

## *Six Thousand Miles to Home:* A Guide for Readers and Teachers

This guide collates notes relevant to the socio-cultural and historical contexts of the novel *Six Thousand Miles to Home*. It is organized according to the narrative's chronology and divided according to the novel's three major sections and their respective chapters. Background material—about Jewish life in both Poland and Iran—precedes the sections of the book set in those countries. In between the notes for each chapter are historical “snapshots,” most of them derived from primary source material, and which serve to illustrate events described in the novel.

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*Numerous volumes recount in detail the thousand-year history of Jews in Poland as well as the circumstances particular to the Silesian Duchy of Teschen and its Jewish inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> What follows here is a summary.*

### Medieval Period

Jews inhabited Poland since at least the tenth century when, fleeing persecution in German territories, they made their way east.<sup>2</sup> One legend recounts that a scrap of paper directed them to

“Polaniaya,” a Hebrew name for Poland, which they interpreted as meaning “Here God dwells.” They arrived in a forest where they heard the word Polin, another Hebrew name for Poland, which they interpreted as “Po-lin,” “Rest here.” In some versions [of the legend], a cloud broke and an angel’s hand pointed the way and a voice said “Po-lin.” According to [another] version [...], Jews entering the forest discovered tractates of the Talmud carved on the trees; in other versions, pages of the sacred texts floated down.<sup>3</sup>

This story begins in a town called Teschen (called Cieszyn both before and after the time of this narrative) was populated by Slavic peoples by at least the seventh century. According to legend, in 810, three brothers—Bolko, Leszko and Cieszko—discovered a spring and decided to build a fortified settlement, which they called Cieszyn, derived from the phrase *cieszym się* (“I’m happy”). A Romanesque chapel, built in the eleventh century, still stands at Castle Hill. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Cieszyn was encircled by walls, entry was granted via three gates: the Fryszstadt Gate, the Water Gate, and the Upper Gate. The Eisner and Kohn family members would have seen the ruins on Castle Hill and known about the town’s long and complex history.

By 1264, the Statute of Kalisz had established in Poland certain conditions for Jewish settlement, including religious freedom, communal autonomy, protection from harm, and the right to practice various occupations. Towns in Poland were modeled after German towns, designating specific streets where Jews were permitted to live, as well as determining locations for synagogues and Jewish cemeteries. During the fourteenth century, despite the protections afforded them, Jews were “generally

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<sup>1</sup> Please see Sources Cited, Consulted, and Recommended for some of these historical and scholarly works.

<sup>2</sup> The tenth-century Sephardic chronicler Ibrahim ibn Yakub, sent by the Caliph of Cordoba as a member of a diplomatic mission, was the first to mention Jews in Poland.

<sup>3</sup> Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Antony Polonsky, eds., *Polin: 1000 Year History of Polish Jews* (Warsaw: Museum of the History of Polish Jews, 2014), p. 27.

forbidden to engage in productive labor [because] the Christian guilds, which monopolized production, were closed to them.” As a result, Jews turned to moneylending and trade as principal forms of livelihood. Research indicates that in Poland, “the Jewish share in overall credit turnover was no more than 10 percent and that Jews did not charge interest in excess of the norms deemed admissible by the Church.”<sup>4</sup>

### **The First Jews in Cieszyn**

Historians estimate that in 1500, Jews inhabited over 100 communities in Poland. Though rumor persists of Jews living in Cieszyn as early as the fourteenth century, recent research confirms that it was not until 1531 that “the first [...] person of the Hebrew faith [appeared] in Cieszyn.”<sup>5</sup> That person was a man named Jacob, who purchased a house on Srebna Street, which he sold a year later. And despite the edicts prohibiting Jews from living in Silesia in the second half of the sixteenth century, a Jew named Markus, who was a court glassmaker to the Duke of Cieszyn, bought a house on the same street in 1575, though he did not reside there long.

Ignoring the ban against Jews living in Silesia, the duchess Elizabeth Lucretia in 1631 leased the right to collect tolls in Cieszyn to Moses and Jacob Singer, two brothers from a town near Brno.<sup>6</sup> Later, the duchess granted Jacob the right to trade, keep a shop, practice Judaism, and construct a private cemetery. He purchased a house in 1637 on Polska Street (now Głęboka) and then in 1640 a larger one on Niemiecka Street (now Mennicza). Coincidentally, Julius and Josefina Kohn and their children also lived in houses on these two streets, though when they were growing up, the street names were in German (and they would see them changed into Polish on one side of the Olza River and Czech on the other before they fled in 1939).

### **The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth**

The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (formally called the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania) was formed in 1569; its territories comprised contemporary Poland and Lithuania as well as Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia, and parts of Russia.<sup>7</sup> Known as the most tolerant country in Europe, “the Commonwealth became home to the largest Jewish community in the world and a center of the [Ashkenazi]

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 66.

<sup>5</sup> Janusz Spyra, *In the Footsteps of Cieszyn's Jews: A Brief Guide to the Jewish Monuments of Cieszyn and Czech Cieszyn* (Cieszyn: Biuro Promocji i Informacji, 2004), p. 3.

<sup>6</sup> The Singer family would eventually leave Cieszyn in 1788 after selling the cemetery and the so-called Jewish House.

<sup>7</sup> The Commonwealth was governed by a constitutional monarchy (with strict checks on monarchical power) and was an early precursor to modern democracy.

Jewish world.”<sup>8</sup> Jews resided in the Commonwealth on the basis of privilege granted to them by the king. This arrangement benefitted the royal family, who had at its disposal the medical care provided by Jewish physicians and the credit and luxury goods provided, respectively, by Jewish bankers and merchants. However, Jewish tradesmen and craftsmen were forced to operate outside the Christian guild system. Because of these limitations, Jewish businessmen became competitive, cutting their prices. In turn, discord increased between Jews and the ruling burghers.<sup>9</sup>

During the next two centuries, Jewish communities in Poland grew in number and population. Each of these communities had its own governing council, or *kahal*, established to manage welfare institutions for the poor and needy, a court system (presided over by the local rabbi), schools, craftsmen’s guilds, and tax collection.

After decades of lobbying to change legislation, in the sixteenth century the Commonwealth’s nobles finally secured the autonomy they sought to manage their own estates. The rapidly increasing market for Polish grain launched the land-holding nobility into the highly profitable export of grain, which was produced by the peasants who farmed these vast agricultural estates. The nobility engaged Jews, who had acquired considerable skill in financial affairs (from centuries of working as bankers and moneylenders), to manage their estates. Thus “an increasing number of Jews moved out of royal towns and into private towns owned by the nobility.”<sup>10</sup> More than half of all Jews in Commonwealth territories lived in these private towns.

During the mid-seventeenth century, wealthy Jewish estate managers had become leaseholders, who often also administered the fiscal and daily affairs of the estates. In the Commonwealth’s Ukrainian lands, this arrangement provoked resentment among the largest local population of Orthodox Ruthenians—peasants, burghers, and Cossacks<sup>11</sup>—who wanted freedom from the Polish Catholic nobility and who considered it humiliating to be subservient to Jews.

In 1648, resentments against the Catholic and mostly Polanized nobility fomented into hostility, paving the way for the Khmelnytsky Uprising. Initially a Cossack operation, the uprising became a popular rebellion, which resulted by 1657, when it ended,<sup>12</sup> in the massacre of 100,000 Jews.<sup>13</sup> After almost two decades of war, the

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<sup>8</sup> *Polin: 1000 Year History of Polish Jews*, p. 27. In Kraków, then the royal capital of Poland, the Jewish community “soon became one of the leading centers for Jewish life in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth—other centers included Lublin, Poznań, and Lwów. [...] Kraków’s rabbis were among the greatest spiritual leaders in Jewish history” (ibid, 95).

<sup>9</sup> Burghers were the precursor to the middle class, prominent citizens of a particular town. Later, anti-Semitic tracts were written and circulated, and violent attacks ensued, though these were condemned by the king’s representative.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 116.

<sup>11</sup> The term *Ruthenians* (sometimes *Ruthenes*) refers, in the broadest sense, to people now called Belarusian, Russian, Ukrainian, and members of the Rusyn minority, though the latter two groups have come to object to the use of this term to refer to them. Cossacks are a group of predominantly East Slavic-speaking people who became known as members of democratic, self-governing, semi-military communities, predominantly located in Ukraine and Russia. The Cossacks were renowned for their horsemanship.

<sup>12</sup> “Sources vary as to when the uprising ended. Russian and some Polish sources give the end date of 1654, indicating that the Treaty of Pereyaslav marked the end of the war; Ukrainian sources give the date as Khmelnytsky’s death in 1657;

Commonwealth “was devastated. Agricultural land lay fallow since many peasants had either been killed or fled. Towns had also lost much of their population, not to mention their housing stock. Markets were barely operating.”<sup>14</sup>

Reconstruction efforts were undertaken predominately by “the upper levels of the nobility, the fabulously wealthy, and politically powerful magnates,” all of whom “still had enough income and infrastructure to begin the process of rebuilding.”<sup>15</sup> Jews were encouraged to settle in towns to help restore the markets; Jews also played an instrumental role in reviving the agricultural economy.

### **Silesia and Teschen under the Habsburgs**

In 1653 (five years after the Khmelnytsky Uprising), Silesia was ceded to the Habsburgs. No longer under Polish rule, Cieszyn was renamed Teschen, and its inhabitants became subjects of the Bohemian Kings to whom the Habsburg monarchs swore allegiance. The family of Josefina’s mother (Karola [Ziffer] Eisner), lived around this time in the Teschen area.

Eighty years later in 1733, Emperor Charles VI permitted Jews to settle in Silesia, on condition of paying a tolerance tax. Only one son of each Jewish family was allowed to marry. Jews were restricted in Silesia to the trade, on a small scale, of distilling and selling vodka.

After the First Silesian War of 1742, most of Silesia had passed to the Kingdom of Prussia.<sup>16</sup> Teschen, however, remained under Austrian control. In 1752, Empress Maria Theresa,<sup>17</sup> who had (eight years prior) expelled 20,000 Jews from Prague, granted permission to eighty-eight “tolerated” Jewish families to live in Cieszyn Silesia.<sup>18</sup>

In 1782, Maria Theresa’s son and co-regent, Emperor Josef II, issued the Edict of Tolerance, which abolished the requirement for Jews to wear gold stars, abolished the tax that Jews were required to pay, and extended the range of occupations Jews could practice. In spite of these reforms, synagogues, rabbis, written Hebrew, and spoken Yiddish were banned. Jews were obliged to speak German (except during worship)

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and a few Polish sources give the date as 1655 and the Battle of Jezierna. There is some overlap between the last phase of the uprising and the beginning of the Russo-Polish War (1654–1667), as Cossacks and Russian forces became allied” (Wikipedia).

<sup>13</sup> The numbers of Jewish dead are disputed: Although many modern sources still give estimates of Jews killed in the uprising at 100,000 or more, others put the numbers killed at between 40,000 and 100,000, and recent academic studies have argued that fatalities were even lower.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 129.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 129.

<sup>16</sup> The Silesian Wars were fought between Prussia and Austria (1740-42; 1744-45; 1756-63); for control of Silesia in the mid-eighteenth century. All three ended in Prussian victory. The first two were waged in the context of the larger War of the Austrian Succession, while the third is better known as the Seven Years' War.

<sup>17</sup> Her relationship with Jews was not always so beneficent.

⇒ See Endnote 1—The Empress Maria Theresa and her relationship with her Jewish subjects

<sup>18</sup> In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, by 1765, an estimated 750,000 Jews lived in over 1,150 locations.

and create German-language primary schools (or send their children to Christian schools). A series of laws followed the edict that:

- abolished the autonomy of Jewish communities;
- compelled Jews to acquire family names;
- subjected Jewish men to military conscription; and
- required candidates for the rabbinate to have a secular education.

If the forebears of Julius Kohn's paternal grandfather, Sigmund Kohn, lived in Silesia at this time, his parents' generation would have been the first of his family to have been affected by these laws.

In 1801, a Jewish house of prayer was established in rented rooms on Münzstrasse (Mennicza) Street in Teschen; the worship was led by Juda Löbl Glücklich, who was officially recognized as a teacher of religion. In 1838, after receiving permission from the emperor, Teschen's Jews built their own synagogue (on a street near Mennicza 10, where the Kohn family was living in 1939), which was in 1878 extensively reconstructed to accommodate the growing Jewish population. Sigmund Kohn was fourteen years old when the Jewish Community erected the shul on Tempelgasse, what is today Bóznicza (Prayer) Street.<sup>19</sup> He would become president of the Jewish Community in 1888, the same year he founded his tannery, Sigmund Kohne & Sohne. Adolf Ziffer, whose granddaughter Josefina would marry Sigmund's grandson Julius, served on the board of the Jewish Community in 1893.

Emperor Josef II's Tolerance Edict also opened schools and universities to Jews. While most Jewish families engaged Jewish tutors to privately educate their children, in 1806 a Jewish child was enrolled in Teschen's secondary school, which even until the middle of the nineteenth century, was attended by only a few Jewish children. We know that Sigmund (born 1824) and his older brother Ferdinand Kohn (born 1819) both attended the K. K. Kreishauptschule school (and were perhaps among the first generation of Kohns to be educated thusly). The first Jew from Cieszyn to complete a course of higher education (in medicine) was Hermann Holländer, who would have been an older contemporary of Sigmund Kohn's father, Emerich Kohn.

### **The Haskalah and the Partitions of Poland**

The beginnings of the Enlightenment had started in Western Europe in the early eighteenth century.<sup>20</sup> Not long afterward, the Early Haskalah, or Jewish

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<sup>19</sup> This synagogue was burned down by the Nazis on 13 September 1939. Today, an empty lot and a school basketball court occupy the space. A mural of Irena Sendler, recognized as one of the Righteous Among the Nations, graces the outer wall of the building where the offices of the Jewish Community once stood.

⇒ See Chapter Notes—The Righteous Among the Nations

<sup>20</sup> The Enlightenment era spanned the mid decades of the seventeenth century through the eighteenth century, spreading through different parts of Europe at different times. Characterized by "dramatic revolutions in science, philosophy, society, and politics," the Enlightenment "swept away the medieval world view and ushered in [the] modern Western

Enlightenment movement,<sup>21</sup> began to take root in Central and Eastern Europe. The Berlin Haskalah would follow and in turn pave the way for the Haskalah in Eastern Europe of the early nineteenth century. The Haskalah unfolded as the first, second, and third partitions of Poland took place (in 1772, 1793, and 1795<sup>22</sup>), dividing the Commonwealth—and its Jewish inhabitants—between Prussia, Austria, and Russia. “Jews now ceased to be one of several corporate communities within a system of estates. They became individual subjects of states intent on making them into useful subjects and, potentially, citizens.”<sup>23</sup>

Like all the denizens of the former Commonwealth, Jews responded to the partitions in different ways. Some attempted to reform Jewish life in accordance with the values of the Haskalah. Others promoted more fervently religious tradition, leading to the expansion of Hasidism, which had emerged in Eastern Europe in the 1760s.<sup>24</sup> Some were motivated by the idea of social integration to speak German, Russian, or Polish and embrace these respective cultures. As the eighteenth century ended, and the nineteenth was well underway, full integration became less likely, and new Jewish political movements arose. With the rise of industrialization in the nineteenth century and the increasing numbers of Jewish workers, the Jewish labor movement—the Bund—was established, its founding conference held in 1912 in Katowice, about an hour north of Teschen.<sup>25</sup> Into such a sociopolitical landscape Julius Kohn and his wife-to-be, Josefina Eisner, were born.

### Reforms and the Birth of a Modern Town

The development of Teschen at the end of the eighteenth century was slowed by the great fire of 1789, which damaged most of the town. Almost fifty years later in 1836, another fire destroyed part of Teschen’s center, including the town hall, which was restored in 1846 (and has survived intact since). Sigmund Kohn was twelve years old the year of this second fire; his wife-to-be, Charlotte, was a girl of seven. In 1839 a new Classicist hunting palace was erected where the Piast castle had once stood. Here the Habsburg monarchs stayed when they came to Silesia to hunt deer and wild boar. In the same year a brewery was built near Castle Hill.

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world. [...] Enlightenment ideals of freedom and equality for all [are] founded [...] upon principles of human reason (*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*).

<sup>21</sup> “We must distinguish between processes of acculturation—the adoption of the language and cultural models of the surrounding society—and Haskalah. Although Haskalah advocated a certain degree of acculturation, it favored the continued existence of Jewish society as a distinct entity and sought to promote the spiritual and cultural renewal of Jewish society” (*YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*).

<sup>22</sup> The grandparents of Sigmund Kohn and his wife, Charlotte, would have learned about at least the second and third (and perhaps the first) partition of Poland. We have not ascertained where they came from, or how the Kohns (and the families of their spouses) came to be in Teschen.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>24</sup> See Endnote 2—The emergence of Hasidism in Poland

<sup>25</sup> The General Jewish Labor Bund in Poland was a Jewish socialist party that promoted political, cultural, and social autonomy of Jewish workers, fought anti-Semitism, and was generally opposed to Zionism.

In 1848, when Sigmund Kohn was twenty-four and perhaps already married to Charlotte (who was nineteen), the revolutionary wave called the Spring of Nations swept Europe and affected over fifty countries, including Austria and Hungary.<sup>26</sup> Although the monarchy was reinstated in Austria and a constitution drafted but not implemented, serfdom was abolished and political rights were granted to Jews, their population limits ended. Also in 1848, the first Polish-language newspaper, *Tygodnik Cieszyński*, appeared in the Duchy of Teschen. Sigmund had been admitted the year before—at the age of twenty-two—to the Red Tanners Guild.<sup>27</sup> After the Revolutions of 1848, the Austro-Hungarian Empire introduced modern municipal divisions in re-established Austrian Silesia, and Teschen became the seat of a political and legal district. Authorities appointed Abraham Schmiedl as Teschen’s first District Rabbi, who was also the first officially confirmed rabbi in the region. Two years later, a Jew was elected for the first time to Teschen’s town council. The Jewish Religious Community in Teschen was confirmed in 1866,<sup>28</sup> when Sigmund and Charlotte’s children Luisa, Emilie, Ferdinand, Eugen, Emerich, Malvine, and Laura were, respectively, fourteen, twelve, ten, eight, seven, three, and one.

The next year, 1867, Austria-Hungary was created, a merger of two constitutional monarchies ruled by the House of Habsburg. It was the second largest country in Europe after the Russian Empire. Emerich, Julius’s father, was a boy of eight in 1867, the year that Jews living in the Habsburg Empire gained full citizens’ rights. The last of Sigmund and Charlotte’s children, Emerich’s youngest sister (Julius’s Aunt Laura, a character in the novel), was two years old.

By the time the railway line reached Teschen in 1869, Peter and Suzanna’s maternal grandfather, Hermann Eisner, was a one-year-old, living in the industrial village of Ustroń, ten miles west of Teschen. That year, the tanner Sigmund Kohn and his wife, Charlotte, had a large family of seven children—four daughters, ages seventeen, thirteen, six; and three sons, ages sixteen, eleven, and ten.<sup>29</sup> Emerich, Julius’s father, was the youngest of the boys. He and his siblings probably watched the construction of the railway on the left bank of the Olza River, in what is now Český-Těšín (where Emerich would live as an adult and die in 1931, when his grandchildren Peter and Suzanna were nine and five years old, respectively). Industrial development

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<sup>26</sup> Also called the People’s Spring or the Revolutions of 1848.

⇒ See Endnote 3—The Spring of Nations

<sup>27</sup> Sigmund apprenticed from 1841-1846 to become a *Rothgärbermeister*, or a master of red tanning. In this method of tanning leather, reddish phenolic substances called phlobaphenes or “tanner’s red” are produced when tannin extracts are mixed with mineral acids as part of the tanning process.

<sup>28</sup> In 1863 (three years prior to Jewish Emancipation in the Austria-Hungarian Empire), in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (a neighbor to Austria-Hungary), the January Uprising began. It started when young Poles protested conscription into Russia’s Imperial Army; politicians and high-ranking officers in the Commonwealth’s armed forces joined the insurrection, which was crushed in 1864. Some 70,000 Poles are estimated to have been imprisoned or deported to Siberia. The story of this insurgency was used to motivate conscripts in the Polish Army after their release from Soviet labor camps in 1941.

<sup>29</sup> They would have had eight children, but a son named Alois, born in 1853, died at age five.



of the western part of Teschen followed the building of the train station. Nineteen years later, Sigmund and his sons Ferdinand and Emerich established the Kohn tannery on the eastern side of the river in what would become the Polish Town of Cieszyn once Sigmund's grandson Julius took over the business.

Sigmund's was the next-to-last generation of Kohns to be religiously observant, though he and his family were likely acculturated in terms of language, dress, and education (full assimilation on this side of the family would not occur until after the war).<sup>30</sup>

During this same era, Orthodox Jews from Galicia started to emigrate to the city, settling primarily in the suburb of Frystadt on the eastern side of the Olza and, on the river's western side near the railway station (whose presence gave rise to an industrial sector in the town). They formed their own houses of prayer in private homes, and in 1912, under the auspices of the Machsike Hadas Society for Religious Strengthening, built a synagogue on Benediktinergasse (now ul. Benedyktyńska).<sup>31</sup> Sigmund was president of Teschen's Jewish Community; in his will, he allocated donations to Teschen's synagogue on Tempelgasse (now ul. Bóźnicza), to guarantee his wife, Charlotte, a seat there for the duration of her life and to ensure that kaddish would be said annually on his behalf. It is likely that Hermann and Karola Eisner also attended this synagogue once they moved from Orlau to Teschen. By then, a decade had passed since Hermann Eisner had purchased the mill and bakery. Josefina and her siblings grew up in the Eisner farmhouse (adjacent to the mill and bakery), which was located on the road to Frystadt, and they would have passed the Machsike Hadas shul during local excursions.

Teschen's Jews assimilated rapidly, allying themselves politically with local German liberals, which caused friction with the Polish majority in Teschen, many of whom supported Poland's nascent nationalist movement.

### **Between the Two World Wars**

When World War I ended, the two new and independent states of Poland and Czechoslovakia disputed the territory of Austrian Silesia. The region was important to the Czechs, as the railway line that connected Czech Silesia with Slovakia crossed the area (the Košice-Bohumín Railway, one of only two railroads that linked the Czech provinces to Slovakia at that time). The western area of Cieszyn Silesia is also very rich in coal, and many important mines, facilities, and metallurgy factories are

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<sup>30</sup> I use the term *assimilated* to mean one or a combination of the following qualities: living a secular lifestyle, participating in religious practice on a part-time basis, speaking at home the language of the nation in which one resides, marrying outside the Jewish community, loosely observing kosher laws.

<sup>31</sup> The Machsike Hadas synagogue was burned down by the Nazis on 2 September 1939. The synagogue built in 1928 by the Schomre-Schabos Prayer and Charity Society (located today in Český-Těšín) is the only Jewish house of worship to have survived the Nazi invasion. It is now the meeting place for the Polish Cultural and Educational Union Club.

located there. The Czechs wanted this territory for historic and ethnic reasons. The Polish government claimed the area because, according to the 1910 Austrian census, a majority of the area's population was Polish.

The dispute was, after much tension and escalating hostilities, settled at the 1920 Spa Conference of Ambassadors.<sup>32</sup> Thus Teschen was divided into Cieszyn on the eastern, Polish side of the Olza River, and Český-Těšín on the western, Czech side. Afterward, many Jews left Poland and relocated to the Czech side of Cieszyn, other Polish or Czech cities (e.g., Kraków, Prague, Warsaw), and various towns and cities in Austria and Germany.

Included in this geographical movement were four of Sigmund and Charlotte's children and their respective families. This would become their undoing: in September 1939, Julius Kohn's aunts and uncles and cousins were established in cities where Jews were among the first to be deported to concentration camps or ghettos and/or killed when the Nazis invaded and then occupied these cities.<sup>33</sup>

The interwar period was also a time of greater Jewish activity in the political life of Cieszyn. By 1926, the year Suzanna Kohn was born, a group of Jewish citizens had formed to support assimilation with Polish culture. By the mid to late 1920s, most Jewish children were educated in Polish schools; this was true for Peter and Suzanna Kohn (though only one generation earlier, their parents had attended German-style schools called gymnasias and received German-language education). Gaining momentum were Orthodox and Zionist organizations; by 1930, a dozen different Jewish membership societies existed in Cieszyn. In 1931 the Jewish hotelier Rosalie Wiesner built the Café Avion, a round addition to the National Hotel, which overlooked the Olza River and stood on the Czech side of the bridge. By the mid-1930s, the café was a center for social and artistic life for both parts of the town, serving patrons of all nationalities. The Nazis demolished the café early on in the war.

In October 1938, Poland took over Zaolzie and the Czech side of Teschen (Cieszyn). At that time, Julius and Josefina Kohn and their children, Peter and Suzanna, lived at 10 Mennicza Street. Hermann Eisner, whose wife, Karola, had died in 1935, lived in the farmhouse adjacent to the mill and the bakery. Arnold and Milly Eisner lived in the apartment above the bakery. Julius's sister, Greta, married to Ernst Borger (co-owner of the Kohn tannery), lived on the western side of the Olza, at 4 Kwiatkowski Street. The novel opens in early summer of 1938; less than a year later, the Nazis invaded Poland, starting the Second World War.

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<sup>32</sup> See also: Notes—The geographic importance of Teschen, the division of Teschen after the First World War, and the 1938 annexation of Zaolzie by Poland

<sup>33</sup> See also: Historical Snapshot: Where They Perished: A Too-brief Memorial for the Kohn Family Members and Their Friends Known to Have Perished in the Shoah

### **During and after the Shoah**

On the Eisner side, Karola (née Ziffer) died in 1935, before the war started. Her husband, Hermann, died in 1941, during the German occupation of Teschen. The story of Hermann Eisner's death—that he fell on the ice while walking on Głęboka Street in late December of 1941—is inconclusive as to whether he was a victim of Nazi violence. However, the story of Hermann's death does indicate that anti-Semitic laws played a role in his demise: Jews were to receive medical treatment only in Jewish hospitals, and because it took six hours for the ambulance to arrive from the one Jewish hospital in the region (located in Ostrava), according to the family story, Hermann contracted pneumonia and died soon afterward.

All three of Josefina's siblings survived the Shoah, and each because of different circumstance: Elsa (widowed in 1932) and her daughter, Maddalena, emigrated to Argentina in January 1939; her son, Corrado followed in December of that same year, after the war started. Hans met and married Brigitte Hahn in London. They emigrated in 1939, first to Canada and then to America, where his two sons, George and Steven, were born and where he changed his name to John Emerson. Arnold, who was en route to join the Polish Army just before the war began, wound up fleeing, through the Carpathian Mountains, diverted because of the rapidly advancing Germans. He never reached the army's headquarters in Kraków. He lived as a civilian refugee west of Budapest until 1944, when he was deported to a concentration camp and liberated by the Soviets. Arnold's wife, Milly (who was Catholic), and their daughter, Eva (born four months before the Nazi invasion of Poland and alive as of 2017), remained in Český-Těšín during the war. When Arnold was reunited with his family, he, Milly, and Eva lived in the bakery/mill in Teschen and then in Český-Těšín. They had a second child, Jan, who became a priest.

Of Julius Kohn's family descended on the paternal side, the following cousins are known to have survived the Shoah: Kurt Redlich, the grandson of Julius's Aunt Aloisa, emigrated to Shanghai, B30-0301 lived in the Jewish ghetto there EO-492 as president of the Jewish Community, and then later settled in the U.S. with his wife. He died in 1983 at age eighty, with no children surviving him. Hedwig Auspitz, the daughter of Julius's Aunt Laura, sought and received sanctuary in England<sup>34</sup> just before the war started; she died in England in 1949 at the age of fifty-four, with no children surviving her. Moritz and Felix Kohn, two sons of Julius's great-uncle Alois, emigrated to the U.S. and lived in New York City. Moritz died in 1955 at age seventy-seven, and Felix in 1959 at seventy-four, neither of them having had children. Alois's grandson Robert Kohn was living in England after the war and died in 1991 at age ninety-one.

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<sup>34</sup> She had also attempted in June of 1938 to secure employment in New York City, as an instructor at the New School.

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## ENDNOTES

### **Endnote 1: The Empress Maria Theresa and her relationship with her Jewish subjects**

“In 1777, she wrote of the Jews: ‘I know of no greater plague than this race, which on account of its deceit, usury and avarice is driving my subjects into beggary. Therefore, as far as possible, the Jews are to be kept away and avoided.’

“Maria Theresa imposed extremely harsh taxes on her Jewish subjects, and in December 1744 proposed to her ministers the expulsion of Jews from her hereditary dominions. Her first intention was to deport all Jews by 1 January, but having accepted the advice of her ministers, who were concerned by the number of future deportees, had the deadline slipped to June. She also transferred Protestants from Austria to Transylvania and reduced the number of religious holidays and monastic orders. She later abandoned the idea of expelling Moravian Protestants after Joseph, who was opposed to her intentions, threatened to abdicate as emperor and co-ruler. Finally, she was forced to grant them some toleration by allowing them to worship privately. Joseph regarded his mother’s religious policies as ‘unjust, impious, impossible, harmful and ridiculous.’

“In the third decade of her reign, influenced by her Jewish courtier Abraham Mendel Theben, Maria Theresa issued edicts which offered some state protection to her Jewish subjects. She forbade the forcible conversion of Jewish children to Christianity in 1762, and in 1763 she forbade Catholic clergy from extracting surplice fees from her Jewish subjects. In 1764, she ordered the release of those Jews who had been jailed for a blood libel in the village of Orkuta. Notwithstanding her strong dislike of Jews, Maria Theresa supported Jewish commercial and industrial activity.” **(Source: Wikipedia)**

### **Endnote 2: The emergence of Hasidism in Poland**

“The magnates tried increasingly to extract as much cash income as possible from both their estates and their subjects. For the peasants, this meant constant increases in their feudal labor dues [...] and a decrease in their income. In the towns, increased taxation on trade and restrictions on merchants doing business outside local markets [...] sowed the seeds of economic stagnation. [...] The magnates squeezed the home market by exploiting their monopoly on the sale of alcohol as much as they could. As a result, the levels of drunkenness in the small towns and villages became a serious social issue by the end of the century.

“Though Jews were deeply involved in this system, [...] they themselves were also a source of income for the magnates. This became a cause for significant corruption within Jewish society. Though the magnates exploited the Jews’ ruling bodies—mostly the community councils—to promote their own economic interests, they also supported individual Jews whose skills and personal wealth brought them great income. This Jewish socioeconomic elite, which was also the communal leadership, began to lose the sense of mutual responsibility that had characterized it in previous centuries [...]. As the gap between rich and poor grew, [...] tensions developed, and Jewish religious and communal leadership became the target for much criticism.

“[...] This did not effect the great rabbinic scholars of the eighteenth century who served as communal rabbis. The problem came in appointing rabbis to communal posts in communities under magnate influence. These appointments were another source of income for the estate owners, who charged significant sums for three-year rabbinic licenses [...]. Many of the great rabbis left the Commonwealth to serve in the large communities of Central and Western Europe, while at home, criticism of the rabbinate grew [...].

“In an attempt to find new sources of spiritual authority, some Jews created centers of Jewish study unconnected with the established leadership and magnate influence. [...] A closed group of scholars who received a salary from either a wealthy benefactor or a community would sit and study in isolation from the corruption of Jewish public life. [...]

“One such institution was to be found in the flourishing [...] town of Międzybóž. At its head, from 1740 to 1760 was one of Poland-Lithuania’s greatest mystics [...], the Ba’al Shem Tov, Master of the Good Name, or Besht.[...] Like other Jewish mystics, the Besht strived to unite with God through ecstatic prayer and other mystical techniques. [...]

“The Besht had a remarkable mystical vision of the world in which God was omnipresent in even the most mundane aspects of everyday life. The emotional experience of prayer was for him a more important way of finding God than the intellectual practices of Talmud study, and held that feelings of happiness and joy rather than asceticism would lead the individual to inspiration. Hasidism began to become a religious movement when one of the Ba’al Shem Tov’s disciples, Dov Ber, the Maggid (preacher) of Międzyrzec, set up his own court in 1766. The Maggid abandoned the idea of the [...] closed institution of study and began to invite as many people as possible, especially a younger generation of students, to gather round him in his court.

“Hasidism met with opposition from several quarters. Among those who objected was Eliyahu ben Shlomo Zalman, [...] known as the Vilna Gaon. [...] His stature in the realm of Torah study was unparalleled. No one had so thoroughly mastered the entire range of sacred texts. [...] He made the study of Torah for its own sake the cornerstone of religious life and never held any public office. The Gaon’s emphasis on the centrality of Talmud study led his disciples to found the famous Lithuanian yeshivas after his death. He vehemently opposed the Besht’s emphasis on ecstatic prayer over study and what he and other opponents considered [...] strange new rituals. Beginning in 1772, he led the effort to outlaw Hasidism. [...]” **(Source: *Polin: 1000 Year History of Polish Jews*, ed. by Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Antony Polonsky, pp. 161, 164, 168)**

### **Endnote 3: The Spring of Nations**

“The Revolutions of 1848, known in some countries as the Spring of Nations, People's Spring, Springtime of the Peoples, or the Year of Revolution, were a series of political upheavals throughout Europe in 1848. It remains the most widespread revolutionary wave in European history.

“The revolutions were essentially democratic in nature, with the aim of removing the old feudal structures and creating independent national states. The revolutionary wave began in France in February, and immediately spread to most of Europe. Over fifty countries were affected, but with no coordination or cooperation between their respective revolutionaries. Major contributing factors included widespread dissatisfaction with political leadership, demands for more participation in government and democracy, demands for freedom of press, other demands made by the working class, the upsurge of nationalism, and the regrouping of established governmental forces.

“The uprisings were led by ad-hoc coalitions of reformers, the middle classes, and workers, which did not hold together for long. Tens of thousands of people were killed, and many more forced into exile. Significant lasting reforms included the abolition of serfdom in Austria and Hungary, the end of absolute monarchy in Denmark, and the introduction of parliamentary democracy in the Netherlands. The revolutions were most important in France, the Netherlands, the states that would make up the German Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Italy, and the Austrian Empire.” **(Source: Wikipedia)**

## PART I: UNCERTAINTY

### HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT: IMPOSSIBLE THINGS BEGIN TO OCCUR

#### *Spring 1938 | Eyewitness testimony*

“[In Vienna] the operations were applied with great vehemence directly after the Anschluss<sup>35</sup>—one was continually asked on the street whether one was Aryan, and on replying in the negative taken away and involved in so-called *Reibekolonnen* [cleaning gangs]...

“In April, above all on Saturdays, *Reibekolonnen* of Jews were formed and marches organised on which signboards had to be worn by Jews with the inscription ‘*Nur ein Schwein kauft bei Juden ein*’ [Only a pig buys from Jews] and by Catholics with the inscription ‘*Jesuitisches Schwein*’ [Jesuit pig]. In this way so-called carnival processions were organised, which moved through the main avenue of the Prater and ended with the Jews having to amuse crowds by dancing, jumping and crawling in groups.

“Rabbis and [synagogue board members] had to sweep streets wearing tallit and top hat [...]. Jewish women with make-up had their faces smeared with chlorine and were mistreated, dirndl dresses were stripped off them. At [one] shoe shop, anti-Semitic caricatures were painted on the shop window display—the owner had to pay the ‘artist’ for his work, and later also for its removal.”<sup>36</sup>

#### *Spring 1938 | Reportage*

During the spring of 1938, “some five hundred Austrian Jews chose to kill themselves to elude humiliation, unbearable anxiety, or deportation to concentration camps. [...]”

“The obscene anti-Semitic slanders of such Nazi journals as the *Stürmer*, the regulations restricting Germany’s Jews in the practice of the professions, the [Nuremberg] racial laws of late 1935,<sup>37</sup> the villages proudly advertising that they were ‘clean of Jews’—*Judenrein*—were giving Germany’s Jews a foretaste of hell. But they had suffered comparatively little of the kind of wholesale random violence that spread across Austria after the Anschluss: Austria in March 1938 was a dress rehearsal for the German pogroms of November.”<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> The Anschluss was the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany in March of 1938.

<sup>36</sup> “Testimony B.95, 29 November 1938” (<http://wienerlibrarycollections.co.uk/novemberpogrom>).

<sup>37</sup> See Chapter Notes—The Nuremberg Race Laws

<sup>38</sup> Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time*, p. 21; p. 619.

## HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT IN THE NEWS AT THE TIME: REFUGEES AND VIOLENCE

### *March–November 1938 | Reportage*

On 30 March 1938, the Polish government announced that Poles who had lived abroad for more than five years would lose their Polish citizenship. This measure was aimed mostly at Polish Jews living in Germany. The Nazis, in an attempt to prevent these Polish Jews from staying in the Reich, arrested about 16,000 of them, transported them to a point on the Berlin-Poznan railway line near Zbąszyń [see map above]. The Polish authorities denied them passage, and in the pouring rain, they wandered for days in the no-man's land between Germany and Poland, without food or shelter.



Among these deportees were the mother and father of Herschel Grynszpan, a seventeen-year-old Polish Jew who had moved in 1936 to Paris, where he lived with an uncle.

Upon learning of the fate of his parents, Grynszpan declared, “I have to protest in such a way that the whole world hears my protest, and that is what I intend to do.” On 7 November 1938, he bought a revolver and shot legation secretary Ernst vom Rath at the German embassy in Paris.<sup>39</sup> The diplomat died two days later on 9 November 1938, coincidentally the anniversary of the failed putsch of 1923.<sup>40</sup>

The Nazis used the death of a German diplomat as an excuse for the pogrom that would become known as *Kristallnacht*.

<sup>39</sup> Grynszpan was arrested by the French police and incarcerated in Paris until 1940, when Germany invaded France. He was taken into custody by the Nazis, held first in the Moabit Prison in Berlin and then transferred to the Sachsenhausen and Flossenbürg concentration camps. Grynszpan's fate is unknown, though it is believed he perished at Sachsenhausen.

<sup>40</sup> A putsch is “a secretly plotted and suddenly executed attempt to overthrow a government.” (*Webster's*). On 8–9 November 1923, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party attempted a coup d'état, which came to be known as the Munich or Beer Hall Putsch. Hitler was convicted of treason, sentenced to five years in prison, but spent less than a year in jail, during which he dictated *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*), his political autobiography.

### **HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT, CONTINUED**

#### **9–10 November 1938 | *Eyewitness account: Kristallnacht*<sup>41</sup>**

“[In Vienna], amongst the 30,000 arrested people were numerous women and children. [...] The arrested people were [...] transported in lorries, even in cattle-trucks, just as one takes pigs or oxen to the slaughterhouse. [...] On climbing [into the trucks], their bare fingers were hit with iron rods, [and] during the transport, [they were hit] with sticks and iron rods on their bare heads.

“The arrested people were assembled en masse [...] and penned up; there were 4,000 to 5,000 people in the stable of the [police barracks], who spent more than thirty-six hours standing without food [...].

“They were ordered to perform military exercises standing on the manure, they were forced to dirty each other's faces with muck, punch and slap each others' faces, etc. If these blows given to each other were not strong enough in the opinion of the Kommandant, the guards themselves dealt out the blows in an appropriately intensified manner.”<sup>42</sup>

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“On the morning of 10 November, synagogues all over Germany [including Austria] were put to the torch. The fire brigade was allowed to intervene only if the fires threatened to spread to neighbouring buildings. Thousands of [Jewish] apartments were demolished during the night, and thousands of Jewish businesses were smashed to bits in the course of the following day. The broken glass that piled up on the streets gave the night the ironically euphemistic name of *Kristallnacht*, ‘the night of broken glass’. It is estimated that 400 people were murdered or driven to suicide. About 40,000 Jews were arrested, and 30,000 of them were sent to Dachau, Buchenwald, or Sachsenhausen, where they were subjected to the cruellest harassment.”<sup>43</sup>

#### **1938–1939 | *Refugee numbers***

“Whereas in the first half of 1938 only about 14,000 Jews had emigrated from Germany [...], by the end of 1939, about 100,000 Jews had left Germany and another 100,000 had left Austria. Most of those who remained were poor or old.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> The *Kristallnacht* violence was instigated primarily by Nazi Party officials, members of the Storm Troopers, and Hitler Youth. The German government imposed on German Jews a fine of one billion Reichsmark (equivalent to ±\$400 million US dollars at 1938 rates) for the cost of damages sustained by the Jewish community. Insurance payouts were confiscated from Jews.

⇒ See Chapter Notes—*Kristallnacht*

<sup>42</sup> Transcript of Testimony B.123, ca. end 1938. (<http://wienerlibrarycollections.co.uk/novemberpogrom>).

<sup>43</sup> Uta Gerhardht & Thomas Karlauf, eds., *The Night of Broken Glass. Eyewitness Accounts of Kristallnacht*, pp. 1–8.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.



