin, now in Jerusalem. A very appealing person with considerable knowledge not only of religious but also mundane matters. He lived in the township and came on holidays to visit us. I listened with great interest to his conversations with my father about nature phenomena, about the life of men and animals. A man who had received no secular education and yet know a great deal about natural sciences. He impressed me.

Abraham Havkin, the mayor of Shtchedrin, who ran the affairs of the township. A tall, impressive man who could be very witty.

Moyshe Mordecai, the violinist of Paritchi, who settled in Shtchedrin for a few years after the fire in his home town. He was a good violinist and instructed Benjamin and me in music. As a teacher he was not quite up to par. He taught me a false position of the left arm and of the right hand, which remained with me for the rest of my life. Later we had another teacher, Jacob Epstein, who came from Kharkov and was considered an outstanding virtuoso. He played with great sweetness the "Legend of Venjavsky" and with great temperament and verve various "Krakovyaks".

I also recall Sholem the Cantor. He lived in a small house near the "court". By calling and talents he was a cantor, but this position could not quite support him and he struggled all his life. We saw him frequently. He was a fair tenor and highly gifted musically. Although he had no musical training, he could charm beautiful tones out of a violin. He possessed compositions of famous cantors (Sulzer, Lewandovsky) and frequently sang these songs with great feeling. He was an artist through and through, but in Shtchedrin no one paid any attention to him, he was not appreciated. Under different circumstances, he may have become a great artist, a famous singer. This way his talents did not attain their full development.

The following episode is quite old; it belongs in the 1870's and was told to me later: One of our town officials traveled from Vilna to St. Petersburg. In the station restaurant of the first class sat a group of gentiles at a table; before them was a copy of the paper "*Novoye Vremya*", from which some of the members read and argued passionately. The name of Shtchedrin was repeatedly mentioned. Our man naturally became interested. Unobtrusively he approached the group and noted the date of the paper. He came to Shtchedrin and reported the incident which aroused great curiosity. What could there be in the paper about Shtchedrin? The copy in question was obtained and lo, there was an article about the famous novelist, Saltykov-Shtchedrin, who had absolutely nothing to do with the township of Shtchedrin.

In 1882, the family Golodetz received the title of Hereditary Honorary Citizen because Chaim Golodetz had been for so and so many years a Merchant of the First Category. There came a large, printed certificate, beginning with the words, "We, Alexander III", and listing all members of the Golodetz family. At the end were affixed the seals of the Master of Heraldry and of the Senate. A copy of this document is still in my possession. At that time, I was then six years old. We were proud of it. The title, Hereditary Honorary Citizen, appertained only to those members of the family that had the name Golodetz. It did not appertain to the children of fathers who married into the family. For the first time there came up a differentiation that aroused dissatisfaction. Originally, these "honorary citizenships" carried with them various privileges, especially the right of residence outside the pale. Later, these privileges were abrogated.

The family Golodetz lived in the "court" like a large society. The interests were somewhat primitive, they were not on a high cultural level. They were, however, many-sided. Life was easy, there was not much to do. In the morning people went to the synagogue, which

was the center for all, as it were, a local club. The prayers were said hastily, and people chatted about this and that. After the "davnen" the people went home. The older people went to their business, the younger ones to their studies. No one was overworked. Noon dinner was at 12. At 4, one had tea. At 6 we went to receive the mail at the post office. Then it was time again for the synagogue. The evening was free for conversation and gossip. On holidays, one did nothing.

My father's house occupied a special position in the "court" and was recognized as the center. He was the most active person in the conduct of the business and was considered the leading figure. Our mother was an educated person for those days, with cultural interests. She came of a good family in the city of Mogilev and had attended in her adolescence a girls' private school. She spoke Russian and German quite well. In our house there were the Russian paper "*Novosty*" (published by the Jewish journalist Notovich), the German "*Gortenlaube*" and "*Uber Land und Meer*". The illustrations contained in the last acquainted me in my childhood with the events the world over. I still recall the illustrations in connection with the death of Kaiser Wilhelm I, and the illness of his successor Frederick (probably in 1888).

The preferred position of our house makes it understandable why important visitors, like the "*ispravnik*" (county police chief) or the "*stanovoy pristav*" (police sergeant) were received in our house. Their arrival was generally announced by the sound of bells attached to their carriage pole. They were cordially received by Mother and remained as a rule to the next day. These officials did not come because of mere friendship or for pleasure. Mostly they were urged on by the wish or attempt to obtain a small "loan." This was a usual occurrence. As a rule their wishes were granted in consideration of the situation.

