

Shulem

memories

ש ל ם

Samuel Kilsztajn

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For my people,
eternal life.

The stories of the Jews Holocaust survivors
are all the same.

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Introduction

Shulem (Sholem) is the Yiddish pronunciation of *Shalom* (שלום), the Hebrew word that can be translated as peace and well-being. *Shulem* is used in greetings, such as ‘Peace and well’ for the Franciscans; and farewells, as ‘Go in peace’. *Shulem aleichem* in Yiddish, *Shalom aleichem* in Hebrew and *As-salamu alaykum* in Arabic, which are also used in greetings and farewells, mean ‘Peace be with you’.

The stories of the Jews Holocaust survivors are all the same and at the same time all unique and thrilling. This is the story of two World War II Polish Jew survivors, Michal Kilsztajn from Bendin and Chana Libman from Mezritsh, told from their memories, from the memories of other survivors and from some historical sources. Michal spent the War in *Lager*, Nazi German Forced Labor and Concentration Camps; and Chana was deported with her mother and siblings to Siberia. Among the statistics that hide personal tragedies, almost all the large families of Michal and Chana, which were living in Poland for centuries, were exterminated in the Holocaust.

As anti-Semitism is an ideology, it is refractory to any contestation. The Nazis, who were obsessed by the “Jewish Question”, came to power in Germany in 1933 and began to segregate the Jewish population within its borders right away. In 1938, when Nazi Germany annexed Austria, they decided to force the emigration of Jews out of their domains. After the occupation of Continental Europe in 1940, the order was to make Europe *Judenrein*, clean of Jews, evacuating the Jews and concentrating them in Poland, from where all the Jews would have come. In 1941, when the Nazis decided to invade the Soviet Union to become the Masters of the World, Nazi Germany finally settled the implementation of the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question”, the evacuation of all the Jews from the face of the Earth.

The barbarity that befell the Jewish people in the late XIX and first half of the XX centuries, from the Russian *pogroms* to the Nazi Holocaust, was responsible for a Diaspora of the survivors with no parallel through all the turbulent history of the Jews. The Jewish population, which in the 19th century were mostly living insulated in numerous *shtetls* (plural of *shtetl*; diminutive of *city*, *shtot*, *stadt*), Jewish little towns in Central and Eastern Europe, spread throughout the World settling down in the remote

territories of North America, South America, Africa, Asia and Australia, making the Jews to have relatives in any part of the Globe.

Unlike the Russian *pogroms*, the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question” was an official policy of Nazi Germany. And, unlike the historical anti-Semitism that intended the eradication of Jewish religion and culture with the compulsory conversion or expulsion of the Jews, the Nazi Germans have committed themselves to extinguish the entire blood of Orthodox Jews, Liberals, non-practicing, assimilated and converts, including the blood that passed through the veins of Protestant pastors and Catholic priests with Jewish ancestry. According to Nazi racial ideology, the Jews were not considered human beings, and therefore no act against the integrity and life of the Jews could be considered inhumane. Indeed, the Nazis considered humanism nonsense and were trained to endure the suffering of others and to extirpate themselves of any sense of compassion.

The survivors Michal Kilsztajn and Chana Libman met after WWII and married in 1946 in Liegnitz, a German city that was transferred to Poland after the War. Expelled from the country where they were born, the lost homeland, they went from Liegnitz to Rosenheim Displaced Persons Camp in Germany, where they remained waiting for the opportunity to emigrate to the British Mandate of Palestine, and where, in 1948, their first child Adina was born.

In the same year, with the establishment of the State of Israel, according to the UN resolution, Michal, Chana and Adina immigrated and settled in the city of Jaffa, where, in 1951, Samuel, the second child, was born. In early September 1953, the family left the Old World toward the United States.

After unexpected delays, they landed in Port of Santos in December 1953 and settled in Brazil where, in 1956, the third child Malvina was born. In São Paulo they lived and left children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. The history of those two survivors is told here by their son Samuel Libman Kilsztajn.

Kilsztajn (קילשטיין) sounds German/Yiddish but is written with Polish letters, ‘sz’ (sh) and ‘aj’ (i). In German it would be spelled Kilstein, more properly Kühlstein (cool stone). The Yiddish surname Libman (ליבמאַן) is very dear to me because it can be translated to Beloved. The Polish letters ‘ch’ in Michal and Chana have the sound of ‘h’ in German, ‘j’ in Spanish and ‘x’ in the Russian Cyrillic alphabet (transliterated as ‘kh’).

Although the memories collected here are the memories of my parents, they are more properly my memories of their memories, since both were already gone when I started to write them down. For personal reasons I could not have written my parents' memories while they were still living among us. More than that, I also think that after they passed away I inherited the mission of keeping alive the memory of the martyrdom of my family and my people during the Nazi Holocaust. People never forget Genocide.

Being the son of survivors and knowing that my grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins were exterminated in the Holocaust, I grew up knowing that, according to the murderers of my family that dominated all Continental Europe, I also had no right to life. WWII is over, but as anti-Semitism is not, the fear continues to follow the Jews, who know that there is not much distance between simple prejudice and hatred, discrimination, verbal aggression, violence and the shouts 'Kill the Jews'. I am a Jew, and nothing can change my destiny, even the exchange of Judaism by any other religion.

Sartre, in *Anti-Semite and Jew*, stated that it is the anti-Semite who makes the Jew. At a Russian industrial fair in São Paulo, a friend of mine and his father were talking to a Russian lady, and they mentioned that they were of Russian origin. The woman asked where the family came from, and they said Kishinev. Then she corrected, 'so you are not Russians, you are Moldovans' (Moldova, in the early 20th century, was part of the Russian Empire). Later, when she heard the name of the family, she said 'you are not Russians, nor Moldovans, you are Jews!' As an adult, I met a young woman whose Italian Jewish parents took refuge in Spain during WWII and immigrated to Brazil after the War. She had been brought up as a Catholic and, at the height of her professional career, by chance, she became aware of her Jewish origin, which generated in her a deep identity crisis with serious consequences on her physical health.

To write the memories I inherited, to me, was and remains a catharsis, which does not mean that evil and fear will cease to exist, but that evil and fear may cease to control my life. While I was deepening myself into the stories of my parents and family, I often felt myself living and suffering alongside them in the Ghettos, in the *Lager* and in the Death Marches, although I knew that, according to the testimonies of the survivors, there are no words to describe what they went through; and any description of the horror that they experienced is only a faint image of their misfortune.

Besides my parents' memories I carry with me, I immersed in the vast literature of the Holocaust and had also the opportunity and joy, through my research, to find unknown but quite close relatives scattered to the four corners of the World. The active

participation of many relatives, unknown until then, was yet decisive for the reconstruction of the family history's puzzle. In this sense, these memories were collectively produced by several family members. One information here, another there, and, suddenly, everything began to have life (and unfortunately suffering and death).

To get an idea of the movement of this work, the survivor Chaskiel Kilsztajn (Harry Stein) from Canada tried insistently and in vain to find the ties that united him to my father and his brothers, who had the same surname and were from the same city, Bendin. However, as the memory of the young survivors was not enough to draw any relationship, disappointed, they concluded that they were indeed only very distant cousins. In documentary research, long after Chaskiel passed away, we discovered that his father was the brother of Michal's grandmother. Today, after drawing the family relationship, many of the descendants began to treat each other as true brothers; and I always think that, if it were not the War, we would all be living side by side in the same good old *shtetls*.

These memories, which collect documents, photographs and stories of private and family interest, were written with continuous back and forth among the memories of the survivors and their direct descendants; and between these memories and the documents found in Civil Records, museums and other institutions for the preservation of the memory of the Holocaust. Moreover, because behind the institutions there are people, I would like to thank Daniel Kazez (Czestochowa-Radomsko Area Research Group), Rita Margolin (Yad Vashem), Bettina Michalke (International Tracing Service/Bad Arolsen) and Huddybeth Haller (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum).

Among the survivors of Bendin, who affectionately refer to each other as *Bendiner*, the destiny also brought to Brazil Bela Bogata; Adam Ptasznik, his daughter Jadwiga and his son Marjan Ptasznik; Ala Lubliner; Lazar Feldberg and his wife Betty Schwimmer; the brothers Aron, Berish and Moshe Wolf Danek, and his wife Yenta Laudon; the brothers Leib and Chaim Zawader; Grisha Szykman; and the brothers Chaim and Icek Feiman, among others. There are no Jews living today in Bendin, but Adam Szydowski, a Polish citizen from Bendin, took upon himself the mission to preserve the Jewish Culture in the city and is working today as the Jews' ambassador in Bendin.

These memories are a tribute to my parents and to the vanished Jewish World from Central and Eastern Europe; they are living sculptures and an endless work. The memories began to be typed in English, later in Portuguese, and today it is being written concomitantly in Portuguese and English. Some relatives have already asked when the

Yiddish version will come out. Periodically new documents, photos and stories are being added to the original text. Some volumes printed in book form were distributed among the relatives. Moshe Libman, the brother of my mother, with almost ninety years old and not familiar with laser printing, lowered his head to better see the relief of the photos inserted on the pages of the book and said in Yiddish ‘Shmulik, how did you manage to paste the photos on this album so well?’

São Paulo, October 2022

ה'תשפ"ג

Samuel Kilsztajn

The Jews in Poland

The Kingdom of Poland was created in 1025 with the coronation of Boleslaw I. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, established in 1569, which included Prussia, Livonia and Courland, corresponds to the Polish Golden Age.



The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 1619
(superimposed on 2021 national borders)

Poland began to be partitioned in 1772 and, in 1795, all the Polish territory was divided among the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires and the Kingdom of Prussia. For more than one century, from 1795 to 1918, Poland ceased to have national existence; and was erased from the map of Europe. During that time, even in the far away Brazil, among the German and Polish children that were living in the State of Parana, one could always hear the rhythmic insult ‘Poles do not have a flag! Poles do not have a flag!’

However, even without national existence, Polish Jews and Christians continued to declare themselves Polish citizens, causing many troubles to the US immigration commissioners who were forced to formally recognize the existence of citizens of a nation that had been extinguished in 1795.

Ever since its foundation, the Kingdom of Poland was known for its religious tolerance and the Jews arrived at the Kingdom in its early beginning. In 1264, Duke Boleslaw of Kalisz edited the first statute that guaranteed rights and freedom to the Jews in Poland; and the great migratory flow of Jews from Central Europe to Poland, *Poylm* in Yiddish, occurred during the reign of Casimir III in the mid 14th century. In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth period, the Polish Jews were already the main Jewish Community and the center of the Jewish Culture in the World.

In the 18th century, the European Jews were concentrated in the territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, between the Baltic and the Black seas, in present Poland, Baltic States, Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova/Bessarabia; and there was not expressive number of Jews in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe. However, from 1795 to 1918, with the extinction of Poland and the partition of the region among the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires and the Kingdom of Prussia, the Polish Jews spread and formed important Jewish communities in those domains. That means that almost all the Russians, Romanians, Hungarians, Slovaks, Czechs, Austrians and Germans Jews are descendants of Polish Jew that immigrated to these countries during the XIX and early XX centuries. The illustrated German Jews, who looked with arrogance and disdain the ‘uncultured’ Polish Jews who spoke Yiddish, were indeed grandchildren of Polish Jews who erased the origin of their ancestors and assumed the prejudices of the Germans towards the Eastern Slavs. Joseph Roth, in *The wandering Jews*, published in 1927, recorded the lives of Eastern European Jews who were rejected by German Jews because they reminded them of their own grandparents.

Germans and Europeans have always considered Slavs an Asian/Eastern people. For them, the border between Europe and Asia was not the Ural Mountains. Asia began with the Russian Empire, the same one that defeated Napoleon and resisted the advance of civil rights that have spread across Europe following the French Revolution. The Jews, therefore, were doubly Asian, because they had their remote origins in the Middle East (then the eastern Ottoman Empire); and they lived among the Eastern Slav peoples.

At the end of the 19th century Jews were present in virtually all European countries and empires, with significant participation in all European capitals, from London to St. Petersburg. Nevertheless, in a period of exacerbated nationalism and xenophobia that dominated Europe, the situation of the Jews among the nations became extremely precarious, in Einstein's words. Jews could never be truly English, French, Germans, Austrians, Polish or Russians... they were simply true Europeans, par excellence, as Nietzsche and Hannah Arendt asserted. They were Europeans because they were represented in all European nations and, therefore, they stood against the disastrous wars between the European powers. Violence and xenophobia did not concern them. Many scholars do research to raise the number and dedication of Jews who participated in the armed forces in each of the various belligerent countries during WWI; but Jewish pacifism is much more worthy of decoration.

During WWI, with the Russian withdrawal, the German and Austro-Hungarian empires were able to concentrate all their troops and to strengthen the western front. The War was being fought in the territories of the Allies, which had not even entered the territories of the Central Empires. However, the German Army was severely affected by the Spanish Flu of 1918 (the belligerent countries did not report the flu due to military strategy; Spain, which did not participate in the War, was the country that publicized the flu, naming it). The Spanish Flu destroyed the German Army, but the generals prevented the fact from being publicized and decided to accept the armistice and the peace agreement. As the German society did not learn that their army had been destroyed by the Spanish Flu, news of the armistice with its army stationed in enemy territory gave rise to the version of the 'stab in the back' by the Jews (the only Europeans par excellence, who were against wars between the European powers), the Bolsheviks and the Socialists.

However, the French regarded them as German spies (Dreyfus Affair), the Germans regarded them as Russian spies, and the Russians considered them as articulators of an international plan to dominate the world (The protocols of the Elders of Zion). In the xenophobic universe of Europe in the first half of the 20th century, the time of the Jews in Europe was bound to be over. "*Juden raus! Auf nach Palastina!*", "Jews Out! Out to Palestine!"

In 1939, approximately 10 million Jews were living in Europe, 3.3 million in Poland and 3.3 million in the Baltic States and the Soviet Union (which included Belarus and Ukraine); in Hungary and Romania (which included Moldova/Bessarabia) lived about 1.5 million Jews; slightly less than one million in Germany, Austria and

Czechoslovakia; 800 thousand in France, Holland, Belgium, Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria; and 350 thousand in the UK.

• • •

The Jews, the “People of the Book”, from ancient times, were literate; they prayed and studied in Hebrew, considered the sacred language, the language spoken by God. As a language for daily use, Jews established in Central Europe developed the language called Yiddish, derived from high German spoken in the mountainous regions of Central and Southern Germany, *Hochdeutsch*, with the incorporation of several words of Hebrew and Aramaic origin (the following paragraphs of this chapter have been incorporated as the first part of my book *Yiddish*, amazon.com: b0bcsb1mhd). Jews who migrated from Central Europe to Eastern Europe from the 11th century, and especially during the 14th century, continued to speak Yiddish, incorporating in their language several words of Polish origin and from other languages of the regions in which they settled in. Like Yiddish among Jews, several Central and Eastern European communities used German dialects outside the German Empire constituted by Bismarck in 1871. Even in Germany, many German dialects continue to be mutually unintelligible.

Yiddish is a nomadic, versatile and anarchic language. To illustrate it, the term *balebos* should not be translated into owner, nor boss, nor director, nor manager; *balebos* is the one who takes care of the place where he works. So, everyone who takes care of an establishment is a *balebos*, and if everyone does, they will be all *balebos*. The female form is *baleboste*, which is not a housewife; *baleboste* is only used for good housewives. At first, Yiddish was more spoken than written. But because they knew the Hebrew alphabet, the Jews could write *Hochdeutsch* using Hebrew characters. Therefore, the alphabet was born before the language, it can also be said that Yiddish was already born written. Dovid Katz immersed himself in religious literature written in Yiddish since the first centuries of the second millennium. Religious Yiddish literature rose to prominence with the Hasidic movement in Eastern Europe in the late 18th century.

Many people believe that Yiddish and Hebrew are just one language, because both are languages of the Jewish people, because they are both written with Hebrew characters. English and Portuguese are written with Latin characters, but they are far from being the same language. Yiddish is an unholy Germanic language used by *Ashkenazi* Jews; and Hebrew is a sacred Semitic language, which has been reissued by the modern State of Israel.

In the 19th century, dominated by the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires and the Kingdom of Prussia, secular and cults Jews were committed to write preferably in Hebrew, Russian, and German. It is said, as a joke, that Yiddish they only wrote with letters to the mother, because she did not understand anything other than Yiddish.

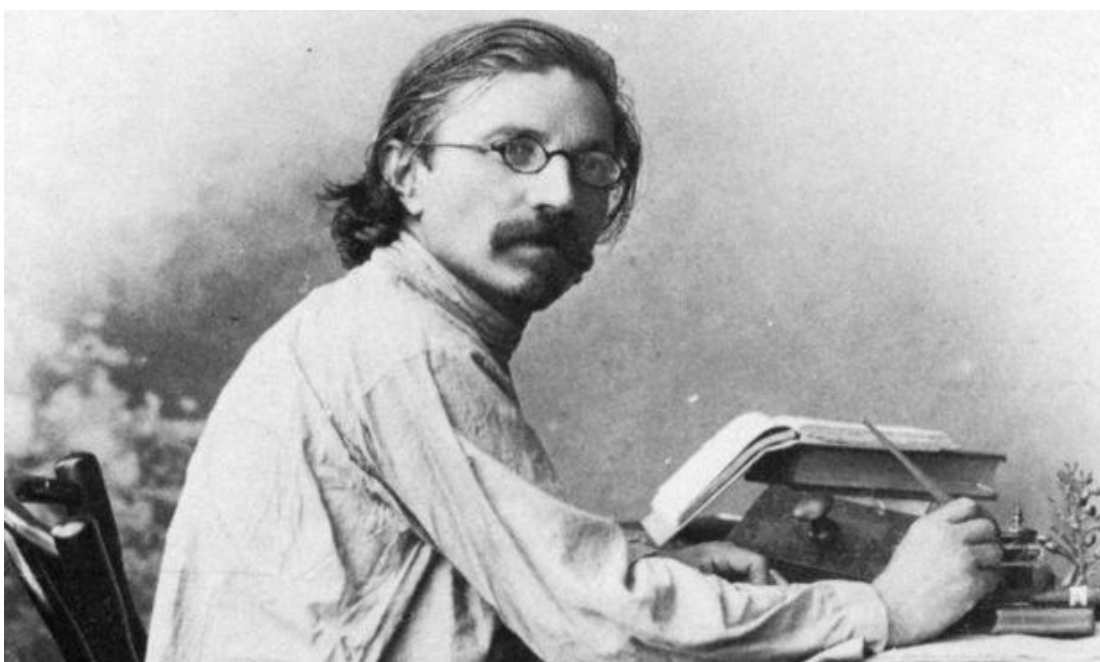
After the demarcation of the borders that followed Napoleon's defeat in 1815, most of the historic Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth Republic came under Russian rule. Russia, until the end of the 18th century, housed only small Jewish communities (Jews from the Mountain-Caucasus, Jews from Georgia, the Krimtchaki of Crimea, and the Karaites – ethno-religious groups that lived for a long time along the southern borders of the Empire). But with the occupation of many territories of the historic Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Russia also became home to the largest Jewish community in the world, as well as the anti-Semitic population that inhabited the region.

Jews and non-Jewish inhabitants of the territories occupied by the Russian Empire were subjugated and subjected to recruitment by a system of quotas per community for military service with a period of 25 years, effective for the entire Russian Empire (a period that was gradually reduced during the 19th century) and mobility restriction (Russia was then practically feudal). The Pale of Settlement for Jews in the Russian Empire roughly corresponded to the territories of the historic Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

The Russian Empire, which had succeeded in defeating Napoleon in 1812, remained refractory to the civil rights advances that spread throughout Europe with the French Revolution. After the assassination of the liberal Tsar Alexander II by Russian revolutionaries in 1881, Konstantin Pobedonostsev, the advisor of Alexander III (and later of Nicholas II as well), architected anti-Semitic policies as a way to divert the attention of the Russian people, who sought for revolution; and the people of the historic Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, who sought independence from Russian rules. In these occupied territories (Poland, Ukraine, Bessarabia, etc.), inhabited by Jews and long-time anti-Semites, a wave of mass violent attacks, called pogroms, with massacres of Jews and destruction of their properties and synagogues, was also fomented. *The protocols of the Elders of Zion* were forged and first published in Russia in 1903.

The anti-Semitic policies adopted by Alexander III eventually reinforced the Jewish national identity, also promoting the development of modern secular Yiddish literature. Secular literature until then was incipient, as educated Jews who wrote it, used basically Hebrew, Russian, and German. From the reign of the conservative Alexander III, the

Yiddish became a language with vast and rich secular literature. Sartre, in his indigestible *Anti-Semite and Jew*, stated that it is the anti-Semites who make the Jew. So, we can say, with some irony, that it was the anti-Semitic policies of Alexander III that promoted modern secular Yiddish literature. Mendele Mocher Sforim and Isaac Leib Peretz are considered the classics of modern Yiddish literature; and Sholem Aleichem, in addition to being classic, has always been his most popular and beloved writer.



Sholem Aleichem

The anti-Semitic policies adopted by Alexander III, in addition to promoting the development of modern secular Yiddish literature, generated a process of mass emigration of Jews from the Russian Empire, mainly to the United States. Since the late 1860s, the impoverishment of the population occurred because of the socioeconomic transformations underway in the territories occupied by the Russian Empire, which had triggered a process of emigration of Jews. This process intensified and reached mass emigration proportions with the escalation of antisemitism and pogroms in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

After Pinni, putting both feet in New York, in Sholem Aleichem's novel *Motl the cantor's son*, with his face toward the ocean, raises his right hand in a fist, and proclaimed "Listen, you asses, brutes, drunks, hooligans and *pogromchiks*! We have you to thank for our being here in this free, fortunate land! If not for you and your persecution, cruel laws and pogroms, we wouldn't know Columbus and Columbus wouldn't know about us!...."

In 1908, the first international conference for the systematization of the Yiddish language was held in Czernowitz, present-day Ukraine. There, Yiddish was declared a national language of the Jewish people. Sholem Asch is considered the most important and controversial Yiddish writer of the first half of the twentieth century; Chaim Grade and Avrom Sutzkever were members of the avant-garde Yiddish literary group *Yung Vilne*, created in 1929, survived the Holocaust, and were prominent writers in the post-war period; Isaac Bashevis Singer received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1978.

Between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, most Jews lived in Russian domains (Poland, Baltic countries, Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova-Bessarabia, and Russia). Envisioning their emancipation, a significant part of these Jews embraced the revolutionary ideals that shook the Russian Empire, which is why Jews are historically identified as communists. Yiddish literature, developed during this period, was impregnated with a markedly humanist and popular bias. Mordechai Spektor, in *A meal for the poor*, narrated a strike by beggars who claimed one ruble per person to deign to attend the wedding of a rich man's youngest daughter, so as to allow him to fulfill the meritorious act of offering a banquet to the poor.



A.Reyzen, I.L.Peretz, Sholem Asch, K.Zhitlovski and H.D.Nomberg, Czernowitz Conference 1908

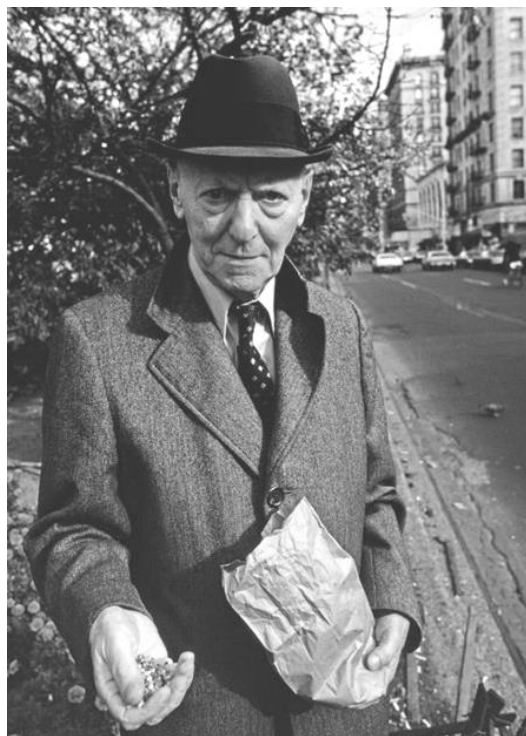
During WWI, the Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Poles considered the Jews pro-German. After the Bolsheviks took power in Russia, the Germans, Poles, Belarusians and Ukrainians came to consider Jews pro-Russians. During the Civil War that followed the October Revolution of 1917 and lasted until 1922, Jews had no choice because the

White Army. In addition to being anti-communist, the White Army was openly anti-Semitic; while the Red Army proclaimed brotherhood among people.

Isaac Bashevis Singer was born in 1903, on the outskirts of Warsaw, which at the time was part of the Russian Empire; and immigrated to New York in 1935. In the United States, he worked on *The Forward* (*Forverts*), the respectable socialist daily newspaper published in Yiddish. After World War II, some Yiddish writer, who switched to English, scolded Bashevis Singer saying that if he continued to insist on writing in that dying language, he would not communicate with anyone but the small circle of Yiddish readers who survived the Holocaust. But Bashevis Singer remained faithful, authentic, writing as he always wrote, and ended up being translated into countless languages.



Isaac Bashevis Singer at right, Warsaw 1930



Isaac Bashevis Singer, New York 1975

Nostalgia accompanies the Jews from the old lost world in Eastern Europe. In Singer's *The little cobblers*, the old man, who refuses to renovate his home, tells his wife that the various layers of paint with different colors overlaps on the peeled wall, for him they are a family album.

In his speech, upon receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature, Bashevis Singer said that he wrote in Yiddish because, among other reasons, he liked to write ghost stories, and nothing fits a ghost better than a dying language; the deader the language, the more alive is the ghost; ghosts loved Yiddish and, as far as he knew, they all spoke it (was he

referring to the millions of Jews exterminated during the Holocaust?). Singer also said that Yiddish could be a dying language, but it was the only one he knew well, “Yiddish is my mother language and a mother is never really dead”.

The German language was only systematized in the 16th century, from Luther’s translation to *Hochdeutsch* of the *New Testament* in Greek and the *Old Testament* in Hebrew. Yiddish is a language derived from *Hochdeutsch*, written with Hebrew characters. Despite incorporating several words of Hebrew, Polish, and other languages, Yiddish is essentially German in its basic structure, grammar, and syntactic. A person fluent in Yiddish can easily communicate with anyone who speaks German; and can’t understand at all people who speak Hebrew or Polish. By comparing, English incorporates several words of Latin origin without losing its basic structure. And if Yiddish is *Hochdeutsch* written in Hebrew characters, German is Greek and Hebrew translated into *Hochdeutsch*. In this sense, Hebrew contributed to the evolution of the German language (and literature).

Because Hebrew was used only as a sacred language, the daily Yiddish could be free to be profane, fun, colorful, and theatrical – a counterpoint to the suffering of the Jewish people. The structure, inflection, and cadence of Yiddish language and literature are deeply rooted in the vanished Eastern European Jewish world. Yiddish sounds like music to the ears. The language of the people, the language of thousand flavors (*toyznt tamen*), abuses puns and proverbs, such as *nar zogt vus er veyst, a klug veyst vus er zogt* (a fool speaks what he knows, a wise man knows what he speaks). When someone asks *vus mahstu?* (what do you do?), among countless answers, one can hear *mah ma nisht visndik* (I pretend not to know anything) or *mir shlepn zih* (we drag ourselves). Yiddish literature is colloquial and uses many diminutives. The text seems all embroidered, rococo, and the ideas are repeated countless times, as in the music in which an orphan boy, on a cold and rainy night, sings that the cigarettes he sells are *trukene fun regn nisht fargozn* (dry, not splashed by rain); or as in another song, in which a boy, who wants to become a bird, keep company to a tree defoliated by winter. He tells his mother that is “crying with tears”, *mame, s’iz a shod, dayne sheyne oygn* (mother, it is a waste for your beautiful eyes).

Yiddish is a nomadic, versatile, anarchic language and, by incorporating words from the various language and countries in which the Jews settled, is a natural universal language. In fact, Esperanto, the most spoken artificial universal language in the world,

was created in 1887 by the Polish Jew Ludwik Lejzer Zamenhof. Yiddish is not just a language, it is a culture. A person may be speaking Yiddish in English, that is, Yiddish translated to English if he is using the mood, cadence, and language figures of Yiddish. At a meeting at my children's school, I once said that my daughter had birds on her head, and a friend noticed and commented later that I was speaking in Yiddish. There is no richer Yiddish and more alive than that spoken by Jewish gossip women, the *yahnes*. A *yahne* despises no one, talks to everybody and often speaks to herself, so everyone around can hear it. If questioned, she denies she was talking, she was just thinking out loud. A *yahne*, to ensure you that she knows how to keep secrets, assures you, *do geredt, do geblibn*, here spoken, here it stayed. Even my father, who was a little grave, when I asked *vus?* (what?), he snapped theatrically, *the vus harget mih avek* (this "what?" knocks me dead).

Although Yiddish uses the Hebrew alphabet, some Jews write transliterated by using the Latin alphabet. My father always corresponded with his brothers and with me in transliterated Yiddish. Until World War II, Yiddish was the basic language of all Central and Eastern European Jews, known as *Ashkenazim*, Jews of German origin. In addition to the *Ashkenazim*, which now account for more than 80% of the world's Jewish population, there are two other large groups of Jews, the *Sephardim*, Jews of Spanish origin who speak Ladino, a language derived from medieval Spanish, also written in Hebrew characters; and the *Mizrahim*, Eastern Jews, descendants of Jews who never left the Middle East.

The *Ashkenazi* emigrants who abandoned Central and Eastern Europe in the last decades of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, and settled in the distant territories of North America, South America, Africa, Asia, and Australia, they all spoke Yiddish, which became the *lingua franca* of coexistence among Jews from Poland, Silesia, Galicia, Bohemia, Slovakia, Moravia, Bucovina, Hungary, Transylvania, Ruthenia, Romania, Bessarabia, Volhynia, Podolia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, Austria and Germany, each correcting the pronunciation of the other, according to the "true and correct" *rihtik* Yiddish he used to speak at home.

In 1885, the mass emigration of Jews from the territories occupied by the Russian Empire was just beginning, before the bagels became a New York postcard, a theater critic for the daily *The Sun*, who attended *Bar Kochba* in Yiddish at the Oriental Theater (Bowery), identified the language as "a hybrid Russian mixed with Polish, Massuric [Prussian dialect], and old Hebrew, and at times resembling German in form". Still

according to the critic, the program of the play was “printed in square Assyrian characters”. Under the title *A quaint Hebrew drama*, the critic analyzes both the play and the audience. It is symptomatic that, throughout the article in which the word “Hebrew” is used 18 times, the word “Jew” is avoided, being used only twice, probably by mistake.

In this article the author states that “the language employed by the actors in ‘Bar Kochba’ it is alleged is Hebrew, but it is not”. The author makes a confusion between Yiddish and Hebrew derives from his concern in not using the word Jew, which most likely he should consider derogatory. Yiddish was the language used by the *Yiddin* (plural of *Yid*, *Jude* in German) and, as the author insists on calling Hebrew the Jew, he calls Hebrew the Yiddish language (the language of the Hebrew people) and then says it is not Hebrew.



The sun, New York, February 22, 1885 (fragment)

The Holocaust annihilated most of Europe’s Jews, ended the vibrant Jewish life in Eastern Europe and put an end to the effervescent Yiddish culture and literature that developed in the interwar period. The survivors were housed in Displaced Persons – DP Camps, installed by the United States and the United Nations in Germany, Austria and Italy, so the Jews could organize themselves to seek new life opportunities.

Among the survivors, weddings happened rapidly, were held collectively, and babies swarmed in the DP Camps. Orphaned teenagers got to know each other on a Thursday and got married on Saturday. The birth of children also reaffirmed the hope and will to live as survivors. They were true militants of life. Writer Halpern Leivick, born in Belarus in 1888 and living in the United States since 1913, visited the DP Camps, he assisted refugees and wrote in Yiddish the play *The wedding in Foehrenwald*, chronicling the dilemmas of widowed survivors and marriages at this DP Camp in the Munich region. Leivick also wrote, in Yiddish, *With the survivors*.

The Israelis, in the formation of the State, committed themselves to overcome the passivity that they faced pogroms and the Holocaust. They decided to bury Yiddish, *mameloshn*, the ancient mother tongue of *Ashkenazi* Jews. Theodor Herzl, the founder of Modern Political Zionism, had already declared, in the passage of the 19th to the 20th

century that Yiddish was a corrupted jargon, a clandestine language of prisoners, a ghetto language from which Jews should be dishabituate. Even before the rise of the Nazis in Germany, Yiddish writers and editors (anti-Zionists, non-Zionists, as well as Zionists) were attacked by Hebrew gangs in Palestine. Although gang aggression was not an institutional initiative of Zionist entities, they remained sympathetic to the actions of these gangs.

In Israel, the *Ashkenazi* humanist tradition of the diaspora Jews, along with their Yiddish language, was banned. Hebrew with *Sephardi/Mizrachi* pronunciation was declared by the State the official language of Israel; Arabic was declared a recognized language; and Yiddish was ruled out. *Ashkenazi* Hebrew has a strong Yiddish accent and rhythm. If you walk into a synagogue and hear an old *Ashkenazi* Jew praying, you'll swear he's praying in Yiddish, and only with great effort will you realize that the words are Hebrew. It should also be said that modern Hebrew (as opposed to Biblical Hebrew) was created from the translation of Yiddish texts, i.e., modern Hebrew is the translated Yiddish.

In the 1950s, Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion formally banned the appointment of officers with Yiddish surnames to the military and diplomatic corps, forcing the replacement of Yiddish surnames to Hebrew surnames. However, Avrom Sutzkever founded *Di goldene keyt* (The Golden Chain), the Yiddish literary journal that Sutzkever edited from 1949 to 1995. The Yiddish has always been a stateless language, and its only weapon has always been the pen. In Israel, speaking Yiddish on the streets was frowned upon, almost a misdemeanor. The poet Menke Katz, after being taken to prison in Israel for speaking Yiddish with his son in the street, packed his bags once more and re-emigrated to the United States. But in the 1960s, Chava Alberstein, Israel's most popular singer, who bears a resounding Yiddish surname, began singing and recording in Yiddish, which she considered a language with a magical cultural richness, authentic, full of colors, aromas and flavors.

