Szulim Rozenberg

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Interviewer: Anna Szyba

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I met Szulim Rozenberg in his Paris apartment, a veritable haven of Yiddish culture. The walls are hung with paintings, most of them by Josel Bergner, a school friend of Mr. Rozenberg's who now lives in Tel Aviv. The shelves are packed with Jewish books, and family photographs are displayed all around. Mr. Rozenberg is a wonderful man who becomes visibly moved as he reminisces about prewar times, when, he remembers, he "defied the poverty of his own family to discover the secrets of literature and science." Our journey through his childhood often resembles a paean to his friends and the teachers from the Jewish school he attended before the war. Although Mr. Rozenberg left Poland just after the war, and his native tongue is Yiddish, we talk in Polish. Hence the errors in his speech, which at times was hard to understand. However, I have attempted to reproduce his style faithfully.

My family background

I was born in Warsaw, on a street that was called Kupiecka, at no. 16, and that was on 11th November 1918. When Father saw that Mother was somehow restless, he said: 'Maybe we need that woman for you, to help you give birth?' And she [the midwife] came, and I was born quite quickly. So that was 8 babies. We had not long gone into that apartment and they didn't even have a large bowl to bath the born baby, so one of my sisters knocked to the neighbor opposite and said she wanted to borrow a bowl. And the neighbor said 'You can wash your hair tomorrow,' so my sister says: 'No, my mother has had a baby, I want it for the baby.'

My parents came from very poor families from Kozienice [90 km south of Warsaw]. Father, Szmul, was born in 1879; I think Mother was born in the same year, maybe in 1880. Her maiden name was Grinberg, Dwojra Rejla.

Both Father's parents and Mother's parents lived in Kozienice. I know nothing about my grandparents; I only know that Father's father was called Ichesil. My grandmother, Father's mother,

came to us one time. I don't remember what she was called; I was maybe 2 years old. We weren't in touch because there was no money to travel. My mother had a terrible tragedy: her mother – or maybe her father, I don't remember – died, and they didn't tell her. A few months later, when she found out, she sobbed: 'I would have walked to the funeral.'

My mother had a brother in Warsaw. And she had 3 brothers in Kozienice. The one who lived in Warsaw was called Jankiel Grinberg. He lived at 27 Pawia Street. We kept in touch with him but you couldn't go visit him because he lived in a pigsty, the conditions were a very low standard. There were 5 children there, 3 boys and I think 2 girls. The boys all survived, they were in Russia, and then 2 of them went to Israel and one to Canada. They are all dead now. Mother's brothers who lived in Kozienice was Fajwl, Lajbisz and Mendl.

Father had no family. He was very young when his father died. And there was a brother, because his children were in Warsaw: a daughter and a son, but I know nothing about that brother. The daughter, Chaje Frydman, married well, only her husband died fairly young. She had 3 children, 2 sons and 1 daughter. She used to come to our home often – my father was her uncle. We called her Auntie Chaja. She was a gutsy woman, knew everything, could do everything; she found a husband for my eldest sister. And she had a brother, called Chisel, who lived in Warsaw too, and that brother had a wife with TB. She lay for years in sanatoria, and died before the war.

I never went to Kozienice, but my 2 sisters, they went there. And my eldest brother went there, and lived a while there, did work for the Bund 1 and worked. The uncles, Mother's brothers, used to come and they always stayed with us.

The eldest, Fajwl, I only saw him one or two times, he came to buy something for his cobbler's workshop. And he had a son who wasn't very alright [he was sick] and he was in Warsaw too, we had to take him to the hospital. And that was the end of it, I never saw him again and we weren't in contact. The second, Lajbisz, he in 1905 2 was in the Russian army, near Japan, he ate frogs there. Later, still before the war, he went to Israel [ed. note: to Palestine]. In Israel he didn't make it either, the life was too hard and the heat was killing him, and he came back to Kozienice. They were all sitting in Poland, at home, on that one piece of bread. That Lajbisz, whenever he left [after visiting], he would always leave 10 or 20 groszy for the children. You remember that. The youngest, that was Mendl, he was a consumptive and he worked in Warsaw. They made him up a bed and he slept in our apartment. For quite a long time, but I don't remember any more, because I was still a child.

Father went to Warsaw to work as a young boy. That was at the beginning of the 1890s. And sometimes he would come back to his mother for the festivals. Once he came back and saw a girl standing in a doorway, trying not to be seen, and he liked the look of her, so he sent a shadkhan and the shadkhan said that he was a nice guy, he worked in Warsaw, and they got married. That could have been in 1898, because their first daughter, Golda, was born in 1900. And they went to Warsaw together and looked for an apartment.

Mother could have been about 19 when she had her first baby. 3 years later the 2nd baby, 2 years later the 3rd baby, 3 years later the 4th baby, and so on. During World War I they had a very bad apartment, they lived very miserably, with 5 children in this basement, at 58 Dzika Street, and shortly before I was born they decided to take that apartment at 16 Kupiecka Street, where I was born. That was a very nice house: on the 3rd floor, above us, they were 6 and 5 rooms. The same

on the second, and the same on the first.

Growing up

When I was born there were already 5 children at home before me. The eldest, Golda, was 18. They were thinking, about her, to get her married, but they were having trouble. She worked, she was a very resolute, bright girl. But what? She didn't mix with company. And because she didn't mix with company, she didn't have any friends. My second sister, Rajzla, who was about 3 years younger than her [b. 1903], went to the organization [Bund] and she had friends. And then there was the first son, who was called Ksil, born in 1905. So he was 13 when I was born and he went to cheder like all the other boys. Then there was Menasze, born in 1908, and in 1912 a third daughter was born, Ryfka, who was 6 years older than me, but she went to Polish elementary school. That was the first one who went to school.

On the first floor, where we lived, it was quite a big shop. There's no other way to describe it, because you came in off the street and there was a very high room, so my parents made this sort of gallery where they slept, and when I was small I slept there with Father up to a certain age. Underneath the gallery Father had his workbench, where he worked as a cobbler. Then there was another room, which was without windows, that was the "bath," because sometimes water came through from the second floor. When I was a child I slept there, but not alone, with my brother, and from time to time water would pour in, so we had a free bath. There was a kitchen, and the other rooms were separate [taken by another tenant].

On the third floor lived a family that had come from Russia; they had 2 daughters: one was a ballerina at Wysocka's [Tacjanna Wysocka, 1894-1970, dancer, choreographer, journalist. From 1918 she ran the theatrical dance section at the S. and T. Wysocki Music School], and she was always escorted home. And they had 2 sons, surgeons. Those doctors very rarely came to their parents'; they lived somewhere in the good districts of Warsaw, something near Marszalkowska [one of the widest, biggest boulevards in Warsaw]. From time to time their parents went to visit them. And then there was the eldest daughter, Ida, who looked after her parents, who were quite old, and she had no private life. On Saturdays, as a child, I used to go to them to ask for hot water, because we couldn't boil water for tea on Saturdays. But what? I would come and say: 'Please Miss Ida, can you give me a little fresh built water?' And she would say: 'Not "fresh built", "fresh boiled".' It took quite a long time for that to get into my head.

On the fourth floor lived the widow Ozarow, and on the second floor lived the 2 Wolkow sisters, with a daughter and a son. There were no husbands. They sublet rooms to someone, on a temporary basis, not permanently. For instance there was this young dancer, Musia Dajches, from Vilnius, who used to come and give concerts at the Novelty Theater 3. She was 10 years old and toured all over the world, she was the national celebrity of the Polish Jews. She danced in Israel. When she came, she always stayed with them. She was a child, so they needed a child to amuse her, play with her, so I was that young man.

My parents didn't go to any school. Maybe Father went to cheder – he had learned the prayers. That was all. He could sign his name in Russian, but in Polish not even that. At home we spoke Yiddish. My parents knew a few words of Polish. I learned Polish myself, from Grimm's fairytales. There on our street there was this shop that sold notebooks, pen nibs, ink, and he had these little

books. So for 2 groszy he would let me read one of those books. I learned to read Yiddish myself too, without school, from the newspapers that come to our house.

I liked my mother very much but she was a very unhappy woman, because she had not food to give her children. In winter we bought 2 sacks of potatoes and into the cellar, and a little onion, and that was our food. And the only thing, it was so tragic for Mother, was that she couldn't make Sabbath, because for Sabbath you had to have a few zloty to buy a fish, to buy a little bit of meat. Later, in the 1930s, my eldest sister Golda lived in Czerniakow and was doing well. Streetcar no. 2 went from there to us, so she would come to do her shopping on Mila Street. She would come, take Mother, and bought for Mother too. So that Sabbath was Sabbath, and I would take the chulent to the baker [Jews often took chulent to the baker's on Friday evening to put it in the baker's oven, to have a warm meal for the Sabbath, when they weren't allowed to cook]. You understand how that whole life went on?

Mother had that eldest son, Ksil, well, he was sickly, and she, when she was giving us food, well I would look at his plate, that he always had a spoonful more than all the others. And that hurt. And I remember how when I was working for the tailor and something needed delivering, the patron [owner] would give me the streetcar fare there and back. And I would nip there on foot and save the few groszy streetcar fare. Mother had these varicose veins on her legs and she suffered terribly, she was in bed, so I bought a satsuma for the groszy I'd saved, and took it to Mother.

I liked her a lot, only we didn't get on at all. With Father you could always talk a bit more, but not with Mother. She was always so withdrawn, and the poorness upset her so much that it was awful. Even now I cry when I see her, how she looked. From time to time she would go to visit my sisters, to Golda most of all, so she had to have enough for the streetcar. So when she got there, Golda gave her enough to get back.

The eldest granddaughter, Nechuma, was Rajzla's; she married a mechanic, Icchak Fruchtman, and he worked in a button factory, which was in the precinct on Nalewki at no. 2 – there was this precinct, Simons, there [Simons' precinct opened at the beginning of the 20th century on the corner of Dluga and Nalewki as a commercial building]. There was a factory there, a big unit, and in another unit the same was the union of tailors, and in the other unit was Jutrznia, Morgenstern 4. And he earned quite a good wage, but he was unemployed for a very long time, and only when he found a job there was great delight at such good fortune. They lived opposite me. I lived on Kupiecka, the second house, and here [adjacent] was Zamenhofa Street, at no. 21, and they had a balcony that gave onto the street, and when Nechuma went out onto the balcony she would shout 'Grandma, Grandma!' So we could see each other. But Mother didn't go to Rajzla's very often because her husband, when he came back from work, he would lie down on the couch, he was tired and didn't like having visitors. Ryfka married a Rubin Moszkowicz and went to live at 27 Dzielna Street, opposite Pawiak [a notorious Warsaw prison]. She had 2 children. Icchak was born in 1943 in Russia, Dwora she had in 1946 in Dzierzoniow.

Father was always busy, always smiling, always dashing off somewhere, always had some idea. He matched couples together, for instance, was a bit of a shadkhan, and found them apartments. And he would forget to take money. Apart from that he was always thinking of somebody. But he was very cheerful. He had a friend who was a half-rabbi. He wasn't an official rabbi, he just wore this round fur hat. He was very poor too, but very decent. They used to go the bar on Fridays and pay

so that they could go on Saturday and drink a little glass of vodka. And he would come home in such a good mood, come to his wife and kissed her, and she would say: ‘Oy! What are you doing?’ So he would say: ‘Let my children learn how to love a wife.’

Father had a little manufactory until the 1930s, which was in our house. There were about 12 people in it. When things were going worse, he made a pair of high boots, warm ones, with fur inside, took them under his overcoat and went out into the Polish district. He saw a woman selling apples, sitting at a cash desk, and it’s cold there. And he comes in and says: ‘Put them on, Ma’am.’ She puts a shoe like that on, and then she doesn’t want to undress it… And when he’d sold that pair he could buy material for another pair, and we had enough to eat for a few days. Only what? It was hard for him because he had no-one to second him. The eldest son, Ksil, he’d learned to make uppers and started work in the factory, but the first strike at Father’s it was he who organized.

We were very poor. On the one hand because my father got involved in causes like making a kitchen for the poor and taking them food. Our apartment wasn’t too big to start with, and then they set up this kitchen in it as well, to cook. On Thursdays he would go round shops and here they’d give him something, there they’d give him something else. And they’d do the cooking, and on Friday evening they’d take it to this big hall at 32 Muranowska Street. It was this hall that was hired for weddings, dances, and there they distributed the food. Father had a lot of energy and he was a very good man, and people like that have a very hard life.

