



The Community of Maheriv:

Ukrainians, Poles and Jews

How We Lived Together



Maheriv (Magierow), 2014

The Community of Maheriv/Magierow: How We Lived Together:

A Brief History of the Life of the Magierow Community from Ancient Times to the Mid-Twentieth Century

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This book explores the history of the Magierow community, through archival documents, Internet resources, and personal memories. It presents the Magierow community—Ukrainians, Poles and Jews—from ancient times to the mid-20th century. It is addressed to all who are interested in the history of Magierow and the story of its inhabitants, and aims to encourage further research.

Under the leadership of Olha Pedan-Slepukhina, materials were collected and organized by a creative group of Maheriv Secondary School teachers and students, including (pictured below L-R): Lyubov Harpola (history teacher and organizer of the student group); Roman



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Introduction

We live in the ancient town of Maheriv. This is our home, and we love it. It has a long, interesting and complex history. This story, this town, was created by people who lived here as a single community, our ancestors: Ukrainians and their good neighbors – Poles and Jews. We wanted to know more about Maheriv's story. What was it like in the distant and more recent past? How did people live? What did they do? What did they believe in? What did they hope for? Sadly, the river of time flows incessantly and carries human lives into the past. There are fewer and fewer people who remember how Ukrainians, Poles and Jews lived together. We therefore tried to gather information about the past of our town, so that life in our town would live on, and the connection of times and generations would never be severed, and the memory of the people who lived here would be preserved.

A Brief History of Maheriv from Its Inception

According to some sources, the settlement dates to the end of the 14th century.¹ Initially, on the Bila (White) River there supposedly stood a small hamlet founded by a Christian preacher, known as Magerova. Later, according to this version, a village formed here, inhabited mainly by Ukrainians engaged in agriculture and forestry. At the end of the 16th century, during the reign of Sigismund III, the village developed into a small town.

However, Polish historians maintain that there was no settlement here until the end of the 16th century, and this settlement was built on the “raw root” (previously uninhabited place) and on its “own ground” by a noble subject of the Polish King Jan Magier, whose name became the name of the town.

The Geographical Dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland and Other Slavic Lands describes the beginnings of the formation of a multinational community here, with the nobleman Jan Magier as town founder. He built a settlement on his own soil, called it Magierow, and, on January 20, 1591, passing through the nearby villages of Lipnik and Ruda Magierowska, granted the following privileges:

We want in this place to glorify God forever, according to the rites of the Roman Catholic faith, not allowing to settle any renegade convicted by the apostolic capital; and if any of the Catholic burghers departs from the Roman Church, he must be expelled from the town, his property taken away or sold. I allow followers of the Greek and Armenian faiths to live here within the town law, forbidding them only to hold the post of mayor. I exclude Jews, a scornful, cunning, and anti-Christian nation because of their faith, unfavorable and insidious; and decree that they not be accepted, that burghers should not rent or sell their houses to them, and that my successors should not allow them into the town under any pretext. The burghers should follow Saxony and Magdeburg law. Six councilors and as many lords (judges) will manage for life; the mayor must change every month. When questions arise, I allow you to receive advice from the Lviv magistrate.

¹ Starozytna Polska, art. 1212.



Magierow Coat of Arms, XVI-XIX c. (the era of Rzecz Pospolita)²

Later, Jan Magiera allowed the townspeople to build a town hall with shops and a bath, and to collect a city tax from these, as well as from the sale of goods, with the obligation to report annually to the owners of the town. He allowed the townspeople to be engaged in trade of all kinds, including: handicrafts; production of malt and honey, and the brewing of beer; distillation of vodka for sale in taverns; land cultivation, husbandry and logging by permit; trading privileges at trading posts/markets. These activities were exempt from taxes, fees, and encumbrances only until the end of the contract term.

The city government collected taxes from the owners of shops, baths and sale of goods, and these taxes went toward the needs of the town. The burghers were given fields and pastures, and felling in the forest was allowed. The burghers were exempt from taxes, rents and duties, until such time as the town would become economically strong.³

The granting of these “privileges” to the burghers was a function of political circumstances, namely the need to create a barrier of fortified towns in Eastern Galicia against frequent attacks by enemies of Rzecz Pospolita (the Polish-Lithuanian state). Confirming the privilege of the town of Magierow on March 10, 1595, Sigismund III noted: “Both we and Rzecz Pospolita are very interested in the establishment of as many

² <http://geraldika.ru/symbols/8491>

³ *Starozytna Polska*, p.1212

houses, cities, towns and castles as possible in the whole kingdom, in particular in the Russki lands, which are tormented by almost daily attacks. And with the growth of the population, strength and power will grow against all enemies of the Christian faith.”

A slightly different version of the founding of Magierow is presented in the Independent Cultural Journal “Ī” in the “Intellectual Guide to Polish Galicia:”

In 1462, the surrounding lands in the newly formed Belz voivodeship were given to the Magier family. After the death in 1567 of the last male descendent of the family, Jan Magiera, the estates passed to his daughter Barbara Belzecki, and later to her son Jan Belzecki. In 1591, he founded the town, which he named Maheriv in memory of his maternal ancestors. In 1595, the town rights were confirmed by King Sigismund III Vaza, and in the same year Jan (Andrew) Belzecki founded a Catholic parish. The city was in the hands of the Belzecki family until the first half of the 17th century, then alternately belonged to Messrs. Głogovsky, Markovsky, Semensky, Stadnitsky, and again Semensky, from the end of the XIX century until 1939.

In 1772, after the partition of Poland, Magierow lost its town status and has been an ordinary village ever since.⁴

Our town began its history in one or another of the above manners, and the town community has been multiethnic from the beginning.

Understanding the role of the Church in the development of the town, and seeing in the Church a source of faithful support, Polish noblemen contributed in various ways to the strengthening and growth of the Church’s authority among the population. In 1595, a Roman Catholic parish was founded in Magierow, which received all the necessary material resources. Later, at the beginning of the 17th century, when the Ukrainian population had grown, a Greek Catholic (Uniate) parish was founded, and wooden churches were built.

⁴ Independent Culturological Journal “Ī,” №52, 2008, Polish All-World of Galicia. An intellectual guide to Polish Galicia. “The Way to Zholkev. Maheriv.” <http://www.ji.lviv.ua/n52texts/shliax-zolk.htm>



Maheriv. Church of St. Yuri, 1673 or 1733⁵



*Church of St. Nicholas, Velyke Peredmistia,
a large settled area to the east of Magierow, 1877⁶*

⁵ Zhovkva Area: Historical Essay. City: Lviv-Kyiv. 1994. Editor: Lytvyn M Storniki: 326

⁶ Zhovkva Area: Historical Essay. City: Lviv-Kyiv. 1994. Editor: Lytvyn M Storniki: 326

In the 17th century, a brick Roman Catholic church was built in Magierow. It was significantly restored in 1845 and is still preserved as an architectural monument. A Basilian Monastery (Uniate) was also built, which burned down during the war in the mid-17th century.⁷



Brick Church of the Holy Trinity. Photos: M. Borovets (2013)

In the 17th century, a Jewish community appeared in Magierow. The first mention of Magierow’s Jews dates back to 1629.⁸

A synagogue and other ritual buildings were built in the town. In 1781, the Austrian Emperor Joseph II issued an edict called Patent of Religious Tolerance. All “non-Catholics” were allowed to follow their faith. Next, in 1782, came the Edict of Tolerance for Jews, which allowed equal access to all branches of production and trade. This document abolished the autonomy of Jewish communities. Before that [*author’s addition for this translation*], Jewish communities in towns lived a separate life in closed areas (ghettos). They had a kind of autonomy – their special internal rules and laws, court and council. The Jewish communities in towns experienced discrimination. They were not allowed to live beyond the ghetto territory, participate in craftsmen’s and trade corporations, etc. Now, Jews had rights equal to those of other communities, paid state taxes, were subject to the general (state) court, and had to serve in the army and receive a secular education.

⁷ Schematism of the Province of St. Savior of the Order of St. Basil the Great in Galicia. Lviv, 1867, p. 186.

⁸ Russian Jewish Encyclopedia, <http://rujen.ru/index.php>

At the end of the 18th century, the main occupations of the Jewish population of Magierow included handicrafts (leather processing, sewing) and trade. Jews owned two shops, five wine cellars, and a mill.



The former synagogue in 2012⁹

The Jewish community grew steadily. In 1765, 440 Jews lived in and around Magierow. In 1789, there were 62 Jewish families. In 1861, there were approximately 800 Jews (about 40% of the population).¹⁰

⁹ http://risu.org.ua/ua/relig_tourism/religious_region/50073/

¹⁰ Russian Jewish Encyclopedia, <http://rujen.ru/index.php>

The Magierow Community in Struggle, Work and Spiritual Life 17th to the Beginning of the 20th Century

Our town, located on trade routes, has always attracted conquerors. Its inhabitants therefore built fortifications on the roads to the town. The road to Magierow passes through a rampart that stretches through Kamianets-Podilskyi, which according to some studies must be Trajan's Wall.¹¹ Historian Anthony Petrushevych in his study "Summary Galician-Russian Chronicle from 1600 to 1700," published in the Literary Collection (Lviv, 1874), reports that it dates back to Avar times. In his study "Ancient Poland" (vol. II, p. 1213), Balynsky writes that the study was inconclusive, and no information could be obtained from local lore. Around Magierow, there are also rectangular ramparts, 70 fathoms long (a fathom is an ancient measure of length equal to seven English feet, or 213.36 cm.) and 30 fathoms wide, but they date from later times and were created for defense or convoys. The Krekhiv chronicle mentions the Basilian monastery, which was supposed to exist in Magierow.¹²

In the northwestern part of Magierow, along the river Bila, there is also a *filvarok*, a manorial farm producing food for market, called Okopy (which means trenches). Here is how it is described by the Geographical Dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland and Other Slavic Lands: "Okopy: a *filvarok* and distillery in Magierow, Rava Ruska district. Traces of ramparts and the remains of walls indicate that this name was given to the area for a reason."

Due to the risk of enemy attacks, the owners of Magierow built a wooden castle. The exact location of the castle is unknown, but according to legend, it was located on a hill near the modern Agricultural Machines Research Institute (a testing site for agricultural machines), near the block of apartment buildings in the northwest (L. Martovich Street., 33-45). At present, all that remains is the servants' house, according to the elders.

¹¹ Translator's note: Any connection with the Roman Emperor Trajan appears to be local lore rather than historically accurate.

¹² Schematism of the Basilian Monasteries, Lviv, 1867, p. 186



The house of the castle's servants, at the northwest edge of Magierow.