**Page 1**

**The geographic importance of Teschen, the division of Teschen after the First World War, and the 1938 annexation of Zaolzie by Poland**

*Geographic importance of Teschen (Cieszyn)*

Former presidential advisor and professor Richard Pipes, who was born in Teschen, writes: “I visited [Teschen] several times after we had moved away: once during the winter vacation of 1937-38 and then again in February 1939, after the Polish government had forced the Czechs, abandoned by their allies at Munich, to surrender their half of [Teschen]. Walking its deserted streets, I felt sick with shame for my country.

“The population used Polish, German, and Czech interchangeably. At home, my parents spoke alternatively Polish and German. With me they spoke exclusively German; they also engaged German-speaking nannies. But the children I played with spoke Polish and so I picked up the language. As a result, at the age of three or four I was bilingual.

“It must be difficult for an American to visualize the cultural crosscurrents that met in the geographic heart of Europe,\* for although the United States has many ethnic groups, the English language has always dominated its culture. Where I was born, cultures met on an equal footing.”

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\* Lines drawn from North Cape in Norway to Sicily and from Moscow to the western coast of Spain intersect in the vicinity of Teschen (Cieszyn).

*The division of Teschen*

“Cieszyn Silesia was cemented as a uniform historic, geopolitical, socio-cultural and economic entity during the period of Habsburg rule. It is distinct from the rest of Silesia because after the First Silesian War between the Austrian Empire and Prussia it remained part of Austria, whereas most of Silesia became a part of Prussia. [...]

“Two local self-government councils, Polish and Czech, were created. Initially, both national councils claimed the whole of Cieszyn Silesia for themselves [...]. On 31 October 1918, in the wake of World War I and the dissolution of Austria-Hungary, most of the area was taken over by local Polish authorities. [...] On 5 November 1918 the area was divided between Poland and Czechoslovakia by another interim agreement. In 1919 the councils were absorbed by the newly created and independent central governments in Prague and Warsaw.

“The former was not satisfied with the situation and on 23 January 1919 invaded the area while both parties were engaged in much larger conflicts elsewhere, Poland in its war against the West Ukrainian National Republic, and Czechoslovakia in the war with the Hungarian Soviet Republic over Slovakia. The impetus for the Czech invasion in 1919 was Poland's organizing of elections to the Sejm (parliament) of Poland in the disputed area. The elections were to be held in the whole of Cieszyn Silesia. The Czechs claimed that the polls must not be held in the disputed area, as the delimitation was only interim and no sovereign rule should be executed there by any party. The Czech demand was rejected by the Poles, and the Czechs decided to resolve the issue by force. Czech and Polish units clashed after the swift Czech advance near Skoczów, where a battle took place on 28–30 January. It was inconclusive, and before the reinforced Czech forces could resume the attack on the town, they were pressed by entente to stop operations, and a ceasefire was signed on 3 February.

“In this tense climate it was decided that a plebiscite would be held in the area asking the people which country the territory should join. Plebiscite commissioners arrived there at the end of January 1920 and after analyzing the situation declared a state of emergency in the territory on 19 May 1920. The situation remained very tense. Mutual intimidation, acts of terror, beatings, and even killings affected the area. A plebiscite could not be held in this atmosphere. On 10 July both sides renounced the idea of plebiscite and entrusted the Conference of Ambassadors with the decision. Eventually 58.1 percent of the area of Cieszyn Silesia, along with 67.9 percent of the population, was taken over by Czechoslovakia on 28 July 1920 [...]. This decision divided a historically unified region, leaving a sizeable Polish minority in Czechoslovakia [...]. The division of 1920 had an immediate impact on [...] the region. Many families were divided by the new border. Several municipalities were divided between the two states, including Teschen.”

### *1938 Zaolzie annexation*

Zaolzie means “the land beyond the Olza River” (looking from Poland). “Within the region originally demanded from Czechoslovakia by Nazi Germany in 1938 was the important railway junction city of Bohumín (Bogumin in Polish). The Poles regarded the city as of crucial importance to the area and to Polish interests. On 28 September 1938, Czech President Edvard Beneš composed a note to the Polish administration offering to reopen the debate surrounding the territorial demarcation in Těšínsko in the

interest of mutual relations, but he delayed in sending it in hopes of good news from London and Paris, which came only in a limited form. Beneš then turned to the Soviet leadership, which had begun a partial mobilization in eastern Belarus and the Ukrainian SSR on 22 September and threatened Poland with the dissolution of the Soviet-Polish non-aggression pact. The Czech government was offered 700 fighter planes [by the Soviets] if room for them could be found on the Czech airfields. Romania allowed 100,000 Soviet troops to pass through its territory as long as it happened quickly. On 28 September, all the military districts west of the Urals were ordered to stop releasing men for leave.

“Nevertheless, the Polish leader, Colonel Józef Beck, believed that Warsaw should act rapidly to forestall the German occupation of the city. At noon on September 30, Poland gave an ultimatum to the Czech government. It demanded the immediate evacuation of Czech troops and police and gave Prague until noon the following day. On 1 October, the Czech foreign minister called the Polish ambassador in Prague and told him Poland could have what it wanted. The Polish Army, commanded by General Bortnowski, annexed an area of 801.5 km<sup>2</sup> with a population of 227,399. Administratively the area was divided between Frysztat and Cieszyn counties.

“The Germans were delighted with this outcome, and were happy to give up the sacrifice of a small provincial rail center to Poland in exchange for the ensuing propaganda benefits. It spread the blame of the partition of the Republic of Czechoslovakia, made Poland a participant in the process, and confused political expectations. Poland was accused of being an accomplice of Nazi Germany—a charge that Warsaw was hard-put to deny.

“The Polish side argued that Poles in Zaolzie deserved the same ethnic rights and freedom as the Sudeten Germans under the Munich Agreement. The vast majority of the local Polish population enthusiastically welcomed the change, seeing it as a liberation and a form of historical justice, but they quickly changed their mood. The new Polish authorities appointed people from Poland to various key positions from which locals were fired. The Polish language became the sole official language. Using Czech (or German) by Czechs (or Germans) in public was prohibited, and Czechs and Germans were forced to leave the annexed area or become subject to Polonization. Rapid Polonization policies then followed in all parts of public and private life. Czech organizations were dismantled, and their activity was prohibited.

“The behavior of the new Polish authorities was different but similar in nature to that of the Czech ones prior to 1938. Two political factions

appeared: socialists (the opposition) and rightists (loyal to the new Polish national authorities). Leftist politicians and sympathizers were discriminated against and often fired from work. The Polish political system was artificially implemented in Zaolzie. The local Poles continued to feel like second-class citizens, and a majority of them were dissatisfied with the situation after October 1938. Zaolzie remained a part of Poland until the invasion of Poland started on 1 September 1939.

“[...] According to historian Paul N. Hehn, Poland’s annexation of Teschen may have contributed to the British and French reluctance to attack the Germans with greater forces in September 1939.”

“Historian Richard M. Watt describes the Polish capture of Teschen in these words:

Amid the general euphoria in Poland—the acquisition of Teschen was a very popular development—no one paid attention to the bitter comment of the Czechoslovak general who handed the region over to the incoming Poles. He predicted that it would not be long before the Poles would themselves be handing Teschen over to the Germans.

“Watt also writes that

the Polish 1938 ultimatum to Czechoslovakia and its acquisition of Teschen were gross tactical errors. Whatever justice there might have been to the Polish claim upon Teschen, its seizure in 1938 was an enormous mistake in terms of the damage done to Poland’s reputation among the democratic powers of the world.

“In his postwar memoirs, Winston Churchill compared Germany and Poland to vultures landing on the dying carcass of Czechoslovakia and lamented that ‘over a question so minor as [Teschen], [the Poles] sundered themselves from all those friends in France, Britain, and the United States who had lifted them once again to a national, coherent life, and whom they were soon to need so sorely.’”

**(Sources: *Vixi: Memoirs of a Non-Belonger*, by Richard Pipes, pp. 16-17; Wikipedia)**

#### **Page 4**

#### **The Nuremberg race laws of 1935**

“At the annual party rally held in Nuremberg in 1935, the Nazis announced new laws which institutionalized many of the racial theories prevalent in Nazi ideology. The laws excluded German Jews from Reich citizenship and prohibited them from marrying or having sexual relations with persons of ‘German or related blood.’ Ancillary ordinances to the laws disenfranchised Jews and deprived them of most political rights.

“The Nuremberg Laws, as they became known, did not define a ‘Jew’ as someone with particular religious beliefs. Instead, anyone who had three or four Jewish grandparents was defined as a Jew, regardless of whether that individual identified himself or herself as a Jew or belonged to the Jewish religious community. Many Germans who had not practiced Judaism for years found themselves caught in the grip of Nazi terror. Even people with Jewish grandparents who had converted to Christianity were defined as Jews.

“For a brief period after Nuremberg, in the weeks before and during the 1936 Olympic Games held in Berlin, the Nazi regime actually moderated its anti-Jewish attacks and even removed some of the signs saying ‘Jews Unwelcome’ from public places. Hitler did not want international criticism of his government to result in the transfer of the games to another country. Such a loss would have been a serious blow to German prestige. After the Olympic Games (in which the Nazis did not allow German Jewish athletes to participate), the Nazis again stepped up the persecution of German Jews. In 1937 and 1938, the government set out to impoverish Jews by requiring them to register their property and then by ‘Aryanizing’ Jewish businesses. This meant that Jewish workers and managers were dismissed, and the ownership of most Jewish businesses was taken over by non-Jewish Germans who bought them at bargain prices fixed by Nazis. Jewish doctors were forbidden to treat non-Jews, and Jewish lawyers were not permitted to practice law.

“Like everyone in Germany, Jews were required to carry identity cards, but the government added special identifying marks to theirs: a red ‘J’ stamped on them and new middle names for all those Jews who did not possess recognizably ‘Jewish’ first names—‘Israel’ for males, ‘Sara’ for females. Such cards allowed the police to identify Jews easily.”

The key dates around the institution of the components of the Nuremberg Race Laws are described below:

“15 September 1935: At their annual party rally, the Nazis announce new laws that revoke Reich citizenship for Jews and prohibit Jews from marrying or having sexual relations with persons of ‘German or related blood.’ ‘Racial infamy,’ as this becomes known, is made a criminal offense. The Nuremberg Laws define a ‘Jew’ as someone with three or four Jewish grandparents. Consequently, the Nazis classify as Jews thousands of people who had converted from Judaism to another religion, among them even Roman Catholic priests and nuns and Protestant ministers whose grandparents were Jewish.

“18 October 1935—new marriage requirements instituted: The ‘Law for the Protection of the Hereditary Health of the German People’ requires all

prospective marriage partners to obtain from the public health authorities a certificate of fitness to marry. Such certificates are refused to those suffering from 'hereditary illnesses' and contagious diseases and those attempting to marry in violation of the Nuremberg Laws.

"14 November 1935—Nuremberg Laws extended to other groups: The first supplemental decree of the Nuremberg Laws extends the prohibition on marriage or sexual relations between people who could produce 'racially suspect' offspring. A week later, the minister of the interior interprets this to mean relations between 'those of German or related blood' and Roma (Gypsies), blacks, or their offspring."

**(Source: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, "The Nuremberg Race Laws")**

#### **Page 4**

#### **Anti-Semitism in Poland and anti-Semitic legislation, 1935-1939**

"The population at large was imbued with a hostility toward Jews, instilled in it over centuries by the Catholic Church. It was not racial anti-Semitism but it was only slightly less painful since it could be averted only by renouncing one's religion and one's people, and even then, in Polish eyes, one never quite got rid of one's Jewishness. [...]

"[In 1935] Poland could hardly escape the fate of a Europe mired in depression. The situation of Jews deteriorated rapidly, the more so that the Nazis fanned abroad the flames of anti-Semitism. Talk was heard of 'solving' the Jewish question [...]. Jewish enterprises were boycotted; some non-Jewish stores displayed prominently signs proclaiming them 'Christian'; Poles were urged to 'buy from your own kind.' In my school [in Warsaw], where previously Catholics and Jews had led separate but amicable lives, students debated the 'Jewish question,' by which was meant the allegedly harmful influence of Jews on Poland's economy and culture. The term *zażydzenie* or 'Judaization' of Poland gained currency. Jewish university students suffered physical assaults, and in 1937, the minister of education, bowing to the demands of the fascist National Democrats, ordered them to sit on separate benches on the left side of the lecture rooms. All this created an intolerable atmosphere."

In 1935, soon after the death of Poland's chief of state Józef Piłsudski, pogroms began. "In March 1936, in the small town of Przytyk<sup>45</sup> near Radom, Jews were robbed by local peasants and two of them killed; other incidents of

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<sup>45</sup> This town is about two hundred miles from Teschen and approximately sixty-five miles south of Warsaw.

violence followed. [...] The authorities condemned to prison Przytyk Jews who had defended themselves while acquitting their murderers and robbers.”

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“Nazi politics and foreign expansion also left the Germans [in Poland] vulnerable to Polish hostility. The rising tensions were in part due to the increasingly nationalistic atmosphere in Poland, which the authoritarian government in Warsaw stoked. Nazi propaganda concerning the unity of the German people only convinced Polish nationalists that the Germans in Poland were in league with the Reich policy. [...] many Poles feared that the Reich would use the Germans in Poland as a fifth column as it had with the Sudeten Germans. In Torún, Polish nationalist clubs such as Sokoł staged a boycott of German stores in December 1938—one month after the anti-Jewish violence in Germany [...] called *Kristallnacht* [...]. In February 1939, German stores in Torún were attacked over four days. The police did little to prevent the vandals from hurling stones through the windows. The local German consulate also reported having seen a sign stating: ‘Germans, Jews, and Dogs: No Entrance.’ During this time, heightened national tensions easily led to mixtures of anti-Semitic and anti-German sentiments. The German consular office in Cieszyn (Teschen) reported that in early 1939 the local district office had placed a poster with the command: ‘Chase the Jews and Germans from the country.’ After several German-owned businesses were attacked, the official submitted photos including one with a Star of David painted over a storefront.”

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“From 1935 to 1939, anti-Semitic feeling in Poland gained in intensity. The impact of this development was to influence the adoption of measures by Polish professional organizations that excluded Jews. Here are a few examples:

- ♦ August 1936: The Polish government ordered all shops to include the owner’s name on their signs. This order was tantamount to targeted, Jewish-owned businesses. Attacks on Jewish businesses surged after the marking order went into effect.
- ♦ May 1937: The membership of the Polish Medical Association adopted a paragraph into their professional charter excluding Jews from the medical profession. The Polish Bar Association adopted a similar measure. This was followed by official state action in May 1938 restricting the ability of Jewish lawyers to attain licenses to practice law.
- ♦ January 1938: The General Assembly of Journalists in the city of Wilno

added a provision to its by-laws stating that anyone who was Jewish could not belong to their organization.

- ♦ April 1938: Bank Polski, Poland's largest fiscal institution, adopted a provision excluding Jews.
- ♦ March 1938: The Polish government announced a new 'Citizenship Law.' This law stated that as of 30 October 1938, the passports of Polish citizens who had lived abroad for more than five years would be revoked if those citizens had not 'maintained contact with the [home] country.' Although this law did not target Jews specifically, its effect had a dramatic impact on Jews who had lived outside of Poland. One such community of Jewish expatriates were the tens of thousands of Polish Jews residing in neighboring Germany. The Polish action would have effectively rendered these people 'stateless' on German soil, making them a German problem. Nazi officials, particularly Heinrich Himmler, chief of the SS, and his subordinate, Reinhard Heydrich, had planned since earlier in the year to force Jews—particularly Polish Jews—to leave Germany. On 28-29 October 1938, the SS and Gestapo detained 15,000 Polish Jews and sent them over the German frontier into Poland. These refugees were turned back by Polish border guards and then interned in a refugee camp 'between' Germany and Poland at Zbaszyn. There they languished under terrible conditions until Poland finally relented and allowed them to enter the country in 1939."

However, before Poland opened its borders, this event precipitated, in turn, despair for the young Herschel Grynszpan, who shot a German diplomat, an event used as a pretext for Kristallnacht (see entry below for more about Kristallnacht).

**NOTE:** The exact fate of Herschel Grynszpan is unknown. One report alleged he was executed in 1940, though an official in the German Foreign Office, Fritz Dahms, claimed he died just before the end of the war. After the war, frequent rumors suggested he had survived and lived under an alias in Paris, but no evidence corroborates these rumors. There is more evidence that supports the notion that Grynszpan died at Sachsenhausen sometime in late 1942.

**(Sources: *Vixi: Memoirs of a Non-Belonger*, by Richard Pipes [born in Teschen], pp. 20-22; *The German Minority in Interwar Poland*, by Winsun Chu, p. 244 [www.worldfuturefund.org](http://www.worldfuturefund.org))**

#### **Page 5**

**The roots of German nationalism in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire**

“There was a longtime dispute in the German-speaking territories over the



concept of German identity. [...] The idea of ‘nationalism’ in a modern sense, became significant in the nineteenth century, initially as a progressive democratic idea [...], which by the end of that century had also become attractive to right-wing thinkers whose ideas [in turn] led to fascism and Nazism.

“In the German-speaking and especially Habsburg lands, the idea of a German ‘Volk’ went back to the Habsburg Holy Roman Empire, but German nationalism was hijacked by Bismarck and used to promote the domination of Prussia in the new ‘German’ Reich that was established in 1871 at the expense of the dominant southern ‘German’ kingdom of Bavaria and (Habsburg) empire and kingdom of Austria-Hungary, which split itself as a compromise with Hungarian nationalists.

“Within Austria, both traditions of nationalism were strong. The idea of a union of German-speaking lands was known as ‘Gross Deutschland’—Greater Germany. As with most ideas, its supporters ranged from the respectable and sensible of both left and right to the vicious and fanatical—e.g., Hitler, though he was not an orthodox Greater Germany supporter.

“The first declaration of the democratic First Republic in November 1918 was called the Republic of Deutsch Oesterreich (German Austria, to differentiate it from the non-German-speaking Habsburg lands, especially Hungary; *Oesterreich* means, literally, the eastern part of the empire). [...] The Treaty of St. Germain, imposed by the Allies, which formally ended the hostilities of WW I, explicitly forbids the union of Austria and Germany [...]. By the 1930s, virtually all left-wing nationalists rejected unity because of Hitler’s policies, but some right-wing Nationalists saw Hitler as the embodiment of the German Nationalist idea. Other right-wing politicians had always rejected German Nationalism, but in the 1930s, more, especially those linked to the Catholic church, rejected Hitler’s policies and, looking for allies, established links with Italian Fascism.”

**(Source: Pauline Crump, Weymouth, UK, *Austria-Czech SIG digest*)**

## **Page 5**

### **Café Landtmann**

The Café Landtmann was Sigmund Freud’s favorite. Other patrons included the composer Gustav Mahler and the writer Felix Salten (author of *Bambi*).

“Cafe culture and the notion of debate and discussion in cafes is very much part of Viennese life now and was then,’ explains Charles Emmerson, author of *1913: In Search of the World Before the Great War*.”

**(Source: “When Hitler, Trotsky, Tito, Freud and Stalin all lived in the same place, 1913” by Andy Walker, in BBC’s Magazine, 18 April 2013)**

### Page 7

#### **Freud and Hitler’s parallel lives in Vienna**

In the film *Neighbors: Freud and Hitler in Vienna*, director Manfred Becker examines the parallel existences of the two men who shaped the twentieth-century in vastly different ways:

“1907 Vienna: Hitler, a high-school dropout, has just buried his mother. The family doctor has noted that Adolf’s attachment to his mother bordered on the pathological. Adolf’s father, who had beaten him and his mother regularly and savagely, had already drunk himself to death with alcohol. At this juncture, Hitler admires the Jewish people because of their extraordinary contributions to the arts and sciences and indicates that he wants to be a part of their culture. He expresses a wish to be a painter and applies to Vienna’s Academy of Fine Arts.

Freud takes his dog for walks on a square where Hitler also goes from time to time to buy magazines.

“1908: Hitler’s application to the art academy is rejected. He becomes a drifter. Sometimes he enters the Austrian parliament to escape the cold. There he hears people blaming the Jews for the uncertain times. By candlelight Hitler sketches utopian cities. He organizes a small band of disaffected followers.

“1909: Some of Hitler’s followers are Jewish. He lives in a boarding house located a few blocks from the house where Freud lives and works at 19 Berggasse. Freud, meanwhile, is a master of his own group of disciples, with Carl Jung declared ‘the crown prince.’

“1913: Hitler leaves Vienna.

“1920: Freud’s daughter Sophie dies in the 1918-1920 flu pandemic.

“1923: Hitler has become head of the national socialist movement, commonly known as the Nazi party, and has written his manifesto, *Mein Kampf*. At this juncture he is aware of Freud’s ideas and declares psychoanalysis an idea of a deranged mind. But Freud is apparently not aware of Hitler; he is uninterested in politics.

1938: Hitler returns to Austria as a ‘liberator.’ Jung gives Freud money to escape Austria, but he refuses to do so. Then Freud’s daughter Anna is picked up by Hitler’s Gestapo. When she is released, Freud finally agrees to leave

Austria. In June, he says goodbye to Vienna, which has been his home for seventy years. He and his family move to London. Freud's sisters remain in Austria, however, and die in concentration camps.”

**(Source: “Film Depicts Parallel Lives of Freud, Hitler,” by Joan Arehart-Treichel, in *Psychiatric News*, 5 November 2010)**

#### **Page 10**

### **The Olza River**

The right tributary of the Oder River, the Olza flows from the Silesian Beskids<sup>46</sup> through southern Cieszyn Silesia in Poland and Frýdek-Místek and Karviná districts of the Czech Republic, often forming the border with Poland. It flows into the Oder River north of Bohumín. The Olza-Oder confluence also forms a border.

The Olza is a symbol of the region known as *Zaolzie* region (*Zaolzie* means land beyond the Olza), which lies on its western bank.

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### **The Café Avion**

The Café Avion was built in 1933 on the Czech side of the Olza.

“The café/restaurant was built for Rosalia Wiesner (next to the former Hotel National) in 1933 by the builder V. Nekvasil, on the



corner of Saxon Hill and the Avenue Masaryk. This café formed a center for cultural and social life, and due to its [geographic] situation, it was also a base for smugglers. The Avion was rented by E. Streck (about 1935). [...]

The main bridge was blown up by the retreating Polish troops on 1 September 1939. Due to its strategic importance, the bridge was quickly rebuilt; at the same time the Nazis demolished the Café Avion, which belonged to Jews. During the withdrawal from Cieszyn in May 1945, the bridge was blown up again.”

**(Source: <http://www.avion.tesinsko.cz/historia.html>)**

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<sup>46</sup> The Beskid Mountains are a “discontinuous series of forested mountain ranges lying in the eastern Czech Republic, northwestern Slovakia, and southern Poland.[...] The highest points in the Beskid Mountains are Mount Babia (5,659 feet) in Poland and Mount Pilsko (5,108 feet) in Slovakia. Iron deposits in the northwest foothills of the Beskids led to the establishment of the iron and steelworks of the Ostrava district in what is now the Czech Republic.” The Beskid climate, is dry in summer and suitable for pasture and sheep breeding, with ample snow for winter sports.

From the western flank of the second highest peak in the Beskid range, Barania Góra, flows the source of the Vistula River, the longest waterway in Poland. It stretches east to Kraków and then north across the country to Warsaw, twisting northwest, and empties into the Baltic Sea. Also sourced in these mountains is the Olza River, a tributary of Poland's second longest river, the Oder, which also empties into the Baltic. *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

**Skoczów, Sergius Pauser, Frederick Sinaiberger, David Spitzer**

*Skoczów during the war*

There is no evidence that the family vacationed in Skoczów, which is about ten miles east of Cieszyn, but we do know that Sergius Pauser painted portraits of the Kohn family members (see below). “Germans entered Skoczów on 2 September, 1939. Many Jewish families escaped, but still there were 250 Jews in the city. Men were forced to do public works, women had to sweep streets and clean houses belonging to Germans. The synagogue was closed down. Spitzer’s tannery [was Aryanized in September 1939]. Some of the machines were moved to Łodygowice and new equipment, which [made] tannage of calf leather possible, was brought in from the Kohn factory in Teschen. Leon Świetlik, a former worker, became the manager of the tannery. New authorities rented him Oscar Spitzer’s house on Katowicka Str. The neighboring villa of F. Sinaiberger was occupied by the Austrian Göres, who became the new director of the Heilpern factory. [...]

“On 27 September, at 7:00 AM, Jews from Skoczów and [environs], mostly men between sixteen to sixty years old, were put into cars. They could only take hand luggage and a few hundred German marks. They were transported to Bielsko and, later [...] to Katowice. On the way, a few groups of men from



the Bielsko, Zaolzie, and Bogumin regions joined the transport, [and] 1247 people were put on one train of boxcars and sent [...] to Nisko on the San River [...], where a temporary work camp was established.”

*Sergius Pauser and Frederick Sinaiberger*

Sergius Pauser painted portraits of Josefina, Julius, and the children (though only the portrait of Josefina, painted ca. 1935, and pictured at left, is known to us). Pauser went to Skoczów as a protégé of Frederick (Fritz) Sinaiberger, a well-known citizen of the town. An amateur painter, Sinaiberger, along with another Jew from Skoczów, David Spitzer (see below), owned a tannery, so it is likely that

Julius Kohn knew both men because of his own tannery business. The Sinaibergers later changed their last name to Serger. Fritz and his wife, Helen (née Spitzer), emigrated to France and then America, where they owned a

well-know art gallery on East Eighty-Second Street in New York City, La Boetie (opened in 1964 and closed after Helen's death in 1989). The Spitzer family had relations and connections to families in Teschen, and quite possibly intermarriage with distant members of the Kohn, Ziffer, and/or Eisner families.

### *David Spitzer*

“David S. Spitzer established a tannery that employed, in 1906, thirty-eight workers. His wife, Rose (née Lindner) bore him numerous children—Hermann, Emanuel, Siegfried (commissioner of the Vienna Police), Eugenia, Alfred, Norbert, Emma, Fridericka, and Theresa.” [Karola Eisner's mother was a Lindner]. David Spitzer had siblings, “who in 1910 lived in Cieszyn. [...] His son Emanuel married Emma Mayer (b. 1878; died 1975 in New York) and their children were Helen (b. 1901) and Oscar (b. 1904). Helen married Frederick Sinaiberger [who] in 1926 became share-holder of the tannery. Oscar married Sylvia Guttman (b. 1915) in 1937 in Vienna. They had a daughter, Monica, born 1940 in London); Oscar died in NY in March 1995.”

**(Sources: Author research; “Jewish families from Skoczów and from the Skoczów area,” by Jacek Proszyk; and “History of Skoczów Jews during the Second World War,” by Halina Szotek, from *In the Shadow of the Skoczów Synagogue*, edited by Janusz Spyra, pp. 137 and 105-106)**

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#### The Teschen millrace

Today called ul. Przykopa (Moat Street), when Teschen was part of Austria Hungary, the millrace was called Mühlgrabenstrasse in German. The millrace was also known as Teschen's Venice. The Kohn family leather tannery was located here.



The manmade millrace (pictured above) that was used to power the waterwheels of the urban mills runs south to north between the edge of town and the river. This area was home to weavers, tanners, drapers, and blacksmiths and was lined with low houses with wooden bridges to their front doors over the narrow watercourse.

## HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT: HITLER PRACTICES DECEIT

### *22 August 1939 | Reportage*

Hitler tells the top commanders of the Wehrmacht (the German army): “The object of the war is to physically destroy the enemy. [...] That is why I have prepared, for the moment only in the East, my ‘Death’s Head’ formations with orders to kill without pity or mercy all men, women, and children of Polish descent or language.”<sup>47</sup>

### *30 August 1939 | Reportage*

When Hitler gave the attack order at eight in evening, the war commenced with an act of subterfuge:

“*Sturmabführer* Alfred Naujocks of the German *Sicherheitsdienst* (security service) led a party dressed in Polish uniforms, and including a dozen convicted criminals dismissively code-named ‘*Konserwen*’—‘tin cans’—in a mock assault<sup>48</sup> of the German radio station at Gleiwitz<sup>49</sup> in Upper Silesia. Shots were fired; Polish patriotic slogans were broadcast across the airwaves; then the ‘attackers’ withdrew. SS machine gunners killed the ‘tin cans,’ whose bloodstained corpses were arranged for display to foreign correspondents as evidence of Polish aggression.

“At 2:00 AM on 1 September, the Wehrmacht’s 1st Mounted Regiment was among scores roused in its bivouacs by a bugle call—some German units as well as many Polish ones rode horses to battle.[...] At 4:40 AM, the big guns of [an] old German battleship [...] opened fire on the Polish fort at Westerplatte. An hour later, German soldiers tore down crossing poles on the western frontier, opening the way for leading elements of the invasion force to pour forward into Poland.”<sup>50</sup>

### *1 September 1939 | Reportage*

In a speech in Berlin, Hitler lies to the public: “I will not war against women and children. I have ordered my air force to restrict itself to attacks on military objectives.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Cited in Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland’s Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918-1947*, p. 115.

<sup>48</sup> Also known as a “false flag,” or a “covert operation covert operations conducted by governments, corporations, or other organizations, which are designed to appear as if they are being carried out by other entities” (Wikipedia).

<sup>49</sup> The Polish name of the town is Gliwice, and it is about an hour away from Teschen (Cieszyn).

⇒ See Chapter Notes—The Gleiwitz Incident

<sup>50</sup> Max Hastings, *Inferno: The World at War, 1939-1945*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>51</sup> Maurice Hindus, “Introduction,” *Siege*, by Julien Bryan, p. 10.

*1 September 1939 | Historical account*

“The German terror began in the sky. At 4:20 in the morning on 1 September 1939, the bombs fell, without warning, on the central Polish city of Wielún. [...] The church, the synagogue, the hospital all went up in flames. Wave after wave of munitions fell, seventy tons of bombs in all, destroying most of the buildings, and killing hundreds of people, mostly women and children. [...] Throughout western Poland, scores of towns and villages met a similar fate, As many as 158 different settlements were bombed.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, p. 119.

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**Translation of a letter written by Julius Kohn, with postscript by Josefina Kohn**

*NOTE: This letter is referred to and directly quoted in the very first paragraph of the chapter.*

17 July 1939

Dear Ernst!

I am traveling often and Finka is reluctant to write so that's why you receive an answer from us just now. Your suitcase, loden coat and lap robe is with Dr. Leo Neumann [brother of the famous throat specialist who refused to operate on Hitler] and director Winternitz from Prague who have taken it with them to England. You will receive their address at the refugee office if they do not notify you as they promised us. There are daily 10–30 people arriving, we have established a help organization but all means are too little in order to be able to really help. We know your situation in England from many letters.

Regarding the export from Poland, it is eggs, meat, grease which comes from a big company that has the monopoly on it. This syndicate also has cotton and machines in its hands. For you, only the clothing industry in Tarnow or Białystok would be interesting and I am not familiar with that. You will get the best information at the English/Polish chamber of commerce in London. All business here is more difficult because of a lack of currency/credit. How better it will get is unknown and will depend on the ongoing talks, hope is for much.

Tomorrow, I will go to Danzig and Warsaw-Lwów, so again I will be away all week long. Warm greetings to you and your loved ones. Julek. When will we see each other? Not before August.

*from Josefina:*

Dear Ernesta[o?],

Unfortunately, we have so many transients that I have no time for anything so please forgive me for not writing—Julek has told you everything and I hope you will get to your things soon. How is your [Finka] doing, you probably know about your homeland, I believe that your parents will soon be coming home.

**(Source: Peter Kohn family, translation by Family Archive Services)**



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### **Kristallnacht**

After Ernst vom Rath died, German propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels and other Nazis planned a series of pogroms. Thus, on the night of 9 November 1938, “violence against Jews broke out across the Reich. It appeared to be unplanned, set off by Germans’ anger over the assassination of a German official in Paris at the hands of a Jewish teenager. In fact, [they were] carefully organized pogroms. In two days, over 250 synagogues were burned, over 7,000 Jewish businesses were trashed and looted, dozens of Jewish people were killed, and Jewish cemeteries, hospitals, schools, and homes were looted while police and fire brigades stood by. The pogroms became known as Kristallnacht, the ‘Night of Broken Glass,’ for the shattered glass from the store windows that littered the streets.

“The morning after the pogroms, 30,000 German Jewish men were arrested for the ‘crime’ of being Jewish and sent to concentration camps, where hundreds of them perished. Some Jewish women were also arrested and sent to local jails. Businesses owned by Jews were not allowed to reopen unless they were managed by non-Jews. Curfews were placed on Jews, limiting the hours of the day they could leave their homes.

“After the ‘Night of Broken Glass,’ life was even more difficult for German and Austrian Jewish children and teenagers. Already barred from entering museums, public playgrounds, and swimming pools, now they were expelled from the public schools. Jewish youngsters, like their parents, were totally segregated in Germany. In despair, many Jewish adults committed suicide. Most families tried desperately to leave.”

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It was Hermann Göring who “issued an order to the effect that the Jews, as ‘atonement’ for their hostile attitude toward the German people” should pay this fine and be responsible for repairing the damages. The idea was Hitler’s and occurred to him during a lunch with Goebbels in Munich.

**(Sources: US Holocaust Memorial Museum, “The Night of Broken Glass,” in *Encyclopedia: The Night of Broken Glass: Eyewitness Accounts of Kristallnacht*, ed. by Uta Gerhardt & Thomas Karlauf, p. 9.)**

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### **Aryanization**

Aryanization (Arisierung) was the transfer of Jewish-owned businesses and property throughout Germany and German-occupied countries. For a moving

story about the Aryanization of a Jewish widow's sewing shop in a small Slovakian town, see the Czech film *The Shop on Main Street*, directed by Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos, featuring Polish actress Ida Kamińska as the widow.

(Source: author research)

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#### Nivea cream

Several family members report that Josefina, Elsa, and Suzanna used Nivea cream. Nivea was a personal-care brand developed by a Hamburg-based



company called Beiersdorf Global. Founded in 1882 by a German pharmacist, Beiersdorf was sold in 1890. In 1900 the company developed a water-in-oil emulsion as a skin cream, the first stable emulsion of its kind. This was the basis for Eucerin and, later, Nivea. *Nivea* derives the Latin for snow-white.

During the 1930s, Beiersdorf began producing such products as tanning oils, shaving creams, shampoo and facial cleanser and toners. The trademark Nivea was expropriated in many countries following World War II. Beiersdorf completed buying back the confiscated trademark rights in 1997. During the 1980s, the Nivea brand expanded into a wider global market.

(Source: author research)

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**On Julius Kohn's military service and status as a POW during World War I** Julius Kohn was an officer with the rank of *Leutnant* (2nd Lieutenant or most junior officer) who served in the artillery with *Feldhaubitzen* (Field Howitzer) Regiment 12. In 1914 the regiment was garrisoned in Nagyszeben, Romania and at that time it comprised Magyar—39 percent, German—31 percent, Romanian—22 percent, and various—8 percent.

On 29 November 1916, Julius was listed as wounded, missing in action (according to family stories, he lost an eye during the war. He wore an eye patch for the remainder of his life). On 13 January 1917, over six weeks later, he was listed as wounded, prisoner of war, Russia.

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“Following army ethics and the Hague convention, military hierarchies were observed amongst POWs. Hence, from the moment of their capture, officers received preferential treatment. Their privileges were reflected in the

circumstances of their transportation, living conditions, and most crucially in the fact that they were exempt from forced labor, while receiving a monthly salary. Soldiers' barracks varied greatly in size, holding between 500 and 1,000 men, notably fewer in the case of officers. [...] Some officers had the privilege of living under strict surveillance in private housing. They were initially permitted to leave their accommodation for the purpose of shopping. When restrictions loosened under the provisional government, they were also allowed to visit towns for purely recreational ends.

"[...] Not surprisingly, the political transformation of Russia between 1917 and 1920 had immediate implications for the treatment of POWs. The February Revolution of 1917 loosened camp restrictions to some extent. [...] During this period, camp industries became a crucial factor in the material survival of POWs and played an important role in local economies. Among POWs, successful entrepreneurs emerged, producing and selling various goods and even taking on government contracts. The October Revolution altered the situation drastically. After initial chaos, the Bolsheviks declared POWs free citizens and officers were theoretically declared class enemies.[...] By the autumn of 1918, most POWs had left European Russia: in addition to some 22,000 invalids exchanged by the end of 1917, over 670,000 POWs were able to return home."

**(Sources: Family Archive Service; [www.encyclopedia.1914-1918online.net](http://www.encyclopedia.1914-1918online.net))**

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### **The Hitler Youth**

"The Hitler Youth and the League of German Girls were the primary tools that the Nazis used to shape the beliefs, thinking, and actions of German youth. Youth leaders used tightly controlled group activities and staged propaganda events such as mass rallies full of ritual and spectacle to create the illusion of one national community reaching across class and religious divisions that characterized Germany before 1933.

"Founded in 1926, the original purpose of the Hitler Youth was to train boys to enter the SA (Storm Troopers), a Nazi Party paramilitary formation. After 1933, however, youth leaders sought to integrate boys into the Nazi national community and to prepare them for service as soldiers in the armed forces or, later, in the SS.

"In 1936, membership in Nazi youth groups became mandatory for all boys and girls between the ages of ten and seventeen. After-school meetings and weekend camping trips sponsored by the Hitler Youth and the League of German Girls trained children to become faithful to the Nazi Party and the

future leaders of the National Socialist state. By September 1939, over 765,000 young people served in leadership roles in Nazi youth organizations which prepared them for such roles in the military and the German occupation bureaucracy.

“The Hitler Youth combined sports and outdoor activities with ideology. Similarly, the League of German Girls emphasized collective athletics, such as rhythmic gymnastics, which German health authorities deemed less strenuous to the female body and better geared to preparing them for motherhood. Their public displays of these values encouraged young men and women to abandon their individuality in favor of the goals of the Aryan collective.”

The Kohn family friend Eric Better recollects that “in Silesia, the native [ethnic] Germans officially acted politically as Nazi Germans and Hitler Youth, wearing white knee socks, leather shorts, white shirts, Tyrolean hats, and German insignias, [...] and meeting and singing in the public places. [...] They were trained and prepared for any future positions and knew the date and time of every movement planned by their party officials.”

**(Sources: U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, <http://www.ushmm.org>; *The Auto Biography of Erich Better* [unpublished], p. 7)**

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#### **Distances between Teschen and Polish towns/cities mentioned in the narrative**

About forty miles northeast of Teschen (Cieszyn) is Oświęcim (Auschwitz in German), site of the notorious Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and extermination camp. Approximately fifty miles due north of Teschen, slightly east of Katowice, is Gliwice (Gleiwitz in German), where the first act of the war began. Lwów appears on today’s map as Lviv (its Ukrainian name). If one heads east from Teschen toward Lwów, Jaroslaw is on the same road. Lublin is located between Warsaw and Lwów. Teschen to Warsaw: approximately 240 miles; Warsaw to Lublin: approximately 115 miles; Lublin to Lwów: approximately 145 miles; Teschen to Lwów: approximately 300 miles.

**(Source: Google maps)**

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#### **The Hotel Angielski**

The Hotel Angielski was first called the Hotel d’Angleterre and was bought in 1803 by a Polish restaurateur. In 1812, the hotel accommodated one of its most famous guests, Napoleon Bonaparte (a



plaque was erected in 1937 to commemorate his stay). The hotel was destroyed during the bombing of Warsaw in September 1939. Today, the Metropolitan office building occupies the site.

**(Source: Author research)**

## HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT: POLAND BESIEGED

### *After 13 September 1939 | Eyewitness account*

“At first we had only bombs to worry about. They usually came in series and, for thirty minutes or so after a bombing, we felt fairly safe hurrying from place to place. One can adjust oneself to almost everything. But after September 13 the German artillery was within range of the heart of the city, and then things became really bad. Aviators gave the exact range to the artillery, who were able to train their guns with precision up and down the main streets. The idea was apparently not to destroy buildings with artillery, but to kill and wound as many pedestrians as possible. Perhaps the German officers would say that their sole objective was to prevent movement of troops in Warsaw. It happened, however, that there were always five to ten times as many civilians in the city as there were soldiers.”<sup>53</sup>

### *September 1939 | Historical account*

“Poland fought alone. France and Britain declared war on Germany, as promised, but took no meaningful military action during the campaign. [...] Polish forces were outnumbered, outgunned, and outflanked by the motorized assault from the north, west, and south. Yet resistance in some places was stiff.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Julien Bryan, *Siege*, p. 31.

<sup>54</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, p. 120.

*Chapter Notes: A Screaming Comes Across the Sky*

*Certainly this must be the first war that millions of people on both sides continued to think could be avoided even after it had been officially declared.*

—Janet Flanner, “Letter from Paris, September 10,” in *The New Yorker*,  
16 September 1939

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**The Sacher torte**

In 1832, Franz Sacher was a sixteen-year-old Jewish apprentice to the pastry chef at the court of Prince Klemens Wenzel von Metternich, foreign minister of the Austrian Empire. One evening Metternich requested a special dessert for guests, but the head chef had fallen ill. Franz Sacher was responsible for creating a confection of two chocolate cake rounds with a middle layer of apricot jam, the entire cake enrobed in chocolate. Eduard, Franz’s son, and his wife, Anna, established the Sacher Hotel, where they featured on the menu this famous cake.