In Poland rent at that time was quite expensive. And in the crisis years it was terrible. Before, when we had the shop, together with the kitchen and the little room we paid 82 zloty a month [a kilo of bread cost 30 groszy]. That was a terrible sum. To earn it the whole family had to work, and we didn’t always have it. So in 1932, when my sister Rajzla got married, they gave her the little gallery [the platform in the apartment on Kupiecka], to live in with her husband, and there she had a daughter. And later Father stopped working. He was around 50, and he couldn’t sit on the stool any more. And Rajzla left home and took an apartment [at 21 Zamenhofa]. Then Father split the shop off and gave it to somebody else so as not to have so much rent to pay. And for the kitchen and the dark room we paid 28 zloty. But once Father wasn’t working, his earnings were all up in the air: he hooked a few zloty or he didn’t. And at one time we didn’t pay the rent for about 2 months, and the bailiff came and all there was, 2 beds, Father’s and Mother’s, and the couch, they put it out in the gateway. That was a terrible thing. When I came from work, I saw our things standing in the gateway, and Mother looked like a mummy, and she couldn’t even speak. And then we started looking for money to pay somehow, and we went round everyone we knew. When we paid it, we moved back into that ‘palace’ and I carried on sleeping in that dark little room in the same bed as my brother.

Mother went to the synagogue at every festival. She knew that she wasn’t allowed to mix dairy and meat, that this wasn’t kosher and that wasn’t kosher, so she didn’t do it, but whether she was religious? What does ‘religiousness’ mean? The whole religiousness thing among poor people like that was a bit of a comfort thing, that they would go there [to heaven after death], and it would be easier there. Mother always went to the mikveh after her period. And Father went too, only Father went every week. I went once, I think, or maybe twice, I don’t know, but it was a terrible place, the mikveh! The water was dirty!

Mother lit the candles. When I was a small child we played with a dreidl [Yiddish: a four-sided spinning top traditionally played with at Chanukkah], but later on it didn't interest me any more: I ate at home and then went to SKIF 5, we would sit there and sing all the time. We had this small projector that they showed Chaplin films on [Charlie Chaplin, 1889-1977, the biggest Hollywood silent movie star]. At Sukkot we made a sukkah and ate there. It was almost at home – we lived on the first floor, and Mother passed us food out through the window. We ate with the neighbors, so they were careful to give us better food. When I was small I went to the synagogue, but I never took a book to read the prayers in the synagogue.

Father went to the prayer house at 21 Mila Street every Saturday. The prayer house at Mila was 2 or 3 rooms on the second floor, 2 at least because the women couldn't be together. There was a mikveh in the same house too. I know there was a board at the prayer house, and my father was on the board. I went to that prayer house until 1932. Going to the prayer house was a kind of getting away from the hard lot. The last years, all the children in our house were Bundists. One son, Ksil, didn't live at home any more, but I and one brother, Menasze, we still did, and Father once asked us: 'I know you don't want to go to the prayer house, but just take me, so that other people don't see me going alone.' How much humbleness did he have to have to tell his children: 'Take me'? We took him. We walked with Father and he went into the prayer house and we went off to the side and did what we wanted.

The eldest brother Ksil and Menasze went to cheder a bit but somehow it was no joy to them. And when I was a few years old, I don't know, maybe 5, maybe 6, Father took me to cheder and I started to go. There was this cheder not far from Mila. There was some kind of cheder in every house. There were 2 teachers, and they went round: 'Read this, say that.' On every week you had to pay on Sunday. After 2 weeks I come and I haven't anything to pay with. So they sent me home: 'When you have money, come.' So a week later Father had something, gave me a few groszy and sent me off again. But when I come back after that week the other children had already learned something I didn't know and I was unhappy. After that happened a few times, at 8½ years old I didn't want to go back there again. It didn't do anything for me. My elder brother, when I was let's say 6, he was 19, he was earning, and he bought these *Literarisze Bletter* 6, which used to come to our house every week. And I remember that photograph of David, Michelangelo's, he was naked, or Moses with horns. You were afraid to look at it!

All 3 sisters got married before the war and I remember the weddings. They were religious. What is the wedding? They take the future husband and with the future wife they are stood under a canopy and the rabbi says some prayer. They get a glass and take care that it's a fine one, and at a certain moment the man breaks the glass to recall the destruction of Jerusalem. They all had it.

My sisters kept kosher homes. I'll tell you this: when you left a home like ours, what you cooked you cooked kosher. She couldn't pour milk into meat, for instance. I don't know if they had special pots, for meat and for milk. But they kept Jewish homes, though for Ryfka it wasn't important.

I sometimes used to go to my sister Golda in Czerniakow, that was a very long way. I used to walk an hour and a half. My parents, you see they couldn't use transport on Saturdays, they used to go 2 and a half hours on foot to go and see their first grandson there. Golda's husband was called Froim Sziber. He was a cobbler, totally illiterate. When I used to go by tram I would take books and in the evenings I'd read to them. Sometimes he'd still be sitting and working and I would read him

books. It was kind of moving that he got so much joy from those books, that he liked it so much. And my sister too. They liked each other so much. They lived in their shop, so they made a piece of canvas to divide the first room where he worked off from where she had her workshop, there she made all sorts of knits [e.g. gymnastics suits, swimsuits, ballet wear]. When I was working in Warsaw I would buy goods for her and he came and took it and she always made some design. Swimsuits that didn't sell, I took them, went to the wholesale and sold them. When I went to them, I slept on the other side from them, but it was the same room.

When she had to go to the hospital [to have her baby], I went to their house every evening to take her. I took her in a taxi that went via Zelazna Street, and crossed over the tracks and bounced, and she screamed: 'Oy, oy!' Well then it [the birth] went fast after that. When she had twins, at the hospital in Czyste 7 they told me: 'It's a girl, but call back in 20 minutes. I called back in 20 minutes: 'There's another girl.' I had to go and register it.

The street opposite us was Wolynska, and there was a series of small food stores. At 7 in the evening all the shops closed. Sometimes when I come home and there wasn't a piece of bread, I would go there, one of the family was standing on the street, and when I came I said to him: 'A quarter loaf for 10 groszy, sugar for 5 groszy and for 5 groszy a medium piece of herring,' and he took the 20 groszy and in a greasy newspaper gave me the goods. And we made a bit of tea, everyone took a piece of bread and that's what you went to sleep on. That's how we lived.

What I remember most is Jewish Warsaw. It took in more or less from Stawki, where the Umschlagplatz 8 was later, to the philharmonic on Jasna. In every week I would go for Sunday mornings at 12, those were classical music concerts. I went on my own, or with this one friend who also liked music, Naftule Leruch. At first we were the only ones and they laughed a bit, but later other friends from Zukunft 9 wanted to go themselves, and a whole gang of us went. And sometimes I even got in on the sly, I mean I gave the janitor 20 or 30 groszy and he let me in. And from time to time there was an inspection and they went round looking for people without tickets, but I just sat in the corner on the left, on the second floor, and when they came they just looked at me and went on. I don't know why, but they probably saw that it would be a shame to take away the happiness that this child got from the concert.

From time to time, very rarely, we used to go for a walk to Marszalkowska. And apart from that we went to the Saski Gardens and there we had fights with the Fascists 10, who didn't want Jews to get into the garden. There was a summer theater in that garden, and I used to go there from time to time, there was this wonderful actress, a Jewish one, Ejchlerowna [Irena Eichlerowna, 1908-1990], who used to play a doctor. I still remember her acting. And I used to go to the opera for claps, to clap [as a hired applauder]. If they didn't have anyone you could get in for free, but if there were a few who wanted to, then he wanted 50 groszy. From time to time, if I had 50 groszy and there was a good thing that I wanted to see, I gave him the 50 groszy and you had to shout 'Encore!' and throw flowers on the stage. When it was vacation time I sometimes went 4-5 times a week.

In the summer we went down to the Vistula [Poland's biggest river, which flows through Warsaw], to the other side of the Kierbedz Bridge, and there there was a non-regulation beach. We went there in the morning, everyone took a hunk of bread, a cucumber, sometimes something else, and you were there all day. That was the old Warsaw. I knew her, loved her, and never in my life would

I have thought that I would leave Warsaw …

I remember, it was probably in 1928, there was a terrible storm, roofs flew off, and we were on that beach. So what did we do? We got in the water and laughed and sang. Before evening it quietened and we went home. And my eldest sister, Golda, had come out to look for me. She was walking towards the beach, and when she saw me she was so happy, she hugged me and took me home. I was not quite 10. I was very independent altogether. In 1932 my brother Ksil was sick and was in the hospital in Czyste, he had a problem with his lungs. So I went every day on the streetcar, I hung on at the back. I went to visit him, sometimes take him something if Mother gave me something. And I had to be first in the ward when it was visiting time, because that's what he wanted!

I remember one evening the great Polish violinist Huberman [Bronislaw Huberman, 1882-1947, violinist and pedagogue. Initiator of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra in Tel Aviv] came to Warsaw, and my eldest brother Ksil bought himself a ticket, and he spent a lot of money, but there wasn't a bit of bread in the house, but he had to go. Only what? He was working, he had friends who were richer than him and they all went. Later on I understood him, because I used to do the same. Once, I was walking along Rymarska Street, near the Saxon Gardens, with a girl friend who lived in the same house as me, Estera Lenger, and we met friends of hers who lived there. And they said: 'We're going for coffee!' So I say to Estera: 'Listen, I haven't got a single grosz.' 'Don't worry, it'll be fine.' Later, I felt her slipping her purse into my pocket so that I could pay. But that can happen once, it can happen a second time, but it's hard to live like that.

And 2 days before the war, on the 5th [September 1939] there was a concert at the Warsaw Opera House. Ewa Bandrowska-Turska [1894-1979, Polish singer] was performing, and the money was going to the army. So I went with her, it was she bought the tickets, we sat opposite Rydz-Smigly [Edward Rydz-Smigly, 1886-1941, Polish marshal]. I needed it and she needed it. She saw that I loved her very much, and she loved me very much too, and her family thought very highly of me, and even of my impoverished father.

In 1929 the winter was terribly cold in Warsaw. We didn't go to school. So I every day went to the library. And when I go, Mother says: 'Where are you going?' 'To the library.' 'You'll die on the way and no-one will even know where you are!' That's what Mother said as I left. I came back with some new book and there were the 3 of us left at home. Father, Mother and I. So I sat by the stove and read aloud, Shulem Aleichem 11, Mendele Moykher Sforim 12.

In the Simons precinct, on the first floor, was the Grosser Library [the Grosser Memorial Library in Warsaw was founded in 1915 on the initiative of a group of workers and officials. It operated until 1939]. It was the library of the Bund and the Kultur-Liga [Kultur-Liga, cultural and educational organization dominated, especially at first, by Bundist political influences. Founded in 1916 in Kiev and active in Poland from 1922]. To that library, I went every day. I had a marvelous librarian. He knew what I already read and he took my reading further. When I met someone, they had a book that I liked, I say: 'You know what? Give it to me until tomorrow morning.' So I went home and there in my dark room I put the light on and by tomorrow morning I finished that book and took it back. Of German literature, I remember Georg Fink wrote a book called *Mir hingert* – 'We are hungry.' It's him talking, in Berlin, about how he's always hungry. I read a lot and in those books I always found something in common with my life.

The Bund was a working-class party, and my brothers joined that party as young men. I was the youngest in the house and I heard what they talked about. When Perec Markisz [Markisz Perec 1895-1952, poet writing in Yiddish] came to Warsaw, there was this story: My sister Rajzla had very long hair, and she'd made a plait, and he stroked that plait, so they said: 'Don't wash your hair now! You mustn't cut your hair, it's sacred!'

In 1928, in November, Michalewicz [Bejnisz Michalewicz, 1876-1928, pedagogue, journalist, co-founder of the CISzO] died. We had a Bund place on Przejazd, no. 9; there was a kitchen there as well. So they laid him out there and people came to see him. Well I gone past 13 times. I went back in the line and gone past again. Lots of people at the funeral, hundreds of thousands came from various places to Warsaw for Michalewicz's funeral. And Chmurner [Jozef Chmurner, 1884-1935, journalist, CISzO activist] died in something like 1934. But his was smaller. Chmurner was the leader of the leftist Bundists [in the 1920s the Bund split into 2 factions, the 'Ones', under Henryk Erlich and Wiktor Alter, and the 'Twos', led by Chmurner. The Twos were against joining the Internationale and collaboration with the PPS. The Twos were dominant until 1924, but after that the Ones gained the majority]; there were less of them, but he was a very respected leader and I often went to his lectures. I only went to Michalewicz once, with my eldest sister, to a pre-election rally. He lived opposite Joski Lifszyc [Jozef Lifszyc – dentist, Bund activist, co-founder and chairman of the Zukunft Socialist Youth Union], whose son Rubin I was friendly with. In 1928 there were elections to the Sejm, so we put on a meeting of the tenants of our house, and Michalewicz was supposed to come. And when my brother went to look for Michalewicz, he was already sick, so he went in to Lifszyc and Lifszyc came and he spoke to the tenants. I often came to the Lifszyces, because I hung out, I went round to one, then I went round to another, but I was welcome. I remember their home well – and the grandmother always put us something up to eat, because she was familiar that these children coming round are hungry.