Photo: M. Borovets (2013)

The community constantly suffered the burden of wars, accompanied by destruction, fires and looting. During the national liberation war of the Ukrainian people, in 1648, Magierow was attacked by Tatars and set ablaze.¹³

In 1649, the town, at that time inhabited mainly by Poles, was besieged by Bogdan Khmelnytsky's military units moving from Lviv to Zamost. They forced the burghers to pay a large indemnity.¹⁴

The inhabitants of Magierow suffered a new calamity in 1656, with the attack of the Transylvanian Semigorod Prince György (Yuri) Rakoczi, who captured the town, turned it over to his soldiers, and burned down the castle. On July 11, 1657, Stefan Chernetsky recaptured the town from the Prince, who after a fierce battle, despite having a large army, was forced to flee as far as Medzhibozh (in Volhynia).¹⁵

The town did not have time to heal from its war wounds, for in 1672 it was attacked again by the Tatars, who committed murder and robbery. The fires burned two churches and many wooden houses. A monument near the village of Krekhov serves as a reminder of the attack. We learn about this event from Ludwik Dzedzicki: "During the siege of Lviv by the Tatars in 1672, the Tatars sent their troops together with Petro

¹³ Sources on the History of Ukraine-Russia, Vol. VI, p. 66

¹⁴ Vol. 5, Vasily Chernetsky, Town of Magiera (Magierow) Russko-Ravskiy district, (Chronical of Stavropigiyskiy Institute for 1897, Lviv, p. 184

¹⁵ Balynsky "Ancient Poland," vol. II, p. 1213 Starozytna Polska

Doroshenko in the surrounding area. After looting Magierow, the returning horde set up camp in front of the monastery of the Basilian Fathers, whose walls were hiding people of various origins and wealth. From a cannon that still exists, a shot fired by a monk killed the Tatar leader in his tent on September 23, 1672. The enemy fled. A monument was erected to commemorate the event.” Today the monument bears the inscription: “Erected in honor of the victory of the surrounding inhabitants over the Turkish-Tatar troops near Krekhov in September 1672.”¹⁶



Krekhiv, Tatar column (XVII - XVIII century)

Photo: T. Pozniak (2011)

Magierow endured trouble after trouble in the 18th and 19th centuries. In 1769, a large fire burned the city to the ground. A plague would follow a year later, taking many lives. In 1790, the rebuilt town was engulfed in another fire. In 1809, during the Napoleonic Wars, the Polish army, passing through Magierow, requisitioned grain and cattle, and recruited men.

Despite the troubles of war, the community worked hard and prospered, developing crafts and trades. Documents of the Central Historical Archive of Lviv indicate the existence in Magierow in 1811 of a pottery workshop with six workers, a brickyard with an annual

¹⁶ On the Ways of Heritage of Jan III Sobieski. Gmina Lyubachow and Gmina Nemyriv, Polish-Ukrainian border. www.ua.sobieski.lubaczow.com.pl/szlak_zolkiewski/krechow

production of 13,000 bricks per kiln, a hatmaker's workshop, a fabric workshop with 23 workers, a tinsmith's that made horse harnesses, and distilleries with 15 workers.¹⁷

Natural disasters, too, befell our town. In 1813, the population suffered a great one: unprecedented downpours caused enormous damage to the fields, the mill floated on the water, people drowned. Three years later, during more endless rains, all the grain rotted in the fields, and so in 1817 the people experienced a great famine. In 1831, many died of cholera. In 1833, the city was engulfed in another fire, although this time relatively few houses burned down, because after the fire of 1790, the townspeople began to build stone houses.¹⁸ There was no need to import building materials, as the stone was quarried on local territory.

It is difficult to determine the size of the town in the late 17th century and first half of the 18th, as little data is available. In total, there were 275 homes in Magierow at that time. In 110 of those homes lived peasants who worked one or two days per week in serfdom. 103 farms did not work in serfdom, but paid additional rent instead, known as *chynsh* (a tribute – a regular, fixed payment in money or in kind, paid to the state or landowner by free peasants and burghers for land use since the fourteenth century).¹⁹ In 62 homes lived landless Jews who paid only rent for the home and yard.²⁰

The ban on Jews settling in the town was apparently repealed in the 17th century. However, Jews were still not allowed to govern. In addition to rent, residents also paid tribute. For example, for the right to graze a cow, the payment was a chicken. They had to pay for the use of the mill to make flour, and for the landowner's oven to bake bread. They also carried out various tasks such as repairing roofs, roads and bridges, and cleaning wells.

¹⁷ Report of the Zhovkva District Administration, February 29, 1812. Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine, Lviv.

¹⁸ Vasily Chernetsky, Town of Magiera (Magierow) of the Russian-Ravsky district, Vremennik of the Stauropegian Institute for 1897, Lviv, p.134)

¹⁹ Institute of the History of Ukraine of the National Academy of Science, <http://resource.history.org.ua>

²⁰ Vasily Chernetsky, Town of Magera (Magerov) Russko-Ravskogo District, Vremennik Stavropigiyskogo Institute for 1897, Lviv, p.134, Vol. 2, p. 6

At the end of the 18th century and first half of the 19th, Magierow grew significantly. In 1860 it was home to 2,200 people. There were 2,574 in 1869, in 450 homes.²¹

There was a constant struggle between the Catholic and Uniate churches for religious influence over the faithful. In 1853, there were about 1,500 Greek Catholics (Uniates) in Magierow, who attended two churches rebuilt after the fires in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. There was only one school at their disposal, a parish church (Deacon's house), where only 34 students studied.

A few years later, in 1857, a two-year school was opened.²² For a long time it was housed in a dilapidated manor house near the church, and had such a miserable appearance that even an official of the imperial government, upon visiting, was forced to declare that it was no different from a kennel. In 1891, Count Seminsky-Levytsky, a Magierow landowner, responded to the endless entreaties of the townspeople and donated to the school the premises of the former town hall, built in 1829.²³ The state government provided no funds for the conversion of the old building into a school. The population was forced to create a committee that collected money and materials, and finally with great difficulty converted the town hall.²⁴ The new school was a four-grade school.

²¹ Starozytna Polska, p.1212

²² "Starozytna Polska," Vol.2 page 11

²³ "Starozytna Polska," Vol. 4 page 11

²⁴ "Starozytna Polska," Vol. 4 page 12



The building of the former Magierow town hall, later the school building until 1986. Photo: M. Borovets (2013)

In addition to this secular school, which was attended by children of different ethnicities – Poles, Ukrainians, Jews – the Jewish community also had its own network of educational institutions.

The Central Historical Archive of Lviv preserves records of the number of private Jewish schools in the territory of Rawa County from 1874-1907. Such schools, for the study of the Torah (the Hebrew name of the first five books of the Bible, or the Pentateuch), were attended only by boys. These schools were called Cheders. In 1899 there were eight such schools in the county, three of them in Rawa Ruska, one in Uhnov, and four in Magierow.²⁵

²⁵ “Records and Reports of the Mentorship on the Number of Existing Private Jewish Schools in the Territory of Rawa County,” Rawa-Ruska, January 30, 1899. Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine, Lviv, Fond 146, description 51-v, case 393

School Sponsor	# Studying at Home	# Studying in Cheders	Tuition
Juda Tauberg	39	10	24 grosh per person
Yosef Geist	38	14	
Leib Shlatiner	59	13	
Marcus Maltz	98	23	

Sylvia Blasberg (Tsilya Schwert), a Jewish girl who was born in 1925 in Magierow and who survived World War II, provides interesting information about the education of Jewish children. In her own words [in English]:

My parents had – that was called a melamed, or a teacher. You see, the boys were sent to a cheder, that was a must when the child was – the boy was three years old, you took him to the cheder, and that’s when we started to learn. But girls did not go to cheder, so the melamed or a teacher used to come to the house twice a week, three times a week, to learn Yiddish. [... You] started already when you were six, seven years old. [...] I particularly started with the melamed. My mother, by the way, was teaching us because she knew very well and Yiddish. She could daven in Yiddish. As a matter of fact when I did not want to learn Yiddish, and I must say you know how children are, I don’t want to, I’d rather go and play, she told me all this, “Sylvia, it is so beautiful when you... you’ll see when you get older. First of all you’ll be able to read a Yiddish book and secondly, she said, when you come to temple and you can understand what you are praying and you don’t have to ask anybody what page are you on, what page are we on, you know.” There was Yiddish books [...], just like here it’s English and Hebrew, we had Yiddish and Hebrew. So the Yiddish I started learning with a melamed and later on after this I had to make the homework and all this, and at that time already, maybe for two years, I learned with a melamed. And then when I took Yiddish in school, not Yiddish, Hebrew, already it was, and religion, history and tradition, then the melamed stopped. But my little brother went to cheder.²⁶

²⁶ Transcribed from interview with Sylvia (Tsilia) Schwerd Blasberg, Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee, USA. Oral Stories of Holocaust Survivors. <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/HolocaustSurvivors/Blasberg.asp> [Translator’s note: Silvia Blasberg died in October 2012.]

The Geographical Dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland and Other Slavic Lands gives us information about life in Magierow at the end of the 19th century: “In 1880 there were 2,812 inhabitants in the *gmina* of Magierow and 85 inhabitants in the manor (among them 695 Roman Catholics, 1581 Greek Catholics). The Magierow parish included: the villages of Bila, Dobrosyn, Horodzhiv, Kamyana Hora, Lavrykiv and Okopy, Monastyrok, Pyly, Poharysko, Ulytsko, Zamok and Zarubane.”

In Magierow there was already a municipal credit office at that time, with capital of 155 zlotys. The local fund for the poor (founded by Samuel of Belz in 1642), had 1,800 zlotys of leased property and was managed by the *gmina* administration. There was also a dowry fund of Jan and Filipino Komarnicki, established in 1869 by Mr. Jan Komarnicki, to pay for dowries for poor girls from Magierow, Birki, Peredmistia, and Pidlissia (on the outskirts of Magierow). The estate was managed by the regional government, the *gmina* authorities and the parish priests of both parishes. The leased property at the end of 1883 was valued at 1,515 Polish zloty.²⁷

At the end of the 19th century, the legal status of the Jewish community in Magierow was finally settled. This is evident from the “Statues of the Organization of the Jewish Community in Magierow,”²⁸ found in the Central State Historical Archive of Lviv, which was filed for review on December 24, 1895, and approved in 1897. The Statues carefully described all the rights and responsibilities of community members.