## **HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT: UNREPORTED EVENTS TAKE PLACE**

*22 August 1939 | Historical text*

“German soldiers had been instructed that Poland was not a real country, and that its army was not a real army. Thus the men resisting the invasion could not be real soldiers. German officers instructed their troops that the death of Germans in battle was ‘murder.’ [...]

“On 22 August 1939, Hitler had instructed his commanders to ‘close your hearts to pity.’ The Germans killed prisoners. [...] The Germans also murdered the Polish wounded.[...] As a rule, the Germans would kill civilians after taking new territories. They would also kill civilians after losing ground.”<sup>55</sup>

*September 1939 | Historical text*

“*Einsatz* units—groups and commandos—had followed the German army into Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland when Germany had invaded those countries successively in 1938 and 1939. *Einsatzgruppen* secured occupied territories in advance of civilian administrators. They confiscated weapons and gathered incriminating documents, tracked down and arrested people the SS considered politically unreliable—and systematically murdered the occupied country’s political, educational, religious, and intellectual leadership.[...]

“During the first weeks after the invasion, while the Wehrmacht still controlled the occupied areas, a historian of the Polish experience summarizes, ‘531 towns and villages were burned; the provinces of Lodz and Warsaw suffered the heaviest losses. Various branches of the army and the police [i.e., Himmler’s legions] carried out 714 [mass] executions, which took the lives of 16,376 people, most of whom were Polish Christians. The Wehrmacht committed approximately 60 percent of these crimes, with the police responsible for the remainder.’”

*3 September 1939 | Eyewitness account*

“[In the town of Bydgoszcz], the first victims of the campaign were a number of Boy Scouts, from twelve to sixteen years of age, who were set up in the marketplace against a wall and shot. No reason was given. A devoted priest who rushed to administer the Last Sacrament was shot too. [...] That week, the murders continued. Thirty-four of the leading tradespeople and merchants

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<sup>55</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, pp. 120-121.



of the town were shot, and many other leading citizens. The square was surrounded by troops with machine-guns.”<sup>56</sup>

*7 September 1939 | Testimony*

“On 7 September 1939, Reinhard Heydrich [chief of the Nazi Main Security Office] stated that all Polish nobles, clergy, and Jews must be killed. On 12 September 1939, Wilhelm Keitel [chief of Defense] added the intelligentsia to the list.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Richard Rhodes, *Masters of Death: The SS Einsatzgruppen and the Invention of the Holocaust*, pp. 4-6. Eyewitness account, cited in *Masters of Death*, p. 6.

<sup>57</sup> Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918-1947*, p. 23.

## Chapter Notes: *Combust, Spontaneous*

*The next two weeks of fine, cloudless weather during the day and of moonlit nights were to become almost as great a weapon against Poland as the German army itself. Hitler's luck on weather had stayed with him for one more season. Perhaps heavy rains and overcast skies would not have fully stopped the German army, but they would have slowed it down tremendously.*

—Julien Bryan, *Siege*, p. 20

*Author note: Much of the description in this chapter derives from two illustrated accounts: *Siege*, by the photojournalist Julien Bryan, and the recollections of Jerzy Kajetanski, who survived the Siege of Warsaw as a teenager.*

### Julien Bryan and Jerzy Kajetanski

#### *Julien Bryan*

Julien Bryan was an American photographer who became the only foreign journalist to cover the Siege of Warsaw in 1939. While there, he appealed to President Roosevelt, via a Radio Warsaw broadcast, to come to the aid of civilians being bombed in Warsaw. He smuggled out his images and film when he left Warsaw on 21 September. His short documentary film, *Siege*, was released in 1940, along with a book of photos of the same name. The images in Josefina's dream derive from pictures included in Bryan's book.

#### *Jerzy Kajetanski*

Similarly, other images in this section of the narrative derive from Jerzy Kajetanski's illustrated account of the siege. Kajetanski was a Warsaw native, a teenager in September 1939. His paintings and recollections can be found at: <http://culture.polishsite.us/articles/art438fr.htm>.

**(Source: Author research)**

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#### **The Soviet secret police (NKVD)**

The Soviet secret police that came to be known as the NKVD originated as a result of a re-organization of the agency that preceded it, the OGPU (the Joint State Political Directorate, operative from 1923 to 1934). To reflect "its new status and greater responsibilities," in 1934, "the secret police officially became the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs—and became popularly known by a new acronym: NKVD. Under its new name, the NKVD now controlled the fate of more than a million prisoners."

**(Source: Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*, p. 90)**

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### **The secret Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact**

“The German-Soviet Pact, also known as the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact after the two foreign ministers who negotiated the agreement, had two parts. An economic agreement, signed on 19 August 1939, provided that Germany would exchange manufactured goods for Soviet raw materials. Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union also signed a ten-year nonaggression pact on 23 August 1939, in which each signatory promised not to attack the other.

“The nonaggression pact of 23 August 1939 contained a secret protocol that provided for the partition of Poland and the rest of eastern Europe into Soviet and German spheres of interest. In accordance with this plan, the Soviet army occupied and annexed eastern Poland in the autumn of 1939. On 30 November 1939, the Soviet Union attacked Finland, precipitating a four-month winter war after which the Soviet Union annexed Finnish territory borderlands, particularly near Leningrad. With German indulgence, the Soviet Union also moved to secure its sphere of interest in eastern Europe in the summer of 1940. The Soviets occupied and incorporated the Baltic states and seized the Romanian provinces of northern Bukovina and Bessarabia. [...]

“Hitler had always regarded the German-Soviet nonaggression pact as a tactical and temporary maneuver. On 18 December 1940, he signed Directive 21 (code-named Operation Barbarossa), the first operational order for the invasion of the Soviet Union. From the beginning of operational planning, German military and police authorities intended to wage a war of annihilation against the Communist state as well as the Jews of the Soviet Union, whom they characterized as forming the ‘racial basis’ for the Soviet state.”

**(Source: US Holocaust Memorial Museum, “German-Soviet Pact,” in *Holocaust Encyclopedia*)**

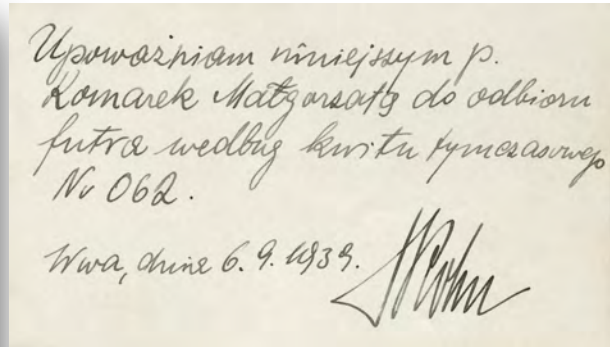
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### **The term *bloodlands***

“In the middle of Europe in the middle of the twentieth century [1933-1945], the Nazi and Soviet regimes murdered some fourteen million people. The place where all of the victims died, the bloodlands (see striped areas on map, right), extends from central Poland to western Russia, through Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic States. [...] The victims were chiefly [...] the peoples native to these lands. [...] Not a single one of the fourteen million murdered was a soldier on active duty. Most were women, children, and the aged; none were bearing weapons; many had been stripped of their possessions, including their clothes. [...] The fourteen million were all victims of a Soviet or Nazi

killing policy, often of an interaction between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, but never casualties of the war between them. A quarter of them were killed before the Second World War even began. [...] The bloodlands were where most of Europe’s Jews lived, where Hitler and Stalin’s imperial plans overlapped, where the Wehrmacht and the Red Army fought, and where the Soviet NKVD and the German SS concentrated their forces.”

(Source: Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, pp. vii-xi)



*Above left is the ticket for the furs at the Warsaw furrier’s; above right is the note written by Julius Kohn, authorizing Milly’s sister to retrieve the furs. At right is an advertisement for astrakhan fur jackets.*

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**The furrier Maksymilian Apfelbaum**

Located on Marszałkowska Street, the furrier’s shop was “first established in 1922 by the brother and sister team of Maximilian Apfelbaum and Anna Maximilian Potok in Warsaw, Poland, third-generation furriers [who] revolutionized the fur industry. The fur techniques used by Maximilian Furs created garments of the highest quality and exquisite design [and] they quickly built a thriving couture business, with their popularity swiftly spreading across Europe. [...] They catered to many of the rich and famous across Europe, who came to their salon to buy custom fitted couture fur garments.



“Their success in Europe was cut short as World War II drove [them] from Poland in 1939. [...] Forced to leave their entire business behind, the siblings [...] brought their passion for fur to America and re-established themselves by opening up a couture fur shop on Fifth Avenue and Fifty-Seventh Street in New York City.

(Source: <http://www.maximilian.com/about.shtml>)

**The symbolism accorded storks**

The white stork is very populous in Poland, migrating each year from Africa to mate and breed. Storks often nest on buildings. In Germany, where people believed that a stork's soul was human, a stork's nest on a house was believed to provide protection from fire. In Germany and Holland, to bring good luck



to a household, people encouraged storks to nest on houses, sometimes constructing high platforms. Poles, Lithuanians, and Ukrainians believe storks bring harmony to a family on whose property they nest.

**(Source: Author research)**

## HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT: BRUTALITY ENSUES

*September 1939 | Historical account*

“Wehrmacht officers and soldiers blamed Polish civilians for the horrors that now befell them. As one general maintained, ‘Germans are the masters, and Poles are the slaves.’ The army leadership knew that Hitler’s goals for the campaign were anything but conventional. As the chief of staff summarized, it was ‘the intention of the Leader to destroy and exterminate the Polish people.’ Soldiers had been prepared to see the Polish civilian population as devious and subhuman. [...] The soldiers quickly took to taking out their frustrations on whomever they happened to see. [...]

“In the town of Widzów, the Germans summoned the men, who, fearing nothing because they had done nothing, answered the call. [...] All of the men of the town were lined up against a fence and shot. In Longinówka, forty Polish citizens were locked in a building, which was then set aflame. Soldiers fired on people as they leapt from windows. Some of the reprisal actions were unthinkable casual. In one case a hundred civilians were assembled to be shot because someone had fired a gun. It turned out that the gun had been fired by a German soldier.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, pp. 121-22.

## Chapter Notes: *Almost in Our Laps*

*The Holocaust is so big, the scale of it so gigantic, so enormous, that it becomes easy to think of it as something mechanical. Anonymous. But everything that happened, happened because someone made a decision. To pull a trigger, to flip a switch, to close a cattle car door, to hide, to betray.*

—Daniel Mendelsohn, *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million*, p. 610

*Author note: The Kosinskis are fictional characters, but I wanted to include people who may have helped the Kohns, people who would have been recognized after the war as the Righteous Among the Nations.*

### The Righteous Among the Nations

Yad Vashem is “the Jewish people’s living memorial to the Holocaust [that] safeguards the memory of the past and imparts its meaning for future generations. Established in 1953, [it is] the world center for documentation, research, education and commemoration of the Holocaust. [...] One of Yad Vashem’s principal duties is to convey the gratitude of the State of Israel and the Jewish people to non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust.

“This mission was defined by the law establishing Yad Vashem, and in 1963 the Remembrance Authority embarked upon a worldwide project to grant the title of Righteous Among the Nations to the few who helped Jews in the darkest time in their history. To this end, Yad Vashem set up a public Commission, headed by a Supreme Court Justice, which examines each case and is responsible for granting the title. Those recognized receive a medal and a certificate of honor and their names are commemorated on the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem.[...]

“A person can be considered for the title of ‘Righteous Among the Nations’ when the data on hand based on survivor testimony or other documentation, clearly demonstrates that a non-Jewish person risked his or



*This mural of Irena Sendler, a designated Righteous Among the Nations, is painted on the building that once housed Teschen’s Jewish Community offices, which were across from the Moorish-style synagogue that was destroyed in September 1939. Sendler, a Polish woman, is notable for having saved Jewish children by smuggling them out of the Warsaw Ghetto.*

her life, freedom, and safety, in order to rescue one or several Jews from the threat of death or deportation without exacting monetary compensation or other rewards. This applies equally to rescuers who have since passed away.”

(Source: [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org))

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#### **Messerschmitt**

Messerschmitt is a generic term for aircraft designed by the Messerschmitt aircraft manufacturer. The Messerschmitt 109 became the standard fighter of the *Luftwaffe* during the war.

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#### **Warsaw Mayor Stefan Starzyński**

Stefan Starzyński, Warsaw’s mayor, refused to leave the city on 4 September 1939, when Polish officials and the diplomatic corps were evacuated.

“Starzyński broadcast daily to his people, denouncing the Nazi barbarism with passionate emotion. He recruited rescue squads, summoned thousands of volunteers to dig trenches, comforted victims of German bombs who were soon numbered in the thousands.”

In 2014, “An investigation by the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) concluded that [...] Stefan Starzyński was shot by Nazi German Gestapo officers in the first few weeks of WWII. The fate of the popular Warsaw mayor has eluded historians for decades, with various theories [about] Starzyński's demise. [...] According to the institute's findings, three Gestapo officers led by Oberscharfuehrer Hermann Schimmann carried out the execution of Starzyński between 21 and 23 October 1939. The shooting most probably took place in Warsaw, or on the outskirts of the capital. [...] Starzyński's body has never been recovered, although a memorial was erected in Warsaw's Powazki Cemetery in 1957.”

(Sources: Max Hastings, *Inferno: The World at War, 1939-1945*, p. 14; Radio Poland, 10/09/2014, <http://www.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/181181,Mystery-of-missing-WWII-Warsaw-mayor-solved>)

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#### **The Flying Pencil aircraft**

“The first prototype of the Dornier 17 flew in 1934 as part of a competition to provide Lufthansa with a passenger plane that could fly passengers around western Europe. Its fuselage proved to be too slim for passengers, but its military potential was soon spotted. The plane’s narrow fuselage gave it the nickname ‘flying pencil’ and the first military variant flew in 1935. It was capable of flying with a 1,102-pound (1500 kg) bomb load and like most German



warplanes of this time, saw service in the Spanish Civil War in 1937. [...]

“[The Dornier 17] made its mark in the attack on Poland in September 1939 and its versatility was such that it was used as a bomber, reconnaissance plane, and as a pathfinder by the Luftwaffe.

(Source: [www.historylearningsite.co.uk/world-war-two/weapons-of-world-war-two/dornier-do-17/](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/world-war-two/weapons-of-world-war-two/dornier-do-17/))

## HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT: ON ALLEGIANCES

### 1940 | *Testimony*

“Before the war, there were about 110,000 Jews who lived in Lwów, out of a population of 400,000 Poles and Ukrainians. After the war broke out, some 100,000 refugees, mostly Jews, fled to our city from territories in western Poland, which were occupied by the Germans. They lived in improvised camps, in fields and public squares and in any available place and room, several families squeezed together, living on money and property they managed to smuggle in from home and from temporary jobs. The communist regime finally decided to exile them to labor camps in Siberia. Ironically, the Jews who were exiled to Stalin's ‘Gulags’ were saved from the Holocaust and from a fate like ours, during the Nazi occupation.

“Under the communist regime our family continued their life routine. We enjoyed a good income and the authorities didn't consider us to be a threat in any way since we were only simple people coming from the working class, without any property or political past.”<sup>59</sup>

### 1940 | *Reportage*

“The Jews welcomed the Soviet armies enthusiastically [in Lwów]. The Jewish proletariat continues not to be ill-disposed to the Bolsheviks, and to be ill-disposed to Poland. However, the Jewish middle class and the intelligentsia are as oppressed as the Poles. These Jews say they'd rather be beaten regularly by the Germans morning, noon and night than bear the completely irregular oppression of the Soviets.”<sup>60</sup>

### September 1939 | *Testimony*

“In the mid-1930s, the leaders of the Polish Communist Party were called to Moscow for their eternal reward. In other words, they were to be killed. Most of those who escaped this fate did so because they were sitting in Polish jails at the time and hence were unable to travel. The Communist International dissolved the Polish Communist Party in 1938.

“Few Polish people, therefore, welcomed the Soviet invasion of September 1939. Among these few were the undaunted former members of the Communist Party (both Christians and Jews) who gathered in Lwów and hoped for better days.”

### 1939 | *Reportage*

“[...] on the eve of the war four thousand Galician Ukrainian Nationalist agents, trained by the Abwehr [German military intelligence] in sabotage

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<sup>59</sup> Testimony of Zisha Sholder (born 1921 in Lwów, Poland), (<http://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/article/lwow/16,accounts-memories/14111,zisha-sholder-born-in-lwow-poland-in-1921/>).

<sup>60</sup> 1940 report to London, cited in Tadeusz Piotrowski, *Poland's Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918-1947*, p. 53.

and diversion, infiltrated central and southern Poland, incited the minorities, and participated in acts of violence against the Polish people.”

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“People acquired great power. Everyone could destroy everyone else. All [anyone] needed to do was go to the authorities and make a deposition. The man [...] accused was, as a rule, done for.”<sup>61</sup>

*1939 | Historical account*

“[The regulation] with the most immediate impact on life in eastern Poland was the introduction of the ruble as legal tender in the occupied areas, with a value equal to that of the Polish złoty. This regulation was issued jointly with another ordering that all shops stay open and that merchants sell their stock at prewar prices. [...] The [...] conquering army frantically bought up everything. Added to this was outright theft, requisitions, and, ultimately, expropriation of private and state-owned property. [...] The bulk of the material resources seized by the Soviet authorities went to maintain the occupying army and the constantly growing police and administrative apparatus imported by the USSR or was simply shipped to the Soviet Union. [...] Oil, foodstuffs, and cattle, on the other hand, were shipped [...] to Germany in accordance with the economic cooperation clause of the Friendship Treaty with Hitler [...] Within a few months drastic shortages developed, and very little could be bought through the official network of retail stores.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, pp. 77; 205; 16.

<sup>62</sup> Irena Grudzińska-Gross and Jan Tomasz Gross, editors and compilers, *War Through Children's Eyes*, pp. 14-15.

## Chapter Notes: Getting Out of the Way

*The highways and back roads [...] from Warsaw to [...] Lublin were clogged with refugees who progressed on foot under heavy German bombardment and gunfire that took many lives.*

—Dov Levin, *The Lesser of Two Evils: Eastern European Jewry Under Soviet Rule, 1939-1941*, p. 179.

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#### **The popularity of *Gone with the Wind* in Poland**

“During the summer of 1939 *Gone with the Wind*, Margaret Mitchell’s novel of the old American South, enjoyed a surge of popularity in Poland. ‘Somehow I consider it prophetic,’ wrote one of its Polish readers, Rula Langer. Few of her compatriots doubted that a conflict with Germany was imminent, because Hitler had made plain his commitment to conquest. Poland’s fiercely nationalistic people responded to the Nazi threat with the same spirit as the doomed young men of the Confederacy in 1861. ‘Like most of us, I believed in happy endings,’ a young fighter pilot recalled. ‘We wanted to fight, it excited us, and we wanted it to happen fast. We didn’t believe that something really bad could happen.’”

(Source: Max Hastings, *Inferno: The World at War, 1939-1945*, p. 3)

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#### **The *Judenrat* and the fate of Lublin’s Jewish community**

##### *Judenrat*

“As far back as 1933, Nazi policy makers had discussed establishing Jewish-led institutions to carry out anti-Jewish policies. The concept was based upon centuries-old practices which were instituted in Germany during the Middle Ages. As the German army swept through Poland and the Soviet Union, it carried out an order of S.S. leader Heydrich to require the local Jewish populace to form Jewish Councils as a liaison between the Jews and the Nazis. These councils of Jewish elders, (*Judenrat*, plural: *Judenräte*), were responsible for organizing the orderly deportation to the death camps, for detailing the number and occupations of the Jews in the ghettos, for distributing food and medical supplies, and for communicating the orders of the ghetto Nazi masters. The Nazis enforced these orders on the *Judenrat* with threats of terror, which were given credence by beatings and executions. As ghetto life settled into a ‘routine,’ the *Judenrat* took on the functions of local government,

providing police and fire protection, postal services, sanitation, transportation, food and fuel distribution, and housing, for example.

“The *Judenrat* raised funds to create hospitals, homes for orphans, disinfection stations, and to provide food and clothing to those without. Jewish leaders were ambivalent about participating in these *Judenräte*. On the one hand, many viewed these councils as a form of collaboration with the enemy. Others saw these councils as a necessary evil, which would permit Jewish leadership a forum to negotiate for better treatment. In the many cases where Jewish leaders refused to volunteer to serve on the *Judenrat*, the Germans appointed Jews to serve on a random basis. Some Jews who had no prior history of leadership agreed to serve, hoping that it would improve their chances of survival. Many who served in the *Judenrat* were arrested, taken to labor camps, or hanged.

“When the Nazis required a quota of Jews to participate in forced labor, the *Judenrat* had the responsibility to meet this demand. Sometimes Jews could avoid forced labor by making a payment to the *Judenrat*. These payments supplemented the taxes which the *Judenrat* levied to finance the services provided in the ghettos.

“Underground Jewish organizations sprang up in the ghettos to serve as alternatives to the *Judenrat*, some of which were established with a military component to organize resistance to the Nazis.”

#### *Lublin's Jewish community*

“The Germans captured Lublin on 18 September 1939. The Jewish population doubled again by 1941 and reached about 45,000, including 6,300 refugees from other cities. Lublin became a center of mass extermination of Jews during the Holocaust.

“A *Judenrat* was formed on 25 January 1940. [...] The Nazis established two ghettos, with a population of 34,000. Exit from the ghetto was restricted in April 1941. Deportations began, at a rate of 1,500 daily, on 16 March 1942. A total of 30,000 Jews were deported to Belzec or murdered on the way in nearby forests. [...]

“A small number of skilled craftsmen were able to stay in and work in Lublin. Their shops were closed in May 1943 and the workers were sent to Majdanek. Another 300 craftsmen were kept at the Lublin Fortress and worked until July 1944; they were put to death a few days before the Nazis evacuated the city.”

“Before the war, Lublin was composed of two areas, like two lungs: a Christian area and a Jewish area. The Nazis had established the headquarters of Operation Reinhardt there. [Operation Reinhardt was the code name for the German plan to murder the approximately two million Jews residing in the so-called Generalgouvernement (Government General), that part of German-occupied Poland not directly annexed to Germany, attached to German East Prussia, or incorporated into the German-occupied Soviet Union]. [...] Day and night, the cattle trucks arrived, Jews got out, and were gassed. [...] The Jewish quarter of Lublin was entirely destroyed, and today the town looks like a bird who has had one wing amputated.”

**(Sources: Gary M. Grobman, *The Holocaust for Teachers*; Rebecca Weiner, “Lublin, Poland,” *Jewish Virtual Library*; Father Patrick Desbois, *The Holocaust by Bullets*, p. 32)**

## WHAT THEY DIDN'T KNOW WAS COMING: THE RED ARMY AND THE NAZIS ADVANCE

### *April 1940 | Historical account*

“From the Soviet perspective the most dangerous Polish group was the officer class. It represented a threefold threat: It was the leadership of an enemy army; some of its senior officers were veterans of campaigns against the USSR; and its reserve officers represented the Polish educated classes.[...] The immediate aim of the arrest and elimination of such people was to make political resistance more difficult.[...]”

“In April 1940, some 21,892 Polish officers and other Polish citizens were shot by NKVD officers in the Katyń Forest and at four other sites.”<sup>63</sup>

### *April 1940 | Notes on the massacre*

Though the killings took place at several different locations, the massacre is named after the Katyń Forest, where some of the mass graves were first discovered—by the Nazis—in 1943. The USSR claimed the victims had been murdered by the Nazis in 1941 and denied responsibility for the massacres until 1990, when it officially acknowledged and condemned the perpetration of the killings by the NKVD, as well as the subsequent cover-up by the Soviet government. (For an astonishing film about the massacre, see the 2007 film *Katyń*, directed by Andrzej Wajda.)

### *April–May 1940 | Historical accounts*

“In Western Europe, this period was known as the ‘phony war’: nothing seemed to be happening. France and Britain were at war with Germany as of September 1939. But that autumn, winter, and the following spring, as Poland was defeated, destroyed, and divided, and tens of thousands of its citizens murdered and hundreds of thousands deported, there was no western front in the war. The Germans and their Soviet allies were free to do as they liked.

“The Germans invaded Denmark and Norway in April 1940, thereby securing access to mineral reserves in Scandinavia and preventing any British intervention in northern Europe. But the phony war was well and truly over when Germany attacked the Low Countries and France on 10 May.”

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“In spring and summer of 1940, the Germans were extending their small system of concentration camps so that they could intimidate and exploit

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<sup>63</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning*, p. 122.

the Poles. In late April 1940, Heinrich Himmler visited Warsaw, and ordered that twenty thousand Poles be placed in concentration camps.”<sup>64</sup>

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“A sense of unreality at first pervaded French public consciousness as the familiar world began to disintegrate. [...] As the truth began to be understood, panic swept the nation. Among the most terrible aspects of those days was the massed flight of civilians.[...]”

“Eight million French people abandoned their homes in the month following the onset of the German assault, the greatest mass migration in western European history.”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, pp. 141; 150.

<sup>65</sup> Max Hastings, *Inferno: The World at War, 1939-1945*, pp. 58-59.



**“To Go to Lvov”**

*[...] To leave  
in haste for Lvov, night or day, in September  
[...] people bade goodbye  
without handkerchiefs, no tears, such a dry  
mouth, I won't see you anymore, so much death  
awaits you, why must every city  
become Jerusalem and every man a Jew,  
and now in a hurry just  
pack, always, each day,  
and go breathless, go to Lvov [...]*

—“To Go to Lvov,” by Adam Zagajewski, trans. by Renata Gorczynski, p. 79.

[The entire poem can be read here:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48313/to-go-to-lvov>]

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**Ethnic strife in Galicia**

Local populations were manipulated into assisting with the mass murders that took place in the bloodlands after a string of particular historical events: “In an unhappy sequence, Soviet mass terror (1937-1938) was followed by an alliance with Nazi Germany (1939-1941), and then an invasion by Nazi Germany (1941). In the lands that German forces first reached after crossing through the new Soviet territories, in western Soviet Belarus and western Soviet Ukraine, the Great Terror had taken some three hundred thousand lives. Because shootings and deportations had removed much of the Polish minority from precisely this region, local Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Russians had already seen a minority removed from their midst by state policy. The major settlements of Jews in the western Soviet Union had also been, without exception, major settlements of Poles. [...] When the Germans arrived in 1941, Soviet citizens who had denounced their Polish neighbors [in order to acquire] their apartments three years before presumably had little hesitation about denouncing their Jewish ones. Soviet citizens—Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, and others—did hand over their Jewish neighbors to the Germans. [...] In Kyiv, Ukrainians and Russians helped the German Order Police find and register Jews before the mass shooting at Babyi Iar. Afterwards, the German police received the denunciations in what had been NKVD headquarters.”

**(Source: Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning*, pp. 180-181)**

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**The emptying of shops by Soviet soldiers**

“The invaders—and not only the rank and file but highly placed officers even of the NKVD [the Soviet secret police], the most privileged caste of the whole Union—were seized with astonishment and admiration at the sight of the simplest articles offered for sale in the most primitive store. In the towns they would all rush into all the shops in a street and come out again after having bought up literally everything in sight; not because they were in need or even often understood the use of what they had bought, but from sheer exuberance, and from astonishment at the shopkeeper’s freedom to sell, and the customer’s to buy, any article either chose—a phenomenon never present in their experience until now.”

**(Source: *The Dark Side of the Moon*, by Zoe Zajdlerowa, p. 49)**

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**“Solveig’s Song” and Edvard Grieg**

“Solveig’s Song” is a movement of the incidental music composed by Edvard Grieg for Henrik Ibsen’s 1867 play *Peer Gynt*. The song was popular, and anyone with a knowledge of theater and opera would have known it. Ibsen said that everything he wrote was “minutely connected with what [he] lived through.” When he completed *Peer Gynt*, Austria-Hungary was established as a dual monarchy, the poet Baudelaire died, and both Goethe’s *Faust, Part One* and volume one of Karl Marx’s *Das Capital* were published. Sigmund Freud was a boy of eleven, enrolled in the Sperl Gymnasium in Vienna.

**(Source: Author research)**

## **HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT: BEFORE THE WAR STARTED, STARVATION AND TERROR RAGED**

### *Holodomor, 1930-1933 | Historical accounts*

“The term Holodomor refers specifically to the brutal artificial famine imposed by Stalin's regime on Soviet Ukraine and primarily ethnically Ukrainian areas in the Northern Caucasus in 1932-33.

“[In June 1933,] at the height of the famine, people in Ukraine are dying at the rate of 30,000 a day, nearly a third of them are children under ten. Between 1932-34, approximately four million deaths are attributed to starvation within the borders of Soviet Ukraine. This does not include deportations, executions, or deaths from ordinary causes. Stalin denies to the world that there is any famine in Ukraine, and continues to export millions of tons of grain, more than enough to have saved every starving man, woman, and child.”<sup>66</sup>

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“In the waning weeks of 1932, facing no external security threat and challenge from within, with no conceivable justification except to prove the inevitability of his rule, Stalin chose to kill millions of people in the Soviet Ukraine. He shifted to a position of pure malice, where the Ukrainian peasant was somehow the aggressor and he, Stalin, the victim. Hunger was a form of aggression [...] against which starvation was the only defense. [...] It was not food shortages but food distribution that killed millions in Soviet Ukraine, and it was Stalin who decided who was entitled to what.

“[...] Starvation led not to rebellion but to amorality, to crime, to indifference, to paralysis, and finally to death. Peasants endured months of indescribable suffering, indescribable because of its duration and pain, but also indescribable because people were too weak, too poor, too illiterate to chronicle what was happening to them. [...]

“A very few outsiders witnessed and were able to record what happened in these most terrible of months.”<sup>67</sup>

### *The Great Terror, 1937-1938 | Historical account*

“The Great Terror stands out as one of the most brutal periods of oppression under Stalin. It began in July 1937 and ended in November 1938, and was directed at various groups perceived by the Soviet leadership as real or potential ‘enemies of the people.’ The arrests began with Communist Party members accused of counter-revolutionary

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<sup>66</sup> “Holodomor Facts and History,” <http://www.holodomorct.org/history.html>

<sup>67</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, pp. 42; 46-47.

activities, and then spread to family members of party members and then to the general public. During the Great Terror, 1,575,259 people were arrested and more than half of them were shot.”<sup>68</sup> Which means that one in twenty people was arrested and 1,500 people executed daily.

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<sup>68</sup> David Hosford, et al, *Gulag: Soviet Prison Camps and Their Legacy*, p. 4.

*The trains were very long, and seemed also extraordinarily high. [They seemed tall] because they seldom stood along platforms and the whole train was accordingly seen from the level of the ground. [...] This great length of the waiting trains, always coiling away somewhere and always partly lost to sight, was in itself terrifying to the imagination. Those about to be deported were brought to the stations heavily guarded: for the most part loaded on to armoured cars, but also, when these gave out, on sledges and on little country carts [that were] ordinarily used for the carting of dung.*

—Zoe Zajdlerowa, *The Dark Side of the Moon*, p. 59.

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**Comets, matches, and beliefs around fire in rural Poland**

“A judicious choice of fuel and an appropriate swinging motion permitted the building up of heat suitable for various purposes, while steady stoking prevented the ‘comet’ from going out. For example, the baking of potatoes, turnips, or fish requires a slow fire of peat and damp leaves, and the roasting of a freshly killed bird required the live flame of dry twigs and hay. Birds’ eggs freshly plucked from their nests were best cooked on a fire of potato stalks.

“[...] On wet snowy days the comet had to be refilled frequently with dry resinous wood or bark and required a lot of swinging. On windy or hot dry days the comet did not need much swinging and its burning could be further slowed down by adding fresh grass or by sprinkling in some water.

“[...] the extinction of a comet was an extremely serious thing. It could happen through carelessness, oversleeping, or a sudden downpour. Matches were very scarce [...]. They were costly and hard to obtain. Those who had any matches got into the habit of splitting each match in half for economy.

“Fire was therefore preserved most scrupulously in kitchen stoves or in the fireboxes of ovens. Before retiring for the night women would bank up ashes to make certain that the embers would keep glowing until morning. [...] Fire, [it was] said, is no natural friend to man. That is why one must humor it. It was also believed that sharing fire, especially borrowing it, could only result in misfortune. [...] And carrying fire out of the house might make the cows dry or go barren, Also, a fire that went out could produce disastrous consequences in cases of childbirth.

“[...] At night, men and boys coming home would swing [the comets] with all their strength and let them fly into the sky, burning fiercely, like

soaring red disks. The comets flew in a wide arc, and their fiery tails traced their courses. That is how they got their name.”

(Source: Jerzy Kosinski, *The Painted Bird*, pp. 29-30)

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#### The deportations into the USSR

*The first wave:* 10 February 1940, 220,000 *osadniks*, military settlers, and foresters sent to forced labor in the Arctic north. [Revised estimates: 140,000-143,000]

*The second wave:* 13 April 1940, 320,000 “family system of enemies.” These deportees were forcibly resettled in Kazakhstan; 80 percent of them were women and children. [Revised estimates: 61,000]

*The third wave:* June/July 1940, 240,000 refugees from the territories occupied by the Germans. [Revised estimates: 75,267-78,000]

*Final wave:* June 1941, 200,000 from the Lithuanian SSR were sent to POW camps and gulags. [Revised estimates: 36,000-40,000]

*Note about revised estimates:* *With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening of previously sealed archives, researchers have produced revised data on the numbers of deportees. “The revised data have prompted considerable debate among historians. Some question the reliability of the NKVD [Soviet secret police] statistics and point out that since all figures come from the same basic source—the NKVD—the concurrence of documents means little. [...] No information exists in the NKVD documents thus far examined either on the deaths or escapes from the transports, throwing into question the reliability of statistics from authorities at the receiving end of the journeys.”*

“Many Jewish refugees, already after the first months of experiencing life under Soviet rule, tried to return to their homes under the German occupation. This was encouraged in part by the Soviet authorities’ announcement that it was possible to sign up for such return. [...] This very registration for return home to the German occupation became a trap for tens of thousands of Jews. [...]”

“In 1940, the German repatriation commission “was besieged by tens of thousands of Jews who wanted to return home to German-occupied Poland [...]. This Jewish population of refugees from west-central Poland constituted the bulk of the June 1940 deportation into the USSR.”

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“[The deportations] must be carried out as quietly as possible so as to avoid demonstrations or panic among the population. [...] The whole operation shall be carried out [...] at night-time.’ The deportees at most might be

allowed twenty to sixty minutes for packing their things. The weight of the baggage of any family was not to exceed 100 kilos, and might contain only clothing, bedding, kitchen utensils, food for one month and fishing-tackle. [...] ‘Trains must be ready for departure before dawn. Before entraining, heads of families were to be segregated and placed in special cars. After entrainment, the doors and windows of cars were to be blocked up, leaving only an opening ‘for the introduction of food and for eliminating excreta.’ [From an order of 28 November 1940]”

**(Sources: Family Archive Service; Kathleen Jolluck, *Exile & Identity*, pp. 10-11; Feliks Tych, “Polish Jews—Prisoners of Soviet Camps,” in *I Saw the Angel of Death*, edited by Maciej Siekierski and Feliks Tych, pp. 17; 19; Zoe Zajdlerowa, *The Dark Side of the Moon*, p. 52)**

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### **The *osadnik* and the kulak**

*Osadnik* were civilians and veterans of the Polish Army who were given or sold state land in the territory ceded to Poland according to the terms of the 1921 Polish-Soviet Peace Treaty. This territory, in western Belarus/western Ukraine, was known as the *kresy*, or eastern borderlands. Kulak means “tight-fisted” and came to refer to a category of relatively affluent farmers. According to Richard Pipes, in 1918, the term *kulak* included any peasant who refused to hand over their grain to detachments from Moscow. Lenin called kulaks “rabid foes of the Soviet government.”

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“The kulaks were peasants, the stubborn survivors of Stalin’s revolution: of collectivization and famine, and very often of the Gulag. As a social class, the kulak (prosperous peasant) never really existed; the term was rather a Soviet classification that took on a political life of its own. [...]

“To be a kulak was not only to have suffered, it was to have survived movement across vast distances. Collectivization had forced millions of kulaks into the Gulag or into the cities. This meant journeys of hundreds or even thousands of miles. Some three million peasants, at least, had become paid laborers [...]. That, after all, was the Plan: that the Soviet Union would be transformed from an agrarian to an industrial country.”

**(Sources: Author research; Richard Pipes, *Communism: A History*; Vladimir Lenin, “Comrade Workers, Forward to The Last, Decisive Fight!”; Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, pp 78-79)**

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### **Adam Mickiewicz**

Born at the end of the eighteenth century, Mickiewicz was a contemporary of

Sigmund Kohn's father, Abraham. Renowned as one of Poland's greatest literary figures, Mickiewicz penned poems (including the epic *Pan Tadeusz*), plays, essays, and translations. All the Kohn family members would have been familiar with his work as it was a standard fare not only in schools but in theater and music (his friend the composer Frédéric Chopin had set two of his poems to music). A professor of Slavic literature, Mickiewicz was also a political activist who championed Poland's independence, and because of this, he was banished to Russia in 1824. A long period of exile abroad followed, in Paris, Rome, Switzerland. In December 1848 Mickiewicz was offered a post at the Jagiellonian University in Austrian-ruled Kraków. The offer was soon withdrawn after pressure from Austrian authorities. In the winter of 1848–49, Chopin, in the final months of his life, visited his ailing compatriot and played piano for him.

Mickiewicz welcomed the Crimean War of 1853–1856, which he hoped would lead to a new European order, including a restored independent Poland. Soon after the Crimean War broke out in 1853, the French government entrusted him with a diplomatic mission to Constantinople, in the Ottoman Empire. There he assisted in the organization of Polish forces to fight under Ottoman command against Russia. With his friend Armand Lévy he also helped organize a Jewish legion. Though some speculate that political enemies might have poisoned Mickiewicz, there is no proof of this, and he probably contracted cholera, which claimed many lives at the time.

A statue and memorial to Mickiewicz still stands in Lwów near the location of the Café de la Paix (where refugees went for coffee and news during the war).

**(Source: Author research)**

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#### **The Great Terror (also called the Great Purge)**

During the Great Terror, an average of 1,500 people were shot daily. “[The] Soviet killings and deportations went unnoticed in Europe. Insofar as the Great Terror was noticed at all, it was seen only as a matter of show trials and party and army purges. But these events, noticed by specialists and journalists at the time, were not the essence of the Great Terror. The kulak operations and the national operations [which eliminated ethnic minorities] were the essence of the Great Terror.

“The Great Terror was [...] chiefly a kulak action, which struck most heavily in Soviet Ukraine, and a series of national actions, the most important of them the Polish, where again Soviet Ukraine was the region most affected.



Of the 681,692 recorded death sentences in the Great Terror, 123,421 were carried out in Soviet Ukraine—and this figure does not include natives of Soviet Ukraine shot in the Gulag. [...]

“The Great Terror was a third Soviet revolution. Whereas the Bolshevik Revolution had brought a change in political regime after 1917, and collectivization a new economic system after 1930, the Great Terror of 1937-1938 involved a revolution of the mind. Stalin had brought to life his theory that the enemy could be unmasked only by interrogation.”

(Source: Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, p. 107)

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##### **Brzuchowice**

Several days after the German invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 (which included Lwów), “the German army entered the village of Brzuchowice, and around fifty soldiers stationed themselves in the Katz home. On 15 July, the Germans and the local Ukrainians began killing Jewish people and destroying Jewish-owned buildings. The largest synagogue in the town was burned to the ground along with three children who were thrown into the flames (two of them being children of the Belzer Rebbe). Towards the end of July 1941, a *Judenrat* was established in Brzuchowice, and was made responsible for sending Jews to labor camps. Three months later, the Gestapo ordered all males between eighteen and sixty years of age to register at the high school, or otherwise be shot [...] the men were taken to the forest in Krosienko, where they were killed.”

(Source: <http://arts.monash.edu.au/jewish-civilisation/resources/holocaust-memoirs/link.php?id=279>)

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##### **The *Lamed Vav Tzadikim***

Rabbi Raymond A. Zwerin writes: “It is said that at all times there are thirty-six special people in the world, and that were it not for them, all of them, if even one of them was missing, the world would come to an end. The two Hebrew letters for thirty-six are the *lamed*, which is thirty, and the *vav*, which is six. Therefore, these thirty-six are referred to as the *Lamed Vav Tzadikim*. This widely-held belief, this most unusual Jewish concept, is based on a Talmudic statement to the effect that in every generation thirty-six righteous ‘greet the Shekinah,’ the Divine Presence. [...]