The numbers on our street started from the first number but on one side it only went up to 11 and on the other to 18. And the side that had the lack of numbers was a dead wall without windows, without a shop, without anything. That's where the SKIF people gathered, I saw them coming. Leruch's sister asked if I wanted to be in SKIF too. So I went to 29 Karmelicka Street, where the school was [a 7-grade Bund school run by the Central Yiddish School Organization, CISzO], and became a member of SKIF. I was about 10.

When I went to SKIF, I met friends who went to school, I went to their houses when they were doing their homework, and I sat and did the same work as them. And one time, when I was in the SKIF place at 29 Karmelicka, I asked if I couldn't go to night school, because I was already 10, I should have been in 4th grade, so I couldn't go to day school. So the teacher, Halperin, who worked at SKIF, said: 'All right, come this evening.' She was terribly cross-eyed and we called her 'di koke' – 'koke' [Yid.] that means that she sort of looked sideways. I had another friend in SKIF, Lejbe Gruzalc, so I told him that we could go to that night school, and he enrolled as well, and we went together the whole time.

In 1932 I went on my first SKIF camp, to Gabin [100 km west of Warsaw]. We collected the money – I used to go to the Metropol bar, opposite the club for Jewish writers [Mr. Rozenberg probably means the Union of Jewish Writers in Warsaw, at 13 Tlomackie Street]. I.J. Trunk [Jechiel Iszaje Trunk, 1887-1961, Jewish prose writer and essayist who wrote in Yiddish, in the 1930s chairman of the Jewish PEN Club in Warsaw] was there, the one who wrote the 7 volumes *Pojlin*, and Segalowicz

[Zusman Segalowicz, 1884-1949, Jewish poet and prose writer, wrote in Yiddish] used to go too. All sorts. Richer ones used to go, and in the club, on the second floor, were all the ones who wrote poems, poor lads, who wanted to get into those circles, be writers. Some of them made it, but some of them spent their whole lives sitting there.

At the committee they told us that the one who collected the most money could go on the camp free. The director of the Medem Sanatorium 13, Leo Brumberg, took a month's vacation to run the camp. It was he who said to me, at the SKIF headquarters: 'Listen, tomorrow evening is a committee meeting, and we'll know who's going.' He said: 'You come, and when you're there we'll see.' I get there, I'm sitting there, it's 10.30, and they're going out, and he comes up to me and says: 'Come here, Szulim. You know what? You collected the most money, and we have decided that for 10 zloty you can go for 2 weeks.' So I burst into tears. I was 13. 'Why are you crying? You should be happy!' So I say: 'But where's my mother going to get 10 zloty?' 'Listen, I'll see that no-one will ever know about this.' And he took out 10 zloty.

At the camp everything was planned. We got up in the morning and did gymnastics. On the first day we had to dig a hole, which we put a plank over and that was the toilet. Then we had to make tables and we had to make a kitchen. So we had to get a few bricks and lay the bricks so that the pot could stand. And then we had to put a pole up so that the red pennant could be hoisted. That was a great honor, to hoist the pennant, a different child every day. So there were things to do all day. We had to peel potatoes, we had to go to town to buy something – we did everything ourselves. There wasn't anyone hired. There was one teacher and then there was one deputy for that teacher, that was Emanuel Pat. At night we stood on guard for 2 hours. We drove to Gabin by ship, and in other years we drove to Brok [85 km north-east of Warsaw] and to Kazimierz [150 km south-west of Warsaw] by ship too.

After that every year I went on camp. Only once I was working I put a few groszy aside every month, so that I didn't have to go crying to anybody to get the money to go on camp. In 1939 they did the first camp in the mountains for the trade unions' youth section, on the river Dunajec. It was a fairy tale, so you can't imagine it. It was run by a teacher and a juror in the Lodz magistrate court. He was so small, like a barrel, and he told wonderful stories, he taught us to hike in the mountains. We just went for 2 weeks. On our way back we stopped a day in Krakow. We visited Wawel [the Royal Castle on a hill in Krakow], we saw the Jewish area 14 and we went back to Warsaw. When I came back to Warsaw my shoes were totally walked out. And I had a girl friend, Estera, who lived opposite me, on the fourth floor, and they were quite rich people. And my mother told me that she was sick. So I wanted to go see her, but I couldn't go in such shoes, so the next day, I don't know what my father did: when I got home, Mother cooked some potatoes, sprinkled them with a little onion, and that was dinner, and in this bag lay a pair of shoes, so that I could go and see my friend. They were new shoes.

SKIF was so active that you knew everybody and saw everybody. And those children were attached to the organization – all the friends I had were from SKIF. We often used to go to Josel [Josel Mlotek, 1918-2000, Bund activist]. Josel had a season ticket to the ice rink. So I'd go, he'd give me the season ticket, I got in for free. You see, I didn't have any money for all those good things. I was friendly with Bergner, his father was Rawicz [Melech Rawicz 1983-1976, poet and essayist writing in Yiddish], so I used to go round there. Once I turned up on a Saturday at his house, and my shoes wasn't as black as they should have been. So he says to me: 'Why didn't you clean your shoes

when you left?' So I say: 'I went through a garden!' 'What garden? There's no garden from Kupiecka to Nowolipie! And if you come here again like this I won't let you in the house.' They weren't rich; those Jewish things [cultural and educational work among the Jews] didn't pay much. Rawicz traveled in the world a lot and wrote wonderful columns for the Folkszeitung 15. He was the secretary of the Writers' Union 16, but all that wasn't lucrative. Melech Rawicz used to travel around to all these small towns with lectures. He was a big expert on that Jewish philosopher, Spinoza 17. His wife didn't work, she was a singer. They had 2 children. The daughter was called Rutka – still is called Rutka, lives in Australia. She's a year older than me.

In Zukunft I had this one speaker, called Chenoch Mendelson, well, our club met at his house, at 43 Nowolipki. There were 3 sisters and he had a brother who was an engineer. And Chenoch worked on Saturdays till lunchtime. We would meet up in his courtyard and chat with his Mom and sister through the window, and he'd come back, go and wash and have something to eat, and only then did we go in for the meeting. During the war he emigrated to America and working in the Bund unions.

We had this speakers club at Zukunft, and for instance Mrs. Erlich [Zofia Dubnow-Erlich, wife of Henryk Erlich] would come to the club meetings, she was the daughter of Szymon Dubnow 18. She taught us literature lessons. Russian literature, German literature. She opened my head about Chekhov, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky. When we came out after she finished her evening, we couldn't go straight home. So the whole group, we went down to the Vistula, and we took her every word apart. Later on, when I got to Russia, I felt at home there. At Hashomer Hatzair 19 they found out that she is coming to us to those club meetings, they asked her if she wouldn't come to them too. They had this hakhshara [Heb.: center for future emigrants to Palestine], outside Warsaw, in Grochow 20 [ed. note: according to Gertrud Pickhan it was in Jozefow. *Gegen den Strom*, p. 293]. So she said: 'The children want me to, so I will go. And she went there too. One evening she was there with them in Grochow, and there was this train there [a suburban train into Warsaw]. The train didn't have the power to keep going all that time, so it stopped for a bit, for an hour or two [there was a break in the running of the trains]. And when she got home it was 12 o'clock at night, and Erlich was sitting there writing his articles for the newspaper, and he says to her: 'I thought you'd gone to Israel!' It was a great joy that such a woman came to such illiterates as I, she had so much knowledge, and that she could share herself with me, well, that was the biggest fortune I could have in life.

At the school on Karmelicka there were 5 different classes. We went every day evening. It started at 6.30. It finished at 9.30, sometimes maybe even 10.30. In the evening we used to go home with this Gruzalec, I remember there was this thick snow, we bought ourselves 3 bagels for 10 groszy and we each ate them on the road, a bagel and a half, so when I come home I was full. You paid for school, but it wasn't so much for that night school. And anyway, I wasn't enrolled. If I had money I took it, if I didn't have any I didn't take any.

The same teachers taught as in the day. They had a lot more work, and they were happy, because teaching was quite badly paid, so they had a few more hours. Some had families, some didn't have families because they didn't earn enough to have a family. Everything was in Yiddish: we had mathematics, history, Polish history, history of the Jews, and languages. Polish was taught in our school, but in little teaspoons. I did 5 or 6 years at Karmelicka. I worked, at first as an errand boy, later in a tailor's shop, and went to that school. Later, when I was working in the shop for

Znamirowski, I found I didn't have enough Polish, so I enrolled in a Polish night school; that was in 1937.

There were 4 schools like that one [secular Jewish schools run by CISzO]. The 4th was at 68 Nowolipki [ed. note: owned by Left Poalei Zion], and a 5th, that wasn't a Bund school; that was at 6 Zamenhofa. That was a CISzO 21 school, but it was under the influence of Left Poalei Zion 22. They had another on Muranowski Square, at no. 12. There wasn't really any difference between those schools. Only what? At that one there was a lot about Palestine, that a state had to be built for the Jewish nation, whereas we believed that we ought to live together with others. But generally speaking, the program was the same. We knew each other. We used to go down to a square near the Vistula to play soccer.

The schools were in houses – a whole floor was taken up by the school. The rooms were made over into classrooms. There were normal benches and desks, and a blackboard that they wrote on, and we wrote in notebooks. There was one class in each room. 6 on Karmelicka, I think, and you went to the 7th class on Krochmalna. In the recesses the teachers sat in the kitchen, and we couldn't even go out into the courtyard, because the residents didn't really put up with a lot of noise

The difference between our school and other schools was that we were more attached to that school, and our teachers embraced us with a love that there wasn't in any school. People who went to 'szabasowka' [Jewish elementary schools, where lessons were not held on Saturdays; introduced between the wars and recognized by the Polish state], or to public schools, when they went out of school they never met any of their teachers. But we stayed in that circle all our lives. That was the difference. That warmness and that duty. A lot was organized in those schools. For instance in 1937 there was an exhibition on Shulem [Sholem] Aleichem. It was like this: the children had various interests – some painted, some wrote poems or stories, or some sketches about Shulem Aleichem. Every child prepared something. It was an exhibition in some trade union [A national exhibition on the life and work of Sholem Aleichem organized by CISzO].

I hadn't left the school on Karmelicka when I started working. My youngest sister Ryfka worked for this patron, plaited plaiting for shoes. And those were 2 brothers who had this little manufactory, and then they sold the plaiting to cobblers. Well, they needed an errand-boy, to fetch and carry. And I was that errand-boy. I worked there for maybe a year, or perhaps more. But later – I knew that wasn't a trade – I decided I would look for work with a dressmaker. And I went to work for this dressmaker, it was a small manufactory, an atelier, well, let's say 6-8 people worked there. What was my work? I had to go down into the cellar, bring coal, because the house needed heating. Then, before lunch I had to go and buy something for each of those workers. So he gave me this whole task: to buy a quarter loaf of bread for 10 groszy, sugar for 5 groszy, and the middle slice of herring for 5 groszy. Later I had to take a finished piece of work to a patron and bring another piece ready cut. I didn't have the chance to learn anything there. And there was this terrible thing there, too, that haunted me my whole life, called the dead season. There was no work: 'There's no work, so go home.' And then they didn't pay.

There was this one affair, that he sent me on the day of the seder to take a piece of work to this patron, and it was already 10.00, and when I got to the seder it was after 11.00. And it was this big tragedy at home because they couldn't start the seder. So I stopped going to work for that patron and went to another patron. I seemed to be doomed not to learn anything. This other patron

already had this one apprentix [apprentice]. The other apprentix, his father gave that patron of mine work. When he gave him work, he put him in front of the machine and I did all those other things.