In the Soviet Union, Yiddish had been strengthened in the 1920s at the initiative of the state (which financed its teaching and paid salaries to writers); suffered a setback in the 1930s; but survived World War II as an important Literature Center. However, Stalin had the main writers and poets of the Yiddish language executed, accused of treason, espionage, and bourgeois nationalism. Although they were all fervent communists, and even adherents of Stalin's cult of personality.

Despite being officially banned, the Yiddish continued to be widely spoken by Holocaust survivors and their descendants who were born shortly after the war. The Holocaust exterminated the survivors' parents; but how could the Israeli Government exterminate their tongue? How could the survivors get rid of their mother tongue? The language they expressed their feelings, the language they thought in, the language they dreamed. Yiddish has also always been and continues to be spoken in Orthodox Jewish communities (as they use Hebrew only as a sacred language).

In São Paulo, in the 1950s and 1960s, Yiddish was widely spoken in *Bom Retiro*; the newspaper *Der Naier Moment* (The New Moment) circulated through the streets of this neighborhood; Yiddish theater used to perform at the Luso-Brazilian Club at 608 Graça Street; and the Coral Scheiffer, under the leadership of conductor Ernesto Hoenigsberg, sang in Yiddish. *Casa do Povo*, on *Tres Rios* Street, housed the Sholem Aleichem School, which taught Yiddish; the Brazilian Israeli Art Theater – TAIB; a Yiddish library; and published the *Undzer Shtime* newspaper (Our Voice), with articles in Yiddish and Portuguese.

The Weltman bookstore was on Ribeiro de Lima Street. In his short story *The secret*, written in Yiddish, Chaim Rapoport immortalized Mr. Weltman, a short, chubby Jew whose mocking gaze could be seen through his thick lenses, who spoke to the clientele smiling and looking over his glasses.

The characteristic junction of Ribeiro de Lima, Graça and Correia de Melo streets was the meeting point of the Jews in *Bom Retiro*, the *platzel*, the “square”. It was crowded with people speaking Yiddish. Itzhak Guterman published a Yiddish short story about the *platzel* in *Bom Retiro* (Good Retreat), *The boiling square*.

Europa Restaurant, which in the 1960s moved from Ribeiro de Lima to 56 Correia de Melo Street, became an institution. For decades, every Saturday and Sunday mornings, in addition to lunch the families flocked, men gathered in the restaurant for *schnaps*, which means brandy, and it was the table of joy, where a bunch of friends feasted and drank vodka until they sat in the gutter, all in Yiddish.

English has taken on the undisputed role of universal language, to the point of snatching even the French and the pragmatic Chinese, although the Russians are still faltering. The strength of English is not due to the international hegemony of the United States of America, as it might seem at first glance, but to the previous international hegemony of England, which dominated the United States, Canada, South Africa, India, Australia, New Zealand and other countries in the Caribbean, Africa and Asia.

However, Dovid Katz, in *Words of fire*, presents Yiddish as one of the different languages that fuel the development of universal culture, even in a globalized world where the English language is employed by non-English native writers.

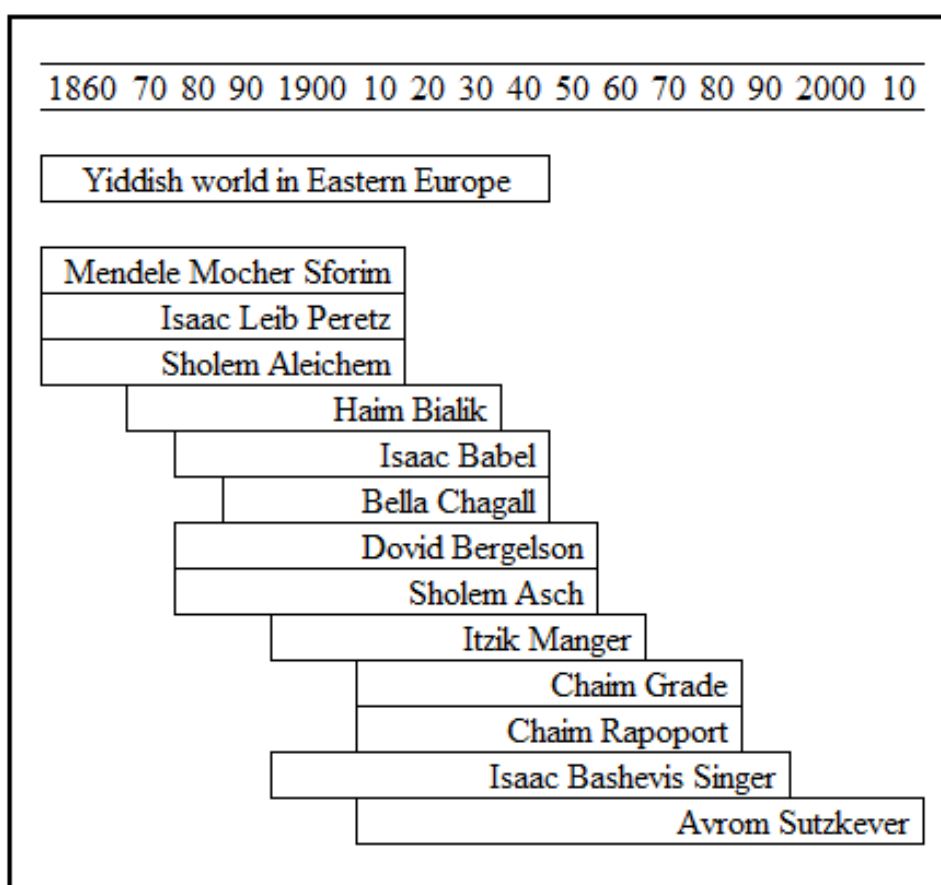
All the rich and fruitful modern secular Yiddish literature has been produced in almost 150 years but unfortunately it is gone, there is no more, *di gantse veltlehe Yiddishe literatur iz nito, nisht mer*. Although Yiddish culture and language are millennial, Yiddish religious literature only rose to prominence with the Hasidic movement in Eastern Europe in the late 18th century; and Yiddish secular literature only rose to prominence in the second half of the 19th century. Mendele Mocher Sforim, Isaac Leib Peretz and Sholem Aleichem are the three great classics of Modern Yiddish Literature; and the three left this world together during World War I. The interwar period is considered the golden age of Yiddish literature. With World War II, many of the writers passed away from this world, and much of the Yiddish readers too; and the millennial Yiddish world of Eastern Europe disappeared.

Eastern Europe was the nest that reproduced the native Yiddish among both Orthodox and secular Jews. Many of the secular writers were raised in Orthodox cradles and attended religious schools; and although they broke with the religious world, they fed, carried and made references to this world in their secular literature, some valuing religious formation and practices, many with a somewhat critical stance, and others blaspheming and putting them inside out.

Native Yiddish speakers are still being shaped only in the Orthodox community; in the secular world, the native Yiddish only resisted for a generation outside the now vanished Jewish world in Eastern Europe. After World War II, Israel endeavored to banish the Yiddish; and Stalin had the principal writers of the Yiddish language executed. However, several native Yiddish secular writers and poets, who survived the Holocaust, continued resolutely to produce Yiddish literature, but almost all of them are already on the other side of paradise.

The picture with the years of the writers' activity of the modern secular Yiddish literature, presented in my book *Yiddish*, follows below. We are today witnessing a Yiddish revival, which can be seen in the programs of institutions such as the Yivo Institute for Jewish Research, founded in Vilna in 1925 and transferred to New York in 1940; the Yiddish Book Center, founded in 1980 in Massachusetts; and numerous theatrical performances and klezmer festivals in several countries around the world, such as Kleztival, organized by Nicole and Edy Borger of the Institute of Jewish Music – Brazil.

In São Paulo, *Casa do Povo*, which means People’s House and lives up to its name, is restoring the TAIB theater, maintain a library and a Yiddish archive; the *Yiddishe Trupe*; and the Tradition Choir, which, since 1989, sings exclusively in Yiddish, under the regency of Maestrina Hugueta Sendacz, who artistically manages to scold with radiating love. While Yiddish courses are proliferating amid growing academic interest in Yiddish language and literature, we don’t know what the future holds for Yiddish, the future’s not ours to see, *que sera, sera! Di tsukunft iz nisht undzere tsu zen, vus vet zayn, vet zayn!*



Leonard Nimoy, Spock in *Star Trek*, spoke Yiddish and recorded an interview at the Yiddish Book Center, where he says that the Vulcan salute is a blessing used by rabbis in the synagogue (gg.gg/leonard-nimoy).

Live long and prosper!

Bendin

The city of Bendin (Bedzin in Polish and Bendsburg during the Nazi German occupation) is located in Upper Silesia, eight miles far from Katowice, the major urban center with 130 thousand inhabitants in 1939. The Jews were living in Bendin from its foundation in the 13th century. The Jewish population of Bendin was 22 thousand in 1939. In Sosnowiec, 4 miles far from Bendin, 28 thousand Jews were living in 1939. However, Bendin was an eminently Jewish city because the Jews of Bendin represented 50% of the total population; in Sosnowiec the Jews represented only 22% of the total population. Bendin, Sosnowiec, Dabrowa Gornicza (7 miles far from Bendin) and the surrounding *shtetls* and *derfers* (plural of *dorf*, village) are known as the Zagłębie Dabrowskie region, which had 100 thousand Jew in 1939.



The Castle, the Great Synagogue and the Czarna Przemsza River, Bendin 1914

Although Bendin did not have a very large population, the city had an intense political and cultural life, with several political movements, painters, musicians, poets, writers, actors, etc. In 1939, Szymon Rotenberg of Bendin concluded the *Zagłębie almanac*, which was not published due to the German invasion. Rotenberg was exterminated in the Holocaust and, in 1959, the Association of Former Residents of

Bedzin in Israel published the part of the *Zaglebie almanac* that was found after the War, also gathering several reports of survivors in Yiddish and Hebrew, which were partially translated into English as *A memorial to the Jewish community of Bendin*.



Bendin newspapers in Yiddish

David Kilsztajn and Eidel Telner were married in Bendin in 1915, during World War I, when the city, which was part of the Russian Empire, was occupied by the German Troops. Their first son was born during the War and the second one was born on the eve of the end of WWI and the Restoration of Poland after more than a century of foreign domination.

David and Eidel had twelve children. The first three children were born while the family was living in 19 Nadrzeczna Street, on the banks of Brynica River (*nadrzeczna* means riverside), in Czeladz, Bendin County, 4 miles far from the City of Bendin. In the 1920s the family moved to the City of Bendin, 33 Podzamcze Street, in the banks of Czarna Przemsza River, behind the Castle Hill (*podzamcze* means below the castle), next to the Hospital and in front of the second Jewish Cemetery of Bendin. In the 1930s the family moved again, this time to the central area of the city, to Marszalka Jozefa Pilsudskiego Street, number 9.

David Kilsztajn, a severe man and relatively wealthy for the local standard, was the owner of his house and of a manufactory of shoes that operated in the same building where he lived. The shoes' manufactory employed many workers, besides David's five eldest sons... a bunch of vandals, according to the neighbors. In winter, they would miss classes and sit on their school bags to slide down the snow-covered Castle Hill. Although the family had a comfortable life, there was never enough food to feed these starving offspring. However, Michal was proud that his father bought one of the first radios in the city and that the neighbors showed up in the evening to listen to the radio programs.

David (Aron Dawid), son of Malka Kilsztajn, was born on May 15, 1898, in Janow, a *shtetl* in Czestochowa County, also located in Upper Silesia, 35 miles far from Bendin. Eidel (Ajdl, Adela), daughter of Josef Telner and Estera Muflarz, was born in Bendin on April 13, 1900. Once married, Eidel was either pregnant or carrying a child on her lap. The name of the children (with variations), in order of birth, and the family photographs, except for the two youngest, are presented below:

1. Heindel (Lajb Heindel) Kilsztajn, born 26oct1916
2. Salomon (Moshe) Kilsztajn, born 29oct1918
3. Chaim (Joachim) Kilsztajn, born 24dec1920
4. Michal (Michuel, Moniek) Kilsztajn, born 5nov1922
5. Sandel (Sanek, Sander) Kilsztajn, born 20nov1924
6. Feigel (Estera Fajgla) Kilsztajn, born 21jan1927
7. Berel (Sucher Berisz) Kilsztajn, born 8feb1929
8. Iakhet (Jacheta, Yarech) Kilsztajn, born 15oct1931
9. Majer (Maie, Meir) Kilsztajn, born 7oct1932
10. Rivka (Rywka) Kilsztajn, born 4sep1935
11. Shiel (Szyja) Kilsztajn, born 1937
12. Chawa Kilsztajn, born 1941



David



Eidel



Heindel



Salomon



Chaim



Mihal





Pilsudskiego Street, Bendin 1920



Pilsudskiego Stret, Bendin 2012



9 Street Pilsudskiego, Bendin 2012

Bendin Civil Registry Book certifies the birth of Michal (*Michuel*), son of Aron Dawid Kilsztajn and Ajdla Telner in Bendin (*Bedzinie*), in November (*listopada*) five (*piatego*), thousand nine hundred and twenty-two (*tysiac dziewiecset dwudziestego drugiego*).

Urodził się w mieście Bzdynie dnia dwudziestego piątego w miesiącu ty-
siące dziewięćset dwudziestego dziewiątego roku, o godzinie jedenastej z rana.
Stawił się Aron-Dawid Kilsztajn, sześć lat trzydzieści jeden mający
stały mieszkawiec osady Janów, gminy Potok-Łoty, powiatu Łęczyńskiego,
a w mieście Bzdynie zamieszkały, w obecności świadków: Szymona
Lewkowiera lat pięćdziesiąt i Józefa-Jeha Langfusa, lat trzydzie-
ści dziewięć mających, handlowców, w mieście Bzdynie zamieszkałych i
okazał nam chociaż pięć miesięcy minęło, że takowe urodzone zostało
to dnia piątego listopada tysiące dziewięćset dwudziestego drugiego roku o
godzinie dziewiątej wieczorem, w mieście Bzdynie, przy ulicy Podkamere pod
numerem trzydziestym trzecim, z małżonki jego Ajdli z Felnerów lat dwa
dziesiąt dziewięć mającej, któremu przy obnawianiu matki zostało imię
Michał. Później meldowanie nastąpiło wskutek opóźnienia ojca. Akt ten
stawiłszy odczytany przez których wraz z nami, przed ojca niepisemnie
go podpisany został. Utrzymujący księgi Staw Lubimnego, Viceprezydent
m. Bzdyna H. F. Rubinlicht H Szymon Lewkowiec H J. Langfus.

Copy of Bendin Civil Registry Book, Birth Certificate of Michal Kilsztajn

The use of surnames (family names) is a relatively recent phenomenon that only became popular in the 19th century. The Jews in the Synagogue to this day do not use surnames. The person is usually identified by his first name followed by his father's name (patronymic), Michal *ben* (son of) David, Feigel *bat* (daughter of) David. In Poland, the Jews were married in the Synagogue, but not necessarily according to the Civil Law. Many children also had no Birth Certificates. The lack of birth and marriage certificates did not create major problems for the life of the Jews in Poland. However, Joseph Roth wrote a hilarious account of the torment of the "paperless" Eastern European Jews living in Germany and Austria, where a Jew without papers was rather less than papers without a Jew.

According to Polish Law, children of mothers who were not officially married could not inherit their father's surname. In the Birth Certificates of children from single mothers, according to the Civil Registry, the father should necessarily be stated as unknown, even if he was living with the mother and the child in the same room. The certificates of the children originally registered with the mother's surname could be

endorsed with the father's surname only after the parents fulfilled their marriage in the Civil Registry. If the father or mother were to die without civil marriage, the children would have to remain with the mother's surname.

David Kilsztajn and Eidel Telner were married in the Synagogue in 1915, during WWI, when they were respectively 17 and 15 years old. The civil marriage was officiated only 14 years later, on September 25, 1929, for some unknown reason, when seven of their twelve children were already born. In the civil marriage, besides the 'fiancées' and the usual two witnesses, the local Rabbi (*miejscowy rabin*) of Bendin, Hersz Henoch Lewin (Tzvi Chanoch Lewin), was present to attest the previous religious marriage of David and Eidel.

Stawiło się w miesiącu Bzdanie dnia dwudziestego piątego września tysiące
dziewięćset dwudziestego dziewiątego roku, o godzinie dziesiątej z rana.
stawił się Herr-Henoch Lewin, miejscowy rabin wraz z niżej pod-
pisanymi nowożasłużonymi i świadkami oświadczając nam, że wo-
becuści świadków: Szymona Lewkowiera, lat sześćdziesiąt i Józefa
Tcha Langfusa, lat trzydzieści dziewięć mających, handlowców, w mie-
ście Bzdanie zamieszkałych, przed nim w dniu dzisiejszym zawarte zostało
religijne małżeństwo pomiędzy Avonem - Dawidem Kilsztajnem, kawalerem
swoim, lat trzydzieści jeden mającym, synem żyjącej Malki Kilsztajn nie-
żonanej i niewiadomego ojca urodzonym w miesiącu Bzdanie, stałym mie-
skaninem osady Janów, gminy Potok-Żłoty, powiatu Częstochowskiego w
miesiącu Bzdanie, przy ulicy Podzamcze, pod numerem trzydziestym trze-
ciem - zamieszkałym i Ajdlą Telner panną lat dwadzieścia dziewięć ma-
jącą, córką żyjącego Józefa i zmarłej Estery z Muflarow urodzoną, sta-

Copy of Bendin Civil Registry Book, Marriage Certificate of David and Eidel Kilsztajn

In the act of David and Eidel's civil marriage, the couple's seven children born earlier were also certificated. Some children, such as Michal who was born in 1922, had not been registered until then. Heindel, Salomon, Chaim and Feigel, which had been previously registered with the mother's surname (Telner), had their records endorsed with the surname Kilsztajn.

Malka Kilsztajn, David Kilsztajn's mother and Michal Kilsztajn's grandmother, born in Janow on January 19, 1865, was also living in Bendin in 1939, in 93 Modrzejowska Street. Malka was living with her daughter Sura Chawa Kilsztajn, born in Bendin on January 15, 1908, her son-in-law Chil Rozenfeld, born in Bendin on December 24, 1910, and her granddaughters also born in Bendin, Ruchla Gitla Kilsztajn

(*15nov1933) and Estera Chaja Kilsztajn (*10dec1934). Malka Kilsztajn had been married only in the Synagogue and was a widow. In the Birth Certificates of Malka's children, the father is mentioned as unknown and therefore all her children inherited the maternal surname Kilsztajn (we could not find out the father's name and surname). Sura Chawa Kilsztajn and Chil Rozenfeld, who was a tailor, were also married only in the Synagogue and their two daughters were registered with the mother's surname Kilsztajn.

In addition, of the families of Malka Kilsztajn and her son David Kilsztajn, two other Kilsztajn families were living in Bendin in 1939, the family of Chaim Kilsztajn and the family of his son Yaacov Kilsztajn. Chaim Kilsztajn, born in Janow in 1861, was a brother of Malka Kilsztajn and great-uncle of Michal Kilsztajn. Chaim was also a shoemaker but, in 1939, 78 years old, he was working as a custodian, living in 17 Modrzejowska Street with his wife Doba Rozenblum, born in 1889 in Olkusz (Elkish), 21 miles far from Bendin, and their three children, Chaskiel (*15may1910), Michael (*5jun1922) and Ruchla (*1925). Chaim Kilsztajn and Doba Rozenblum were married only in the Synagogue and all three children, born in Bendin, were registered with the maternal surname, Rozenblum.

Yaacov Kilsztajn was a son of Chaim Kilsztajn from a previous marriage. Yaacov, born in Janow on December 7, 1896, was living in 4 Okrzei Street with his wife Osna Kilsztajn, born in Bendin on June 6, 1901, and two of their four children, Ephraim, born on April 7, 1925, and Fryda, born on April 18, 1931. In total, 22 people named Kilsztajn were living in Bendin in 1939, before the Second World War, besides the wife of Chaim Kilsztajn and their three children.

• • •

In the Polish Civil Records, I found my great-great-great-grandfather, born in the early 19th century, from whom I inherited the surname Kilsztajn (each person has 32 great-great-great-grandfathers/mothers with related surnames). The research of the ancestors of my great-great-great-grandfather Kilsztajn is hampered because the family surnames were only popularized in the 19th century.

All my father's relatives, from my great-great-great-grandparents to my grandparents, were born and lived in Upper Silesia in the period when Poland ceased to exist as a country. The towns of Lower and Upper Silesia are located on the borders of Poland, Germany and the Czech Republic and changed hands several times during its history. As they used to say at the time, 'we go to sleep in one country, and we wake up

in another'. In the early 19th century, Bendin, Janow and Czestochowa belonged to the Kingdom of Prussia; from 1807 to 1812 the region was under the domination of the French Empire of Napoleon; in 1815 it turned out to be part of the Russian Empire; from 1914 to 1918 was occupied by Germany; after WWI Bendin, Janow and Czestochowa became part of Independent Poland; during WWII Bendin was annexed to the III Reich; and, after the War, almost all Lower and Upper Silesia turned out to be part of Poland.

My great-great-great-grandfather Joachim (Chaim) Kilsztajn married with Malka Sura Roger and had three children, Kopel (*12may1834), my great-great-grandfather Aharon (Aron) (*27jul1838), and Leybus (*23apr1840), all born in Niwki/Kromolow (Zawiercie), a *shtetl* in Upper Silesia, 24 miles far from Bendin and 21 miles far from Janow. The Kilsztajn family was orthodox, very religious and belonged to the branch *Kohen*. The *Kohanim* are direct descendants of Aharon, brother of Moses from Egypt, and perform the function of priest among the Jews.

In the middle of the 19th century, my great-great-grandfather Aharon Kilsztajn moved to Janow, Czestochowa County. Janow, 17 miles far from the city of Czestochowa, was a *shtetl* with 960 inhabitants who lived in 116 wooden houses (there was only one brick house in Janow), an average of 8 people per house. Half of its population was Jewish, and the *shtetl* had a Jewish synagogue, school and cemetery. In 1900, the majority of the 1,447 inhabitants of the *shtetl* were Jewish. It was one of these *shtetls* in which almost all the residents were related and the children, to greet their relatives during the holidays, left one house to enter the next, crossing the town from end to end.

My great-great-grandfather Aharon Kilsztajn was a shoemaker, a craft that characterized most of the Kilsztajn family in Poland (the hereditary life of Polish Jewish shoemakers was described by Isaac Bashevis Singer in the short story *The little shoemakers*). Aharon married Chawa Rychter (Cimerman?), born in 1839. They had three children, all born in Janow, Sura Kilsztajn (*1860), Chaim Kilsztajn (*1861) and my great-grandmother Malka Kilsztajn (*19jan1865).

The names are recurring because the tradition among *Ashkenazi* Jews is to inherit the name of deceased ancestors. My great-great-grandmother Chawa Kilsztajn passed away in Janow at the age of 30 (3may1869) and her daughter Sura Kilsztajn died three years later, at the age of twelve (20may1872).

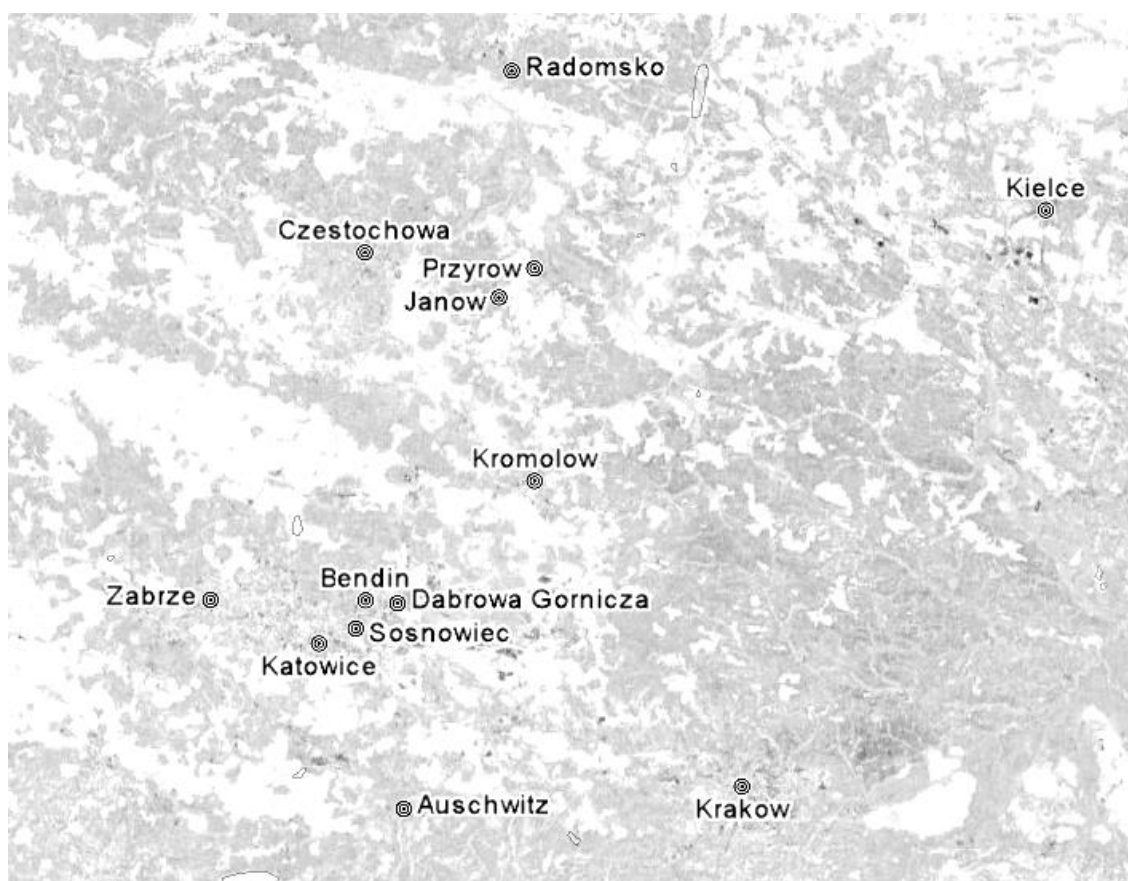
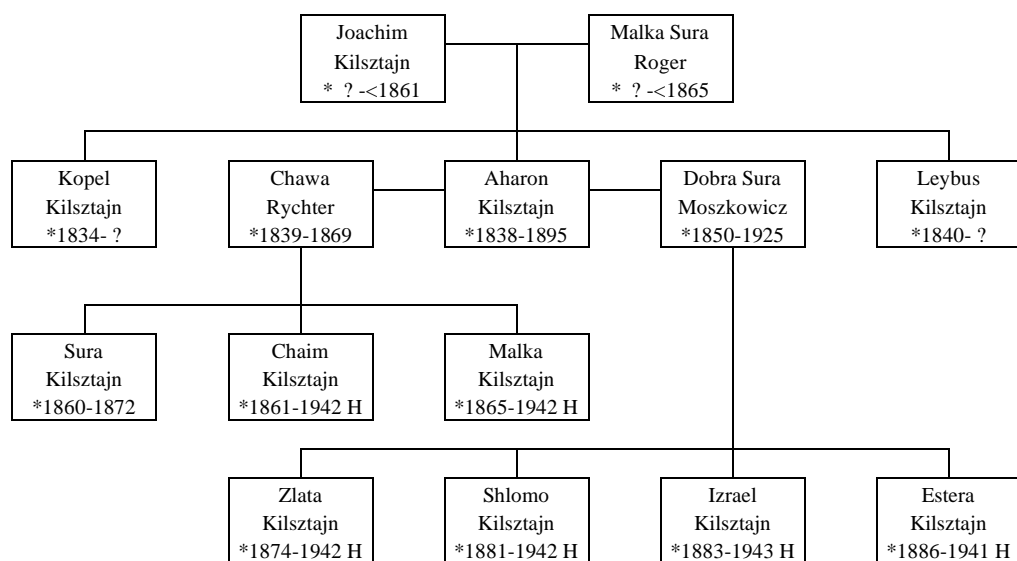
Aharon Kilsztajn married a second time on February 23, 1871, with Dobra Sura Moszkowicz, born to Szapsia and Jacheta Moszkowicz in 1850, with whom he had more

four children, all born in Janow, Zlata (*20sep1874), Shlomo (*1881), Izrael (*1883) and Estera (*14may1886).

Aharon Kilsztajn lived until his last days in Janow and passed away at the age of 56 (26mar1895). All his children and many of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren were born in Janow. Dobra Sura Kilsztajn passed away in Czestochowa at the age of 75 (22apr1925). In the Family Trees “H” means fatal victim of the Holocaust, “S” survivor and “R” refugee who left Poland before WWII.



Dobra Sura Kilsztajn's Grave (1850-1925)
Jewish Cemetery of Czestochowa



My great-grandmother Malka Kilsztajn had three children, my grandfather David (Aron Dawid) Kilsztajn (*15may1898), Fela (Fajga) Kilsztajn (*1899), both born in Janow; and Sura Chawa Kilsztajn, born in Bendin on January 15, 1908. Malka Kilsztajn transferred residence from Janow to Bendin in the early 20th century. Sura Chawa was only registered on February 20, 1920, when she was already 12 years old. Who registered

Sura Chawa Kilsztajn in Bendin was Michal Faska, born to Hendel e Rajzla Sztajnitz in Bendin on July 31, 1857, then aged 62 years old. Michal Faska presented himself as the owner of the house (*wlasciciel domu*), 18 Nadrzeczna Street, Czeladz, where his tenant Malka Kilsztajn, then 55 years old, was living (in 1920, the family of Malka's son, David, also lived on Nadrzeczna Street in Czeladz). In the Birth Certificate, the father is stated as unknown, and Michal Faska signed the document in Hebrew because he was not familiar with Latin letters.

93. Dnia 10 w miesiecu Szwanim dnia dwunastego lubego Lysice dziesieciet dwudziestego roku, o godzinie jedenastej wronu, zrodzila sie Michal Faska, wlasciciel domu lat siedemdziesiat dwa majacej w miesiecu Szwanim w mieszkaniu w obecnosci swiadkow: Chaima - Rajza Frychman, lat dwadziecia miesi i Jeka - Horsa Fershtenkfelda, lat dwadziecia piec majacych, hamolowców, w miesiecu Szwanim w mieszkaniu i zrodzila nam dziecko płci żeńskiej o imieniu Sura Chawa, ze tego: nie wiadomo zostało dnia piątnastego Lysice dziesieciet osmiu roku, o godzinie dwunastej o polnocy, w miesiecu Szwanim, przy ulicy Nadwiesnej, pod numerem czynnym, od lokatorki jego Malki Kilsztajn nieramiennej i nierodzonego zca, wyrobney lat przedniesiat trzy majacej, stalej mieszkanki osady jomim, gminy Potok - Zloty, w miesiecu Szwanim w mieszkaniu. Dziecku temu nadane zostały imiona Sura - Chawa. Prośne meldowanie nastąpiło skutkiem sferwacji matki. Akt ten staraja: cym odcyfrowany przez ktorych znan y nam podpisany został. Poproszono "dama" odcyfrowanie. Przekazano mi "dama" odcyfrowanej przez domu cyfrowego

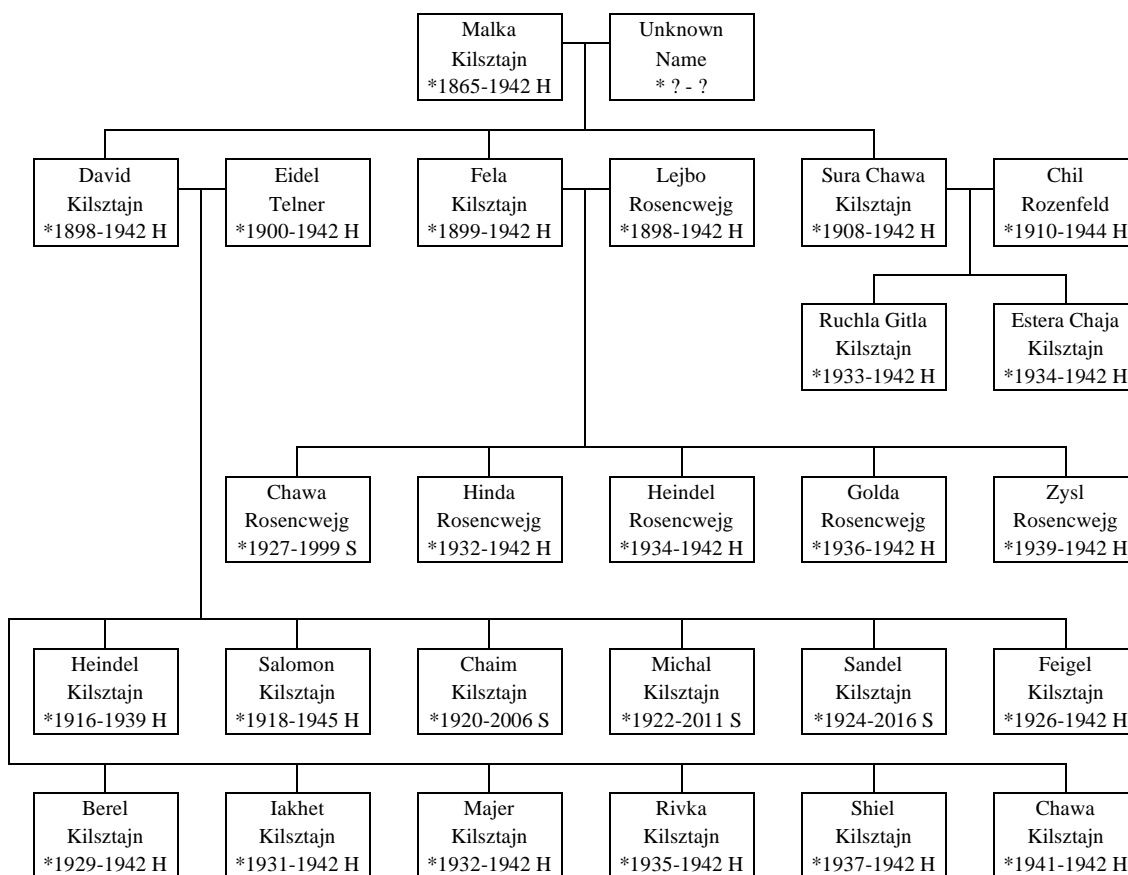
Michal Faska
 Bendin
 Prezydent m. Bendina. Pyppe
 H. L. Friedman Jack Hen Rosenfeld

Copy of Bendin Civil Registry Book, Birth Certificate of Sura Chawa Kilsztajn

Malka, David and Sura Chawa were living in Bendin in 1939 when the Nazi Germans invaded Poland. Fela Kilsztajn had married Lejbo Rosencweyg and, in 1939, they were living with their five children in the neighboring city of Sosnowiec: Chawa (*14mar1927), Hinda (*1932), Heindel (*1934), Golda (*1936) and Zysl (*1939). Lejbo Rosencweyg worked with fruits and Michal, his nephew, helped him in the loading.