“The *Lamed Vav Tzadikim* are also called the *nistarim* (concealed ones), [who] emerge from their self-imposed concealment and, by the mystic powers

they possess, [avert] the threatened disasters of a people persecuted by the enemies [surrounding] them. The *Lamed Vavniks*, scattered as they are [...] have no acquaintance with one another. On very rare occasions, if one of them is ‘discovered’ by accident, the secret of their identity must not be disclosed. The *Lamed Vavniks* do not themselves know that they are one of the thirty-six. In fact, tradition has it that should a person claim to be one of the thirty-six, that is proof positive that he is certainly not one. Since the thirty-six are each exemplars of *anavah*—humility—having such a virtue would preclude against one’s self-proclamation of being among the special righteous.”

**(Source: Rabbi Raymond Zwerin, “The 36—Who Are They?” *Kol nidre* sermon, Denver Temple Sinai, 15 September 2002)**

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### **Brygidki Prison**

A former Bridgettine nunnery, in 1784 the Brygidki building pictured below was turned into a prison, where death sentences were carried out on a regular



basis until the 1980s. It still functions as a prison and is the oldest one in Ukraine. Taken over by the Soviet Union after Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939, the prison was one of three sites of mass murder of political prisoners by NKVD in Ukraine in June 1941 as the Soviets were retreating before the Nazi German invasion.

Prisoners in Brygidki included bourgeoisie,

capitalists, officers and officials of the Polish army and government, and politicians; executions occurred at night without explanation.

**(Source: Family Archive Service)**

## HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT: ON THE TRAINS

*April-June 1940 | Eyewitness account*

“Dust [...] lay along the folds of clothing and worked its way into lungs whose resistance became weaker every day. This was not so awful a problem in winter as it became in April and June [...], when the roofs and walls of the car were red-hot from the burning rays of the sun. Space was by common consent allotted first of all to the very old and to the most feeble and to mothers with very young children or women who were pregnant. The hole in the middle of the floor was screened by a blanket or two. This hole was of necessity extremely filthy and repulsive and, from the very beginning, this question of physiological processes loomed larger, probably, than any other. [...] Not only in the trains or on marches, but later in penal institutions of every kind, the whole endless torturing business of the body’s needs, and the absolute lack of any decency or privacy in which these needs could be satisfied, pressed with accumulating cruelty not only on the poor body, but also on the mind. [...]

“From Kiev onwards, scarcely one of the people hurrying to and from on the crowded platforms so much as glanced twice in the direction of the cars or their freight. The Poles could not get over the sensations induced by the fact that these people, moving about freely themselves, did not appear to feel surprise, compassion, or, indeed, even a mild interest in the convoys. It was still very difficult for people coming from outside the [Soviet] Union to take in that such things could be everyday sights [...]. It was some time before they understood that this was not some otherwise unheard-of proceeding against themselves as foreigners, but that the whole system and the institutions to which they were being taken had, in fact, come into existence and continued to exist as a normal part of life for Soviet citizens. [...]

“No regular allowances of food and drink were given out on the trains. Arrangements about this varied. Roughly speaking, it may be said that bread (sour and black and badly baked) was handed out at intervals of two or three days or so. Occasionally a few buckets of fish soup with fish heads and bones, or eyes and entrails of animals in it, was distributed, but this was very rare, perhaps twice or three times during the whole journey, in all. [...] Hunger was pretty general, but a lot of people did still have some food and hunger was not the worst hardship. The water situation, however, was absolutely drastic. [...] On no train at any time, in any temperature, was there ever anything like the lowest possible amount of water which could keep a human being from suffering acutely from thirst. [...]<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Zoe Zajdlerowa, *The Dark Side of the Moon*, pp. 63-66.

*Chapter Notes: Long Days' Journey Into Long Nights*

*Volumes could be filled with nothing but the story of the trains. And even then it would not have been told, for there are no words which can reproduce the emotions, experiences and the sensations undergone.*

—Zoe Zajdlerowa, *The Dark Side of the Moon*, p. 69

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“Later, some Polish trains were also employed, but the earliest were all typical long Russian trains brought in for the purpose; dark green in colour, with doors coming together in the middle of box cars [...]. In each of these cars, very high up, just under the roof, were two tiny grated rectangles, the only windows and the only spaces by which air and light could enter once the doors were fast.”

**(Source: Zoe Zajdlerowa, *The Dark Side of the Moon*, p. 59.)**

## Part II: No Man's Land

*Author note: The term no man's land was first used in the eleventh century to describe parcels of land that were just beyond the London city walls. Afterward, the term was used to define a contested territory or a dumping ground for refuse between fiefdoms. In modern times, it is commonly associated with the First World War to describe the area of land between two enemy trench systems, which neither side wished to cross or seize due to fear of being attacked by the enemy in the process.*

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“In his 1939 regulations, Beria [Stalin’s chief of the NKVD] ordered all camp commanders to line their fences with a no-man’s-land, a strip of earth no less than five meters (fifteen feet) wide. Guards regularly raked the no-man’s-land in summer and deliberately left it covered with snow in winter, in order that the footprints of escaping prisoners might always be visible. The beginning of the no-man’s-land was also marked, sometimes by barbed wire, sometimes by signs reading ‘zapretnaya zona,’ ‘forbidden zone.’ The no-man’s-land was sometimes called the ‘death zone,’ since guards were permitted to shoot anyone who entered it.”

**(Sources: Author research; Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*, p. 187)**

## HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT: SAME THING, ONLY DIFFERENT

*The three first-person narratives below are excerpted from the written testimonies of three Polish Jews who were deported to the Mari El Republic (then known as Mariskaya ASSR) and later released.*

### *Michael Zimmerman | Testimony*

“Our [settlement] consisted of three huge wooden barracks, each sheltering about fifty people, at a distance from one another, a separate shack containing a kitchen range, a big out-house, a better kept house for the administration offices and dormitories, and a store where bread was supplied. Our compartment in the barrack sheltered nineteen grown-ups and several children. The beds were pushed in such a way that each family had a number of beds to accommodate all its members, densely, side by side, with a space of about one foot and another group of beds. [...] The only lighting consisted of a small petroleum lamp standing on a rough table near the huge oven. Everybody was dead tired after the long trip and deeply depressed with the circumstances we never anticipated. We called it a night. Something eerie happened. We lit the lamp. The entire barrack was crawling with bedbugs, which got hungry waiting for our arrival. Any defense was out of question.

“[The bedbugs] were highly experienced and had their own strategy, like parachuting from the ceiling and landing directly on the intended victim. All over the Soviet Union, people repeat constantly one proverb: ‘You will get used to it. If you don’t, you will perish.’ We got used to it.”<sup>70</sup>

### *Mala Horowicz | Testimony*

“We were unloaded in Mariskaya ASSR. We were lodged in underground dugouts—passages dug in the ground with separate levels connected with ladders. I spent months living underground in conditions in which people on the lowest level of civilization had lived. If the little windows got covered by snow, then there was no contact with the outside world. There I met Russian elements sentenced to long-time exile. These were families of ‘Trotskyists’ sentenced during the purge of 1937. They treated us very humanely, and especially compassionate was the behavior

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<sup>70</sup> Michael Zimmerman, *How I Survived the Wars and Peace: My Life in the Gulag*, p. 8.

of nuns. In a certain way, however, they took away our hope of leaving this camp. [...]

“Each one of us got three boards for our own use, for sleeping, etc. We were told that once we started working, we would get a blanket. After the voyage, we were extremely exhausted and we had no strength to work. We had to, therefore, sleep on bare boards, covering ourselves with what each had.”<sup>71</sup>

### *Mel Oderberg | Testimony*

“A little farther down the track, I saw an elderly woman standing still and staring at the train and the men that were transporting us; suddenly, she raised her hands to her cheeks, and shaking her finger-covered face, she turned away. I was left with the impression that she was crying, as if bemoaning the fate of these people being transported. Woe to this new batch of exiles being brought to the hinterland, the edge of Siberia, us. [...]

“You could see not less than six barrack-type buildings at the edge of the woods from where we were sitting in the clearing. The barracks were all made from rough-hewn lumber. [...]

“People started to gather to be the first to be assigned an accommodation. They quickly moved toward the man doing the assigning. Some even began to offer him a bribe so as to be the first to get an accommodation. [...]

“As tired as we were [...], traipsing through all kinds of forests, in these woods we couldn't get one solid hour's worth of sleep, because the bedbugs were trying to eat us alive. [...]

“My new neighbor [...] said, ‘Don't worry, you'll get used to it.’”<sup>72</sup>

### *Parts of the Gulag | Historical account*

“According to the most accurate count to date, there were, between 1929 and 1953, 476 camp complexes in the realm of the Gulag. But this number is misleading. In practice, each one of these camp complexes contained dozens, or even hundreds, of smaller camp units. These smaller units—*lagpunkts*—have not yet been counted, and probably cannot be,

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<sup>71</sup> Testimony of Mala Horowicz in *I Saw the Angel of Death: Experiences of Polish Jews Deported to the USSR during World War II*, p. 508.

<sup>72</sup> Mel Oderberg, *Because Life Is for Living*, pp. 110-14.

since some were temporary, some were permanent, and some were technically parts of different camps at different times. Nor can very much be said about the customs and practices of the *lagpunkts* that is guaranteed to apply to every single one. [...]

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“The most fundamental tool at the disposal of the camp administrators was control over the space in which prisoners lived: this was the *zona*, or ‘prison zone.’ By law, a *zona* was laid out either in a square or a rectangle. [...] Most of the buildings in a typical [camp] looked remarkably alike [...], primitive wooden buildings, otherwise indistinguishable except for the captions describing one as a ‘punishment cell,’ another as a ‘dining hall.’ There was usually a large open space in the center of the camp, near the gate, where the prisoners stood at attention twice a day to be counted. There were usually some guards’ barracks and administrator’s houses, also made of wood, just outside the main gate. [...]

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“The *zona* controlled the prisoners’ movement in space. But it was the *rezhim*—or ‘regime,’ as it is usually translated into English—that controlled their time. Put simply, the regime was the set of rules and procedures according to which the camp operated. [...] The regime differed in its severity from [camp to camp], but the basic system remained the same. The regime determined when and how the prisoner should wake; how he should be marched to work; when and how he should receive food; when and for how long he should sleep.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*, p. 183; 186; 190-91.



## Chapter Notes: *The Dark Side of the Moon*

*The Gulag, which the Soviets themselves called a “system of concentration camps,” began alongside the collectivization of agriculture and depended upon it. It would eventually include 476 camp complexes, to which some eighteen million people would be sentenced, of whom between a million and half and three million would die during their periods of incarceration.*

—Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, p. 27

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#### **The taiga**

Taiga, which means “little land of sticks” in Russian, is the collective term for the northern forests of Russia, and in particular, Siberia. Also called the boreal forest, the taiga is a biome, or major life zone, of vegetation primarily consisting of cone-bearing, needle- or scale-leaved evergreen trees. The taiga is characterized by long winters and annual precipitation ranging from moderate to high.

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“In Russia, the world’s largest taiga stretches about 5,800 kilometers (3,600 miles), from the Pacific Ocean to the Ural Mountains. This taiga region was completely glaciated, or covered by glaciers, during the last ice age.

“The soil beneath the taiga often contains permafrost—a layer of permanently frozen soil. In other areas, a layer of bedrock lies just beneath the soil. Both permafrost and rock prevent water from draining from the top layers of soil. This creates shallow bogs known as muskegs. Muskegs can look like solid ground, because they are covered with moss, short grasses, and sometimes even trees. However, the ground is actually wet and spongy. [...]

“Taigas have few native plants besides conifers. The soil of the taiga has few nutrients. It can also freeze, making it difficult for many plants to take root. [...] Instead of shrubs and flowers, mosses, lichens, and mushrooms cover the floor of a taiga.”

**(Sources: Author research; National Geographic Society, *Encyclopedia*)**

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#### **The Polish resistance and the Armia Krajowa**

“In response to the German occupation, Poles organized one of the largest underground movements in Europe with more than 300 widely supported

political and military groups and subgroups. Despite military defeat, the Polish government itself never surrendered. In 1940 a Polish government-in-exile became based in London. Resistance groups inside Poland set up underground courts for trying collaborators and others and clandestine schools in response to the Germans' closing of many educational institutions. The universities of Warsaw, Kraków, and Lwów all operated clandestinely. Officers of the regular Polish army headed an underground armed force, the 'Home Army' (Armia Krajowa—AK). After preliminary organizational activities, including the training of fighters and hoarding of weapons, the AK activated partisan units in many parts of Poland in 1943. A Communist underground, the 'People's Guard' (Gwardia Ludowa), also formed in 1942, but its military strength and influence were comparatively weak.

“With the approach of the Soviet army imminent, the AK launched an uprising in Warsaw against the German army on 1 August 1944. After sixty-three days of bitter fighting, the Germans quashed the insurrection. The Soviet army provided little assistance to the Poles. Nearly 250,000 Poles, most of them civilians, lost their lives.

“The Germans deported hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children to concentration camps. Many others were transported to the Reich for forced labor. Acting on Hitler's orders, German forces reduced the city to rubble, greatly extending the destruction begun during their suppression of the earlier armed uprising by Jewish fighters resisting deportation from the Warsaw ghetto in April 1943.”

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Members of these resistance organizations were often called partisans, a term designating “a member of an armed group formed to fight secretly against an occupying force.” To protect themselves, “many Polish Jewish partisans sought affiliation with Polish partisan groups. This was a difficult and dangerous task—a Jewish partisan could be robbed of his weapon, or killed for approaching a partisan unit. However, numerous Polish partisan units welcomed Jews, such as the People’s Guard. In the Generalgouvernement [also called the General Government, an area in Nazi-occupied Poland that was run by the Germans as a separate administrative unit for logistical purposes], hundreds of Jewish partisans belonged to Polish units of the People’s Guard, to the Home Army (AK), and to other groups. Considerable numbers of these Jewish partisans operated in commando units, and dozens of Jews took leadership roles as commanders.

“Jews also fought as partisans in all-Jewish units, such as the ZOB (the

Jewish Fighting Organization), which was active throughout occupied Poland. Against incredible odds, thousands of Polish Jewish partisans fought back, and most lost their lives. Many did not expect to survive, as reflected in the motto of one Jewish partisan group: 'For those who seek life, we are not the address.'

"Sheltered in the forests, Polish Jewish partisans created camps as their bases. These camps were of two types: 'family' camps, which provided protection for those Jews who could not fight, such as some women, children and the elderly, and partisan camps, which traveled lightly, and moved frequently. In the Nalibocka forest in eastern Poland, as many as 3,000 Jews, in all-Jewish units, were among 20,000 partisans resisting the Germans."

**(Sources: US Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Polish Resistance and Conclusions," in *Holocaust Encyclopedia*; Jewish Partisan Educational Foundation)**

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##### **Vol de Nuit perfume**

In 1933, perfumer Jacques Guerlain launched the perfume called Vol de Nuit (Night Flight), which became very popular. The scent was inspired by the 1931 international best-selling novel of the same name by his friend Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (who also wrote *The Little Prince*). The novel is based on Saint-Exupéry's experiences as an airmail pilot and as a director of the Aeroposta Argentina airline, based in Argentina.

**(Source: author research)**

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##### **Fougère Royale cologne**

Fougère Royale was a men's cologne brought out in the early 1880s by French perfumer Paul Parquet of House of Houbigant. The scent was evocative of cool, lush, green, fern-like woodland foliage. It has been reissued several times. The line also included a talcum-powder after-shave.

**(Source: author research)**

## HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT: BRIEF DISPATCHES ON HUNGER

### *Historical account*

“Universally, former prisoners agree that the taste of [...] prison soup was revolting. [...] Hunger was a powerful motivator nevertheless: the soup might have been inedible under normal circumstances, but in the camps, where most people were always hungry, prisoners ate it with relish. Nor was their hunger accidental: prisoners were kept hungry, because regulation of prisoners’ food was, after regulation of prisoners’ time and living space, the camp administration’s most important tool of control.”<sup>74</sup>

### *Camp survivor account*

“Hunger....Hunger is a horrible sensation, which becomes transformed into an abstraction, into nightmares fed by the mind’s perpetual fever. The body is like an over-heated machine, working at increased speed and on less fuel, and the wasted arms and legs come to resemble torn driving-belts. There is no limit to the physical effects of hunger beyond which tottering human dignity might still keep its uncertain but independent balance. [...]

“Hunger does not relax its hold at night, but on the contrary, it attacks cunningly and forcefully.”<sup>75</sup>

### *Camp survivor advice*

“Never on any account take more than a half-hour to consume your ration. Every bite of bread should be chewed thoroughly, to enable the stomach to digest it as easily as possible so that it gives up to one’s organism a maximum amount of energy.”<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*, pp. 206-07.

<sup>75</sup> Gustaw Herling, *A World Apart*, pp. 136-37.

<sup>76</sup> Dmitri Panin, cited in Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*, p. 214.

## Chapter Notes: You'll Get Used to It

*Every camp is its own world, a separate city, a separate country.*

—Tatyana Okunevskaya, cited in Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*, p. 184.

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#### **The Mari El Republic**

“Extending north from the left bank of the Volga [...], the republic consists of a level, often swampy, plain that rises gently toward the east, where it merges with the low Vyatka Hills. Winters are long and cold in the markedly continental climate, with an average January temperature of 9 °F, and incursions of Arctic air often result in temperature readings as low as –44 °F. Summers are mild, with a July average of 68° F. Precipitation is greatest in the summer and generally ranges from eighteen to twenty inches annually. Forests, mostly spruce, birch, and pine, cover about one-half of the surface. Floodplain meadows line the Volga and other rivers, which are subject to annual flooding in the spring. Chief cities are Yoshkar-Ola (the capital), Volzhsk, and Kozmodemyansk.”

**(Source: *Encyclopedia Britannica*)**

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#### **The slogans on gates at the Soviet labor camps**

“[...] The first thing the prisoners saw upon arrival was their camp’s gate. More often than not, the gate displayed a slogan.” These included:

- ♦ Labor in the USSR Is a Matter of Honesty, Glory, Valor and Heroism! (Kolyma)
- ♦ With Just Work I Will Pay My Debt to the Fatherland (Irkutsk)
- ♦ With an Iron Fist, We Will Lead Humanity to Happiness! (Solovetsky)
- ♦ Through Labor—Freedom! (Solovetsky)

**(Source: Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*, p. 175)**

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#### **Kettles**

The kettles listed below are for peacetime. By 1941, the contents were decreased. Chronicler Zoe Zajdlerowa urges her readers to remember that “bread” did not refer to an accompaniment to a meal, but was the meal itself. The bread was dense, hard, tasteless.

*Kettle 1:* For those who accomplished more than 50 percent and less than 100 percent of the norm (i.e., daily work quota)—14.1-18 ounces of bread, daily + very thin soup three times daily

*Kettle 2:* For those who accomplish 100 percent of the norm—21-26 ounces (1 lb 5 oz to 1 lb 10 oz) bread + very thin soup three times daily + some spoonfuls of barley or groats at night

*Kettle 3:* For the Stakhanovites who accomplish more than 100 percent of the norm—26-42 ounces (1 lb 10 oz to 2 lb 10 oz) bread + soup and groats + probably fish or a white roll at night

*Kettle 4:* For the *pridurki* with “soft” jobs—28 ounces or more (1 lb 12 oz) bread + three full meals daily

*Punishment kettle:* For those who accomplish less than 50 percent of the norm—10.5-14.1 ounces of bread + one meal of the worst quality soup every day

**(Source: Zoe Zajdlerowa, *The Dark Side of the Moon*, p. 97)**

## HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT: IN WHAT WAS ONCE POLAND, THINGS GET MUCH WORSE

### *Summer–Autumn 1940 | Historical account*

“By the end of summer 1940, the Germans had killed [in Poland] some 3,000 people they regarded as politically dangerous, and about the same number of common criminals. [...]

“The AB Aktion [...], as these killings were known, was implemented differently in each of the various districts of the General Government.<sup>77</sup>

In the Kraków district prisoners were read a summary verdict, although no sentence was actually recorded. The verdict was treason, which would have justified a death sentence; but then, contradictorily, everyone was recorded as having been shot while trying to escape. In fact, the prisoners were taken from Montelupi prison in Kraków to nearby Krzesawice, where they dug their own death pits. A day later they were shot, thirty to fifty at a time. In the Lublin district, people were held at the town castle, then taken to a site south of the city. By the light of the headlamps of trucks, they were machine-gunned in front of pits. On one night, 15 August 1940, 450 people were killed. [...]

“As the AB Aktion came to a close, prisoners were no longer executed, but sent to German camps, very often Auschwitz. The first transport to Auschwitz was made up of Polish political prisoners from Kraków [...]. In July, transports of Polish political prisoners were sent to Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald; in November followed two more to Auschwitz. On 15 August began mass roundups in Warsaw, where hundreds and then thousands of people would be seized on the streets and sent to Auschwitz. In November 1940 the camp became an execution site for Poles. At around the same time it attracted the attention of investors from IG Farben. Auschwitz became a giant labor camp very much on the Soviet model, although its slave labor served the interests of German companies, rather than Stalin’s dream of planned industrialization.”<sup>78</sup>

### *October 1940 | Historical account*

“On 12 October 1940, the Germans decreed the establishment of a ghetto in Warsaw. The decree required all Jewish residents of Warsaw to

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<sup>77</sup> AB was short for *Ausserordentliche Befriedungsaktion*, or Extraordinary Pacification Action. The Government General was the zone of German occupation in what was once Poland.

<sup>78</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, p.147-150.

move into a designated area, which German authorities sealed off from the rest of the city in November 1940. [...]

“The Jewish council offices were located on Grzybowska Street in the southern part of the ghetto. Jewish organizations inside the ghetto tried to meet the needs of the ghetto residents as they struggled to survive. [...] Financed until late 1941 primarily by the New York-based American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, these organizations attempted to keep alive a population that suffered severely from starvation, exposure, and infectious disease.

“Food allotments rationed to the ghetto by the German civilian authorities were not sufficient to sustain life. [...] Between 1940 and mid-1942, 83,000 Jews died of starvation and disease. Widespread smuggling of food and medicines into the ghetto supplemented the miserable official allotments and kept the death rate from increasing still further.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, “Warsaw,” *Holocaust Encyclopedia* Among the welfare organizations active in the ghetto were the Jewish Mutual Aid Society, the Federation of Associations in Poland for the Care of Orphans, and the Organization for Rehabilitation through Training.



## Chapter Notes: To Count One's Blessings

*In most camps, the prisoner's day officially began with the razvod: the procedure of organizing the prisoners into brigades and then marching them to work. A siren or other signal would awake them. A second siren warned them that breakfast was finished, and work was about to begin. Prisoners then lined up in front of the camp gates for the morning count. [...]*

*From there, prisoners were marched to work. [...] five abreast, to the workplace. If it was a great distance, they would be accompanied by guards and dogs. The procedure for the evening's return to camp was much the same. After an hour for supper, again prisoners were lined up in rows. And again, the guards counted [...]. Then another siren sounded, and it was time to sleep.*

—Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*, pp. 191; 192.

*We live by the law of the taiga. [...] The ones that don't make it are those who lick other men's leftovers, those who count on doctors to pull them through, and those who squeal on their buddies.*

—Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*; pp. 3; 4.

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#### Alexei Stakhanov

“Alexei Stakhanov was a miner in Donbass, a coal-producing region in Soviet Ukraine. Under the communist system, all mines were run by the state and had monthly production targets. If they missed the targets, local managers and Communist Party officials were in trouble. The mine where Stakhanov worked was one of the worst-performing in the region. [...]

“In the 1930s, miners used picks to work the coal, which was then loaded on carts and pulled out of the shaft by pit ponies. Lying on his side or his back, a miner would hack into the coal. He also had a set of pit props—logs cut to different lengths—and from time to time, he would prop up the roof of the tunnel where he worked.

“Stakhanov came up with the idea of having one miner constantly picking coal, while another loaded the coal on the cart, a third miner propped the roof with pit props, and a fourth led the pony in and out. And instead of the traditional pick, Stakhanov was keen to use a mining drill, which was a novelty and required specialist training. Drills were extremely heavy, weighing more than 15kg. [...]

“The manager of the mine had serious doubts about Stakhanov's initiative. However, Stakhanov persuaded his team leader and the local party boss to try it.

“On 30 August 1935, at 22:00, Alexei Stakhanov and three colleagues entered the mine, accompanied by the party boss and a local journalist. Six hours later they emerged, triumphant, having produced 102 tonnes of coal—more than 14 times the target.

“Stakhanov was instantly lavished with attention and praise: a delegation of local women presented him with flowers, the local paper published his story and the Soviet minister of industry, Sergo Ordzhonikidze, showed the story to the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. Before long, an article praising ‘the Stakhanov method’ appeared in the central party newspaper, *Pravda*. Once it was approved by Stalin, the method started spreading throughout the Soviet Union. [...]

“With the support of the Communist Party, he started travelling around the Soviet Union, promoting his initiative. [...] Over the next few months, travelling around the country, Stakhanov recruited thousands of supporters from all branches of Soviet industry and agriculture, who were happy to apply his ideas to increase productivity. In November that year, the First Conference of the Stakhanov Movement gathered in Moscow. A reporter from *Time* magazine attended the event. A new word was born—‘Stakhanovite’—meaning a person who works extremely hard.

“Thousands of happy workers wiped tears of joy away as they listened to the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, give his address to the conference.

“Life has become easier, comrades, life has become happier. And when one is happy, work goes well. If our life was hard, sad and joyless, we wouldn't have had the Stakhanovite movement.’

“Stalin's speech was greeted with passionate applause. Decades later, Russians remembered Stalin's words about ‘life becoming happier’ with sarcasm—for most Soviet citizens, the 1930s turned out to be a time of starvation as well as brutal repression.

“Alexei Stakhanov died after a stroke in Donbass, in eastern Ukraine, in 1977. A city in the region is named after him.”

**(Source: Dina Newman, “Alexei Stakhanov: The USSR's superstar miner,” in *BBC's Magazine*, 30 December 2015)**

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#### **The Mari people**

Colonized by the Russians in the sixteenth century, “the Mari, a Finnic people of roughly half a million whose language sounds a bit like a [...] mixture of Finnish and Turkish, are said to be Europe's last pagans. Yet their priests, called *kart* in Mari, reject that notion.

“We are not pagans. We call our faith the Mari Traditional Religion, and

we are registered officially in the republic,' said the chief *kart* of the local Sernur district.

"He went on to explain that for the Mari, God has nine substances, or hypostases, ranging from the life-giving Ilyan Yumo to the birth goddess Shochinava.

"Asked about the theological foundation of his faith, Mamayev [the kart] smiled and said, 'Everything works through nature.'"

"Indeed, like most animist religions, the Mari faith traditionally knows no written scriptures and no sacred edifices. Prayers are chiefly held in sacred groves, where some feasts include the ritual slaughter of animals as sacrifice. [...]

"In Soviet times [...] villagers would sneak out to the sacred groves after midnight, hoping that nobody would report their forbidden prayers. Indeed, unnoticed by much of the outside world, the Mari faith has made a remarkable recovery since the end of Soviet Union. [...]

"In Mari El, the Mari Traditional Religion, dubbed MTR, is recognized as one of three traditional faiths, along with Christianity and Islam. [...] About 15 percent of the people of Mari El consider themselves adherents of MTR, according to a survey conducted in 2004 by sociologists of the Mari Institute for Language, Literature and History. Because Maris make up just 45 percent of a population of 700,000, this figure means that probably more than a third of them follow the old religion.

Even local Orthodox clergy acknowledge the traditional faith's dominance in the republic's northern rural districts.

**(Source: *The Moscow Times*)**

⇒ *See also: photos of contemporary Mari people in articles from the Washington Post and Guardian, at these websites:*

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/in-sight/wp/2016/02/11/the-forgotten-mari-pagans-of-the-volga/?utm\\_term=.5dd02a2cd0a9](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/in-sight/wp/2016/02/11/the-forgotten-mari-pagans-of-the-volga/?utm_term=.5dd02a2cd0a9)

<https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/gallery/2016/dec/21/europes-oldest-pagans-mari-people-ikuru-kuwajima>

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### **Parcels and letters in the Soviet camps**

"[By] 1939, a whole raft of rules governing the sending and receiving of letters had also sprung into existence. Some political prisoners could receive letters once a month, others only once every three months. Camp censors also explicitly forbade prisoners to write about certain subjects: they could not

mention the number of prisoners in their camp, discuss details of the camp regime, name the camp guards, or say what sort of work the camp carried out. [...]

“All of these regulations were continually changed, amended, and adapted to circumstances. During the war years, for example, all limitations on the number of food parcels were lifted: camp authorities hoped, simply, that relatives would help feed the prisoners [...].

“It was all very well to be allowed to write [...], but it was not always so easy to find something to write with or to write on. [...]

“During the hardest war years, in the most difficult northern camps, packages could determine the difference between life and death.”

**(Source: Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*, pp. 248-50)**

*Chapter Notes: Winter Wind and Wolves*

*Hunger allows no choice  
To the citizen or the police;  
We must love one another or die.*

—W. H. Auden, “September 1, 1939”

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This tale is adapted from a Polish folktale, “The Wolf and the Devil,” in *Polish Folklore and Myth*, collected and edited by Joanne Asala, p. 88, who explains, “In Polish mythology the wolf is often seen as a creature of good will and not something to be feared. [...] Today wolves’ teeth are a popular design on [Easter] eggs, and are considered [tokens] of luck or wisdom.”

## HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT: THE MECHANICS OF A DIABOLICAL PLAN

*June 22, 1941–November 1941 | Historical account*

“Hitler intended to use the Soviet Union [...], not in its present capacity as an ally but in its future capacity as a colony. During this crucial year, between June 1940 and June 1941, German economic planners were working hard to devise the ways in which a conquered Soviet Union would make Germany the kind of superpower that Hitler wanted it to become. The key planners worked under the watchful eye of Heinrich Himmler, and under the direct command of Reinhard Heydrich. Under the general heading of ‘*Generalplan Ost*,’ [were] drafted a series of plans for a vast eastern colony. A first version was completed in January 1940, a second in July 1941, a third in late 1941, and a fourth in May 1942. The general design was consistent throughout: Germans would deport, kill, assimilate, or enslave the native populations, and bring order and prosperity to a humbled frontier. Depending upon the demographic estimates, between thirty-one and forty-five million people, mostly Slavs, were to disappear. In one redaction, eighty to eighty-five percent of the Poles, sixty-five percent of the west Ukrainians, seventy-five percent of the Belarusians, and fifty percent of the Czechs were to be eliminated.

“After the corrupt Soviet cities were razed, German farmers would establish, in Himmler’s words, ‘pearls of settlement,’ utopian farming communities that would produce a bounty of food for Europe. [...]

“If Germany conquered the Soviet Union, it could use Soviet territories as it pleased. [...] The Final Solution would [...] follow the invasion of the Soviet Union [...]. The first major shooting actions would take place in Soviet Ukraine.”<sup>80</sup>

Operation Barbarossa, the German attack on the Soviet Union, began on 22 June 1941. “Surprised by the swift advance of the German armies, the NKVD began [to slaughter] thousands of prisoners whom they did not have time to evacuate. [...] In Eastern Poland alone, some 150,000 prisoners were either moved into the Soviet interior or killed or both.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, pp. 159-61.

<sup>81</sup> Tadeus Piotrowski, *Poland’s Holocaust: Ethnic Strife, Collaboration with Occupying Forces and Genocide in the Second Republic, 1918-1947*, p. 18.

*Chapter Notes: Behind the Bars, No World*

*The Panther, In the Jardin des Plantes, Paris*

*His vision, from the constantly passing bars,  
has grown so weary that it cannot hold anything else.  
It seems to him there are a thousand bars,  
and behind the bars, no world.*

*As he paces in cramped circles, over and over,  
the movement of his powerful soft strides  
is like a ritual dance around a center  
in which a mighty will stands paralyzed.*

*Only at times, the curtain of the pupils lifts, quietly—  
An image enters in,  
rushes down through the tensed, arrested muscles,  
plunges into the heart and is gone.*

— Rainer Maria Rilke, translated by Stephen Mitchell

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**Zamarstynivska Prison (also known as Prison No. 2)**

Julius Kohn was murdered by the Soviet Red Army on 26 June 1941, along with thousands of other prisoners, at Zamarstynivska Prison (also known as Prison No. 2) in Lwów. Previously, he had been held at Brygidki Prison (where other prisoners were also killed).

Zamarstynivska was housed in a former monastery, whose functions have changed many times over the centuries. The monastery was formed around the Armenian Church of St. Cross. The first mention of the monastery, which was located between Zamarstynivska Street and Chornovil, was in 1590. Emperor Joseph II in 1784 closed the monastery and a hospital was installed there. Then a small barracks and prison, known as Zamarstynivska.

Upon the arrival of the Soviets in 1939, the NKVD adapted the prison to hold political prisoners. In late June 1941 the prison building was turned into a torture chamber. When the Germans attacked, the NKVD feared that prisoners would move to the side of the enemy. The original intention was to move the political prisoners east into Siberia but because of lack of transport and the speed of the German invasion they decided to shoot them. Up to 22 June there were 801 prisoners. They released *bytovyktiv*, prisoners convicted of

domestic offenses. All others were shot: 471 individuals were selected for execution and all 471 were killed. The massacre of prisoners took place in the prison basement. The burial was carried out in the yard and in the basement of the right wing of the building. In early July of the same year the German authorities opened the prison to relatives of murdered prisoners. In the prison yard a memorial service for the dead was held.

The mass killing at Zamarstynivska occurred as part of the Soviet scorched-earth policy adopted after the German invasion of the USSR (i.e., Operation Barbarossa, which commenced on 22 June 1941). Afterward, consecutive pogroms, from 30 June to 2 July 1941, and from 25-29 July 1941, took the lives of an estimated 6,000 Jews living in Lwów. These began when, on 30 June, “the Germans removed some of the bodies of the thousands of prisoners shot by the NKVD in Lwów [and] Ukrainian nationalists helped them portray these killings as a Jewish crime against the Ukrainian nation. [...] On 25 July 1941, [...] Jews were killed in a pogrom organized by the Germans with the help of local nationalists.”

**(Sources: Family Archive Service; author research; and Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning*, pp. 155-156)**

#### **Page 164**

#### **The Vienna zoo and Mädi the elephant**

The zoo in Vienna, the Tiergarten Schönbrunn, is the world’s oldest zoo, founded in 1752. Like many zoos, it was founded as an imperial menagerie. In



the summer of 1906, Mädi the elephant was born to Mizzi, and became the first elephant born in captivity.

In 1914, the zoo housed 712 species and 3,500 specimens. Because of diminishing food supplies during World War I, the number of

animals rapidly decreased to 900. At the war’s end and with the fall of the Austrian Hungarian Empire the zoo became the responsibility of the Austrian Republic.

Allied bombardments in February 1945 at the close of World War II destroyed many building and killed many of the animals.

**(Sources: Author research)**



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**Dürer's famous etching of the rhinoceros**

In 1515, the Sultan Muzafar II of Johor (Malaysia) made a gift to King Manuel I of Portugal of Ganda the rhinoceros. The King, in turn, decided to gift the animal to Pope Leo X, to whom he had already given a white elephant named Hanno, whom the pope was very fond of. Tragically, en route to Rome, after stopping in Marseille for a viewing by the French king, the ship transporting Ganda capsized and the rhinoceros died.

Dürer, who made the etching at right, never once saw the animal he was depicting. He fashioned the image after receiving two drawings and a woodcut sent to him by other chroniclers who did see the animal. The etching of the rhinoceros would be one of the first images produced in a way to allow people without means to see exotic species. Until the late 1930s, this image appeared in German



textbooks as an accurate depiction of the rhinoceros. The inscription on the top of the woodcut reads:

On the first of May in the year 1513 AD [sic], the powerful King of Portugal, Manuel of Lisbon, brought such a living animal from India, called the rhinoceros. This is an accurate representation. It is the color of a speckled tortoise, and is almost entirely covered with thick scales. It is the size of an elephant but has shorter legs and is almost invulnerable. It has a strong pointed horn on the tip of its nose, which it sharpens on stones. It is the mortal enemy of the elephant. The elephant is afraid of the rhinoceros, for, when they meet, the rhinoceros charges with its head between its front legs and rips open the elephant's stomach, against which the elephant is unable to defend itself. The rhinoceros is so well-armed that the elephant cannot harm it. It is said that the rhinoceros is fast, impetuous and cunning.

**(Source: Author research)**

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**Rudyard Kipling's stories**

“How the Rhinoceros Got His Skin” and “How the Leopard Got His Spots” are two tales included in Rudyard Kipling’s collection *Just So Stories*, which was published in 1902. These two works were not translated into German or Polish until many decades after the time of this narrative. Thus, any translations into German would have had to have been made by someone who was educated and who had time. Eugen, being a bachelor attorney, would have had these resources and perhaps the inclination to undertake translations

of stories by Kipling.

*The Man Who Would Be King*, a Kipling novella that Eugen might have read, first appeared in *The Phantom Rickshaw and other Eerie Tales* in 1888 and collected in *Wee Willie Winkie and Other Stories* in 1895. The story was translated into French in 1901. The story is a parable about imperialism using a stranger-in-a-strange land motif. Though Kipling was English, because he was a subject of the crown in one of its colonies, his stories may have appealed to men of Eugen's generation, who spent a larger portion of their lives as subjects of the Habsburg Empire, an imperial entity.

**(Sources: Kipling Society, author research)**

### **Page 166**

#### **The history of the bagel**

While the Eisner bakery did not advertise bagels as one of their products, the history of the bagel is worth noting. The bagel “came East to Poland from Germany as part of a migration flow during the fourteenth century. At the time, pretzels (the thick bread of the German variety, not the American kind that comes in plastic bags) were making their way out of their original home in the monasteries and being made into readily available feast day bread. German immigrants, brought to Poland to help provide people power for building the economy (immigration was then encouraged, not discouraged), brought the pretzels with them. In Poland, the theory goes, the German breads morphed into a round roll with a hole in the middle that came to be known in Poland as an *obwarzanek*. Written records of them appear as early as the fourteenth century.

“[Another theory] dates the first bagels to the late seventeenth century in Austria, saying that bagels were invented in 1683 by a Viennese baker trying to pay tribute to the King of Poland, Jan Sobieski. The king had led Austria (and hence Poland as well, since it was part of the empire) in repelling invading Turkish armies. Given that the king was famous for his love of horses, the baker decided to shape his dough into a circle that looked like a stirrup—or *beugel* in German.[...]

“At the same time Germans were making their way to Poland, so too were a good number of Jews [...] In that era it was quite common in Poland for Jews to be prohibited from baking bread. This stemmed from the commonly held belief that Jews, viewed as enemies of the Church, should be denied any bread at all because of the holy Christian connection between bread, Jesus, and the sacrament. Strange though it sounds, Jews were often legally banned from commercial baking.

“The bagel as Jewish food really came of age during the era of Polish history known as the ‘Nobles’ Democracy’. While intolerance and conflict reigned elsewhere, Poland was probably the preeminent country for tolerance, acceptance, education, and understanding. Unlike almost every other country in Europe, Poles identified themselves as citizens of their country rather than of any divisive framework based on religious, ethnic, or linguistic origins. This mindset created the environment where Jews were first allowed the opportunity to bake, and then sell, bread—of which bagels were an integral part.”

**(Source: “The Secret History of Bagels,” by Ari Weinzwieg, review of *The Bagel: the Surprising History of a Modest Bread*, by Maria Balinska, in *The Atlantic*, 26 March 2009)**

### **Page 170**

#### **Julius Kohn’s poetry and the Schlaraffia**

As a student at the K. K. Albrecht gymnasium, Julius Kohn was a member (who presented his poems) of Schlaraffia, a worldwide German-speaking men’s society founded in 1859 in Prague (then a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) with a pledge of friendship, art, and humor.

“Schlaraffia is unlike most other all-male international fraternal organizations. Members, or ‘knights,’ dress up in robes and silk helmets and meet in halls filled with medieval paraphernalia. Addressing one another with humorous titles, the members carry on all conversation in German.

“Meetings are often devoted to cultural discussions, with members reciting poems they have written or performing their own works on musical instruments. Any mention of religion, politics or business is forbidden. Humor and friendship and an appreciation of the arts—not necessarily Germanic—are stressed. Rivalry and jealousy have no place at the club's meetings.

“Schlaraffia—the word is German—is [an invented word for] an idealistic fairy tale land. Gustav Mahler and Franz Lehar were members of the organization, founded in Prague in 1859.

“[...] In 1935, Hitler directed the Schlaraffia fraternities in Germany, some 144 strong, to rid their clubs of Jewish members.[...] The Schlaraffia clubs did not heed Hitler's follow-up demand that they voluntarily disband. Then in 1937, Hitler ordered that the Schlaraffia meeting rooms be trashed and the books burned.

After the war, members in Eastern Europe had to meet secretly because the clubs were outlawed by the Communists.”