THE TOWNSHIP OF SHTCHEDRIN

Shtchedrin was, as mentioned, half a kilometer from the "court". It consisted of two long parallel streets and had a population of some 2,000 people: farmers, tailors, shoemakers, blacksmith, shopkeepers, clerks, teachers. Very many of the people lived from the Golodetz family. Life in the township was thoroughly Jewish. At the head of the community was the "starosta". Among the adjuncts of the town was the rabbi and the physician. In my memory have remained the physicians Pines (later in Ekaterinoslav), Friedman (moved to America), and Danziger (later in Almavir). So far as I can judge retrospectively, they were competent physicians who did a great deal for the people.

There were practically no gentiles in Shtchedrin. Besides the "*shabbes goy*" there lived on the periphery of the town one or two Christian families who were thoroughly judaized. They spoke excellent Yiddish and were familiar with Jewish practices.

Shtchedrin was on a highway that linked together the surrounding villages. Frequently

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the peasants had to pass in their wagons the main street of the town. They did it not without fear of being molested by Jewish urchins, perhaps with the same sentiment that Arabs pass through Tel Aviv. On the whole, in the 100% Jewish Shtchedrin there was such freedom in the everyday life that I as a young boy could not understand why Jews complained constantly about Jewish oppression and suffering in the world, when not a trace of it was evident in town. Apparently Shtchedrin was an oasis unmolested by enemy forces.

Here my notes end. It was a necessity and a satisfaction for me to unpack the memories preserved in my mind (Department "Archives") to air them, transpose them onto paper and then put them back into the archives of the mind, where they will remain for the rest of my life. I cannot and will not separate myself from them. Had I not made these notes, these recollections would have been lost at my death. This way a copy remains.

I have carried these notes up to about 1897, which I left Shtchedrin and went to Leipzig. This was the crucial point in my life. During my student years I spent my summer vacations in Shtchedrin. In 1904, the family left Shtchedrin altogether. Never again have I seen the home of my boyhood days, but it is still vivid before my eyes. Other members of the Golodetz family remained there for several years more, but I believe that in 1910, the "court" became empty. Then came the war and after that the Bolsheviks. What happened then I do not know. The members of the Golodetz family lived scattered throughout many cities and contact was lost.

One branch of the family - our immediate family - was carried by fate to Hamburg and later to London and New York. The branch grew to a lusty tree with strange blossoms. A botanist would hardly recognize the tree from which the branch sprang on the basis of an examination of the new tree. Science calls this metamorphosis. It is yet too early to write the history of this branch.

The End.

Notes:

1. According to the *Evreiskaia Entsiklopediia* the year was 1842.
 2. See [estate map](#).
 3. See [Geneology of the Golodetz Family](#).
 4. The Duma = Parliament
 5. See [Korngold photograph](#).
- See also photos of the Lalitchi [palace](#) and [lodge](#), and the [Schedrin band](#).
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SHCHEDRIN, town in Polesie district, Belarus. In 1841 Hayyim Golodetz, a timber dealer, established a Jewish colony on the estate of Shchedrin. By the end of the 19th century some of the settlers engaged in general agriculture and some in the timber business of the Golodetz family. In 1897 there were 4,022 Jews in Shchedrin (95% of the total population of the town), about 40% of them engaging in agriculture. A decline in the timber trade in the area and the subsequent departure of the Golodetz family resulted in a general emigration from the town. In 1926 there were 1,759 Jews (91 percent of the population) in Shchedrin. The Soviet government attempted to develop agriculture and in 1930 over half of the 380 remaining Jewish families were engaged in that occupation, about half of them living on the kolkhoz Sotsialistishe Veg. About 30 percent were engaged in crafts. A local Jewish council operated until the 1930s, as did two Yiddish schools, one for the kolkhoz children. The Germans arrived in July 1941, and in March 1942 they murdered the 1,500 Jews living there.