The population of Magierow grew rapidly until the beginning of the First World War. In some 50 years, the number of inhabitants increased by almost a thousand. Information about the composition of the

²⁷ Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich, wyd. pod red. F. Sulimierskiego, B. Chlebowskiego, J. Krzywickiego i W. Walewskiego, Warszawa 1880—1902, t. 5

²⁸ Izraelitcka Gmina Wyznaniowa. Statuta. 24 grudnia 1895. Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine in Lviv, Fond 701, description 4, case 77

population of Magierow is given by B. Vasyutynsky in the study *The Jewish Population in Poland in the 19th-20th Centuries*:²⁹

Year	Total # inhabitants	# Jews	Jews as % of total population of Magierow
1880	2897	1138	40.5%
1890	3157	1050	33.2% (population decline due to emigration)
1900	3225 (513 homes)	1322	Jews, 41.9%; Ukrainians 1,116 (34.9%); Poles 769 (23.2%)
1910	3449	1340	36%
1921	2473	600	24.3% (new wave of emigration)

We see that Jews made up two fifths of the town's population in the 19th century. They had all the necessary institutions for a full economic, social, cultural, and religious life. In the early 20th century, there were three synagogues in Magierow. In the period 1870-1894, Magierow's rabbi was Joseph-Alter Epstein; from 1894-1920, his son Gershon; from 1920-1925, Naftoli-Hertz Bombach; from 1920-1930, Rappoport. In the early 20th century, representatives of the Belz Hasidic dynasty lived in Magierow – Aryeh-Leib Rokeah and his son Nohum-Aron. At that time, Magierow had the charitable organizations Bikur Cholim (Visiting the Sick, a charity organization for patient care, doctor visits pharmacy services), Linas HaTzedek (a charity organization for care for the sick and needy, and support and assistance related to emigration), and other public organizations.

In the early 20th century, the Ukrainian community was the second largest in Magierow, and the small old wooden church, built at the expense of the heir Oleksandr Stadnytsky in 1733, could no longer meet the needs of the Ukrainian Greek Catholics. In 1908, through the efforts of the priest Father Ivan Reshetylo, construction began of the brick Church of St. George. Construction was completed in 1914 and the new church was consecrated just before the First World War.

²⁹ Wasiutyński B., *Ludność żydowska w Polsce w wiekach XIX i XX: studjum statystyczne*, Warszawa 1930, s. 137. <http://www.sztetl.org.pl/ru/article/magierow>



Church of St. Yuri, Maheriv, 1914³⁰

The old church was dismantled and moved in 1937 to the neighboring village of Gorodzhiv, where the following year Joseph the Blind consecrated it as the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin. The church still stands there.



³⁰ <http://www.turystam.in.ua/uk/2011-12-04-13-07-31/76-2012-02-18-20-18-10/3983--19081914->

*Church of the Assumption of the Virgin, in the village of Gorodzhiv*³¹

³¹ <http://decerkva.org.ua/horodzhiv.html>

Magierow during the First World War

World War I began in 1914, bringing new misfortunes and poverty to the population of Magierow. The turbulent events of the war repeatedly swept the town, causing destruction and damage. The town became the scene of fierce fighting between the Austro-Hungarian and Russian armies. In 1914-1915, Magierow was in the hands of Russian troops. Polish researcher Grzegorz Ronkowski writes: “During the First World War, on the plains east of Magierow, the Russian and Austrian armies met in two fierce battles. The first took place on September 6-11, 1914, during a failed Austrian counteroffensive to recapture Lviv. The second was June 18-20, 1915, when the Russians were repulsed and left the capital of Galicia.³² Mass graves in the vicinity of Magierow were evidence of the bloody events of that time.



*Interior of the synagogue in Magierow,
WWI era (soldiers in Austro-Hungarian uniforms)*

When the Russian troops withdrew from Galicia in 1915, many Ukrainian families left with the Russian convoys, returning to their homeland only after the war. The war caused significant destruction in Magierow. The center of our town was especially badly damaged. The church, school, and practically all houses on and around Market Square

³² “Lviv region.” Guide to Western Ukraine, Part 3. Grzegorz Rąkowski.

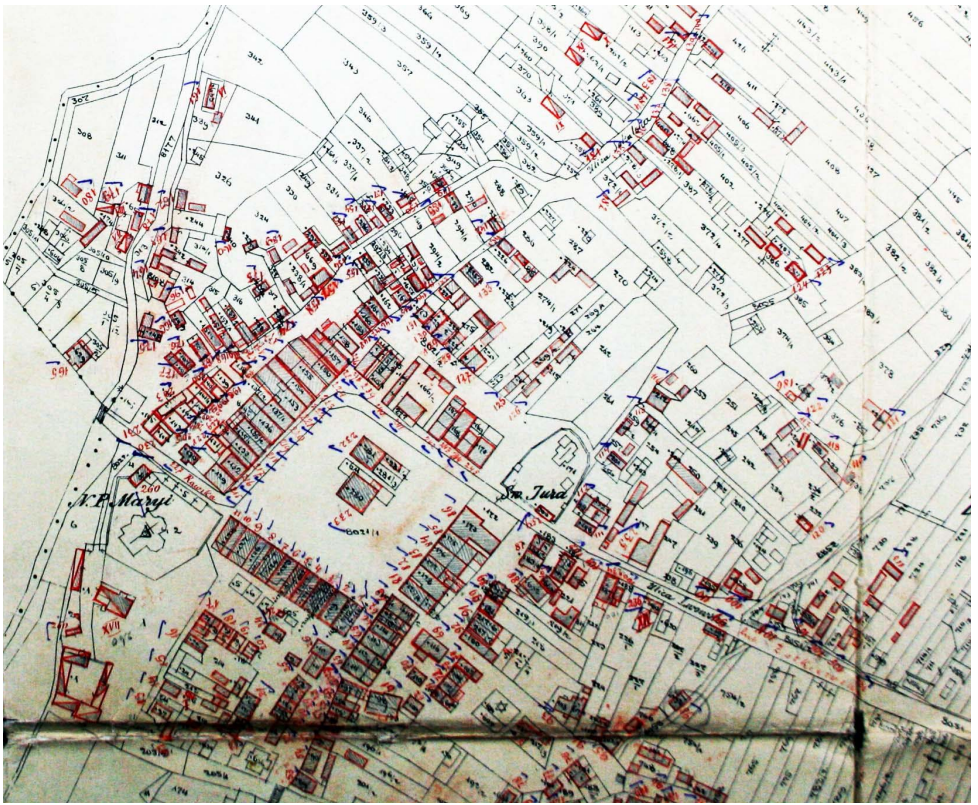
were damaged. Many Jewish houses and synagogues and other public and ritual buildings were destroyed. The Joint (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee) assisted in their restoration.³³



Ruins of the Catholic Cathedral in Magierow, 1917

Governmental organizations also provided assistance. In 1917, a special committee headed by engineer Martin Maslyanka was set up at Sadovnitska Street 37 (now V. Antonovycha Street) in Lviv to inspect houses and farms in Galician settlements affected by the war and assess the damage (partially or completely destroyed buildings) and calculate the amount of monetary compensation. The commission showed that 286 houses and 270 farm and public buildings were damaged in Magierow. The cost of damages amounted to 3,251,674 Austrian kronen.

³³ The Joint (the Central Committee for Aid to Jewish Victims of War and the American Jewish Relief Committee) was formed in the United States in 1914-1915, and in 1917 transferred \$1,532,300 to Galicia to rebuild war-torn homes and farms (<http://ru.wikipedia.org>).



*Map of Magierow, 1917-1918 (fragment)
from "Lists of the Inhabitants of Magierow, Rawa-Ruska District,
Affected during the First World War, Indicating the Damage Inflicted on Them"³⁴*

Interestingly, the above-mentioned document registers not only Jewish property but also Polish and Ukrainian property that suffered during the war. It describes in detail all the losses and the amount of compensation provided to the victims.

³⁴ Vols. 1-2, 1917-1918. Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine, Lviv, Fond 146, description 48, case 120-121

The war claimed a large number of casualties. The population of the town decreased by almost 1000 people (in 1910, there were 3,449 people; in 1921, there were 2,473).

During the First World War, the community of Magierow suffered from another epidemic of cholera. According to the book of deaths of the Catholic Church alone, 113 people of various ages died of Asian cholera in the summer of 1915, in two months.³⁵

Similar data were probably recorded in the funeral books of the Greek Catholic Church and the synagogue.

During and after the war, many residents of Magierow went to Europe and America in search of a better life. Patricia Blaszczyk-Cole of Charleston, South Carolina, writes: “My grandfather, Ludwik Blaszczyk, sent his two sons, Franciszek and Casimir (my father), to the United States around 1915-1920 to avoid what was to happen in Poland. Later he came to visit his sons... and returned to Poland...”

³⁵ Metric book: birth, marriage, death, church, Magierow village, 1901-1919. Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine, Lviv, Fund 618, description 2, case 2789)



Ludwik Blaszczyk with his sons in America.
Photo: Blaszczyk family archive

Not everyone was so lucky. Sylvia (Blasberg) Schwerd recalls this about her relatives:

My grandfather, my father's father, went to America. At that time quite a few people, you know, left their families, they went to work [in New York] and then brought their families. And he and some other friends went to America. He stayed here in New York, he was working and he told me he was a presser, probably a – I don't know what kind of manufacture. Maybe clothing or something. [And grandma] did not want to go [...] So grandpa had to come back. But while he was here, his oldest, oldest five children came, two sons [...] and three daughters [...] came here. They were very young, 15, 16. So they stayed here. So I did have relatives here. But their names were changed to Schwartz.

My father's younger brother immigrated to Belgium and he had a family, a wife and three children, and after the war... I remember the city, I remember we used to write letters and receive pictures. Something Charleroi, a royal Charleroi, something like that, a city in Belgium. It wasn't in Brussels. It was

also a large city, Charleroi. I really don't know. But I remember after the war I met a person, a lady, who came from the same town I was, and I asked if she knew the family and she told me she knew that they were deported to Auschwitz.