**(Source: Joyce Jones, “Modern Knights Meet for Culture, Fun and Ceremony,” *New York Times*, 12 February 1995)**

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**Ivan Shumakov and the murder of prisoners in Prison No. 2**

Ivan Shumakov was the NKVD Deputy Chief of Investigations in Lwów, though it is unclear if he was assigned specifically to Zamarstynivska (Prison

Фамилия, имя и отчество	Вед. рожден.	Статья	Следственный и др. отдел	Примечание
ЧЕРНИШОВ Чеслав Владислав	1919	54-2-10	следственный	
БЕЛЕНКО Борис Александрович	1922	54-10-11	осужден на 5 лет	
МХИНСКИЙ Артур Петрович	1922	54-2-11		
ВАЛОС-ПАТЕР Ян Янович-Осип	1914	54-2-10		
ПЕДВОНСКИЙ Артур Зигмундович	1920	54-2-10		
ПЕДВОНСКИЙ Станислав Станислав	1919	54-2-10		
СЕРЕДИНСКИЙ Станислав Иванович	1915	54-2-10		
РАЙС Владимир Германович	1910	54-10-19		8 лет
ПЕДВОНСКИЙ Казимир Владислав	1917	54-2-10		
КЛИМОВ Павел Владиславович	1918	54-2-10		
ВАНС Марин-Мечеслав Эдвардов	1887	20-54-2		
АТЛАН Михаил Алексеевич	1919	72-16-33		10 лет
БУДЕОВ Станислав Станислав	1878	54-18	следственный	
МИТОВСКИЙ Иван Францевич	1909	54-13		
ГРИГОРИЙ Николай Федорович	1915			
СНАБ Петр Андреевич	1919	54-10		
ГУРАВСКИЙ Александр Иванович	1897	54-10		
МАЛЕК Левкий Восторжич	1911	54-10-11		
СЕРЖИ Владимир Андреевич	1919	54-10-11		
СТАРЕЦКИЙ Петр Сидорович	1922	54-2-11		
САДКО Михаил Тимофеевич	1922	54-2-11		
КОЛОДЯК Иван Иванович	1890	54-2-11		
РОМАНОВ Иван Александрович	1921	54-2-11		
СЛАДКО Ярослав Степанович	1921	54-2-11		
КОРЖ Михаил Дмитриевич	1920	54-2-11		
БРЕНД Федер Фридрих	1912	54-11-10		
ДОНЕЦ Владимир Викторович	1921	54-2-11		
МУХИНА Николай Коопетинич	1909	54-2-10		
КАСТРАНА Василий Васильевич	1919	54-2-11		
ТАДЭВ Владимир Григорьевич	1922	54-10-11		
КОУР-ЕВЫН Вукча Ильясович	1922	54-10-11		
МЕЛЬНИК Петр Иванович	1906	54-2-10-11		
БУРАК Григорий Васильевич	1918	54-2-11		
КОМАРОВА Степан Федорович	1920	54-10-11		
ЖЕЛЕНСКИЙ Роман-Виктор Адам	1920	54-10-11		
АВШИИ Иероним Яковлевич	1921	54-10-11		
МАСК Владимир Михайлович	1922	54-10-11		
СЕРЖИКУВАК Александрович	XXXX	XXXX		
ИВАНОВ Петр Федорович	1920	54-2		
САДОВСКИЙ Павел Петрович	1918	196-20		
БЕЛЕНКО Борис Васильевич	1919	54-2-11		
САДОВСКИЙ Павел Иванович	1919	54-2-11		
МЕРКУ Александр Николаевич	1921	54-2-11		
КАРПОВ Василий Григорьевич	1918	54-2-11		
СЕРЖИ Александр Григорьевич	1903	54-3-22-24		
ТРЕШИН Павел Викторович	1906	54-3-10-11		
СЕРЖИ Владимир Степанович	1911	54-2-11		
САДОВСКИЙ Иван Николаевич	1912	54-2-11		
САДОВСКИЙ Александр Антонович	1879	54-2-10		

No. 2). Shumakov was from Saratov, a city on the Volga River. Shumakov signed the order for Julius's execution, authorized by Leontij Kharitonov, the regional prosecutor in Lwów. Julius was accused, according to article 54 of the Criminal Code, of anti-Soviet propaganda (part 10) and as a foreign agent (part 13). His case was not complicated and his charge was not proven.

In the document at left, the handwritten portion (in red on the original) and signed by Ivan Shumakov, indicates that the prisoners on this list (which includes Julius Kohn, #276, on

a second page) were shot as enemies of the state. The darker handwritten portion (in purple on the original), signed by Leontij Kharitonov, indicates the authorization to execute.

(Sources: Igor Derevyanyy, historian at the Memorial Museum at Lontskoho Street; Family Archive Service, and [www.stopgulag.org](http://www.stopgulag.org))

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**German emigration to the Volga**

The Volga was, until 1941, home to ethnic Germans from the time of Catherine the Great. This population was expelled with the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, to Siberia, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. Few returned.

(Source: author research)

## HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT: AN AMNESTY IS NEGOTIATED AND A POLISH ARMY MOBILIZES IN THE SOVIET UNION

30 July 1941 | *Historical accounts*

“A month after [the invasion of the USSR by the Nazis] General Sikorski, the leader of the Polish government-in-exile in London, and [Soviet] Ambassador Maisky signed a truce [which] re-established a Polish state—its borders still to be determined—and granted an Amnesty to ‘all Polish citizens who are at present deprived of their freedom on the territory of the USSR.’<sup>82</sup>

“Both Gulag prisoners and deported exiles were officially freed, and allowed to join a new division of the Polish Army, to be formed on Soviet soil. In Moscow, General Władysław Anders,<sup>83</sup> a Polish officer who had been imprisoned in Lubyanka<sup>84</sup> for the previous twenty months, learned that he had been named commander of the new army during a surprise meeting [after which] General Anders left the prison in a chauffeured NKVD car, wearing a shirt and trousers, but no shoes. [...]

“The Soviet authorities refused to take any moral responsibility for the ‘soldiers’ of the new army—all in a terrible state of health—and would not give General Anders any food or supplies. [...] Some camp commanders even refused to let their Polish prisoners out at all. [...]

“The Soviet authorities complicated matters further by stating, a few months into the Amnesty, that its terms applied not to all former Polish citizens, but only to ethnic Poles: ethnic Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Jews were to remain in the USSR. Terrible tensions erupted as a result. Many of the minorities tried to pass themselves off as Poles, only to be unmasked by genuine Poles, who feared re-arrest themselves if the identity of their ‘false’ comrades was revealed. Later, the passengers on one Polish evacuation train, bound for Iran, tried to evict a group of Jews; they feared the train would not be allowed out of the USSR with ‘non-Polish’ passengers.

“Other Polish prisoners were released from camps or exile settlements, but not given any money or told where to go.[...]”<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> See Chapter Notes—The Polish-Soviet Pact of 31 July 1941

<sup>83</sup> See Chapter Notes—General Władysław Anders and Anders Army

<sup>84</sup> Lubyanka was a notorious prison in Moscow.

⇒ See Chapter Notes—Lubyanka Prison

<sup>85</sup> Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*, p 452.

“The implementation of the Amnesty was chaotic, prolonged, and never completed. Following the announcement of [the Amnesty on] 12 August 1941, the Soviet government issued directives to district commissars and to camp commanders stating that all Poles were to be released. Yet the directives were either obeyed or ignored or postponed according to the whims of officials, and the process dragged on through 1941 and 1942. The Soviet press publicized the Amnesty. But the word spread slowly, especially in the most distant provinces, and the releases, if they happened, were not coordinated with Army recruitment. Most people who benefitted from the Amnesty left their places of exile with little information about where or when the Polish Army was going to be formed. All they knew was that a chance to escape had fallen from heaven, and that they must somehow leave [...] before the onset of the next murderous winter. In some cases, the camp commandants refused to release them or to give them the necessary documents. [...] As often as not, however, freed prisoners were given no food rations or money for transportation. [...] Some began to walk across the taiga. Some built rafts, on which they could float down the great rivers of the north. Most tried to hitch a lift, or to climb onto the back of a passing lorry and to make for the nearest railroad.”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Norman Davies, *Trail of Hope: The Anders Army, An Odyssey Across Three Continents*, pp. 77-78.

## Chapter Notes: Parting Gifts

*The most common way of slipping through the NKVD's net was to declare one's previous identity papers to be lost or stolen—which was frequently true—then to modify inconvenient details on the registration forms. [...] Jews would state that they were Catholics or of “no religion.”*

—Norman Davies, *Trail of Hope: The Anders Army, An Odyssey Across Three Continents*, p. 141.

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#### The Polish-Soviet Pact of 31 July 1941

“The Polish-Soviet Pact of 1941—like any other pact made by nations at war—arose out of, and was rooted and grounded and subject to, the war itself. At this time the Soviet armies were retreating on every front. [...] There were grounds for hoping that the [Polish] army to be raised might number as many as 200,000. [...] At conferences now held between the two High Commands many agonizing questions came up for settlement. Of all these questions none was more urgent nor more agonizing than that of the whereabouts and present fate of at least 8,300 of the 10,000 Polish officers declared by the Russians themselves to have been taken as prisoners to the Soviet Union, and who had been interned, together with many non-commissioned officers, some soldiers, and a hundred or so civilians, in three camps. [...] At a Kremlin meeting which took place in December, General Sikorski himself urgently pressed for an answer. None came: only a determined assertion at all times that all the prisoners had been released, which was manifestly untrue.[...]”

“[A]t the same time as many Poles were indeed being set at liberty, [and] it was made known, first to the Polish military mission in Moscow and then to General Anders, Polish Commander-in-Chief within the Union, that the Soviet authorities expected these men, once incorporated into Polish military formations, to be dispatched without any further training to the crumbling Soviet fronts. To do so, that is, a bare ten or twelve weeks after the most fortunate of them, very nearly naked, often barefoot, famished and devoured by disease of all kinds, had left their prisons [...] Worse still [...] arms were issued to a single division only, the 5th Division. Besides this issue, to the 5th, 200 rifles for guard service only were later issued to General Anders's army, and no other arms at all, at any time, were ever forthcoming out of the Moscow agreement [...].”

“By the end of October the number of volunteers had risen [from 40,000] to 44,000, and in November to 46,000; and it was at this point that [...] General Anders was told [that] rations to the Polish Army would be issued to [...] 30,000 only.[...] Without the Soviet authorities, there is simply no way of getting food [...] inside the Soviet Union. General Anders was faced with doing one of two things: sending away the 16,000 Polish soldiers or cutting down by one-third at the beginning of a Russian winter the rations of men who had been starving for years and were still pretty well famished; and who were working like fanatics and living under canvas. The men remained. The Russians retaliated by mounting strong military guards on the stations of Busuluk and Totskoye and ordering the trains carrying Poles to go through these stations without so much as slowing down. Transport after transport of Poles [...] were now headed off to republics further south, where they died in hundreds of thousands in the kolkhoz of Syr-Daria and along the banks of the canals.”

**(Source: Zoe Zajdlerowa, *The Dark Side of the Moon*, pp. 175-178)**

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#### Solovki

In the 1920s, the monastery on the Solovetsky Islands in the White Sea “was transformed into a concentration camp that launched the entire Gulag system. Solovki, as it is popularly known in Russian, witnessed the suffering of thousands of innocent people [...]. It epitomizes the ruination of Russia’s spiritual and material culture in the name of communist ideology. [...]

“In 1923 the Solovetsky Special Purpose Camp was established on the islands. The churches, hermitages and monastery buildings were converted into prisoner barracks and camp administrative offices. The interiors of the churches [...] and the monastery library were ransacked and later destroyed. The relics of the monastery’s founders [...] were removed from their tombs and sent to the Museum of Atheism in Leningrad. The Solovetsky monks were driven out or arrested.

“Crammed into bare wooden bunks set up in the churches, the prisoners were held in appalling conditions—hungry, louse-infested, and frozen. [...] [Deported to Solovki were] intellectuals, philosophers, writers, artists, scientists, political and social workers, aristocrats, Czarist officers, entrepreneurs, and clergymen. [...]

“The Solovetsky camp was a sort of laboratory for methods that would be applied for years to come throughout the Gulag system. The main focus was on finding ways to raise productivity among the slave laborers. [...] The labor



camp system began to spread onto the mainland. New branches were opened on the White Sea coast, in Karelia, in the Urals and on the Kola Peninsula. [...] In 1933, after ten years of operation, the Solovetsky camp [...] was absorbed into the White Sea-Baltic camp, a larger structure in the ever-expanding Gulag. [...] By the time the last prisoners were removed from the ruined Solovetsky Monastery [in 1939], the network of Gulag camps covered the entire territory of the Soviet Union, and the number of prisoners had reached two million.”

**(Source: Tomasz Kizny, *Gulag: Life and Death Inside the Soviet Concentration Camps*, pp. 36-37)**

## **HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT: AS THE AMNESTY IS UNDERWAY, ATROCITIES ARE COMMITTED**

### *Pogroms in southeastern Poland, July 1941 | Historical account*

“What local people expected from the German invasion of 1941 depended upon their experience of Soviet rule in 1940. And what the Soviet experience had meant depended, in turn, on interwar politics. The various peoples of eastern Poland—Poles, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Jews—reacted very differently to the German invasion of June 1941 not because they belonged to various ethnicities, but because they had different hopes and aims arising from prior experiences. In southeastern Poland, there was more collaboration with the Germans in the early days and weeks of the invasion than in northeastern Poland, because in southeastern Poland there were Ukrainian nationalists who could believe that a German invasion would advance their political interests.

“As Ukrainian nationalists helped organize pogroms in reinvaded southeastern Poland in summer 1941, they also helped the Germans to translate the experience of Soviet rule into a fantasy of Ukrainian innocence and Jewish guilt. When the corpses of prisoners were found inside an NKVD prison, German propaganda inevitably presented the executioners as Jews. When on 30 June 1941, the Germans removed some of the bodies of the thousands of prisoners shot by the NKVD in Lwów, Ukrainian nationalists helped them portray these killings as a Jewish crime against the Ukrainian nation. The actual NKVD officers who had performed the actual executions had gone, but the Jews of Lwów remained. Here, as elsewhere, corpses were put on display wherever they were found, the horror associated with the Jews. [...]

“In Lwów on 25 July 1941, more than four weeks after the NKVD had shot its prisoners, Jews were killed in a pogrom organized by the Germans with the help of local nationalists.”<sup>87</sup>

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### *Mass shooting in Kiev, 29 September 1941 | Historical account*

“On 24 September, a series of bombs and mines exploded, destroying the buildings in central Kiev where the Germans had established offices of their occupation regime. Some of these explosives were on timers set before the Soviet forces withdrew from the city, but some seem to have

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<sup>87</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning*, pp. 155-56.

been detonated by NKVD men who remained in Kiev. [...] The Germans had a clear ideological line to follow: if the NKVD was guilty, the Jews must be blamed. [...] Although most of the Jews of Kiev had fled before the Germans took the city, tens of thousands remained. They were all to be killed.

“A [Nazi] propaganda crew printed broadsheet notices that ordered the Jews of Kiev to appear, on pain of death, at a street corner in a westerly neighborhood of the city. In what would become the standard lie of such mass shooting actions, the Jews were told that they were being resettled. They should thus bring along their documents, money, and valuables. On 29 September 1931 most of the remaining Jewish community of Kiev did indeed appear at the appointed location. Some Jews told themselves that [because] Yom Kippur [...] was the following day, they could not possibly be hurt. Many arrived before dawn, in the hopes of getting good seats on the resettlement train—which did not exist. People packed for a long journey [...].

“The Germans had erected a roadblock near the gates of the Jewish cemetery, where documents were verified and non-Jews told to return home. From this point forward, the Jews were escorted by Germans with automatic weapons and dogs. [...]

“[...] Having surrendered their valuables and documents [at another checkpoint], people were forced to strip naked. Then they were driven by threats or by shots fired overhead, in groups of about ten, to the edge of a ravine known as Babi Yar. Many of them were beaten [...]. They had to lie down on their stomachs on the corpses already beneath them, and wait for the shots to come from above and behind. Then would come the next group. Jews came and died for thirty-six hours. People were perhaps alike in dying and in death, but each of them was different until that final moment, each had different preoccupations and presentiments until all was clear and then all was black. [...] Only there in the ditch were these people reduced to nothing, or to their number, which was 33,761.”<sup>88</sup>

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*A death factory built near Lublin, October 1941 | Historical account*

“Aware of the successful gassing experiments performed on Soviet prisoners of war, Himmler entrusted the creation of a new gassing facility for Jews to [...] Odilo Globocnik on about 13 October 1941. Globocnik

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid, pp. 201-03; 254; 256.

was the SS and Police Leader of the Lublin district of the General Government\* [...]. Globocnik had expected that millions of Jews would be deported to his region, where he would put them to work in slave labor colonies. After the attack on the Soviet Union, Globocnik was charged with the implementation of Generalplan Ost. Though this grand design for exterminatory colonization was generally tabled after the Soviet Union failed to collapse, Globocnik actually implemented it in part in his Lublin district, driving a hundred thousand Poles from their homes. He wanted a general ‘cleansing of the General Government of Jews, and also of Poles.’

“By late October 1941 Globocnik had chosen a site for the new gassing facility: Bełżec, just south and east of Lublin.[...]

“The facility at Bełżec would require just a few German commanders to operate. The basic labor would be provided by Jewish slaves. [...]

“Bełżec was not to be a camp. People spend the night at camps. Bełżec was to be a death factory, where Jews would be killed upon arrival.

“There was a German precedent for such a facility, where people arrived under false pretenses, were told that they needed to be showered and were then killed by carbon monoxide gas. Between 1939 and 1941 in Germany, six killing facilities had been used to murder the handicapped, the mentally ill, and others deemed “unworthy of life.”<sup>89</sup>

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*\*The General Government, also referred to as the General Governorate, was a German zone of occupation established by Hitler after the joint invasion of Poland by Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939. The newly occupied Second Polish Republic was split into three zones: the General Government in its center, Polish areas annexed by Nazi Germany in the west, and Polish areas annexed by the Soviet Union in the east. The territory was expanded in 1941 to include the District of Galicia.*

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### *Anti-Semitic laws and one death in Teschen, December 1941 | Reflection*

“Hitler gave the starting signal for the greatest population resettlement in the history of mankind on 6 October 1939, when he announced before the Reichstag ‘a new order of the ethnographic situation’ in Europe. He described ‘the resettlement of nationalities’ as Germany's most important task and called ‘the attempt to order and regulate the Jewish problem’ one of Germany's goals in the ‘German sphere of influence’ west of the German-Soviet line of demarcation. This confirmed all rumors about the

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<sup>89</sup> Johnny Moser, “Nisko: The First Experiment in Deportation,” by Jonny Moser, translated from the German by Hanna Gunther, Museum of Tolerance Online Multimedia Learning Center.

proposed Jewish reservation in Poland. Now even the Western press reported: ‘A Jewish reservation is to be established in Poland’.<sup>90</sup>

In October 1939, most of the male Jews in Teschen—including Kohn family friend Eric Better’s father, Jacob, and his uncle Moryc—were sent to the Lublin “reservation,” located between the San and Bug rivers in eastern Poland. This particular camp was closed in April 1940, and some of the Cieszyn Jews were sent back to Silesia. Those Jews who remained in Teschen were used by the Nazis for forced labor, stationed in camps in the town, and from there gradually deported to ghettos and labor/concentration camps in Upper Silesia and Nazi-occupied Poland. One of the Jewish men still living in Teschen in December 1941 was Hermann Eisner. His granddaughter says he was walking on Głęboka Street when he slipped on the ice and fell. Because the Nazi laws forbade Jews to receive treatment in non-Jewish hospitals, an ambulance was summoned from the area’s only Jewish hospital in Orlova. According to Hermann’s granddaughter, it took six hours for the ambulance to arrive. Hermann died of pneumonia on 23 December 1941. It is likely that Josefina did not know about her father’s death until after she arrived in Tehran.

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter Notes: Brief Sojourn in the Garden of Eden

*I hear, I hear the early ice,  
Rustling under the bridges,  
I recall a luminous intoxication,  
Swimming over our heads.*

—Osip Mandelstam, “53,” from *Veronezh Notebooks*, translated by Andrew Davis, p. 59

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#### **General Władysław Anders and Anders Army**

“The man chosen to head the Polish Army in the USSR was General Władysław Anders (1892-1970), an officer of great fortitude and determination, who was lucky to have escaped the fate of his comrades murdered at Katyń. Appointed on 4 August before the Amnesty had taken place, he was chosen because he was a man of undoubted courage, having been wounded in action eight times, because he had no close political ties with the prewar Sanacja regime, and above all because he had an expert knowledge of Russia. Twenty-five years earlier Anders had been serving as a cavalry officer in one of the elite guards of the Tsar’s Army. More recently, ever since his capture in October 1939, he had been an inmate of Soviet prisons, first of the Brygidki in Lwów and later at the Lubyanka, the NKVD’s headquarters in Moscow. [...].

“Anders recalled the moment of his release: ‘It was 8:00 PM when the car left the NKVD building. It was already dark, and the street lights were dim. There were very few passers-by, but quite a number of vehicles, all army ones, and all making much use of their klaxon horns. For nearly two years I had lived in prison cells. Now the fresh air, the noise of the streets and the traffic almost intoxicated me. How strange it was to be free again.’”

*Author note: Anders went on to serve with distinction, leading the Polish Army (popularly known as Anders Army) to fight in the decisive Battle of Monte Cassino. Peter Kohn was a soldier with Anders Army and also fought in the Battle of Monte Cassino.*

**(Source: Norman Davies, *Trail of Hope*, p. 56)**

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#### **Margilan**

“Uzbekistan is the world’s third-largest silk producer, and Margilan is the traditional center of the industry. Much of the silk for sale in Samarkand and Bukhara is in fact made in factories here.

“Long privy to the secrets of sericulture [the production of silk and the

rearing of silkworms], Margilan was a major Silk Road stop by the ninth century, although local legend extends its history back to Alexander the Great. On his arrival he was given chicken (*murgh*) and bread (*nan*), from which the town grew its name.

“For centuries, its merchant clans, key players in Central Asia’s commerce and silk trade, were said to be a law unto themselves; even in the closing decades of Soviet rule, this was the heart of Uzbekistan’s black-market economy.”

(Source: “Margilon” [sic] <http://eurasia.travel/uzbekistan/cities/fergana/margilon/>)

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### **The Silk Road**

“The term ‘Silk Road,’ or Seidenstrasse, was first coined in 1877 by the German geographer Baron Ferdinand Vin Richtofen, great uncle of the Red Baron. The term is a misnomer: the Silk Road was not really a road at all—it was a vast network of land-based and maritime trade routes and merchants who used it to carry far, far more than just silk. [...] Evidence from burial mounds [...] in Mongolia suggests that there was already extensive contact between imperial China and the nomads of the northern Steppes from at least the fourth century BCE. [...]

“In Dayuan, now identified as the Fergana Valley in present-day Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, [a palace courtier called Zhang Quian] reported seeing blood-sweating, heavenly horses that flew through the skies. [The Chinese Emperor] Wudi sent out further missions to acquire these horses for breeding stock and the territories to the west were gradually opened up to trade. The first Chinese contacts with Persia occurred in 115 or 110 BCE [...]. The Parthian rulers of Persia sent 20,000 horsemen to accompany the Chinese emissaries to the court of their king [...]. They were presented with gifts, including ostrich eggs and conjurers, and were accompanied back to China with a Persian ambassador. [...] In 53 BCE, the Roman Empire came into contact with Chinese silk for the first time [when they] were routed by a Parthian army [...] close to the border with Syria. The Persians unfurled dazzling silk banners during the battle, causing the Romans to flee in panic.”

(Source: Jonathan Tucker, *An Illustrated Silk Road Map*)

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### **The Fergana Valley**

“The Fergana Valley is one of the most densely populated areas of Central Asia and is a major producer of cotton, fruit, and raw silk. Among the mineral

deposits that are exploited are coal, oil, mercury, antimony, and ozocerite. The chief cities are Khujand, Kokand (Quqõn), Fergana, Marghilon, Andijon, and Namangan. Sedentary agriculture has been practiced for many centuries in the Fergana Valley, which also lay on one of the main trade routes to China. The valley was conquered by the Arabs in the 8th century, by Genghis Khan in the 13th, and by Timur (Tamerlane) in the 14th. The khans of Kokandruded it from the late 18th century until it was taken by Russia in 1876.”

*(Source: Encyclopedia Britannica)*

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### **The Lubyanka Prison**

Lubyanka was the heart of darkness of the old USSR, the fabled headquarters of the KGB and home of an infamous jail where spies, political dissidents, and various enemies of the State were imprisoned, interrogated, and tortured. An old joke called Lubyanka the tallest building in Moscow, since Siberia could be seen from its basement.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn described the horrors of the Lubyanka, where he was imprisoned, in his epic book *The Gulag Archipelago*. Simeon Vilensky, a woman who spent time in the Lubyanka, described the horrible silence of the prison at night. The guards were not allowed to speak and communicated in the darkness by clicking their tongues, a noise that was punctuated only by the occasional wail or a prisoner.

The Lubyanka building, a massive yellow brick structure in the neo-baroque style, looks slightly less menacing than the organization it once housed. It was originally built in 1897 for the All-Russia Insurance Company, but after the October Revolution the building was re-purposed and became the headquarters of the Cheka, the first secret police organization of new socialist state. Until the fall of the USSR in 1991, the adjacent square featured a monument to ‘Iron’ Felix Dzerzhinsky, the founder of the organization. The Soviet secret police organization has changed names several times but never left the building. The same office on the third floor was used by all the chiefs of the service, from Lavrenty Beria to Yuri Andropov.

The building was extended and enlarged in two intervals, first in the period between 1940-1947, by the addition of one story, and again in 1983. Today it is home to the headquarters of The FSB, or The Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation, Border Control, and the KGB Museum. Visits to the KGB Museum are by appointment only, but it is worth it to see Cold War-era propaganda as seen from the other side.

*(Source: Atlas Obscura)*



## HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT: NEW ROADS

*December 1941–early 1942 | Memoir excerpt*

The Prime Minister of the Polish government-in-exile, General Sikorski, went to Tehran, where he “had an audience with the Shah of Persia. He later received representatives of the press, to whom he spoke of his impressions of Russia and declared that the Poles had been freed from the camps and prisons. For obvious reasons of diplomacy, he [...] never mentioned the great number of Polish officers still missing. The Russians were quick to see the propaganda value of his declarations, circulating them all over the world, so that [...] they had the effect of misinforming public opinion for a very long time. [...]

“It soon became only too clear that the Soviet authorities were still insincere in their dealings with the Polish Army. [...] We continued constantly to receive information that thousands of Poles remained in prisons and labor camps and that the ‘amnesty’ was not being honestly carried out. [...]

“[In Kuybyshev and Busuluk], the temperature dropped to minus fifty-two degrees centigrade and icy winds swept the snow into drifts. Many of our men froze to death in their tents. [...]

“At the beginning of 1942, we at last received a decision from the Soviet authorities for the transfer of our troops to the south. Our new headquarters were established at Yangi-Yul, which means New Road, near Tashkent. The name was significant, for from here we later started the long journey that was to take us across the Middle East to Italy. [...] Soon a flood of men began to arrive. Almost all by now had English uniforms and underwear [...].<sup>91</sup> But health, owing to the lack of food, was poor, and epidemics, particularly typhus, spread rapidly, for there is little soap in Russia and an enormous number of parasites. [...]

“People still kept reaching the army area from the north, but the Soviet authorities put more and more obstacles in their way. Whole convoys were forced to leave their trains and were stranded in the steppes without any supplies. [...] Anyone deprived of rations simply starved to death. [...] “People would leave the camps and not return, vanishing without trace as so often happens in Russia. The NKVD even kidnapped people inside the camps.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> In Iran, the British oversaw the formation of the Polish Army and provided temporary uniforms to the newly recruited Polish soldiers.

<sup>92</sup> Władysław Anders, *An Army in Exile: The Story of the Polish Second Corps*, pp. 92; 94–95.

## Chapter Notes: Out of Egypt

*Freedom. It isn't once, to walk out  
under the Milky Way, feeling the rivers  
of light, the fields of dark—  
freedom is daily, prose-bound, routine  
remembering. Putting together, inch by inch  
the starry worlds. From all the lost collections.*

—Adrienne Rich, “For Memory,” from *A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far*

*Next year in Jerusalem!*

—Traditional phrase uttered at the end of a seder

*Author note: Many of the details in this chapter—including the itinerary—derive from Second Lieutenant Konrad Kurkowski's unpublished, handwritten field journal of the 26 pp (the regiment which Peter Kohn served with), housed in the Polish Institute in London and provided/translated by Family Archive Services.*

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#### **Shostakovich's Symphony No. 7 in C major, Op. 60**

While it is not known what the orchestra played, it is not impossible that it was Symphony No. 7 in C major, Op. 60, completed in December 1941 and dedicated by the composer to the City of Leningrad. It was written in condemnation of the German invasion of the Soviet Union.

**(Source: Author research)**

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#### **The national dances of Poland**

The national dances of Poland are:

“Polonaise: Evolved from a dance called the *Chodzony* (walking dance) of the fifteenth century danced by royalty and nobility. The dancers walk around the dance floor.

“Kujawiak: Originated in the nineteenth century in the Kujawy region. It is a simple, slow dance.

“Mazur: Also originates from Kujawy, but its name derives from Mazovia, a region near Warsaw. This dance was known in the sixteenth century; its rhythm was used by Chopin to create some of his masterpieces. The Mazur is an intricate, swift-moving, elegant dance, cherished by the social elite.

“Oberek: Originated from the Mazowsze region of Poland. Its name comes from the Polish verb *obracac sie*, which means to spin. It is the fastest of the Polish folk dances and very difficult to dance.

“Krakowiak: Originated in Kraków and the Malopolska region in the sixteenth century. The Krakowiak has a syncopated rhythm and was another inspiration for Chopin.”

(Source: <http://www.thepolishzone.com/national-dances-of-poland>)

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#### **Bandar-e Pahlavi**

The original name of Bandar-e Pahlavi was Bandar-e Anzali, which was restored after the Iranian Revolution. *Bandar* means “port.” One of the most important ports in northern Iran, Bandar-e Anzali is also a major center of caviar production. Peter Kohn’s sons recall their father saying that he had eaten so much caviar that he grew to dislike it. Possibly, he had eaten such amounts of caviar at Bandar-e Pahlavi, where the troops in his division were stationed from 30 March to 9 April 1942.

(Source: Author research)

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#### **Persepolis and Ernst Herzfeld’s excavation of it**

“Persepolis, located in the province of Fars, southwestern Iran, is among the most iconic sites of the ancient world. It was a ceremonial capital of the great Achaemenid empire, which extended from eastern Europe to northern India at its height. The city was founded by Darius I the Great (r. 522–486 BCE) in the late sixth century BCE and destroyed by Alexander the Great just 200 years later. [...]

“Western travelers started mentioning Persepolis in accounts of their trips to the Middle East as early as the 1300s. In the nineteenth century, Persepolis and its surrounding area began to receive particular attention from scholars and artists, who sought to document the still visible structures. Ernst Emil Herzfeld, a German archaeologist, philologist, geographer, and historian, conducted the first scientific investigation of Persepolis in 1931 after he was appointed excavation director by the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago. Along with his studies at the Islamic city of Samarra, his research at Persepolis is the best known work of his career.

“Herzfeld described the city as ‘the glory of the Persian world’ and found the site to be more impressive than the famed ruins of Palmyra in Syria. He first visited the site in November 1905 to study the various reliefs for

publication in the book *Iranische Felsreliefs* (Berlin, 1910). He then returned in 1923 as part of an expedition across the Middle East. Living among the ruins of Persepolis for six weeks, he was able to produce plans of the various structures and to complete extensive photographic documentation. Herzfeld made connections with important political leaders in Iran who later allowed him to negotiate for the formal right to excavate. Reza Shah of the Pahlavi dynasty granted him permission to work in Persepolis, breaking the French monopoly over archaeology in Iran (France had been the first and only foreign country to excavate there since 1885). The goals of Herzfeld's archaeological inquiry at Persepolis were threefold—to excavate the main terrace, to reconstruct certain buildings, and to initiate preservation efforts throughout the site.

(Source: Daira Szostak, "Ernst Emil Herzfeld (1879–1948) in Persepolis," *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*, Metropolitan Museum of Art)

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#### The hoopoe bird and its symbolic meanings

The hoopoe's range includes Europe, Asia, North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Central Asia. Most European and north Asian birds migrate to the tropics in winter. Its symbolism is as varied as its range:

*Egypt*: hoopoes were considered sacred and depicted on the walls of tombs and temples.

*Persia*: hoopoes were seen as a symbol of virtue (a hoopoe was a leader of the birds in the Persian epic poem *The Conference of the Birds*. In ancient Greece, they were considered the king of the birds.

*Across much of Europe*: hoopoes were considered thieves.

*Scandinavia*: hoopoes were considered harbingers of war.

*Estonia*: hoopoes are strongly connected with death and the underworld; their song is believed to foreshadow death for many people or cattle.

*German municipalities of Armstedt and Brechten*: the coat of arms for both towns features a hoopoe.

*Israel*: the hoopoe was chosen as the national bird in May 2008 in conjunction with the country's sixtieth anniversary, following a national survey of 155,000 citizens.

*South Africa*: the hoopoe appears on the University of Johannesburg's logo and



is the official mascot of the university's sport teams.

(Source: author research)

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#### **Where they were laid to rest**

*Author note: Many of the refugees evacuated from the Soviet Union died upon arrival in Iran. Some succumbed to illness after being resettled in other refugee camps. They were laid to rest throughout Iran, in the locations listed below.*

### Tehran

#### *Dulab Polish Cemetery*

Tehran was the heart of Polish evacuation activity, which explains why the Dulab Polish Cemetery is the largest burial place of World War II Polish refugees in Iran. They died from epidemic disease and exhaustion, in hospitals and evacuation camps in Tehran. Many who died were newborn children. Of the 1,892 buried in Dulab Cemetery, 408 were soldiers.

#### *Polish Plot in Jewish Cemetery*

Approximately 2,000 Jewish refugees came to Iran from the Soviet Union (almost half were children). Most went through Tehran and were evacuated progressively to other refugee centers. A number of them, both soldiers and civilians, died in Iran and were buried in 1942-1944 in a separate cemetery plot of the Jewish Community in Tehran. Of the fifty-six Polish Jews buried here, thirteen were soldiers.

#### *Polish Tombs in British Military Cemetery*

The remains of ten Polish soldiers, who died in 1942 in Hamadan and were buried in local cemeteries, were transported to the Cemetery of the British Commonwealth in Tehran in 1962. The cemetery is located at the rear of summer residence of the Ambassador of Great Britain in Iran.

### Bandar-e Anzali (formerly Bandar-e Pahlavi)

#### *Polish Plot in Armenian Cemetery*

Polish refugees came to Iran via the Caspian Sea and through the port of Bandar-e Anzali. After a short period of quarantine, refugees were transported from temporary camps in Anzali to evacuation camps in Tehran, Ahwaz, and elsewhere in Iran. Many of the refugees died in Anzali and were buried in the Polish plot of the local cemetery of the Anzali Armenian Community, the second largest Polish cemetery in Iran, where 639 are buried, of whom 163 were soldiers.

### Ahwaz

#### *Polish Plot in Catholic-Chaldean Cemetery*

In 1942-1945, British authorities established a transitional camp for Polish

refugees. To this camp came thousands of Polish soldiers, civilians, and children. Thus, in Ahwaz, a Polish infant school, primary school, and general education grammar school were established, along with other organizations, including the Association of Polish Teachers, scouting organizations, an office of the ministry of culture and education, the English-Polish Organization, and a Polish Library. Polish camps closed in 1945, and the schools closed their doors by the end of January 1946. The tombs of Poles, deceased during their stay in Ahwaz, started to appear in 1942. Eighty civilians and twenty-two soldiers are buried in Ahwaz.

### Isfahan

#### *Polish Plot in Armenian Cemetery*

The city lies along the Zayandeh-rood River, at the foot of rocky Zagros mountain range and is surrounded by hilly terrain and wild desert. The Isfahan climate is mild, which is why it became in 1942 an asylum for Polish refugees, the majority of them children (and many orphans among them). In 1942-1945, some 2,000 children passed through Isfahan, called then “the city of Polish children.” Upon arrival of the Polish children, nursery schools, primary and grammar schools, as well as classical colleges started to operate. A convalescent house was established, and the Polish Health Service was organized. A Polish bakery was opened, and carpenters, metalworkers, and shoemakers went to work. A security service, employing six men, was responsible for law and order. Polish-language newspapers were published. Eighteen Poles, one soldier and seventeen civilians, are buried in Isfahan.

### Qazvin

#### *Polish Plot in Catholic-Chaldean Cemetery*

The city lies in a hilly region on the route from Anzali to Tehran. On March 24, 1943, Soviet authorities agreed to establish British and Polish bases of evacuation in Qazvin, among other locations. Hundreds of Polish civilian refugees arrived there, including children. Forty Polish refugees are buried in Qazvin.

### Khoram-shahr

#### *Polish Plot in Catholic-Chaldean Cemetery*

Khoram-shahr is a port in southwestern Iran, about ninety kilometers from Ahwaz. The neighboring Iraqi border was the reason Khoram-shahr became a point of transit for Polish soldiers who were en route to Basra where Polish troops were quartered. It was also the port from which Polish refugees were evacuated to India, East Africa, and destinations. Five Polish soldiers are buried in Khoram-shahr.

## Mashad

### *Polish Plot in Armenian Cemetery*

Mashad is located at the foot of mountains in northeast Iran. In 1942, 1,704 children arrived there, weak from starvation and diseases, exhausted by extreme trials. Of these 1,704 children, 675 were sent through Zahedan to India. At a later date, the remaining children were sent to three camps near Tehran. Fifty-one Polish refugees, many of them children, are buried in Mashad.

**(Source: author research)**

## HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT: THOSE WHO LEFT / THOSE WHO WERE LEFT BEHIND

*Late winter, 1942 | Memoir excerpt*

“It became clear to us that Moscow would not allow a strong and well-equipped Polish Army to be raised in the Soviet Union, unless this army were completely subservient to her. It became clear, too, that Moscow’s final aim was to win supreme control over the whole of Poland.”<sup>93</sup>

*Late winter/early spring 1942 | Historical account*

“Employees of the Polish Embassy, deployed around the country, were still subject to unexplained arrest [after the Amnesty]. Fearing the situation might worsen, General Anders changed his plan in March 1942. Instead of marching his army west, toward the front line, he won permission to evacuate his troops out of the Soviet Union altogether. It was a vast operation: 74,000 Polish troops, and another 41,000 civilians, including many children, were put on trains and sent to Iran.

“In his haste to leave, General Anders left thousands more Poles behind, along with their Jewish, Ukrainian, and Belarusian former fellow citizens. Some eventually joined the Kosciusko division, a Polish division of the Red Army. Others had to wait for the war to end to be repatriated. Still others never left at all. To this day, some of their descendants still live in ethnic Polish communities in Kazakhstan and northern Russia.”<sup>94</sup>

*Spring 1942 | Memoir excerpt*

“We who left the Soviet territory [...] would be free again; most of us would fight for the freedom of our country. But what about the rest of the one and half million Poles [who had been] deported and detained? We considered that half of them had already died, their bones scattered over the vast spaces of the Soviet republics. We who survived, had survived by miracle. [...] But we left behind us [...] hundreds of thousands, and our hearts were heavy. Many, ragged and starved slaves, must, if they still survive, be working there now. Could we, or should we, I wondered as I flew towards Persia, have acted differently? Was there any other solution

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<sup>93</sup> Władysław Anders, *An Army in Exile*, p. 119.

<sup>94</sup> Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*, p. 453.



of our problem? It was enough to look at the 115,000 people who entered Persia, old and young, healthy and sick, to have the answer. There was not one who would not have said: 'God has delivered us from the house of bondage.'"<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Władysław Anders, *An Army in Exile*, p. 116.

*Unlike the Jews who fled persecution and traveled east toward Poland in the Middle Ages, the Jews who came to settle in Persia first arrived in the area as captives, taken in 597 BCE from their homes in Jerusalem and Judah by the armies of King Nebuchadnezzar II.<sup>96</sup> Thus, until the 1979 Iranian Revolution (when Jews fled Iran in large numbers), the Persian Jewish community was one of the oldest in the world. The long and complex relationship between the Jewish people and multi-ethnic denizens of Iran spans close to three thousand years. Many scholarly works have been written that trace this rich history; what follows here is a brief overview.<sup>97</sup>*

### Antiquity to the Middle Ages

Biblical accounts<sup>98</sup> describe the forced exile of Jews from the Kingdom of Israel to Media, an ancient land bordering what is now northwestern Iran.<sup>99</sup> This expulsion is thought to have taken place in two cycles during the years 598 to 597 BCE. According to historian David Yeroushalmi, contact between Persians and Jews living in Babylonian settlements began in earnest “in October of the year 539 BCE, when the army of Cyrus<sup>100</sup> [...] defeated the Babylonian kingdom and annexed to the new Iranian empire those areas of Babylon where the exiles from Jerusalem and the Kingdom of Judea resided.”<sup>101</sup>

The Achaemenid or Persian Empire (559-330 BCE) was founded by Cyrus the Great and stewarded to its zenith by Darius I.<sup>102</sup> It became the largest empire in human history up until that point, ruling over and administrating most of the known world, and spanning three continents, Europe, Asia, and Africa.