Back then – I was maybe 16 – I started feeling badly. And Lucjan Blind summoned me, he was the secretary of Zukunft, and he told me that Zukunft had the right to send 2 people to the Medem Sanatorium for 30 zloty. That was 1936, and it was a bit easier financially, because the family had thinned out a bit. I gone to my family and told them, and they all chipped in, and gave me the 30 zloty. I paid and went to the sanatorium for a month. When I arrived at the sanatorium, in the evening you had to go and take a shower and clean your teeth – I didn't even know what you did that for! And I gotten into a clean bed, all on my own. I'd never slept alone. When I was a small child I slept with my parents, when I was bigger I slept with my brother. Well, I didn't know what was going on – such a big room, such big windows, so much sun. All my life in Warsaw I'd slept in a room where there was no window!

When we got up we did gymnastics and then we went to eat breakfast. And before breakfast they read out this log, what had happened that day. At 4.00 they gave us a snack; there was this teacher, called Batke, he asked 'What do you want to eat?' 'I want chocolate.' He brought chocolate. And how could I possibly imagine that, when I'd always gone hungry?

When I was there I was elected to the committee that was in charge of all matters, and Josel Mlotek was there too; he was always at the sanatorium in the summer. We were very friendly. And I met a girl there, she was from Vilnius. It's not the kind of acquaintance they make today, but something like it. She was called Fojgele Jofe. Her father was a teacher in Vilnius.

When I came back from the Medem Sanatorium, I gone to the trade unions, to the merchants 23. Everyone in the organization knew me, they gave me a letter to go with. I went to Mr. Znamirowski [a shop owner] on Franciszkanska. He took the letter and asks: 'Where do you live?' I told him where I lived. 'Who your parents?' I told him, and that was it. 'And you shall come on the Monday after next.' On the Monday after next I came and it was all all right. There came a time, I found out he had an uncle who lived on Majzelsa, so he asked, and they told him: 'Szmul the cobbler's child, you can take him on blind.'

When we sent parcels to customers, for down payments, we had to collect the money at the Post Office. Sometimes we had to collect it from the eastern railway station. They sent me, and I brought the money back in coins. So he asks me: 'Have you counted it?' So I say 'Yes.' So he tips it into the till. I say: 'I don't want that. I'm a poor kid and if I need a zloty I'll take it, because I know you tip it in without counting it.' So he says: 'You're wrong, I know that you're a decent person.'

I remember once he told me to come in on 1 May [appointed as a holiday, Labor Day, by the Second Internationale, from 1890 celebrated every year with mass rallies, demonstrations and marches]. So I told him that I could come in on Yom Kippur, I could come in on other holidays, but on 1 May I couldn't come in. So he says: 'Well, you needn't come in on 2 May either, then.' But I come in on 2 May, and I come with the secretary of the youth union, and when I come in with him, he talked to the patron and the patron told me to stay.

When I was working in that shop of Znamirowski's, I go out of the house, which was at 39 Kupiecka, and I walking to Franciszkanska, and on the left there were 3 Jewish publishers and on the right 2.

When I walking to work at 8.30 I always saw those writers and I knew them by sight. Shalom Ash 24, for instance, who was a handsome man. You could have made a film of him and his wife walking along. Always as he walked he looked up to heaven, like he was talking to the Lord.

During the war

And the war started, and I was walking to work in that shop at 34 Franciszkanska; that was the best job in my life. I worked there about 3½ years. And on 7th [September] a friend of my elder brother's came in and asks: 'Don't you know that the president of the city has ordered all young people out of Warsaw 25?' So me and my brother, Menasze, started thinking about it. We didn't have any money. So I went upstairs to my friend Estera, borrowed 10 zloty off of her, and as we gone, Mother took out 2 zloty and gave it us for the journey. And that was our farewell with Mother. I saw them again but my brother never saw them again.

When we started walking, we met Josel Mlotek and we walked those 550 km together. Josel Mlotek was editor of Forwerts 26 [after the war], and he was my age, he'd known me from childhood and I'd known him from childhood. On the way we met this one teacher from the Medem Sanatorium, Trupianski – a musician -he was a beautiful man [Abraham Brumberg remembers Jankew Trupianski as a 'tall, well-built man over 30, the owner of a huge nose and a bushy mop of black hair.' *Midrasz*, September 2005, p. 17]. He was pushing a baby carriage with a baby and he was worn out, so we took it from him and we pushed that carriage for 5-10 km.

And when we came to Sarn [ed. note: Sarny, today Ukraine, 230 km east of Chelm], I met my patron's son – Jakub Znamirowski. My patron had stayed in Warsaw; his son was this small, fat guy, but he'd bought himself the loveliest wife that Warsaw had. She was an orphan [ed. note: she had no father but her mother was alive], and when he got his hands on her, her mother said: 'This is gold!' and she married him.

From there we walked on foot to Maniewicz [today Ukraine: 30 km from Sarny], that was a beautiful little town. In Maniewicz was one of the richest Jews in Poland, who was a factory owner in Lodz – I don't remember his name. The Russians there had started arresting anyone wearing Polish army clothes. So Josel Mlotek and I went to that factory owner and told him that there were Jewish soldiers who needed civilian clothing. If not, they are sending them to plen [Russ: taking them prisoner]. He took out a few hundred zloty – that was a huge amount. For that money we clothed about 15 people.

Then Josel Mlotek decided that he was going to Vilnius, and my patron's son went to Vilnius too. So at one point I said to my brother: 'You know what, we'll go to Vilnius too.' That was right after the war ended between Poland and Germany 27. I get to Vilnius, and on the street I meet Fojgele Jofe, the girl from the sanatorium. I was with my brother, and she took us to a friend who'd been with us in the sanatorium, and his mother gave us clean underwear and I had a bath. It was more than a month that we'd been on the road. That was the first time I washed after that month. And the girl said: 'My father said he wants to meet you.' He was a teacher, in our schools, and was a Bundist, and he was hiding, he didn't live at home. I came at the arranged time, and he sits there with me, talking to me, and he says: 'You know what, I believe that in such hard times it's better to throw in your lot with a bigger country than to stay here in Lithuania, because there's no knowing what might happen here. I'm even sending my daughter to Grodno.' So we thought, and we went to

Volkovysk [today Belarus, 100 km east of Bialystok].

If I'd stayed in Vilnius, then Sugihara [Sempo Sugihara, 1900-1986, Japanese diplomat, consul general in Kaunas at the time of Lithuania's incorporation into the Soviet Union, who issued over 2,000 transit visas forJewish refugees], who was giving out the visas to Japan – I could have gone there too. My friend Josel Mlotek and my patron, they went to Shanghai and they survived the war there, but as it was I had the chance to get my sisters and brother out of Poland.

We were in Volkovysk for about 6 months. Rajzla, Ryfka and my brother and I, we were all living in this shop. Golda had stayed in Poland. One of my teachers, Halperin, was Volkovysk. Her parents lived there. She met me and it turned out there were 2 other people from our school there, so every week we had to go to her place for tea. There was such a community, between those students and those teachers, like nowhere else in life.

When I was in Volkovysk from time to time I went to Bialystok, because people from Warsaw come there. On one day I'm standing selling cigarettes on the street, I meet my elder brother Ksil. So I ask he: 'Where are your wife and child?' and he says: 'The Germans took me into plen and I escaped.' So I give him the cigarettes and I say: 'I'm going to the train, to bring you your wife and son.' And I decided to go to Warsaw. That was sometime about October [1939]. I went to Zreba Koscielna [Zreby Koscielne, 120 km east of Warsaw] and there you could still get over onto the German side, it wasn't so hard, though when we went into Zreba, the Germans grabbed us by the head and cracked our heads, but they let us go and I took a train to Warsaw. I bought lots of things, because when I went to my patron [Znamirowski], he gave me money, and things. By then I knew what we needed.

After his wedding my brother Ksil lived in Otwock [25 km south of Warsaw]. He married a young girl. He was 34, she was about 18. She was called Tauba Frydman. They met because he was working for her father, he made shoe uppers, very expensive, lovely things. She was from Otwock, and she'd been to school in Warsaw. She was a nice girl, and there aren't even any photographs of her in the family. And in about 1937 she had a little boy, Perec. And I took them from Warsaw to Volkovysk. And they put their names down to get Russian passports [people who lived in areas occupied by the USSR were forced to take Soviet citizenship. Refugees who had arrived there from central Poland could take Soviet citizenship or put their names down to return to the General Governorship. The latter were deported to Kazakhstan in June 1940] and went to live apart from us.

Ryfka was pregnant. Ryfka's husband saw I'd brought so many things from Warsaw, so when I came back, he said he would go too. And he went to Warsaw – it was a week, 2 weeks, he didn't come back. And he had 2 brothers in Bialystok. So I went to Bialystok. I go to his brother and I ask him: 'You know anything about Rubin?' So he says: 'Yes, I know, he's sitting on that neutral strip [a strip of no-man's land on the Russian-German border]. He's been there 18 days and they bring him food from Warsaw. A wonderful thing, a good lodging.' So I say: 'Come on, we'll go to the border and see what we can do there.' We went to get something to eat in a Jewish bar, and a young boy came in, maybe 15-16 years old. I ask him: 'Do you know how to get to the neutral ground?' He says: 'Yes.' 'Would you come at 12.00 at night to take us there?' 'Yes.' In exchange he wanted a pair of officer's boots worth 200 zloty. At 12 he came, we went to that neutral strip – there were 5,000 people there. We started shouting: 'Rubin! Rubin! Rubin!' And somehow we found him and we took him away, to some village. What he'd brought we packed in bags and put the bags in a

hole, and I brought a barber to shave him, cut his hair, and we took him home. The next day they took those 5,000 people and transported them back to Warsaw, and almost all of them perished.

Rubin and I went cleaning railroad tracks, and Ryfka had a little boy. I think he was called Jakub. That was their first child. After that they started sending families to labor villages [kolkhozes], they escaped from that village and were supposed to go east, but on the way the child died. That was terrible.

There in that Volkovysk we had to put our names down, whether we wanted to be Russian citizens. So I said no, that I wanted to go to Vilnius. And in April 1940 they arrested me, put me on a train, we were going to Minsk, but there was nowhere to put us out, so we went back to Volkovysk. Here they put us on a barge and we went to Koltas, that was the NKVD zone, where you couldn't get out from.

And then we lost each other. They went one way, and I and my brother Menasze found ourselves in a camp in Komi ASRR, near Vorkuta [160 km south of the Arctic Circle, the region with the biggest forced labor camps in the European part of the USSR], and we didn't get contact with the rest of our family. In 1944, when I met Ida Kaminska 28 in Moscow, she gave me contact with Ksil, and then he gave me the address to Ryfka and to Rajzla.

In the camp we worked, we hacked wood. But when I came to the camp, I had dysentery, from the journey on the barge. I gone to the doctor, well, I didn't know Russian yet. So I ask him if he knows any other language, and he says he knows Jewish. He was from Bukovina. He asked if I didn't want to work with him, as an assistant – clean, wash the floor. So I was pleased, and I worked in the hospital. One day a commission came round to see what was going on in the hospital. I was reading Pushkin for my patients. And they ask what I'm doing here, and the doctor says I have tuberculosis. But they sent me to work, made me a brigadier [gang foreman]. I worked for 20, and I told them I didn't want to be a brigadier, that I'm no good at holding a truncheon to beat people over the head. So they sent me to the horse base to water and wash the horses. And I never went back to the heavy work any more, I come out of the camp in good shape.

We sat in the camp about a year and a half, and when the Russian-German 29 war started, that was a great fortune for us, because we knew we would get out. When I gotten out of the camp, my brother, with some different boys, they made this sewing manufactory, where they mended broken jackets, padded trousers, everything. It was in the same place, in a building next to the camp, but we were free people, we had our own kitchen, we made good soups there, you could buy a bit of bread. And my brother was a good tailor, so they took him to the center, to do work for the managery. So he went there, and I stayed here. I had a brigadier there, a Chinaman [Mr. Rozenberg probably means someone of Asian background] and one day he gave me a pair of trousers to mend that were dirty. I said: 'I'm not doing that!' I threw it in his mug and went to my brother.

After a few days I got my first job: I was to tidy up the pharmacy store. But my brother had gotten friendly with his director, a woman, and asked if she didn't have work for me. So she says: 'We're looking for a head of snabzhenie [Russ: provisions], which means someone to take care of the whole supply process.' So he says: 'Maybe my brother.' I come to them, and by then I could speak Russian, only writing I found very hard. And one of the foremen from that group went into the army and left a young wife and child, so I said that maybe she could do the writing for me, because I had

to write reports. And she started doing it.

