

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. BOGEN

REPORT ON BEREZINO MINSK GUBERNIA

The town Berezino, Igumen Uyezd, Minsk Gubernia is situated 35 versts from the station Borisov on the M. Ruthenian-Baltic Railway Line on the river Berezino. Before the war the population of Berezino consisted of 4250 people, including 3000 Jews. At the present time the population of the town is 2500, including 1800 Jews.

Before the war the population was engaged in timber industry, as there are many forests in the suburbs of the town. In and around the town there were many tar-works; part of the population occupied itself by rafting timber; a small portion of the population was trading and pursuing some trades. Almost all of the inhabitants earned money and got along pretty nicely, among them were even some well-to-do folks. Beginning with 1919 the situation of the inhabitants has changed for the worse. The town happened to be at the frontier line and thus changed hands several times. In 1919 following the Polish invasion the town was plundered; in 1920 before the withdrawal of the Poles the town was bombarded by the Red troops; shrapnel set fire to many buildings and the best part of the town was either burned or demolished. At that time 25 of the best houses and as many Jewish stores were burned. With the withdrawal of the Poles the economic situation was not improved. One could not be in the timber industry as the forests were nationalized; tar works are also nationalized; trading was at a complete standstill; besides, the fire of 1920 drove a considerable part of the population out of the town to various other places, and in consequence half of Berezino was deserted. At the present time the economic situation of the inhabitants is very pitiful. An insignificant part of the Jewish population is engaged in trades and trading, which, because of the high taxes, deprives one of the opportunity to make a living. The majority of the population is very badly off. There are about 200 unemployed in the town.

Children's Institutions: Berezino has 1 Children's home which shelters at present 36 children between the ages of 2 to 15, including 22 boys and 14 girls; 13 children from the Volga region - almost all of them are orphans, and in view of this it is impossible to effect their reevacuation. There are no Jewish children at the Children's home at present. The premises of this home are very good. There is a shortage of beds, only 18 altogether so that 2 children sleep in one bed. There is only one change of linen. There are no school appliances at all.

At the present time in the country-side near the town there is another children's home functioning; this home has been transferred for the summer from Igumen. Weak children from the Igumen children's homes and the home for the Youths have been accepted in that home. There are 15 Jewish children among them; feeding is good, but the rainy and cool summer is depriving the children of the opportunity to improve their health.

Schools: Berezino has one seven-years course school for 250 children of whom 50% are Jews. There is an acute need for shoes and school appliances. Besides, there is a Polish school for 50 children. The Jewish school which is functioning here has 55 children between the ages of 8-16. The building is old and untidy; the roof has to be repaired; the winter double window

frames have to be fixed; floors have to be repaired and the whole building requires whitewashing, - all of which could call for an allocation of \$200. Besides, the school has very few benches, one school slate board and there are no school appliances. To remove these defects a sum of \$100 would be necessary. The children go barefooted and the need for shoes is great.

Prof-technical Education: There is no prof-technical school in town, though the need for such is acute, since the Jewish youngsters have no place to go and are aimlessly roaming about the streets. A sum of \$500 would be required here to open a prof-technical school.

Medical Aid: The town has one hospital of 40 beds; at the present time the hospital has 15 patients, including 1 Jewess; the quarters is satisfactory; but it is necessary to repair the laboratories, bathroom and well which is about to crumble down, - all of which could require a sum of \$300. Besides there is an acute need for medicaments, bandages, disinfection apparatus and products for dietetic feeding.

Though the town has a Section for Mutual Aid it takes care only of workmen and trade union members; the majority of the Jewish population receives no help. In view of the poverty of the population it is desirable that a loan kassa be opened here, which undertaking could require an initial expenditure of \$500.

The town needs the following:

1. Linen, Underwear and furniture for Children's Home	\$200
2. Repair of Jewish School, Furniture and School Appliances	300
3. Establishment of a Prof-technical School	500
4. Repairs to the Hospital	300
5. Establishment of a Loan Kassa	500
Total	<u>\$1800</u>