One of the most famous Jewish figures who lived in ancient Persia was Hadassah, otherwise known as Esther,<sup>103</sup> descended from the captives brought to Babylon and renowned for saving her people from what would have been a massacre intended to eliminate Jews from the Persian Empire.

<sup>96</sup> See Endnote 1—Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian captivity

<sup>97</sup> Please see Sources Cited, Consulted, and Recommended for some of these works.

<sup>98</sup> See, for example, the Book of Kings II:17.

<sup>99</sup> During the Achaemenid period, Media comprised present-day Azerbaijan, Iranian Kurdistan, and western Tabaristan. Under the Achaemenid Dynasty, Media eventually encompassed a wider region, stretching to southern Dagestan in the north. However, after the wars of Alexander the Great, the northern parts became known as Atropatene, while the remaining region became known as Lesser Media.

<sup>100</sup> See Endnote 2—King Cyrus the Great

<sup>101</sup> David Yeroushalmi, editor, *Light and Shadows: The Story of Iranian Jews*, p. 20.

<sup>102</sup> Darius organized the empire by dividing it into provinces and placing provincial governors called satraps to govern it. To centralize and unify the empire, he organized a new uniform monetary system, made Aramaic the official language, built roads, and introduced standard weights and measures. Darius also worked on construction projects throughout the empire, focusing on Susa, Pasargadae, Persepolis, Babylon, and Egypt. Darius is mentioned in the Biblical books of Haggai, Zechariah, and Ezra–Nehemiah. According to historian Joseph Kaminski, during Darius’s reign, the Achaemenid Empire controlled the largest fraction of the world’s population of any empire in history. Based on historical demographic estimates, Darius I ruled over approximately 50 million people, or at least 44 percent of the world’s population.

<sup>103</sup> See also: Chapter Notes—Esther

The orphan daughter of the Benjamite Abihail, Esther lived among the Jewish exiles in Susa<sup>104</sup> under the protection of her cousin Mordecai.<sup>105</sup> After a dispute with Queen Vashti, King Xerxes (also known as Ahasuerus) sought a new queen. He chose Esther, and thus it came to pass that she became a queen. With great intelligence and acumen, she acted to save the Jews from a plot hatched by the king's vizier Haman. The Jewish festival of Purim commemorates her courage and act of resistance.

Limited records exist concerning the life of Jews during Esther's time, or afterward, during the Parthian and Sassanian dynasties that followed the Achaemenid era. According to Yeroushalmi, Jewish sources—among them the Mishnah, the Babylonia Talmud, and the Jerusalem Talmud—suggest indirectly that under the rule of the pre-Islamic kings, Jews enjoyed

a significant degree of religious tolerance, as well as cultural and communal autonomy [and] that the relatively protected status of the Jews under the Parthian kings was one of the factors that encouraged Jews to migrate to Iran and settle in various regions of the country between the third century BCE and the third century CE.<sup>106</sup>

The kings of the Sassanian Empire sought to consolidate the Zoroastrian religion<sup>107</sup> in order to create a more centralized authority to their rule. In turn, the religious establishment gained power, zealotry increased, and episodes of severe persecution of Jews occurred, especially under the reign of Bahram I (272-276 CE) and Piruz (459-484 CE). The Sassanian Empire came to an end with the Arab-Muslim conquest of Persia in 642 CE, which, says Yeroushalmi

led to the annexation of various areas and populations within the borders of the Sassanian Empire to the Muslim caliphate [in which] Jews were defined as a monotheistic religious minority (Ahl al-Kitāb). In exchange for paying a poll tax (jizya) and accepting certain conditions and limitations that defined their status as inferior, they became protégés of the Muslim state.<sup>108</sup>

During the Middle Ages, Persia came under the rule of a succession of caliphates and sultanates,<sup>109</sup> and eventually, a series of Islamized Persianate states and dynasties. And though Jews—like other religious minorities—were made to pay special taxes and accept Muslim dominance, according to historian Nequin Yavari, in medieval times, “There is much more to the history of the Jewish community and to Jewish faith and philosophy than a simple tale of legal and socially inferior status accorded to

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<sup>104</sup> Susa, now the modern Iranian town of Shush, is located in the lower Zagros Mountains, about 160 miles east of the Tigris River and 450 miles southwest of Tehran.

<sup>105</sup> Mordecai is sometimes referred to as Esther's uncle.

<sup>106</sup> *Light and Shadows*, p. 44.

<sup>107</sup> See Endnote 3—The Zoroastrian religion

<sup>108</sup> *Light and Shadows*, p. 22.

<sup>109</sup> Caliphs were chief Muslim civil and religious rulers; sultans were Muslim sovereigns.

minorities.”<sup>110</sup> In fact, Jewish theological scholars were consulted by Iranian philosophers and advisors, Jewish physicians and bankers served diverse caliphs and viziers,<sup>111</sup> and certain Jewish figures distinguished themselves with their intellectual pursuits and, even, activism.<sup>112</sup>

### Five Important Events/Processes

David Yeroushalmi identifies five particular historical events/processes—playing out over the course of the next eight centuries—which had dramatic and far-reaching effects on the lives of Persian Jews. First, the Mongol invasion of the early thirteenth century, which tragically erased or devastated dozens of Jewish communities and settlements and destroyed irreplaceable cultural, historical, and archeological records. Second, the rise of the Safavid Kingdom in the early sixteenth century, which ended the Sassanian Empire,<sup>113</sup> established an Iranian-Islamic identity, proclaimed Shi’i Islam the state religion,<sup>114</sup> and in turn worsened the living conditions of all minorities in Iran, including Jews.<sup>115</sup> Third, the rise of the Qajar Dynasty (1796-1925)<sup>116</sup>, whose rulers maintained the integrity of Persia’s borders, despite military defeats and the loss of territories to Czarist Russia, but who were, as Yeroushalmi points out, ineffective in providing Jews “with protection, rights, assistance, and services.”<sup>117</sup> Fourth, contact between Persian and European Jews, which began unfolding in the late eighteenth century, evolved during the subsequent two hundred years, and had a profound effect on “aspects of community life, the education and professional training of Iranian Jews, and [...] cultural and religious trends in the Jewish communities.”<sup>118</sup> Fifth, changes in governance and political order in the twentieth century. These changes included the rise to power in 1925 of the Pahlavi Dynasty, whose first shah liberated the Jewish population and whose second shah paved the way—both purposefully and

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<sup>110</sup> Nequin Yavari, “Jewish Muslim Interaction in Medieval Iran” in *Esther’s Children: A Portrait of Iranian Jews*, edited by Houman Sarshar, p. 54.

<sup>111</sup> A vizier was a high official.

<sup>112</sup> One such figure was David Alroy, a learned Jew from the city of Amadia in western Iran. In the twelfth century, Alroy, who had studied with the head of the Jewish Academy in Baghdad, and who was also well versed with Muslim scholarly writing and secular literature, became in 1160 the messianic leader of a rebellion against the Saljūq Dynasty.

<sup>113</sup> According to Yeroushalmi, the borders established during the Sassanian era correspond approximately to contemporary Iranian borders.

<sup>114</sup> Though these three major consequences of the Safavid monarchy are of a piece, the third is particularly noteworthy. The proclamation of Shi’i Islam as the state religion “created a rift,” writes Yeroushalmi, “between Iranian Muslim and the Sunnite majority in neighboring countries. Moreover, the tensions and differences between Shiite [sic] Iran and the Sunnite majority led to a continuous state of religious and political conflict with the Sunnite Ottoman Empire” (*Light and Shadows*, p. 23).

<sup>115</sup> Discrimination, hostility, and intolerance ensued during the Safavid era, causing Jews to withdraw into insular communities whose isolation was exacerbated by poverty and limitations in transportation and communication. In the late sixteenth century, the Jewish population is estimated to have been 100,000; by the first half of the nineteenth century, the Jewish community in Persia numbered only 20,000.

<sup>116</sup> The Qajar kings came to power after seventy years of political instability that followed the end of the Safavid dynasty.

<sup>117</sup> *Light and Shadows*, p. 26.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, p. 32.

inadvertently—for Western-style modernization in Iran and whose fall during the 1979 Iranian Revolution prefaced the mass exodus of Jews from Iran.

### *1. The Mongol Invasion and afterward*

In the thirteenth century, Mongols under the leadership of Genghis Khan invaded Persia; they burned libraries containing six centuries of Islamic scholarship, destroyed *qanat* irrigation systems, and killed many Persian civilians. It is estimated that between 1220-1258, the total population may have dropped from 2,500,000 to 250,000 as a result of extermination, emigration, and famine caused by the Mongol Invasion.

After Genghis Khan died, a series of Mongol commanders ruled Iran; their reign ended with the Timurid Empire (1370-1507), founded by Timur-e Lang (Tamerlane in English), a warlord of Turco-Mongol origin whose vision was to restore the vast empire of Genghis Khan.<sup>119</sup> His campaigns were noted for their brutality, though his regime was characterized by its inclusion of Persians in administrative roles and its promotion of architecture and poetry.

### *2. The Safavid Era*

The Safavids originated from a mystical Sufi order at the turn of the fourteenth century. They took control of Persia in 1501 and remained in power until 1722. The Safavid Dynasty, writes historian Rudi Matthee:

unified much of Persia under a single political control, transforming an essentially tribal nomadic order into a sedentary society deriving most of its revenue from agriculture and trade. Most importantly, the Safavids introduced a concept of patrimonial kingship, combining territorial authority with religious legitimacy that, with modifications, would endure until the twentieth century. The political system that emerged under them had overlapping political and religious boundaries and a core language, Persian, which served as the literary tongue, and even began to replace Arabic as the vehicle for theological discourse. A number of administrative institutions created during the Safavid period or adapted from earlier times continued to exist well into the Qajar era. The Safavid period, finally, witnessed the beginning of frequent and sustained diplomatic and commercial interactions between Persia and Europe.

In discussing Persia between 1501 and 1722, several peculiarities of the area and the time should be borne in mind. The first concerns the country's physical environment and its effects. Much of Persia consists of arid, unproductive land.

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<sup>119</sup> Allegedly, Timur's tomb was inscribed with these words: "When I rise from the dead, the world shall tremble." Supposedly, when Soviet anthropologist Mikhail M. Gerasimov exhumed the body in 1941, an additional inscription was found inside the casket: "Whomsoever opens my tomb shall unleash an invader more terrible than I." Three days after Gerasimov began the exhumation, Adolf Hitler launched Operation Barbarossa, the largest military invasion of all time, upon the Soviet Union. Timur's body was re-buried with full Islamic ritual in November 1942, just before the Soviet victory at the Battle of Stalingrad.

Large parts receive insufficient rainfall to support agriculture but are well suited to pastoral nomadism. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, nomads, organized in tribes, comprised as much as one-third to one half of the country's population. A second and related issue was that military power in Persia was usually tribal in origin, with political power following suit. Until the twentieth century, all of Persia's ruling dynasties had their origins in tribal ambitions. The nomadic makeup of the state was reflected in an ambulant royal court and the fact that until modern times Persia did not have a fixed capital. Safavid Persia had a succession of capitals: for the capital was where the shah and his entourage happened to be. Thirdly, military and political power in Persia was generally in the hands of ethnic Turks, while ethnic Persians, called Tajiks, were dominant in the areas of administration and culture. As Persians of Kurdish ancestry and of a non-tribal background, the Safavids did not fit this pattern, though the state they set up with the assistance of Turkmen tribal forces of eastern Anatolia closely resembled this division in its makeup.<sup>120</sup>

The founder of the Safavid Dynasty, Shah Esmā'īl I (ruled 1501-1524), introduced the policy of forced conversion to Shi'i Islam. Historian Vera B. Moreen notes it is debatable as to whether this policy was implemented with the intention "to cut off the Iranian kingdom from any form of Sunni (Ottoman and Uzbek) influence or out of profound religious conviction." Nonetheless, the policy increased intolerance levels toward all minorities, and unsurprisingly, there were active persecutions of individual Jews during this time. However, Moreen points out, the shah's "primary goal was converting the Sunni populace and dismantling the hierocracy that maintained it."<sup>121</sup>

By the time Shah Abbas I (ruled 1571-1629) came to the throne, Shi'i Islam had become well entrenched in the Safavid kingdom. Because artisan products provided much of Iran's foreign trade, Shah Abbas I understood the commercial benefit of promoting the arts. In this period, handicrafts such as tiles, pottery, and textiles were developed, and great advances were made in miniature painting, bookbinding, decoration, and calligraphy. Starting in the sixteenth century, carpet weaving evolved from a nomadic and peasant craft to a well-executed industry with specialization of design and manufacturing. Tabriz was the center of this industry. In addition, Isfahan became the showcase city of the most prominent examples of Safavid architecture, all constructed in the years after Shah Abbas I permanently moved the capital there in 1598. The establishment of Isfahan as the great capital of Persia and the material splendor of the city attracted intellectuals from all corners of the world.

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<sup>120</sup> Rudi Matthee, "Safavid Dynasty" in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, 28 July 2008.

<sup>121</sup> Vera B. Moreen, "The Safavid Era," in *Esther's Children*, p. 63.

### 3. *The Qajar Era (1796–1925)*

Soleiman Cohen's distant ancestors survived over two hundred years of Safavid-era intolerance. His more immediate family inherited a collective Jewish memory of that time, but they would be forged in a different socio-cultural crucible: as the Safavid Dynasty waned at the end of the eighteenth century, the Qajar kings assumed the rule of what they came to call the Sublime State of Iran. At about this time, in the year 1800, Soleiman Cohen's maternal great-grandfather Moshe Kashie was born. Moshe's son Abraham would have a daughter named Gohar, who would marry a Tehrani Jew named Rahim Cohen, a man who came to be a purveyor to the royal court of fine fabrics—silks and crêpes de Chine, in particular. The Cohen and Kashie union was one of two hardworking, God-fearing, and forward-thinking families whose reputation for intelligence, compassion, and ethics was well known not only in their respective communities but among their Muslim neighbors and associates.

However, they were restricted to living in Tehran's *mahalleh*, not permitted to maintain shops at the bazaar or ride in the streets, and governed by the discriminatory *najāsa*, or laws of impurity. Generally, the *najāsa* prohibited Jews (and other non-Muslims) from having contact with Muslims. Thus, even into the modern age, Jews were barred from public baths and tea houses and were forbidden to leave their homes on rainy or snowy days, lest the water that touched them pollute the surrounding environment. Historian David Menashri writes:

Following the weakening of centralized rule during the Qajar period (1796-1925), travelers to Iran returned home with disheartening descriptions of Jewish life there. The Hungarian Orientalist Arminius Vambery, for instance, who traveled extensively to Iran in the mid-nineteenth century, wrote that he had never encountered any group more miserable, helpless, and deserving of compassion than the country's Jews. Speaking of the "terrible oppression" inflicted on the Jews in northern Iran by their "Muslim masters," the American Reverend Justin Perkins quoted a Jewish doctor who told him, in 1836, that if "the Messiah does not appear soon," the Jews would "be exterminated." The British diplomat George Curzon provided numerous details concerning the deplorable conditions of Jews in Iranian cities in the nineteenth century.<sup>122</sup>

During the nineteenth century, Iran's Jewish population occupied large cities such as Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz, Hamadan, and Kermanshah as well as smaller cities and villages. According to Iranian author Janet Afary:

Some were bankers, tax collectors, and treasurers in the courts of the sultans and other officials. But most Iranian Jews held humble [...] positions as shopkeepers,

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<sup>122</sup> *Light and Shadows*, p. 88.

moneylenders, and small businessmen dealing with textiles, jewelry, antiques, spices, and medicine. Others became entertainers, singers, musicians, dancers, or minstrels. Some Iranian Jews also became merchants of wine and alcohol, since the Shiite community regarded these professions as *najes* (ritually impure).

“Still, we do hear of Jews who prospered in business or made significant intellectual accomplishments. [...] Jews played a significant role in the import of cotton textiles from Manchester through Baghdad. [...] One of the few professions of higher esteem that was open to Jews was medicine. [...] In large cities such as Tehran and Hamadan, [...] Jewish men and women became physicians and midwives.<sup>123</sup>

By the late nineteenth century, Jews in Iran were required to observe over fifty types of restrictions, some which dated back to the ninth century, and some which were relatively new and borrowed from anti-Semitic European practices. Forced conversions decimated the Jewish community. Living conditions for most Jews were deplorable. Schools were not open to Jews, and traveling abroad for education was essentially impossible for the impoverished Jewish minority whose travels were further limited by restrictions.

#### *4. Contact with European Jews: The Particular Case of the Alliance Israelite Universelle*

In the modern era, increased contact between Western nations and Iran led to increased contact between European and Persian Jewry. One of the most profound relationships between Ashkenazi and Mizrahi Jews happened as a result of charitable work initiated by a French organization founded in 1860. On behalf of impoverished Jews worldwide, the Alliance Israelite Universelle (AIU) sought to “work everywhere for the emancipation and moral progress of world Jewry” and “to offer effective assistance to Jews suffering from anti-Semitism.” Faryar Nikbakht writes:

By the end of the nineteenth century, the AIU had successfully established dozens of modern schools throughout Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Ottoman Empire (Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Palestine, etc.), Egypt, and North Africa, among other places. In addition, the AIU had also intervened on behalf of many Jewish communities during particular anti-Semitic episodes, for instance [...] protesting pogroms in Bārforūsh (Bābol) and Hamadan in Iran in the 1860s. In the process, Alliance gained a significant amount of experience, recognition, and diplomatic savvy on which it would later rely to expand its activities.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> *Esther's Children*, p. 142. Janet Afary explains that “unlike food and water, merchandise such as carpets, antiques, jewelry, and textiles were not considered conductors of [impurity]. For that reason, a disproportionately large number of Iranian Jews gravitated toward trade in these commodities as a viable means of earning a living” (p. 140). Curiously, money was also not considered a conductor of impurity. Distinguished doctors and midwives were often exempt from the rule prohibiting Jews from riding a white donkey or horse, which was a symbol of prestige.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200.



In 1873, AIU's founder, Adolphe Cremieux, persuaded the Qajar ruler of Iran, Naser al-Din Shah, to permit the Alliance to open schools in Iran. Twenty-five years passed before this permission resulted in an actual school. Thus, during the reign of another Qajar king, Mozaffer al-Din Shah, AIU opened its first school on Iranian soil in Tehran in 1898. Over the course of the next thirty years, AIU schools were established in Hamadan (1900), Isfahan (1901), Shiraz (1903), Sanadaj (1903), Nahavand (1904), Kermanshah (1904), Bijar (1906), Borujerd (1913), Yazd (1926), and Kashan (1929).

The AIU schools were not only educational institutions, but veritable community centers for Iranian Jews, where social gatherings, functions, and community meetings were held. Faryar Nikbakht writes:

At times, the Alliance would also act as an authority, even among Muslim Iranians, to resolve conflicts, prevent pogroms, or impede other anti-Semitic incitements. With such authority and with strong links to the central Iranian government and to the French and English embassies, Alliance may have saved countless Jewish lives, particularly in the tumultuous decades early in the twentieth century. [...]

[...] In the beginning, the Alliance curriculum consisted of a full French education in all fields and a Persian education [...]. For subjects taught in Persian, Alliance would hire Muslim teachers in an active attempt to break down certain social taboos—namely the segregation of Jews based on [...] impurity. In so doing, Alliance not only laid the ground for Muslims to accept Jews as normal humans with whom to be in contact, it further allowed for Jewish children to extend their views and visions beyond their small communities and the limits of the mahalleh. [...]

“Alliance had adopted a policy of enrolling non-Jews in its schools in a continued attempt to facilitate a social assimilation of Jews within the predominantly Muslim society at large. [...] Many prominent Muslims—including government officials—would send their children to Alliance, and so for the first time in centuries many young Iranian Jews were able to find themselves as equals with their Muslim compatriots.<sup>125</sup>

Modernism, liberalism, and European cultural influences<sup>126</sup>—all of which led to Iran's Constitutional Revolution in 1906—were spreading throughout Iranian cities and effecting Jewish communities along the way. Into this environment Soleiman Cohen was born in 1905, and in an Alliance school in Tehran he was educated. But two

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid, p. 203; 206-07.

A. Netzer writes: “In the academic year 1898-99 the number of students enrolled in the elementary classes was 350 (421 by the end of the year), out of a Jewish community of 6,000 in Tehran; the following year an Alliance school for girls opened and evening classes were established for adults. Yearly tuition at the school was 1,200 francs (approximately 240 *tomans* at that time). Two-thirds of the student body was exempted from monthly payments and approximately sixty poor and orphan students were given free meals. By the academic year 1913-14 the number of male students in Tehran was 455 and the number of females, 190” (*Encyclopedia Iranica*).

<sup>126</sup> Modernization efforts included the establishment of communication infrastructures.

⇒ See Endnote 4— The telegraph, telephone, and postal service in Iran

decades passed before Jews were allowed to live beyond the walls of the *malballeh*. A World War and subsequent famine would wreak havoc throughout Iran and pave the way for the emergence of a new dynasty.

*5. From the Pahlavi Dynasty to the Iranian Revolution (1925-1979)*<sup>127</sup>

The rule of Reza Shah, writes David Menashri,

was characterized by stability, an authoritarian regime, and processes of modernization, secularization, and Westernization. Reza Shah was determined to build Iran into a strong nation-state [...], and to transform national identity—rather than Islam—into a catalyst for social unification. This was a true turning point for religious minorities [...]. Indeed, for the Jews and other non-Muslims, this period was one of relative relief, and an improvement in social and economic status [...]. The country's urbanization process was accelerated, and many Jews already residing in large cities left the ghettos [...]. This reform, and especially its expression in the educational, economic, and administrative sectors, offered Jews numerous new entrepreneurial and other opportunities.<sup>128</sup>

While the socio-economic status of Jews improved significantly during Reza Shah's reign, the anti-Semitism faced by Persian Jews did not, of course, simply disappear. In fact, during the 1930s, Iran's ties to Nazi Germany served to increase anti-Semitic rhetoric and sentiment. According to author Alireza Asgharzadeh:

The Nazis found a favorable climate among the Iranian elite to spread fascistic and racist propaganda. The Nazi propaganda machine advocated the (supposedly) common Aryan ancestry of 'the two Nations.' [...]

The Reza Shah regime began to sponsor conferences in which Nazi lecturers were invited to deliver speeches on race, ethnicity, culture, and history. Among Iranian intellectuals, those who demonstrated pro-Nazi tendencies were awarded titles and honorary degrees. Reza Khan's regime went so far as accepting the emblem of the swastika as a permanent decoration of art in Iran.<sup>129</sup>

Although Iran declared neutrality once the war started, as Alireza Asgharzadeh writes, Reza Shah "made no serious attempt to restrict the activities of pro-German forces."<sup>130</sup> Because of this alliance, the Russians and British invaded Iran in 1941 and deposed Reza Shah. His son Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was installed as the new leader of Iran.

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<sup>127</sup> See Endnote 5—Dr. Mohammad Mossadeq

<sup>128</sup> *Light and Shadows*, pp. 92-3.

<sup>129</sup> *Iran and the Challenge of Diversity: Islamic Fundamentalism, Aryanist Racism, and Democratic Struggles*, p. 92.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid*, p. 94.

At first the new shah was merely a figurehead, controlled by the Allies, and in particular, Britain and the U.S. However, he went on to make of himself an absolute monarch and was able to resist periods of political instability during the post-war period. In the early 1960s, the shah championed the White Revolution, which featured strong, central rule and rapid modernization. By the late 1970s, as David Menashri observes, the Jewish community

was free, educated, and wealthy. Their part in economic, scientific, and professional life was disproportionate to their share in society (more than 80,000 Jews from a total of less than 40 million). In per capita terms, they may well have been one of the richest Jewish communities worldwide, with the young generation also being highly educated. [...] Although there were people of low income among them, the vast majority could be defined as middle class, or upper middle class. Some became very rich, taking full advantage of the freedom granted to them, the reform programs, and the growing oil income. [...]

With the revolutionary upheaval (from Fall 1977)<sup>131</sup>, Iranian Jews' previous assets turned into liabilities. Their prominent socio-economic standing, their identification with the shah and his policies, and their attachment to Israel, Zionism, and "American Imperialism" were all held against them. [...]

With the outbreak of open opposition movements, Jews were often threatened by their Muslim neighbors. This was not necessarily the result of a deliberate policy on the part of the revolutionary movement but rather of independent and spontaneous initiatives—a paradigm not uncommon in the history of Iranian Jewry.<sup>132</sup>

Once the revolutionary fervor stabilized, Jews were officially recognized as a religious minority with one representative in the Majlis. Despite this reform, writes David Menashri, "Jews were made aware of their inferior status as a minority and felt insecure. [...] Official tolerance did not preclude individual acts of persecution, however, or even the execution [in May 1979] of well-known minority leaders—among them Habib Elghanian, the most prominent figure in Iran's Jewish community."<sup>133</sup>

After Elghanian's execution, it is estimated that approximately two-thirds of Iran's Jews left the country, most of them emigrating to Israel and the U.S. In 2012, about 9,000 Jews were still living in Iran, constituting the next largest Jewish community in the Middle East after Israel and Turkey.

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<sup>131</sup> See Endnote 6—The Iranian Revolution

<sup>132</sup> *Esther's Children*, p. 395.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, p 400.

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## ENDNOTES

### Endnote 1: Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian captivity

“The son of Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar became king of Babylon in 604 BCE as Assyria was on the decline. His name [...] appears more than ninety times in the Old Testament.

“In the Rabbinical literature, Nebuchadnezzar, or the ‘wicked one’ was a son—or descendant—of the Queen of Sheba by her marriage with Solomon and a son-in-law of Sennacherib, with whom he took part in the expedition of the Assyrians against Hezekiah, being one of the few who were not destroyed by the angels before Jerusalem. He came to the throne in the fourth year of King Jehoiakim of Judah, whom he subjugated and, seven years later, killed after that king had rebelled. Nebuchadnezzar did not on this occasion go to Jerusalem, but received the Great Sanhedrin of Jerusalem at Daphne, a suburb of Antioch, informing that body that it was not his intention to destroy the Temple, but that the rebellious Jehoiakim must be delivered to him, which in fact was done. [...]

“Nebuchadnezzar was most merciless toward the conquered people. By his command the exiles on their way to Babylon were not allowed to stop even for a moment, as the king feared they would pray during the respite granted them and that God would be willing to help them as soon as they repented. Nebuchadnezzar did not feel safe until the exiles reached the Euphrates, the boundary-line of Babylon. Then he made a great feast on board his ship, while the princes of Judah lay chained and naked by the river. In order to increase their misery, he had rolls of the Torah torn and made into sacks, which, filled with sand, he gave to the captive princes to carry.

“On this occasion Nebuchadnezzar ordered the singers of the Temple to add their music to his feast; but they preferred to bite off their fingers, or even to be killed, rather than to play their sacred music in honor of the Babylonian idols. He heartlessly drove the captives before him, entirely without clothing, until the inhabitants of Bari induced him to clothe them. But even after the heavily burdened Jews finally reached Babylonia they had no rest from the tyrant, who massacred thousands of youths whose beauty had inflamed the passion of the Babylonian women—a passion which did not subside until the corpses were stamped upon and mutilated. Nebuchadnezzar carried to Babylon, together with the Jews, cedar trees which he had taken from Lebanon, and millstones which he made the captive youths bear. Even the Jews who had sought refuge from the Babylonians in Ammon and Moab or in Egypt did not escape Nebuchadnezzar, who, on conquering Egypt, carried all the Jews in that country, including Baruch and Jeremiah, to Babylonia. Nebuchadnezzar was equally victorious in his expedition against Tyre, whose king, Hiram, his stepfather, he dethroned and put to a painful death. [...]

“The lot of the Jews was naturally a very sad one during Nebuchadnezzar's reign; and even Daniel, as well as his three friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, who were pages at court, were often in peril of their lives. This was especially the case when the king tried to force the three pages to worship the idol at Durah, and they, upon their refusal to do so, were thrown into the fiery furnace. However, the miracle performed on their behalf induced Nebuchadnezzar to join in praising God; and he was so carried away by his songs that had he continued he would have surpassed David, but an angel forced him to desist. Yet this did not prevent him from massacring all the 600,000 Jews who had obeyed his command and worshiped the idol, and whom he reproached for not having followed the example of the three pious men and trusted in God.”

**(Source: Emil G. Hirsch, Ira Maurice Price, Wilhelm Bacher, Louis Ginzberg, “Nebuchadnezzar,” in *Jewish Encyclopedia*)**

### Endnote 2: King Cyrus the Great

That Cyrus's ancestors had ruled the Persian tribes for several generations is clear from both his inscriptions and contemporary historical reports. The Greek chronicler Herodotus knew that Cyrus was of royal descent. Cicero reported that Cyrus became king when he was forty years old and then ruled for thirty years. Cyrus died in 530 BCE., and was likely born around 600 BCE.

"After the conquest of Mesopotamia, Cyrus treated his kingship as a union with the Babylonians, adopting the official title 'king of Babylon, king of the lands.' He also attempted to restore the normal economic life of the country. He preserved traditional methods of administration throughout his domains and in particular is said to have made almost no changes to the local political structures of the Phoenicians, the Greek cities in Asia Minor, and some other nations as well. He permitted foreigners who had been forcibly settled in Babylonia to return to their own lands, including the Jews of the Babylonian captivity, who were also permitted to rebuild their temple in Jerusalem. Two versions of this edict have been preserved in the Book of Ezra, one in Hebrew, the other in Aramaic.

"Cyrus himself may have been a worshiper of Ahura Mazdā [supreme God in the Zoroastrian religion], but almost nothing is known about his personal beliefs. [...]. The fire altars and tombs at Pasargadae bespeak Zoroastrian practice [...].

"The emperor appears to have initiated a general policy of permitting religious freedom throughout his domains. [...] According to the Babylonian chronicle, Cyrus brought peace to the people of Babylon and kept the army from the temples. In another inscription, from Ur, he boasted that 'the great gods have delivered all the lands into my hands...I restored a peaceful habitation to the land.' [...]

"The generally tolerant character of Cyrus's reign is borne out by Jewish sources. Chapters 40-55 of the Book of Isaiah were probably written by a witness to the fall of Babylon, and some extended passages are similar in both spirit and context to contemporary Babylonian texts praising Cyrus and condemning Nabonidus. Cyrus is mentioned twice by name and designated as the anointed one (messiah) of Yahweh. [...] Cyrus thus seems generally to have respected the customs and religions of conquered lands. The Persians themselves called him their father. The priests of Babylon recognized him as the appointed of Marduk. Even the Greeks considered him a great conqueror and a wise statesman [and] an ideal ruler.

"In 530 BCE Cyrus mounted a campaign to Central Asia in order to protect the northeastern borders of his empire from incursions by the Massagetae. During a battle along the lower Oxus (now Āmū Daryā) near the Aral Sea, the emperor was not only defeated but also killed."

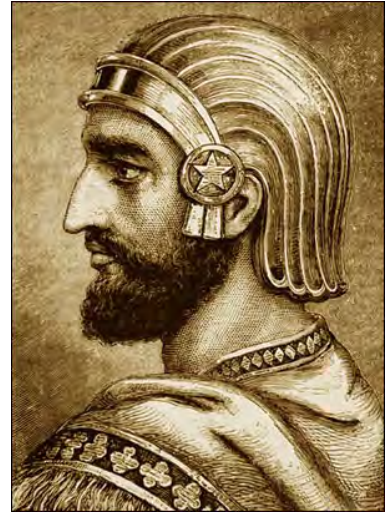
**(Source: *Encyclopedia Iranica*)**

### Endnote 3. The Zoroastrian religion

"Zoroastrianism is one of the world's oldest monotheistic religions. It was founded by the Prophet Zoroaster (also called Zarathustra) in ancient Iran approximately 3500 years ago. For a millennium Zoroastrianism was one of the most powerful religions in the world. It was the official religion of Persia from 600 BCE to 650 CE. It is now one of the world's smallest religions. In 2006 the *New York Times* reported that there were probably less than 190,000 followers worldwide at that time."

The basic tenets of Zoroastrianism include the following beliefs:

- ♦ There is one God called Ahura Mazda (Wise Lord) who created the world and



- revealed the truth through the Prophet Zoroaster.
- The elements are pure, and because fire represents God's light or wisdom, Zoroastrians worship communally in a Fire Temple or Agiary.

The Zoroastrian book of Holy Scriptures is called the *Avesta*, which can be divided into two main sections: 1) the core part of the scriptures, which contains the *Gathas*, seventeen hymns thought to be composed by Zoroaster himself and 2) the Younger *Avesta*, or commentaries to the older *Avesta* that also contains myths, stories, and details of ritual observances. Zoroastrians traditionally pray several times daily.

**(Source: "Zoroastrianism" in *BBC Religions*)**

#### Endnote 4. The telegraph, telephone, and postal service in Iran

##### *Telegraph / Newspapers*

"The spread of the telegraph occurred in the early 1860s, not because of internal need but to facilitate British control over India. [...] By the 1880s, Iran was well equipped with telegraph lines that connected it with various parts of the world and linked up its towns, [which, according to Denis Wright] 'greatly strengthened the hand of the shah in dealing with his far-flung provinces [and] brought Persia into contact with the outside world as never before and was probably more responsible than any other single factor in stimulating those reformist and nationalist movements which began to stir in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.' [...]"

"The telegraph also helped the establishment of newspapers in Iran. The first daily was founded in 1898 and tapped into the foreign news coming in over the wires from Reuters en route to the Indian press. [...]"

##### *Telephone*

"Telephone lines were installed just before the First World War, and by 1914 the Société Anonyme de Téléphones Persans had nearly one thousand subscribers in twelve towns. The British-Persia Oil Company had its own lines, and the fishing industry in Astará and Anzali had also developed its own telephone system. By 1923 Tehran had a major company [and] an agreement with Siemens (the German communication company) to develop [...] the basis of a national public telephone system."

##### *Postal service*

"In a history somewhat parallel to that of the telegraph, the postal service developed in Iran through British involvement. Up to 1874 there was really no postal system for private individual use in Persia, and a limited system for government use. Internal private letters and parcels were carried by merchants or travelers. [...] The British Legation organized mounted messengers (*gholams*) who carried mail once a month to Constantinople and Shiraz, from where new couriers took it to London and Bushire.

"In 1874, Amir Kabir inaugurated Persia's own postal system, with a post office in Tehran [...]. By 1914-15 there were 158 postal offices, 15 branches, 263 post houses, 2,370 horses used for delivery, 632 coaches and carts, 260 horse riders and postmen [...]. By the time of the [...] Pahlavi dynasty, [...] all these [point-to-point communication] systems were consolidated in the Ministry of Post, Telegraph, and Telephone in 1931. These systems were to expand considerably over the next decades[...]"

**(Source: Annabelle Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ali Mohammadi, *Small Media, Big Revolution: Communication, Culture, and the Iranian Revolution*, pp. 44-48)**

**Endnote 5. Dr. Mohammad Mossadeq**

“In the hierarchy of Qajar Iran, Mohammad Mossadeq was an aristocrat, the son of a high-ranking bureaucrat and a great-granddaughter of the Qajar king Fath Ali Shah. The prominence of his family provided him an appointment as treasurer of the large, rich province of Khorasan at the ripe age of fifteen. In 1909, the twenty-seven-year-old Mossadeq, like others of his class, climbed the Alborz Mountains, sailed the Caspian, and rode the railways to Paris to acquire the learning of the West.” He studied law in Lausanne, Switzerland, and wrote a thesis that wove together Islamic tradition, Western constitutional law, and Iranian nationalism.

“As an elected member of the Fifth Majlis, he opposed—almost alone—the creation of the Pahlavi dynasty in 1925. “He retreated behind the walls of his estate in Ahmadabad, not far from Tehran. In 1941, when Reza Shah abdicated, Mossadeq emerged as the moral drama that Iranians call politics. It is a drama in which Iranians obey, and sometimes even admire, the ruling royal [...] but still hold eternal hope that somewhere there is a mythic hero who will defend justice against the autocrat. It was as the martyr of Reza Shah that Mohammad Mossadeq again entered the Majlis in 1944. From there he put together a coalition of nationalists that bridged Iran’s broad and complex political spectrum to incorporate all political groupings except the Communists.”

**(Source: Sandra Mackey, *The Iranians*, p. 195)**

**Endnote 6. The Iranian Revolution**

The Iranian Revolution, also known as the Islamic Revolution or the 1979 Revolution, started with demonstrations against the shah in October 1977. This led to a campaign of civil resistance, which included both secular and religious elements and which intensified in January 1978. Between August and December 1978, strikes and demonstrations paralyzed the country. The shah left Iran for exile on 16 January 1979. Ayatollah Khomeini was invited back to Iran by the government. On 11 February, rebel troops overwhelmed troops loyal to the shah in armed street fighting. This action brought Khomeini to official power. On 1 April 1979, Iran voted by national referendum to become an Islamic Republic, approving a new, theocratic-republican constitution and installing Khomeini as supreme leader of the country in December 1979.

**(Source: author research)**

## HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT: PIECES OF THE PERSIA PUZZLE

### *Tehran, 1900s | Recollection*

“In the late 1800s, my grandfather Haji Rahim and his family lived in the *mahalleh*, or Jewish sector of Tehran.<sup>134</sup> At the turn of the twentieth century, this was the only area where Jews could live. My father’s family lived in two rooms in a house that had no running water or electricity. My grandmother cooked using wood as a source of fuel. As for water, the authorities of the City of Tehran would divert the source of a spring only once every six months and allow water to flow in open gutters through the Jewish sector. At the time when these gutters were flooded, Jews would open up their reservoirs to receive water and store water for the next six months. Obviously, the flow of water became a powerful tool for intimidation of the Jews. The Jewish sector of Tehran at the turn of the century had bath houses that were open to women during the day and to the men after dark. These bath houses, which were also fed by the reservoir system, were the only source of hygiene available.”<sup>135</sup>

### *Persia During World War I | Historical account*

“The conventional European chronology of the First World War begins in 1914 and ends in 1918. For Iranians however, the war period lasted longer, at least within its own national frontiers. [...] In 1911 Russian military forces occupied the northern provinces of Iran and imposed an ultimatum on the government of Iran to observe the Russian interest in the country. [...] The end of the war in Iran was also three years later than the Armistice in Europe: the last British troops withdrew from southern Iran, and the Russian Red Army from northern Iran in 1921. [...] For most of Iran’s working poor, the First World War brought nothing but misery. Hunger, famine, drought, insecurity caused by armed violence, price inflation, and unemployment forced many to abandon their homes in search of a safer existence in other parts of the country, or even beyond its borders. Tens of thousands of migrant Iranians were employed in factories, oilfields, mines and construction works in the

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<sup>134</sup> The *mahalleh* was the old Jewish quarter/ghetto, to which Jews in cities were restricted to live before 1925. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nCpA4gYcQT0>.

<sup>135</sup> Edward Cohen, “My Family and Persian Jewry,” in *The Golden Treasures Book. 1001 Memories*, compiled by Dr. Rouhollah Cohanim, p. 52; minor redactions by the author.



Caucasus. When they returned home after the 1917 Russian Revolution, they added to the army of unemployed. [...]

“A series of severe droughts from 1916 on further depleted agricultural supplies. By early February 1918, the famine spread all over the country, and panicked crowds in major cities began to loot bakeries and food stores.

“[...] The colossal food crisis, plus large numbers of soldiers, refugees and destitute people constantly on the move in search of work and survival, facilitated a deadly combination of pandemics and contagious diseases [which] spread with terrifying speed across the country, claiming huge numbers of deaths every day. [...] Typhoid, too, spread in many parts of the country, and caused so many deaths that, according to an eyewitness, ‘the high mortality in Tehran was not due to famine, but rather because of typhoid and typhus.’

“In the historical memory of the Iranians [...] the First World War is remembered as a period of carnage—not primarily because of combat deaths, [...] but much more because of famines and epidemics that claimed far more victims.”<sup>136</sup>

#### *The Pahlavi era (1925-1979) at the start of World War II | Historical accounts*

“The Reza Shah [Pahlavi] era witnessed the repeal of all of the discriminatory laws applying to Jews. Jews were accorded the right to serve in the military and to enroll in state schools [...]. Jews started to leave the Jewish quarter (*maballeh*) and reside wherever they wished. They had the right to hold government jobs and keep shops in the bazaars. They took advantage of the opportunity and opened shops in commercial areas outside of the Jewish quarters.”<sup>137</sup>

“The modernization and industrialization of Iran were the major projects of Reza Shah’s reign. [He] was determined to pull his people into the twentieth century whether they liked it or not. To this end, he inaugurated a mammoth range of reforms, construction projects, reorganizations, and other changes. The sheer breadth of the effort was staggering and included expansion of the country’s infrastructure; the

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<sup>136</sup> Touraj Atabaki, “Persia/Iran,” in: *1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, edited by Ute Daniel et al. (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 2016-05-02).