At the end of 1942 we finished our work in Komi ASRR and went to Gorki oblast [the Gorki district]. Menasze stayed, because he had a good job. At the end of 1943 I went to Moscow for the first time on business. When I was coming back I brought various things – needles, pins. So the wives of the engineers working there took them from me, round the villages and brought back a pile of money. So I left my job, because I knew that if anything happened with my brother I would be left all alone. So I decided that I will go to my brother in Krasnodar. I had a girl, a Russian girl, her name was Lena. And we went to Ukraine together, where she lived, and she stayed there. I said: 'When I get myself fixed up you will come.' I didn't go back to her. And I went to my brother. When I got there, on the street I met a guy I knew from Komi ASRR. And he knew that I worked in transport there, as head of snabzhenie, so he says: 'I got a good job for you.' And he took me to the NKVD construction authority 30. In that district was one of the 10 most devastated cities, so there was building going on. I was head of purchasing. It was a good salary. Every morning when I come to work, the boss asks me: 'You have money?' So I say 'Yes.' 'Dania! Bring the car!' That was to the driver. And we went to the market, where they sold vodka in 100g shots, and he would have a drink: 'Sashenka [Szulim] will pay.' That was how my working day started. And I had to travel – for instance for glass almost to Chechnya. Once I brought lamps, for kerosene lamps for myself, and I sold them and earned a pile of money, and there was money to live on.

I didn't work till the end, because I got sick, and I went back to Krasnodar, about 120 km, and hailed a doctor, and the doctor gave me sick leave. And they fined me for not being in work. So I gone to the prosecutor and got a job in this big pharmacy store. And there they would always leave me a little of the dressing stuff, it was in meters, and I sold it and made as much as I could have earned in a month. I was in Krasnodar until 1946, and from there I went to Poland.

I had a girl there called Dina. I used to go round to her house, I was welcome, like a son. They wanted me to go study pharmacy. But around that time, in 1945, I got a telegram, that they put Ksil away for 10 years 'after Henryk [Erlich] and Wiktor [Alter]' – which meant for Bundism. He had been speaking at the funeral of a friend's father who'd died and they arrested him. It wasn't the post office that brought the telegram to the house, it was a policeman. I come to Dina's in the evening, and her mother took me into another room. She had been at school with the chief of the police in Krasnodar, and he told her that I should take my evacuation card and leave. Then this whole drama began between me and Dina. But she couldn't go. She could have registered to leave, only what? Her father was director of agriculture. He had another daughter who was at university. And he said to me: 'If you stay here, then that's nothing, but if she goes, then our life had no value.' Menasze and I decided to leave. And back before that, Ryfka and her husband had already left. In the meantime she had had another son, Icchak, and when they got to Poland in 1946 she had a daughter as well, Dwora. So she had 3 children: Jakub, Icchak and Dwora, but Jakub didn't survive.

After the war

We went back to Poland. When we arrived at Ryfka's address in Lodz, she had gone to Dzierzoniow [60km south of Wroclaw], because she had a nice apartment there and he'd got work there right off. She wasn't there, so I had to go to her. And Rajzla had gone back, to Szczecin. I went to Ryfka, Menasze went to Rajzla, he was closer to her. There he met a woman, and got married there. She

was Jewish, Anna Karmazin. They had a daughter; she lives in Paris, her name is Izabela.

In Dzierzoniow I went straight to the organization [Bund], but my sister kept me on a tight rein. And I wasn't used to being told what to do any more. So I went to Lodz. And I gone to the apartment where they were before, got a job straight away, in the Jewish Committee 31, in records, and later distributing food and the clothes they sent from America.

In 1946, at the Bund camp in Bielawa [60km south of Wroclaw], I met Zenia. And back in Lodz, then working for a tailor's co-operative – I was a buyer and a seller – I met Zenia, who was walking back to her student dorm with her friend Lena. I kissed Zenia, shook hands with Lena, and Zenia says: 'She used to work in the embassy in Moscow.' So I say to her: 'I need you – I've got a problem for the embassy. Can I come and see you today?' Because all the time the thing with my brother Ksil was upsetting me. I come, I started telling her of my brother, and she started writing letters. She was a very practical girl. I started coming to her, and almost every day in the evening were together. Apart from that I had meetings in the evening – I was secretary of Zukunft at that time. And Lena moved in with me.

Rubin came, Ryfka's husband, and he saw that there's some girl here in bed. Well, they introduced themselves, and everybody liked her a lot. And my eldest sister asks me: 'What kind of wedding do you want?' So I say: 'We'll go to the town hall and register.' But she says: 'But if our parents were alive, wouldn't you have a chuppah?' Well, I despaired, and I said: 'Do what you want.' And they ordered some rabbi, and we went, it was raining, a Saturday evening, and they did the chuppah thing, and we laughed, and the rabbi told us not to laugh.

We met on 17 September 1947. At the end of November, on her birthday , I took her to my place. We got married before the rabbi on 27 December 1947. Our son, Samuel, was born on 24 November 1948.

My wife was born on 30 November 1924 in Bialystok. She was 6 years younger than me. She was called Lea Jedwab. Later, in Russia, she became Lena, and that's what they called her all the time. Lena Rozenberg-Jedwab. She came from more or less a family like mine. Even more miserable. She went to a CISzO school, too, in Bialystok. And she moved in, and she was pregnant, and she didn't even make food. We had this kitchen in the Bund, opposite where I worked, so she came and we ate there every day.

Being in Russia we didn't know a lot about what was going on in Poland: Mother and Father, and Golda and the 3 children were in the ghetto 32**.** The Germans killed her husband with a bomb. When I was in Dzierzoniow I went to Lodz via Wroclaw [330 km south-west of Warsaw]. While I was in Wroclaw, I thought to myself that I'd go visit an acquaintance from the camp, Berenfeld. I ring the bell, and the door was opened by my neighbor from before the war, we grew up in the same house from the first day of my life! Kronenberg, she was called. It was she told me that my father and her mother died in the ghetto around the same time. Her father and my mother, and my sister and her children were taken to Treblinka 33 on the same day.

In 1948 the witch-hunt against the Bundists started, for its links with the Bund in America, because the Bund in America is against communism. And they told us the Bund had to be shut down and we had to go over to the workers' party, PPR 34. When we heard that, we made a meeting of the Zukunft Central Committee and the Bund Central Committee separately, and we decided we were

leaving. [A faction of the PPR aligned with the Central Committee of Jews in Poland (CKZP) was attempting to break up the Bund from the inside. In 1948 part of the Bund joined the PPR, creating a faction of the PZPR aligned with the CKZP. Most of those who didn't agree with the fusion with the PPR emigrated to France]. And groups started being organized to emigrate. Before that I'd never thought to leave, because I was waiting for my brother Ksil to be released from the camp. On 15 May 1948 my brother Ksil came back from Russia. I'd gone to buy flowers, and the train came in, and Lena saw, this old man walking along, holding some dirty sack on his back, and Lena says: 'Isn't that your brother?' It was my brother. And I took him to a friend's house, we took a tin bath and put him in that tin bath, washed him, and I had brought with me the clothes I had worn at my wedding. And he was a different man. No-one knows what happened to Ksil's first wife. When the war started, they fled from Nesvezh [today Belarus, 50 km east of Baranovichi] and on the way their child wouldn't walk; he couldn't carry it, and they split up. She said: 'They won't do anything to me, I'm a blonde.' And she disappeared, and he married again in Russia, Jentel Rubin. Jentel Rubin had already been with a husband, and already had a daughter – she had her years, she was from 1909, and that was 1945, so she'd had time to have her first child.

When there was the decision to leave Poland, there was a group of 6 of us, and we went to Katowice [290 km south-west of Warsaw]. In Katowice was the boss who was running the emigration 35. I don't know who he was. We were to go in the night, over the border, and in the morning we were in Prague. I went with my wife, my brother Ksil, my friend who I lived with after the war, Leon Krolicki, and there was also one of the editors of the Folkszeitung with us, a writer and historian, Mordechaj Bernsztajn. From Prague we had to go to Germany. And we went by train to the border, and from the border by bus to Feldafing [Germany]. We arrived in Feldafing in the night; they saw there was a pregnant woman with us, so they took us straight away to a private family. We stayed with those private people those few weeks that we were in Feldafing. For a visa to America you had to wait a year, a year and a half, and I didn't want the child to be born in Germany. And we went to Ulm and from Ulm there was a group that was going to Paris. And we arrived in Paris on 22 August 1948.

We arrived here, and they sent us to a hotel. And here, the first evening, I started crying terribly. So Lena asks me what's wrong. I say: 'I don't understand a single word, I can't say anything, I can't buy anything, and I haven't a trade. What are we going to live on?' So she comforted me a little. And a few days later I went to the Bund club and there I met a friend from Warsaw, called Rochman, and he ran a manufactory there, they made windcheaters, these coats with fur on the inside. And he took me on at his place. But that only lasted until the end of December, because the season finished. I went to work for a tailor who made women's suits, as an assistant machinist, and I worked there 2 weeks but then he said he didn't need me any more. So I gone to an elderly lady, she worked alone, and what it took her a whole week to make, I did in a day. So that wasn't normal either, so she sent me to her sister, who also had a studio where they made coats and other things.

I arrived the first day and asked how much they'd pay me: 5,000. OK. I come on the Monday, and the guy attacks me and starts screaming: 'How dare you ruin other people's property!' First of all, no-one had ever screamed at me, I'm not a street urchin to be screamed at like that. What for, what was the problem? He comes out and brings this overcoat, and I start to laugh. So he says: 'What, and now you're laughing?' So I say: 'What, you want me to cry as well? I didn't do that.' He had a son, who did the same things as me. So the son gets out of bed, in his pajamas, comes in,

still half-asleep and says: ‘Dad, it was me did that.’ ‘Ah, well, if that’s the case, go to your machine!’ So I said: ‘Go to a machine I will, but not yours.’ He paid me and I gone.

I had the address of another workshop, so I went there, and they told me to report to Monsieur Marcel. This young guy, maybe 35. An older lady, a finisher, asks me: ‘And where are you from?’ So I say: ‘Warsaw.’ ‘I’m from Warsaw too.’ ‘Where did you live, Ma’am?’ So she says: ‘At Dluga, no. 12.’ So I say: ‘I had a friend at Dluga 12. Lea Kristenfrajnd, she was called.’ So she starts crying terribly. And she told me that Lea had died in the ghetto. So I say to her: ‘There’s no need to cry. She’s alive.’ Because of course we knew who was still alive, and who wasn’t. I say: ‘I’ll bring you her address.’ That lady was Marcel’s wife’s sister’s mother-in-law. And he told me to come to work, and I sat down at the machine and started work.’ And one time he says to me: ‘You know what, Szulim, you could find yourself a machine.’ So I say: ‘My friend has a machine, I’ll get it from him.’ ‘And you could go to the same patron and do the same thing, and earn 2 or 3 times more.’

The next day I went to the patron, took material off him to make up, and if I earned 5,000 with Marcel, in the first week I earned 18,000. That was the beginning. Later I hired a machinist, I hired finishers, and made a proper business. Only what happened? Lena got sick and went to the sanatorium. That was in 1950, on 19 August she went to the sanatorium. I was left with the workshop, with the child, and it was very hard. At Pascha, I went to Lena. And for the vacation I had to send the child to this family, to stay. For a while there was a woman in the house, but it didn’t work, somehow.

When Lena came, she threw me out, so I didn’t work at home. So I got a room on this street that went up a hill. And you had to haul those ready cut things, and I worked myself into the ground. And at the end of the year, when Lena was back home, they told us to have our son Samuel x-rayed. When I went to have the x-ray done, he didn’t want to have it done, so I say: ‘Don’t be silly, look, I’ll have one done too.’ They x-rayed me – found a hole in my lungs. I went to the same doctor as Lena, and he put me in the hospital for a few months, then they sent me to a sanatorium for nearly a year; that was 1952. And one time I go to the doctor, he x-rayed me, and says it was all healed. Two days later I was home, and through a friend I got a room near us, on the first floor, to use as a workroom.

We had two rooms at that time. On the one hand it was very nice, but we had to carry everything – coal, and everything – 4 floors. It wasn’t our own apartment, but we lived there 14 years. Our first daughter was born on 30 March 1957 and is called Flore, the second, Dorote, was born on 23 January 1962.