Hinda, Heindel, Zysl, Chawa, Fela and Golda Kilsztajn Rosencweyg, Sosnowiec 1939



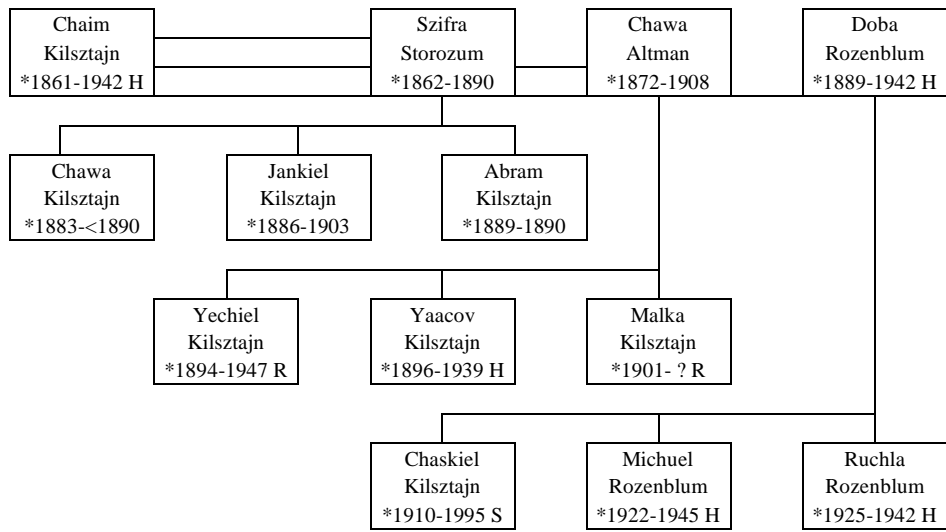
Chaim Kilsztajn, Malka Kilsztajn's brother and Michal's great-uncle, was a very religious man and had married in 1882 in Janow with Szifra Storozum, born to Josek and Ajdla Chana Chauptman in 1862, and had three children. Szifra also passed away very young, 20 days after her third labor, on January 11, 1890; and none of her three children reached adulthood: Chawa (*1883, died before 1890), Jankiel (*16may1886, died in 21apr1903) and Abram (*20dec1889, died in 14mar1890, two months after his birth and after his mother passed away). The mortality rate in the 19th century was very high in Poland, mainly due to tuberculosis and maternal mortality.

On November 28, 1890, the widower Chaim Kilsztajn married Chawa Altman, born to Yankel and Nacha Zomper in 1870 in Przyrow, another *shtetl* in Czestochowa County, 7 miles far from Janow. Chaim and Chawa Kilsztajn had three children, all born in Janow, Yechiel (Chilka), born 12feb1894; Yaacov (Jakow Kopel), born 7dec1896; and Malka, born 14mar1901.

The second wife of Chaim Kilsztajn died in 1908. For Jews, it is not decent for an adult man to remain single (*es past nisht*); and, according to Jewish law, after the eleven months of mourning, a widower is required to remarry. Chaim married for the third time in 1909, with Doba Rozenblum, born in 1889 in Olkusz (Elkish), 21 miles far from Bendin. Chaim, as well as his sister Malka Kilsztajn, migrated from Janow to Bendin in the early 20th century. Chaim Kilsztajn and Doba Rozenblum had three children, all born in Bendin, Chaskiel (*15may1910), Michuel (*6jun1922) and Ruchla (*1925). Chaim Kilsztajn and Doba Rozenblum were married only in the Synagogue and all three children used the maternal surname Rozenblum. Chaim Kilsztajn, his wife Doba Rozenblum and their three children were living in Bendin in 1939 when Nazi Germany invaded Poland. Chaskiel and Michuel were carpenters. Chaskiel, later, changed his surname to Kilsztajn.

At the end of WWI, Yechiel and Yaakov, the sons of the second marriage of Chaim Kilsztajn, settled respectively in Breslau (Wroclaw) in Lower Silesia and Hindenburg (Zabrze) in Upper Silesia. Breslau and Hindenburg remained part of Germany after WWI. Hindenburg was very close to the border between Germany and Poland, just 17 miles from Bendin.

Yechiel Kilsztajn married Rachel, born to Moshe Yosef and Nacha, on August 5, 1882, in Pilica, 30 miles far from Bendin. The couple had six children, Tzipora, Naha (*1919), Miryam (*1919), Max (*1921), Routh and Moshe, all born in Breslau, Germany.



Yaacov, Chaim and Yechiel Kilsztajn, Bendin 1917



Yechiel and Rachel Kilsztajn

Yaacov Kilsztajn married in Bendin in 1918 with Osna Testyler, born to Meir (*1846-1916) and Tzipora Fiszal in Bendin on June 6, 1901. Jacob and Osna Kilsztajn had six children, Meir (*15jun1919) born in Bendin; and Lea (*18aug1921), the twins Arnold and Johana (*11apr1923), Ephraim (*7apr1925) and Fryda (*18apr1931), born in Hindenburg, Germany (Johana passed away in 6mar1924 and Arnold in 16may1924). Yaacov Kilsztajn was a shoemaker, like his grandfather Aron Kilsztajn, his father Chaim Kilsztajn and his first cousin David Kilsztajn, Michal's father.



Ephraim, Osna, Meir, Lea and Yaacov, Hindenburg 1929

Among the four children of Aharon Kilsztajn and Dobra Sura Moszkowicz, Chaim's and Malka's half-siblings and Michal's great-uncles/aunts, Zlata Kilsztajn married on June 19, 1907, with Berek Panski, born to Lejbus (Lewek) and Frimeta (Frajdl) Fridman in Przyrow on October 20, 1878. They had a daughter, Malka, born in Przyrow on May 16, 1911.

Shlomo (Szlama) Kilsztajn, who was a baker and very religious, married on June 30, 1903 with Itta Najman, born to Chaim Josek and Chaja Guterman on March 6, 1889 in Przyrow. They had seven children, Malka (*4may1906), born in Janow, and Jakob (Jankiel) (*14jun1913), Genia (*14oct1914), Szprinza (*1916), Chaja (*1920), Yehudit (*1922) and Rozia (*1923), born in Przyrow. Itta passed away in 1923 and, in 1924, Shlomo married with her sister, Brucha Najman, born in 1876, widow of Icek (Isak) Erenfryd, shoemaker, with whom she had eight children, all born in Janow. The family of Shlomo and Brucha moved to 7 Ogródowa Street in Czestochowa, 17 miles far from Janow and 40 miles far from Bendin, the city well known for housing the Black Madonna of Czestochowa. Shlomo and Brucha, 49 years old, still had a daughter together (at that time, it was very common for mother and daughter to get pregnant at the same time), born

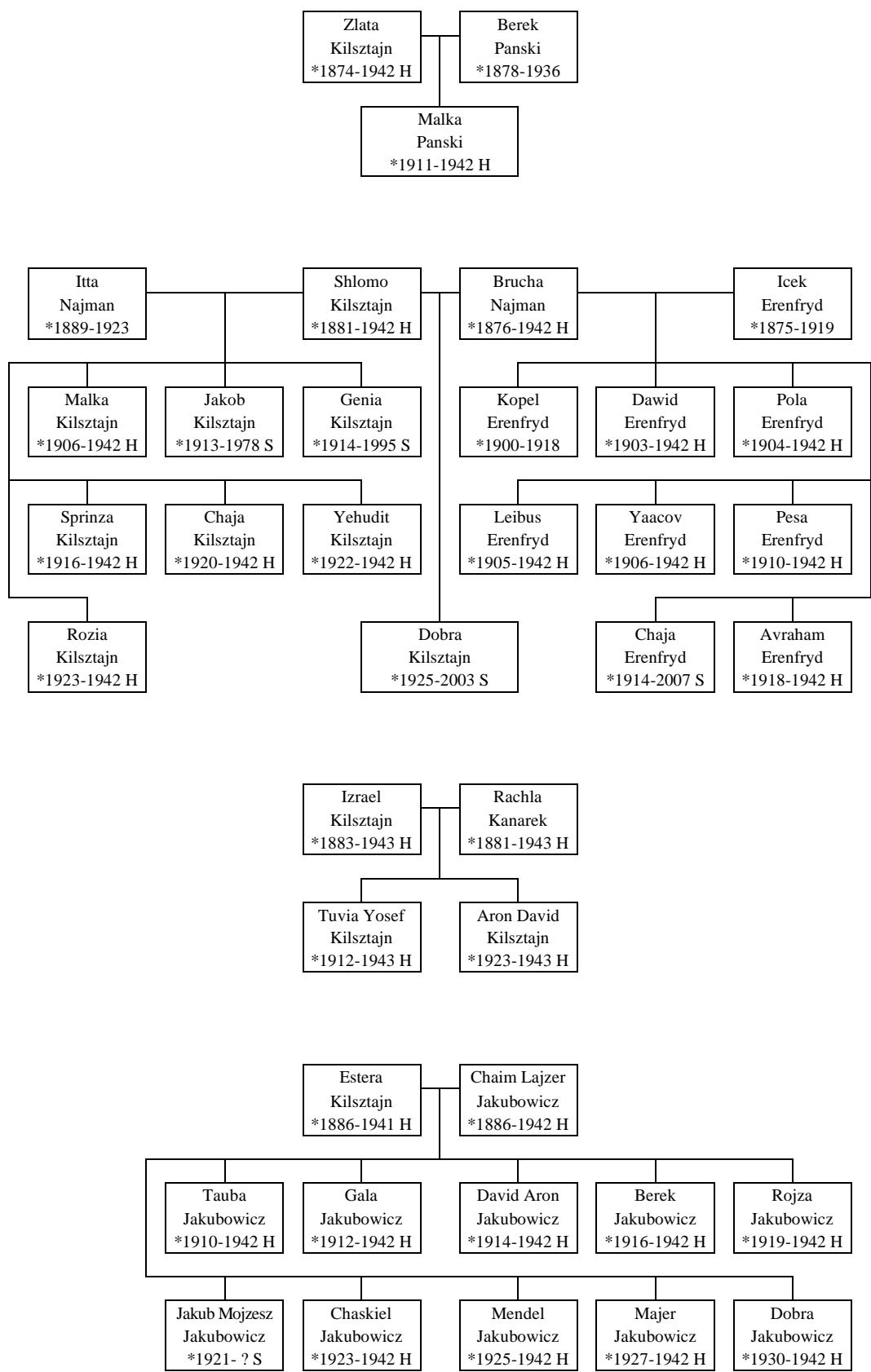
in Czestochowa on July 28, 1925, which was named after her paternal grandmother that passed away in Czestochowa shortly before, on April 22, 1925, Dobra Kilsztajn.

Malka Kilsztajn (*1906), daughter of Shlomo and Itta Kilsztajn, married in the Synagogue in 1925 with Moszek Chil Litmanowics, born to Juda Mendel and Bajla Dymant in 1880 in the city from Radomsko, Province of Lodz, 30 miles far from Janow. They had five children, all born in Radomsko, Jakub Hersz (*12jul1926), Chaskiel (*9feb1928), Abram Sucher (*9nov1929), Ita Ruchla (*9jan1932) and Majlech (*23mar1934). Malka Kilsztajn and Mozek Chil Litmanowics only got married according to the Civil Law on November 20, 1932.

Dobra Kilsztajn, the youngest daughter of Shlomo and Brucha Kilsztajn, had fourteen brothers and sisters alive when she was born, seven through her father and seven through her mother, that were first cousins among themselves (Brucha's first child had died during the Spanish flu in 1918). Dobra had a bunch of nephews, some with her age, and the house was always full of people, as in an eternal party. The family was not wealthy, but everyone considered the size of the offspring a blessing. In addition to the fifteen children and numerous grandchildren, Shlomo had five brothers alive, his sister Estera had ten children, his brother Chaim Kilsztajn had six children, his sister Malka Kilsztajn had only three children, but nineteen grandchildren etc.

Izrael Kilsztajn, manufacturer of hand tools, married on October 21, 1903, with Rachla Kanarek, born to Towia and Rajzla Flater in 1881 in Przyrow. They had two children born in Janow, Tuvia Yosef (Tobjasz) Kilsztajn (*20feb1912) and Aron David Kilsztajn (*1923).

Estera Kilsztajn married with Chaim Lajzer Jakubowicz, born to Pinkus and Tauba Jakubowicz in Klomnice, Czestochowa County, on May 21, 1886, tailor, with whom she had ten children, all born in Radomsko, Tauba (*29may1910), Gala (*3sep1912), Aron David (*22dec1914), Berek (*4jul1916), Rojza (*2jan1919), Jakub Mojzesz (27may1921), Chaskiel (*22may1923), Mendel (*8sep1925), Majer (*14apr1927) and Dobra (*23oct1930). The family, in the 1920s, lived on 2 Rynek Street; in the 1930s, they moved to 3 Maja Square, number 2. Tauba married in Radomsko on January 6, 1933, with Mordka Szloma Sobel, born to Izrael Majer and Rajzla Jakubowicz in Radomsko on June 7, 1906. Tauba and Mordka Sobel had a son, Izrael Sobel, born in Radomsko on April 27, 1934. Gala married in Radomsko on February 20, 1940, with Szaja Cukierman, born to Berek and Rojza Altman on January 7, 1909.



About the recurring *Ashkenazi* names, my great-grandmother Malka Kilsztajn (*1865), daughter of Aharon (*1838) and Chawa Kilsztajn (*1839) inherited the name of her paternal grandmother Malka Sura Kilsztajn; my grandfather Aron Dawid Kilsztajn (*1898) and his sister Sura Chawa Kilsztajn (*1908) inherited the names of their maternal grandparents and so on. The name of my great-great-great-grandmother Malka Kilsztajn was inherited by her granddaughter Malka Kilsztajn (*1865) and by her great-granddaughters Malka Kilsztajn (*1901), Chaim's daughter; Malka Kilsztajn (*1906), Shlomo's daughter; and Malka Kilsztajn Panski (*1911), Zlata's daughter, among other relatives.

Although Kilsztajn was not a very usual name, besides the Kilsztajn of Bendin there were many families with the surname Kilsztajn in Czestochowa city and in the *shtetls* Janow and Przyrow in Czestochowa County, Upper Silesia. Several families with the surname Kilsztajn lived in other Polish cities and *shtetls* as Belchatow, Gowarczow, Konskie, Piotrkow Trybunalsk, Radomsko, Tomaszow Mazowieckie and Zamosc. There were also families with the surname Kilsztajn in Romania (Moldova/Bessarabia) and Ukraine.

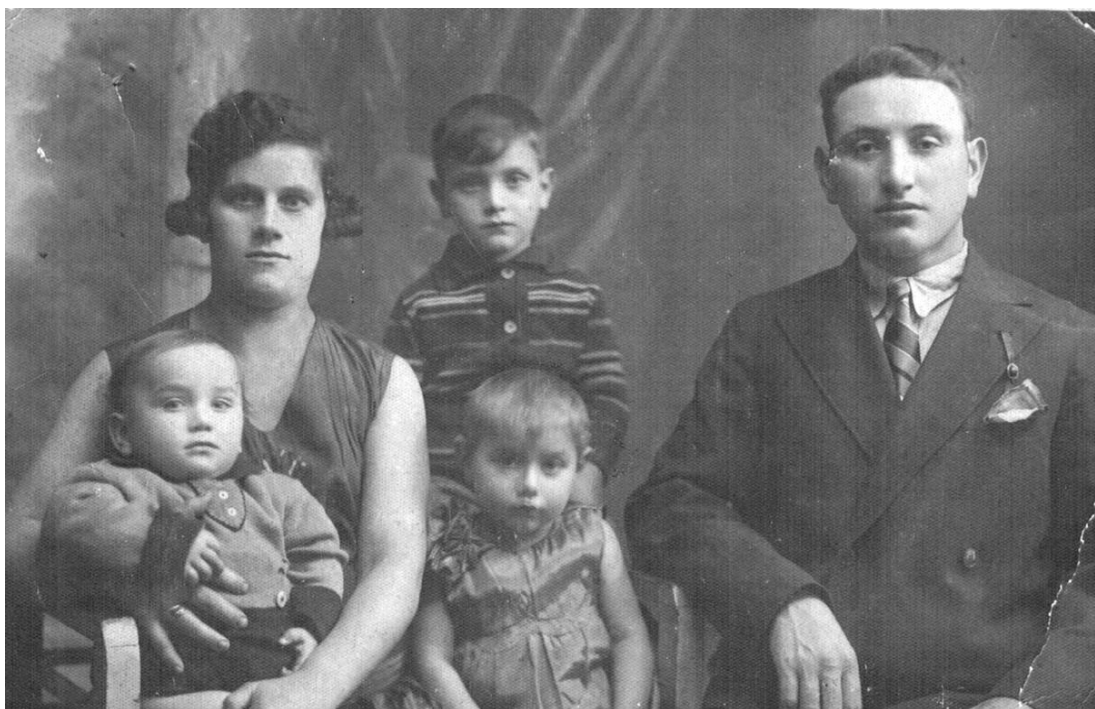
After the assassination of Alexander II, in the process of emigration that followed the *pogroms* in the territories occupied by the Russian Empire, several families surnamed Kilsztajn emigrated to the United States, changing the Polish spelling Kilsztajn to the German/English form Kilstein. Immigration to the United States was limited in the first half of the 1920s'. The United States Census of 1930 registered 44 people with the surname Kilstein, most of them based in New York.

Eight families with the surname Telner, totalizing 30 people, inhabited Bendin in 1939. Josef Telner, Eidel Kilsztajn's father and Michal's grandfather, was born in Bendin on November 20, 1865, and was a charger. Josef Teller married with Estera Muflarz, daughter of Herzel (*1849) and Fajgla Hamburger (*1846), born in Bendin on January 19, 1870. Estera Muflarz Telner passed away before 1927 and Josef Telner married with Chawa, born on September 29, 1893, in Ksiaz, a *shtetl* in Lower Silesia, 55 miles far from Bendin. Josef and Chawa Telner were living behind the Castle Hill, in 33 Podzamcze Street, in the same building where the family of David and Eidel Kilsztajn was living before moving to the central area of the city. Besides Eidel, Josef and Estera Muflarz Telner had more two children, Ruchla Laja and Labj Wolf.

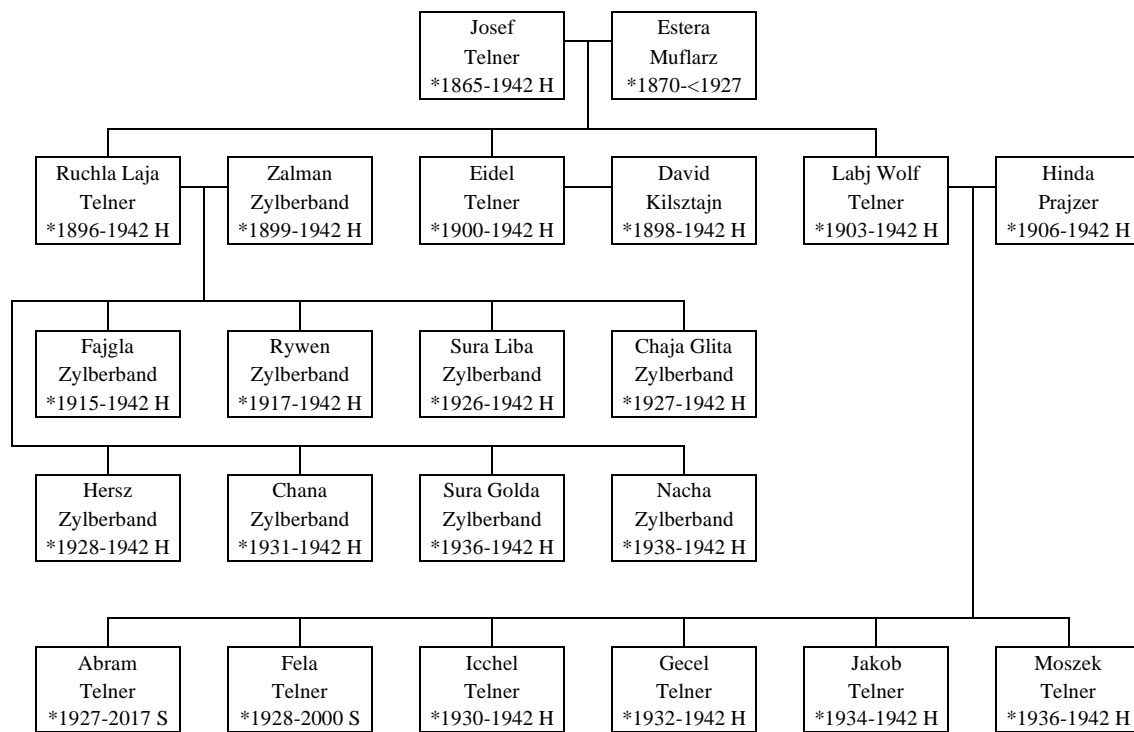
Ruchla Laja Telner was born in Bendin in 1896 and married with Zalman Zylberband, born on December 8, 1889, in Pinczow, 70 miles far from Bendin, who was a locksmith working with bicycles. They had eight children, Fajgla (*1915), Rywen (*1917), Sura Liba (*1926), Chaja Gitla (*1927), Hersz (*1928), Chana (*8aug1931), Sura Golda (*1936) and Nacha (*1938). All the children were born in Bendin and were living in 45 Podzamcze Street.

Labj Wolf Telner was born in Bendin in 1903 and, like his father, was a charger. He married with Hinda Prajzer, born in 1906, and had six children, Abram (*6aug1927), Fela (*1mar1928), Icchek (*1930), Gecel (*1932), Jakob (*1934) and Moszek (*1936). All the children were born in Bendin and were living in a house owned by Zalman and Ruchla Laja Zylberband, in the same ground at 45 Podzamcze Street.

Abram Telner said that his father Labj Wolf was so strong that he could carry two bags weighing two hundred pounds over his shoulders; Michal Kilsztajn told us that his uncle Labj Wolf could carry alone a cabinet of solid wood; and Michal's brother Chaim Kilsztajn (*1920) stated that Labj Wolf could carry alone even a piano.



Icchek, Hinda, Abram, Fela and Labj Wolf Telner, Bendin 1931



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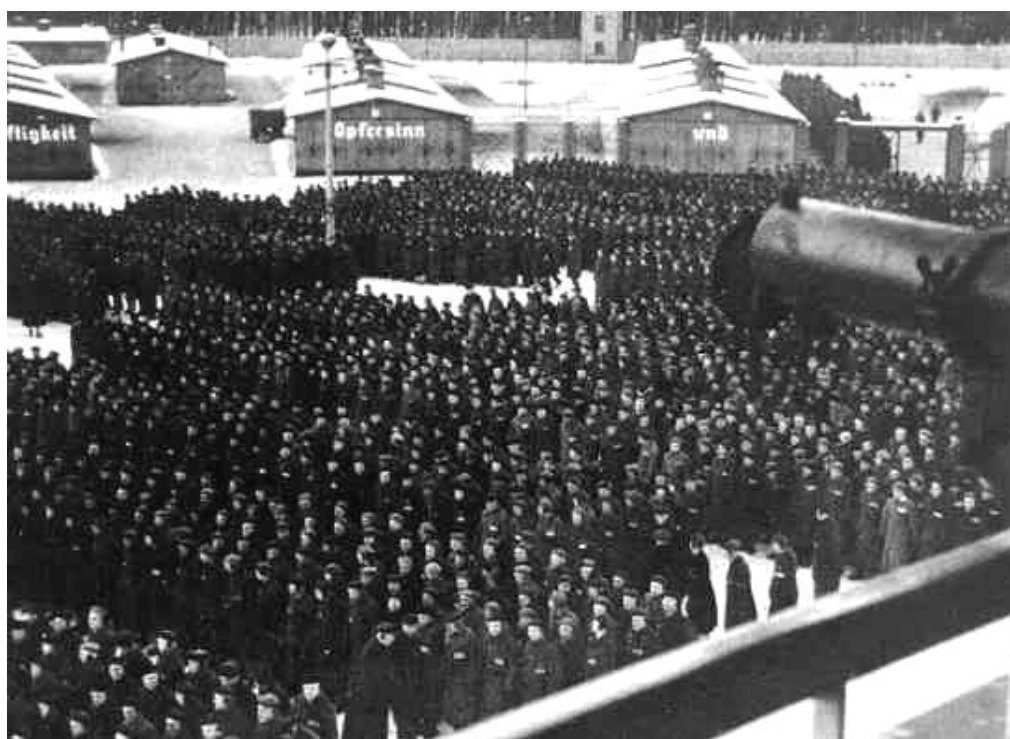
In 1928 the Nazis had obtained 2.6% of the votes in Germany. Five years later, in 1933, when they reached 43.9% of the votes, the Nazis inaugurated the Third Reich that terrorized Germany, Europe and Humanity. Until WWI, Germany was an empire and, in the institution of the new republic, Germany lacked democratic tradition.

The phenomenon Hitler/Nazi/Third Reich is not easy to understand. In 1929 Erich Maria Remarque published *Im westen nichts neues* (All quiet on the western front), a novel that constituted a powerful manifesto against wars, was a German and international best seller, Oscar in 1930, but failed to stop the rise of Nazism in Germany. Hitler probably embodied the aspirations of the Germans, which regarded themselves as a superior race but had been defeated in WWI and was immersed in the Great Depression of 1929. The Spanish Flu had destroyed the German Army in WWI, but the generals prevented the fact from being publicized and decided to accept the armistice and the peace agreement. As the Germans did not learn that their army had been destroyed by the Spanish Flu, news of the armistice with its army stationed in enemy territory gave rise to the version of the ‘stab in the back’ by the Jews, the Bolsheviks and the Socialists.

Hitler regarded the German people as ignorant, unstable, insecure, emotional, sentimental, unable to think soberly, manipulable by a few ideas that should be repeated

and hammered a thousand times in their heads until they reach fanaticism and hysteria. Marshal Hermann Göring used to say, 'I have no conscience, Adolf Hitler is my conscience.' As absolute and predestined leader, the *Führer* (guide) subjected all national institutions, became the law itself and raised the German people and Germany above everything, *Deutschland über alles*.

In 1933, the Nazis initiated the official authoritarianism and terrorism that characterized the Third Reich. Thousands of Germans opposed to the Nazi ideology were sent to Concentration Camps. In the photo below at Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp in 1936, authentic Aryans who were against the Nazi are lined up in rows of five, for the call roll and overall count of the prisoners. The photo highlights the organization of the prisoners subjected to the Nazi authoritarianism. A society that witnessed this extreme authoritarianism against its Arian fellows would admit any of the atrocities that were to be committed later during World War II.



Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp, Nazi Germany 1936

The Jews were emancipated in the Kingdom of Prussia in 1812. With the unification of Germany and the establishment of the German Empire in 1871, the German Jews had been declared German citizens. Restriction of rights and economic boycott of Jewish companies and professionals began with the rise of the Nazis into power in 1933. The saga of German Jews during the Third Reich can be experienced in reading the letters written by Lilli Jahn and published by her grandson Martin Doerry.

On September 15, 1935, the German Jews lost officially their citizenship and their political rights. Jean Amery, an assimilated Austrian Jew and survivor of Auschwitz, said that when he read the Nuremberg Laws, he knew he was reading his death sentence.

The rise of Nazism in Germany in the 1930s led to a massive Jewish emigration from Nazi Germany to other European countries and to other countries that provided visas to Jews. At that time, the emigration of German Jews was encouraged by the Nazi Government. However, the United States, Canada and Argentina had restricted the immigration since the first half of the 1920s' and the international quotas offered to Jews were far smaller than the demand for visas.

Anne Frank's family emigrated from Nazi Germany to the Netherlands in 1933. *The diary*, which I reread to write these memories, is the main work of the vast literature of the Holocaust, perhaps because the Holocaust is not the subject of *The diary*, but only the background of a masterpiece written by a teenager growing up between four walls, highlighted by its sincerity.

It was in those international circumstances that, after 1933, the emigration of Jews to Palestine gained strong impulse. The Nazi German slogan was "*Juden raus! Auf nach Palastina!*", "Jews Out! Out to Palestine!" Modern Political Zionism, devoted to the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine, had emerged in the late 19th century due to the wave of *pogroms* in Eastern Europe and the Dreyfus Affair in France. Nevertheless, until the rise of Hitler to power, the Zionist Movement was of very little significance among the Jewish communities. From 1881 to 1914, while two million Jews emigrated to the United States, only 40,000 Jews emigrated to Palestine, which was then part of the Ottoman Empire. Palestine turned into a British Mandate at the end of World War I. From 1881 to 1914, roughly one thousand Jews had emigrated in average per year to Palestine; from 1919 to 1932 there were 10 thousand Jews per year; and from 1933 to 1939 the emigration of Jews to Palestine rose to about 40 thousand per year. Amos Oz, in *Tale of love and darkness*, described his parents' emigration from Eastern Europe and the life of the Jews in Palestine during this time. In 1932, approximately 190 thousand Jews lived in Palestine; in 1939, the Jewish population of Palestine reached 450 thousand.

Theodor Herzl, the founder of Modern Political Zionism, considered that anti-Semitism, manifested or latent, was deep-rooted in European culture; and that the Jews were hated as much for their faults as for their gifts. Despite the emancipation of the Jews, their performance as loyal patriots and their contribution to the development of science

and arts within each of the European nations, Jews will always be treated as foreigners, disdained and persecuted.

Theodor Herzl, who in the transition of the 19th to the 20th centuries has engaged in the construction of a Jewish State in Palestine as a solution to the Jewish Question, and that even remotely could conceive the tragic Nazi “Final Solution to the Jewish Question”, almost prophetically, stated that in the countries where Jews feel comfortable, they “will not believe me till Jew-baiting teaches them the truth; for the longer anti-Semitism lies in abeyance the more fiercely will it break out.”

Joseph Roth, who had published *The wandering Jews* in Berlin in 1927, in defense of Eastern European Jews at a time when Jews lived with full rights in Germany and the Nazis did not reach 3% of the electorate, published a new edition in Amsterdam in 1937, after ten years of complete deterioration of Jewish life in Germany. Nevertheless, in 1937, a Jewish child in Germany could still sidles into the classroom, past the benches from the front to the back, and even if it has a place, it still has a sensation of wandering. God took Joseph Roth on the eve of the War to spare him from witnessing the events that followed the invasion of Poland.

Jews are hated as much for their faults as for their gifts. Anti-Semitism is manifested even in the praise to the commitment and intelligence of the Jewish people. Jews, who now account for about 0.2% of the world’s population, have seized more than 20% of the Nobel Prizes. The Chinese, who represent almost 20% of the world’s population, received less than 1% of the Nobel Prizes. Of course, this does not mean that the Jews are more intelligent than the Chinese are. The Western mind favors causality while the Chinese mind is pragmatic and focuses on the systematization of chance. And Western rationalism, which is behind the Nobel Prize, is based on the way of thinking, abstracting, intellectualizing, questioning and criticizing that are at the heart of the religious formation of the Jews and constitute the foundations of justice, the denial of violence and finally the guarantee of the universality of man and therefore the guarantee of the emancipation of the Jewish people.

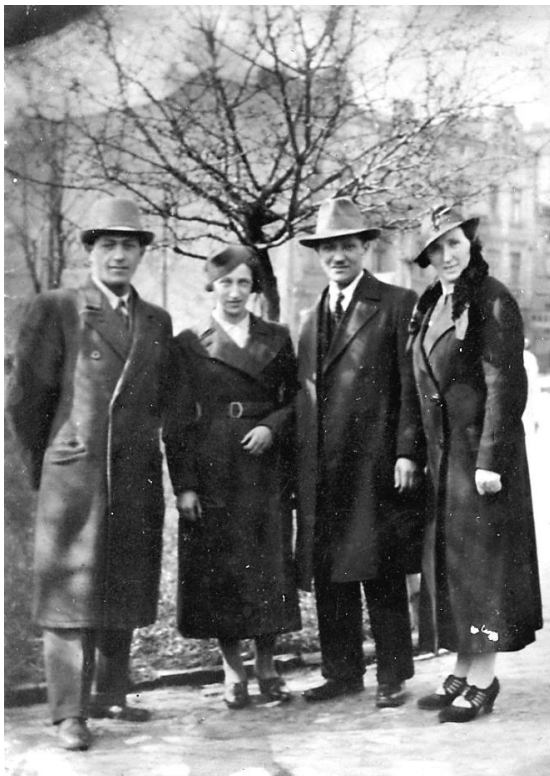
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Since the end of WWI, the families of the brothers Yechiel and Yaakov Kilsztajn, sons of Chaim Kilsztajn, great-uncle of Michal, were living in Germany. Ephraim (Fritz) Kilsztajn, the son of Yaakov who was born in Hindenburg in 1925, told that the family was very religious but lived and had good relations with non-Jewish people. It was in

1935, when he was 10 years old, that Ephraim first heard from a Christian friend that the Jews had killed Jesus.

It was also in 1935, after the Nuremberg Laws, that Yechiel Kilsztajn, Rachel, and their six children that were born and were living in Breslau emigrated from Nazi Germany to Palestine. Meir, the oldest son of Yaacov and Osna Kilsztajn, who was living in Hindenburg, also emigrated from Nazi Germany to Palestine in 1935, settling in Kibbutz Kfar Giladi in Galilee, next to the Golan Heights. Lea (Helene) Kilsztajn emigrated to Palestine in 1936 carrying to her brother Meir a photograph with her parents and Yaacov's brother Chaskiel Rozenblum Kilsztajn from Bendin. Malka Kilsztajn (*1901), the sister of Yechiel and Yaacov, emigrated to Canada before WWII.

Yaacov and his wife Osna Kilsztajn could not emigrate to Palestine in 1936 because their children Ephraim and Fryda (Feilsche) were too young (11 and 5 years old). In 1937 the family, who were living in a modern and comfortable house in Hindenburg, was expelled from the neighborhood where they lived and forced to move to the Jewish quarter. Ephraim Kilsztajn still celebrated his Bar-Mitzvah in Hindenburg in April 1938.