<sup>137</sup> Orly R. Rahimiyan, “Judeo-Persian Communities: The Pahlavi Era (1925-1979)”, in *Encyclopedia Iranica* (New York: 15 September 2009).

reform of legal, judicial, fiscal, industrial, and civil service systems and practices; the establishment of public education; the expansion of enhanced health care; and a modernization of the status of women. [...]

“Reza Shah was fascinated by the rise of modern Germany. [...] He saw in Germany what he and other Iranians had once seen in America—a powerful third country that could help Iran to keep Britain and Russia at bay. [...] And the Germans *did* want an alliance with Reza Shah. [...]

“After the invasion of Russia in June 1941 pushed Stalin into Churchill’s arms, there was probably little chance that Iran would avoid foreign occupation. Especially since Reza Shah had built the Trans-Iranian Railway, linking the Persian Gulf with the Caspian, Iran was simply too good a route to get supplies to the embattled Red Army for the Allies not to occupy it. Of course Reza Shah’s flirtation with the Germans—and his former anti-British activities—only sealed the matter for London. In August 1941, the British and Soviet governments demanded that Reza Shah expel all of the Germans in Iran and place the Trans-Iranian Railway and Iranian port facilities entirely at their disposal. When Reza Shah refused, Russian and British forces invaded the country. [...] In less than two weeks it was all over. Reza Shah himself was sent into exile, and on 25 August 1941, his twenty-one-year-old son, Mohammad Reza, was installed by the allies on the Peacock Throne as Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi.”<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict Between Iran and America*, p. 33; pp. 37-38.

## Part III: In the Land of Esther's Children

### *Chapter Notes: Portrait of a Gentleman with Maroon Cabriolet, Tehran*

*There were few traffic lights in Tehran in the 1940s and later. Where there were no traffic lights, a policeman stood on a stool in the middle of the intersection, directing traffic. As we passed the policemen, our father, Soleiman Cohen, handed the police officer a five-toman note (in those days, worth about a dollar). My father always kept a stack of new five-toman notes ready for this purpose. The policeman saluted my father as the car approached. We always felt proud to be in the car when the police officer saluted our father.*

—Edward Cohen, *Project Notes* [unpublished]

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#### **The name Soleiman**

The name Soleiman (Solomon) derives from the Hebrew root verb shalem, whose general meaning is wholeness, completeness, or unbrokenness. The derivatives of this root verb include shalom, meaning peace. Psalm 49). Peace doesn't only indicate a warless state, but is a state of completeness and harmony, or un-dividedness. It also covers completeness (Jeremiah 13:19), prosperity (Genesis 43:27), health and safety (Psalm 38:4).

**(Source: author research)**

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#### **Esther**

“Esther first appears in the story [in the Book of Esther] as one of the young virgins collected into the king’s harem as possible replacements for Vashti, the banished wife of King Ahasuerus (also known as Xerxes I, r. 485-465 BCE). [...] When her turn comes to spend the night with the king, Ahasuerus falls in love with her and makes her his queen. [...] Esther keeps her Jewish identity secret.

“After Esther becomes queen, her cousin Mordecai becomes involved in a power struggle with the grand vizier Haman the Agagite, a descendant of an Amalekite king who was an enemy of Israel during the time of King Saul.

Mordecai refuses to bow before Haman, and this so infuriates Haman that he resolves not only to put Mordecai to death, but also to slaughter his entire



*Esther's Tomb*

people [the Jews residing in Persia]. He secures the king's permission to do this, and a date is set, 13 Adar (this episode determines the date of Purim, the festival commemorating Esther). When Mordecai learns of Haman's plot, he rushes to the palace to inform Esther, weeping and dressed in sackcloth.

“At this point in the story, Esther's character comes to the fore. She cannot approach the king without being summoned, on pain of death, and the king has not summoned her in thirty days, implying that she has fallen out of favor. However, following Mordecai's insistent prodding, she resolves to do what she can to save her people, ending with the ringing declaration ‘After that I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish’ (Esther, 4:16). [...]

“She appears, unsummoned, before King Ahasuerus, who not only does not kill her, but promises to grant her request. [...] Esther asks the king to a dinner party. [...] Accompanied by Haman, [the king] attends Esther's banquet and again seeks to discover her request, which she once more deflects with an invitation to another dinner party. Only at the second dinner party, when the king is sufficiently beguiled by her charms, does she reveal her true purpose: the unmasking of Haman and his plot. She reveals, for the first time, her identity as a Jew and accuses Haman of the plot to destroy her and her people. [...] Haman is executed, and the Jews receive permission to defend themselves from their enemies, which they do with great success. The book ends with Mordecai elevated to the office of grand vizier and power now concentrated in the hands of Esther. [...]

“The purpose of the Book of Esther is to demonstrate to Jews living in exile that it is possible to achieve success in the country of one's exile without giving up one's identity as a Jew. [...] The character of Esther serves as a positive role model for Jewish women and men living in diaspora.”

**(Source: Sidnie White Crawford, “Esther: Bible” in *Jewish Women's Archive Encyclopedia*)**

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#### ***Nowruz and Sizdah Bedar***

#### ***Nowruz***

“Persian New Year, or *Nowruz*, is the most celebrated and festive day in Iran and the holiest day in the Zoroastrian religion. *Nowruz* literally means ‘new day’ and it falls on the spring equinox around 20 or 21 March [...]. In every Iranian home the *Haft-seen* is the centerpiece of *Nowruz* celebrations.[...] Everyone gathers around the *Haft-seen* as the clock strikes the first hour of the year. [...] They say that whatever mood you are in at *Nowruz* you will be that

way for the rest of the year, so people make sure they are on their best behavior.

“[...] *Chaharshanbeh suri*, literally Red Wednesday or the Festival of Fire, takes place on the eve of the last Wednesday of the year. People light bonfires in their gardens or even on the pavement outside their homes and jump over them singing ‘give me your fiery glow and take away my sickly pallor.’”

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“In order to make wishes come true, it is customary to prepare special foods and distribute them on this night: [...] noodle soup, *baslogh* (a filled Persian delight); and special snacks, [one of which is called] ‘the unraveler of difficulties’ [made by] mixing [...] pistachios, roasted chickpeas, almonds, hazelnuts, peaches, apricots, and raisins.”

### *Sizdah Bedar*

Celebrated in the thirteenth day of *Nowruz*, *Sizdah Bedar* “marks the beginning of the return to ordinary daily life. It is customary on this day for families to pack a picnic and go to a park or the countryside. It is believed that joy and laughter clean the mind from all evil thoughts, and a picnic is usually a festive, happy event. *Sizdah-Bedar* is also believed to be a special day to ask for rain [...] and a day for competitive games.”

(Sources: Ariana Bundy, *Pomegranates and Roses*, p. 194; Najmieh Batmanglij, *Food of Life*, p. 567; [www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Celebrations/sizdah\\_bedar.htm](http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Celebrations/sizdah_bedar.htm))

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#### The *haft-seen* plate

The seven symbolic items on the *haft-seen* plate all have names that begin with the Farsi letter *seen* and are: *sabzeh*, wheat, barley, mung bean or lentil sprouts growing in a dish, symbolizing rebirth; *samanu*, a sweet pudding made from wheat germ, symbolizing affluence; *senjed*, dried oleaster or Russian olive fruit, symbolizing love; *seer*, garlic, symbolizing medicine and health; *seeb*, apple, symbolizing beauty; *somāq*, sumac fruit, symbolizing sunrise; and *serkeh*, vinegar, symbolizing old age and patience.

(Source: author research)

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#### The Café/Hotel Naderi

Construction of the Café Naderi and hotel began in 1928, concurrent with the construction of the Iranian railroad and a number of banks. It was built according to the Western, especially German, style as a place for

entertainment. In addition to the café and hotel, the complex also included a confectionary shop. It was frequented by dignitaries of the Iranian arts, literature and culture, including Sadeq Hedayat, Bozorg-e Alavi, Mojtaba Minavi, and many others.

Performers at the Café Naderi included popular Persian singers such as Delkash and Marzieh.

Delkash (Esmat Bagherpour Baboli, 1924–2004) was an Iranian diva and actress. Born in Babol, she was the daughter of a cotton trader who had twelve other children. She came to Tehran to study (where she stayed until her death in 2004) and was introduced to the music masters of the time, Ruhollah Khaleghi and Abdolali Vaziri.

Delkash started singing in public in 1943 and was employed by Radio Iran in 1945. There, she worked with the composer Mehdi Khaledi until 1952. Some of her most popular songs were written by lyricist Rahim Moeini Kermanshahi, and composer Ali Tajvidi.

Marzieh (Ashraf o-Sadat Mortezaie, 1924–2010) was a Tehran-born singer of Persian traditional music. Her first major public performance was in 1942, when, though still a teenager, she played the principal role of Shirin at the Jame Barbud opera house in the Persian operetta *Shirin and Farhad*. Like Delkash, her career took off in the 1940s at Radio Tehran, and Marzieh worked with some of the greatest twentieth-century Persian songwriters and lyricists, including Ali Tajvidi, Parviz Yahaghi, Homayoun Khorram, Rahim Moeini Kermanshahi and Bijan Taraghi. She also sang with the Farabi Orchestre, conducted by Morteza Hannaneh, a pioneer of Persian polyphonic music, during the 1960s and 1970s. When public performances and broadcasts of record albums by solo female singers were banned, Marzieh walked at night from her home in the north-Tehran Niavaran foothills to her cabin in the mountains, where she sang next to a roaring waterfall: “Nobody could hear me. I sang to the stars and the rocks,” she said. In 1994, she left Iran and emigrated to Paris.

**(Source: author research)**

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#### **The Grand Bazaar in Tehran**

The Grand Bazaar is a historical market located at Arg Square in southern Tehran. It is split into several corridors over 10 kilometers (6.2 mi) in length, each specializing in different types of goods. It has several entrances; the main one is called Sabze Meydan. In addition to shops, the Grand Bazaar of Tehran contains banks, mosques and guest houses.

The area around Tehran has been settled since at least 6000 BCE, and while bazaar-like constructions in other parts of Iran have been dated to 4000 BCE, Tehran's bazaar, pictured at right in a drawing from 1873, is not that old. It is hard to say exactly when it first appeared, but in the centuries following the introduction of Islam, travelers reported the growth of commerce in the area now occupied by the current bazaar.



A portion of today's bazaar predated the growth of the village of Tehran during the Safavid era, although it was during and after this period that the bazaar began to gradually grow. Western travelers reported that by 1660 CE and beyond, the bazaar area was still largely open, and only partially covered.

Historian and scholar Abbas Milani describes the structure of Tehran's bazaar, "which was—[and still] is now—divided along trade lines. In the shoe bazaar, for example, there were stores that sold to the public, as well as *hojreh*s, located in what is called a *timcheh*—akin to a business-office compound—that catered to middlemen and shop owners. There was an important hierarchy of status among these *timchehs*."

(Source: author research)

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#### **The route from Tehran to Paris**

"Haji Rahim and his brother-in-law/business partner Dai Yousef traveled by bus from Tehran to Bandar-e Pahlavi, where they boarded a ship to Astrakhan. They traveled overland through Czarist Russia to Moscow, by stagecoach and bus. Then they boarded a train and went to Paris, via Warsaw and Berlin, and this took a month. But their trip was nothing compared to what the voyage was before there were buses and trains, when caravans went overland and were away for up to nine months.

"When Soleiman Cohen was a teenager, and travel through Russia was made impossible because of the revolution and then the Great War, he and Haji Rahim traveled by bus to Karachi, stopping at little inns along the way, where one sat on the ground to eat or take tea or rest. They boarded a freighter to Marseille and then took the train to Paris.

“After selling the goods they had brought with them, Haji Rahim and Dai Yousef went to the Westminster Bank at Place Vendôme, where they stored whatever went unsold in a large safe-deposit box. They purchased bolts of fabric; precious silks and crêpes de Chine were shipped back to Tehran. Such travels, even in peacetime, were fraught with potential danger. Bandits and thieves rode fast horses and carried sharp swords. Transportation broke down. Storms—rain, sleet, snow, ice, wind, and sand—delayed and sometimes stranded the travelers. When Soleiman was about to leave on his first journey to Europe, his mother, Gohar Khanoum, took him to say a solemn good-bye to each member of the immediate family.

“Before the Great War, Soleiman Cohen reported that had been struck by the elegance of Russians who traveled by train. He observed them sipping tea, wearing furs and jewels. After the revolution and the Great War, he saw that most people on those trains dressed shabbily, some in rags, all carrying small bundles of bread and often other parcels. In Astrakhan, did he marvel at how the Volga emptied into the Caspian Sea and the commerce it inspired? How the city had become a gate to what westerners called the Orient? How his own country, Persia, stood at the crossroads of East and West? Haji Rahim likely took his son to see the carpet market in Astrakhan, where they talked with Persians who sold rugs. Perhaps he took Soleiman to the wharves and watched the fishermen go out and return with the sturgeon whose eggs were so coveted beyond Russia’s borders.<sup>139</sup> The train travel from Moscow to Paris was a ten-day affair.

“When the locomotive pulled into Warsaw, like many other travelers on such long journeys, Soleiman and his father and uncle likely got off the train and enjoyed several days out and about in the great city. Perhaps they went to the stately Hotel Bristol to sit in the restaurant and, after a fine meal, enjoy a piece of the chef’s signature chocolate tort.<sup>140</sup> Or maybe they walked to the Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street.<sup>141</sup> Those sojourns in Warsaw would end during the years of the Great War. But when Soleiman Khan returned to Tehran after three years of study in Paris, he passed once again through the

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<sup>139</sup> “In the beginning of the twentieth century, Russian fishermen caught up to 40,000 tons of sturgeon annually in the Caspian Sea and the Volga, which, according to some specialists, was the peak sturgeon catch. During World War I and the Russian Civil War (1917-1923), sturgeon fishing declined sharply, leading to a slight increase in fish populations. In 1938, the USSR imposed limits on sturgeon fishing for the conservation of valuable fish species. But in 1940, the Soviet Union and Iran signed a treaty of commerce and navigation, which allowed Iran to catch sturgeon on a par with the Soviet Union” (Daria Strelavina, *Caviar: Russia’s Original Black Gold*, in *Russia Beyond the Headlines*).

<sup>140</sup> The Tort Bristol was first made in 1901 and served in Warsaw at Hotel Bristol’s restaurant. It is similar to the Viennese Sacher torte.

<sup>141</sup> The Great Synagogue was, at the time of its opening in 1868, the largest synagogue in the world. It was a reform synagogue. It was blown up by SS-Gruppenführer Jürgen Stroop on 16 May 1943, the last act of destruction of the Jewish ghetto in Warsaw by the Germans.



city of palaces, as he perhaps thought of Warsaw.<sup>142</sup> Maybe he ambled through the streets and looked in shop windows. Or sat at a café and ate *palachinki*—crêpes filled with cherry preserves and dusted with powdered sugar, his favorite. Perhaps he visited Holy Cross Church, on Krakowskie Przedmieście, where Chopin’s heart was kept in a hermetically sealed jar enclosed inside a wooden urn.<sup>143</sup> Soleiman Cohen couldn’t know then how close he actually stood, in Warsaw, to his future, no more than he could guess at it now as he parked his car on Avenue Istanbul. But who can know such things?”

**(Source: Kim Dana Kupperman, *Teschen to Tehran* [unpublished], based on interviews with Edward Cohen and David Eshagian, pp. 264-66.)**

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## **Chador and other coverings for women in Iran**

### *Chador*

“A chador is a full-body-length semicircle of fabric that opens down the front [and drapes to the feet]. This cloth is tossed over the woman's or girl's head. The chador has no hand openings, or any buttons or clasps, but rather it is held closed by her hands or tucked under the wearer's arms. Before the 1978–79 Iranian Revolution, black chadors were reserved for funerals and periods of mourning. Light, printed fabrics were the norm for everyday wear. Currently,

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<sup>142</sup> There are approximately 250 palaces in the province that surrounds Warsaw and an estimated 2,800 throughout Poland. Most were built in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for kings or aristocrats.

<sup>143</sup> Chopin was buried in Père Lachaise Cemetery in Paris. However, during “his last days, in Paris, [Chopin], the supreme poet of the piano, had asked that his heart be brought back to his native land. So while Chopin’s body rests at Père Lachaise [in Paris], in the company of Oscar Wilde and Jim Morrison, his heart resides at Holy Cross, in the first big pillar on the left.

“The woman who set the saga in motion was Ludwika Jędrzejewicz, Chopin’s eldest sister, who heard and recorded his curious request for dismemberment. She saw to it that the heart was preserved in a hermetically sealed crystal jar filled with an alcoholic liquid, possibly cognac. That vessel was, in turn, encased in an urn made of mahogany and oak. In early 1850, a few months after her brother’s death, Jędrzejewicz smuggled the assemblage into Poland, hiding it under her cloak in order to elude the attentions of Austrian and Russian inspectors. In 1879, it was placed in its present position at Holy Cross. A memorial slab bore a citation of the Book of Matthew: “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

“As Jędrzejewicz must have anticipated, the erection of a memorial at Holy Cross soon acquired political resonance. For decades, it was the only public monument to Chopin that tsarist authorities permitted in the city, and it drew covert displays of nationalist fervor. When Poland achieved independence, in 1918, the site became an open shrine. [...]

“During the German occupation of Poland, the heart was nearly lost. Conscious of Chopin’s symbolic power, the Nazis prevented performances of his music and destroyed a statue that had been erected in his honor in 1926. [...] During the Warsaw Uprising, battles raged around Holy Cross, and the building suffered heavy damage. In the midst of the fighting, a German priest named Schulze asked his Polish counterparts whether they would let him take the heart into safekeeping. After a discussion, the priests agreed. The urn passed into the hands of Heinz Reinefarth, a high-ranking S.S. officer who professed to be a Chopin admirer. For the remainder of the uprising, the heart was kept at the headquarters of Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski, the infamously brutal commander of Nazis in the region.

“Once the uprising had been suppressed, Bach-Zelewski made a show of returning the urn to Polish hands. [...]

“Chopin’s heart remains an object of fascination and dispute. In 2008, a team of scholars asked for permission to subject it to a DNA analysis, in order to test a theory that Chopin died not of tuberculosis, as was long believed, but of cystic fibrosis. (That might explain the largeness of the heart.) The Polish government refused the request. Indeed, it seems right to let the heart rest in peace for a long while” (Alex Ross, “Chopin’s Heart,” in *The New Yorker*, 5 February 2014).

the majority of Iranian women who wear the chador use the black version outside and light-colored chadors indoors.”

### *Hijab*

“Hijab is referred to by various names, some of the most common of which are a *veil* or *headscarf*. Most Muslims who wear the covering call it a hijab, an Arabic word meaning ‘cover.’ However, there are various forms of hijab that are referred to by different names. While hijab is commonly associated with women, Muslim men sometimes wear a head covering as a means of showing modesty.”

### *Roopoosh [Manteau] / Roosari*

“Perhaps the most common type of hijab is the *roopoosh-roosari*. *Roopoosh* (also called *manteau*) are long jacket-type covers worn over the clothes. They used to be long, formless, and almost down to the ankles. Now they are above the knee or sometimes even a long-sleeve shirt that just covers the rear. *Roosari* is the scarf that women wear to cover their hair. The *roosari* is a square cloth that is folded diagonally into a triangle and tied under the chin.”

(Sources: <http://arabsinamerica.unc.edu/identity/veiling/hijab/>;  
<http://www.mypersiancorner.com/2013/08/a-guide-to-hijab-in-islamic-republic.html>)



## HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT: MEANWHILE, THINGS GO WRONG

### *Late March, 1942 | Report*

“Ships carrying evacuees from Krasnovodsk came in daily with no regularity and often without warning. Evacuees were landed at all times of the day and night, frequently by lighters<sup>144</sup> from ships too big to enter the harbor. Civilian evacuees were often in a state of destitution after landing. Everything that could be done to alleviate their situation was carried out; among other things transport to camps and hospitals was provided at the wharf, on which a medical tent was set up and hot tea was available day and night. There was however inevitably some suffering and owing to difficulties in administration not all the evacuees received food regularly for a few days after landing. [...]

“Supplies of bread from Tehran ceased without warning on 30 March [1942] and a contract was made with seven local bakers to provide daily 1,000 kilos of bread, each baker using Government flour. [...]

“With regard to fresh supplies the very large demands undoubtedly had a big effect on the local market and the prices of meat, vegetables, etc., soared in some instances to as much as double. Beef was difficult to obtain but mutton was supplied in considerable quantities and fish on a number of occasions [...].

“The inspection of the evacuees by the Russians at Krasnovodsk had not been properly carried out, with the result that typhus cases that should never have been embarked arrived among civilian crowds. A large amount of civilian baggage was brought, much of which was rubbish and had subsequently to be burnt. In one instance seventy-two tons of baggage arrived on one ship and [included] sewing machines, sacks of grain, dogs, fowls, and masses of clothing in every state of dilapidation. [...]

“Considerable difficulty was at first experienced in controlling both the Polish evacuees and the local Persian population. Polish soldiers and civilians were naturally anxious to provide themselves with articles which could be acquired in shops in the town after having been for so long deprived of such amenities in Soviet Russia. There was consequently

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<sup>144</sup> A lighter is a flat-bottomed barge or other unpowered boat used to transfer cargo or passengers to or from ship or harbor.

considerable intermingling with the local population and, unfortunately, this was not confined to those Poles who had been disinfested. Among other things there was some traffic in old clothes which was highly dangerous. [...]

“Officers [of both the British and Polish armies] came to the joint conclusion that it was essential to move the civilians, especially women and children, to Tehran as soon as possible.”<sup>145</sup>

*Late Spring, 1942 | Testimony*

“[At the Pahlavi refuge camp,] typhus broke out. We worked frantically but our chronically malnourished patients had no defense against it, and it ran through the wards like fire in a tinder-dry forest. [...]

“Each refugee who came off the ship had to be bathed, and showered. [Their] hair had to be cut, and all bodily hair shaved off before [they] went on the wards.”<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Lieutenant Colonel A. Ross, British Base Evacuation Staff, “Report on Polish Evacuation from Pahlavi,” 3 June 1942.

<sup>146</sup> Account of military nurse Helena Czupryn, cited in Norman Davies, *Trail of Hope: The Anders Army, An Odyssey Across Three Continents*.

*Chapter Notes: Go Tell It on the Mountain*

*For the long wet months are past,  
the rains have fed the earth  
and left it bright with blossoms  
Birds wing in the low sky,  
dove and songbird singing  
in the open air above*

—Marcia Falk, translator, *The Song of Songs*

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**Mt. Damavand**

[Tehran], which has a mean altitude of 3,750 feet above sea level, is situated on the northern fringe of the great central plateau; standing as it does on ground that rises steadily towards the north, there is a difference in level of several hundred feet between its southern and northern limits.

Only a few miles to the north is the impressive mountain chain of the Alborz. The To Chal ridge, which is just under 13,000 feet high, dominates the city, while nearly fifty miles to the northeast, but seemingly much closer in the clear air of the Persian uplands, is the magnificent snow-capped cone of Damavand, 18,600 feet in height.

While Tehran itself is of too recent origin to figure in the Persian legends, there are, as one might expect, many of them connected with the surrounding country, particularly with Damavand. This extinct volcano was known as Bikni, the mountain of lapis lazuli, in ancient times.”

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Mt. Damavand is the highest peak in Iran and the Middle East and is located in the middle of the Alborz range near the southern coast of the Caspian Sea.

In Persian mythology, Damavand is a significant mountain, appearing in Persian literature as a symbol of Iranian resistance against despotism and foreign rule. In the mythology of the Zoroastrians, the three-headed dragon Aži Dahāka was imprisoned within the mountain until the end of the world.

Some scholars speculate that the word *Damavand* may mean “the mountain from which smoke and ash arises,” in allusion to the mountain’s volcanic nature.

**(Source: Laurence Lockhart, *Persian Cities*, p. 1; author research)**

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**Asino**

Located in southeastern Russia, Asino is a city in the Tomsk oblast near the Chulym River, important for logging activities. Asino is now the largest wood-processing center in western Siberia.

One of the former prisoners of Asino recalls: “It was accidental that there were twenty-six doctors in the camp, and I remembered the familiar names of Dr. Glassa, Dr. Talerman, Dr. Milejkowskiego [and others]. The total number of dissidents in this place was 25,000.”

**(Source: author research; testimony of Emmy Lewinówny, translated by author, in *I Saw the Angel of Death*, p. 160)**

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**The Warsaw Ghetto and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April 1943**

*Warsaw Ghetto*

“On 12 October 1940, the Germans decreed the establishment of a ghetto in Warsaw. The decree required all Jewish residents of Warsaw to move into a designated area, which German authorities sealed off from the rest of the city in November 1940. The ghetto was enclosed by a wall that was over ten feet high, topped with barbed wire, and closely guarded to prevent movement between the ghetto and the rest of Warsaw. The population of the ghetto, increased when Jews were compelled to move in from nearby towns, was estimated to be over 400,000. German authorities forced ghetto residents to live in an area of 1.3 square miles, with an average of 7.2 persons per room.

“The Jewish council offices were located on Grzybowska Street in the southern part of the ghetto. Jewish organizations inside the ghetto tried to meet the needs of the ghetto residents as they struggled to survive. Among the welfare organizations active in the ghetto were the Jewish Mutual Aid Society, the Federation of Associations in Poland for the Care of Orphans, and the Organization for Rehabilitation through Training. Financed until late 1941 primarily by the New York-based American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, these organizations attempted to keep alive a population that suffered severely from starvation, exposure, and infectious disease.

“Food allotments rationed to the ghetto by the German civilian authorities were not sufficient to sustain life. In 1941, the average [diet in the] ghetto [consisted of] 1,125 calories a day. Czerniaków [chairman of the Jewish Council] wrote in his diary entry for 8 May 1941: ‘Children starving to death.’ Between 1940 and mid-1942, 83,000 Jews died of starvation and disease in the Warsaw ghetto. Widespread smuggling of food and medicines into the

ghetto supplemented the miserable official allotments and kept the death rate from increasing still further.”

### *Warsaw Ghetto Uprising*

Nazis occupying Warsaw “intended to begin the operation to liquidate the Warsaw ghetto on 19 April 1943, the eve of Passover. When SS and police units entered the ghetto that morning, the streets were deserted. Nearly all of the residents of the ghetto had gone into hiding places or bunkers. The renewal of deportations was the signal for an armed uprising within the ghetto.

“[Jewish Combat Organization (ZOB)] commander Mordecai Anielewicz commanded the Jewish fighters in the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Armed with pistols, grenades (many of them homemade), and a few automatic weapons and rifles, the ZOB fighters stunned the Germans and their auxiliaries on the first day of fighting, forcing the German forces to retreat outside the ghetto wall. German commander SS General Jürgen Stroop reported losing twelve men, killed and wounded, during the first assault on the ghetto.

“On the third day of the uprising, Stroop's SS and police forces began razing the ghetto to the ground, building by building, to force the remaining Jews out of hiding. Jewish resistance fighters made sporadic raids from their bunkers, but the Germans systematically reduced the ghetto to rubble. The German forces killed Anielewicz and those with him in an attack on [...] 8 May.

“Though German forces broke the organized military resistance within days of the beginning of the uprising, individuals and small groups hid or fought the Germans for almost a month.

“To symbolize the German victory, Stroop ordered the destruction of the Great Synagogue on Tłomacki Street on 16 May 1943. The ghetto itself was in ruins. Stroop reported that he had captured 56,065 Jews and destroyed 631 bunkers. He estimated that his units killed up to 7,000 Jews during the uprising. The German authorities deported approximately another 7,000 Warsaw Jews to the Treblinka killing center, where almost all were killed in the gas chambers upon arrival.

“The Germans deported almost all of the remaining Jews, approximately 42,000, to the Lublin/Majdanek concentration camp, and to the Poniatowa, Trawniki, Budzyn, and Krasnik forced-labor camps. With the exception of a few thousand forced laborers at Budzyn and Krasnik, German SS and police units later murdered almost all of the Warsaw Jews deported to Lublin/Majdanek, Poniatowa, and Trawniki in November 1943 in ‘Operation

Harvest Festival' (*Unternehmen Erntefest*).

Even after the end of the uprising on May 16, 1943, individual Jews hiding out in the ruins of the ghetto continued to attack the patrols of the Germans and their auxiliaries.

“The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was the largest, symbolically most important Jewish uprising, and the first urban uprising, in German-occupied Europe. The resistance in Warsaw inspired other uprisings in ghettos (e.g., Bialystok and Minsk) and killing centers (Treblinka and Sobibor).”

**(Source: “Warsaw” and “Warsaw Ghetto Uprising” in *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, US Holocaust Memorial Museum)**



## HISTORICAL SNAPSHOT: THE PLACES THEY WENT

### 1942 | *Historical account*

“Starting in 1942, the port city of Pahlavi (now known as Anzali) became the main landing point for Polish refugees coming into Iran from the Soviet Union, receiving up to 2,500 refugees per day. General Anders evacuated 74,000 Polish troops, including approximately 41,000 civilians, many of them children, to Iran. In total, over 116,000 refugees were relocated to Iran. Approximately 5,000–6,000 of the Polish refugees were Jewish.

“The refugees were weakened by two years of maltreatment and starvation, and many suffered from malaria, typhus, fevers, respiratory illnesses, and diseases caused by starvation. Desperate for food after starving for so long, refugees ate as much as they could, leading to disastrous consequences. Several hundred Poles, mostly children, died shortly after arriving in Iran from acute dysentery caused by overeating.

“A large number of refugees lost their lives to disease and malnourishment shortly after arrival in Iran. Most of these refugees are buried in the Armenian cemetery in Pahlavi.

“After spending several days in quarantine in warehouses near the port of Pahlavi, the refugees were sent to Tehran. There were so many refugees that government buildings and centers were allocated to house them. [...]

“Thousands of the children who came to Iran came from orphanages in the Soviet Union, either because their parents had died or they were separated during deportations from Poland. Most of these children were eventually sent to live in orphanages in Isfahan, which had an agreeable climate and plentiful resources, allowing the children to recover from the many illnesses they contracted in the poorly managed and supplied orphanages in the Soviet Union. Between 1942–1945, approximately 2,000 children passed through Isfahan, so many that it was briefly called the ‘City of Polish Children.’ Other children were sent to orphanages in Mashad. Numerous schools were set up to teach the children the Polish language, math, science, and other standard subjects. In some schools, Persian was also taught, along with both Polish and Iranian history and geography.

“Because Iran could not permanently care for the large influx of refugees, other British-colonized countries began receiving Poles from

Iran in the summer of 1942. The refugees who did not stay in Iran until the end of the war were transported to India, Uganda, Kenya, and South Africa, among other countries. The Mexican government also agreed to take several thousand refugees. A number of Polish refugees stayed in Iran permanently, some eventually marrying Iranian citizens and having children.

“While most signs of Polish life in Iran have faded, a few have remained. Nearly 3,000 refugees died within months of arriving in Iran and were buried in cemeteries, and many of these burial sites are still well tended by Iranians today. A Polish cemetery in Tehran is the main and largest refugee burial site in Iran, with 1,937 graves [where fifty-six Polish Jews are buried].”<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> “Polish Refugees in Iran During World War II,” *Holocaust Encyclopedia* See: <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10008210>.

⇒ See also: Chapter Notes—Where They Were Laid to Rest

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**Haji Aziz Elghanian**

The late Dr. Massoud Cohen-Shohet, a cousin of the Cohen family, said, “Haji Aziz Elghanian was Soleiman Cohen’s best friend. He was an industrialist who also worked for the welfare of the Jews in Persia. It was Haji Aziz who persuaded Soleiman Khan to take in a family from the refugee camps.” Dr. Cohen-Shohet’s wife, Farideh, had this to say: “Isn’t it something—Haji Aziz did not have children and had no one to remember his name. And now, today, we are all saying his name, and his name will be in this book, and he will be remembered.”

**(Source: author interviews with Mrs. and Dr. Massoud Cohen-Shohet, December 2014)**

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**The Tehran Children**

Among the civilian refugees who arrived in Tehran were approximately 1,000 Jewish children, the majority of them orphans. They became known as the “Tehran Children.”

“The involvement of the Jewish Agency for Palestine [...] was a crucial component in the story of the children in Tehran. While these Jewish children were still scattered in the southern part of the Soviet Union, representatives of the Jewish Agency negotiated with the Polish government-in-exile regarding the percentage of Jews to be included in the transports to Iran. As the transports came into Pahlavi, they were met by Jewish Agency representatives, who identified and separated the Jewish children from Christian Poles. Hungry and traumatized by their recent experience, many children refused to admit that they were Jewish. The children ranged in age from 1-18 years, although most were ages 7-12. Once the children were gathered in Tehran, Zionist leaders David Ben Gurion and Eliahu Dobkin negotiated with Polish cabinet minister Stanislaw Kott, as well as British officials, to facilitate the children's admission to Palestine.

“The Jewish Agency established an orphanage for the Jewish children. The 730 Jewish children who arrived in Iran from April to August 1942 lived in tents on the grounds of Dustan Tappeh, a former military barracks of the Iranian Air Force outside Tehran. An effort to assist the evacuation of more children from orphanages following this successful transfer permitted a small

additional number of Polish-Jewish children to arrive in Tehran after summer 1942. The camp, which rapidly became known as the 'Tehran Home for Jewish Children,' received assistance from the local Jewish community, the Hadassah Women's Zionist Organization in the United States, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and the Youth Immigration Department of the Jewish Agency.

“Experienced Zionist youth leaders from Palestine took charge of the children's shelter. After long periods of hardship, homelessness, and confinement in orphanages, many children suffered from serious illness (frequently tuberculosis) and malnutrition, but most recovered their health in the Tehran camp.

“As a result of negotiations between the Jewish Agency and the British administration in Palestine, the children eventually received certificates permitting their immigration to Palestine. On 3 January 1943, 716 children with their adult escorts, many of them also refugees, traveled by truck to Bandar Shahpour on the Persian Gulf, and from there on the freighter *Dunera* to Karachi, Pakistan. From Karachi, the refugees traveled on the *Noralea* around the Arabian Peninsula and through the Red Sea to the Egyptian city of Suez. The children then crossed the Sinai Desert by train, and arrived at the Atlit refugee camp in northern Palestine on 18 February 1943, where the Yishuv (the Jewish community in Palestine) welcomed them. A second transport of 110 children arrived in Palestine overland (via Iraq) on 28 August 1943. In all, some 870 Tehran Children arrived in Palestine, and soon settled on kibbutzim (collective farms) and *moshavim* (cooperative farming villages). Thirty-five of the Tehran Children died either as civilians or as soldiers in Israel's War of Independence in 1948-1949.”

**(Source: “Tehran Children” in Holocaust Encyclopedia, US Holocaust Memorial Museum)**

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#### **Soleiman's decision**

“At that time, the protocol of family relations in the Iranian Jewish community required that any major decision had to be made with consultation and advice. The family had to be included, or at the very least all the older siblings, and of course parents (if alive) had to be consulted. Older members of the family consent or perhaps the advice of the older brothers had to be obtained if there was any intention to form a marriage or business liaison with another family. This would definitely apply if a son or daughter were to become engaged to marry into another family. This approach not only was a

courtesy but created comfort and security by obtaining the blessing of older persons in the family. It confirmed that the correct decision was being made. Soleiman Khan was embarking on a kind of revolutionary action by introducing two foreign people into his household and thus into the extended family.”

(Source: Edward Cohen, recollections, *Project Notes* [unpublished], p. 232)

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#### Traditional instruments in classical Persian music



In these two paintings of seventeenth-century musicians in Isfahan, we see, in the left image, left to right: the *nay* (a reed flute), the *tar* (a fretted lute with six strings), and the *santour*, a hammered dulcimer. In the image on the right, left to right, we see the *tombak* (sometimes spelled *dombak*), a one-headed drum carved of a single piece of wood (played by the figure whose head is obscured), and the *kamanche*, a bowed fiddle with four metal strings and a sheepskin membrane stretched across a wooden hemisphere.

(Source: author research)

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#### Saffron

Food historians believe saffron was first cultivated in Greece. Its cultivation in Europe dates back to the Moorish occupation of Spain in the eighth and ninth centuries. In Austria, its cultivation goes back centuries (and it continues today). In Austrian cuisine, there is a dish called *Serviettenknoedel met Semmelkren*, a baked bread loaf with saffron gravy. The Viennese also add saffron to dishes for the color. The Russians put saffron in their Easter bread (this comes from a Lebanese tradition). People in Europe would have been familiar with saffron, especially anyone with the resources to buy it. (It is, literally, worth its

weight in gold because it requires 100,000 crocus flowers to produce one kilo of dried stigmas.)

Medical authorities of the Salerno School recommended the use of saffron: “Saffron arouses joy in every breast, / Settles the stomach, gives the liver rest.”

In 2014, 250,000 kg were produced worldwide. Iran is responsible for around 90–93% of global production, and much of its produce is exported. A few of Iran's drier eastern and southeastern provinces, including Fars, Kerman, and those in the Khorasan region, glean the bulk of modern global production.

**(Source: author research)**

### *Chapter Notes: Two Lives Come Together*

#### **Page 283**

#### ***Pochettes (pocket squares)***

“The origin of the pocket square goes all the way back to the ancient Greeks. Wealthy Greeks carried around perfumed hankies as early as 500 BCE. English and French noblemen carried perfumed and embroidered hankies in order to cover their noses from the stench of the streets and other people. In the early 1900s, a dapper gentleman would never leave the house without a pocket square tucked neatly into his suit’s breast pocket.”

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Pocket squares can be folded many different ways, including the square or presidential fold, the one-point fold, the two-point fold, the three-point fold, the four-point or Cagney fold, the puffed fold, the winged puff fold, the scallop fold, and the Dunaway fold.

**(Sources: “How to Properly Rock a Pocket Square,” *The Art of Manliness* blog; <http://www.realmenrealstyle.com/pocket-square-infographic/>)**

*Chapter Notes: La Vie en Rose*

*Des yeux qui font baisser les miens  
Un rire qui se perd sur sa bouche  
Voilà le portrait sans retouches  
De l'homme auquel j'appartiens  
Quand il me prend dans ses bras  
Il me parle tout bas  
Je vois la vie en rose  
Il me dit des mots d'amour  
Des mots de tous les jours  
Et ça me fait quelque chose  
Il est entré dans mon cœur  
Une part de bonheur  
Dont je connais la cause  
C'est lui pour moi, moi pour lui dans la vie  
Il me l'a dit, l'a juré pour la vie  
Et dès que je l'aperçois  
Alors je sens en moi  
Mon cœur qui bat  
Des nuits d'amour à plus finir  
Un grand bonheur qui prend sa place  
Des ennuis, des chagrins s'effacent  
Heureux, heureux à en mourir  
Quand il me prend dans ses bras  
Il me parle tout bas  
Je vois la vie en rose  
Il me dit des mots d'amour  
Des mots de tous les jours  
Et ça me fait quelque chose  
Il est entré dans mon cœur  
Une part de bonheur  
Dont je connais la cause  
C'est toi pour moi, moi pour toi dans la vie  
Il me l'a dit, l'a juré pour la vie  
Et dès que je t'aperçois  
Alors je sens dans moi  
Mon cœur qui bat  
La la, la la, la la  
La la, la la, ah la  
La la la la*

—Edith Piaf, “La Vie en Rose” (Soleiman and Suzanna’s favorite song)

WHERE THEY PERISHED: A TOO-BRIEF MEMORIAL FOR THE KOHN  
FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS KNOWN TO HAVE PERISHED IN THE  
SHOAH

*Mourner's Kaddish*

יְתַגַּדַּל וְיִתְקַדַּשׁ שְׁמֵיּהּ רַבָּא.

[אמן]

בְּעֶלְמָא דִּי בְּרָא, כְּרַעוּתָהּ. וְיִמְלִיךְ מַלְכוּתָהּ, וְיַצְמַח פְּרֻקָּנָהּ, וְיִקְרַב מְשִׁיחָהּ. [אמן]  
בְּחַיִּיכוֹן וּבְיוֹמֵיכוֹן וּבְחַיֵּי דְכָל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּעַגְלָא וּבְזִמְן קָרִיב, וְאַמְרוּ אָמֵן  
[אמן יְהֵא שְׁמֵיּהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ, לְעָלְמָא לְעָלְמֵי עָלְמֵינָא]

יְהֵא שְׁמֵיּהּ רַבָּא מְבָרַךְ, לְעָלְמָא לְעָלְמֵי עָלְמֵינָא וְיִתְבַּרַךְ וְיִשְׁתַּבַּח וְיִתְפָּאֵר וְיִתְרַומֵם וְיִתְנַשֵּׂא וְיִתְהַדָּר וְיִתְעַלֶּה וְיִתְהַלָּל, שְׁמֵהּ  
דְּקֻדְשָׁא בְּרִיךְ הוּא.