My wife never worked. I was always working for somebody. One time, Lerer [Yid.: teacher] Rotenberg came to Paris from Mexico. And I went round the museums with him. To Versailles a student of his was supposed to take us, who turned out to be a school friend of mine. ‘What do you do?’ I say: ‘I’m all in tsures [Yid.: tsores – trouble, problems]. I’ve fallen out with my patron and I’d like to do something on my own account.’ Well, he didn’t say anything. ‘We’ll see.’ When we’d taken our Lerer Rotenberg back to the train, where he was going to catch his ship, he took me to 2 retail stores, one on the opera square and the other opposite Galleries Lafayette. And there he said: ‘If he brings you something, try to order from him.’ So I made these leather vests. In a few days the first 12 were ready and I took them to the shop by the opera house. That was on the Thursday or Friday. On the Saturday I come to the phone, and they say: ‘We’ve sold all those

jackets, haven't you got any more?' I say they'll have to wait until the end of the week

If the first week I bought material for 12 jackets, on the Monday for 40. That was 1959. And by chance I gone in this street, and I saw that there was a shop to let, so I went in to that woman and I gone out a few hours later with the key in my hand. And that was at the end of the week, and on the Monday we went to the notary to sign and I fixed it up. 1 January 1960 I opened the shop, and till 8 February no-one even came in, and I got sick. And Lena went to the shop. She comes in in the evening from the shop and says: 'One man came, and he saw those models of yours, and says he'll come tomorrow. Well, I was better – I could have killed the world boxing champion! The next day I went, and it started. It was such a season, something fantastic. I bought an apartment straight away. I had the shop till 1985.

Ksil came to Paris with me. In 1951 Ryfka and her husband and 2 children left Poland and emigrated to Israel, and as well a year later Menasze to Israel, with his wife and daughter. And my other sister Rajzla went in 1956 also to Israel. And the 2 sisters stayed in Israel and died there. Menasze came with his wife and daughter to Paris. He couldn't register in Paris and that was a whole problem, and somehow later he registered. His daughter, Izabela, graduated in medicine here. And Menasze died very early, in 1961, at 53. Ksil died at 89, and his sons studied at a university in Israel and then came back to Paris, and work here, as engineers in Information technology. Rajzla died in 1986. She was 83; Ryfka died at 91 in 1991.

At home we used to speak Yiddish, and only later we started to speak in French a little, because the children didn't like it. My son spoke Yiddish like me. When he took the phone, they would say to him: 'Szulem?' He said: 'Ich bin nicht Szulem, ich bin Shmil [Yid.: I'm not Szulem, I'm Shmil].' He went to a Jewish school, where he learned to read and recite Hebrew very nicely. Only later he stopped being interested in those types of things, because his wife is French. His wife is called Elian and he has 2 children: Silvan, who is 31, and Eliza, she is 26. Flore's husband is a Jew from Algeria, he's called Serge Amselem, and they have 3 sons. Dorote's husband is a Jew too, he's called Michael Albert, they have a son Daniel and a daughter Sara.

My son did his school-leaving examinations, then he did a fee-paying IT school. In 1968 he got his diploma and got a job straight away. And he worked in one firm 32 years. Now he's going on a pension from that company. His wife is an official at the university. My elder daughter studied in Paris at medical school and is a virologist; she teaches at the university, in the Pasteur Institute; my son-in-law is a physician too, a geneticist. He is a professor. Dorote graduated from a school for translators in Paris too and is an English-French translator, and he is a lawyer, a partner in a big law firm.

My daughters have a bond with their Jewishness, well, my son does too. We celebrated all of the Jewish holidays here, and my son's wife always came. 30 people would sit at a table like this. Especially on Passover. One time the mayor of a large Israeli city was here, and our friend from Los Angeles brought them here for lunch. That was at Yom Kippur. We sat here from about 1.30 till about 4.30. 4.30, my son came in from school. So the mayor of that Israeli city says to him: 'Go wash your hands and come and eat.' But he says: 'I'm not eating today, I'm fasting.' It was a lovely house.

One day I come home, and I said: 'Lena, you know what, I think I'm closing the shop.' I'd worked hard, I was 67. What more did we need? So she says: 'Fine, I understand, you need to close down.

But what are you doing, you can't sit at home for 5 minutes?' So I say: 'I'll go to the Medem library 36.' She says: 'That's a good thing for you.' And I went to the Medem library and from then on I've been in the Medem library. The Medem library was set up in 1929. As soon as I came to Paris I became a member of the library. I had to have books. My wife and I used to go to various lectures there. My wife was the main reciter. She graduated in the humanities and German from the university in Moscow.

After I came to Paris I was in the party [the Bund], only I didn't have the chance to get involved, but I was a member like the others. In 1997 in Paris we organized the 100th anniversary of the Bund, in a large restaurant, there were 300 people. There were a few Bundists who spoke. And Marek [Edelman] 37 spoke in Yiddish and that was a great thing, no-one wanted to believe it. Of those 300 people who were at the banquet, to say Bundists, I don't know if there were 20. And now there are none at all. I couldn't count 5 Bundists in Paris. Only what? For me, well, it was a home, it was an idea that I held on to all my life. It never bankrupted as an idea. Recently there was even talking whether it shouldn't be wound up, but what is there to wind up? There isn't anything to wind up. For me it was something awesome, I had such wonderful people, who showed me life, who taught me to read, taught me to write, taught everything, and above all taught me to be a man. That if there was somebody who was sicker than I, I gave him my bed and gone to the shed.

I took an interest in what was going on in Poland, because I was interested in politics. Le Monde talked about it all. Neither I nor my wife went to Poland after we left. I finished with Poland. I was wounded by Poland, because of how they received us when we came back [from Russia]. I stopped having a link with Poland.

In the library I did everything. Above all I took care of issuing books to the people of my generation, and then there were a lot of them. There were these women, for instance. If I wasn't there, she didn't want anyone else to give here the book. Apart from that, that was the period that the generation that had come here before the war was starting to die off. And there were libraries, some of them had fairly decent libraries.

Did I tell you how our library came into being? When anyone came from Poland, his friends, what could they give him? They gave books. When they came here, everyone had a few books. So instead of one lending to another, they made a library in this cafe in the Jewish quarter, on the second floor, with those few-score, later few hundred books. And that's how it became a library. And they would come there, talk, drink a beer, and that was it. Later they rented a place, and before the war that library had 5,000 volumes. That was a huge sum. And there was a Bund club there, and a kitchen. The dinners were cooked by this old Russian Bundist, who had lived in Germany, in Berlin, Natan Szachnowski, and he'd married a German woman. And later, when they had to flee [in the 1930s], she fled with him. He had a daughter with her. Well, once [during World War II] the Germans came. They started milling around, but the door to the library was closed. And she started to string them along, and they said: 'OK, we'll come another time.' When they said: 'We'll come another time,' the next day she organized carrying those books into the cellar at her house. When they came again, the books weren't there. And they closed the place down. That could have been 1941. And as soon as the war ended, those books came back up, and there were 5,000 books straight away. And then Americans who published books started sending all the new books that had been published in the war to Paris straight away. And there were a lot of publications, because everyone had to write something. Later, we split off from the Arbeter Ring 38

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I’m the librarian to this day, only now the books are in the cellar, and I find it hard going up and down steps. So now I send the boys and girls. But even so, I’m the brain. Everything goes through my hands.

My wife died on 15 February 2005. Only she left life 12 years ago. We came back from a walk, I met our nephew, and he kissed me and her, and when he went she asked who it was. He was 40-something then. She’d brought him up and didn’t know who it was. So straight away we started going round the professors. And my daughter Dorote’s father-in-law is the best specialist on that disease [Alzheimer’s] in America, and he dictated to the doctors, but they couldn’t do anything. She was on her feet another 10 years, but the last two she was in bed.

My life flows along with these memories of our life together, these memories of the children, of my grandchildren; that’s the compensation that I have from life today. I miss having somebody close to lean on, lay my head on. And I don’t have that, and that’s a big thing. I had such a full life with my wife, we understood each other so well, we had so many shared desires in literature, in art, in music. It goes on, I come in from the library, make myself something to eat, look at the television a while, and listen to music. I like classical music very much, and I know it well, and that’s how I fill my days and nights. And that’s all.

Glossary

1 Bund
The short name of the General Jewish Union of Working People in Lithuania, Poland and Russia, Bund means Union in Yiddish). The Bund was a social democratic organization representing Jewish craftsmen from the Western areas of the Russian Empire. It was founded in Vilnius in 1897. In 1906 it joined the autonomous fraction of the Russian Social Democratic Working Party and took up a Menshevist position. After the Revolution of 1917 the organization split: one part was anti-Soviet power, while the other remained in the Bolsheviks’ Russian Communist Party. In 1921 the Bund dissolved itself in the USSR, but continued to exist in other countries.

2 1905 Russian Revolution
Erupted during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05, and was sparked off by a massacre of St. Petersburg workers taking their petitions to the Tsar (Bloody Sunday). The massacre provoked disgust and protest strikes throughout the country: between January and March 1905 over 800,000 people participated in them. Following Russia’s defeat in its war with Japan, armed insurrections broke out in the army and the navy (the most publicized in June 1905 aboard the battleship Potemkin). In 1906 a wave of pogroms swept through Russia, directed against Jews and Armenians. The main unrest in 1906 (involving over a million people in the cities, some 2,600 villages and virtually the entire Baltic fleet and some of the land army) was incited by the dissolution of the First State Duma in July. The dissolution of the Second State Duma in June 1907 is considered the definitive end to the revolution.

3 Nowosci Theater

one of the five permanent Jewish theaters in pre-war Warsaw, staging shows in Yiddish and Hebrew. Founded in October 1921, located at 5 Bielanska Street, it had 1,500 seats. One of the co-owners was Samuel Kroszczor. The longest-acting manager was Dawid Celemejer. The performing troupes often changed, among them were groups such as Habima (Hebrew), Warszawer Najer Jidyszer Teater (WNIT), Di yidishe bande, or Ararat. Basically, the Nowosci was an operetta and revue theater, but it also staged plays by Sholem Aleichem and Isaac Babel. From 1938, the Nowosci was run by Ida Kaminska.

4 Morgensztern (full name

The Workers' Physical Education Association „Jutrznia"-„Morgensztern"): Jewish sports club connected with the Bund. Founded in Warsaw in 1922, but by 1925 was already a nationwide organization, and in 1929-1931 it had several dozen divisions. In 1938 the Warsaw division numbered 1,775 members, of whom 1,095 were active sportspeople. It was chaired by S. Notkowski. The most popular sections were gymnastics, boxing and eurhythmics; there were also handball, soccer, athletics, water sports, cycling and table tennis sections. The second-largest club in Poland was the Lodz division, which also had a strong gymnastics section. Owing to suspicion of communist infiltration of Morgensztern sportspeople, the clubs were under political observation and on several occasions closed down (e.g. the Lodz division in 1937). Morgensztern operated until 1939.

5 Skif (Socjalistiszer Kinder Farband, Yiddish Organization for Socialist Children)

a children's organization under the umbrella of the Bund party. It was created in the 1920s as an initiative of the Bund youth section, Zukunft. The purpose of the organization was bringing up future party members. A parent-teacher association looked after the children. In the 1930s Skif had several thousand members in over 100 towns in Poland. It organized dayrooms, trips, camps for the children. Skif also existed during the war in the Warsaw ghetto. It was reactivated after the war, but was of a marginal importance. It was dissolved in 1949, along with the majority of political and social Jewish organizations.

6 Literarisze Bleter (Yid

: Literary Pages): the leading Yiddish-language literary journal in the interwar period. It came out weekly in Warsaw between 1924 and 1939. In all, 782 issues were published, and the paper had a circulation of 5,000. The editors were Nachum Majzel and Mejlech Rawicz; regular contributors included writers such as Perec Markisz, Alter Kacyzne, Jozef Opatoszu, Noe Prylucki, Chilel Cajtlin. It published short stories, novels in installments, poetry, essays and reviews. In 1925-1932 there was an academic supplement, Jedijes fun Jidiszn Wisnszaftlechn Institut (News from the Jewish Scientific Institute), and from 1936 there was a theater supplement, Teater Jedijes (Theatre News).