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³⁶ Transcribed from interview with Sylvia (Tsilia) Schwerd Blasberg, Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee, USA. Oral Stories of Holocaust Survivors.
<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/HolocaustSurvivors/Blasberg.asp>

The Life of the Magierow Community in the Interwar Period (1918-1939)

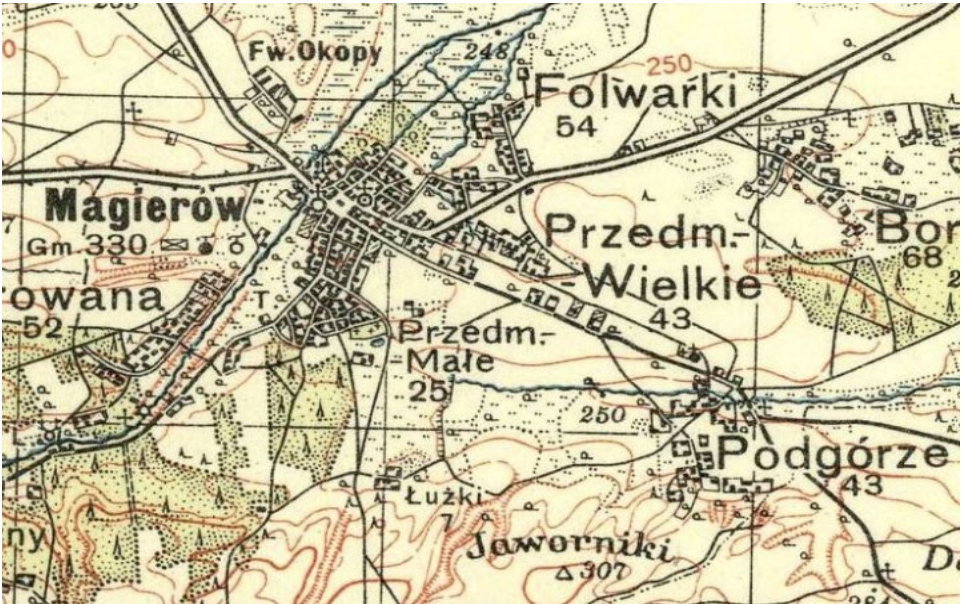
In the autumn of 1918, the Austro-Hungarian Empire disintegrated, and in 1919, during the Ukrainian-Polish War, the lands of Western Ukraine passed into the possession of Poland. Polish researcher Grzegorz Ronkowski writes: “During the Polish-Ukrainian War, there were heavily fortified Ukrainian positions near Magierow, which were unsuccessfully attacked by Poles on March 21-23, 1919, and which were captured during the spring offensive on April 30, 1919.”³⁷

Postwar reconstruction of the town was slow. One of the official documents of the Lviv Voivodeship describes the living conditions of the population in 1921 as follows: “Houses in four towns of the district were significantly destroyed during the war, especially in Magierow. There were brick houses, some two-story, and low houses built of wood. There were also a lot of unhygienic, low *mazankas*, poorly built of wood and clay, with insufficient lighting and ventilation.”³⁸

Between 1921-1924, the town was restored to order. The streets were widened and repaired, and houses were rebuilt, including the war-damaged school. A post-telephone-and-telegraph office appeared.

³⁷ Lviv Region. Guide to Western Ukraine. Part 3 Grzegorz Rąkowski, 2007

³⁸ Starozytna Polska, p.15



Magierow on the map of the Polish General Staff in the 1930's³⁹

During the interwar period, Magierow was the center of Magierow *gmina* in Rawa-Ruska County, Lviv Voivodeship, Poland. These times could be described as relatively quiet for the townspeople. The economy was restored, and public life developed rapidly. In Magierow, each of the three communities had its own places of worship, community centers and organizations, cooperatives and production.

As many people were not landowners, and land was generally scarce, small-scale artisanal production, fisheries, and trade, were common occupations in Magierow. In 1931, 2,885 people lived in Magierow, in 551 homes, and the total land they owned amounted to 1,757 hectares. The lack of land pushed the burghers and peasants to seek additional sources of livelihood. The townspeople, from ancient times, were able to bake the so-called Magierow *palyanytsi* (local traditional bread loaves), which were transported for sale in Lviv and other cities. The village was also famous for its “*magerka*” fur hats, which were sewn

³⁹ <http://www.dishmodels.ru/gshow.htm?mode=P&vmode=T&p=4099&id=45874&tp=g>

by masters from separate small parts of high-quality processed sheepskin. In 1930 there were five shoemakers, five bakers, four carpenters, three blacksmiths, a tinsmith, a tailor, eight butchers, 68 shopkeepers and innkeepers, and four restaurant owners.⁴⁰

As the population grew, so did the number of artisans and traders. Both burghers and peasants were engaged in handicrafts and shopkeeping. The artisans sold their goods at fairs held in Magierow 13 times per year and on weekly market days, which were on Wednesdays. Shopkeepers traded in manufactured goods, haberdashery, ready-made clothing, leather, iron, flour, sausages, tobacco, cattle, etc. Artisans from Yavorow brought wood products (buckets, sieves, tubs, etc.) to fairs and bazaars, so-called Ugniv boots from Kulikow, which were in great demand among the population, and sausages from Nemirow.

The elders say that the entire center of Magierow was built up by the so-called “trade rows.” The owners of these shops were mostly Jews and Poles (according to Kateryna Kozhushko, a resident of Magierow).



“Trading rows” in Magierow. Houses on Rynok Square in the summer of 1941
Photo: Exhibition in Magierow Village Council

⁴⁰ Starozytna Polska, p. 17

The town's industry grew slowly, and was mostly small. According to 1939 data, there were three mills (one steam, and two water), with the two larger ones employing three workers each; there were two dairies, one a cooperative; one soda water production enterprise; a sawmill; four brickyards, two large enough for 10-15 workers (20,000 bricks were laid in one firing), the other two operated by the owners themselves; a concrete factory that produced tiles, concrete circles for wells, and gutters for water drainage ditches.



The water mill building, preserved. Photo: M. Borovets (2013)

Businesses were supported by various public associations. The State Archives of Lviv provide examples such as the following:

The **Malopolska Agricultural Society** was formed on September 16, 1929, and from 1929 the smaller Polish Agricultural Circle also operated in Magierow, where participants exchanged experience in economic activity, organized courses, and studied agronomic science. Ukrainians had similar circles.

The **Agricultural Circle** was formed in Magierow on July 21, 1929. The board: Chairman, Jan Kruchek; Deputy, Stefan Slipets; Secretary, Mykhailo Pavlyk; Treasurer, Frantishek Antosh; Members, Petro Ziembra and Mykhailo Stegnyy.

There was an **Economic Circle** in the village of Bila, formed on March 4, 1923. It had 16 members, and the Chairman was Karol Materna.

Jewish businessmen were mainly engaged in trade. They formed trade unions, such as the **Union of Grain Traders** (June 20, 1939), which operated in Lviv and had branches throughout the Lviv region.

Sylvia Blasberg Schwerd shared interesting memories of such activities:

My father was a businessman [...]. [The gardening business] came from my grandfather's and my great-grandfather's dad. You see, it was called in Polish a sadownik. That meant that they rented, my grandfather and some other people who were in partnership, rented orchards by let's say landowners, people like the barons of Poland, the people who owned big amounts of land. I mean they were not sitting on their land; they were someplace in Paris probably, or in Switzerland. But they rented those orchards let's say for five, six years, they made contract. They had people who were... if there was a good year, people were working, taking off the fruit, apples, pears, cherries, nuts, walnuts, things like that, and also beehives, with bees. And this was transported, this was taken care of with help, you know, and these were transported later to Lemberg, to the big city where we rented special places, basements, cold, kept the fruit cold and there people were coming let's say for stores or for markets and they came and bought it. So that's the kind of business.

My grandfather was [...] in Magierow and [...] my uncle was there also, my father's brother, and my father was the one who was in Lemberg. That's why we were living in Lemberg taking care of when the fruit came to Lemberg. He was taking care of that, consulting with the people there, and selling it.⁴¹

Iryna Slipets, born in Magierow in 1934, recalled:

We lived in the very center of the city. We had a garden. Dad loved to take care of the trees. He grafted them himself. We also had several hives. During the fruitful years, people came to us, Jews who traded in fruit. They inspected apple and pear trees and bought harvested fruit from Dad right from the tree. Then each apple was collected and packed very carefully. And in the winter,

⁴¹ Interview with Sylvia (Tsilia) Schwerd Blasberg, Wisconsin Historical Society, Milwaukee, USA. Oral Stories of Holocaust Survivors.
<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/HolocaustSurvivors/Blasberg.asp>

on St. Nicolas Day,⁴² dad went to shop and bought fresh tangerines. Now I have not seen such. They were like covered with a delicate down...

Socio-political and cultural life in Magierow was actively developing. From the materials of the State Archives of Lviv, one can learn about the activities of various socio-political organizations and societies. The Magierow community had organizations for almost all age groups and strata.

There were also educational, cultural and religious societies in Magierow.

In the 1920's and 1930's, there were branches of various Jewish parties and organizations in Magierow. There were two Jewish schools: a Cheder, a religious school for boys; and Beit Yaakov, a school for girls.⁴³

The Merkaz Rouchani Society for the Dissemination of Jewish Education and Culture: Merkaz Rouchani means spiritual center in Hebrew. The World Zionist Organization, founded in 1902, became a workers' party 20 years later. The Magierow organization Merkaz Rouhani was approved by the Government of the Lviv Voivodeship on January 27, 1928, "[aiming] to awaken and spread religious consciousness among Jews and help poor Jews get to Palestine."

Agudas Israel: A division of the Central Organization of Orthodox Jews of the Voivodeships Lviv, Stanislavsky, and Ternopil, was formed on November 13, 1931. Agudas Israel is a world Jewish religious movement united in a political party with the goal of preserving the foundations of Jewish life and religion, based on the Halakha. The party operated in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The

⁴² December 19. In Western Ukraine children used to receive gifts from the Saint, like Santa Claus. [Author's note for this translation]

⁴³ Russian Jewish Encyclopedia. <http://rujen.ru/index.php>

statutes of the Magierow affiliate indicated the following activities: teaching the way of life and activities of Jews in accordance with the provisions and traditions of the Torah, protection of the right to perform religious rites and holidays, material assistance to Jews, and promoting the establishment of cooperative societies.

A Jewish youth union called the **Gordonia Guardianships of Jewish Youth** (May 13, 1931): A youth organization that educated young people passionate about Eretz Israel, Judaism, and Hebrew on the personal example of Aaron David Gordon. The organization promoted the idea of living in kibbutzim (agricultural communes in Israel) and aliyah emigration (literally “ascension”) to Palestine. It was a socialist youth organization founded in Galicia in 1925. The statutes located in the archives stated the following purpose of the organization: “Healthy physical and moral education of Jewish youth on a spiritual and ethical basis. Study of Hebrew and Polish language, Jewish and Polish literature and history, in order to cultivate a love of work and other virtues. Organization of vacation camps (like summer camps), sports, gymnastics and scout exercises for Jewish youth; organization of choirs, amateur theaters, friendly gatherings; organization of training courses, evening programs, reading rooms and libraries under the guidance of professional pedagogical figures and parents.” The board in Magierow included: President, Isaac Fand; Deputy, Jozef Wurzel; Secretary, Salomea Klar; Treasurer, Shandla Shapira; board members Mina Schlager and Hana Klar. There was also a board of trustees of entrepreneurs: Solomon Rothandler, a butcher; Isaac Klar, a merchant; Gersh Adler, son of Moses, a merchant; Isaac Wolf, a merchant; Chaim Ber Rumelt, a furrier. The society had 22 members, characterized politically as “Zionists loyal to the state.”

“Brit Hatzoar” Circle of the Jewish Zionist Revisionist Organization of Poland (December 1933)

“Beit Yakov” Jewish Cultural and Educational Society: Established in Magierow on March 17, 1925. Founding Committee: Emil Clair, Ozer Funk, Solomon Feder, Abraham Kessler, Isaac Adler. Board: President, Solomon Rothandler; Deputy, David Mandelbrot; Secretary, Anna Kessler. Beit Yaakov (“Jacob’s House” in Hebrew) was a network of orthodox Jewish religious schools for girls. The first Beit Yaakov school was founded in 1918 in Krakow by Sarah Schnirer.