Chaskiel, Lea, Yaacov and Osna
Hindenburg 16apr36



Fryda, Yaacov and Ephraim in his Bar-Mitzvah
Hindenburg 14apr38

On March 12, 1938, Nazi Germany had annexed Austria. Edmund De Waal and the survivor Ruth Kluger described the impact of the Nazi German invasion on Jewish life in Vienna. It was then that the Jews began to be expelled from Nazi Germany and Austria. On July 6, 1938, the United States organized an international conference attended by 32 countries in Evian-les-Bains, France, to try to get a solution for the issue of the Jewish immigration.

Since the reconstitution of independence after WWI, historical anti-Semitism has officially manifested itself in Poland. Israel Joshua Singer, the elder brother that the Nobel Prize Isaac Bashevis Singer considered the family's real writer, in *The brothers Ashkenazi* told the history of Polish Jews and anti-Semitism since the second half of the 19th century. At the end of the novel, the Ashkenazi brothers, who were industrialists from Lodz but were on Soviet territory, were surprised at the border by the reception of officers from Independent Poland, who had fun mistreating the Jews and murdered the younger brother. Subsequently the constitution of the Second Polish Republic, Jews have been banned from working in the administration and public companies.

In 1936, an economic boycott of Jewish companies and professionals was officially adopted in Poland. In 1938, the Polish Government decided to revoke, as of October 30, 1938, the citizenship of Polish Jews living abroad for more than five years. Nazi Germany preceded Poland and, on October 28, expelled eighteen thousand Polish Jews living in Germany, and sent them to the border with Poland, which at first refused to allow the refugees to enter. The organization of the main refugee camp in the town of Zbaszyn was carried out by historian and community activist Emanuel Ringelblum, who later became a prominent figure in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Yaacov Kilsztajn, Osna, Ephraim and Fryda, who were Polish citizens (Ephraim and Fryda were born in Germany), were first taken to a prison and then, without their belongings, taken to the border. When they finally arrived in Bendin, Yaacov and the family were received by his father Chaim Kilsztajn and other relatives.



Refugees at Zbaszyn, nov38

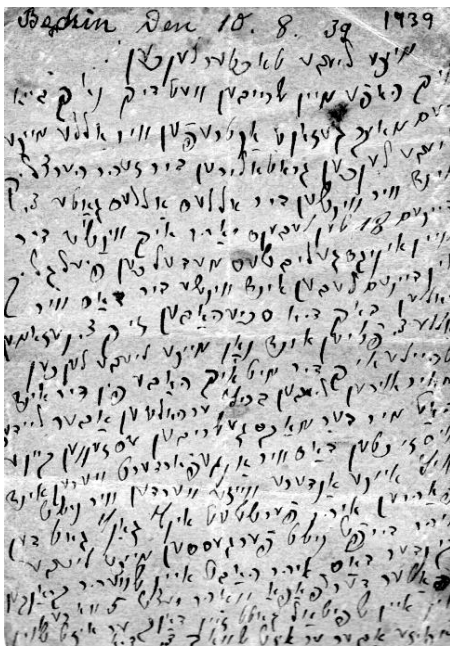
On November 9, 1938, the murder of a German diplomat in Paris by a young Jew was used as a pretext to promote in Nazi Germany and Austria an official *pogrom* at national level, which became known as *Kristallnacht*. Nazi Germany, which had already annexed the Sudetenland on October 1, 1938, invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939. *Helga Weiss's diary* describes the Nazi German occupation and the rise of anti-Semitism in Prague.

On May 13, 1939, on the eve of the Second World War, the German transatlantic *St. Louis*, with 938 Jewish passengers, mostly Germans, sailed from Hamburg towards Cuba, which did not recognize the passengers' entry visas. The transatlantic toured the east coast of the United States, but no American country was willing to accept the refugees, who had to return to Europe. Gustav Schroeder, the ship's captain, contemplated beaching his ship rather than return to Hamburg. Finally, the United Kingdom, France, Holland and Belgium agreed to give refuge to the passengers and the ship docked in Antwerp, Belgium, on June 17, 1939. Many of these refugees were exterminated shortly after, when Nazi Germany invaded Continental Europe.



St. Louis refugees arriving in Antwerp, 17Jun39

In Bendin the family of Yaacov Kilsztajn went to live in 4 Okrzei Street. Yaacov was diabetic and became very weak due to the lack of medicine in Bendin. On August 10, 1939, three weeks before Nazi Germany invaded Poland, Osna sent a postcard written in Yiddish with Hebrew characters to her children Meir (Majer) and Lea Kilsztajn, addressed to Kibbutz Kfar Giladi, commenting the fact that they could not emigrate to Palestine (due the restrictions imposed by Britain, according to the *White Paper* of May 17, 1939); and informing them the serious health condition of their father. Yaacov passed away in Bendin before the Nazi German invasion. Ephraim was 14 years old and remembered his grandfather Chaim Kilsztajn following the funeral procession with the family.



Heute gehort uns Deutschland und morgen die ganze Welt! Today Germany belongs to us, and tomorrow the whole World! After having annexed Austria and invaded Czechoslovakia without provoking any reaction from the United Kingdom, France and the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany began to contemplate Poland. To restrain Nazi German aspirations, London, Paris and Moscow tried but failed to reach an agreement because Poland refused to allow the entry of the Soviet Troops in its territory. Lastly, on August 23, 1939, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union ended up signing a Pact of Non-aggression, with secret protocols determining the partition of Poland and the creation of spheres of influence in the region, Lithuania to Nazi Germany; and Latvia, Estonia, Finland and Bessarabia (which then belonged to Romania) to the Soviet Union.

With the imminence of the Nazi German invasion, Heindel Kilsztajn was recruited to serve in the 4th Company, 75th Regiment/Bedzin, 23rd Upper Silesian Infantry Division of the Polish Army; and was sent to the border with Nazi Germany. Heindel, Michal's brother, was the firstborn and beloved son of David and Eidel. In the photo below from 1939, Heindel, surrounded by two friends, carries a certificate with the Yiddish letters 'פּר' (Pr) highlighted, which is perhaps the abbreviation for professor.



Heindel Kilsztajn surrounded by two friends, Bendin 1939

A week after the signing of the Pact between Hitler and Stalin, on Friday September 1, 1939, the Nazi Germans invaded Poland. Britain and France declared war on Nazi Germany in September 3, 1939, initiating the European War, later renamed World War II. On September 3, 1939, at the age of 22, Heindel was shot and killed in the front. Heindel Kilsztajn was buried in the Cemetery of Tychy, 12 miles far from Katowice, but the family was not informed the whereabouts of his body.

Grabnummer, Reihe, Abteilung	Staats- angehörig- keit	Dienst- grad	Zuname und Vornamen	Truppenteil	Erkennungs- marke- Inschrift	Todestag
2825 Tichau (Tychy) 106		Nr. Sold.	Kilsztajn Heindel	4. Kom- panei 75. Regiment Bed- Benzin zin 1916	B.35	3.9.39

Lists of foreigners buried (extract)

David Kilsztajn went crazy when he learned of the death of his firstborn and beloved Heindel. Frustrated, he walked aimlessly and threw himself in the streets of Bendin (*er hot zih gevarfn in di gasn*). Heindel was engaged to Fradla Lachtikier and, according to Jewish tradition, his younger brother, Salomon, took over the engagement and married later with Fradla.

The Nazi Germans occupied Bendin on Monday, September 4, 1939, annexed Upper Silesia to the Third Reich and changed the name of Bedzin to Bendsburg. The story of the Nazi German occupation of Zagłębie Dabrowskie, the region that includes the cities of Bendin, Sosnowiec and Dabrowa Gornicza, was narrated by Art Spiegelman in the award-winner cartoon *Maus*. The survivor Vladek Spiegelman, Art's father, was living in Sosnowiec and was also in the front when Nazi Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939.

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The stories of the Holocaust survivors are all the same, unique and thrilling. Several stories have been collected and published by many institutions. Among them, we could highlight the Shoah Foundation, created by Steven Spielberg, and housed at the University of Southern California – USC, which already recorded more than 50 thousand videos of Holocaust's witnesses, including reports of Allied soldiers who liberated the prisoners of the Nazi German Concentration Camps. Ephraim Kilsztajn, son of Yaacov Kilsztajn; Dobra Kilsztajn (Deborah Eilenberg), daughter of Shlomo Kilsztajn; and Jakub

Mojzesz Jakubowicz (Yankel, Jack Jacobs), son of Estera Kilsztajn from Radomsko, recorded interviews for Shoah Foundation. In all, 665 interviews were recorded with Jewish survivors who lived in Bendin or mentioned Bendin in their reports.

On the New Moon of the evening of September 13, 1939, under Nazi German occupation, the Bendin Jews celebrated the beginning of the year 5700 (in the Jewish lunisolar calendar the New Year and every month always start on the New Moon). Warsaw, the largest center of Jewish life and culture in Europe, which gathered 400,000 Jews, a third of the total population of the city, was being heavily bombed by the Nazi Germans. Isaac Bashevis Singer in *The Moskat family* wrote the history of Warsaw Jews from the early 20th century to the bombardment of the city in September 1939. The novel ends during the bombing, without its personages knowing the future that awaited them and with the assertion that the expected Messiah was death. Warsaw capitulated in the first day of Sukkot, on the Full Moon of September 28, 1939 (Tishrei 15, 5700; the 15th day of each Jewish months is always Full Moon).

The Soviet Union had invaded the eastern part of Poland on September 17, 1939. Once again, after two decades of independence, Poland returned to be partitioned between Russia and the former Prussia and Austria, now joined as Third Reich. During the first months of the War, people could still cross the border between the territories occupied by the Nazi Germans and by the Soviets. The journalist Peretz Opoczynski recorded in live colors the chaotic information that flooded Warsaw during this period; the dilemma of the Jews between staying in Nazi German or Russian hands; the comings and goings; and the adventures and misadventures of those who crossed the border.

In the territories occupied by the Nazi Germans the Jews were forced to wear four inches wide Stars of David to distinguish them from the local people; and were segregated into Ghettos. Warsaw Ghetto was created in November 1940. Some Jews who managed to escape or hide ended up going back to the Ghettos to get together and share the fate of their families and people. Jews fit for work were employed in “shops” (workshops) in the Ghettos or were deported to Forced Labor Camps (*Zwangsarbeitlager*, ZAL) and Concentration Camps (*Konzentrationslager*, KZ, KL) across Europe, both known as *Lager*. Jews working in “shops”, Forced Labor and Concentration Camps were employed by private companies to produce munitions, uniforms and roads for the Nazi German Army.

The Ghettos aimed to concentrate the Jews in order to allow greater control on selections and deportations. In the Ghettos the Jews could still live as a family and

community. In some Forced Labour Camps the prisoners could receive mail and parcels from the family. Concentration Camps, in contrast, were larger, overcrowded and more austere than Forced Labor Camps. Life and work conditions in the Concentration Camps were more cruel and the workers had their heads shaved, were required to wear prisoner clothes and were numbered.

The Nazis regarded the Germans as the top of the human being and referred to Jews as ‘these criminals’ or as rats, worms, subhumans without the right to life. Jews forcibly were subjected to inhuman conditions to justify their extermination. Jews on their way to the Concentration Camps were transported in freight trains overcrowded, without latrine, and for days. Sometimes, when the trains paused in their ways, the Jews took the opportunity to defecate in the open, to the horror of local Germans that were watching the show and “had” to agree that people like that deserve to be treated as animals. When a Jewish girl was asked what she wanted to be, she replied, a dog, because the Nazi Germans loved and treated them well.

Curzio Malaparte reported WWII switching European palaces, battlefronts, and jail. In *Kaputt* Malaparte describes the horrors of Warsaw Ghetto in February 1942 and tells how the witty Governor General of occupied Poland Hans Frank, who, thrilled, played Chopin so wonderfully, amused himself at his gala dinners saying that the Jews really liked to live in the middle of dirt, as rats, in deplorable conditions, which was the cause of their high mortality rate.

In the Ghettos, the Nazi Germans exposed the Jews to extremes of hunger, thirst, cold, lack of sanitation, disease, humiliation and gratuitous violence, which were decimating the Jewish population of Europe since the beginning of the War. However, the Genocide would require a further articulated project that was materialized with the use of the Extermination Camps, the European railway network, and an information system to detect descendants of Jews assimilated or converted to other religions, many of whom were not acquainted of their Jewish ancestry, including pastors, priests and nuns.

The Extermination Camps, for the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question” project, were created in late 1941, all located on Polish territory. Many Concentration Camps were a complex with several subcamps. The Concentration Camps of Auschwitz and Majdanek were both Concentration and Extermination Camps. Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka were strictly Extermination Camps. From the sadism released on an individual scale to the killing machinery methodically engineered for mass murder, the Holocaust was the outspread of a *pogrom* in inconceivable dimensions.

Schedules and transshipments of trains carrying human cargo should be strictly timed to enable the mass flow of Jews from all over Europe, including countries as far away as Norway and Greece. The memories of the witnesses of the Holocaust about the Death Trains were collected by Claude Lanzmann in his nine hours movie *Shoah*, which had its text published in book form. Psychologist methods were employed to pacify the victims and prevent uprisings. This carnage, promoted systematically, was ruled as a production line. In addition, there was still the disturbing work of getting rid of the rubbish mountains of corpses that should be buried in huge mass graves or cremated, which is sacrilege for Jews. All this confirms that the human soul has no bounds.

In the Warsaw Ghetto, a clandestine network had been set up to collect documents and reports from the point of view of the victims during the course of the martyrdom to which the Jews were subjected in WWII. The archives of *Oyneg Shabes* (joy of the Sabbath), an organization conceived and directed by historian and community activist Emanuel Ringelblum, were buried during the War, and found after the war by two of the three *Oyneg Shabes* survivors. Besides the description of the life in Warsaw Ghetto, the collected documents bring together the earliest reports of the mass shooting of the Jewish population that accompanied the invasion of the Soviet Union by the Nazi Germany in June 1941 and of the Extermination Camps installed in Poland. In late January 1942 a Jewish that runaway from the Chelmno Extermination Camp, which had been in operation since December 1941, arrived in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Reports about the Extermination Camps were transmitted as early as the first semester of 1942. Etty Hillesum in her diary on July 11, 1942, wrote ‘...they say that the Germans are burying us alive or exterminating us with gas. However, what is the point of repeating such things, even if they should be true?’ Etty, although considering everything beyond comprehension, never ceased to venerate life and left singing the Westerbork Concentration Camp in the Netherlands to Auschwitz, where she was murdered. Thomas Mann, in his radio program transmitted by the BBC to Germany in German, denounced on September 27, 1942, the killing of Jews with poison gas.

With the information and documents brought by the emissary Jan Karski (Kozielski), member of the Polish Underground, the Polish Government in Exile, then headquartered in London, published on December 10, 1942, a document addressed to the governments of the United Nations entitled *Mass extermination of Jews in German occupied Poland* with accurate information on the ongoing extermination of Polish Jews and Jews deported from other German-occupied countries, mentioning the Extermination

Camps and the use of poison gas. On December 17, 1942, the governments of the United Kingdom, United States and other allied countries issued a *Joint declaration by members of the United Nations* denouncing and explicitly condemning Nazi Germany's bestial policy of extermination of the Jewish people. Moreover, on Christmas Eve 1942, Pope Pius XII, in radio message, denounced the extermination of hundreds of thousands of people because of their nationality or race.

Here we refrain from reproducing photographs of the Holocaust, which can be seen on numerous websites. Special attention should be given to the unfinished documentary of the British Army, with the participation of Hitchcock, based on the images of the liberation of the Nazi German Concentration Camps. In the macabre scenes that terrorized the master of horror, multitudes of corpses are dragged by mechanical excavators and thrown into huge mass graves. For Jews the scene is particularly shocking because the body of a person is considered the home of the soul in this world and the lifeless body is regarded and should be respected as the "place" where the soul used to live.

The first time I saw pictures of the Holocaust I was ten or eleven years old. A school fellow brought a printed album with the photographs of the liberation of the Concentration Camps. I remember that I became very impressed with the pictures, though I already knew for years that my parents were survivors and that my grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins had been exterminated; I was also familiar with the Auschwitz numbers tattooed on the left forearm of my parents' friends, men and women. The Auschwitz numbers are the trademark of the survivors. However, there were also not tattooed survivors of other Forced Labor and Concentration Camps, as my father; the survivors who were deported to Siberia, as my mother; the survivors who remained sheltered or hidden; the *partisans*; the persecuted and refugees from Germany since 1933 etc.

Among all the Concentration Camps, Auschwitz was the only one who tattooed prisoners (tattoo is sacrilege for Jews). The numbers on the left forearm identify all survivors who went through Auschwitz. After the War, some survivors exhausted of seeing every morning the numbers that remember them the Holocaust, underwent plastic surgery. Others, to spare themselves from the questions of curious, superimposed tattooed images to Auschwitz's numbers. Nevertheless, most of the survivors remained with the numbers that identified them as Auschwitz's prisoners. There are many stories of children asking what are the numbers tattooed on the forearms of the Auschwitz survivors, and the answer "it's my phone number". At the wedding of the Israeli writer David Grossman,

his aunt covered her Auschwitz number with a band-aid, as if a band-aid could hide her passage through Auschwitz.

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In the occupied cities, the Nazi German Secret Police, the *Gestapo*, created Jews Councils, *Judenrat*, and Jewish Police to administer the Ghettos and to mediate the selection of Jews to Forced Labor, Concentration and Extermination Camps. The attitude of members of the *Judenrat* and the Jewish Police varied vastly. Some members who refused to follow Nazi Germans orders were summarily shot, others committed suicide; some participated in resistance movements; others collaborated with the Nazi Germans considering that they could help to save part of the Jewish people; many were against resistance movements; and there were those who denounced the members of the resistance that, in turn, attacked both the Nazi Germans and these members of the *Judenrat* and the Jewish Police.

For the internal administration of the *Lager*, the Nazi Germans used prisoner functionaries, *Kapos*, often members of criminal gangs, Jews and mainly non-Jews, who were rewarded for their brutality with other prisoners. Were also called *Kapos* the Jews and non-Jews used by the Nazi Germans as interveners and administrators of Jewish businesses that amused themselves beating the former owners.

Organized resistance of Jews during WWII was exiguous, as was the resistance of the occupied European nations that had military armies. Jewish resistance movements were generally coordinated by Zionist (especially the left wing), Communists and the Bund, the Jewish social-democratic party.

Jewish resistance was inhibited because Jews are rationalists, humanists, defenders of justice and averse to violence by nature. Moreover, the escalation of violence against the Jews was usually progressive. Most Jews passively accepted the growing violence believing that there will be a limit to how much worse things could get; that it should have an end; or that the War would be over. They also believed that Jews fit for work would be spared because they considered that their work in the armaments and uniform industries was indispensable for the Nazi German Army. No one could imagine that the ideas of Hitler could be taken to the last consequences. The histories of the Extermination Camps are not credible at all and there are even those who argue that the Holocaust never existed. Most Jews thought that resistance would stimulate the escalation of violence, and the Nazi Germans indeed invested against the community in retaliation

for the actions taken by members of the resistance, what was called collective responsibility. Movements of resistance in the Ghettos broke usually during the last deportations. The abundant material from Emanuel Ringelblum's *Oyneg Shabes* archives documents the resignation of the Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto in organizing the resistance.

To illustrate the proceed of collective responsibility used by the Nazi Germans, Yitzhak Malmed, a Jew who resisted deportation in the Bialystok Ghetto in 1943, caused the death of a Gestapo officer. Yitzhak managed to escape, and eventually surrendered to avoid the uncontrolled killing undertaken by Nazi Germans against the population of the Ghetto, being hanged in the public square. For Yitzhak Malmed it was no use to take into account that the Jews of Bialystok would anyway be murdered later by the Nazi Germans; but the weight he would carry with him if he did not surrender. However, for the organized resistance, abandoning their activities would be the same as allowing the Nazi Germans to fully achieve their goals.

The most important forms of Jewish resistance were the guerrilla movements, *partisans*, and the uprisings of Ghettos, Concentration and Extermination Camps. Faye Schulman described her participation as a woman and Jew among the Russian *partisans*. The most known uprisings were Warsaw Ghetto on April 19, 1943; Treblinka Extermination Camp on August 2, 1943; and Auschwitz on October 7, 1944. The Jews were so peaceful, and resistance was so unusual that Mordechai Anielewicz, in his last letter during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which lasted for a month, wrote "The last wish of my life has been fulfilled. Jewish self-defense has become a fact". In the liquidation of the Vilna Ghetto in September 1943, the United Partisan Organization (FPO), which included the poets Avrom Sutzkever and Shmerke Kaczerginski who survived the Holocaust, thought it opportune to leave the Ghetto to join the *partisans* in the forest, as they considered that in the case of an armed confrontation with the Nazi Germans, the Jewish population of the Ghetto would fight against the FPO. Anyway, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is celebrated as the Holocaust Remembrance Day in Israel.

Nevertheless, it is worth remembering that all those who survived the Nazi Germany Forced Labor and Concentration Camps are considered heroes not because they fought, but on the contrary, because, armed with extraordinary strength, they did not react, and subjected themselves to excesses, violence, humiliation and, after the vilification suffered in the *lager*, they still became true militants of life.

Michal Kilsztajn never told me the atrocities he experienced during the War. I believed, then, that my father had no emotional detachment to report to me his memories in the Concentration Camps and in the immediate postwar period. However, on a single occasion in which he began to report the savagery that he experienced, I was the one who asked him to stop his story, because I did not have the emotional detachment to hear him. Even reading *The drowned and the saved* by Primo Levi, who was an Auschwitz survivor, especially the disgusting stories of the special prisoner teams in charge of the Extermination Camps, that I undertook when I was writing these memories, caused me extremely bad feelings. The reports are not credible, and did not seem real. Primo Levi told a recurring dream, his and other inmates while incarcerated in Concentration Camps. The prisoner dreamed that, once freed, he was telling his experience to his relatives, who did not believe in his stories, stopped to listen to him and walked away.

Despite the vast literature of the Holocaust, most of the survivors remained reticent, did not want to talk about it, did not tell and much less wrote their experiences, in order to protect their children and themselves from their own emotions after the vilification they suffered in the *Lager*. Some survivors took 40 years to be able to start telling their stories and others took their stories to the grave. The production of Holocaust's literature, however, instead of cooling down, is increasing with the natural detachment reached by new generations of survivors' descendants. Martin Doerry and Edmund De Waal, non-Jewish grandchildren of Jewish victims of the Holocaust, are examples of this new production. People never forget Genocide. After all, the Jews are the "People of the Book". It is said that Napoleon, seeing some Jews in France lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem, said that he had not been informed about that. When he heard that they were mourning over the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in the sixth century BC, Napoleon would have said that a people that never forget would never be destroyed.

The vast majority of Jews who inhabited Central and Eastern Europe were poor and defenseless people who believed in the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" and spent the day praying and studying the Bible. For Jews, monotheism means that men, enlightened and perverted; animals, gentle or wild; plants etc. are all part of the same being.

Photographer Alter Kacyzne recorded the lives of these Jews before World War II, first for the US Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society – HIAS, and then as a correspondent for *The Forward* (*Forverts*), the New York daily newspaper published in Yiddish.

Another important photographic record before the Holocaust was carried out by Roman Vishniac for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee – JDC. Vishniac, among other images, recorded the Jews impoverished by the economic boycott of Jewish companies and professionals promoted by the Polish Government in 1936.

During the War, the overwhelming majority of these Jews, who had never taken up a gun, walked peacefully to the Ghettos, Forced Labor, Concentration and Extermination Camps without offering any resistance. There are references to beaten Jews thanking for not exercising the role of executioner. During the Holocaust, in 1944, Sholem Asch wrote *Yiskadal V'Yiskadash*, a short story about a rabbi subjected to the atrocities of the Nazi Germans without losing his dignity and faith. The martyrdom of faith, which was always present in the history of the Jews, however, was not suited to the Nazi ideology, which exterminated even Protestant pastors and Catholic priests with Jewish ancestry. The most moving Holocaust reports describe victims that, facing the imminent death by mass shooting, were engaged in distracting and comforting their children and other victims around.



Boys studying the Talmud, the rabbinical literature – Roman Vishniac, Czechoslovakia 1937

Jews are the people of the *Torah*, the “People of the Book”. I get a little uncomfortable when I hear that my grandparents, uncles and fellow citizens walked to the slaughter just like sheep to the butchery. So, in addition to being exterminated, are

these Jews also guilty of being passive, of not fighting for life? Nazi Germans in fact considered Jews to be a weak people, a bunch of cowards. However, Sartre wrote that the gentleness of the Jews in face of injustice and violence is the true mark of the greatness of the Jewish people.

One of the Holocaust's most tragic events happened in Lodz, the second largest city in Poland, which was incorporated into the Third Reich under the name of Litzmannstadt. The Ghetto of Lodz, with around 200,000 Jews imprisoned, was one of the first to be created and the last to be liquidated, in August 1944, at the approach of the Red Army. Mordechai Chaim Rumkowski, the King of the Jews of Lodz, is considered the most controversial *Judenrat* director of the Holocaust. When the Nazi Germans began the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question", the sick, the elderly and the children were always the first to be sacrificed. In all cities, the children were usually sent to the Extermination Camps with their parents. However, in Lodz the parents were notified in advance that children under ten years would be taken away unaccompanied (to Chelmno Extermination Camp, as it turned out later). Rumkowski in a speech urged "fathers and mothers, give me your children!" The Jewish Police were initially in charge of collecting the children, but later had reinforcements from the German authorities. The journalist Josef Zelkowicz described in real time this tragedy in the first weeks of September 1942, the whimpers, howls, suicides, cold-blooded murders, and the subsequent "return to normality" of the life in the Ghetto.

This folk, who did not submit to the Roman Empire and was expelled from their land, Jerusalem, two thousand years ago, is considered foreign everywhere, enemy of the people and is disqualified on principle. No matter how much they may contribute to the development of science and the arts within each of the countries where they live, there will be no lack of opportunity to discriminate them as Jews. Stalin liked to refer to them, pejoratively and euphemistically, as 'rootless cosmopolitans'.

When the monotheistic Jews were dominated and expelled from Judea, monotheism dominated the world. Jewish monotheism, based on the Old Testament, after the domination and expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem, expanded to the west in its Christian form, incorporating the Gospels to the Old Testament. Jewish monotheism also expanded in its Islamic form, which incorporates both the Old Testament and the Gospels. The Abrahamic religions, Christian (Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant etc.) and Islamic

(Sunni, Shiite etc.) embrace today 4 billion human beings, in addition to the scarce 13 million original Jews.

All religions teach to love your neighbor, social justice and peace, but religious intolerance has justified endless holy wars. The Jews share the Old Testament to Christians, but they do not accept Jesus as The Messiah, The Savior. For those who are intolerant to a greater or lesser extent, the Jews killed Jesus Christ and continue to kill Him nowadays, since they do not accept Him as The Messiah. The Jews say that we are all children of God and that we can speak directly with Him without any intermediation. They are rationalists, irreverent, do not bend and do not submit to anyone. They use indiscriminately the zucchetto (*kippah*) reserved for the Pope and the high hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Many Jews behave and dress up ridiculously. Where they settle, Jews astutely enrich themselves at the expense of the local humble populations. They are not honest. They love money and are avaricious. The Jews live in sealed communities and not mingle with anyone (even so, the 1935 Nuremberg Laws had to forbid intermarriage between Aryans and Jews). Jews help each other and, where do they get, they always end up doing well. They want to dominate the World, or rather, they already dominate the World, science, money, the media, Hollywood etc. They pretend to be victims and, with their powerful and efficient propaganda machine, invented Auschwitz and the Holocaust. Those who argue that the Holocaust is an invention of the Jews and their puppet states, United States and United Kingdom, consider that if the Holocaust had really existed there would not be so many Jews around the World; and they certainly remain committed to end with this defamatory Jewish race for good.

Prejudice, hatred, discrimination, verbal aggression, violence and murder have accompanied Jews in various societies, mainly Christian. The Dreyfus Affair in the late 19th century illustrates the feeling of hatred of Jews in the libertarian, egalitarian and fraternal France. In condemning a Jew army officer for high treason, regardless of judicial error, all French Jews were condemned as foreign traitors, with the Parisian crowd shouting "Kill the Jews!" Even if Alfred Dreyfus had actually betrayed France, admirable in this case was the condemnation of all French Jews from the accusation of a single Jew army officer. Sartre said that the only reason for being for the Jew created by society is to serve as a scapegoat for a still pre-logical collectivity. It was due to the Dreyfus Affair that the World Zionist Organization was created.

Anti-Semitism is an ideology and is refractory to any contestation. The Nazi Germans, methodical lovers of superior orders, hated the irreverent Jews because they

were too rich, or because they were too poor; because they were all arrivistes and occupied the top positions in society, or because they were all worthless, subhuman living insulated in Ghettos; because they were all capitalists, or because they were all communists. This explicit inconsistency is the result of the obsession of the Nazi Germans by the “Jewish Question”.

The Jews were also hated because they were too passive, weak, had no honor, did not fight, did not defend themselves, accepted to be beaten without sketching the least resistance, in short, they were cowards and masochists. That mildness, that Sartre considered the true mark of the greatness of the Jewish people, also characterizes Jesus, who was born, lived and died as a Jew. As Jesus, the Wandering Jew, foreigner everywhere, continues to be martyred on this side of paradise. What could be Christian about martyring the Jews? *Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.* And today anti-Semitism is also manifested as anti-Zionism, because the Jews are no longer passive and attack the Palestinian people. In 1938, in the *Kristallnacht*, the Nazi Germans shouted “Judens raus! Auf nach Palastina!”, “Jews Out! Out to Palestine!”; and now the order is “Jews out of Palestine!” Foreigners everywhere.

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The Nazi Germans occupied Bendin on Monday, September 4, 1939. Four days later, on Shabbat night, the Nazi Germans set fire to the Great Synagogue with 100 people praying inside. Anti-Semitism demonstrations in Bendin, till then restricted to Christian teenagers throwing puddle water on Jewish teenagers dressed to go to the Synagogue, took on a new dimension after the Nazi German invasion.

In October, the Nazi Germans seized all the radios from the Jews in Bendin... and that was the end of the family’s radio that Michal was so proud of (in December 1939 all Poles were banned from owning radios). In November, the Nazi Germans confiscated the Jews fortunes in gold and silver, which was the form of saving used by David Kilsztajn. In November the *Gestapo* also forced the Jews to wear four inches wide Stars of David.

In December 1939, the *Gestapo* created the local *Judenrat* and asked for the registration of all Jews, per family, with full name, date of birth, address and profession. The *1939 Bendin census* recorded 22,167 Jews. In this census David Kilsztajn, Eidel and ten of their twelve children (numbers 9005 to 9016) were recorded as living at 9 Pilsudskiego Street. Heindel, the oldest, had died in combat at the start of the War; and Chawa, the youngest, was not yet born.

L. N.	Zu- u. Vorndme Nazwisko i imię	Adresse Adres	Geburtsdatum Data urodzenia	Beruf Zawód	Bemerkungen U w a g i
8995	Kilberg Israel Wendel	Zn: kowa 6	28.7. 1929	b.Mutter	
6	" Cheria	"	1911	Schneider	
7	Kilbert Gela	Kodrzejowska 70	1917	b.Eltern	
8	" Lajb	"	22.5. 1935	"	
9	" Abram	"	8.IV. 1936	"	
9077	Kilbstajn Chaim	" 17	1861	Wärter	
1	" Chawa	" 93	1908	Ehefrau	
2	" Fstera-Chaja	"	1914	b.Eltern	
3	" Ruchla-Gitla	"	15.XI. 1933	"	
4	" Malka	"	1870	b.Tochter	
5	" Dawid	Wilsuda:kiego 9	15.V. 1898	Schuhmacher	
6	" Ajdla	"	10.VI. 1930	Ehefrau	
7	" Salomon	"	15.XI. 1918	Scheften- macher	
8	" Chaim	"	3.XI. 1918	Schuhmacher	
9	" Michael	"	1.XII. 1922	"	
9010	" Sander	"	5.XII. 1924	"	
1	" Fstera-Fajgla	"	7.I. 1926	b.Eltern	
2	" Sucher-Berysa	"	9.I. 1928	"	
3	" Jacheta	"	15.X. 1931	"	
4	" Majer	"	28.XII. 1932	"	
5	" Rywka	"	1938	"	
6	" Szyja	"	1937	"	
7	" Oana	Okreski 4	1901	"	
8	" Frits	"	7.IV. 1925	b.Mutter	
9	" Fryda	"	18.IV. 1931	"	
9020	Kilstok Daniel	Czeladzka 27	1894	Scheften- macher	
1	" Blima	"	21.IX. 1898	Ehefrau	
2	" Majer-Mojtesa	"	11.II. 1923	b.Eltern	
3	" Fiszel	"	7.VIII. 1924	"	
4	" Mariam	Zawale 22	1899	"	
5	" Mojse-Majer	"	1925	b.Mutter	
6	" Nuchim	Jasna 12	10.VI. 1877	Schuhmacher	
7	" Ferla	"	1894	Ehefrau	
8	" Chana	"	14.V. 1928	b.Eltern	
9	" Sura	"	10.XI. 1928	"	
9030	" Rywka	"	3.XI. 1931	"	
1	Kimmelman Abram-Isak	Gzichowska 11	15.III. 1881	Händler	
2	" Chaja-Fstera	"	1884	Ehefrau	
3	" Bacia	"	3.V. 1914	b.Eltern	

1939 Bendin Census

In early 1940, the Jews of Bendin were dispossessed of their business and were transformed into employees of their former shops. David and his four oldest sons (Heindel had died in combat) continued to work in the manufacture of shoes, under the direction of Moshe Mactingel, the *Kapo* designated by the *Gestapo* to manage the manufacture and to beat their former owners.

In October 1940, under the organization of the officer Albrecht Schmelt, the *Gestapo* set up “shops” in the urban area of Bendin and other Silesian cities, using Jewish labor to produce uniforms for the Nazi German Army; and began to install Forced Labor Camps in the region. Almost two hundred Forced Labor Camps of Organization Schmelt were established in Silesia, outside the urban area of the cities, near factories and roads under construction, where the Jewish labor force could be exploited. Organization Schmelt was paid for the lease of those slaves.