7 Hospital in Czyste

A Jewish hospital in Warsaw. The initiative to build it came in the 1880's from the doctors of the Orthodox Hospital (established at the turn of the 19th century). In 1893 the construction of the hospital buildings began on the western outskirts of Warsaw, in the borough of Czyste. Eight buildings were erected, with modern technological equipment. A synagogue was built next to the

hospital. The hospital was opened in 1902 at what was then Dworska Street. In the 1920's the Jewish hospital was transformed into a local hospital. Before 1939, around 1,200 beds were available, which made the hospital the second largest in Warsaw. After 1939 it was turned over to the management of the Jewish authorities and became a hospital exclusively for Jews. After the creation of the Ghetto, it was moved to the Jewish district, that is, the staff of the hospital was confined to the Ghetto and employed in the Ghetto's various medical establishments. Dworska was taken over by, among others, a German military hospital. In the Ghetto, when typhus broke out, a Jewish Contagious Hospital was opened at Stawki Street. Apart from treating patients, the hospital also conducted research (Prof. Hirszfeld) and held classes for nurses. The Bersohn and Bauman Children's Hospital moved into the Stawki hospital building. In time, the Stawki hospital became the only hospital in the Ghetto. After the war, Warsaw's oldest hospital, Sw. Ducha Hospital [Holy Ghost Hospital], was moved to Czyste, into the buildings at Dworska Street. These buildings are currently occupied by the Wolski Hospital at Kasprzaka Street.

8 Umschlagplatz

Literally Reloading Point (German), it designates the area of the Warsaw ghetto on Stawki and Dzika Streets, where trade with the world outside the ghetto took place and where people were gathered before deportation to the Treblinka death camp. About 300.000 people were taken by train from the Umschlagplatz to Treblinka.

9 Zukunft (Yid

: Future): Jewish youth organization that operated in Poland from 1910-1948. It was formed from the merger of several social democratic oriented youth groups. It had links to the Bund and initially also to Socjaldemokracja Krolestwa Polskiego i Litwy [Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania] (SDKPiL), and was involved in printing and disseminating illegal press and conspiratorial political activities in the lands of the Russian partitions. From 1916 it functioned officially as the Bund's youth organization, and from 1918 (when Poland regained its independence) it was a national organization with some 7,000 members (85 sections). Zukunft organized educational and self-teaching activities in young working-class Jewish circles, opened sports clubs, and defended the economic rights of young workers. It published a magazine, Jugnt-Veker (Yid.: Reveille for the Young). During the war Zukunft took an active part in organizing resistance in the Warsaw ghetto. Reactivated in 1944, it continued its cultural and educational activities, running vocational schools and night classes. It was disbanded by the communist authorities in 1948.

10 ONR – Oboz Narodowo-Radykalny (Radical Nationalist Camp)

a Polish nationalist organization with extreme anti-Semitic views. Founded in April 1934, its members were drawn from the Nationalist Democratic Party. It supported fascism, its program advocated the full assimilation of Slavic minorities in Poland, and forced Jews to leave the country by curbing their civic rights and implementing an economic boycott that would prevent them from making a living. The ONR exploited calls for an economic boycott during the severe economic crisis of the 1930s to drum up support among the masses and develop opposition to Pilsudski's government. The ONR drew most of its support from young urban people and students. Following a series of anti-Semitic attacks, the ONR was dissolved by the government (July 1940), but the group

continued its activities illegally with the support of extremist nationalist groups.

11 Sholem Aleichem (pen name of Shalom Rabinovich (1859-1916)

Yiddish author and humorist, a prolific writer of novels, stories, feuilletons, critical reviews, and poem in Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian. He also contributed regularly to Yiddish dailies and weeklies. In his writings he described the life of Jews in Russia, creating a gallery of bright characters. His creative work is an alloy of humor and lyricism, accurate psychological and details of everyday life. He founded a literary Yiddish annual called Di Yidishe Folksbibliotek (The Popular Jewish Library), with which he wanted to raise the despised Yiddish literature from its mean status and at the same time to fight authors of trash literature, who dragged Yiddish literature to the lowest popular level. The first volume was a turning point in the history of modern Yiddish literature. Sholem Aleichem died in New York in 1916. His popularity increased beyond the Yiddish-speaking public after his death. Some of his writings have been translated into most European languages and his plays and dramatic versions of his stories have been performed in many countries. The dramatic version of Tevye the Dairyman became an international hit as a musical (Fiddler on the Roof) in the 1960s.

12 Mendele Moykher Sforim (1835-1917)

Hebrew and Yiddish writer. He was born in Belarus and studied at various yeshivot in Lithuania. Mendele wrote literary and social criticism, works of popular science in Hebrew, and Hebrew and Yiddish fiction. In his writings on social and literary problems Mendele showed lively interest in the education and public life of Jews in Russia. He was preoccupied by the question of the role of Hebrew literature in molding the Jewish community. This explains why he tried to teach the sciences to the mass of Jews and to aid the people in obtaining secular education in the spirit of the Haskalah (Hebrew enlightenment). He was instrumental in the founding of modern literary Yiddish and the new realism in Hebrew style, and left his mark on the two literatures thematically as well as stylistically.

13 Wlodzimierz Medem Sanatorium

sanatorium for juvenile tuberculosis patients in Miedzeszyn near Warsaw. Established in 1926 with the funds of the dissolved Jewish-American Aid Committee. Organizationally, it was part of the CIShO, so it was under strong Bund influence. The sanatorium had 160 beds. The chief doctor was Natalia Lichtenbaum-Szpilfogel. Basically, the sanatorium admitted only children at early stages of the disease: it was an educational facility rather than a medical one. Activities included schooling (in Yiddish), interest groups, arts courses. The patients helped in the daily chores, had their own self-government. In the summer, camps were organized for children from poor families. Over 7,700 patients passed through the sanatorium during its existence. In 1935, director Aleksander Ford made a movie about the Medem Sanatorium, Mir Kumen On (We’re Coming), screenplay by Wanda Wasilewska and Jakub Pat. The government censors didn’t permit the movie to be screened; the Polish premiere took place in 1945. During the war, the sanatorium was incorporated organizationally into the Falenica ghetto. It was managed during that time by Ms. Zygielbojm and Ms. Muszkat. On 19th August 1942 as the Falenica ghetto was being dissolved, the patients and personnel of the Medem sanatorium were too sent to the Treblinka.

14 Kazimierz

Now a district of Cracow lying south of the Main Market Square, it was initially a town in its own right, which recieved its chater in 1335. Kazimierz was named in honor of its founder, King Casimir the Great. In 1495 King Jan Olbracht issued the decision to transfer the Jews of Cracow to Kazimierz. From that time on a major part of Kazimierz became a center of Jewish life. Before 1939 more than 64,000 Jews lived in Cracow, which was some 25% of the city's total population. Only the culturally assimilated Jewish intelligentsia lived outside Kazimierz. Until the outbreak of World War II this quarter remained primarily a Jewish district, and was the basis for the majority of the Jewish institutions, organizations, and parties. The religious life of Cracow's Jews was also concentrated here; they prayed in large synagogues and a multitude of small private prayer houses. In 1941 the Jews of Cracow were removed from Kazimierz to the ghetto, created in the district of Podgorze, where some died and the remainder were transferred to the camps in Plaszow and Auschwitz. The majority of the pre-war monuments, synagogues and Jewish cemeteries in Kazimierz have been preserved o the present day and a few Jewish institutions continue to operate.

15 Folkszeitung

one of the Yiddish dailies published in Warsaw between the wars.

16 13 Tlomackie Street

between the wars, 13 Tlomackie Street was home to the Union of Jewish Writers and Translators, which brought together those writing in both Yiddish and Polish. It also housed the Library of Judaistica and the Tempel progressive synagogue.

17 Spinoza, Baruch (1632-1677)

Dutch philosopher of Portuguese-Jewish origin. An independent thinker, he declined offers of academic posts and pursued his individual philosophical inquiry instead. He read the mathematical and philosophical works of Descartes but unlike Descartes did not see a separation between God, mind and matter. Ethics, considered Spinoza’s major work, was published in 1677.

18 Dubnow, Simon (1860-1941)

One of the great modern Jewish historians and thinkers. Born in Belarus, he was close to the circle of the Jewish enlightenment in Russia. His greatest achievement was his study of the history of the Jews in Eastern Europe and their spiritual and religious movements. His major work was the ten volume World History of the Jewish People. Dubnow settled in Berlin in 1922. When Hitler came to power he moved to Riga, where he was put into the ghetto in 1941 and shot by a Gestapo officer on 8 December the same year.

19 Hashomer Hatzair in Poland

From 1918 Hashomer Hatzair operated throughout Poland, with its headquarters in Warsaw. It emphasized the ideological and vocational training of future settlers in Palestine and personal

development in groups. Its main aim was the creation of a socialist Jewish state in Palestine. Initially it was under the influence of the Zionist Organization in Poland, of which it was an autonomous part. In the mid-1920s it broke away and joined the newly established World Scouting Union, Hashomer Hatzair. In 1931 it had 22,000 members in Poland organized in 262 ‘nests’ (Heb. ‘ken’). During the occupation it conducted clandestine operations in most ghettos. One of its members was Mordechaj Anielewicz, who led the rising in the Warsaw ghetto. After the war it operated legally in Poland as a party, part of the He Halutz. It was disbanded by the communist authorities in 1949.

20 Kibbutzim in prewar Poland (correctly haksharas)
agricultural or production cooperatives training youth and preparing them for life in Palestine, through, e.g. teaching Hebrew and Zionist ideological education. Haksharas were usually summer camps, the participants of the camps were members of the Halutz movement. The camps were organized in private estates of individuals who supported Zionism and at farms purchased by the Zionist Organization in Poland (for example in Jaslo, Czechowice, Klesow in Volhynia) or by youth movements, mostly HaHalutz. In the 1930s the ‘Ezra – Opieka’ Central Committee for Halutz and Palestine Émigrés operated in Lwow and financed the maintenance of the kibbutzim and the training of youth. Some 556 Haksharas took place in Poland until the end of 1938 with some 19,000 participants.

21 CIShO - Centrale Yidishe Shul Organizatsye (Central Jewish School Organization)
An organization founded in 1921 at a congress of secular Jewish teachers with the aim of creating and maintaining a network of schools. It was influenced by the Folkists and the Bundists and was a recipient of financial aid from Joint. The language of instruction in CIShO schools was Yiddish, and the curriculum included general subjects and Jewish history and culture (but Hebrew and religious subjects were not taught). CIShO schools aimed to use modern teaching methods, and emphasis was placed on physical education. The schools were co-educational, although some two-thirds of pupils were girls. In the 1926/27 school year CIShO had 132 schools in Poland teaching 14,400 pupils. The organization also held evening classes and ran children’s homes and a teacher training college in Vilnius. During World War II it educated children in secret in the Warsaw Ghetto. It did not resume its activities after the war.

22 Poalei Zion (the Jewish Social-Democratic Workers’ Party Workers of Zion)
in Yiddish ‘Yidishe Socialistish-Demokratishe Arbeiter Partei Poale Syon’. A political party formed in 1905 in the Kingdom of Poland, and operating throughout the Polish state from 1918. The party’s main aim was to create an independent socialist Jewish state in Palestine. In the short term, Poalei Zion postulated cultural and national autonomy for the Jews in Poland, and improved labor and living conditions of Jewish hired laborers. In 1920, during a conference in Vienna, the party split, forming the Right Poalei Zion (the Jewish Socialist Workers’ Party Workers of Zion), which became part of the Socialist Workers’ International and the World Zionist Organization, and the Left Po’alei Zion (the Jewish Social-Democratic Workers’ Party Workers of Zion), the radical minority, which sympathized with the Bolsheviks. The Left Poalei Zion placed more emphasis on socialist postulates. Key activists: I. Schiper (Right PZ), L. Holenderski, I. Lew (Left PZ); paper: Arbeiter Welt. Both fractions had their own youth organizations: Right PZ: Dror and Freiheit; Left PZ – Jugnt. Left

PZ was weaker than Right PZ; only towards the end of the 1930s did it start to form coalitions with other socialist and Zionist parties. In 1937 Left PZ joined the World Zionist Organization. During World War II both fractions were active in underground politics and the resistance movement in the ghettos, in particular the youth organizations. After 1945 both parties joined the Central Jewish Committee in Poland. In 1947 they reunited to form the strongest legally active Jewish party in Poland (with 20,000 members). In 1950 Poalei Zion was dissolved by the communist authorities.

23 Jewish labor unions

almost from the dawn of the workers' movement, separate Jewish labor unions sprang up. The first were set up by Russian immigrants in France in the 1870s. The reasons were manifold: linguistic, religious (the need for Saturdays free from work) and the unwillingness of Christian employers to hire Jews. In the Poland of the 1920s this latter issue was the main issue addressed by the Jewish labor union (the fight against the 'labor ghetto'). In the 1930s, the years of the great economic crisis, the labor unions were intensively involved in mutual assistance, in the form of loans and credit; the biggest credit organization was the Interest-Free Central Bank. The strongest labor union in Poland was the Central Union of Merchants, which also supported a number of schools of commerce. The labor unions played host to a constant rivalry between the Jewish workers' parties, in particular the Bund and Left Poalei Zion.