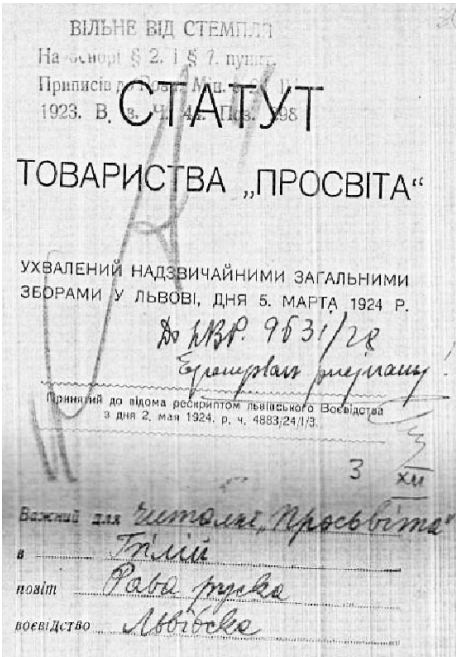
For centuries, there was a Jewish education system for boys, which included Cheders, where studies started from three years old, as well as Yeshivas and Beth-midrashes. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, more and more girls were studying in non-Jewish secondary schools, which was contributing to their further assimilation and distancing from Judaism. Sarah Schnirer, a dressmaker from Krakow, opened a girls' school in her workshop in 1918 to counter this process, and her initiative was supported by authoritative rabbis of the time, such as Hafetz Haim and Rebbe Gurus Hasidim. School branches opened in many European cities, as well as in America and Palestine. The school day began with prayer. In Beit Yaakov schools, along with general subjects such as mathematics, history, geography and others, much attention was paid to religious disciplines. The girls engaged in deep study of the books of the Tanah (Jewish Bible), Halakhah (laws of the Jewish way of life) and Musar (ethics). Particular emphasis was placed on the education regarding spiritual qualities and the Jewish worldview. The appearance of students, and their behavior during school and in their free time, were clearly regulated by school rules. Girls were expected to be modestly dressed according to religious norms. There was a compulsory school uniform, usually a blue blouse with long sleeves and a navy-blue skirt covering the knee. It was also mandatory to wear white or blue tights.

The Ukrainian community was no less active. The largest political party in the Polish-controlled territories of Western Ukraine was the Ukrainian National Democratic Union (UNDO), a centrist party that focused on Ukraine's independence, without resorting to terrorist acts, and on Ukraine's democratic development. UNDO exerted its influence in the societies Prosvita (Educational Society), Ridna Shkola (Native School), Soyuz Ukrainok (Union of Ukrainian Women), Sokil (Falcon, a scouting organization), Lutch (Ray), and others. Its representatives were elected to the Polish Sejm (17 deputies) and the Senate (three deputies). Poland's daily Ukrainian newspapers, *Dilo* (Work) and *Novy Chas* (New Time), were published by UNDO.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Socio-Political Life of the Ukrainian Lands as Part of Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia in the 20-30's." <http://obuch.com.ua/pravo/13580/index.html?page=29>

In order to spread these ideas in Magierow, the Ukrainian Prosvita Reading Room was created. Its Charter for Magierow was approved on August 16, 1932.

The Board included: President, Father Mykhailo Kulchytsky; Deputy, Yosyf Slipets; Secretary, Volodymyr Kochan; Treasurer, Mykola Borys; Librarian, Mykhailo Onushko; Head of the farm, Semko Hoy; members of the Board, Mykola Slipets son of Ivan, Dmytro Slipets, and Vasyl Leus. The Society was located in Magierow on Pilsudskoho Street (now Lvivska Street) in a church building. The aim of the Society was to raise the cultural and educational level of Ukrainian youth and to cultivate a nationalist spirit. A choir was organized at the Prosvita Reading Room, in which they sang Ukrainian songs, and they traveled around the Lviv region to give concerts. This choir also sang in the church of St. George. The choir leaders were Stefan Gladyuk and Yosyf Slipets. Education departments also operated in the surrounding villages. According to the county monitor “members of the society are Ukrainian chauvinists, members of the UNDO political party.” In 1939, the society had 90 members, “60% of the UNDO and OUN sympathizers/supporters, the rest are apolitical” (OUN – Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists).



Charter of the organization Prosvita. A branch operated in the village of Bila.
 Photo: State Archives of Lviv



Foreground, left: The former church building, which housed the Prosvita Reading Room Society and rehearsals of the choir. Right: Father Mykhailo Kulchitsky (second from right) with his family. Photo: Markiyon Kulchitsky family archive.



Ukrainians of Magierow, 1939⁴⁵

The Catholic community of Magierow had a well-developed network of public organizations:

The Catholic Girls' Association, December 27, 1935. Board members: Chairman, Yanina Homotyuk; Secretary, Helena Tchaikovsky; Treasurer Olga Blaschak.

⁴⁵ <http://www.hood.de/i/foto-ukraine-bevoelkerung-magierow-polen-um-1939--38165901.htm>



Olga Blaschak, March 3, 1939
Photo: Blaschak family archives

Catholic Society of Young People, 1935.

Catholic Union of Urban Youth, January 13, 1936. Board: President, Stanislav Stegnyy; Secretary, Jan Materna; Treasurer, Stanislav Onushko.

Catholic Society of Men, 1936.

Catholic Women's Society, January 13, 1936. Board: Chairman, Stanislav Piechka; Secretary, Julia Pushka; Treasurer, Elizabeth Khimon.

The community's combined efforts to develop education continued. On October 12, 1933, the Circle of the Society of Construction of the Public Schools in Magierow was established. Its board included: Father Józef Nowalanec, President; Andrzej Twardowski, Deputy; Władysław Poluch, Secretary; Stefan Gladuk, Treasurer; Jan Dyky, Ludvig Irger and Dr. Yakob Horowitz, Audit Committee. (Based on the names, one can guess that the composition of the board was multiethnic—Poles, Ukrainians and Jews—and the issues of educational development were important for everyone.)

There was a seven-grade school in Magierow with Polish as the language of teaching, which is not surprising, since at that time Magierow belonged to Poland and Polish was the state language. In 1931, the school had 11 teachers and 478 children, mostly children of wealthy burghers. In Birky, on the outskirts of Magierow, a small hut housed a two-grade school (also Polish), in which one teacher taught early reading to 65 children.⁴⁶ The famous Ukrainian writer Les Martovych, who is buried in the neighboring village of Monastyrok, once visited Birky.

How did the inhabitants of Magierow live in the interwar period? Their memories portray a very interesting and colorful picture of everyday life in the 1920's and 1930's.

Esther Kramer Bankier, another Jewish girl, born in 1924, who survived World War II, was interviewed by the Shoah Foundation Institute of Visual History and Education at the University of Southern California, in 1995. She lived in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Here is how she described life in Magierow:

I was born in Magierow on December 24, 1924 in a very well-to-do family. We always had a maid in the house, nice house. My father had a very successful business. He had a mill, grinding flour of all different types. It was a family enterprise, that used to be passed down from generation to generation. I had three sisters and one brother. I was the oldest. I think I was a good child. I was always very happy, very content. And I was very young when the war started. I went to school, belonged to a Zionist organization, and learned Hebrew. It was a nice town. There were a lot of Jews, everyone was very close.

I went to public school in Magierow and high school in Lemberg. I studied there for a whole year. On the weekend I came to Magierow. It was not far. I had an aunt in Lemberg.

It was a nice family, children. My mother was a housekeeper. She was very well educated, she had one year of university, but then they wouldn't let her go anymore. In Poland, Jews were not allowed to attend university. She was a housekeeper; we were pretty well to do. She had friends. I had grandparents, but they lived separately. We had a nice family, you know, you visit, the holidays you spend together. It was a typical European city. I had pretty many

⁴⁶ History of Cities and Villages of the USSR, Lviv region, pp. 510-519, 1968

aunts and uncles on my mother's side – my father was an only child. My mother had one sister.

The family was orthodox, religious. We went to the temple; we were very active. There were two synagogues in the city. One was ultra-orthodox and the other was a little more moderate. My father belonged to both of them. I went where my parents went. The kids used to play around the temple, that's what you do around the holidays.

It was not too big of a town but the Jewish community was very close. Everybody knew everybody took part in everything that happened. The holidays were beautiful. Everybody observed very much, I still long for it. We visited and people came to us.

We had non-Jewish neighbors and it was pretty nice. Everybody respected everybody, there were no divisions then. Everyone lived in peace. The relationship was very friendly. We respected each other very much. I had non-Jewish friends because we went to school together. There was no separate school for Jews or non-Jews. We mixed.⁴⁷

Iryna Yosyfivna Slipets, born in 1934, tells about life in Magierow:

My family comes from Magierow. My mother, Anelya Yakivna Slipets (b. 1905), was Polish, and my father, Yosyf Mykolayovych Slipets (b. 1888), was Ukrainian. There were five of us in the family. The two boys, following their father, were baptized in the Ukrainian church, and the three girls, following their mother, were baptized in the Roman Catholic church. Because the family was mixed, we celebrated both Catholic and Orthodox religious holidays. The whole family went to both one church and the other church.

Our family was not very wealthy. We had only two morgens, a bit more than a hectare, of rag fields in different places. (Author's note: 1 morgen = 0.56 hectare.) This included gardens, where they planted everything necessary for life and economy, and hayfields. My mother was a housewife, very frugal, she tried to have enough supplies for the whole year. She herself spun flax threads and gave them to Roman Tsekala, who lived in Shostaky, near the village of Birky. He had a machine and weaved cloth, and we then bleached it in the

⁴⁷ Video interview with Esther (Kramer) Bankier, November 15, 1995 (70 years old), Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Esther (Kramer) Bankier was born on December 24, 1924, Magierow, Poland.

garden on the grass. When my mother spun wool, my sister and I knitted sweaters. Dad was a shoemaker, sewed shoes. He had a German Singer sewing machine. That was in winter. And in the summer he worked as a bricklayer. He, together with other masters of Magierow, built our church. He also played the violin well, knew the notes and led the church choir.

The population of Magierow consisted of three large communities: Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish. There was no strict settlement border in the city. People lived together and the size of the three communities was about the same. My father once said that he was elected to the city council three times, where there were 10 representatives each from Poles, Ukrainians and Jews. The city had a Catholic church, a Uniate church and a synagogue. Behind the synagogue was a Jewish school. In and around the main square of the city, Jews kept various shops and workshops on the ground floors of two-story buildings. I remember my mom and I going to the store near the synagogue. A Jewish proprietress named Polichka treated me each time with small paper pack of sweets and nuts.

