

WLOCLAWEK and KUJAWY

MEMORIAL BOOK

English Edition



DR. I. M. BIDERMAN

Editor



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WLOCLAWEK AND VICINITY

MEMORIAL BOOK

Hebrew-Yiddish Edition

Edited by

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Foreword to English Edition

1954 a Wloclawek Memorial Book Committee organized in America. Immediately after learning a group of our townspeople who live in Israel had undertaken to publish a memorial to the Jewish community in our "step-mother" birthplace, a committee was formed on these shores with the aim of serving as a pledged partner in that worthy project. As the *Landsmanschaft* organizations of Wloclawek failed to demonstrate any interest in this historical undertaking, we had necessarily to direct our appeal to the post-war immigrants who had settled in America after the second world war. Needless to say, we counted also the cooperation of those who came from the small towns around Wloclawek and the region of Kujawy. "Much water has flowed under the bridge" since then both in the Jordan and in the West. Great enthusiasm was engendered among those who participated in the first meeting that took place in New York at which it was decided to activate those of our American countrymen who were capable of relating the history of Jewish Wloclawek and to collect all the material essential for the publication of the book, — to obtain the financial means required for the production of the volume jointly with our friends in America. That enthusiasm has long since evaporated. The participants have meanwhile grown older and more weary. It is like any undertaking that we dream and strive to achieve, which the weary process of procrastination prevents from being realized, so in this case of the drawn out Wloclawek Memorial Book project, we are left with a lack of confidence in its ultimate completion in the place of the original warmth and enthusiasm. We must note to our infinite regret that among our townspeople no really big patrons were found who were prepared to finance the memorial project in New York, as was true of the memorial undertakings in other cities. Consequently, the Memorial Book Committee held meetings — at first several times a year — and arranged various events for the purpose of raising the funds required for the publication of this volume. Simultaneously to provide an opportunity for our townspeople who lived in the huge city of New York to meet socially and spend an occasional evening together in an intimately friendly atmosphere. These events were New Year parties, Chanukkah dinners, Purim balls, and the like. Moreover, every year a special meeting was held which memorialized the history of our birthplace, and afforded our towns-

people a fitting opportunity of recalling the memory of their loved ones who had perished in the years of agony and annihilation, while at the same time they responded during the meeting to the appeal for contributions to the fund needed for the publication of this volume.

Fifteen years passed thus. During this period a considerable number of our American countrymen visited Israel, never forgetting to encourage and help the committee there and to demand most urgently that the time for the actual final publication be expedited. It goes without saying that the Wloclawek Memorial Book Committee itself made a substantial contribution to the budget needed for the book, and also brought their influence to bear upon other countrymen residing in Canada, Belgium, France and England, urging them to make their contributions as well toward the successful completion of the project.

Most active during all these years in the efforts on behalf of the book and of other undertakings of the New York committee were M. D. Alter and Stanley B. Mirels who together with the undesigned devoted untold patience and energy to this difficult task, absorbing along the way various barbs of criticism.

Publication of the American volume was also delayed because of the resolution passed at the last general meeting expressing the wish that to the Hebrew-Yiddish edition of the Memorial Book be added also a special English edition which would consist of a condensed summary of the most important portions and incorporate certain details which had been omitted in the original text. The English portion is intended for those who unfortunately do not have a command of our own Jewish tongues, so that they too may become acquainted with the history, development and ultimate destruction of our birthplace in Poland. We had in mind particularly the growing generation of children and grandchildren. Under the circumstances that prevailed, we did our utmost. The editor — who also had a large share in the Yiddish-Hebrew section of the book — did his work with infinite love and devotion, aided by the unfailing understanding and cooperation of the above-mentioned friends on the committee.

We hope that this book will find its way into the homes of our townspeople and that in moments of nostalgia they will, with trembling hands and a sense of respect and awe, turn the pages of this volume which is in effect the sole memorial to the beloved Jewish *kebillah* that once existed — and is no more.

Editor