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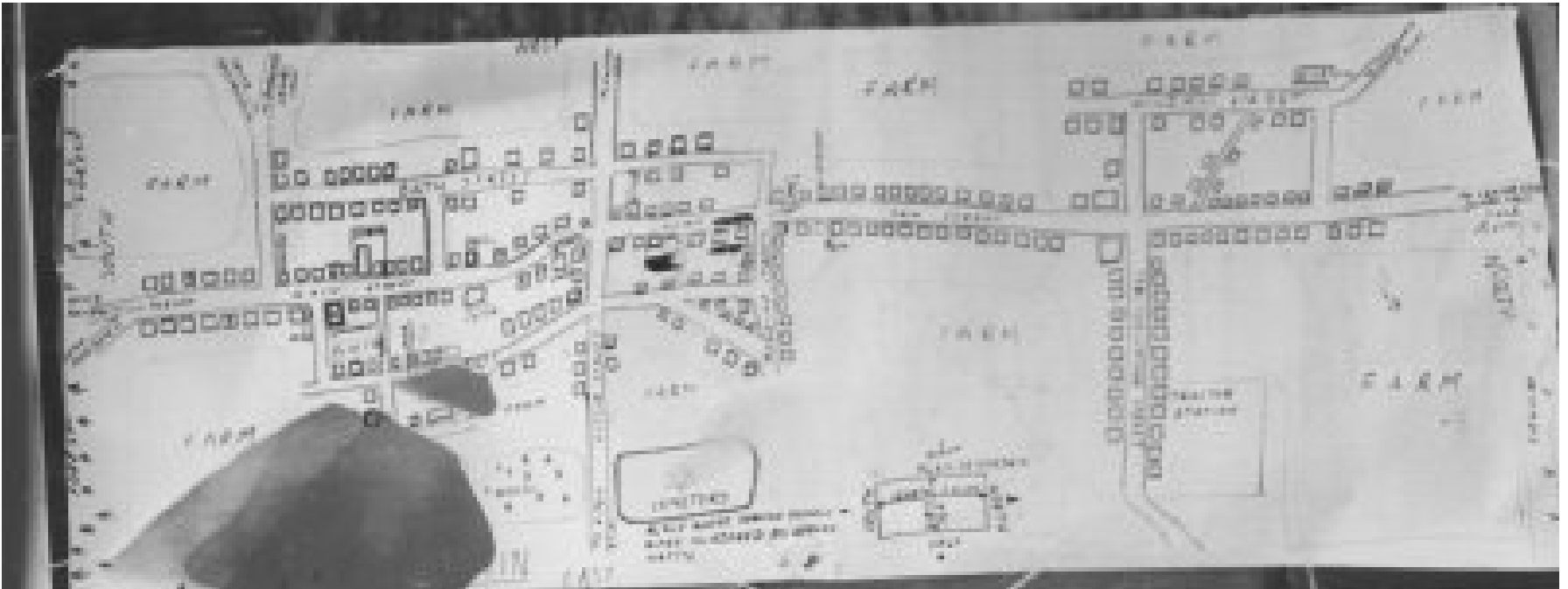
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[Yehuda Slutsky / Shmuel Spector (2nd ed.)]

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Stories and Excerpts from *The Bobruisk Yiskor Book*



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<http://jewishwebindex.com/Belarus.htm>

Belarus is located east of *Poland* and is slightly smaller than the *State of Kansas*. It borders *Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Russia* and has a total population of 10.4 million of which it is also home to some 20,000 to 70,000 *Jews*.

Over 50% of the population of the major cities *Minsk, Grodno, Mogilev and Vitebsk* were Jewish cities. Ninety eight percent of the native *Byelorussians* lived in the countryside. Today, *Jews* constitute *one percent* of the national populations according to information from the *Minsk In Your Pocket Guide, Summer, 1997*, page 30; *Winter, 1997-98*, page 31.

White Russian (Byelorussia) is the nationality of the people living in this marshy land area, that was formerly part of *Mother Russia*. *White Russian Monarchists*, fighting *Bolsheviks* during the *Russian Civil War (1917 to 1920)* were referred to as "*White Guard*" and those they fought were referred to as the *Red Guard*.

Today, *Belarus* is not much different than yesterday's *Belarus*. You will still see the horse drawn plows and vehicles on the rough highways next to old models of the *Lada* automobile. Getting gasoline, which is rationed, can take up a great deal of time, when you find someone selling gasoline along the side of the road. It is quite a poor country controlled by the military, but in some areas, the people are better off than other *Russian satellite states*. You will find that the people are scraping the bottom in order to survive including selling off personal items and even used shoes and clothing items. Outdoor markets are quite common.

Belarus lost over 30% of its population and over 75% of its towns and villages during *WW II*. The notorious *12th Lithuanian Police Auxiliary Battalion*, chillingly named the *Schutzmannschaft* was formed in *Kaunas* in 1941, and was composed entirely of *Lithuanian volunteers*. According to documents in the *Belarusian Archives*, this unit was dispatched to *Belarus* on October 5, 1941 with the ostensible mission of breaking the back of local resistance and partisan groups.

The *12th Police Auxiliary* operated principally in *Minsk City* and *Minsk District*, but sometimes moved further a field. The unit was responsible for massacres in *Slutsk, Smilovichi, Borisov, Rudensk, Koidanov* and many other *Shtetls*. Its principle functions were mass executions, hangings and genocide, often on the streets and in city squares. At least 42,000 people; *Jews*, partisans, and alleged *Communist Party* members were murdered by the unit.

It was in *Byelorussia* that the Nazis wholesale murder of *Jews* was first tested. At the same time, many ghettos became centers of resistance. Underground organizations were active in the ghettos of *Baranovichi, Bobruisk, Brest, Grodno, Slonim, Minsk, Vileyka* and others.

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An in-depth study of the history of *Belarus* from ancient times to the present (*in English*)