Our family lived on the main street (then called J. Pilsudski) almost opposite the church. The family of Father Mykhailo Kulchytsky lived near us. My father and Father Kulchytsky worked together in Prosvita. The Prosvita Choir performed in concerts. I remember that they went to Kamyanka Strumylova (Kamyanka-Buzka) to perform. Stefan Gladyuk still worked in Prosvita. I remember that he had a large personal library and the books were marked with his personal stamp "Stefan Gladyuk's Library." Gladyuk's wife was my teacher at school. There was still a large Jewish family living near us. The man's name was Lipa, he was a tailor, and the woman's name was Haika. We, the children, always played outside together, we were not divided by ethnicity.

Every Sunday morning, Dad used to go to a Jewish butcher's stall to buy fresh beef. Even before going to church, my mother had time to cook dinner. After the evening service in the church, no one was in a hurry, people were walking down the street, talking, going to visit relatives, children were having fun...⁴⁸

A resident of Magierow, Galan Kateryna Dmytrivna, born in 1924, also recalls pre-war life:

I was born in the village of Magierow. From childhood I lived at the end of the village, near the current forestry yard. The locals nicknamed this area Bila because the river Bila flows nearby. My father was engaged in beekeeping. Magierow's population consisted of three communities: Polish, Ukrainian and

⁴⁸ Memories of Irina Yosifovna Slipets (Pedan), recorded by Olga Pedan-Slepukhina.

*Jewish. They lived peacefully and treated each other well. The children attended the same school and often spent time together. Jews lived in the center of the village, where the stairs from their houses still remain. Jews were mainly engaged in trade, selling everyday goods: clothes, shoes, food.*⁴⁹

Sylvia Blasberg spoke about her feelings of self-identification in the community:

I spoke Polish with my friends, or with some of them who spoke Yiddish, I spoke Yiddish. But mostly Polish, mostly Polish.

*This is a very strange question [about allegiance]. This is one of those questions that it's ... You see, a person who did not live there can form a question like that. It's not like here, okay, are you first an American or first a Jew. I don't know how to [...] I don't know allegiance. I want to tell you one thing, in the Polish army many Jews were fighting. There were invalids, they were spilling [their] blood. A Jew was fighting in the Polish army, in the Austrian army, in the Russian army, where he was living, that was his country. And he had the allegiance with that country. [...] Israel did not exist at that time. Do you understand? So it couldn't come that question. We were living there, I felt sure. I did not want Poland to fight, I did not want the war to be.*⁵⁰

Life went on slowly, until peace was broken by war.

⁴⁹ Memories of Kateryna Dmytrivna Galan recorded by Olga Kukurudza and Maria Borovets.

⁵⁰ Interview. Sylvia Blasberg (Tsilia Schwert), State Historical Society Wisconsin, Milwaukee, USA. Oral stories of Holocaust survivors.

<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/HolocaustSurvivors/Blasberg.asp>

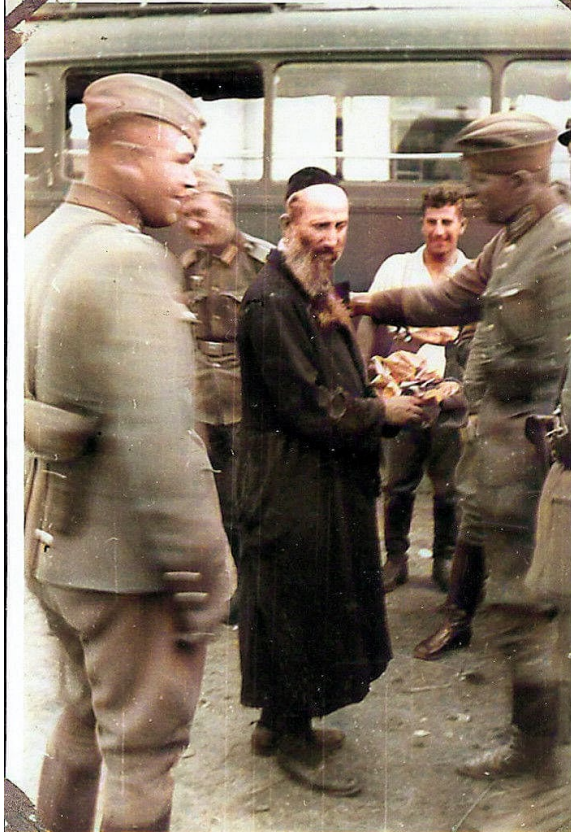
Life in Magierow during the Second World War

On September 1, 1939, World War II began. Nazi Germany attacked Poland. With the beginning of the War, violent events began in the city. By September 15, there were already units of the Wehrmacht (Nazi Germany) in Magierow. They were waiting for the arrival of Red Army units to hand over the town, while destroying Jewish homes. On September 17, Soviet troops crossed the Polish border to “protect the fraternal peoples of Ukrainians and Belarusians.” The secret of this fraternal assistance was contained in the secret protocols of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, according to which Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union divided the Polish state and it ceased to exist.

Sylvia Blasberg describes the beginning of the war:

September 1st, 1939, my family was in Lemberg. And the first day they [Germans] bombarded already our depot station [Pidzamche-Zamarstyniv], there were deaths already. And it took about two, three days, the bombardment and all that, and my father decided... people were talking, you know, and that the best thing is to be in a small town because small towns do not get bombarded so much. So he decided to move his family to the small town Magierow because this is where his father was living and his brother with his family, and that was our home, we owned the place there. It was my grandparent's home.

So they decided, my parents decided, to move. The war took three weeks until the partition came, means the Polish Army hold out not more than three weeks.



A Magierow rabbi and soldiers, 1930's or 1940's

Those two weeks I will not forget. [...] We saw already a taste what the Germans are. [...] They, first of all, they took all the Jewish males to work. What kind of work? It's not work that it's needed work, something which they would give you. It's specially to make the person feel low or just, I don't know, how to say, degrade? Degrade them. And I saw, and children, you know, my parents didn't let us, the parents didn't let us out but somehow young people somehow always managed to sneak out and see, because you want to see. We saw the rabbi of that city, a young man, taken to clean. You know, in the center of the city there were always horses standing in, you know, and the manure from the horses. They took him and stayed over him. [...] But that he should, in his hat, he had to take out his hat, put in the manure and clean the streets.

It was simple humiliating. When his wife saw that, she ran to the priest to beg the priest to intervene, which was intervene for him and they took him away. I mean they took away [inaudible]. But the other people. Or let's say like my

father, they took an out of town walk and he had to carry large stones, there was many more people, from one place to the other, for no reason, for no reason. So there was two weeks.

One incident I remember, and just to show that there are nice people all over. I remember at that time when they were taking the people to work and one time, one day, it was a beautiful fall at that time when the Germans were. We even, and we said, it's not fair, you know, they were bathing and they were sun bathing, it was in September. One day came in a German soldier in our house and he spoke with my mother in German. My mother spoke perfectly German, and he asked my mother where is my father, who else is in the family, and she told him this is my older daughter. And she said as a matter of fact I am sending my daughter with some food because I think they are working, you know, how do you say it, out of town, out of the city about ten kilometers, so he said to my mother, please don't be afraid. Give me the food, he said, I will take it, don't send. She's a young girl, I wouldn't advise you. And my mother looked at him, a German soldier to... to care. I mean, you know, I was about, almost 15, 14 years old, a young lady with long hair, you know, I was... so, well, my mother packed the lunch and he took it.

Later we found out he found my father that day, he gave him the lunch, he also gave him two cigarettes. The next day he came back and he said to my mother, he would like to take a bath, if she could warm up some water. You know, in a small town there was no bath tub with all the facility [...], to warm the water and you had a, like a metal or a wooden bath tub and that's how you took a bath. So he was asking my mother if he could take a bath. No, my mother said. Okay he said, I'll come this time about five o'clock and please would you have some boiled milk for me. You know, in Europe they boiled their milk because it's not pasteurized milk. And the mother said, okay. He came back that evening, he brought candies. It was, I don't know how they call it here, it's called Kandiszucker, it's called. It's like ice, it looks like ice, rock candy for the children. Of course and we all laughed, he took a bath. After this he told my mother, it feels like a paradise.

Then he saw that my mother was sending me to go for milk and [...] and he's asking where, and it was like evening already. And she told him through the garden, there I had to go. And he said, may I go with her, it's dangerous for her to go alone. And again my mother didn't know what to say. I mean she was afraid to say no, she was afraid of yes, who knows, you know, I'm a young girl. I went, he was very nice. He just took me and brought me back,

drank the milk, and he said, don't worry, he said, in German he said like that, "die Rote Armee kommt hier." I didn't even know what it means. My mother explained me, the red army, we didn't know what the red army. He said, those are the Russians and he said "besser sein" you will be better off, you know. My mother couldn't believe. And he said, "Not all people are like the ones you see. He said, I am from Vienna and I understand and I would not harm you." And he also told us, next day he said, "At midnight please try to close your windows, sit in the house, don't go out on the street." He knew that night the whole Germany army left the city. [...] And then the next day we saw the Russian army. There was, without a shot the Germans left because they went in too far, it seems. [...] They withdrew and the next day the Russians came in, and that's all.⁵¹

On September 28, 1939, units of the 2nd Cavalry Division entered the already abandoned town. Soviet power had come to Magierow. With the advent of this power began the so-called Sovietization, which included the nationalization of industry, collectivization of farms and the "cultural revolution."

From the end of 1939, Magierow became the district center. The district committee of the Communist Party and the district executive committee, the new authorities, appeared in Magierow. G.J. Reichbach, a Jew, was elected the first chairman of the village council.

From the protocols of the district executive committee, preserved in the State Archives of Lviv, we learn about the numerous deeds of the Soviet government.

Soviet authorities confiscated landed estates and lands belonging to wealthy landowners (this government called them Kurkuls, meaning "fists," strong farmers). This land was given to the poor. The Kurkuls, of course, were taken to Stalin's camps, or as they said in Magierow, "to Siberia." The property of the evicted settlers was nationalized to the last detail.

⁵¹ Interview. Sylvia Blasberg (Tsilia Schwert), *State Historical Society Wisconsin, Milwaukee, USA. Oral stories of Holocaust survivors.*

<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/HolocaustSurvivors/Blasberg.asp>

Присутні: Голова Райвиконкому тов. Мусяченко, Секретар Райвиконкому тов. Овчаренко, члени Райвиконкому тов. тов. Анісімов, Хрипливий, Кухаренко, Дєйнега.

§ 4. "ПРО ЗВЕРЖЕННЯ ТА РОЗПОДІЛ МАЙНА, ЩО ЗАЛИШИЛОСЬ В ГОСПОДАРСТВАХ ВИСЕЛЕНИХ ОСАДНИКІВ"

Для того, щоб провести повний облік майна в господарствах виселених осадників, а також щоб забезпечити повну схорону його

Магерівський Райвиконком П О С Т А Н О В Л ЯЄ:

1. Зобов'язати голів місцевих комітетів утворити комісії яка повинна на протязі одної доби провести точний облік всього майна і речей, що залишились в господарствах виселених осадників. Комісію створювати в складі 3-5 чоловік, головою комісії повинен бути член комітету.