From 1940 to 1941, 4,000 Bendin Jews were deported to Organization Schmelt Forced Labor Camps. In November 1940, Michal and some Christian friends were walking towards Katowice, eight miles far from Bendin, when Nazi German soldiers in the road asked them if there were any Jew among them. The friends handed Michal, who was arrested by the Nazi Germans and sent to Flossingen Forced Labor Camp (Plawniowice), one of the units of Organization Schmelt in Upper Silesia.

The teenage brothers Chaim, Michal and Sandel, who had respectively 20, 18 and 16 years old in 1940, were deported to Forced Labor Camps at the beginning of the War and survived the Holocaust. Also were sent to Forced Labor Camps and survived the Holocaust the son of Yaacov Kilsztajn, Ephraim Kilsztajn, 15 years old (age in 1940); the son of Chaim Kilsztajn (*1861), Chaskiel Kilsztajn, 30 years old; the daughter of Fela Kilsztajn, Chawa Rosencweyg, 13 years old; Shlomo Kilsztajn’s children, Jakob, Genia, Dobra and the stepdaughter Chaja Erenfryd, respectively 27, 26, 15 and 26 years old; and the children of Labj Wolf Telner, Abram and Fela Telner, 13 and 12 years old. The son of Estera Kilsztajn of Radomsko, Jakub Mojzesz Jakubowicz, who was 17 years old in 1940, managed to escape to the Soviet Union, was deported to Siberia and also survived the Holocaust.

Bendin did not properly have a Ghetto until the fall of 1942. Before that, Jews were being banned from reside and circulate on some of the central streets of Bendin, as Malachowskiego (Kattowitzerstrasse, during the Nazi German occupation), Modrzejowska (Marktstrasse) and Pilsudskiego (Hallenstrasse). Those who lived in these

forbidden streets were transferred to the region around the former marketplace and behind the Castle Hill, around Podzamcze Street, near the Jewish Hospital and the second Jewish Cemetery (the first Jewish Cemetery was in Zawale Street and the third Jewish Cemetery was on Sielecka and Zagorska streets). The streets of Bendin reserved for the Jews at that time were not called Ghetto because there were no walls or barbed wire that surrounded them and because Jews could move freely through the rest of the city and even through the outskirts of Bendin.

David and Eidel Kilsztajn's family was forced to leave their residence in 9 Pilsudskiego Street and moved to 28 Podzamcze Street, the street where they use to live before and where Eidel's relatives were living. Her father Josef Telner and his wife were living in 33 Podzamcze Street and the families of Eidel's sister Ruchla Laja Zylberband and her brother Labj Wolf Telner were living in 45 Podzamcze Street. The name of Podzamcze Street was changed to Burgstrasse during the Nazi German occupation. Chaim Kilsztajn and his family were transferred from 17 Modrzejowska Street to 3 Zamkowa Street (renamed Scholssstrasse), the Castle Street.



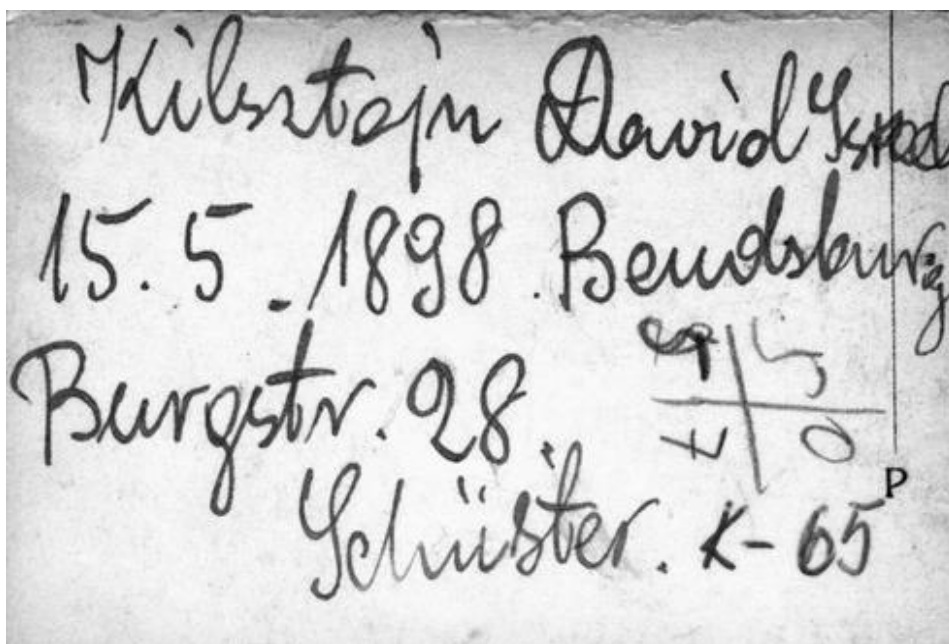
Podzamcze Street, 29 (Jewish Hospital of Bendin), 31 and 33, Bendin 2012

In 1941, the *Judenrat* of Bendin collected for the *Gestapo* portraits of the Jews with surname, name, date and place of birth, address and profession written on the back of each picture. By legal determination, the names Israel for men and Sara for women

were added to the Jews' names. A box containing 4,714 of these photos were found at the end of the War in a building occupied by the *Gestapo* in Bendin. However, the portraits only came to light when the survivor Arie ben Tov (Hassenberg) managed to rescue them in 1980. The 4,714 photos make up an impressive album that illustrates the multiplicity of the Jewish life in Bendin.

Among the 4,714 portraits were the photographs of David, Eidel and six of their twelve sons, Salomon, Feigel, Berel, Iakhet, Majer and Rivka, all living in 28 Podzamcze Street (Heindel had died on the battle front; Chaim, Michal and Sandel had been sent to Forced Labor Camps; and the portraits of the two younger children were not found, probably because Shiel was less than five years old and Chawa was newborn). These portraits are those that appear on the first pages of this book. Among the twelve photos of the family members, Heindel's was taken before the War; Michal's was taken in Bendin in 1940; and the photos of Chaim and Sandel were taken after the War. The photos of Michal's parents and siblings exterminated in the Holocaust are the *Gestapo*'s portraits, the only photographic photos that survived the War. A friend survivor from Bendin, who saw the photos and recognized Michal's parents, informed the family that, seeing the pictures, was moved to tears, as if their loved ones were resurrected.

On the back of each portrait, as in David Kilsztajn's, is written the surname, name, Israel by legal determination, date, and place of birth (the correct should be Janow, not Bendsburg), address and occupation, schuster (shoemaker).



Back of David Kilsztajn's portrait, Gestapo record of the Jews from Bendin

Below are some other portraits of family members, all exterminated in the Holocaust, found in the building occupied by the *Gestapo* in Bendin. Chaim Kilsztajn, great-uncle of Michal (who appears in the photo on the first pages of this book with his sons in 1917), his wife Doba Rozenblum and the son Michuel Rozenblum Kilsztajn; Estera Chaja Kilsztajn, Michal first cousin on the paternal side, daughter of Sura Chawa Kilsztajn; Josef Telner, Eidel Kilsztajn's father, and his wife Chawa Telner; Ruchla Laja Zylberband, Eidel Kilsztajn's sister, her husband Zalman Zylberband and her daughter Chana Zylberband.



On August 14, 1941, Salomon Kilsztajn married with the late Heindel's fiancée Fradla Lachtikier (Frajdlja Lachtiger), born to Abram Chaim and Sura Rosenwald on August 20, 1925, in Dabrowa Gornicza, the city nearby Bendin, and settled in Dabrowa Gornicza in 18 Feldstrasse Street. On July 1, 1942, the son of Salomon and Fradla Kilsztajn was born and was named Awrum Lewek Kilsztajn.

Salomon, Fradla and Awrum Lewek were exterminated in the Holocaust. For some reason that we are unable to elucidate, the surviving brothers of Salomon Kilsztajn, Chaim, Michal and Sanek, called Salomon of Moshe. In addition, confined in the *Lager* before the birth of their nephew Awrum Lewek, the brothers believed that the son of Moshe (Solomon) had received the name of the firstborn Heindel, deceased at the beginning of the War and Fradla's groom, with whom Salomon had married. We only learned the names of Salomon and his son Awrum Lewek recently, through the records found in the registry of Bedin and Dabrowa Gornicza.

Among the belongings of my father, I found two photographs, one from 1940 and another from 1942, both with the original blue rubber stamp on the back '*Photoatelier Josef Goldzweig, Bedzin O S. Kattowitzerstr. 18*'. I do not know how these photos with the original stamps survived the War. Prisoners entered Concentration Camps without clothes, shoes or other belongings, totally nude, and only very luckily could leave the Camps alive. Hardly any photo or other personal belongings survived the Concentration Camps. Besides the *Gestapo* photos, the photos that survived the Holocaust were those that had been sent earlier to relatives in other countries.

The 1940 photo is from Michal, seventeen years old, with his girlfriend Chana Herszlikowicz in Bendin, before he was arrested and sent to Flossingen Forced Labor Camp. In the 1942 photo, manuscript in German in the back, is written '*Bendsburg den 5 / I 1942, Zum andenken fur unser liebe schwesteren tochter und kusine* [As a remembrance for our dear sister, daughter and cousin]. [Signed] *Masia Schwarzberg*'.

The photo of January 1942 calls attention to the dignity of the people, even forced to wear the four inches wide Stars of David. The family surname, Schwarzberg, was unknown to me. In the *1939 Bendin census* I found the records of Sura Szwarcberg, born on November 15, 1901, widow, merchant, living in 42 Kattowitzerstrasse with four children, Dawid (*28aug1923), Masia (*2apr1924), Maria (*10feb1927), and Icek (*5aug1930). On the date of the photo, January 1942, Sura (seated) was 40 years old; Masia (with her mother) 17; Icek (last standing right) 11, and Dawid (one of the other

boys) 18 years old. The other people in the photo are the cousins mentioned in the dedication. Maria Szwarcberg, who is not in the photo, is the person to whom the picture is being dedicated and addressed by her sister Masia. Maria Szwarcberg was 14 years old in January 1942 and probably was confined to one of the Organization Schmelt Forced Labor Camps. Sura, Maria (Bluma) and Icek were exterminated in the Holocaust. Dawid and Masia survived the Holocaust and immigrated to Israel.



Chana Herszlikowicz and Michal Kilsztajn, Bendin 1940



Masia Schwarzberg and family, Bendin 1942

I wanted to know why this original photo of a family with an unknown surname was in my father's possession, but I did not succeed. I located Masia Schwarzberg's phone number in Netanya, Israel. I already knew that Masia was using the name Mania, and also Mirian. Mania could not hear me very well on the phone. Her husband, Gedalia, picked up the phone and intermediated the conversation. I asked if his wife used the name Masia in Bendin and I heard her answering in Yiddish, "I do not remember, I've had so many names in this life". I came to know that her brother Dawid had passed away, but that he had a son, Moshe, who also lived in Netanya. However, she and her nephew did not speak to each other. I got in touch by phone and email with Moshe Schwarzberg in Israel, but he was reserved. I sent the family photo to Masia and Moshe, but I still do not know why this original photo from Bendin was in my father's possession.

Early in 1942 there were about 26,000 Jews living in Bendin, 18,000 residents of Bendin and 8,000 coming from other communities, many of whom moved in spring 1941 from Oswiecim, the Polish city 23 miles far from Bendin, which the Germans called Auschwitz.

Despite the burning of the Great Synagogue; the compulsory use of four inches wide Stars of David; the expropriation of Jewish business; the cruel and gratuitous violence; the prohibition of living and circulating in the central streets of the city; and the deportation of 4,000 Jews to the Organization Schmelt Forced Labor Camps, the life of the Jews in Bendin was relatively tranquil until the spring of 1942. The Jews who worked in the urban workshops of Organization Schmelt lived with their families; and those working in Forced Labor Camps could still receive mail and even parcels from their families. The relative tranquility of the Upper Silesian Jews life until the spring of 1942 can be conferred in the letters of Sala Garnarcz from Sosnowiec, who was living in one of the Organization Schmelt Forced Labor Camps during that time (Sala's letters were published by her daughter Ann Kirschner).

The deportations of Jews from Bendin to Auschwitz began on May 12, 1942. In May and June 1942 2,400 Jews were deported to Auschwitz. The director of the Central *Judenrat* of Upper Silesia, Moszek Meryn (Moshe Merin), collaborated actively with the Nazi Germans and faced strong opposition from the youth resistance movements in Bendin. Hirsch Barenblatt, who had been head of the Jewish Police of Bendin, survived the Holocaust. In 1960, a fellow citizen identified Hirsch Barenblatt conducting the

orchestra of the Israeli National Opera, which was arrested and convicted by the Tel Aviv District Court to five years imprisonment (sentence later revoked by the Supreme Court).

On August 12, 1942, the local authorities and the Organization Schmelt assembled all the Jews of Bendin in two Jewish sports stadiums, Hakoah and Sarmacja, to separate the fit for work from those who should be immediately exterminated in Auschwitz, the sick, the elderly and families with many children. On this occasion, 5,000 Jews from Bendin, 8,000 from Sosnowiec and 1,500 from Dabrowa Gornicza were deported to Auschwitz. The tragic events of August 12, 1942, is described in the diary that the teenager Rutka Laskier wrote from January to April 1943.

It was also during the summer of 1942 that large deportations to Extermination Camps began in Warsaw (July 22 to Treblinka) and Czestochowa (September 22 to Treblinka). On July 23, 1942, Adam Czerniakow, the director of the Warsaw Ghetto *Judenrat*, committed suicide after learning of the deportation plan and was replaced by Marc Lichtenbaum.

There was a discussion in the Nazi German High Command in this period, some considered that the Jews fit for work could continue to be used as slave labor, but most thought that even these should be promptly exterminated. It was then decided to “exterminate them through work”. Most of the Jews deported to Auschwitz were sent directly to the gas chambers and crematoriums. Only a small number of Jews in good physical condition was selected to work in the factories of death in Forced Labor and Concentration Camps. On average, the prisoners in the *Lager* survived only three months. The daily lives of these slaves of the Third Reich were described by Primo Levi in *Se questo è un uomo*, originally published in 1947. At the end of the line, after having lost self-esteem, many prisoners went into a catatonic state that was “contagious” and feared by the other prisoners. Bella Guterman, among others, refers to the eschatological state of these zombies in *A narrow bridge to life*.

From the fall of 1942 to the spring of 1943, the remaining 18,600 Bendin’s Jews were all clustered in the Podsiadly street area, close to the third Jewish Cemetery, in the deprived suburb of Kamionka. Most Jewish clustered in Kamionka Ghetto worked in the production of uniforms for the Nazi German Army. Next to the Kamionka Ghetto, in nearby Sosnowiec, the Srodula Ghetto was installed.

Although the Kamionka Ghetto had no walls and had no barbed wires, guards controlled the entry and the exit of the Jews. Rutka Laskier, in April 1943, described in her diary the imminent transference of her family to the Kamionka Ghetto. Another

From mid-1943 to March 1944, Organization Schmelt was dismantled. The Jewish slaves of Organization Schmelt's Forced Labor Camps were transferred to the administration of Gross-Rosen and Auschwitz Concentration Camps; and the urban "shops" were closed. In line with the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question", the "shops" workers were sent to Auschwitz and most of them were immediately exterminated.

On June 19, 1943, before the final evacuation of Kamionka Ghetto, the Nazi Germans dismissed the director of the Central *Judenrat* of Upper Silesia Moszek Meryn and sent him directly to Auschwitz. From June to August 1943 almost all 18,600 Jews from Kamionka Ghetto were deported to Auschwitz, staying in the city just one thousand Jews assigned to clean the Ghetto, collect and burn the bodies fallen during the evacuation. After cleaning the Ghetto these thousand Jews were also deported to Auschwitz. Rutka Laskier and her family were deported and exterminated in the Holocaust. Only her father, Yaacov Laskier, which was sent to work in the Concentration Camps of Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen and Mauthausen/Ebensee, survived the Holocaust. Yaacov Laskier immigrated to Palestine after the War.

During the last deportation to Auschwitz on August 7, 1943, the Jews of Bendin resisted and held the Kamionka Ghetto Uprising. Ala Gertner from Sosnowiec, who worked in Bendin, participated in the Auschwitz Uprising on October 7, 1944.

Alfred Rossner, a German citizen responsible in Bendin for the production of Nazi German uniforms for Organization Schmelt, which employed more than 10,000 Jewish workers before the final evacuation of Kamionka Ghetto, was arrested by the *Gestapo* in December 1943, charged for supporting the Jews, and hanged. Among the 22 thousand Jews who lived in Bendin in 1939, two thousand people survived the Holocaust.

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Malka Kilsztajn, David's mother and Michal's grandmother, passed away in Bendin on June 30, 1942, at the age of 77, being spared of the selection of August 12, 1942, and the unavoidable extermination in Auschwitz. During the War, German became the official language of the Civil Registry of Bendin, which had been annexed to Nazi Germany in 1939 and renamed Benbsburg.

C

Nr. 123. f

Bendsburg o/s, den 1. Juli 1942
 die Malka Sara Kilsztajn
 ohne Beruf, mosaisch
 wohnhaft Bendsburg o/s, Marktstrasse 93/94,
 ist am 30. Juni 1942 um 21 Uhr Minuten
 in Bendsburg o/s, Marktstrasse 93/94 verstorben.
 Die Verstorbene war geboren am 19. Januar 1865
 in Janow Kreis Tschernochau
 (Standesamt Janow Nr.)
 Vater: Aron Israel Kilsztajn, in
 letet wohnhaft in Janow.
 Mutter: Aron Chana Sara Kilsztajn,
 geborene Klubekannt, in letet wohnhaft in Janow.

Malka Kilsztajn Death Certificate, Copy of the Bendin Civil Registry Book

Almost all the family members that were still living in Bendin and Sosnowiec in 1942 were deported and exterminated in Auschwitz, David, Eidel and seven of their children, including the daughter Chawa who was born during the War and Eidel was still holding in her arms. The first two children of David and Eidel were born during WWI and their last daughter in 1941 during WWII. David and Eidel had 12 children, nine of whom were exterminated in the Holocaust, and probably would have had more other children if they had not been murdered respectively at the age of 44 and 42.

Also were deported and exterminated at Auschwitz the bride Fradla and the baby Awrum Lewek Kilsztajn; Fela Kilsztajn Rosencweyg, David's sister, her husband Lejbo Rosencweyg and their children Hinda, Heindel, Golda and Zysl; Sura Chawa Kilsztajn, David's sister, and her daughters Ruchla Gitla and Estera Chaja; Eidel's father, Josef Telner and his wife Chawa; Eidel's sister Ruchla Laja Telner Zylberband, her husband and their eight children; Eidel's brother, Labj Wolf Telner, his wife and four of their six children.

Chaim Kilsztajn, his wife Doba Rozenblum, their daughter Ruchla, his daughter-in-law Osna Kilsztajn and her daughter Fryda were also exterminated in Auschwitz. The

last correspondence Osna sent to her daughter Lea, who was living in Palestine, was sent through the German Red Cross on July 21, 1942, on the eve of the tragic selection of August 12, 1942. In the correspondence Osna says that she and the children are healthy, but she does not have news from Eljezer's mother, Lea's husband (who had probably been deported to Auschwitz).

Handschrift

Deutsches Rotes Kreuz
Präsidium/Anlaufdienst
Berlin, SW 61, Blücherplatz 2

Absender Hilstein Osna
Marktstr. 42 Semsburg O/S Deutschland

Empfänger Hilstein Lea
Herzlia Ruusale Stenot Palestine

folgendes zu übermitteln

Liebe Kinder

Eure Nachricht mit Freude erhalten Fritz Friedel
Matti gesund von Eljezer Mutter bis heute keine
Nachricht. Kluse

Matti

Datum 15.6.1942. Unterschrift
Osna Sara Hilstein

21. Juli 1942

Also were murdered in the Holocaust Michal's great-uncles and great-aunts, Zlata Kilsztajn and her daughter Malka; Izrael Kilsztajn, his wife Rachla and their two children, Tuvia Yosef Kilsztajn and Aron David Kilsztajn (*1923); Estera Kilsztajn, her husband Chaim Lajzer Jakobowicz, their children Tauba, Gala, Aron David, Berek, Rojza, Chaskiel, Mendel, Majer, Dobra, their sons in law Mordka Szloma Sobel and Szaja Cukierman, and the grandson Izrael Sobel were all sent from Rodomsko to Czestochowa and then exterminated in Treblinka (only their son Jakub Mojzesz Jakobowicz, who fled to the Soviet Union, survived the Holocaust); and Shlomo Kilsztajn, his wife Brucha, eleven of their fifteen children and all their grandchildren. Czestochowa, where Shlomo

was living, was a major urban center with 140,000 inhabitants in 1939, 28,000 of which were Jews. Though located in Upper Silesia, Czestochowa was not incorporated into the Third Reich, being under the administration of Governor General of occupied Poland Hans Frank. The Jewish population of Czestochowa reached 48,000 in 1942 since the city received Jews from other cities and numerous surrounding *shtetls*. Dobra Kilsztajn, who survived the Holocaust, saw the tragic departure of her parents, brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces from Czestochowa to Treblinka Extermination Camp on September 22, 1942, the day after *Yom Kippur*. Her mother knew she was being sent to her death; but her father, optimistic, said that he was going to work.

Productive workers, craftsmen, shoemakers, tailors, bakers, locksmiths, carpenters, painters well-established in the cities where they lived, Polish citizens who inhabited the region for centuries, were mass exterminated because they were Jews.

Salomon Kilsztajn and Abram Telner, his first cousin through his mother, son of Labj Wolf Telner, were arrested on April 12, 1943, and were sent to Blechhammer Forced Labor Camp of Organization Schmelt to work for the industry Oberschlesische Hydrierwerke AG, a chemical plant to produce synthetic gasoline in the vicinity of Heydebreck/Kandrzin (Kedzierzyn Kozle) in Upper Silesia. In April 1944 Blechhammer became a subcamp of Auschwitz (Auschwitz IV). Salomon and Abram were transferred to the Auschwitz administration on 23 April 1944. Michuel Rozenblum Kilsztajn, the son of Chaim Kilsztajn, was recorded in Auschwitz/Blechhammer on April 1st, 1944. In Auschwitz Salomon was tattooed and renamed as prisoner 184,702, a number that would serve as his new identity. Abram Telner received the number 184,780 and Michuel Rozenblum Kilsztajn had received the number 178,319. The sequential numbers that the prisoners carried in their left forearm also identified the period in which the prisoners entered and, therefore, their experience in the art of surviving Auschwitz.

Salomon Prisoner's Personal Sheet of Auschwitz reports numerous information such as residence (Dombrowa Grude was the German name for Dabrowa Gornicza), profession, religion, citizenship, marital status, name of the parents and wife with race and address (*in haft* for prisoners), number of children, education, height, figure (*schlank*, slim), face shape, eyes, nose, mouth, ears, teeth, hair and languages spoken. The number of details illustrates the method used by the Nazi Germans to register prisoners that would soon be exterminated. The prisoners had yet to sign the card, ensuring the correctness of the information, under penalty of law. Literally translated, the signed document states

that "I was informed that I can be condemned for ideological falsification if the information provided above will be proved false". The idea that Auschwitz prisoners could be convicted of forgery is at least grotesque.

Konzentrationslager Auschwitz Art der Haft: Sch. Jude Gef. Nr.: 184 702

(5132)

Name und Vorname: K i l s z t a j n , Salomon, Israel
 geb.: 29.11.1918 zu: Benedsburg
 Wohnort: Dombrowa Grube, Feldstr. 18, O/S.
 Beruf: Schuster Rel.: mos.
 Staatsangehörigkeit: ehem. Polen Stand: verh.
 Name der Eltern: David, u. Hilda, geb. Tellaer Rasse: jüd.
 Wohnort: in Haft
 Name der Ehefrau: Frajdl, geb. Lachtiger Rasse: jüd.
 Wohnort: in Haft
 Kinder: 1. Alleiniger Ernährer der Familie oder der Eltern: ja
 Vorkildung: 5 Kl. Volksschule
 Militärdienstzeit: von — bis
 Kriegsdienstzeit: von — bis
 Größe: 1.55 Gestalt: schlank Gesicht: oval Augen: braun
 Nase: wellig Mund: norm. Ohren: norm. Zähne: vollst.
 Haare: braun Sprache: poln. deut-
 Ansteckende Krankheit oder Gebrechen: keine
 Besondere Kennzeichen: keine
 Renteneinpfänger: nein

Verhaftet am: - .4.43. wo: Benedsburg
 Mal eingeliefert: 2 3 4 44 2. Mal eingeliefert:
 Einweisende Dienststelle: **RSHA**
 Grund:
 Parteizugehörigkeit: keine von — bis
 Welche Funktionen: keine
 Mitglied v. Unterorganisationen: keine
 Kriminelle Vorstrafen: ang. keine
 Politische Vorstrafen: ang. keine

Ich bin darauf hingewiesen worden, dass meine Bestrafung wegen intellektueller Urkundenfälschung erfolgt, wenn sich die obigen Angaben als falsch erweisen sollten.

v. g. u.

Der Lagerkommandant

Salomon Kilsztajn
 KL/42/443 500.000 1918 11 29

Prisoner's Personal Sheet of Auschwitz, Salomon Kilsztajn, 23apr44

Mezritsh

Mezritsh (Miedzyrzec Podlaski) is a city located east of Warsaw, in Lublin Province, near Belarus and Ukrainian borders. Mezritsh was founded in the 15th century and the Jews settled in the city in the 16th century. Mezritsh had 16,000 inhabitants in the 1930s, of which 12,000 were Jews.

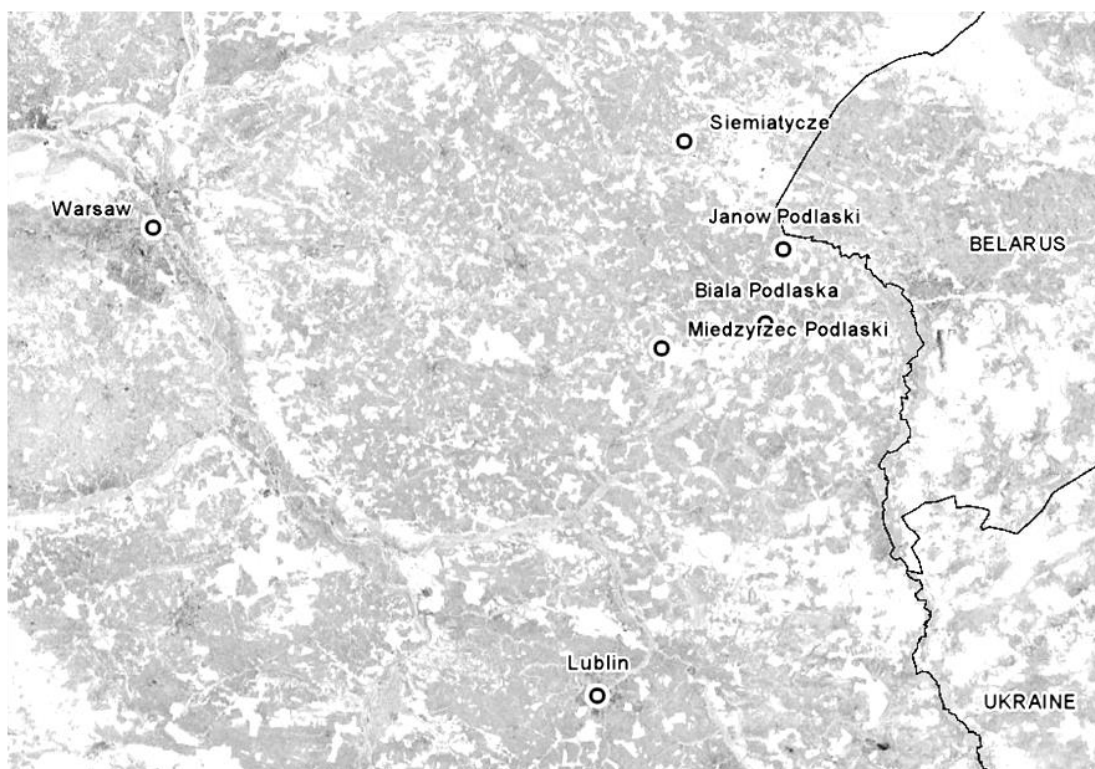


Market Place, Mezritsh 1930

Shmuel Libman, his wife Raizel and their three children Moshe, Chana and Szprinze lived in Mezritsh. Shmuel Libman, son of Froim (Efraim) and Chawa Bejla Peterburg, was born in Janow Podlaski, a *shtetl* 27 miles far from Mezritsh. The names of Polish *shtetls* are often repeated. There are more than fifty little towns named Janow (John) in Poland. Janow of the Libman is a *shtetl* in Biala Podlaska County of Lublin Province in eastern Poland; Janow of the Kilsztajn is a *shtetl* in Czestochowa County of Upper Silesia Province in western Poland.

Froim Libman was born to Natan Libman in Janow Podlaski in 1875; and Chawa Bejla Peterburg, daughter of Yaacov David (Jankel Dawid) (*1839) and Shprintza (Szprinca) Hochman (*1844), was born in 1875 in Biala Podlaska, 13 miles far from Janow Podlaski. Yaacov David and Shprintza Peterburg had three more children born in Biala Podlaska, Sara (Sura) Beila (*1877), Chaja Perlia (*1878) and Moshe Chaim (*1886). Sara Beila Peterburg married Icko Menachem Ejchenbaum, born in 1879. Icko Menachem and Sara Beila Ejchenbaum had four children, Zelda (*1900), Chawa (*1902), Rachel Lea (*1904) and Chana (*1906). In 1939 Sara Beila was a widow of Icko Menachem. Chaja Perlia Peterburg married Noech Man, born in 1877. Noech and Chaja Perlia Man had a son named Elio, who was born in Biala Podlaska in 1907.

In 1795, when Poland ceased to exist as a country, Lublin, Mezritsh, Janow Podlaski and Biala Podlaska were part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; from 1809 to 1812 the region was under the domination of the French Empire of Napoleon; from 1815 until 1914 was part of the Russian Empire; during the WWI it was occupied by the German and Austro-Hungarian armies; after WWI became part of Independent Poland; during WWII the region was occupied by the III Reich; and, after the War, returned to Poland.

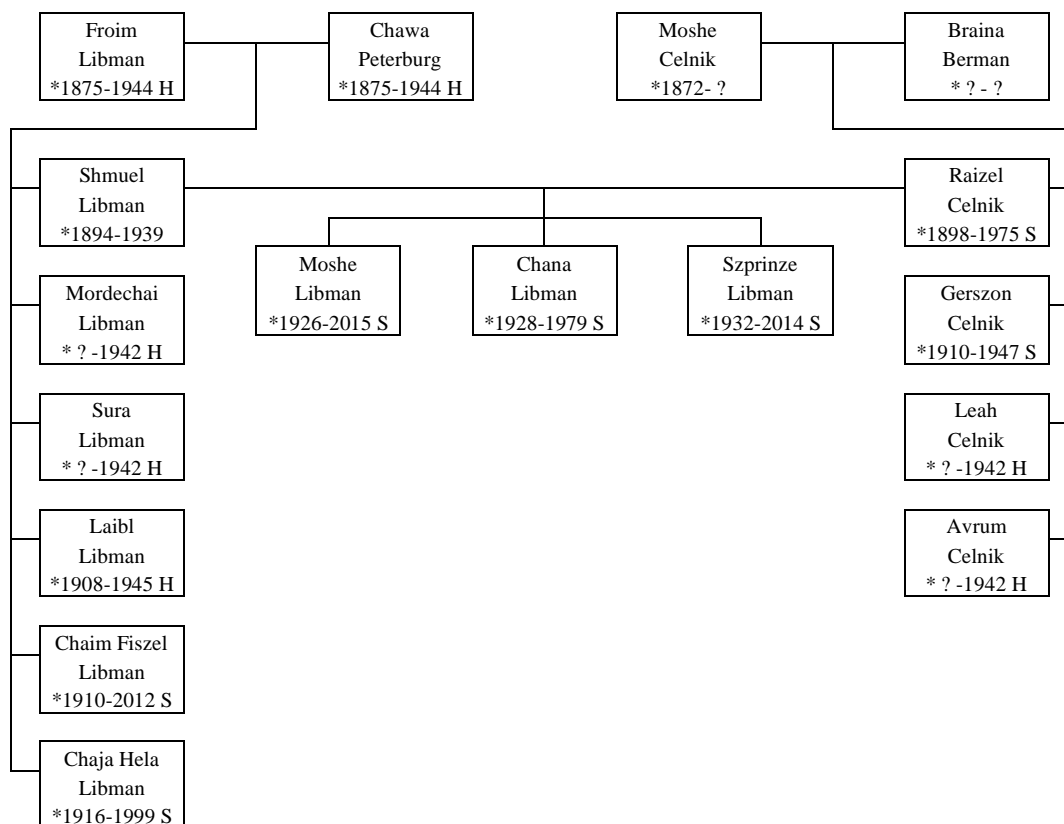


Froim Libman and Chawa Bejla Peterburg were married in Biala Podlaska in 1893 and moved to Janow, where Froim was born and was living. Janow Podlaski was a *shtetl*

with 3 thousand inhabitants, 2 thousand of whom were Jews. Froim Libman was a carpenter and the couple had six children, all born in Janow, my grandfather Shmuel (Szmul) (*1894), Mordechai, Sura, Laibl (Lejbko) (*20jan1908), Chaim Fiszel (*24out1910) and Chaja Hela (*1mar1916).

Shmuel Libman married Raizel Celnik (Rosa Zelnik), daughter of Moshe (Moszko) and Brajna (Bruma) Berman, born in Biala Podlaska on April 15, 1898. Shmuel and Raizel Libman went to live in Mezritsh. Shmuel was a wall painter, and my mother loved the beautiful flowers and other colorful drawings that her father used to paint on the walls with overlapping cards. Chaim Fiszel, Shmuel Libman's youngest brother, was his apprentice. Mordechai and Laibl, like their father Froim, were carpenters. Laibl Libman married Zlota Fiszwangel and they too moved to Mezritsh, at 93 Lubelska Street.

Moshe Celnik, son of Matys (*1838-1910) and Feyga Rejzla Lederman (*1834- <1898), was born in Biala Podlaska in 1872 and worked with leather. Moshe and Brajna, besides Raizel, had three more children, Gerszon (*6aug1910), Leah and Avrum, all born in Biala Podlaska. At the break of WWII, Gerszon, who was also a house painter, was living in Warsaw; Leah was living in Mezritsh; and Avrum in Siemiatycze, on the eastern bank of the Bug River, 26 miles far from Janow Podlaski.