[אמן]

לְעֵלְמָא מִן-כָּל-בְּרַכְתָּא, שִׁירְתָּא, תְּשֻׁבָתָא וְנִחְמָתָא דְאַמְיָרָן בְּעֶלְמָא, וְאַמְרוּ אָמֵן.

[אמן]

יְהֵא שְׁלָמָא רַבָּא מִן שְׁמַיָּא וְחַיִּים עָלֵינוּ וְעַל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאַמְרוּ אָמֵן.

[אמן]

עֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּמִרוֹמָיו, הוּא בְּרַחֲמָיו יַעֲשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם עָלֵינוּ, וְעַל כָּל-עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְאַמְרוּ אָמֵן.

[אמן]

*Yitgadal v'yitkadash sh'mei raba. B'alma di v'ra chirutei, v'yamlichmalchutei,  
b'chayeichon uv'yomeichon uv'chayei d'chol beit Yisrael, baagala uviz'man  
kariv. V'im'ru: Amen.*

*Y'hei sh'mei raba m'varach l'alam ul'almei almaya. Yitbarach v'yishtabach  
v'yitpaar v'yitromam v'yitnasei, v'yit'hadar v'yitaleh v'yit'halal sh'mei d'kud'sha  
b'rich hu, leila min kol birchata v'shirata, tushb'chata v'nechemata, daamiran  
b'alma. V'imru: Amen.*

*Y'hei sh'lama raba min sh'maya, v'chayim aleinu v'al kol Yisrael.  
V'imru: Amen.*

*Oseh shalom bimromav, Hu yaaseh shalom aleinu, v'al kol Yisrael. V'imru:  
Amen.*

Exalted and hallowed be God's great name in the world which God created, according to plan. May God's majesty be revealed in the days of our lifetime and the life of all Israel—speedily, imminently, to which we say Amen.

Blessed be God's great name to all eternity. Blessed, praised, honored, exalted, extolled, glorified, adored, and lauded be the name of the Holy Blessed One, beyond all earthly words and songs of blessing, praise, and comfort. To which we say Amen.

May there be abundant peace from heaven, and life, for us and all Israel, to which we say Amen.

May the One who creates harmony on high, bring peace to us and to all Israel. To which we say Amen.



### *Where They Perished: April 1942, Lublin, Poland*

*Author note: Many Jews from Teschen were initially sent to Lublin<sup>148</sup> in the early days of the war, including Kohn family friend Eric Better's father, Jacob Better. Some came back to Teschen, only to be deported again. Others were deported from Lublin to various extermination camps.*

*In 1938, one of Julius's cousins was living in Prague, and four were living in Kraków. No records exist confirming their fate. Likely, however, that these five cousins were initially deported to Lublin and/or they were later deported to/perished in Theresienstadt or Auschwitz. The five cousins were: Nelly Forster Balabene (daughter of Malvine [Kohn] Forster, one of Julius's paternal aunts, who is buried in Cieszyn), living in Prague; Stefania Kraus, Ida [Kraus] Ostowy, living in Kraków and Ella [Kraus] Moniewski and her son Alfred, living in Kraków (daughters of Emilie [Kohn] Kraus, one of Julius's paternal aunts.*

*In the Uberti family, Stella Huppert, one of Arturo Uberti's sisters and thus one of Elsa [Eisner] Uberti's sisters-in-law, died in the Warsaw Ghetto with her seven-year-old son.*

*The family of Eric Better—an apprentice to Julius Kohn whose brothers were friendly with Peter Kohn—lost almost an entire generation in the Nazi camps, including Eric's parents, Jacob and Resi, and three of their siblings.*

### *About Lublin | A 1944 Report*

“The liquidation of the Jews in the Government General began at Passover 1942.<sup>149</sup> The first victims were the Jews of the city of Lublin, and shortly after that the Jews of the whole District of Lublin. They were evacuated to Bełżec [on the same route to Lwów the Kohns took], and

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<sup>148</sup> The Nisko-Lublin Plan was “developed by the Germans at the beginning of World War II for the expulsion of Jews living in German-occupied areas to the Lublin region of Poland. Adolf Eichmann and Franz Stahlecker initiated the plan. They chose Nisko, near the eastern Galician border, as the site for a transit camp for the Jews, from which the Jews would be resettled in the Lublin district of the Generalgouvernement. The Lublin Reservation [300 to 400 square miles located between the Vistula and San rivers southeast of Lublin] was slated to be ‘a Jewish state under German administration.’ Near the end of 1939, this plan was accepted among SS leaders.

“The first transport of 901 Jews from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia set off for Nisko on 18 October. When they arrived, the Jews were forced to set up barracks in a swampy field. Another 1,800 Jews from Katowice and Vienna arrived a few days later. However, despite Eichmann's long-term plans for the site, the transports were soon stopped, and the camp was shut down in April 1940.

“Officially, the Nisko and Lublin Plan was cancelled due to ‘technical difficulties,’ which probably referred to the difficulties Heinrich Himmler had in finding jobs for those ethnic Germans he had resettled in Poland in place of the Jews. Additionally, Hitler lost interest in a Jewish reservation—and turned his attention to deadlier means of solving the ‘Jewish question’” (“Nisko and Lublin Plan,” Yad Vashem, Shoah Resource Center, The International School for Holocaust Studies).

<sup>149</sup> In other words, as Josefina and Suzanna were arriving/settling in Iran, their relations and friends were being deported to/murdered in Nazi ghettos and camps.

there they were killed in new gas-chambers that had been built especially for this purpose. The Jewish Underground newspapers gave detailed descriptions of this mass slaughter. But [the Jews of] Warsaw did not believe it! Common human sense could not understand that it was possible to exterminate tens and hundreds of thousands of Jews.”<sup>150</sup>

*About Lublin | Historical account*

“At first Jews were sent from ghettos to Bełżec, then to Sobibór, and finally to Bełżec, Sobibór, and Treblinka. Over the course of 1942, some 1.3 million Polish Jews were murdered in these three death facilities. In Warsaw alone, in what was called the *Grosse Aktion* [big action], some 265,040 Jews were deported to Treblinka and murdered and another 10,380 shot in the ghetto between 23 July 1942, and 21 September 1942. Tens of thousands remained, mostly young men, as the ghetto became a labor camp.”<sup>151</sup>

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*Where They Perished: May 1942-1943, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Poland)*

*| Genealogical records*

- ♦ **Heinrich Zehngut**, one of Eric Better’s uncles, murdered 16 May 1942, age fifty-two.
- ♦ **Oskar Borger**, one of Ernst Borger’s brothers, murdered June 1942, age forty-seven.
- ♦ **Berta Zehngut**, one of Eric Better’s aunts, murdered June 1942, age forty-five
- ♦ **Olga Zehngut**, One of Eric Better’s aunts, murdered 1942 (likely June), age thirty-seven.
- ♦ **Walter Borger**, one of Ernst Borger’s brothers, murdered 7 July 1942, age thirty-eight.
- ♦ **Jacob Better**, Eric Better’s father, murdered 1943, age fifty-three.
- ♦ **Resi [Zehngut] Better**, Eric Better’s mother, murdered 1943, age forty-seven.

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<sup>150</sup> From a report by Yitzhak Cukierman in Warsaw in March 1944, and sent to London on 24 May 1944, through the Polish Underground; reprinted in Yitzhak Arad, et al., editors; translated by Lea Ben Dor, *Documents on the Holocaust*, eighth edition (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press and Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1999), p. 277.

<sup>151</sup> Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning*, p. 202.

*About Auschwitz | Testimony at Nuremberg Tribunals*

“When a Jewish transport came there was a ‘selection.’ First the old women, the mothers and the children. They were told to get on trucks, together with the sick and people who looked weak. They kept only young girls, young women and young men; the latter were sent to the men’s camp. [...]

“The [gas] capsules were thrown down into the room through a hole in the ceiling. An SS man observed the effect through a spy-hole. After about five to seven minutes, when the gas had done its job, he gave a signal for the opening of the doors. Men with gas-masks, these were prisoners too, came in and took the bodies out. They told us that the prisoners must have suffered before they died, because they clung together in bunches like grapes so that it was difficult to separate them.”<sup>152</sup>

*About Auschwitz | The Commandant’s Autobiography*

“Eichmann came to Auschwitz and disclosed [...] plans for the operations as they affected various countries concerned. [...] First was to come the eastern part of Upper Silesia and neighboring parts of Polish territory under German rule, then [...] Jews from Germany and Czechoslovakia, and finally the Jews from the West: France, Belgium and Holland. [...]

“[...] The extermination [...] could only be done by gassing, since it would have been absolutely impossible to dispose by shooting of the large numbers of people that were expected, and it would have placed too heavy a burden on the SS men who had to carry it out, especially because of the women and children among the victims.

“[...] A peasant farmstead situated in the north-west corner of what later became the third building sector at Birkenau would be the most suitable. It was isolated and screened by woods and hedges, and it was not far from the railway. The bodies could be placed in long, deep pits dug in the nearby meadows. [...] It would be possible to kill about 800 people simultaneously with a suitable gas. These figures were borne out later in practice.”<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> From testimony given by a French woman, Marie-Claude Vaillant-Couturier at the Nuremberg Tribunals 1945-1946, reprinted in Yitzak Arad et al., editors, *Documents on the Holocaust*, pp. 359-361.

<sup>153</sup> Rudolf Höss, *Commandant of Auschwitz—The Autobiography of Rudolf Höss*, pp. 206-08, in *Documents on the Holocaust*, pp. 351-52.

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*Where They Perished: July–August 1942, Theresienstadt (Terezin), Czech Republic) | Genealogical records*

- ♦ **Laura [Kohn] Auspitz**, one of Julius Kohn’s aunts, was deported from Vienna in July 1942 to Theresienstadt, where she died in August 1942.<sup>154</sup>
- ♦ **Matilde [Hollender] Uberti**, mother of Arturo [Huppert] Uberti, died at Theresienstadt, date unknown.

*About Theresienstadt | Historical account*

Located in Terezin, a small town in the Czech Republic, Theresienstadt was an eighteenth-century military fortress built by the Emperor Joseph II. The Nazis repurposed it as a transit camp, labor-ghetto camp, and holding facility for Jews, most of whom were sent on to other labor camps and extermination camps.

The Nazis also used Theresienstadt in an elaborate propaganda scheme. “Succumbing to pressure following the deportation of Danish Jews to Theresienstadt, the Germans permitted the International Red Cross to visit in June 1944. It was all an elaborate hoax. The Germans intensified deportations from the ghetto shortly before the visit, and the ghetto itself was ‘beautified.’ Gardens were planted, houses painted, and barracks renovated. The Nazis staged social and cultural events for the visiting dignitaries. Once the visit was over, the Germans resumed deportations from Theresienstadt, which did not end until October 1944.

“[...] In 1942, the death rate within the ghetto was so high that the Germans built—to the south of the ghetto—a crematorium capable of handling almost 200 bodies a day.

“Of the approximately 140,000 Jews transferred to Theresienstadt, nearly 90,000 were deported to points further east and almost certain death. Roughly 33,000 died in Theresienstadt itself.”<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> In May 2016, Edward Cohen, the grandson of Julius Kohn and great-nephew of Laura [née Kohn] Auspitz, said kaddish and placed a stone from Theresienstadt on the gravestone of Laura’s sister Malvina [Kohn] Forster (another great aunt of Edward), who is buried in the “new” Jewish cemetery in Teschen.

<sup>155</sup> “Theresienstadt,” US Holocaust Memorial Museum.

*About Theresienstadt | Description*

“Some sixty thousand people were crammed together in an area little more than a square kilometer in size—industrialists and manufacturers, lawyers and doctors, rabbis and university professors, singers and composers, bank managers, businessmen, shorthand typists, housewives, farmers, labourers and millionaires [...]—each of whom had to make do with about two square meters of space in which to exist and all of them, in so far as they were in any condition to do so or until they were loaded into trucks and sent on east [to extermination camps], obliged to work without remuneration in on of the primitive factories set up, with a view to generating actual profit, by the External Trade Section [...].

“[...] the number of the dead—entirely in line [...] with the intentions of the masters of the ghetto—rose to well above twenty thousand in the ten months between August 1942 and May 1943 alone [...].”<sup>156</sup>

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*Where They Perished: September 1942, Maly Trostinets (Minsk), Belarus | Genealogical records*

- ♦ **Richard Fasal** was Julius Kohn’s first cousin, the son of Julius’s aunt Luisa [Kohn] Fasal. He was deported to and died in Maly Trostinets in September 1942.

*About Maly Trostinets | Historical account*

“Maly Trostinets [...] concentration camp sits on the outskirts of Minsk, Belarus [and was] built by the Nazis in the summer of 1941, on the site of a Soviet kolkhoz (collective farm). [...]

“In 1943, the Germans began mass extermination of the prisoners in the camp, which continued into 1944.[...]

“The camp initially held Soviet prisoners of war, [...] captured after the German advance on the Soviet Union [...] known as Operation Barbarossa. But it became a Vernichtungslager, or extermination camp, on 10 May 1942 [...].

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<sup>156</sup> W. S. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, p. 236-37; 240

“Many were killed before reaching the camp, as they were brought to the nearby Blagovshchina and Shashkovka forests, where [...] most of the victims were lined up in front of large pits and shot [in the back of the neck]. Tractors then flattened the pits out. The prisoners in the camp were forced to sort through the victims’ possessions and maintain the camp. However, the primary purpose of the extermination camp was the eradication of the Jewish population of Minsk and the surrounding areas, by means of mobile gas chambers.

Although when the Soviets arrived at the camp on 3 July 1944, they had found a few Jewish prisoners who had previously escaped, no survivors of the camp are known to exist. Original estimates of the number of people killed there ranged from 200,000 to more than half a million. Yad Vashem currently estimates that 65,000 Jews were murdered at the camp, and signage there indicates that the camp claimed 206,000 victims. The numbers are unclear because the Nazis destroyed every record of the Maly Trostinets camp. Currently nothing remains of the camp other than a row of poplars planted by the inmates as part of the border of the camp.”<sup>157</sup>

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*Where They Perished: 1943, Lodz Ghetto, Poland | Genealogical records*

- ♦ Editha [Kohn] Wolf, a first cousin to Julius Kohn’s father, Emerich, murdered 11 April 1943. Her husband, Richard Wolf, died in 1942, likely deported to Chelmno.

*About the Lodz Ghetto | Historical account*

The city of Lodz is located about seventy-five miles southwest of Warsaw, Poland. The Jews of Lodz formed the second largest Jewish community in prewar Poland, after Warsaw. German troops occupied Lodz one week after Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939. [...]

“In early February 1940, the Germans established a ghetto in the northeastern section of Lodz. About 160,000 Jews, more than a third of the city's population, were forced into a small area.”<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> “Concentration Camps: Maly Trostinets,” Jewish Virtual Library,

<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Holocaust/malytrostenets.html>

<sup>158</sup> “Lodz,” in the Holocaust Encyclopedia, US Holocaust Memorial Museum

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*Where They Perished: 1944, Wieliczka, a subcamp of Plaszów, Poland |*

*Genealogical records*

- ♦ **Emil Borger**, one of Ernst Borger's brothers, murdered June 1944, age forty-nine.
- ♦ **Hermine [Kohn] Borger**, Emil Borger's wife, murdered June 1944, age forty-seven.
- ♦ **Lydia Borger**, Emil and Hermine's daughter, murdered June 1944, age twenty.

*About Plaszów | Historical account*

“The camp of Plaszów was originally designed to be a work camp. However, as in many other Nazi camps, shortages of food existed, and prisoners starved or were worked to death or summarily shot for no reason. The camp had been opened in December 1942. More than 150,000 civilians were held prisoner in Plaszow.”

“One use of slave labor was to obliterate all trace of earlier mass murders. At Himmler's instigation, a series of special units, known collectively as Unit 10051, were forced to dig up the putrefied corpses of those slain, to burn them, and scatter the ashes. This work took nearly two years and involved exhuming more than two million corpses. At Plaszów, in January 1945, a Unit 10051 was forced to exhume 9,000 bodies from eleven mass graves.

“Other units, working at different times at the murder sites, were themselves murdered once their work was done. The SS wanted no trace to survive either of their crimes, or of the slave laborers who were being forced to hide them.

“The conditions of life in this camp were made dreadful by the SS commander of the camp, Amon Goeth. A prisoner in Plaszów was very lucky if he could survive in this camp more than four weeks. The camp in Spielberg's film *Schindler's List* is the exact description of Plaszów [...]. Life for the inmates was usually short and miserable.

“As the Russian forces advanced farther and farther westward, the Germans began the systematic evacuation of the slave labor camps in their path. From the camp at Plaszów, many hundreds were sent to Auschwitz, others westward to Mauthausen and Flossenbürg. On 18

January 1945, the camp was evacuated by death marches, during which thousands of prisoners died from starvation, disease or were shot if they were too weak to walk.”<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> “Plaszów: History & Overview,” Jewish Virtual Library:  
<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/Plaszow.html>)



## Chapter Notes: Epilogue: What Became of Them

*Author note: Polish refugees after the war included the refugees who had been deported and then released from the Gulag. While some returned to Poland, others emigrated all over the world. They settled in Israel, England, Australia (some 60,000 Polish refugees went to Australia, including Kohn family friend Eric Better and his family), New Zealand, Canada, North America, and South America. Some, of course, remained in Iran, and others still were left behind in the Soviet Union, primarily in Central Asia, Russia, and Siberia.*

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#### The Battle of Monte Cassino

Historian Norman Davies writes: “For every book or article which reflects on the Italian Campaign as a whole, a hundred celebrate the glory that was Monte Cassino. Yet the overall balance-sheet of the war in Italy cannot be judged on the outcome of one single, though important, episode.” The Italian Campaign (July 1943 to May 1945), notes Davies, consisted of three distinct phases:

**July-August 1943:** Allied forces landed in Sicily. The Polish Corps, in the Middle East at the time, did not take part in the Sicilian operation.

**August 1943 to June 1944:** the Allies crossed from Sicily to the toe of the boot of Italy. The Polish Corps started to arrive in southern Italy in the spring of 1944. The Battle for Monte Cassino (January-May 1944) was a key episode in the second phase of the Italian Campaign. As Davies notes, “It broke the Germans’ hold on south-central Italy, and opened the road to Rome.”

**4 June 1944:** the fall of Rome opened the third phase of the campaign, coinciding closely with the D-Day landings in Normandy.

Davies points out that the Battle for Monte Cassino comprised four separate battles fought by soldiers from a diversity of nations and ethnicities, including the Polish Army (itself consisting of Poles, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Jews, and Lithuanians), Canadians, Australians, French, Greeks, South Africans, Maoris from New Zealand, Brazilians, Sikhs and Ghurkhas from India, Senegalese from West Africa, and by Muslim Moroccan *spahis* and *goumiers*.

During the first battle (17 January to 11 February), the Allies struggled to advance and suffered almost 11,000 casualties. After the second battle (15-18 February 1944), the Allies, writes Davies, “failed to make any advance on the marginal gains of the first.” During the third battle (15-22 March), the 2nd New Zealand Division took the lead, but made no progress. Davies observes: “The fourth and final battle for Monte Cassino [...] could only take place after

two months of elaborate preparations.” General Anders knew his soldiers were eager to prove themselves in battle and when he was asked if the II Polish Corps could participate, he agreed.

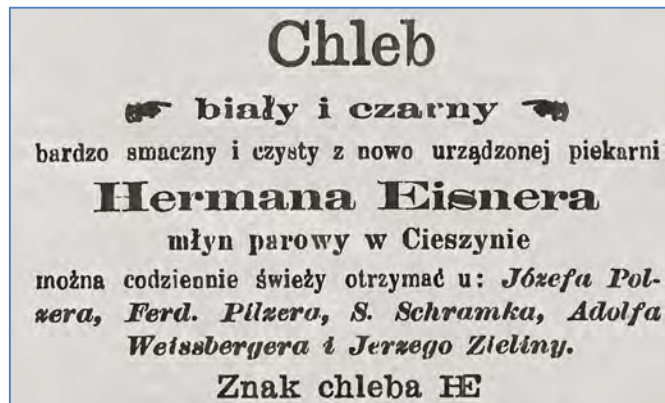
On 11 May 1944, General Anders issued his order. The Polish Corps were asked, Davies says, “for the near-impossible: to take Monastery Hill by frontal attack. The German defenders enjoyed every advantage: firing down from long-prepared and carefully hidden positions. [...] Not surprisingly [...], the first Polish assault on 12 May [...] did not bring the desired result, [and] 281 officers and 3,503 men were lost in the attempt.” However, the Allies persisted.

Davies writes: “It is sometimes said misleadingly that the Poles conquered Monte Cassino. It would be more accurate to say that they reached the summit of Monastery Hill in the crowning moment of a joint Allied operation. Yet it would be equally misleading to suggest that the Polish contribution was no greater or no less than that of all the others. The soldiers of General Anders had triumphed in face of unequalled adversity.”

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And yet, notes General Anders himself, in spite of these shared victories, when the Victory Parade was held in London on 8 June 1946, “the Polish forces, who had been the first to fight the Germans, and who even in the worst days had never deserted their allies, were not invited to take part.” Many voices were raised in protest, including that of Winston Churchill, who spoke at the House of Commons three days prior to the parade. “I deeply regret,” he said, “that none of the Polish troops, and I must say this, who fought with us on a score of battlefields, who poured out their blood in the common cause, are to be allowed to march in the Victory Parade.”

**(Source: Norman Davies, *Trail of Hope*, pp. 430; 436; 447-458; General Władysław Anders, *An Army in Exile*)**



### Hermann Eisner's bakery

Above is an advertisement for Hermann Eisner's bread, listing all the shops in Teschen in which it was sold.

## SOURCES CITED, CONSULTED, RECOMMENDED

**NOTE:** *The following list of sources does not include many important works made before, during, or after the Holocaust, nor does it contain a multitude of works about the various countries and places treated in this narrative. However, these are the books, essays, films, and other resources cited or consulted in making this book, along with some which do not relate directly to the book but are recommended for context.*

*Several resources specific to Nazi terror include:*

- The multivolume *Jewish Responses to Persecution*: Volume I, 1933-1938 (US Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2010); Volume II, 1938-1940 (US Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2011); Volume III, 1941-1942 (US Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2013); Volume IV, 1942-1943 (US Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2014); and Volume V, 1944-1946 (US Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2015). This project is part of the USHMM series, *Documenting Life and Destruction: Holocaust Sources in Context*. It includes a source reader comprising materials from all five volumes.
- *Holocaust Literature: A History and Guide*, edited by David G. Roskies and Naomi Diamant (Brandeis University Press, 2012).
- *Bearing Witness: A Resource Guide to Literature, Poetry, Art, Music, and Videos by Holocaust Victims and Survivors*, edited by Philip Rosen and Nina Apfelbaum (Greenwood Press, 2002).

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[https://web.archive.org/web/20030118221508/http://americanet.com/Sinai/resources/sermons/Zwerin\\_YKKN02.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20030118221508/http://americanet.com/Sinai/resources/sermons/Zwerin_YKKN02.html) Tract about the *lamed vov*.

## VIDEO & FILM SOURCES

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*About Elly*, directed by Asghar Farhadi, 2015.

Three married couples and their three young children, their friend returned from Germany, and a schoolteacher spend a weekend by the sea, which ends in mystery and tragedy.

*Ashes and Diamonds*, directed by Andrzej Wajda, 1958.

Set on the last day of the war.

*A Forgotten Odyssey: The Untold Story of 1,700,000 Poles Deported to Siberia in 1940*, written and directed by Jagna Wright, 2000.

⇒ See synopsis: <http://www.derekcrowe.com/post.aspx?id=31>

*A Generation*, directed by Andrzej Wajda, 1955.

Set in 1942 in Poland, the main narrative in this film concerns a laborer who joins the Polish resistance.

*Hannah Arendt*, directed by Margarethe von Trotta, 2012.

Depicts Arendt's reportage on the Eichmann trial and the controversy that surrounded her series of articles in the *New Yorker* magazine.

*Ida*, directed by Paweł Pawlikowski, 2013.

Set in 1962, this film tells the story of a young novice who discovers that she was placed in a convent—where she grows up and comes of age—because she was Jewish.

*The Imitation Game*, directed by Morton Tyldum, 2014.

Set during WW II, this biopic about Alan Turing (who cracked the Nazi's Enigma Machine) features footage from the war.

*Kanal*, directed by Andrzej Wajda, 1957.

A film about the Warsaw Uprising of 1944.

*Katyn*, directed by Andrzej Wajda, 2007.

The film begins on 17 September 1939, when the Russians invaded Poland. Much of it is set in Kraków.

*The Last of the Unjust*, directed by Claude Lanzmann, 2013.

Documentary by the maker of the epic film *Shoah* about Theresienstadt, featuring interviews with that ghetto's sole surviving Jewish Elder, Benjamin Murelstein.

*The Last Requiem*, directed by Khosrow Sinai, 1983.  
A meditation on the Polish refugees in Iran from 1942 on.

*Rabbit à Berlin*, directed by Bartosz Konopka, 2009.  
A contemporary Polish filmmaker looks at the rabbits living between the walls separating East and West Berlin.

*Saved by Deportation: An Unknown Odyssey of Polish Jews*, directed by Slawomir Grunberg, nd.  
A documentary that traces the story of a Jewish couple from Poland who survived the war because they were deported to the USSR.

*The Shop on Main Street*, directed by Ján Kadár and Elmar Klos, 1965.  
Czech New Wave masterpiece about the Aryanization of a Jewish widow's shop in a small Slovakian town.

*Siege*, directed by Julien Bryan, 1940.  
Documentary short about the siege of Warsaw.

*The Third Man*, directed by Carol Reed, 1950.  
Set in post-war Vienna and based on the Graham Greene novella of the same title.

*Two Men and a Wardrobe*, directed by Roman Polanski, 1958.  
Polanski's student film, a study in postwar violence.

*The White Ribbon*, directed by Michael Haneke, 2009.  
A historical parable about the origins of mob violence and secrecy.

*Woman in Gold*, directed by Simon Curtis, 2015.  
Sixty years after fleeing Vienna, Maria Altmann (Helen Mirren), an elderly Jewish woman, attempts to reclaim family possessions that were seized by the Nazis. Among them is a famous portrait of Maria's Aunt Adele: Gustave Klimt's *Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I*.

*The Zookeeper's Wife*, directed by Niki Caro, 2017.  
True story of a Gentile couple in Warsaw who, during the war, tended to the animals in the Warsaw Zoo and sheltered Jews hiding from the Nazis.

*Museums and Memorials Dedicated to Jewish Life in Poland*

- <http://www.en.galiciajewishmuseum.org/>  
Galicia Jewish Museum (in Kraków): Founded in 2004 by Jewish and British photojournalist Chris Schwarz (whose family is from L'viv), with the purpose of documenting the 800-year cultural history of Jews in Galicia.
- [http://forward.com/news/307318/polish-memorial-to-righteous-suffers-new-setback-as-design-is-tossed/?utm\\_source=Sailthru&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=The%20Forward%20Today%20%28Monday-Friday%29&utm\\_campaign=New%20Daily%202015-05-02](http://forward.com/news/307318/polish-memorial-to-righteous-suffers-new-setback-as-design-is-tossed/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_term=The%20Forward%20Today%20%28Monday-Friday%29&utm_campaign=New%20Daily%202015-05-02)  
Article about setback to new memorial to Warsaw Uprising
- <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29741865>  
A new museum in Warsaw tells the rich and complex story of 1,000 years of Jewish life in Poland.

*General European History, World War II, and Anders' Army*

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxDyJ\\_6N-6A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uxDyJ_6N-6A)  
Time-lapse map of Europe over 6013 years.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOVEy1tC7nk>  
Time-lapse map of the war: seconds 15-20 represent September 1 to October.
- <http://polishgreatness.blogspot.com/2011/05/battle-of-monte-cassino-phase-four.html>  
Detailed account, with photos, of the Battle of Monte Cassino.
- <http://www.rymaszewski.iinet.net.au/6escape.html>  
Franek Rymaszewski's personal account of serving in Anders Army.

*The Poles in Soviet Russia During WWII:*

- <http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~sarmatia/102/221ptas.html>  
The *Samaritan Review* reprinted the Zofia Ludwika Malachowska Ptasnik's Diary of Deportation, Forced Labor, and Death in Kazakhstan: 13 April 1940-26 May 1941.
- <http://www.derekcrowe.com/post.aspx?id=31>  
Synopsis of *A Forgotten Odyssey: The Untold Story of 1,700,000 Poles Deported to Siberia in 1940*, written and directed by Jagna Wright; produced by Jagna Wright and Aneta Naszynska. In English and Polish with English subtitles. 52 minutes. Released in 2000.



- See also a long excerpt at: <http://info-poland.buffalo.edu/KH.html>  
Jews without passports were deported to Siberian camps; Polish Jews with passports stayed in Poland (most perished in camps or at the hands of the Nazis):  
<http://njmonthly.com/articles/lifestyle/a-reunion-for-stalins-jews.html>  
<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/Kresy-Siberia/conversations/topics/52480>  
<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/Kresy-Siberia/info>

### Miscellany: Poland; Hapsburg Empire

#### Cieszyn

- <http://www.sztetl.org.pl/en/city/cieszyn/>  
Includes a reminiscence of Cieszyn by Dr. Shramek.
- <http://www.muzeumdrukarni.pl/en/index.php?md=historia>  
Website of the Printing Museum in Cieszyn. An award-winning printer named Thomas Prochaska bought the printing house owned by Fabian Beinhauer in 1806. In 1848, Prochaska published the first Polish-language weekly magazine, *Tygodnik Cieszyński*. He also ran a bookshop at Rynek 6.
- <http://www.avion.tesinsko.cz/historia.html>  
History of the Café Avion on the bridge between Český-Těšín and Cieszyn

#### Sergius Pauser, Frederick Sinaiberger

- <http://www.sergiuspauser.com/en/biography>  
Website devoted to the painter Sergius Pauser.
- <http://refugeetales.com/2010/06/29/lost-worlds-of-the-austro-hungarian-empire/#comments>  
Blog post about Sergius Pauser (“Vienna on the Vistula”).

#### Poland Miscellany

- <http://culture.pl/en/article/the-hussies-and-gentlemen-of-prewar-poland>  
Fashion of prewar Poland, with special emphasis on 1930s. Includes a picture of the president of Poland in Cieszyn
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-29915863>  
Chopin’s heart, preserved in cognac and smuggled into Poland by his sister, reveals a mystery surrounding his death.

#### Jews in Various Commerce Sectors/Eastern Europe and Poland

- [https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud\\_0002\\_0012\\_0\\_12000.html](https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0012_0_12000.html)  
A brief and informative history of Jewish participation in the leather industry and trade.
- <https://books.google.com/books?id=82ncGA4GuN4C&pg=PA75&dq=history+of+Polish+tanneries&hl=en&sa=X&ei=rbM3VcX->

[DrC1sQSq\\_4HoDg&ved=0CB8QuwUwAA#v=onepage&q=history%20of%20Polish%20tanneries&f=false](http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Transportation)

This particular section of Joseph Marcus's *Social and Political History of the Jews in Poland, 1919-1939* is on Jewish merchants and commerce in Poland.

- <http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Transportation>  
About involvement of Jews in transportation industries in Eastern Europe.

Lviv

- [http://www.wsj.com/article\\_email/ukraines-most-hopeful-city-lviv-1433512065-IMyQjAxMTI1MzA3NjEwMjYwWj](http://www.wsj.com/article_email/ukraines-most-hopeful-city-lviv-1433512065-IMyQjAxMTI1MzA3NjEwMjYwWj)  
*Wall Street Journal* article on contemporary Lviv.

#### Oral History Sources: Jewish Life in Poland

- <http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn73246>  
David Feuerstein, born in Cieszyn, Poland in 1925, describes his orthodox family; being a part of the Zionist movement Hashomer Hatzair; attending both a Catholic school and a *cheder*; how his faith helped him throughout the war; moving with his family in 1933 to Sosnowiec, Poland, where they had a dairy store; going to the Hashomer Hatzair summer colony in Jeleśnia, Poland; seeing a tank for the first time; returning home in August 1939 and talking with his rabbi that Hitler would kill the Jews, which was met with disbelief; leaving for Katowice, Poland; being forced to clean the streets in 1941; how his family was sent to Auschwitz; how his mother corresponded with him until she, his father, and their three children were killed in the gas chambers on 15 August 1943; the survival of his little brother; being sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau and living in block 8 with Dutch Jews; a day in the camp; receiving his tattoo in 1942; being sent to Warsaw, Poland, with 1,000 other Jews; being quarantined upon arrival; working in the kitchen for the SS; working with the resistance in Warsaw and Auschwitz and killing a few Nazis; fighting in the forest on 15 August 1944; becoming a lieutenant in the Polish Army; traveling to Switzerland illegally; being helped by the American embassy in Zurich, Switzerland; living in Argentina and Chile; his reflections on the war years and his survival; how Stalin lied to the Allies and they could have stopped the war twenty-five months earlier; his admiration of Churchill; his belief that whoever is silent is an accomplice; how he is not looking for vengeance; and still having dreams of the war.
- <http://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn73245>  
Pedro Feldman, born 27 August 1925 in Vienna, Austria, describes his bourgeois family and his ancestors; his youth and attending public school; his lack of exposure to anti-Semitism until Hitler was in power; his father's role as the human resource officer at Danube National Ship Company; the measures taken by his family to prevent his father from being deported to Dachau; being kicked out of public school and finishing at a Jewish school; the family's immigration to Holland at the end of 1938; their immigration to Chile via France; the fates of his grandparents; and returning to Vienna after the war.

## ONLINE SOURCES: IRAN

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### *Places in Iran/Tehran*

- <http://trains-worldexpresses.com/500/502.htm>  
Detailed chronology of Soviet rail lines, showing travel from Persia to Europe.
- <http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Lalezar-Street-Champs-Élysées-of-Iran.htm>  
Historical overview of the building of Lalezar Street in Tehran.
- <http://www.bidoun.org/magazine/07-tourism/hotel-naderi-tehran-gone-is-mrs-kakoubian-by-negar-azimi/>  
<http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Naderi-Caf%C3%A9.htm>  
Includes photos and description of the Hotel Naderi in Tehran.
- [http://www.7dorim.com/Tasavir/kenisa\\_haeem\\_danial.asp](http://www.7dorim.com/Tasavir/kenisa_haeem_danial.asp)  
[http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danial\\_Synagogue](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Danial_Synagogue)  
On the Ashkenazi synagogue in Tehran.
- [https://www.google.com/?gws\\_rd=ssl#q=iran+1920%27s&imgrc=17frEVLrQRZuWM%253A%3Bundefined%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.iranian.com%252FPictory%252F2004%252FSeptember%252FImages%252Fes2.jpg%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fz7.invisionfree.com%252Fbodazey%252Far%252Ft251.htm%3B687%3B504](https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=iran+1920%27s&imgrc=17frEVLrQRZuWM%253A%3Bundefined%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fwww.iranian.com%252FPictory%252F2004%252FSeptember%252FImages%252Fes2.jpg%3Bhttp%253A%252F%252Fz7.invisionfree.com%252Fbodazey%252Far%252Ft251.htm%3B687%3B504)  
Results of a Google search; many images of 1920s Iran.
- <http://iranian.com/Arts/2004/October/Tehran/16.html>  
<https://www.tumblr.com/search/mahmoud%20pakzad>  
Photographs by Mahmoud Pakzad, from *Old Tebran* (Did Publishing, 1994):  
Wonderful black-and-white images of the city from the 1940s-1970s.

### *Cultural and Religious Traditions / History of Persian Jews*

- [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSONtDJI97c&feature=youtube\\_gdata\\_player](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSONtDJI97c&feature=youtube_gdata_player)  
Traditions of Jewish Persian music throughout history. Includes recordings.
- <http://www.iranonline.com/History/jews-history/4.html>  
A brief history of Jews in Iran.
- <http://www.aiu.org/fr>  
Website of the Alliance Israelite Universelle

### *Modern/Contemporary Persian Jews of Note*

- [http://www.jewishjournal.com/community/article/recalling\\_elghanians\\_execution\\_30\\_years\\_later\\_20090506/#.VKID\\_zjgB0g.mailto](http://www.jewishjournal.com/community/article/recalling_elghanians_execution_30_years_later_20090506/#.VKID_zjgB0g.mailto)  
On the execution of Habib Elghanian: In 1979, “philanthropist Habib Elghanian became the first Jew executed by Iran’s radical Islamic regime after he was falsely charged and convicted of spying for Israel. His death by firing squad on May 9, 1979, sent shockwaves through Iran’s tight-knit Jewish community, which once lived in

relative peace under the Shah. It prompted scores of Iran's nearly 80,000 Jews to immediately sell off or abandon their assets and flee the country. At least 13 Jews have been executed in Iran since Elghanian." This article features remembrances by friends and family, including some from a son, a brother, and his niece Sharon Cohanim.

- <http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/04/22/iran-executed-my-grandfather-now-the-regime-is-trying-to-hide-the-way-it-has-treated-other-jews/>

Shahrzad Elghanayan is the granddaughter of Habib Elghanian and is writing a book about her grandfather's execution. Opinion piece for the *Washington Post*, April 22, 2015.

- <http://tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/187519/how-iran-kept-its-jews>

After Habib Elghanian's execution, the attempts by Jews to secure safety involved direct communication with Khomeini.

- <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007452>

On Abdol Hossein Sardari: The "Iranian Schindler," Mr. Sardari saved thousands of Iranian Jews.

### *Polish Refugees in Iran and Tehran Children*

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWTOVlqCO1o>  
Pathé Newsreel of Polish people evacuated to Iran/Palestine.
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpJvDQVX\\_Dc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HpJvDQVX_Dc)  
Pathé Newsreel of Poles in Persia.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ry5ERzEOU5c>  
*Lost Requiem*, a 1983 documentary by Khosrow Sinai on Polish Jews in Iran.
- Websites and resources about the Tehran children, who were evacuated to Tehran, Iran, before finally reaching Palestine in 1943:  
<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007498>;  
<http://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/tehran/tehran.html>;  
<http://www.zchor.org/tehran/children.htm>;  
<http://search.aol.com/aol/image?q=YALDEI+TEHRAN>;  
<http://www.israelfilmcenter.org/israeli-film-database/films/the-children-of-teheran>
- [http://www.parstimes.com/history/polish\\_refugees/exodus\\_russia.html](http://www.parstimes.com/history/polish_refugees/exodus_russia.html)  
Detailed descriptions of Pahlavi and refugee camps; includes first-person testimony.
- <https://www.flickr.com/photos/stationarynomads/3790371652/>  
Port of Pahlavi (now Anzali), Iran 1942: personal photos of refugees in Iran.
- <http://poetrania.blogspot.com/2009/08/polish-war-cemetery-at-anzali-formerly.html>  
The Polish War Cemetery at Anzali (formerly Pahlavi), Iran | Antolak: The Deep Poetry: First-person account of the cemetery in Iran.

### *Persian Jews in the U.S.*

- <http://m.forward.com/articles/208173/>  
How Jews from Iran Jews Shaped Modern LA.
- <http://m.forward.com/articles/212745/how-iranian-jewish-women-started-a-writers-revolut/>  
On Jewish-Iranian women writers, including Gina Nahai and Dalia Sofer.
- <http://www.jewishquarterly.org/issuearchive/article4bda.html?articleid=156>  
On Jewish-Iranian Women Writers.
- [http://www.jewishjournal.com/gina\\_nahai/article/and\\_still\\_it\\_moves](http://www.jewishjournal.com/gina_nahai/article/and_still_it_moves)  
Essay by Gina Nahai on contemporary Jews from Iran in the U.S. and traditional customs.
- <http://www.sephardi.house>  
Website of the American Sephardi Federation.
- <https://video.search.yahoo.com/video/play?p=iran+is+great+vimeo&vid=96cad270c738dd9c9bbc60e8e63b5ef1&l=29%3A25&turl=http%3A%2F%2Fts3.mm.bing.net%2Fth%3Fid%3DWN.Kes7zSzd2SHGznUhwP6CBA%26pid%3D15.1&rurl=http%3A%2F%2Fvimeo.com%2F56052808&tit=Iranian+in+New+york+-+Great+Neck&c=2&sigr=10qtemq58&sigt=110sumk5t&sigi=11v7pft0u&ct=p&age=1356039702&fr2=p%3As%2Cv%3Av&hsimp=yhs-002&hspart=mozilla&tt=b>  
Video about the Jewish-Persian Community of Great Neck, NY.

### *Jews in Present-Day Iran*

- [http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.rna.org/resource/resmgr/contest\\_docs/nadine\\_epstein\\_sld.pdf](http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.rna.org/resource/resmgr/contest_docs/nadine_epstein_sld.pdf)  
On Jewish life in Iran post revolution: “Jews are free to practice Judaism. That doesn’t mean they are free.”
- <http://www.iranintelligence.com/reference-jewhistory>  
Website depicting the “truth” about life in Iran.
- <http://www.npr.org/blogs/parallels/2015/02/19/387265766/irans-jews-its-our-home-and-we-plan-to-stay>  
On Jews living in Iran today.