2. Зобов'язати голів комітетів забезпечити повну схорону майна уділівель від пожеж, розкрадання й псування, для чого для кожного господарства назначити вартових.

3. Майно, що залишилось в господарствах виселених осадників сподилити слідуочим порядком: жилі приміщення використовувати д комітети, школи, хати читання, клуби та медичні установи. Коні передати в розпорядження райустанов в такі кількості: Райпарком Райком Комсамола 4 шт., Райвиконком 2 шт., Райфінвідділ 2 шт., Земвідділ 2 шт., РВНО 2 шт., Райспоживспілка 4 шт., Райвідділ С 2 шт., Райміліція 4 шт.,

4. Всі зернові культури, а також картоплю взяти на облік, забезпечити повну схорону його, питання про розподіл вирішити додаво з викликом голів комітетів з матеріалами потреби посівного ріалу.

5. Все борошно квасину/капусту, огірки, помидари/передати Рай-ивспільці, птицю передати через сільські споживчі коопереції.

6. Провести точний облік всіх грубих, а також концкормів і ня про розподіл вирішити додатково.

7. Свиноматки, хряки як старі так і молоді звести в одно місто ному селі і зберегти в районі, кобани і непридатні свинки пе-и Райспоживспільці через заготорганізацію.

8. Дійні корови з телятьми зберегти в районі звівши їх до місця, не дійні корови молодняк-бички передати Райспольці через заготорганізацію.

9. Всі вулики схоронити в одному місці і передати їх Рай-ділу, РЗВ забезпечити повну схорону всіх вуликів.

10. Залишині дрова передати в розпорядження комітетів для чення шкіл та допомори бідноті. Лісоматеріал теж передати радження комітетів для ремонту і обладнання приміщень ів, шкіл коопереції.

Minutes of Magierow District Executive Committee Meeting, February 12, 1940⁵²

⁵² DALO, fund p221, description 2, case 88, p.16

On February 8, 1940, the landlords' abandoned and confiscated property was registered to the state, work in the nationalized mills and sawmills of the Magierow district was streamlined, and property left on the farms of the evicted settlers was distributed. A collective farm was organized in Magierow, although joining it was not forced.

On March 4, 1940, a branch of the State Bank was organized, and Reichbach was instructed to review the names of the streets and immediately change the Polish signs and names to Ukrainian.

On April 6, 1940, dairy commodity farms were organized into collective farms and the property of the evicted people was transferred to them.

On April 13, 1940, the houses were registered of people from Magierow who were sent to Stalin's camps and prisons.

On June 6, 1940, a special Zhovkva-Dobrosyn-Magierow telephone line was created for the work of the regional department of communication, and 12 telephones were installed.

On July 18, 1940, the district hospital was opened. To do this, an order was issued "to vacate the two-story building with eight rooms from the headquarters of the Ensk unit and to transfer it to the hospital." Dr. Yakub Yosypovych Horowitz was appointed the head of the Magierow district health department. At the same time, teachers, employees, and workers of the district who did not have land plots were given estates.

Until 1939, the town was not wired for electricity. There was only a small generator at the mill. It was decided to start construction of a power station, to be completed no later than August 15, 1940.

On September 3, 1940, at the request of the Magierow District Executive Committee, the Lviv Regional Executive Committee increased the limit for newspapers, including newspapers in Hebrew, to 50 copies.

In 1940, many other good deeds were accomplished: the organization of an industrial artel [a small cooperative association]; the construction of an airfield on 20 hectares behind the Christian cemetery, repair of roads; the creation of a commission for pensions; cash benefits for mothers with many children; the seven-year school, clinic, district hospital with 10 beds and a children's medical consulting department all

started working. “Important events” were held to raise the “cultural level” of the population.⁵³

At the same time, all public and political associations and parties (except the Communist Party) were banned, and Prosvita was closed.

The way that the Soviet authorities seized properties for its needs seemed interesting. When homes were taken away from people for public use, it was done in such a way as to give the impression that the people themselves, and then whole communities, requested that their houses be taken away for this purpose.

For example, according to the documentation, “citizen of Magierow Feder Solomon Yakubovych submitted an application to the district executive committee with a request to transfer his house for use by a state institution, the district-authorized People’s Provision Committee.⁵⁴

Even more “interesting” was the request of the Jewish community to close their temple, the synagogue, and transfer it for use as a cinema:

Taking into consideration that the Jewish part of the population of Magierow submitted an application to the District Executive Committee to close the synagogue and to arrange the cinema in the synagogue, Magierow District Executive Committee RESOLVES:

1. To approve the Citizens’ request to close the synagogue.
2. To ask the Lviv Regional Executive Committee to approve this resolution and to file a petition before the Presidium of the Verkhovna Rada [Supreme Council] of the Ukrainian SSR to close the synagogue in Magierow.

⁵³ Minutes of meetings of the Magierow District Executive Committee for 1940. State Archives of Lviv Region. Fund 221, description 1, case 88

⁵⁴ Protocols of the Magierow District Executive Committee of 1940 DALO, fund p221, description 2, case 88, p.71

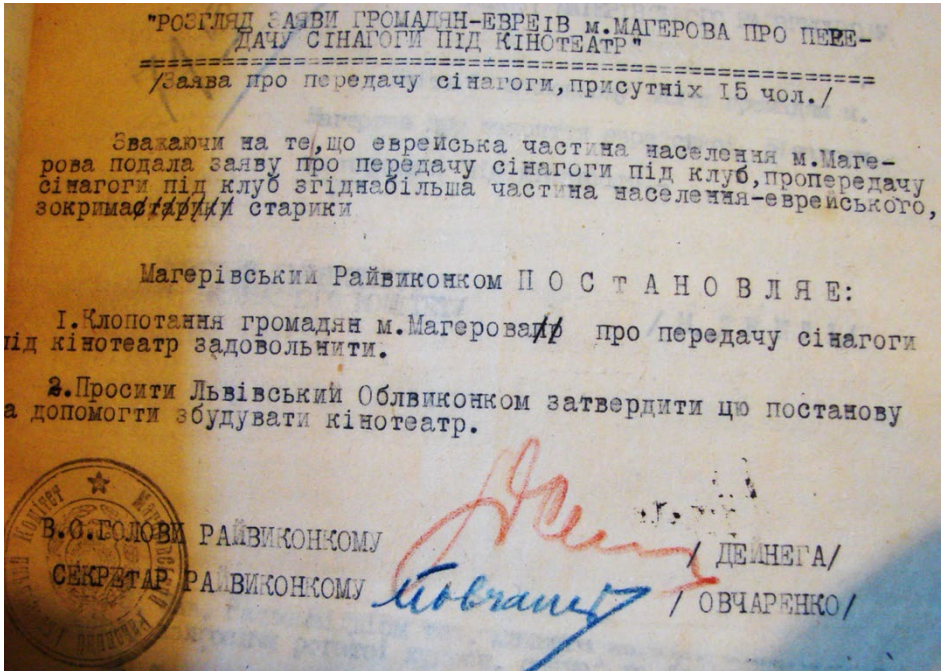


Photo of the protocol on the closure of the Magierow synagogue⁵⁵

In fairness, the case dragged on for a long time and was mired in paperwork, and the request was ultimately not carried out. In late 1940, “the synagogue premises were returned to the faithful.” And only after the Second World War, during which the Magierow Jewish community was destroyed, the synagogue building was rebuilt and turned into a cinema.

With the advent of the new government, sad events came to the town. An NKVD (People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs) unit appeared in the city, housed in a two-story building that is still called the House of Tears. There were cells for prisoners in the basement, men on the right side, and women on the left.

⁵⁵ DALO, Fund r-221, op.1 file 88, Art. 31



*“House of Tears,” location of the NKVD (1939-1941) and the Gestapo (1941-1944). People were gathered in the basement to be sent to Germany for work.
Photo: M. Borovets (2013)*

We find details about the times of the “first Soviets,” as they are called in Western Ukraine, in people’s memories.



Kleba Ivan Mykolayovych, born 1918

Kleba Ivan Mykolayovych, born in 1918, recalled: “The local population greeted the Soviets well and in a friendly manner. [...] With the new government, the cinema came (at first it was shown from the cinema car on the wall of the school); a hairdresser’s opened; doctors appeared, whose provided medical care for free; a club began to function, where occasional dances were held. After a while, there was electricity and radio.”

Esther Bankier, daughter of a Jewish miller, recalls:

In September 1939, Russia came here... It wasn't too bad. They took away the business. But it wasn't in my father's name, it was a family enterprise, so they let us work. People managed. It was hard, but people managed. It wasn't as bad as when Hitler came. [...] You had to help each other, I used to help. I used to go, middle of the night, to my father, and he gave me some flour. I used to take it to a lady who used to bake bread. And people used to come and get the bread, because, you know, the stores weren't there. We feel the pinch, but everybody thought it's temporarily, it's not going to be forever. [...] Where I came from, it was quiet, people managed, hoping it was temporary. The slogan of the Russians was to take away from the rich and give it to the poor. So for some people it was a blessing and some people were in trouble. But there was not too much time for me to realize what happened. Russians were stationed in our city. But there were no manifestations of anti-Semitism. They were very nice to the people. And in 1941 the Germans came.⁵⁶

Magierow's sovietization was interrupted by Nazi Germany's attack on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. Sylvia Blasberg spoke about the beginning of the war:

In 1941, when the war broke out in June 22, it was a Sunday and we were out of the city. At that time a lot of youth, young people, boys, girls and the Russians called it a subotnik, that means you are donating your time, you're volunteering your time to help the government. I mean it wasn't volunteering but, you know, young people, was a nice day, we got some shovels and we were supposed to fix the roads there out of the city. But at that time after an hour or two of work we heard some planes and bombs were falling where they were dropping. So trucks were coming and the Russians sent some trucks and they put us on the trucks and they said, well we have to take you out of the city because—this was close, let's see, to the border. I must mention, close to the Polish-Russian border.

So when they took us on the trucks, we passed by that little city Magierow. I don't know why, what kept me that I didn't jump down because maybe I believed they said we'll take you out for two weeks, maybe a week or two until it's going to calm down. They did not believe that, I mean the Russians will be

⁵⁶ Video interview with Esther Bankier, 15.11. 1995 (70 years old), Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA, Esther (Kramer). Bankier was born on December 24, 1924, in Magierow.