Shmuel Libman and Family, Mezritsh 1932



The three children, Mezritsh 1937



Shmuel and Moshe, Mezritsh 1938



Chana, Mezritsh 1939

Shmuel Libman (Samuel Beloved) did justice to his name and was a very sweet and kind man. Raizel, in turn, was a practical woman. The three children of Shmuel and Raizel Libman were born in Mezritsh. Moshe was born in 1926, Chana in 1928 and Szprinze in 1932. The precise date of birth among Jews in Eastern Europe was not recorded and the day of birth was not celebrated. Only the day of death was recorded on the tombstone, and celebrated annually with rigor. Moshe vaguely knew that he was born at the end of Sukkot (late September 1926). Raizel uses to say, smiling, that Chana was born *tsvishn Purim un Peyseh*, between the Jewish holidays of Purim and Passover, therefore between March 6 and April 5, 1928. The dates used in the document were all fictitious.

In 1934, Shmuel Libman had been diagnosed with sarcoma in the right thigh and was sent for surgery to Warsaw. In 1939, the tumor reappeared, and Shmuel was sent to Warsaw again. Raizel Libman accompanied her husband, leaving her three children in Mezritsh with their uncle Laibl Libman and his wife Zlota Fiszwangel. Shmuel Libman underwent further surgery but did not survive the operation. He passed away in Warsaw in June 1939, on the eve of World War II, being spared to witness the horrors that followed the Nazi German invasion of Poland. However, for Chana Libman the death of her loving father who filled the walls with beautiful colorful flowers was just the beginning of a succession of misfortunes.



Sura Libman and husband, Janow Podlaski 1925

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The Nazi Germans occupied Mezritsh on September 13, 1939. According to the Pact between Hitler and Stalin of August 23, the Province of Lublin, to which belonged Mezritsh, Biala Podlaska and Janow Podlaski, should be under Soviet influence (and Lithuania under Nazi German influence). The Soviet Union invaded Poland on September 17, 1939, and on September 25 the Nazi Germans ceded Mezritsh to the Soviets. On September 28, 1939, Hitler and Stalin agreed a new setting of borders, exchanging Lithuania by the Province of Lublin; and Mezritsh returned to Nazi German rule on October 9, 1939. When the Soviets evacuated the city, they were followed by 2,000 Jewish refugees that were installed in territories under Russian rule.

The widow Raizel Libman with her three children; the family of her sister Leah from Mezritsh; and the brother Gerszon Celnik (his wife and their children remained in Warsaw) were among the 2,000 Jewish refugees who left Mezritsh in October 1939 toward the Soviet Zone. The three siblings were settled in the house of their brother Avrum Celnik in Siemiatycze, on the eastern bank of the Bug River, which became the border between the Nazi German and Soviet zones of influence. Avrum housed the brother and the two sisters, Leah's husband and the five children, three from Raizel and two from Leah, who was pregnant with her third child.

The Russians tried to impose Soviet citizenship to the Polish refugees from the Nazi Germany Zone, but most preferred to keep their Polish nationality. Moreover, the poverty in the Soviet Zone was so great that Raizel, her brother Gerszon and other people asked to return to Mezritsh, even under Nazi German rule. Germany in the first decades of the 20th century was a civilized country and German Jews only began to be harassed and persecuted in 1933, after the Nazi took power. Most of the Polish Jews old enough to have experienced the German occupation during WWI considered the Germans less hostiles than the Russians and could not imagine that the German Army had changed their conduct in line with the rise of Nazism and anti-Semitism in Germany between the wars; and much less could foresee the catastrophe that was about to come. The mass murder of the Jews only began with the Nazi German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, and, in addition, there were little news about the War in the territories under Russian rule.

The refugees who wanted to return to Nazi-occupied Poland, instead of being sent to the Nazi German zone of influence, without knowing, were deported to work in

Siberia. The refugees who did not wish to accept Soviet citizenship were considered “class enemies” and had the same fate. After the invasion of Poland by the Soviet Union, around one million Poles “class enemies”, 800,000 Christians and 200,000 Jews, were deported to Siberia. Jakub Mojzesz Jakubowicz, the son of Estera Kilsztajn of Radomsko who had taken refuge in the Soviet Zone, was deported to Siberia. Liliana Binesztok Syrkis, her mother and sister from Pinsk, although they were not refugees, were deported to Siberia not for being Jewish (though they were), but because her father Alfred Binesztok was an official of the Polish Army. Alfred Binesztok was shot in April 1940 by the Russians in the Katyn Massacre.

Even those who were not imprisoned in the Forced Labor Camps in Siberia could not leave the region, surrounded naturally by extreme low temperatures. Some refugees who knew they would be deported to Siberia tried to avoid boarding. Leah, the sister of Raizel Libman, who was pregnant, insisted and remained with Avrum Celnik in Siemiatycze. Many Jews who had fled Nazi-occupied Poland into the Soviet Zone of influence managed to return to the area occupied by the Nazi Germans and ended up being sent to Forced Labor, Concentration and Extermination Camps. The Jews who remained in Poland under Russian rule and were not sent to Siberia were later exterminated when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union.

Raizel Libman, her three children and her brother Gerszon Celnik arrived in Siberia in the summer of 1940. Chana, twelve years old, used to take her pillow to the window of the hut where they were staying in Siberia to wait for the night to come. After the death of her loving father to whom she was so attached; the invasion of Mezritsh by the Nazi Germans; the arrival of the Russians replacing the Nazi Germans; the crossing of the Bug River with her mother and siblings fleeing to the Soviet side before the return of the Nazi Germans to Mezritsh; the shelter and famine in her crowded uncle’s house in Siemiatycze; and the deportation to Siberia, everything in twelve months, Chana remained at the window to wait for the night to come to be able to sleep but, tired, she fell asleep at the window before dark, which in practice would only happen many months later. When the winter arrived, the night and the cold came to stay.

The following summer, on June 22, 1941, Hitler, who already controlled all Continental Europe, without warning, broke the Non-aggression Pact with Stalin and invaded the Soviet Union. The Nazi German attack was expected by the Soviet Union, but all the same, as a joke, people used to say that Stalin had been informed by the Soviet

Secret Service that Nazi Germany was preparing to invade the Soviet Union, but he would have told them not to worry because he had a signed agreement with Hitler at hand.

There is no person who was in Soviet territory at that time that does not precisely remember the date of the Nazi German invasion. During the War, the people and the Red Army used to declaim, in paraphrase, the speech of Vyacheslav Molotov, Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, on national radio communicating the Nazi German invasion, “on June 22, at four o’clock in the morning, our country was bombed, and only later was informed that the war began...”

After the Nazi German invasion, the Soviet Union joined the Allies against the Axis powers made up by Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan. In 1941 Nazi German Troops advanced on Polish territory occupied by the Soviet Union, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Belarus and Ukraine, towards Russia. Curzio Malaparte witnessed Nazi German officers and soldiers impassively looking Russian prisoners, brutalized by hunger, eating the corpses of their comrades; and the summary shooting of Russian prisoners of war.

At the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Nazi German Troops were followed by Mobile Killing Squads, responsible for mass shootings the Jews, who were buried in huge mass graves. The photographer Alter Kacyzne from Warsaw, The Forward (*Forverts*) correspondent, was a refugee in Polish territory occupied by the Soviet Union. At the advance of the Nazi German Troops, Kacyzne fled to the East, but was overtaken and exterminated in Tarnopol. The Massacre of Ponar (Ponary, Paneriai) in Vilnius inspired the writer, *partisan* and survivor Shmerke Kaczerginski to compose the lullaby *Shtiler, shtiler*’ (Lower, quieter), that participated in a contest organized in Vilna Ghetto in 1943 and became very popular.

When Germany invaded Lithuania, eastern Poland, Ukraine and Belarus in June 1941, it found fertile ground for the mass extermination of the Jews. The extermination of Jews included in many cases the participation of local people. The atrocity in Jedwabne, a Polish little town, has been used as a symbol. On July 10, 1941, local people set fire to a barn where the Jews were gathered, and then took possession of their properties. The case was later hidden, and the extermination of the Jews was attributed to the Nazi Germans; until it was clarified with a parliamentary investigation in 2003, under vehement protests of the local people.

The shooting of Jews during the Nazi German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 was the first experience of Jews mass extermination. Later, the efficient Germans decided to replace mass shootings with Extermination Camps. At the end of 1941, the

mass shooting gave way to transport of Jews to the Extermination Camps installed in Poland, that in the beginning were using vans with exhaust fumes directed to the inside of the vehicle and later were equipped with gas chambers and crematoriums.

The Nazi Germans were always obsessed by the “Jewish Question” and the mass extermination of the Jews was determined in 1941, when Nazi Germany decided to invade the Soviet Union. The guideline to the “Jewish Question” in force until then was to clean Europe and concentrate the Jews in Poland (and in Forced Labor and Concentration Camps). However, the option to invade the Soviet Union and to dominate the World gave way to the “Final Solution”, the mass shooting of Jews, which was later replaced by the use of poisonous gases, that the Nazi Germans considered a “more humane” method of murder, and which had already been used in the “Euthanasia Program” intended to clean the Aryan blood of the physically and mentally disabled.

Despite the harsh conditions the Jews experienced in Siberia, the deportation of approximately 200 thousand Polish Jews to faraway Siberia during WWII left them out of reach of Nazi German Troops and allowed the survival of a significant number of these Polish Jews, since the Jews who remained in Poland, in their great majority, were exterminated by the Nazi Germans. Shmuel Libman’s parents, Froim and Chava Bejla Peterburg Libman; his brother and sister Mordechai and Sura; his aunt and uncle Sara Beila Peterburg Ejchenbaum and Moshe Chaim Peterburg; and his cousins Zelda Ejchenbaum, Chawa Ejchenbaum, Rachel Lea Ejchenbaum and Chana Ejchenbaum were exterminated in Treblinka. On November 9, 1942, Raizel’s brother and sister, Avrum and Leah, the husband and the children, who were living in Siemiatycze when Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union, also were deported to Treblinka Extermination Camp.

After the Nazi German invasion of the Soviet Union, the Polish Jews and not Jews who had been deported were considered allies and could leave Siberia. Raizel, her three children and her brother Gerszon Celnik were transferred in 1942 to Kamensk Uralsky, a city in the Ural Region, and survived the Holocaust.

After the Soviet Union associated with the Allied powers, a Polish Army was created on Soviet soil. Jakub Mojzesz Jakubowicz, the son of Estera Kilsztajn from Radomsko, released from Siberia, joined the Polish Army.



Chana Libman, Russia



Jakub Mojzesz Jakubowicz, Polish Army in Russia

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All Continental European countries invaded by Nazi Germany surrendered after brief resistance. In the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Nazi Germans believed in an even easier and faster victory, because they expected that they would be seen as liberators of the people oppressed by Communism, which would collapse. However, surprisingly, the Nazi Germans faced a determined and unknown army.

Nazi German Troops advanced to the gates of Leningrad (St. Petersburg), Moscow and Stalingrad (Volgograd). Leningrad was sieged on September 8, 1941, and 1.5 million Russians died of starvation, but the city did not surrender. The Nazi Germans entered the Soviet Union, but were held in January 1942 and, on February 2, 1943, in the Battle of Stalingrad, Nazi Germany would suffer its major defeat on the Eastern Front. Facing the disaster, the Nazi German Army surrendered, despite Hitler's strict orders for his officers and soldiers not to surrender and to fight to death. The bloody Battle of Stalingrad, in which more than one million Russians perished, is considered the turning point of the Third Reich, designed to last for a thousand years. However, the terror already experienced by Humanity in these endless ten years of existence was yet to be extended for two more abominable years.

During WWII, the Soviet Union (Russia, Ukraine, Belarus etc.) lost 30 million lives, 10 million soldiers and 20 million civilians. Military casualties from France, Holland and Belgium were respectively 210,000, 7,000 and 12,000. However, to devalue the strength and the resistance of the determined Russian people and army, Westerners attribute the Russian victory to General Frost, the harsh Russian winter, which supposedly had defeated Napoleon too (which is also the Western version to minimize the war effort of Russia during Alexander I, described by Tolstoy in *War and peace*).

At the beginning of the Nazi German offensive, Curzio Malaparte, as a correspondent for the *Corriere della sera* of Milan, sent reports from the Ukrainian Front describing the behavior of the Red Army, which surprised the Nazi German troops. His reports were responsible for his removal from the Ukrainian Front. After a house arrest, Malaparte passed through Poland, Belarus, and the Baltic States, to settle in Finland, where he covered the Siege of Leningrad. The reports from the Ukrainian Front and from the Siege of Leningrad were published under the title *The Volga rises in Europe*.

After the Japanese Pearl Harbor attack on December 7, 1941, Nazi Germany had declared war on the United States, which finally joined the Allied powers. On the Western Front, American and British troops landed in Algeria on November 8, 1942; in Sicily on July 10, 1943; and in France on June 6, 1944, known as the “D” day.

Considering its imminent defeat, Nazi Germany decided to hasten the extermination of the Jewish population in Europe. Anti-Semitism has always been deeply wedged in Nazi ideology. Sartre considers that anti-Semitism and intolerance lead directly to national socialism. The demonic Hitler knew that he would lose the War and would be exterminated, but he still was concerned to carry with him the greatest possible number of Jews. In a hurry, at the end of the War, he planned the extermination of the 800 thousand Hungarian Jews.

Hungary was a Nazi Germany ally and had adopted all racist laws against the 800 thousand Jews that were living in its borders enlarged between 1938 and 1941 with the occupation of Carpathian Ruthenia and Northern Transylvania. However, the Hungarian Government refused to deport the Hungarian Jews to the Concentration and Extermination Camps in Poland. In March 1944, alert on negotiations between Hungary and the Allies, Nazi Germany invaded Hungary, deposed the wayward government, and installed another who took charge of deporting the Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz. The fate of the Hungarian Jews was narrated by the survivors Eli Wiesel, Nobel Peace Prize 1986, in *Night*; and Imre Kertész, Nobel Prize in Literature 2002, in *Fatelessness*.

In two months, May and June 1944, while the Allies were landing in France, nearly 500 thousand Hungarian Jews were deported to Auschwitz. Of the 800 thousand Hungarian Jews, 200 thousand survived the Holocaust. Although forbidden, the arrival of the Hungarian Jews in Auschwitz was photographed by a professional Nazi German in service. Even though they do not depict scenes of violence, the photos of these victims being sent to death are frightening. The album with 188 photos was found after the War by Lili Jacob Meier, a Hungarian Jew survivor of Auschwitz.



The arrival of the Hungarian Jews, Auschwitz 1944

Various attempts on Hitler's life were tried, especially after the defeat at Stalingrad. On July 20, 1944, after the landing of the Allied powers in France, when the outcome of the War was already practically decided, Colonel Claus Von Stauffenberg, Chief of Reserve Troops, placed a bomb next to Hitler, who killed four and seriously injured seven other military officers. Hitler escaped unharmed, with only minor injuries. The coup failed, 200 conspirators were sentenced to death and thousands were deported to Concentration Camps.

In October 1944 the Jewish Brigade of the British Army, composed of more than five thousand Jews volunteers from Palestine, was sent to the Italian Campaign. The Jewish Brigade wore Zionist insignia and flags with the Star of David. Meir Kilsztajn, Michal's cousin, the son of Yaacov Kilsztajn, who emigrated to Palestine in 1935, served in the Jewish Brigade and participated in the Italian Campaign.

Just before Christmas, when the Allied victory was already being celebrated on the Western Front, the Nazi Germans, on December 16, 1944, attempted one last massive offensive that became known as the Battle of the Bulge, the confrontation with the highest number of American casualties in WWII.



Meir Kilsztajn, the Jewish Brigade of the British Army 1944

On January 18, 1945, with the advance of Soviet Troops on the Eastern Front, the Nazi Germans began the final evacuation of Auschwitz to the West. Gross-Rosen main camp and several of its subcamps were evacuated from late January to early February 1945. The prisoners were taken to the Concentration Camps located in Germany and Austria, Flossenburg, Buchenwald, Bergen-Belsen, Dachau and Mauthausen. When in the Western Front the US Army approached Buchenwald, the prisoners were sent toward Flossenburg, Theresienstadt and Dachau, in continuous coming and going.

The evacuation of Concentration Camps took place through the chaos that reigned Nazi Germany in the last months of its agonizing defeat, between contradictory decisions and orders of the Nazi German High Command and the initiative of the local commanders of the *Lager*. The Nazi Germans did not want to give up their prisoners, keeping them as labor force to be exploited by the Reich, abandoning them only to death. The prisoners

were forced to march in the snow, for days without water or food. Corpses of exhausted or murdered prisoners were abandoned along the way and lined the paths of those Death Marches.

Prisoners were taken from *Lager* to *Lager* and, in the anarchy that dominated the end of the War, some *Lager* refused to accept the wandering prisoners and some columns of prisoners had to return to their *Lager* of origin. The orders were that the archives and the witnesses of life in the Concentration and Extermination Camps could not fall into enemy hands. The ill prisoners who were not able to walk and all the archives should be eliminated. However, running in retreat, the Nazi Germans ended up leaving many archives and the prisoners confined to bed to their fate.

Primo Levi and other ill prisoners confined to bed were abandoned in Auschwitz, which was liberated by the Red Army on January 27. Gross-Rosen main camp was liberated by the Red Army on February 14, 1945. The United Nations established January 27 as the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust.

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The universe of slave labor in the Third Reich included Forced Labor Camps (*Zwangsarbeitslager*, ZAL) and Concentration Camps (*Konzentrationslager*, KZ, KL). Numerous *Lager* were created, relocated and extinct during WWII. The Concentration Camps gathered numerous subcamps, some difficult to be located today, many of them branches of reputable German industries, Krupp, I.G. Farben, Siemens, BMW etc. The slaves of the Third Reich were taken from *Lager* to *Lager*, without really knowing where they were being sent; and everything had to be done in a hurry. *Schnell! Schnell! Fast! Fast!* was the word that sounded everywhere.

It did not matter “fast for what”, *Schnell* was not necessarily linked to efficiency or productivity, it was just background music on this hell. Often the work, besides being heavy, was totally worthless and insane, like carrying huge stones upstairs and then carrying them down. The work in the *Lager* was used to humiliate, exhaust and exterminate the Jews whose life was worthless and could be readily replaced by new prisoners. *Schnell! Schnell!* also meant that it was never allowed to rest or relax, which exacerbated anxiety in the prisoners. This exacerbated anxiety marked many *Lager*'s survivors, who never have to know quietness again and passed on this anxiety to their descendants.

The Nazi Germans were also methodically addicted to create lists, sheets, cards and more cards for each prisoner: "Transport list", "List of prisoners entering", "Entry book", "Nominal list", "Numeral book", "Prisoner's personal sheet", "Prisoner's personal card", "Prisoner's card", "Registration card", "Numeral card", "Effects card", "Labor card", "Infirmary card", "Notification of punishment", "List of prisoners entering the infirmary", "Notification of death", "List of names concerning deceased prisoners", "List recording the change in the number of prisoners" etc. And at each new *Lager* to where the prisoner was transferred, new sheets and cards should be filled out. Despite the Nazi German effort to destroy at the end of WWII all the evidence of the *Lager* in the Third Reich, numerous documents survived the War. Some copies of the profusion of these records are listed below.

Salomon Kilsztajn, Michal Kilsztajn's brother who was imprisoned in Auschwitz/Blechhammer, received a "Notification of punishment" for being found in possession of 10.00 RM (*Reichsmarks*).

Konz. - Lager Auschwitz III
Abteilung III

Arb. Lager Blechhammer, den

Meldung

Ich melde den, ~~den~~ Kilsztajn Salomon v. Kde. 21 (Kraftwerk) geb. am 29.11.1911 in Bendsburg Schutz-, ~~Werkzeugmaschinen~~ Juden-, Häftling Nr. 184702

weil er, ~~er~~ unabsichtlich einer Kontrolle in Besitze von 10,00 RM. war. Er will dieses Geld angeblich in einem Bau gefunden haben. Er machte sich der Befehlsverweigerung schuldig, indem er es unterliess, dieses Geld pflichtgemäss abzuliefern. Er beabsichtigte dafür Lebensmittel in Werkgelände einzuhandeln. Der Häftl. gibt sein Vergehen zu. Ich bitte um entsprechende Bestrafung.

Gesehen

Hauptsturmführer
u. Lagerführer

Gesehen u. weitergeleitet:
Der I. Schutzhaftlagerführer

[Signature]
Vor- u. Zuname

H Unterscharführer (Abt. II)

Dienstgrad

KL/36-443 500.000

Salomon Kilsztajn, Notification of Punishment of Auschwitz

Blechhammer subcamp of Auschwitz was evacuated on January 21, 1945. Salomon Kilsztajn, his first cousin Abram Telner and the cousin Michuel Rozenblum Kilsztajn left Blechhammer and followed the Death March to Gross-Rosen Concentration Camp in Lower Silesia, where they arrived on February 2, 1945. At this time, were imprisoned in different Gross-Rosen subcamps Michal Kilsztajn (Wolfsberg/Riese), his brothers Chaim and Sandel (Funfteichen), and the cousin Jakob Kilsztajn (Hirschberg).

Michal, who was arrested by the Nazi Germans in November 1940 and sent to Flossingen Forced Labor Camp (Plawniowice) in Upper Silesia, was transferred in May 1941 to Anhalt Forced Labor Camp (Holdunow/Ledziny), 12 miles far from Katowice; and in January 1942 to Markstadt Forced Labor Camp (Laskowice Olawskie), that supplied Krupp munitions plant Berthawerk AG near Breslau (Wroclaw) in Lower Silesia. All these Forced Labor Camps belonged to Organization Schmelt, which was dismantled between mid 1943 and March 1944. Chil Rozenfeld, Michal's uncle, husband of Sura Chawa Kilsztajn, was with Michal when Markstadt was evacuated in March 1944. Both were deported to Funfteichen subcamp of Gross-Rosen, also set for the Krupp munitions plant Berthawerk AG near Breslau. Michal was registered as prisoner 24,791 on March 18, 1944, and Chil as prisoner 25,348. Chil Rozenfeld passed away in Funfteichen on July 11, 1944.

In November 1944 Michal Kilsztajn was transferred from Funfteichen subcamp to Wolfsberg subcamp of Riese Complex of Gross-Rosen. The Riese Complex was created after the Allies increased the frequency of bombing Nazi German military plants and included several subcamps in a gigantic project surrounded by secrecy for the construction of huge underground structures to house aircraft and armaments factories, besides the headquarters for Hitler and the Nazi German High Command. The Riese Complex subcamps were considered the most terrible and had the highest mortality rate among the *Lager*; Wolfsberg was the largest of Riese Complex subcamps.

Konzentrationslager Gross-Rosen
 Ab. Fünfteichen Post Fünfteichen
 As./Kätr./III/12.7.44/Sto./Sei.

den 12. Juli 1944

An die
 Kommandantur des Konzentrationslagers
 Gross-Rosen.

Das Arbeitelager Fünfteichen meldet:

Am 12. Juli 1944 werden nachstehende im hiesigen Häftlingsrevier
 verstorbene Häftlinge dem Stammlager überstellt:

1. Sch-Pole	✓ 6878	Kaczmarek, Henryk ✓	16. 3. 25 Tschentsochan
		verstorben am: 10.7.44	
		Todesursache: Lungentuberkulose	
2. Jude	✓ 24649	Halfer, Samuel ✓	7. 4. 16 Schredel
		verstorben am: 10.7.44	
		Todesursache: Cachexie nach Darmkatarrh	
3. Jude	✓ 25348	Rosenfeld, Chil ✓	24. 12. 10 Bendsburg
		verstorben am: 11.7.44	
		Todesursache: Lungentuberkulose	
4. Jude	✓ 25512	Skopicki, Herzka ✓	1. 11. 09 Sosnowitz
		verstorben am: 11.7.44	
		Todesursache: Magenepitheloma/Cachexie	
5. Sch-Pole	✓ 20957	Wojciechowski, Wasyl ✓	9. 5. 11 Czornyj-Ostrow
		verstorben am: 10.7.44	
		Todesursache: auf der Flucht erschossen.	

Lagerstand: 4721 Hftl.

F. d. Richtigkeit der Todesursachen
 der diensttuende S. D. G.

SS-Unterscharführer

Der Lagerführer
 SS-Hauptsturmführer

Chil Rozenfeld, List of Names Concerning Deceased Prisoners of Gross-Rosen/Funfteichen 12jul44

Chaim Kilsztajn was arrested on October 25, 1940, and was sent to Johannsdorf Forced Labor Camp in Oppeln (Jaskowice/Opole), Upper Silesia. In March 1942, he was transferred to Gross-Masselwitz Forced Labor Camp (Maslice Wielkie) near Breslau; in the fall of 1942 to Neukirch Forced Labor Camp/Breslau; and in March 1943 to Markstadt Forced Labor Camp, that supplied Krupp munitions plant. Chaim Kilsztajn was transferred in the fall of 1943 to Grunberg (Zielona Gora), used for military production by Wollenwaren Deutsche Manufaktur AG (all these Forced Labor Camps belonged to Organization Schmelt). In March 1944, Chaim was deported to Gross-Rosen Concentration Camp, where he was registered as prisoner 19,838.

Sandel Kilsztajn, in March 1941, was sent to St. Annaberg Forced Labor Camp (Gora Sw. Anny) of Organization Schmelt in Upper Silesia. The Organization Schmelt leased its St. Annaberg's slaves for the construction of the Berlin-Breslau-Katowice highway. In 1943, Sandel Kilsztajn was transferred to Funfteichen, the Gross-Rosen

subcamp set for the Krupp artillery plant. In March 1944, Sandel was registered as Gross-Rosen prisoner 24,792 (together with Michal, registered as prisoner 24,791).

Jakob Kilsztajn, Michal's cousin, son of Shlomo Kilsztajn, was sent to Johannsdorf/Oppeln in September 1941 and was transferred in April 1943 to Hirschberg Forced Labor Camp of Organization Schmelt to work to Schlesische Zellwolle AG rayon plant processing wood with highly toxic acids. Hirschberg became a Gross-Rosen subcamp in March 1944 and Jakob was registered as prisoner 20,165.

When the Nazi Germans evacuated Gross-Rosen, Abram Telner, Michael Rozenblum Kilsztajn, Salomon, Sandel, Chaim and Jakob Kilsztajn were transferred from Gross-Rosen to Buchenwald Concentration Camp. Michal Kilsztajn was transferred from Wolfsberg/Riese subcamp of Gross-Rosen to Ebensee, one of the subcamps of Mauthausen Concentration Camp in Upper Austria.

Laibl Libman, Chana's uncle, was a prisoner in Radom Forced Labor Camp, south of Warsaw, which supplied the Austrian armament industry SDP (Steyr-Daimler-Puch). On January 17, 1944, Radom became a subcamp of Majdanek Concentration Camp. On July 26, 1944, with the approach of the Red Army, Radom was evacuated and Laibl was transferred to Auschwitz, where he was tattooed with the number A19361 (in May 1944 a new numerical series was introduced in Auschwitz, prefaced with the letter 'A'). When Auschwitz was evacuated, Laibl Libman was transferred to Buchenwald,

Laibl Libman arrived at Buchenwald on January 26, 1945; Abram Telner on February 9; and Michael Rozenblum Kilsztajn, Salomon and Sandel Kilsztajn on February 10. Chaim reached Buchenwald shortly later. On February 23, Sandel was sent to Bad Salzungen Command of Buchenwald. Jakob Kilsztajn left Hirschberg/Gross-Rosen on February 28, 1945, and arrived at Buchenwald on March 7, 1945. On March 16 Jakob was sent to Ohrdruf Command of Buchenwald.

Laibl Libman was registered in Buchenwald as prisoner number 120.609, carpenter (*tischler*); Abram as prisoner number 124,945, locksmith (*schlosser*); Michael 125.498, carpenter (*tischler*); Salomon 127,222, shoemaker (*schuster*); Sandel 128,774, shoemaker (*schuster*); and Jakob 134,206, tailor (*schneider*). At that time, the records of the prisoners were filled out in a hurry, without the usual details.

Laibl Libman's Prisoner Personal Sheet of Buchenwald informs his Auschwitz number (A19361), his address in Mezritsh, 93 Lubelska Street, that he and his father were carpenters (*tischler*) and that his father, his mother and his wife Zlota Fiszwangel Libman died, *verst[orben]*, in 1944 in Mezritsh.

P. Jude Auschwitz A 19361

Konzentrationslager Art der Haft: Gef.-Nr.: 120609 ✓

Name und Vorname: LIBMAN Leibko ✓

geb.: 20.1.08 zu: Janow-Podlaski, Weiß Ruthenien

Wohnort: Mienzisec, ul. Lubelska 93, Kr. Janow-Podlaski

Beruf: Tischler Rel.: maß. Weiß Ruthenien

Staatsangehörigkeit: Pole Stand: Vh

Name der Eltern: Vater: Tischler Froyim L. verst. 1944 Rasse: Mienzisec, w.o.

Wohnort: Mutter: Hawa L., geb. Peterburg, verst. 1944 in Mienzisec, wa

Name der Ehefrau: Zlota L., geb. Fiszwangel, verst. 1944 in Mienzisec

Wohnort: K. Angehör.

Kinder: Alleiniger Ernährer der Familie oder der Eltern: **26.1.45 KL. Auschwitz**

Vorbildung: **26.1.45 KL. Auschwitz**

Militärdienstzeit: von — bis

Kriegsdienstzeit: Leibko Libman von — bis 53.235

Größe: Nase: Haare: Gestalt: **79**

Mund: Bart: Gesicht: Ohren: **79**

Sprache: Augen: Zähne: **79**

Laibl Libman, Prisoner's Personal Sheet of Buchenwald 26jan45

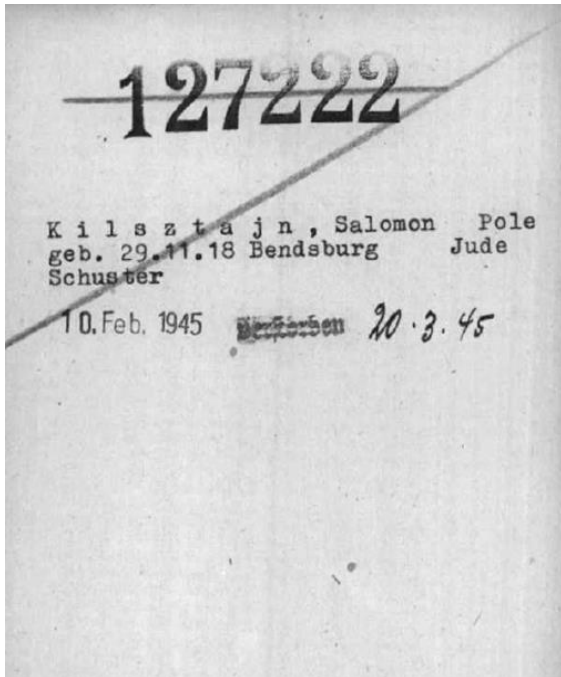
Politische Abteilung. Weimar - Buchenwald, 10. Februar 1945

Neuzugänge von 10. Februar 1945

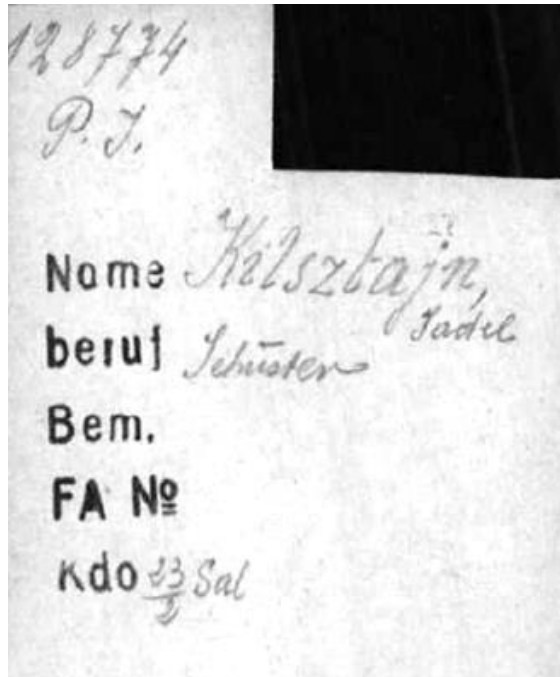
von **KL. Gross - Rosen.**

1828.128217	Kiersbaum	Daniel	20. 4. 07	Saniki	Bäcker	Au 144789
1829.128774	Kilertajn	Sadel	? ? . 26	Bendaburg	Sechsm.	GR 24792
1830.127222	Kilertajn	Salomon	29. 11. 18	Bendaburg	Sechsm.	184702
1831.129858	Kisselman	Abram	10. 10. 27	Dabrowa Gorn Schlos.	GR	24793

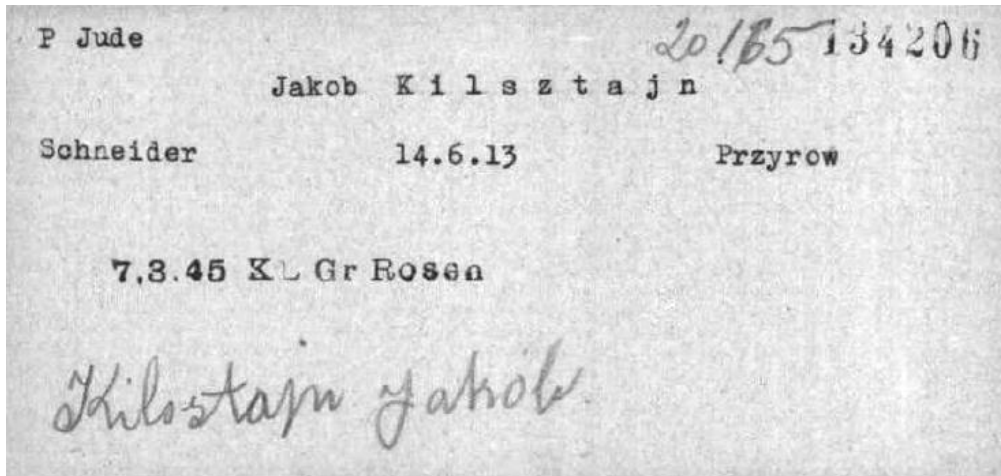
Sandel and Salomon Kilsztajn
List of Prisoners Entering Buchenwald from Gross-Rosen 10feb45 (extract)



Salomon Kilsztajn, Numeral Card of Buchenwald



Sandel Kilsztajn, Labor Card of Buchenwald



Jakob Kilsztajn, Prisoner's Card of Buchenwald 7mar45

On February 26, 1945, after surviving the Death March from Auschwitz to Gross-Rosen and the transport to Buchenwald Concentration Camp, Michuel Rozenblum Kilsztajn, in poor health, was sent to the infirmary of Buchenwald where he passed away on March 1, 1945. Michuel Rozenblum Kilsztajn Prisoner Personal Sheet of Buchenwald, shown above, was scratched diagonally with the notation “*Gest[orben]* (died) 1/3 45”.