24 Asch, Sholem (1880–1957)

novelist and dramatist, who wrote in Yiddish, Hebrew, English and German. He was born in Kutno, Poland, into an Orthodox family. He received a traditional religious education, and in other fields he was self-taught. In 1914 he emigrated to the United States. Towards the end of his life he lived in Israel. He died in London. His literary debut came in 1900 with his story 'Moyshele'. His best known plays include 'Got fun Nekomeh' (The God of Vengeance, 1906), 'Kiddush ha-Shem' (1919), and the comedies 'Yihus' (Origin, 1909), and 'Motke the Thief' (1916). He wrote a trilogy about the founders of Christianity: 'Der Man fun Netseres' (1943; The Nazarene, 1939), The Apostle (1943), and Mary (1949).

25 Umiastowski Order

Col. Roman Umiastowski was head of propaganda in the Corps of the Supreme Commander of the Polish Republic. Following the German aggression on Poland, and faced with the siege of Warsaw, on 6 September 1939 he appealed to all men able to wield a weapon to leave the capital and head east.

26 Forverts (Eng

Forward): Jewish newspaper published in New York. Founded in 1897, it remains the most popular Yiddish newspaper in the US and also has a loyal readership in other parts of the world. Its founders were linked to the Jewish workers' movement with its roots in socialist-democratic circles. From 1903 to 1951 the editor-in-chief of Forverts was Abraham Cahan. During World War I circulation peaked at 200,000 copies. Following Cahan's death circulation dropped to 80,000 copies, and in 1970 to 44,000. The editors that followed Cahan were Hillel Rogoff (1951-61), Lazar Fogelman (1962-68) and Morris Crystal. In addition to social and business news, Forverts also publishes

excerpts of Jewish literature, and has an extensive cultural section. Forverts was initially a daily published in Yiddish only, but in 1990 was relaunched as a Yiddish-English bilingual weekly.

27 September Campaign 1939

armed struggle in defense of Poland's independence from 1st September to 6th October 1939 against German and, from 17 September, also Soviet aggression; the start of World War II. The German plan of aggression ('Fall Weiss') assumed all-out, lightning warfare (Blitzkrieg). The Polish plan of defense planned engagement of battle in the border region (a length of some 1,600 km), and then organization of resistance further inside the country along subsequent lines of defense (chiefly along the Narwa, Vistula and San) until an allied (French and British) offensive on the western front. Poland's armed forces, commanded by the Supreme Commander, Marshal Edward Rydz-Smigly, numbered some 1 m soldiers. Poland defended itself in isolation; on 3rd September Britain and France declared war on Germany, yet did not undertake offensive action on a larger scale. Following a battle on the border the main Polish line of defense was broken, and the Polish forces retreated in battles on the Vistula and the San. On 8th September, the German army reached Warsaw, and on 12th September Lvov. From 14-16 September the Germans closed their ring on the Bug. On 9th September Polish divisions commanded by General Tadeusz Kutrzeba went into battle with the Germans on the Bzura, but after initial successes were surrounded and largely smashed (by 22 September), although some of the troops managed to get to Warsaw. Defense was continued by isolated centers of resistance, where the civilian population cooperated with the army in defense. On 17th September Soviet forces numbering more than 800,000 men crossed Poland's eastern border, broke through the defense of the Polish forces and advanced nearly as far as the Narwa-Bug-Vistula-San line. In the night of 17-18 September the president of Poland, the government and the Supreme Commander crossed the Polish-Romanian border and were interned. Lvov capitulated on 22nd September (surrendered to Soviet units), Warsaw on 28th September, Modlin on 29th September, and Hel on 2nd October.

28 Kaminska, Ida (1899–1980)

Jewish actress and theater director. She made her debut in 1916 on the stage of the Warsaw theater founded by her parents. In 1921-28 she and her husband, Martin Sigmund Turkow, were the directors of the Varshaver Yidisher Kunsteater. From 1933 to 1939 she ran her own theater group in Warsaw. During World War II she was in Lvov, and was evacuated to Kyrgizia (Frunze). On her return to Poland in 1947 she became director of the Jewish theaters in Lodz, Wroclaw and Warsaw (1955-68 the E.R. Kaminska Theater). In 1967 she traveled to the US with her theater and was very successful there. Following the events of March 1968 she resigned from her post as theater director and emigrated to the US, where she lived until her death. Her best known roles include the leading roles in Mirele Efros (Gordin), Hedda Gabler (Ibsen) and Mother Courage and Her Children (Brecht), and her role in the film The Shop on Main Street (Kadár and Klos, 1965). Ida Kaminska also wrote her memoirs, entitled My Life, My Theatre (1973).

29 Great Patriotic War

On 22nd June 1941 at 5 AM Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union without declaring war. This was the beginning of the so-called Great Patriotic War. The German blitzkrieg, known as Operation Barbarossa, nearly succeeded in breaking the Soviet Union in the months that followed. Caught

unprepared, the Soviet forces lost whole armies and vast quantities of equipment to the German onslaught in the first weeks of the war. By November 1941 the German army had seized the Ukrainian Republic, besieged Leningrad, the Soviet Union's second largest city, and threatened Moscow itself. The war ended for the Soviet Union on 9th May 1945.

30 NKVD

(Russian: Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del), People's Committee of Internal Affairs, the supreme security authority in the USSR – the secret police. Founded by Lenin in 1917, it nevertheless played an insignificant role until 1934, when it took over the GPU (the State Political Administration), the political police. The NKVD had its own police and military formations, and also possessed the powers to pass sentence on political matters, and as such in practice had total control over society. Under Stalin's rule the NKVD was the key instrument used to terrorize the civilian population. The NKVD ran a network of labor camps for millions of prisoners, the Gulag. The heads of the NKVD were as follows: Genrikh Yagoda (until 1936), Nikolai Yezhov (until 1938) and Lavrenti Beria. During the war against Germany the political police, the KGB, was spun off from the NKVD. After the war it also operated on USSR-occupied territories, including in Poland, where it assisted the nascent communist authorities in suppressing opposition. In 1946 the NKVD was renamed the Ministry of the Interior.

31 Central Committee of Polish Jews

Founded in 1944, with the aim of representing Jews in dealings with the state authorities and organizing and co-coordinating aid and community care for Holocaust survivors. Initially it operated from Lublin as part of the Polish Committee of National Liberation. The CKZP's activities were subsidized by the Joint, and in time began to cover all areas of the reviving Jewish life. In 1950, the CCPJ merged with the Jewish Cultural Society to form the Social and Cultural Society of Polish Jews.Warsaw Ghetto: A separate residential district for Jews in Warsaw created over several months in 1940. On 16th November 1940 138,000 people were enclosed behind its walls. Over the following months the population of the ghetto increased as more people were relocated from the small towns surrounding the city. By March 1941 445,000 people were living in the ghetto. Subsequently, the number of the ghetto's inhabitants began to fall sharply as a result of disease, hunger, deportation, persecution and liquidation. The ghetto was also systematically reduced in size. The internal administrative body was the Jewish Council (Judenrat). The Warsaw ghetto ceased to exist on 15th May 1943, when the Germans pronounced the failure of the uprising, staged by the Jewish soldiers, and razed the area to the ground.

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33 Treblinka
village in Poland's Mazovia region, site of two camps. The first was a penal labor camp, established in 1941 and operating until 1944. The second, known as Treblinka II, functioned in the period 1942-43 and was a death camp. Prisoners in the former worked in Treblinka II. In the second camp a ramp and a mock-up of a railway station were built, which prevented the victims from realizing what awaited them until just in front of the entrance to the gas chamber. The camp covered an area of 13.5 hectares. It was bounded by a 3-m high barbed wire fence interwoven densely with pine branches to screen what was going on inside. The whole process of exterminating a transport from arrival in the camp to removal of the corpses from the gas chamber took around 2 hours. Several transports arrived daily. In the 13 months of the extermination camp's existence the Germans gassed some 750,000-800,000 Jews. Those taken to Treblinka included Warsaw Jews during the Grossaktion [great liquidation campaign] in the Warsaw ghetto in the summer of 1942. As well as Polish Jews, Jews from Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, France, Greece, Yugoslavia and the USSR were also killed in Treblinka. In the spring of 1943 the Germans gradually began to liquidate the camp. On 2 August 1943 an uprising broke out there with the aim of enabling some 200 people to escape. The majority died.

34 PPR (Polish Workers' Party), and acted against the German forces and was pro-Soviet

At the beginning of 1944 it numbered 6,000-8,000 people and by July 1944 some 30,000. By comparison the partisan forces numbered 6,000 in July 1944. The People's Army directed the brunt of its efforts towards destroying German lines of communication, in particular behind the German-Soviet front. Divisions of the People's Army also participated in the Warsaw Uprising. In July 1944 the Polish Armed Forces (WP, Wojsko Polskie) were created from the People's Army and the Polish Army in the USSR.
Bricha (Hebr. escape): used to define illegal emigration of Jews from European countries to Palestine after WWII and organizational structures which made it possible. In Poland Bricha had its beginnings within Zionist organizations, in two cities independently: in Rowne (led by Eliezer Lidowski) and in Vilnius (Aba Kowner). Toward the end of 1944, both organizations moved to Lublin and merged into one Coordination. In October 1945, Isser Ben Cwi, came to Poland; he was an emissary from Palestine, representative of the institution dealing with illegal immigration, Mosad le-Alija Bet, with the help of which vast numbers of volunteers were transported to Palestine. Emigration reached its apogee after the Kielce pogrom in July 1946. That was possible due to the cooperation of Bricha with Polish authorities who opened Polish borders to Jewish émigrés. It is estimated that in the years 1945-1947, 150 thousand Jews illegally left Poland.

35 The Medem Library
in Jewish immigrants and Bund activists in France set up an organization for the propagation of Yiddish culture, under the name of the Vladimir Medem Workers' Club (Arbeter Klub oyfn nomen Vladimir Medem), also known as the Medem Union (Medem Farband). In July 1929 the Union opened the Hersh David Nomberg Library, at 50 France Bourgeois Street in Paris. It contained

Yiddish books and periodicals, and served as the venue for gatherings and cultural events for Jewish immigrants. The Library's co-operation with the Arbeter Ring grew, and it enjoyed the support of Jewish writers such as Peretz Hirshbein, Zalmen Schneur, Sholem Asch and David Einhorn. During the war its stocks were stored conspiratorially in a building on Vieille-du-Temple Street. In 1944 it was renamed the Vladimir Medem Library of the Arbeter Ring. It also runs a Yiddish Cultural Centre, which organizes Yiddish language courses, publishes Yiddish textbooks and literature, and holds concerts, puts on plays and shows films.

36 Edelman Marek (1919)

Grew up in Warsaw, among Bundists, activei n the Zukunft yout organization. By October 1939 he was already printing illegal newspapers. In the Warsaw ghetto he worked in the Berson and Bauman hospital, moved during the deportation to Umschlagplatz and later to Gesia Street. He was a member of the Jewish Fighting Organization since its creation in October 1942. After the January action in 1943 he began living with other Bundists on the premises of the brushmakers' shop on Swietojerska Street. In the April uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto (1943) he was the leader of 5 groups in the brushmakers' area, later on Franciszkanska Street 9. On May 9 together with the remaining fighters he managed to make it to the so-called Aryan side through sewage canals. He was in hiding in Warsaw, participated in the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944 in a division of Armia Ludowa (People's Army). After WWII he settled in Lodz and became a physician, a cardio-surgeon. He was active in 'Solidarity', detained during martial law in 1981. He lives and works in Lodz.

37 Arbeter Ring

American-Jewish charitable organization. Founded in 1900 by immigrants from Eastern Europe – socialist activists. One of the areas of its activity was self-help for workers, and the other, equally important, was propagation of Yiddish culture: it published books, formed choirs and theater groups, ran training courses for adults, and from 1916 opened a chain of afternoon schools for children taught in Yiddish. Initially it was under the political influence of the assimilators, but it was soon dominated by the Bund. During World War I it formed the People's Relief Committee, and in 1934 it became part of the Jewish Labor Committee. At present it is organized into 6 districts: Cleveland, Boston, Los Angeles, Michigan, New Jersey and New York. It is active in publishing, education and culture, and runs the Folksbine theater and several choirs. It also publishes a newspaper, Jewish Currents.