*pushed back, they didn't believe it. And I saw my sister and she approached the truck and until today I will never forgive myself, why I did not pull her up and take her on the truck. I remember telling her, Roselin, please go tell mama I'll be back, I'll be back, you know. And all that time it just bothered me always.*⁵⁷

Esther Bankier recalled:

In June 1941, we had exams at school. I received an award for excellent study, I was a good student. I came home from Lemberg [near Maheriv]. It was a weekend, and on Sunday, they told us to come out behind the city and dig trenches. All the young people went. And while we were digging, they started to bombard, but we didn't know what it was. Then the man who was in charge came and said, stop digging. We were afraid, we thought maybe we didn't do a good job, and they said no, come on. Trucks came, and they put us in the trucks, and they said we have to evacuate you. And that was the last time I saw my parents.

*There was a terrible panic. I suppose the authorities knew what was happening, but they did not tell us. And while we were driving, people were in a panic, they didn't know what to expect.*⁵⁸

On the night of June 25-26, 1941, Magierow became the scene of battles between the 97th Light Infantry and 81st Wehrmacht Motorized Divisions and the 8th Panzer Division of the Red Army. The first nighttime tank attack of the settlement during the Second World War took place near Magierow.

⁵⁷ Interview. Sylvia Blasberg (Tsilya Schwert), State Historical Society Wisconsin, Milwaukee, USA. Oral stories of Holocaust survivors.
<http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/HolocaustSurvivors/Blasberg.asp>

⁵⁸ Video interview with Esther Banker, 15.11. 1995 (70 years old), Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA. Esther Bankier (Kramer) was born on December 24, 1924, in Magierow.



*A German tank on Lwowska Street, the main street in Magierow,
June 26, 1941*

In the first days of the war, Magierow was occupied by Hitler's invaders and suffered great destruction and losses. The village was 40% destroyed, and the center of the town as much as 90%.



Rynek Square, Magierow, 1941. On the left you can see the school building, in the background the Church of St. George and the destroyed rows of shops and houses.



Ruins of residential buildings on Rynok Square, Magierow, 1941



*Market Square, Magierow, in ruins, 1941
In the background is the synagogue building.*

Almost half of the residential properties and 18 two-story office buildings, as well as all industrial enterprises, except for the water mill, were in ruins. In the center of the village, only the school and four two-story houses survived. On the territory of the then Pioneer Park, the Germans created a ghetto.



Magierow, 1960s. Behind the fence on the left was a ghetto. In the background is the "House of Tears." Photo: Family archive of Kateryna Galan

Iryna Slipets recalls:

When the war started and the Germans came, all the Jews were ordered to sew stars of David on their clothes. I don't remember if they were evicted from their homes.

I have one vivid memory before my eyes: I was almost eight years old. It was summer (1942). We were playing in the courtyard, which faced the main street. At noon, I saw a large crowd of people being chased by young Ukrainian police officers. These people were Jews. How many there were, I cannot say – a lot of children's eyes. They were driven towards the church by the Filwarks (in the eastern part of Magierow). They walked slowly and their line was not dense. They carried some things with them. One older woman was crying a lot and asked a Ukrainian policeman, 'Where are you taking us?' He replied, laughing: 'To America!' I ran to the house and told my mother about it. The next day, news spread through Magierow that those Jews had been shot in Sosonki behind Pidgora. The women said that the poor victims were forced to dig their own graves and that the ground in that place then moved.

In Pidgora, in the south part of Magierow, the Nazis shot a large number of Jews. Kateryna Dmytrivna Galan confirms this event:

When the Germans came to Magierow, they initially treated the Ukrainians well. But about their attitude to the Jews, it's scary to say how cruel it was. The Germans persecuted these innocent people to kill afterwards. The Germans ordered them to dig a very large and deep hole in the woods. Then they started taking Jews there and shooting them. Some of them fell into this pit alive. The Germans were equally cruel to children and adults, so they killed whole families of Jews. Some of those who escaped came and asked for help. One day a boy ran up to me. I knew him very well, because we spent our childhood together. It's scary now to talk about how he cried and begged me to help him and hide him at home. But there could be no talk of it, because we were afraid for our lives and our relatives. The Germans threatened the same massacre for us for helping to hide the Jews.⁵⁹



Kateryna Galan shares her memories. Photo: M. Borovets (2013)

⁵⁹ Memories of Kateryna Dmytrivna Galan, recorded by Olga Kukurudza and Maria Borovets



Kateryna Galan points out the grave site where Germans shot some Jews from Magierow. Photo: M. Borovets (2013)

In March 1942, a death camp was set up in Belzec on the territory of modern Poland for the “final solution of the Jewish question” – that is, mass extermination. By the end of the year, the camp was “functioning” at full capacity. People arriving by transport to this camp were killed within two hours of arrival. About half a million people were killed here. Among them were 900 Jews from Magierow.

XII DECEMBER	
בולשׁווע	BOLSZOWCE
ברעזאן	BRZEZANY
צישאנױו	CIESZANÓW
קאמארנ	KOARNO
קרוסנ	KROSNO
לוביצא	LUBYCZA
	KRÓLEWSKA
מאגיעוױ	MAGIERÓW
נאראױו	NARAJÓW
נארול	NAROL
נימירױו	NIEMIRÓW
פאטיליצ	POTYLICZ
פרימיסלאן	PRZEMYSŁANY
ראוורוסקא	RAWA RUSKA
רוהאטין	ROHATYN
טאמאסזױו	TOMASZÓW
	LUBELSKI



Fragment of table indicating the arrival of transport with Jews from Magierow in December 1942. Memorial at the site of the Belzec death camp.

Photo: O. Pedan-Slepukhina (2009)

Sylvia Blasberg and two other Jewish girls from Magierow were taken to the east of the front line at the beginning of the war. In this way, the girls managed to avoid the massacre that befell their families in their hometown. Sylvia talks about returning to Magierow in 1944:

From Lemberg we went to Magierow, because my family at that time was living in Magierow, you know, I was hoping my grandpa and my mother's sister was living in Lemberg and my uncle. Lemberg was the first town we arrived. And then we went to Magierow, and that was a way, I will never forget. We were schlepping, we had a couple pieces of junk with us, you know, our possessions and it was hard to carry, and I remember we decide maybe to leave it on the road when we go back and then we decided, no, who knows when, and we were schlepping this by foot, we were just exhausted. It took us maybe two days walking and a little riding, you know, if you found a truck or somebody maybe horse and buggy, somebody gave us a ride. And we came in there, and some of the people recognized us, because they knew our parents. It was Hannah [Langer] and I. Esther [Kramer] stayed in Rovne. And they recognized us. And Ukrainians, some of them said, oh, ostali ste zivi, you are alive, ostali ste zivi. They were, like surprised. So they were telling us what happened there, and one neighbor who used to come into our house was telling how they took away my mother and the family and the children. My father wasn't there with them anymore. They took him first to a working camp. And they took her with the rest of the town's people and they put them first in the synagogue and they left

them, they kept them for several days she said. And then they were walking them to the train station, which was not in this town. It was like a 12 kilometers from that town. And she even told me that she stood there. They were standing there, the people were in the market place later, the Jews, and they were standing around and she heard like my little brother, Motele, ask mother, "Where are we going mama, where are we going?" And I was told, later I found out by people who were in Rava-Ruska who told me that the people from Magierow, from surrounding towns, even from Zlocve, a lot of them went to Belzec, Rava-Ruska, all of them were killed in Belzec. And my father died [in] Kamionka Strumilowa [now Kemienka Buska], the working camp.

So from Magierow, we had that terrible experience there. Even in Magierow, okay, I went to see our house, it was just a pile of stones and grass, wild grass was growing already because the neighbors told us that the house was burned the week when the war started, and my parents were living later in a different house with some other relatives. They even told us, across the street, my neighbor, our neighbor, Freedman was the name, he was burned alive in his house. So in Magierow we did not even have where to stay. Can you imagine the city where we knew everybody, we knew. But we knew Christian people there too, but they were afraid to take us. One was afraid of the other one.

The Nazi occupation brought disaster to both Ukrainians and Poles. The entire population was taxed. The heaviest tax was called "contingent," or "kontigent" with a hard g, as it was pronounced in Magierow. It was necessary to hand over the best cattle, fowl and other products. All of this had to be taken to a special yard behind a water mill.

Another problem was the deportation of boys and girls to work in Germany. Sometimes raids were conducted near the church. Therefore, parents were afraid to let young people go on Sunday for the service of God. Those rounded up for work were kept in the basement of the House of Tears. About 40 boys and girls were deported to Germany for forced labor.

Among the locals there were collaborators who went to the police and helped the Nazis commit crimes, extradite Jews to the Nazis and drove them to the ghetto, and captured young men and women to take them to Germany.



Ukrainian Ostarbeiters in Graz, Austria, 1943. In the second row, fourth from the right is Semochko Vasyl Ivanovych, father of Lyubov Harpola. Photo: family archive

The population of Magierow during the war decreased to 1,514 people. There were only 275 houses left in the village, including 15 two-story houses, 95 of them communal and 180 private.

In July 1944, Magierow was liberated by the troops of the First Ukrainian Front, and the so-called postwar reconstruction began. At the same time, in 1944, a secondary school was opened in Magierow, and medical facilities, a pharmacy, a club, and a library were reopened.

With the return of Soviet power came a resumption of repression, as people in the occupied territories were considered traitors. One hundred percent of the adult population was interrogated by the NKVD. Many people were taken to camps, in order to leave the Ukrainian Partisan Army (UPA) units without support. The military base of the so-called “*strebki*” (NKVD special military units that were fighting the UPA) was located in Magierow.

To resolve the national question in western Ukraine, a so-called “population exchange” was carried out from 1944-1946 by agreement between the Soviet governments of the USSR and Poland – the deportation of ethnic Ukrainians from Poland and the expulsion of ethnic Poles from the USSR. From time immemorial, Ukrainians and Poles had created mixed families in Magierow. So, if the head of the family, the father, was Polish, the whole family was deported to Poland. If the father was Ukrainian, the family stayed in Ukraine. The affiliation and preferences of other family members were not taken into consideration.

Thus, after the war, not only the Jewish community, but also the Polish community disappeared from Magierow. In the past, there were times when the three communities lived together. What can this experience of coexistence and cooperation teach us? What lessons we should learn from the past? How can it change our future? ...



The destroyed Jewish cemetery “Okopisko” on the eastern outskirts of Magierow. Photo: M. Borovets (2013)

Afterword

The booklet you have just read does not capture the full history of our village. Far from it! Our book is meant to arouse interest in the history of our native land. Documents still lie unread in the archives, awaiting their researchers. Interesting photos and letters are stored in drawers of private family archives. Hundreds of memories of older people remain untold. Rain and wind destroy the old Polish church, the ruined Jewish cemetery is covered in grass, old houses are destroyed, and new graves sit atop old ones. Time goes by, erasing memory and destroying monuments. Should one simply accept this? No! We hope that this book will encourage many young people to explore further. Some readers may say that many more episodes need to be added. Let all add their research, memories, thoughts, and photos, so that the connection of times is not interrupted.

LET US PRESERVE OUR HISTORY TOGETHER!