T o t e n m e l d u n g

Saal *61* Datum *-1. MARZ 1945*

Nr. *725498* Block *62*

Name *Rozenblum*

Vorname *Michel*

Geb. Tag *5.6.22*

Geb. Ort *Bendzburg*

ist am *-1. MARZ 1945* um *8¹⁵* Uhr

gestorben - ~~tot eingeliefert.~~

Ins Kr. Bsu aufgenommen am *26.2.45*

Diagnose: *Mononucleos. lds.*

L. T. S. FOTO No. *1537*

Unterschrift des Arztes:

Gy...
4383

Michuel Rozenblum Kilsztajn, Notification of Death of Buchenwald 1mar45

On March 3, 1945, Laibl Libman was transferred to Eschershausen subcamp of Buchenwald. Laibl also did not survive Buchenwald Concentration Camp.

Salomon Kilsztajn began to show signs of exhaustion, to the despair of Sandel, his younger brother who still took him in his arms before he disappeared from

Buchenwald. Salomon was sent to the infirmary of the Concentration Camp on March 14 and passed away on March 20, 1945, at the eve of the release of Buchenwald Concentration Camp. Salomon Kilsztajn Numeric Card of Buchenwald, shown above, was scratched, stamped “*Verstorben*” (deceased) and annotated “20.3.45”.



Salomon Kilsztajn, List of Prisoners Entering the Infirmary of Buchenwald 14mar45 (extracts)



DIE TOTEN 1937 – 1945

KONZENTRATIONSLAGER BUCHENWALD

[← zurück zur Übersicht](#)

Salomon Kilsztajn

Geburtsdatum:
 29.11.1918 in Bedzin, Polen

Todesdatum:
 20.03.1945

Sterbeort:
 Buchenwald

Haftnummer:
 127222

Salomon Kilsztajn, Tribute to the Dead of Buchenwald 20mar45

Buchenwald began to be evacuated by the Nazi Germans on April 7, 1945. In the evacuation, the brothers Chaim and Sandel Kilsztajn were transferred to Flossenburg Concentration Camp in Bavaria; and Jakob Kilsztajn was transferred to Theresienstadt Concentration Camp in Czechoslovakia.

When the Nazi Germans left Buchenwald, Abram Telner was ill, confined to bed. Abram remained in Buchenwald, which was taken by groups of the resistance movement a few hours before the arrival of the US Army on April 11, 1945. The survivor Elie Wiesel described his misadventures in Auschwitz, at the Death March and at Buchenwald in *Night*. Chaim and Sandel Kilsztajn were liberated by the US Army from Flossenburg Concentration Camp on April 23, 1945. Jakob Kilsztajn was liberated by the Red Army from Theresienstadt Concentration Camp on May 8, 1945.

Langenbielau, Parschnitz and Gorlitz, Gross-Rosen subcamps, where Michal's cousins, Fela Telner, Chawa Kilsztajn Rosencweyg and Ephraim Kilsztajn were imprisoned, also remained under Nazi German control until the last day of the War in Europe, May 8, 1945.

Fela Telner, Abraham Telner's sister and Michal's first cousin, had been deported in 1942 to Gellenau Forced Labor Camp of Organization Schmelt in Lower Silesia to work for textile industries that supplied the Nazi German Army. In 1943 Fela was transferred to the Langenbielau Forced Labor Camp of Organization Schmelt, which became a subcamp of Gross-Rosen in 1944, when Fela Telner was registered as prisoner 49,796. Fela, throughout this route, managed to keep with her the 1931 family photo that appears in the first pages of this book.

335.	"	19732	Szwarcberg	Estera	1. 3. 24	Dombrowa
336.	"	49734	Szlapkowiec	Janis	10. 8. 27	Bonstburg
337.	"	19737	Teichner	Golda	12. 10. 27	Dombrowa
49796	"	49796	Telner	Fajgla	1. 3. 28	Bonstburg
49797	"	49797	Wechsungen	Bachla	21. 2. 28	Dombrowa

Fela (Fajgla) Telner, Nominal List of Langenbielau/Gross-Rosen

Chawa Kilsztajn Rosencweyg, Michal's first cousin, the daughter of Fela Kilsztajn and Lejbo Rosencweygs, was arrested in March 1942 and deported to Parschnitz, the Forced Labor Camp of Organization Schmelt in Czechoslovakia, to work as a spinner (*spinnerin*) in the spinning and weaving factory *Gebruder C. G. Walzel* that manufactured

uniforms and gas-mask parts for the Nazi German Army. On March 22, 1944, Parschnitz became a subcamp of Gross-Rosen and Chawa was recorded as prisoner number 22,235. Chawa also managed to preserve the 1939 family photo that appears in the first pages of this book.

Fr. A.L. Parschnitz. --- 3 ---			Pa. Gebrüder Walzel, Parschnitz.				
Nr.	Name	Vorname	geb.	in	Beruf	Staats- angehör.	Nr.
	Pardes	Alta	20.9.13.	Sosnowitz	Spinnarin	Poln.	22215
	Pardes	Chawa	14.11.04.	Staszow	"	"	22216
	Pelz	Ryoka	7.8.25.	Bobrowniki	"	"	22217
	Pelzmann	Ryoka	18.2.26.	Czenstochau	"	"	22218
	Pergrycht	Hilma	20.1.25.	Bendsburg	"	"	22219
	Pieczysta	Hilma	18.3.26.	Sosnowitz	"	"	22220
	Pieczysta	Cwila	10.5.28.	Bendsburg	"	"	22221
	Planner	Chaja	24.2.14.	Sosnowitz	"	"	22222
	Podolska	Marta	16.6.23.	Königshütte	"	"	22223
	Podolnyk	Astera	3.10.16.	Porombka	"	"	21462
	Porocka	Estera	22.1.20.	Warthenau	"	"	22224
	Potok	Miriam	10.11.27.	Bendsburg	"	"	22225
	Possantier	Chawa	29.7.17.	Sosnowitz	"	"	22226
	Futterschnitt	Rajsa	18.2.23.	Zarnowitz	"	"	22227
	Futterschnitt	Sala	4.3.20.	"	"	"	22228
	Rajsmann	Laja	15.3.13.	Plonow	"	"	22229
	Rappaport	Matia	21.	Szczekocin	"	"	22230
	Richter	Brucha	1.8.25.	Czenstochau	"	"	22231
	Rosenberg	Chawa		Krenau	"	"	22232
	Rosenberg	Frajda	27.10.24.	Sosnowitz	"	"	22233
	Rosenberg	Laja	2.5.24.	Dombrowa	"	"	22234
	Rosenzweig	Chawa	5.4.27.	Bendsburg	"	"	22235
	Rosner	Rajsla	20.10.12.	"	"	"	22237
	Rosenzweig	Genendla	1.4.23.	Sosnowitz	"	"	22236

Chawa Kilsztajn Rosencweig, Nominal List of Parschnitz/Gross-Rosen

Ephraim Kilsztajn, Michal's cousin, son of Yaacov Kilsztajn, was a member of the Zionist movement *Hanoar Hatzioni* and, in the beginning of the Nazi German occupation, worked in the farm created by the Zionist youth in Bendin. In August 1941 Ephraim was arrested without being able to say goodbye to his mother and was sent to Brande Forced Labor Camp (Prady) of Organization Schmelt in Upper Silesia for the construction of the Berlin-Breslau-Katowice highway. In February 1942 Ephraim was transferred to Neukirch/Breslau to work in the construction of railways; and in August 1942 to Markstadt, the Organization Schmelt *Lager* that supplied Krupp munitions plant.

In August 1943 Ephraim Kilsztajn was transferred from Markstadt to Funfteichen, the Gross-Rosen subcamp set for Krupp artillery plant. Ephraim was registered in March 1944 in Gross-Rosen/Funfteichen as prisoner 24,790 (Michal and his brother Sandel Kilsztajn were recorded respectively as prisoners 24,791 and 24,792). At the end of August 1944 Ephraim was sent to Gorlitz (Biesnitzer Grund), another subcamp of Gross-Rosen Concentration Camp. In Gorlitz Ephraim worked in the ovens for the manufacture of ammunition without eye protection. On February 18, 1945, with the advance of Soviet troops, Gorlitz was evacuated by the Nazi Germans but, after weeks wandering in Death

March without being accepted in other *Lager*, the surviving prisoners were sent back to Gorlitz.

Fela Telner, Chawa Kilsztajn Rosencweyg and Ephraim Kilsztajn were liberated from Langenbielau, Parschnitz and Gorlitz by the Soviet Army on May 8, 1945.

Chaskiel Rozenblum Kilsztajn, Michal's cousin, son of Chaim Kilsztajn (*1861), had been arrested in Bendin in February 1940 and transferred to Czestochowa on February 10, 1941. On May 11, 1942, Chaskiel married in Czestochowa with Mania Panska (Painski). On October 12, 1943, Chaskiel was transferred to Radom Forced Labor Camp, south of Warsaw, which supplied the Austrian armament industry SDP (Steyr-Daimler-Puch). On January 17, 1944, Radom became a subcamp of Majdanek Concentration Camp. On April 22, 1944, Chaskiel was deported to Auschwitz (prisoner B2557); passed through Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp; and was transferred on November 17, 1944, to Kaufering, one of the subcamps of Dachau Concentration Camp in Munich, to work in the kitchen (*koch*), where he was registered as prisoner 127,950.

Jude

Konzentrationslager Dachau Art der Haft: *bei Poles* Gef.-Nr.: *127950*

Name und Vorname: *Rozenblum Chaskiel*

geb.: *15.1.1910* zu: *Bendin 79 0/3*

Wohnort: *Czestochowa, Wasmanski 101*

Beruf: *Koch* Rel.: *mus*

Staatsangehörigkeit: *ch. Polak* Stand: *verh.*

Name der Eltern: *Chaim u. Doba geb. Kilsztajn* Rasse: *jud*

Wohnort: *unbekannt*

Name der Ehefrau: *Mania geb. Panska* Rasse: *jud*

Wohnort: *unbekannt*

Eltern: *Alleiniger Ernährer der Familie oder der Eltern:*

Vorbildung:

Militärdienstzeit: von — bis

Kriegsdienstzeit: von — bis

Größe: *172* Nase: *gerade* Haare: *d. blond* Gestalt: *mittelgr.*

Mund: *norm.* Bart: *keiner* Gesicht: *oval* Ohren: *ant.*

Sprache: *poln.* Augen: *braun* Zähne: *vollst.*

Anmerkende Krankheit oder Gebrechen: *keine*

Besondere Kennzeichen: *keine*

Reiseempfänger: *keine*

Verhaftet am: *15.7.41* wo: *Czestochowa*

1. Mal eingeliefert: *11.11.42* 2. Mal eingeliefert:

Einweisende Dienststelle: *K.L. Saatzheim*

Grund:

Parteizugehörigkeit: von — bis

Welche Funktionen:

Mitglied v. Usterorganisationen:

Kriminelle Vorstrafen:

Politische Vorstrafen:

Ich bin darauf hingewiesen worden, dass meine Bestrafung wegen intellektueller Urkundenfälschung erfolgt, wenn sich die obigen Angaben als falsch erweisen sollten.

V. d. U. *Chaskiel Rozenblum* Der Lagerkommandant

KL 42/8.61 200.000

Chaskiel Rozenblum Kilsztajn, Prisoner's Personal Sheet of Dachau 17nov44

Genia Kilsztajn, Michal's cousin, Jakob's sister and daughter of Shlomo Kilsztajn, spent the War working in the Hasag-Pelzery munitions factory in Czestochowa. In December 1944, Genia was transferred to Ravensbruck Women's Concentration Camp, north of Berlin, where she was registered as prisoner 96,127. On February 15, 1945, she was deported to Burgau, one of the subcamps of Dachau Concentration Camp, where she was registered as number 143,249. Genia was transferred on April 5 from Burgau to Turkeim and, on April 25, to Allach, both subcamps of Dachau. Dachau was liberated by the US Army on April 29, 1945.

Külstein	143249/24 J
Genia	Burgau 14.10.16
Haush.	Tschenstochau
5. März 1945 RAVENSBRÜCK	w.o.
DELIVERED IN GUN-DETAIL BY U. S. ARMY	Ogrodowa 7
	1., -., isr. Pol.

Genia Kilsztajn, Registration Card of Burgau/Dachau 5mar45

Dobra Kilsztajn, the sister of Jakob and Genia, the youngest daughter of Shlomo Kilsztajn, also spent the war working as a slave in the munitions factory Hasag-Pelzery/Czestochowa. Chaja (Helena) Erenfryd, the sister of Dobra by her mother's side, born on March 25, 1914, married during the War, in 1942, with Moshe (Moszek) Roman, born to Feiwel e Zipora Teichner in Czestochowa on January 3, 1911. Chaja and Moshe Roman spent the War working in the munitions factory Hasag-Pelzery/Czestochowa. Dobra, Chaja and Moshe were liberated in Czestochowa by the Soviet Army on January 17, 1945.

Chaja Hela Libman, Shmuel Libman's sister and Chana's aunt, was arrested in October 1942 and sent to Rensdorf Forced Labor Camp (Kolaczkowo) in North-Central Poland. In May 1943, Chaja was transferred to Majdanek Concentration Camp, near Lublin, and in July 1943 to the Hasag munitions factory in Skarzysko-Kamienna, near

Kielce. On August 4, 1944, Chaja Hela was sent to the Hasag munitions factory in Leipzig, linked to Buchenwald Concentration Camp, as a dressmaker (*schneiderin*). Chaja Hela 'Effects card' of Buchenwald was fulfilled, as usual, without any belongings to declare. To avoid being selected for extermination, Chaja changed her birth date to be seven years younger, from 1mar1916 to 20jun1923. Chaja Hela Libman was liberated by the American Army on April 14, 1945. Her brother Chaim Fizel Libman and her aunt Chaja Perlia Peterburg Man also survived the Holocaust.

Pol. Jüdin

Vor- und Zuname: Hela Libman Haft-Nr. 600.

Beruf: Schneiderin geboren am: 20. 6. 23. in: Janow

Anschritts-Ort: _____

Einzel am: 4.8.44 Uhr von Kamienna Entl. am: _____ Uhr nach _____

Bei Einlieferung abgegeben:			Koffer	Aktenlasche	Paket
Paar Schuhe, halb	Schlüpfer, Makko	Mantel: Tuch	Paar Hirschschuhe; Stoff	Effektensack	
Paar Schuhe, hoch	Leibchen	" Leder	Handtasche	Invalidekarte Nr.	
Paar Schuhe, Haus	Korsett	" Pelz	Geldbörse	Invalidegenleitung	
Paar Schuhe, Überziehh	Strumpfhaltergürtel	Jacke: Tuch	Spiegel	Arbeitsbuch	
Paar Strümpfe, Wolle	Unterrock	" Leder	Messer	Photos	
Paar Strümpfe, Seide	Bluse	" Pelz	Kamm	Schreibpapier	
Paar Söckchen	Kleid, Rock	" gestrickt	Ring		
Haar	Schürze: Kittel	Hut	Uhr m. Kette		
Hemdbruse	Schürze: Träger	Mütze	Uhr m. Armband		
Büstenhalter	Taschentuch	Schal	Halskette		
Schlüpfer, Seide	Pullover	Paar Hausschuhe, Wolle	Armband		
Schlüpfer, Wolle	Trainingsanzug	Paar " Leder	Koffer		

Bemerkungen: _____

Abgabe bestätigt: _____ Effektenverwalter: _____

KL 63/7/43 - 100.000

Hela Libman, Effects Card of Buchenwald 4aug44

Wolfsberg/Riese, subcamp of Gross-Rosen, was evacuated by the Nazi Germans on February 16, 1945, and Michal Kilsztajn was transferred to Ebensee, subcamp of Mauthausen, where he arrived on March 3, 1945. Michal Kilsztajn Prisoner's Personal Card of Mauthausen, among other information, shows his number at Mauthausen (136,879); that his father David was sent to Auschwitz (*Konzentrationslager, KL Au.*); that Michal entered Gross-Rosen Concentration Camp (*KL Gr Ros.*) on March 18, 1944, and Mauthausen Concentration Camp (*KLM*) on March 3, 1945; and that he was imprisoned because he was Jew (*Pol. Jude, Political Prisoner, Jew*).

The Allied Armies were stunned when they entered the Nazi German Concentration Camps. In photographic records of the liberation of the Concentration Camps one can see side by side overlapping corpses and emaciated survivors. Many of the survivors died from exhaustion or indigestion within the first weeks after released; and there were several cases of survivors who were unable to continue living after the vilification suffered in the *Lager* and committed suicide. However, most of the survivors embraced life with tremendous strength and became truly militants of life. Even so, a mix of pain, sadness and “guilt” to have survived very close relatives always followed the lives of these heroes who survived by fate. For Jews, the Holocaust is a wound that does not heal. The writer David Grossman says that the Jews refer to what happened in the Holocaust as “what happened there”, as something present that never ends; while others refer to “what happened then”, as a past event that is already over.

The Nazi Germans did not kill millions of European Jews during WWII, that is, the Nazi Germans did not kill millions of Jews in military battles, nor were the Jews civilian casualties during bombings and other military confrontations. The Nazi Germans killed millions of Jews during WWII methodically, by mass shootings and in line production, poisoning them in gas chambers built deliberately for the Genocide of the European Jews. The disaster of the Jewish people during the Holocaust was a disaster for the entire civilized world. This is the reason why the Holocaust is considered the Number One Crime Against Humanity.

Although Jews always had the primacy, the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany during World War II were not restricted to Jews. All European countries occupied by the Third Reich, especially Poland and Russia, were plundered and exposed to cruel and gratuitous violence.

The Germans, until the early drawbacks that Nazi Germany suffered in the Eastern and Western fronts, always considered themselves the top of the human species that should naturally dominate and enslave the World, wiping off the Earth from weed species. However, after the first setbacks, the Germans began to consider themselves the genuine victims of the War, who had to sacrifice their noble young soldiers of pure Aryan blood and had their territory bombed and invaded by the Allied Armies.

Liegnitz

The American journalist William Lawrence Shirer, that was a foreign correspondent in Berlin from 1934 to December 1940, covered the Nuremberg Trials and, later, plunged into the hundreds of tons of Nazi Germans' confidential documents seized by the United States Army. In *The rise and fall of the Third Reich*, Shirer reported thoroughly, step by step, from the 1920s, the tortuous trail of Hitler and the Nazis toward absolute power. Several times, there was a great chance for History to take different courses that it took. During my reading of Shirer, I could not refrain to hope for the disgrace of the unscrupulous Nazi Germans in the years before WWII, although I knew, in details, the direction that History actually took and was aware that my hope was totally useless.

The Nazi Germans, in their efforts to ennoble the Aryan race, transformed into beasts millions of Germans and other European people during World War II. Few European nations remained righteous. Some countries, even those who adopted racial laws against the Jews, refused or obstructed the deportation of their Jewish populations, such as Denmark, Bulgaria, Italy, Belgium and France. However, most of the people living in Hitler's Europe laughed naively at the fate of the Jews and shamefully appropriated the Jews' wealth and property. Nevertheless, moved by Christian and humanitarian ideals, besides courage and selflessness, thousands of Europeans, risking their lives, helped and sheltered Jews who, largely, survived the War. Oskar Schindler is the best known "Righteous Among the Nations", non-Jews who were dedicated to save the lives of Jews during the Holocaust; Alfred Rossner was the "Righteous" who helped Jews in Bendin; Irena Sendlerowa, a Polish social worker, smuggled 2,500 children from the Warsaw Ghetto to house them in Christian homes; and Nicholas Winton was responsible for the singular and anonymous ransom for the United Kingdom of hundreds of Jewish children from the Czechoslovakia Republic annexed to the Third Reich on the eve of the Second World War.

The Third Reich's capitulation was announced on May 8, 1945. In Mauthausen/Ebensee Concentration Camp, from where Michal Kilsztajn was released, a list with the names of the survivors was organized on June 1, 1945 (number 2,363, former prisoner number 136,879).

L I S T A
wydanych legitymacyj

Nr. legitymacyj	Nazwisko i imię	Data urodzenia	(Data) urodzenia	miejsce urodzenia	Nr. b. więzienia	Data występowania
2351	Karasiewicz	Franciszek	15.12.19	Plock	51457	1.6.45.
2352	Karkosz	Wladyslaw	3.7.14	Czyzki	117891	"
2353	Karpin	Szymon	8.1.21	Chrusietyczy	86716	"
2354	Kasperczak	Wladyslaw	17.6.22	Babiewo	38948	"
2355	Kastner	Dawid	2.1.22	Lwow	85108	"
2356	Kauczok	Alfred	31.7.22	Krolewska Huta	117898	"
2357	Kaufman	Bernard	31.7.09	Lodz	136870	"
2358	Keller	Ezriel	21.2.92	Mielec	87714	"
2359	Kedzia	Edmund	7.10.21	Biezyn	47130	"
2360	Kempski	Wilhelm	20.6.13	Ruda Slaska	116893	"
2361	Kierszniowski	Kazimierz	1.12.09	Warka	112205	"
2362	Kifer	Majer	21.1.14	Czestochowa	135887	"
2363	Kilsztajn	Michal	15.12.22	Bedzin	136879	"
2364	Klajn	Moniek	2.4.28	Lodz	133325	"

List of Ebensee survivor, page 49 (extract)

After Ebensee, Michal Kilsztajn returned to his hometown, Bendin. His family house was occupied. When the residents saw Michal, they were surprised and asked “Ty żyjesz!?” “Are you alive!?” Michal understood that he was risking his life and left the city.

Of the three million and three hundred thousand Jews that were living in Poland in 1939, about three hundred thousand survived the Holocaust. In every Polish town and *shtetl*, in every family, nine out of ten people were exterminated in the Holocaust. Yet, many Jewish survivors who returned to their hometowns were murdered by locals to avoid being displaced. The occupants of the Jews residences were lamenting that Hitler had left the “Final Solution” unfinished, leaving sufficient Jews to return and claim their properties.

Konrad Charmatz, who lived in Sosnowiec, the city nearby Bendin, described in detail the life in the Ghetto, the behavior of the Central *Judenrat* of Upper Silesia, torture in prisons, the Labor and Concentration Camps, the Death Marches; and his pilgrimage to Poland after the War in search of the Jewish World lost to the Poles who took possession of the properties belonging to the Jews exterminated in the Holocaust and even of the properties belonging to the few survivors.

The most tragic event happened in the city of Kielce, over a year after the end of the War. Before the War 24,000 Jews were living in Kielce and at the end of the War the city was *Judenrein*, cleansed of Jews. In the summer of 1946, 200 Kielce Jewish survivors returned to the city and were housed in a public building, waiting for a solution to their settlement. On July 4, 1946, local people, drunk, stormed the building where the Jewish survivors were housed and, armed with tridents and other improvised weapons, attacked the 200 survivors, killing 42 Jews, including women and children. The Kielce *Pogrom*

marked the end of any hope that the Polish Jewish survivors could return to live in Poland after WWII. The time of the Jews in Poland was over.

The horrors of the War continued in the postwar. There were also several quarrels between Jewish survivors with the *Kapos* that ordinarily used violence against Jews and with the *Judenrat* members and Jewish Police who collaborated with the Nazi Germans. My father told me that during a train ride in the immediate postwar he saw a survivor beating a Jew *Kapo* and he said that violence should be halted because, otherwise, revenge would never end. Later the family told me that the person who beat the Jew *Kapo* on the train was my father himself and that he was arrested and spent some days in prison for that.

For some time, people talked about shame, collective guilt or collective responsibility that weighed on the Germans. In October 1945, the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany signed the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt, recognizing that the churches had not done enough to resist the Nazis and the Third Reich. It was the German people that brought Hitler and the Nazis to power, and it was not the German people that brought down the Third Reich, despite several attempts, such as the failed July 20, 1944, plot. The Third Reich was defeated militarily by the Allied powers and in the political testament of April 29, 1945, before committing suicide, Hitler went on saying that Nazi Germany was all the time the victim of attacks by the enemy countries and, as always, the fault lay on the Jews. Therefore, for Hitler, despite the mass extermination of European Jews, the Jews won this war against Nazi Germany.

According to Nazi racial ideology, the Jews were not considered human beings, and therefore no act against the integrity and life of the Jews could be considered inhumane. This ideology was the background of all atrocities committed against the Jews during the Third Reich. After the War, however, the vast majority of Germans preferred to declare themselves unaware of any act of violence against Jews and to deny any responsibility for mass murder. High positions in the Nazi German hierarchy, responsible for making *Judenrein* the cities occupied by Nazi Germany, vowed to ignore any aggression against the Jews during the evacuations and the fate of the 'evacuated' Jews, without showing the slightest sense of shame or guilt. Cynically, the Nazi German officers even liked to remember that the Jews had their own councils (*Judenrat*) and polices responsible for the evacuations. Jews themselves received the victims in the Extermination Camps and were responsible for cremating the bodies. The Nazi Germans in service only had the duty to ensure order and to shoot those that hampered the smooth

progress of the work. The historian Mary Fulbrook analyzed the Nazi German occupation of Bendin during the WWII, in particular the responsibility of the Nazi German Udo Klausa, Civilian Administrator (*Landrat*) of Bendin district.

On November 20, 1945, the main Nazi German officers began to be tried by the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg. Almost all defendants stated that they had fulfilled ‘orders’ and, without the least compunction, bragged of their efficiency and productivity in the implementation of the “Final Solution”. Several Nazis and collaborators were tried by national courts in the countries where the crimes had been committed. In 1961, the controversial Eichmann trial in Jerusalem gained wide international coverage.

The Third Reich and the Holocaust are taboo in Germany. After the War, German History in school curriculum did not extend beyond the end of the 19th century. The History of Third Reich only began to be introduced in school curriculum in 1959, in response to the resurgence of anti-Semitic incidents in Germany. In 1961 Hanna Vogt published *Schuld oder verhängnis?* (Guilt or fatality? translated into English as *The burden of guilt*), a school text that became a bestseller in Germany. The Auschwitz Trial by the German Justice in Frankfurt started only in 1963.

In 1970, the German Chancellor Willy Brandt, in an unexpected gesture, dropped to his knees and stood in silence before the Memorial to the Heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. However, Jean Amery, probably the most resolute critic of the Nazi German phenomenon, regarded that the German reconciliation was superficial and hurried by the impact of the Cold War, which explained the tiredness that the new German generations feel about the endless digressions concerning the Third Reich’s crimes.

When, in March 1938, Austria was annexed to the Third Reich, the Austrians inveighed against their Jewish population in the same way that the Nazi Germans did. Nevertheless, after 1945, Austria took no responsibility for the crimes committed during WWII, declaring that the Country was occupied, more precisely, that Austria was the first victim of Nazi Germany.

The few Jews who remained in Poland after WWII were expelled in 1968, after the 1967 Six Day War in Israel. From that time on, Jewish life practically disappeared completely from Poland and people who did not emigrate had to hide their Jewish origin. Since 1989, with the end of communism, a movement of Jewish’s revival has been taking place in Poland. After the deep-seated anti-Semitism disseminated among Polish people,

the massacre of three million Polish Jews and the banishment of the three hundred thousand survivors, the influence of the Jews for the economic, social and cultural life in Poland is now being valued. Festivals of Jewish culture are promoted throughout Poland, encouraging tourism; and, in the midst of this Jewish's revival, many Poles are retracing their family trees looking for Jewish ancestors to rescue their Jewish identity. Katka Reszke is the exponent of this return of Judaism in Poland.

My parents, after losing their families and being expelled from Poland, never wanted to go back, even to visit the land where they lived for almost a millennium. The Museum of the History of Polish Jews – Polin, opened in April 2013, was built on the ashes of the Warsaw Ghetto and is now the center for the renaissance of Jewish life in Poland. I see with horror that the vibrant life of more than three million Jews was reduced to 43.000 sq ft. Nevertheless, despite the *pogroms*, the Holocaust, the banishment of the survivors and the anti-Semitism revitalized by the current right-wing government, Poland was for centuries the center of the Jewish life in the World.

• • •

Europe was razed during WWII and the situation in the postwar era was of misery and hunger. Most European countries took ten years to recover economically from the War. After fleeing Bendin, with nowhere to go, Michal was wandering through a destroyed Europe, Poland, Germany, Austria and Italy. The US Army and the United Nations had structured Displaced Persons (DP) Camps in Germany, Austria and Italy, where the Jewish survivors could organize themselves to search for new opportunities in life. Many of these DP Camps were installed in buildings that had served as Nazi German Concentration Camps. Approximately 250,000 Jews were registered by the Allies as survivors living in DP Camps. Most of the folks housed in the DP Camps were Polish Jews teens and young adults who survived the Concentration Camps, since the adults, the elderly and the children in the territories occupied by Nazi Germany were shot or sent to Extermination Camps. The Holocaust survivors have lost most of their family, lost their homes, their cities, homeland and references. Young people, in particular, were stolen from their years of study and did not have the opportunity to prepare professionally for adulthood.

Young people in DP Camps, many of them unique survivors of huge exterminated families, began to establish deep relationships with each other, friends taking the place of brothers lost in the Holocaust. Most of the survivors were unable to preserve even the

photographs of their exterminated relatives. Perhaps this explains the profusion of photos that invaded the DP Camps. All the friends exchanged pictures with dedications and continued to send photos and more photos when they moved to other places.

Several institutions provided support for the survivors, including the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee – JDC, known as Joint, the main philanthropic entity, founded in the beginning of WWI, that provided refugees with food baskets and helped organize the lives of the survivors; and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society – HIAS, founded in 1881 to assist Jews fleeing *pogroms* in the Russian Empire, that worked hard to get visas and pay transportation for the WWII refugees to the United States, other countries of the Americas, Australia, and to Palestine under British Mandate. However, neither the opulence of American society nor the promise of a Jewish home in Palestine could alleviate the longing that the teenagers and young adults had of the cities and *shtetls* where they had been born and lived for many generations. How could they accept the idea that the time of the Jews in Poland was over? Warsaw, in novels, poetry and songs, came to occupy the Jews' collective imagery as the greatest center of Jewish life in the World, lost by its 400,000 Jews, a third of the total population of the city, which was exterminated during the Holocaust and had its survivors banished in the post-war, a new Jerusalem, a new diaspora, the Warsaw's diaspora.

The Modern Political Zionism and efforts to create a Jewish State in Palestinian territory gained a new dimension after WWII, as an alternative to the settlement of Jewish survivors who were housed in the DP Camps, since the quotas for Jewish immigration continued limited in all countries. In Europe, several committees organized records of Jewish survivors to promote the reunion of family members. In these lists Michal found his two brothers, Chaim and Sandel Kilsztajn who, like him, had been sent to Forced Labor and Concentration Camps in the beginning of the War and survived the Holocaust. Michal Kilsztajn remained in Ebensee DP Camp and, in spring 1946, went to Italy, Bari, Modena, Rome, where he met Chaim Feiman, who was born in Bendin in 1926, survived the Holocaust and, later, became his co-father-in-law. Curzio Malaparte in *The skin* described the horrors of Italy at the same time defeated and freed by the Allied powers. Malaparte was in Naples when the Allies bombed the city; when later the Nazi Germans bombed Naples occupied by the Allies; and when the Vesuvius erupted on March 18, 1944. For Michal, however, compared to the situation in the Nazi German Concentration Camps, the postwar in Italy was a paradise. He could hardly believe his eyes looking at the big dishes of noodles served in the Italian restaurants.



Michal at right, Germany 1945



Michal at left, Germany 1945



Michal, Germany 1945



Michal and Chaim Feiman seated, Italy 1946



Michal and Chaim at left, Vatican 1mar1946

The end of WWII was followed by a dramatic increase in the birth rate in the Western World. The fruits of this baby boom are called children of WWII. The baby boom was particularly remarkable among Jews in DP Camps, engaged in reproducing their families exterminated in the Holocaust. The birth of children also reaffirmed the hope and the will to live of the survivors, genuine militants of life. The weddings took place in a hurry, were made in groups, and babies teemed in the DP Camps in Germany, Austria and Italy. Orphan teenagers met for the first time on Thursday and got married on Saturday. The writer H. Leivick, who was born in Belarus in 1888 and was living in the US since 1913, visited the DP Camps after WWII, assisted refugees and wrote in Yiddish the play *The wedding in Foehrenwald*, about the dilemmas of widowers' survivors and their marriage in this DP Camp near Munich. Leivick also wrote in Yiddish *With the survivors*.

After the War Michal Kilsztajn found his girlfriend from Bendin, Chana Herszlikowicz, already married and pregnant with the widower Abram Hefter of Bendin, who had lost his wife and three children exterminated in the Holocaust.

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At the 1945 Potsdam Conference, the Soviet Union, which took possession of the eastern part of Poland, insisted on giving Poland, among other western regions, the Lower Silesia and the region of Oppeln in Upper Silesia, which were German for centuries. All the German inhabitants of Breslau, Liegnitz, Hirschberg, Oppeln, Gleiwitz and the surrounding area were expelled from their towns. Breslau, the most important center of the region, belonged to Poland until the 13th century, from when the Germans became the dominant group. With the annexation of Lower Silesia and the region of Oppeln to Poland after WWII, all traces of the German past were banished, as if the region had never ceased to be Polish.

The film *The Jewish settlement in Lower Silesia, 1947* features WWII Jew survivors working in industries, cooperatives and in the countryside; and the religious, cultural and political life of the Jews in Lower Silesia. The movie, in Yiddish, claims that 50% of the industrial workers in Lower Silesia were Jews. Creating a *Yiddishland*, a Jewish State, in this region would have been a political willpower. Jews inhabited the region for centuries until the rise of the Nazis to power in Germany. Unfortunately, however, the Potsdam Conference handed over the region evacuated by the Germans from Breslau, Liegnitz, Hirschberg, Oppeln and Gleiwitz to Poland, that renamed them

Wroclaw, Legnica, Jelenia Gora, Opole and Gliwice. Lower Silesia and the region of Opole have 11 thousand square miles, which were delivered uninhabited to Poland (Israel has 8 thousand square miles).



There was even a precedent of a *Yiddishland* designated for the Jews by the Soviet Union, an “autonomous” Jewish National District created in 1934, with the city of Birobidjan as its capital. Nevertheless, this district was in the extreme southeast of Siberia, almost six thousand miles far from Warsaw, next to Korea and Japan, an inhospitable region that has never been inhabited by Jews, and that still had the inconvenience of being subject to the idiosyncrasies of Stalin.



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In March 1946 Raizel Libman from Mezritsh and her three children, Moshe, Chana and Szprinze, who had been deported to Siberia and survived the Holocaust, were sent to Liegnitz. Gerszon Celnik, the brother of Raizel Libman, moved to Breslau. Gerszon, that was a widower (his wife and children had been exterminated in the Holocaust), passed away in a small surgery on May 29, 1947.



Chana, Raizel and Szprinze Libman, 1946

In Liegnitz, Chana and Moshe Libman joined the Dror left-wing Zionist youth movement called *Kibbutz Lohamei HaGeta'ot* (Ghetto Fighters). In the Zionist youth movement photo, further below, alongside Theodor Herzl and Karl Marx, figure the portrait of Dov Ber Borochoy, the Marxist Zionist founder of the Labor/Socialist Zionism.



Chana and Moshe Libman, Liegnitz 1946



Chana and Moshe Libman at down left in the left Zionist movement, Liegnitz 1946

It was in Liegnitz that Chana Libman met Michal Kilsztajn, friend of her brother Moshe Libman. Chana offered herself to wash Michal's dirty shirt. As it was the only shirt he had, Chana lent him one of her brother's shirts. So began the romance between these two survivors who were married shortly afterward, on September 29, 1946.



The marriage, Liegnitz 1946

Rosenheim

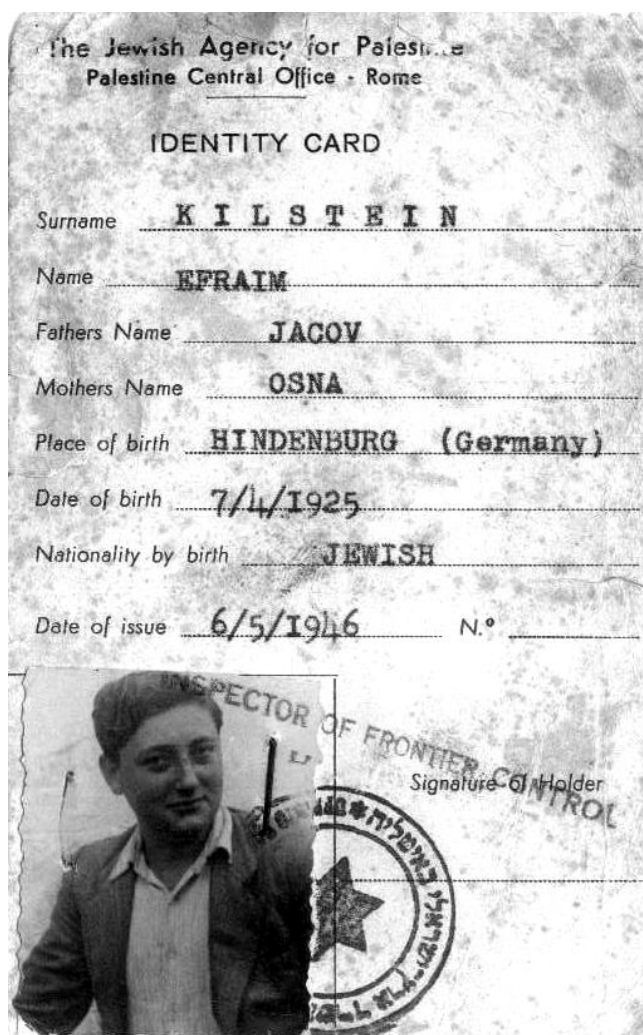
The barbarity that befell the Jews in the late 19th and first half of the 20th centuries, from the Russian *pogroms* to the Nazi Holocaust, was responsible for a Diaspora of the survivors with no parallel through all the turbulent history of the Jewish people. The Jewish population, which in the 19th century was mostly living insulated in numerous *shtetls* in Central and Eastern Europe, spread throughout the World settling down in the remote territories of North America, South America, Africa, Asia and Australia.

The Jewish Brigade of the British Army, after the Italian Campaign, participated actively supporting the Jewish survivors and their immigration to Palestine. Meir Kilsztajn, who had participated in the Italian Campaign, met his brother Ephraim Kilsztajn and his uncle Chaskiel Kilsztajn in Feldafing DP Camp, near Munich. After years of famine, Ephraim stuffed himself and fattened considerably.



Chaskiel, Meir and Ephraim Kilsztajn (sitting) in Feldafing DP Camp 12dec45

Ephraim immigrated to Palestine on May 8, 1946, aboard the ship 'Fede', renamed "Dov Hoz", which could only legally dock in Haifa after tumultuous negotiations with the British Authorities.



Ephraim Kilsztajn Identity Card issued by the British Authorities

Michal and Chana Kilsztajn; and Raizel, Moshe and Szprinze Libman remained in Liegnitz waiting for the opportunity to emigrate to Palestine. For most of the Jew survivors Palestine was a dream, the Jewish home, their land, the Promised Land from which no one could expel or exterminate them. Konstantin Pobedonostsev, the architect of the anti-Semitic policies of Alexander III and Nicholas II, considered the Jews a race of parasites who did not like to work and cultivate the soil and who only survived sucking some other host race. In Palestine the Jews wanted to build a society of their own, without being guests of anyone, *l'shana haba'ah b'Yerushalayim*, next year in Jerusalem.

Also were waiting in Europe to emigrate to Palestine Michal's brother Sandel Kilsztajn, who married with Fela Rybak, born to Mordechai and Rachel Rybak on July

12, 1928 in Sosnowiec, the city nearby Bendin (housed in Flossenburg DP Camp and later in Floss, Bavaria); Michal's first cousin Chawa Kilsztajn Rosencweyg from Sosnowiec, daughter and the only survivor of the family of Fela Kilsztajn and Lejbo Rosencweyg, who married after the War with Natan Dorsmann, born on September 8, 1925 (housed in Babenhausen DP Camp/Frankfurt and later in Rochelle DP Camp/Hesse); Michal's cousin Jakob Kilsztajn, son of Shlomo Kilsztajn, who married with Surea Golda (Genia) Rosenberg from Sosnowiec, born to Abraham and Rivka Abramowicz in Wolbrom on June 27, 1923 (housed in Traunstein DP Camp/Munich); Chaja (Helena) Erenfryd, Shlomo Kilsztajn's stepdaughter, and her husband Moshe Roman (housed in Furth DP Camp, near Nuremberg); and Chana's uncle, Shmuel Libman's brother, Chaim Fiszel Libman and his wife Estera Wajszgarber, born to Meilach and Sale Kobilak on December 4, 1918 in Pultusk, Poland. Chaim Fiszel and Estera were living in Lodz.

(1) REGISTRATION NO.		A.E.F. D.P. REGISTRATION RECORD		For coding purposes															
403132039		Original <input type="checkbox"/> Duplicate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H. I. J.															
(2) Family Name <i>KILSTEIN SANDEK</i>		Other Given Names		(3) Sex <i>M</i>	(4) Marital Status <i>Single</i>	(5) Claimed Nationality <i>POLISH JEW</i>		(8) Number of Accompanying Family Members:											
(6) Birthdate <i>0.3.1925</i>		Birthplace <i>BENZIN</i>		Province <i>POLAND</i>		Country <i>Poland</i>		(7) Religion (Optional) <i>J</i>											
(9) Number of Dependents: <i>1</i>		(10) Full Name of Father <i>DAVID</i>		(11) Full Maiden Name of Mother <i>TELNER</i>		(12) DESIRED DESTINATION <i>PALESTINA</i>						(13) LAST PERMANENT RESIDENCE OR RESIDENCE JANUARY 1, 1938 <i>BENZIN Poland</i>							
(14) Usual Trade, Occupation or Profession <i>Jew. Pol.</i>		(15) Performed in What Kind of Establishment		(16) Other Trades or Occupations		(17) Languages Spoken in Order of Fluency <i>Polish, Yiddish, Hebrew</i>						(18) Do You Claim to be a Prisoner of War <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No							
(20) Signature of Registrant: <i>[Signature]</i>		(21) Signature of Registrar: <i>[Signature]</i>		(19) Amount and Kind of Currency in your Possession <i>15.10.45</i>		(22) Destination or Reception Center						(23) Code for Issue							
(24) REMARKS <i>was born in Koncentration Camp in Buchenwald</i>																			

Sandel Kilsztajn, Flossenburg DP Camp Card, waiting to emigrate to Palestine, 15oct45

• • •

On July 11, 1947, Raizel and her daughter Szprinke Libman boarded at Marseille on the *Haganah* (Defense) Ship Exodus 1947, which would unlawfully carry 4,515 Jewish refugees to Palestine. The Exodus was intercepted by British warships and the passengers were forced to disembark in Haifa. Several refugees were injured and three died. The passengers of the Exodus were subsequently boarded in three British ships back

to France. However, the refugees refused to disembark, and the French authorities also refused to land them.

The refugees went on a hunger strike and, after a month on the French coast, the British ships sailed to Hamburg. On September 8, 1947, the refugees were forced to disembark by the British military and were transferred to Poppendorf and Am Stau DP Camps in the British zone of occupation in Germany. The news and pictures released by the international press eventually transformed the Exodus into an international symbol in favor of the immigration of the Jewish survivors to Palestine.



Haganah Ship Exodus 1947

(92440)

Namen	Reg.Nr.	Alter	angehörige Mutter "Drei"
✓ Singer (M. J. W.)	Cipora 1963	15 J.	Schwester 16, Bruder 10 J.
✓ Silberberg	Wiel 1966	16 J.	Bruder 14 Jahre
✓ Engel	Chawiw 1968	16 J.	
✓ Peur	Abraham 1970	16 J.	Mutter hier, 3 Brüder 9, 12, 14 Jahre
✓ Purosh - J. W.	Finkas 1977	16 J.	in Frankreich die Eltern
✓ Weigelin	Benjamin 1978	16 J.	
✓ Zucker	Nocher 1979	16 J.	
✓ Kapran (M. J. W.)	Boris 1980	16 J.	
✓ Kross	Schawa 1981	15 J.	Eltern in Polen
✓ Roschbaum	Brucha 1982	16 J.	
✓ Schames	Cipora 540	15 J.	Mutter in Deutschl. Bruder 14 Jahre
✓ Stibowicz	Rachel 547	15 J.	Mutter in Cyprus
✓ Liobman	Sprinca 548	15 J.	Mutter hier
✓ Leiserowicz	Manuel 550	15 J.	Mutter in Deutschl. 3 Brüder, 13, 14, 16 Jahre
✓ Kaplan	Miriam 555	15 J.	Vater in Polen
✓ Rosenblatt	Winner 556	15 J.	

Szprince (Sprinca) Libman (n.548), Exodus 1947 passengers list, *mutter hier* (mother on board)

Before leaving Poland, Michal and Chana posed for a premonitory photo. *Pamiętaj o mnie* (remember me), Legnica 1947, would be the farewell to the lost homeland. After that, they never set foot on Polish soil again.



Pamiętaj o mnie (remember me), Legnica 1947

In November 1947, Michal, Chana, six months pregnant, and her brother Moshe illegally crossed borders with fake passports and went to Vienna, where they arrived on November 13, 1947. On November 18, they departed from Vienna to Rosenheim DP Camp, near Munich. Raizel and Szprinze, who had landed in Hamburg after the Exodus journey, reunited with the family in Rosenheim.



Szprinze, Chana (in late pregnancy), Moshe, Michal and Raizel, Rosenheim 1947

On February 12, 1948, the first daughter of Michal and Chana Kilsztajn was born in Rosenheim DP Camp and was named after Michal's mother, Adina (Adela). The first son of Sandel and Fela Kilsztajn, born on February 7, 1947, in Floss, Germany, had received the name of Michal's father, David.



Sandel, David and Fela, Floss 21sep47



Adina and Chana, Rosenheim 1948



Adina and Michal, Rosenheim 1948

Considering the difficulty to control Jewish immigration to Palestine, the United Kingdom had announced in early 1947 its intention to resign the British Mandate of Palestine and hand it over to the UN administration. On the one hand, there was the pressure of the Zionist Movement for the creation of the Jewish State as a form of

“compensation” of the United Nations for the Holocaust; on the other hand, even after the extermination of most of the European Jews, the quotas offered by some countries remained insufficient for the settlement of the survivors. “No Jew is already too many”, for the United Nations countries it was more convenient to create a Jewish State in Palestine than to allow the immigration of the Jewish survivors (the United States only passed the Law on Immigration of Refugees after the establishment of the State of Israel, which absorbed most survivors).

The Jewish population in Palestine was 190,000 in 1932 and 450,000 in 1939, after the rise of the Nazis to power in Germany, the Nuremberg Laws and on the eve of WWII. The Arab Muslim population inhabited the area for centuries and opposed the growing immigration of European Jews who survived the Holocaust. In 1948, the Jews in Palestine were already 650 thousand inhabitants, compared to the 1.3 million Muslim Arabs. The historical origin of the Jewish people wandering and persecuted for two thousand years could not justify the displacement of the Muslim Arab population that had inhabited Palestine for centuries. To claim the dilution of the Palestinians among the populations of the other Muslim Arab countries would be the same as to claim the dilution of the Dutch among the other European countries, to request the Dutch to leave the Netherlands and go to Germany, Belgium, etc. Theodor Herzl in *The Jewish state*, written in the late 19th century, had already stated that for Europe the Jews in Palestine should form a portion of a rampart against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism. Does this mean that we Jews were proposing to constitute a rampart, an outpost of civilized Europe against barbarian Asia?

After the events that surrounded the Exodus, the General Assembly of the United Nations, chaired by Brazilian Osvaldo Aranha on November 29, 1947, approved the Partition Plan for Palestine. Among the 56 countries present at the General Assembly, 33 voted in favor, 13 against and 10 abstained. The 13 votes against the Partition were from Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Turkey, Greece and Cuba.

On May 14, 1948, the British Mandate of Palestine was completed, and the Jews declared the establishment of the State of Israel. The Soviet Union and the United States were the first countries to recognize the State of Israel. At that time, the Soviet Union supported the creation of the State of Israel as a way to reduce British influence in the Middle East. Later, in the mid-fifties, within the frameworks of the Cold War, the Soviet Union lined up with the Arab countries.

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The US Congress only approved the legislation favoring the immigration of Jewish survivors who were housed in the DP Camps in Europe into the US on May 27, 1948, two weeks after the establishment of the State of Israel, which would absorb most of the refugees. The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 that authorized the admission of Jewish survivors for permanent residence was signed by President Truman on June 25, 1948. From 1948 to 1952, nearly 150,000 Jewish survivors immigrated to the United States (400,000 Jews emigrated from Europe to Israel in the same period). On August 7, 1953, President Eisenhower signed the Refugee Relief Act that favored Italians, Greeks and immigrants from communist countries; and restricted further Jewish immigration.

Chaim Kilsztajn, Michal's brother, was housed in Schwandorf DP Camp, near Munich. It was in Schwandorf that Chaim met Anna Katharina Diermeier, born to Georg Diermeier and Theodolinde Herrnbeck in Schwandorf on December 17, 1929. Chaim, who suffered in his skin the legacy of being Jewish, had his parents exterminated in Auschwitz and survived the Nazi German Forced Labor and Concentration Camps, fell in love with Anna Katharina, a German Christian girl. Usually surviving relatives were embarrassed by such unions, but Chaim was the oldest, the most religious, and had ascendancy over the other two surviving brothers.

Chaim got an entry visa and emigrated to the United States in 1951. He departed from Bremerhaven Port in Germany, aboard the USNS "General S. D. Sturgis" on April 10 and arrived in New York on April 20, 1951. One month before leaving for the United States, on March 12, 1951, Chaim had married in Schwandorf with Anna Katharina Diermeier. Once settled in the United States, Chaim returned to Schwandorf, on September 28, 1951, to take his wife Anna Kilsztajn to America. Chaim and Anna Kilsztajn (Kilstein) set up residence in St. Louis, Missouri, in the North American Midwest.



Chaim Kilsztajn, Germany 1947



Anna Katharina Diermeier, Germany 1950

Left for U.S.A. 20. März 1951	
INDEX CARD A. J. D. - EMIGRATION SERVICE - Munich	
Last Name KILSTEIN	File No. US 5020
First Name Chaim Sex: M	Opening Date 2.10.50
Address Schwandorf, Bergstr.64	In transit from:
Birthdate 8.10.20 Birthplace Benzburg/Pol.	Accompanied by
Nationality: Present	Former
Occupation: Present none Former shoemaker	Closing Date
Country of destination USA	

The siblings Abram and Fela Telner, Michal's first cousins, were reunited after the War and were housed in Zeilsheim DP Camp, near Frankfurt. In Zeilsheim Fela met Jankiel Klug, born in Czestochowa on March 4, 1925. Jankiel was an Auschwitz survivor and was in charge of security in Zeilsheim DP Camp. Fela (Fay) Telner and Jankiel (Jacob, Jack) Klug married in Germany in 1947 and emigrated to the United States on May 28, 1949, on board the ship 'General McRae', settling in Cincinnati, Ohio.

Abram Telner married in Frankfurt on March 5, 1949, with Ingeborg Fuchs, a German Christian girl born to Werner and Gertrud Wirth in Frankfurt on July 14, 1926. Abram (Andrey) and Ingeborg (Inge) Telner emigrated to the United States on June 21, 1950. They lived in Chicago until 1959 and returned to Frankfurt, where Inge's parents and sister, also married with a Jewish survivor of Auschwitz, were living.

CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF LIBERATED JEWS
IN THE AMERICAN OCCUPIED ZONE

Name: Telner

Vorname: Abram

Vatersname: _____

Geboren am: 1927

Geburtsort: Bedzin

Beruf: _____

Jetzige Adresse: Zeilsheim

Dez.1946

Ausstellungs-Datum: _____

CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF LIBERATED JEWS
IN THE AMERICAN OCCUPIED ZONE

Name: Telner

Vorname: Fela

Vatersname: _____

Geboren am: 1928

Geburtsort: Bedzin

Beruf: _____

Jetzige Adresse: Zeilsheim

Dez.1946

Ausstellungs-Datum: _____



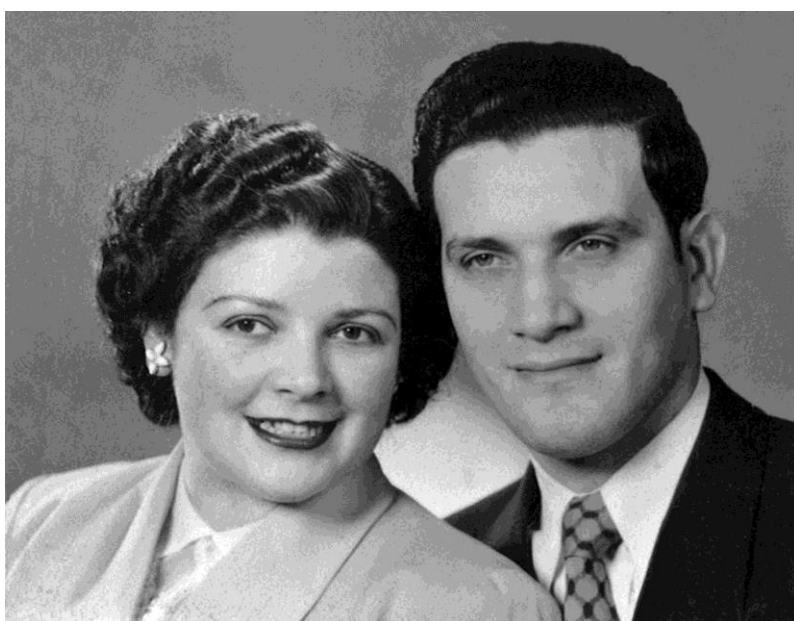
Abram Telner at right, boxing competition in Pocking DP Camp/Bavaria 1946



Jankiel Klug at left in Zeilsheim DP Camp



Fela Telner and Jankiel Klug, Germany 1947



Ingeborg Fuchs and Abram Telner, (visiting) Germany 1952

Chaskiel Kilsztajn, Michal's cousin, son of Chaim Kilsztajn (*1861), widower of Mania Panska that was murdered in the Holocaust, were housed in Feldafing DP Camp, near Munich. Chaskiel married on September 10, 1947, with his first cousin Genia (Gitl) Kilsztajn, daughter of Shlomo Kilsztajn. Chaim and Shlomo Kilsztajn were half-brothers, sons of Aharon Kilsztajn.

On March 9, 1949, Chaskiel and Genia Kilsztajn emigrated to Canada, where Chaskiel's sister, Malka Kilsztajn (*1901), was living since before WWII. Chaskiel Kilsztajn (Harry Stein) and Genia Kilsztajn (Genia Stein) settled in Edmonton, Alberta. In Edmonton Chaskiel worked as a carpenter, the profession he exercised since Bendin.



Chaskiel Kilsztajn, Canada 1970



Genia Kilsztajn, Canada 1970



Malka Kilsztajn, Canada 1968

Dobra (Deborah) Kilsztajn, the sister of Jakob and Genia, the youngest daughter of Shlomo Kilsztajn, was housed in Santa Maria di Leuca DP Camp in Italy and married in September 1945 with Nathan Eilenberg, born in Czestochowa on May 5, 1915, a Holocaust survivor and a baker as her father. Dobra, Nathan, and their daughter Chana Brucha (Anita), born in Italy on October 15, 1946, emigrated to New York on September 1, 1949.



Dobra Kilsztajn and Nathan Eilenberg, Italy 1946

Jakub Mojzesz Jakubowicz, son of Estera Kilsztajn from Radomsko, who had been deported to Siberia and joined the Polish Army in Soviet soil in 1942, was badly injured by the Nazi Germans in Frankfurt/Oder at the end of the Russian offensive on the way to Berlin. Jakub Mojzesz had his leg amputated in Hanover and stayed in Pocking DP Camp, where he married Adela. Jakub Mojzesz and Adela Jakubowicz emigrated to Cincinnati in 1949. In the United States Jakub Mojzesz Jakubowicz changed his name to Jack Jacobs.



Jakub Mojzesz Jakubowicz, Hanover 1945

Chaja Hela Libman, Shmuel Libman's sister and Chana's aunt, married in Lodz on September 15, 1946, with Aaron Barowski, who had lost his wife and children in the Holocaust. They emigrated to Melbourne, Australia, on September 2, 1948.



Chaja Hela Libman and Aaron Barowski, Poland 1946

Jaffa

Biblical Canaan, later called Judea, was the land of the Jewish people before being expelled by the Roman Empire two thousand years ago. With the diaspora, the region known as Palestine became desolate and started to house a majority Christian population, with a Jewish minority concentrated in the cities of Jerusalem, Tsfat, Hebron and Tiberias. Muslim Arabs occupied Palestine in the 7th century; and from the 16th century to the First World War, the entire Middle East came under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. During WWI, England promised Palestine to both Arabs and Jews. In 1917, through a statement by its Secretary for Foreign Affairs Arthur Balfour, the United Kingdom promised to support the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine. The Balfour Declaration has been ratified by France, Italy and the United States.

After WWI, England and France, victorious, arbitrarily divided the region into countries, using square rulers, without worrying about natural boundaries, let alone grouping the different ethnic groups, which were divided into different countries. To ensure its dominance, England and France took over ethnic minorities to subdue ethnic majorities in the new artificially created countries, instituting a latently explosive situation across all the Middle East. The Palestinian issue is just one of the problems that the entire region has been facing since the end of WWI.

In 1920, the League of Nations established the British Mandate of Palestine, which comprised Palestine (10 thousand square miles) and the Emirate of Transjordan (34 thousand square miles). With the beginning of the British Mandate, the first conflicts between Jews and Arabs arose in Palestine. The situation worsened with the Nazis' rise to power in Germany in 1933 and the growth of Jewish immigration (9,000 a year had immigrated between 1919 and 1932; and 34,000 a year immigrated between 1933 and 1939).

After World War II, immigration to Palestine became a claim for the survivors; and, for the member countries of the United Nations, it was more suitable to create a Jewish state in Palestine than to authorize the immigration of these surviving Jews to their respective countries. The United Nations approved the Palestinian Partition Plan despite protests from the Palestinians and from the Arab countries but did not guarantee the settlement of the two peoples in the designated territories. The United Nations made what

is called to bow with someone else's hat, in addition to divesting a saint to dress another. The approval of the Partition Plan intensified the conflict between the parties, and the United Nations Security Council did not intervene effectively, leaving Arabs and Jews to kill each other at will, no bullet was exactly lost.

With the approval of the Palestinian Partition Plan by the United Nations on November 29, 1947, a civil war between Arabs and Jews took over the region. The day after the declaration of the creation of the State of Israel, on May 15, 1948, the countries bordering the newly created State, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, as well as Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, declared war and invaded Israel, initiating the 1948-49 Arab-Israeli War. For the surviving Jews who considered Palestine their dream, the Jewish home, their land, the Promised Land from which no one could expel or exterminate them, the Arab-Israeli War was a new martyrdom.

After a year of conflict, between February 24 and July 20, 1949, Israel signed separate armistices with all the border countries, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. With the end of the 1948-49 Arab-Israeli War, the territory occupied by Israel became 35% larger than the designated area by the United Nations Partition Plan; Jordan annexed Palestinian West Bank territory; and Egypt took control of the Gaza Strip.

When the State of Israel was created in May 1948, 650,000 Jews and 1.3 million Arabs lived in Palestine. The territory that effectively constituted the State of Israel (8 thousand miles square) was home to 900 thousand Arabs; and the West Bank and Gaza (2 thousand miles square) were home to the remaining 400 thousand Arabs. During the conflict, some 700 thousand Palestinians fled the combat zone, for their protection, or were expelled from the territory occupied by Israel. The Palestinians, who have inhabited the region for centuries, were unable to return to Israel, had their properties expropriated, and were housed in Refugee Camps in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and on the borders with Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. The flight and expulsion of these 700 thousand Palestinians from Israel to the Refugee Camps ensured a Jewish majority in Israel, which had 650 thousand Jews when the state was created and then only 200 thousand Arabs who remained within its borders.

As a result, the Jews, who were a small minority in the early 20th century, passed the title of minority to the Palestinians. After armistices were signed with the neighboring Arab countries in 1949, the Palestinians began a series of terrorist attacks, creating a state of permanent conflict between Jews and Arabs in the region. The slogan that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East is a way of covering up the expulsion of Palestinians

in the formation of Israel, in order to guarantee the constitution of a (mostly) Jewish state. Moreover, no democracy survives in a state that oppresses its “minorities” and is “obliged” to restrict information for reasons of “national security”.

In addition, as a result of the 1948-49 Arab-Israeli War, the Jewish populations that until then lived in harmony in the Arab and/or Muslim countries in North Africa and the Middle East were expelled from these countries and emigrated, largely, to Israel. Most Arabs and Persians were Muslims, but there were also Arabs and Persians Christians and Jews. Thus, the time of the Jews, which had already ended in Poland, was also ending in the Arab and/or Muslim countries. Between 1948 and 1952, about 700 thousand Jews immigrated to Israel, 400 thousand from Europe and 300 thousand from Arab and/or Muslim countries.

For the surviving European Jews housed in the Refugee Camps of Germany, Austria and Italy, Palestine was their dream, the Promised Land. But the creation of the State of Israel, which is celebrated by the Jews on May 14, is celebrated by the Palestinians on May 15 as the Day of Catastrophe, al-Nakba. The Jews’ dream is the Palestinians’ nightmare. While the Jews left the Refugee Camps in Europe, the Palestinians left their homes to flock into the Refugee Camps in the West Bank, Gaza and along the borders with neighboring Arab countries. Although not every Israeli supports the Israeli Government’s policy, the vast majority disqualify and degrade the Palestinian people in order to justify the injustices perpetrated against the Palestinians and their right to the land they inhabited. In this effort to degrade the image of the “enemy”, the Palestinian people are presented as a bunch of savages without culture, without erudition and without significant intellectual production, living in Refugee Camps, without elites who, during the catastrophe, evidently emigrated to neighboring Arab countries or to the West. From the Palestinian point of view, Jews are European invaders who treat Palestinians in the same way that Jews were treated by anti-Semitic Europeans. To make matters worse, Jews have always been a small minority in Europe; and the Palestinians constituted the majority of the population in the territory that came to house the State of Israel.

European Jews were essentially *Ashkenazim* and Jews from Arab countries were *Sephardim* or *Mizrahim*. From very different cultures, the coexistence between *Ashkenazim* and *Sephardim/Mizrahim* was at first very problematic. A European Jew could hardly distinguish a Muslim Arab from a Jewish Arab; just as an Arab Jew could hardly distinguish a Christian European from a Jewish European. The *Ashkenazim*

unfavorably called the *Sephardim* black Jews. When, in the 1980s, Ethiopian Jews, who were in fact black, arrived in Israel, the comment among them was that they had never heard of white Jews.

• • •

Following the creation of the State, Michal Kilsztajn, Chana and their daughter Adina emigrated to Israel (in 20nov48). Also emigrated to Israel Sandel Kilsztajn, Michal's brother, his wife Fela and their son David (in 20jul49); Raizel Libman, Chana's mother, and her children Moshe and Szprinze (in 1949); Chawa Kilsztajn Rosencweij from Sosnowiec, Michal's first cousin, her husband Natan Dorsmann and their daughter Fela born in Germany in 1947 (in 29dec1948); Jakob Kilsztajn, Shlomo Kilsztajn's son, his wife Genia and their daughters Regina (Rivka), born in 5jul46, and Ita (Yehudit), born on 12jan49 (in 21jun49); Chaja (Helena) Erenfryd, Shlomo Kilsztajn's stepdaughter, her husband Moshe Roman and the son Isak, born on 21feb46 (in 25nov48); and Chaim Fiszal Libman, Chana's uncle, with his wife Estera and their son Efraim Libman born in Lodz on February 1, 1947 (in aug50).

The family of Yechiel Kilsztajn and his nephews Meir and Lea Kilsztajn, who had left Germany after the Nuremberg Laws, had been living in Palestine since the mid-thirties. Ephraim Kilsztajn, brother of Meir and Lea, had immigrated to Palestine in 1946. Meir Kilsztajn, who had served in the Jewish Brigade of the British Army, remained serving the armed forces after the creation of the State of Israel. To be appointed as officer, Meir was forced, by determination of Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, to abandon his Yiddish surname Kilsztajn, adopting the Hebrew surname Avnon.

When Michal, Chana and Adina arrived, Israel was at War and under strong restraint. The intense immigration of Jews from Europe and the Arab countries, besides the heavy military budget, forced Israel to implement a regime of austerity, with rationing of food and other consumer goods. On April 26, 1949, considering the gravity of the economic situation of the Country, Israel created the Ministry of Rationing and Supply.

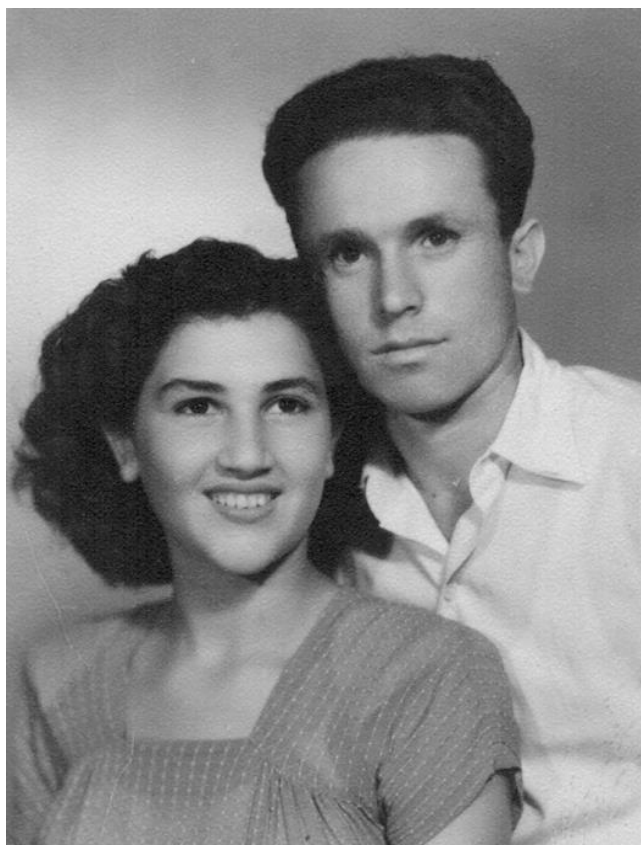
Michal, Chana and Adina settled down in a room of an abandoned Arab two-storey house at 242 (Lamartine) Street, number 35b, in Jaffa (Yafo), the oldest city or one of the oldest cities in the World uninterruptedly inhabited, which was founded and named after the third Noah's son, Jaffeth. There is archaeological evidence that shows that Jaffa was inhabited ten thousand years ago. Jaffa is mentioned by the Egyptians and the cedars of Lebanon for the construction of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem landed in

Jaffa. It is also in Jaffa that the story of Jonah and the whale takes place. In 1909, in the vicinity of Jaffa, which was then an essentially Arab Muslim city, the Jewish community had created the city of Tel Aviv, later unified to Jaffa.



Jaffa Port

Moshe Libman, Chana's brother, married in 1951 with Mazal Levi Danieli, born to Yomtov Danieli and Ester Levi in Istanbul on July 7, 1935. Mazal's family had emigrated from Turkey to Israel in 1949 and spoke Ladino, the language used by the *Sephardim*, the Jews of Spanish origin. Moshe and Mazal also lived in one of the rooms of the two-storey house at 242 Street, number 35b, in Jaffa. The upper floor of the building had a lobby and four rooms that housed four families who shared one bathroom and an improvised kitchen. Michal, Chana and Adina lived in one of the rooms and in the three other rooms lived my grandmother, her son Moshe and his wife Mazal; the family of the sister of my father's sister-in-law; and another family unrelated to ours.

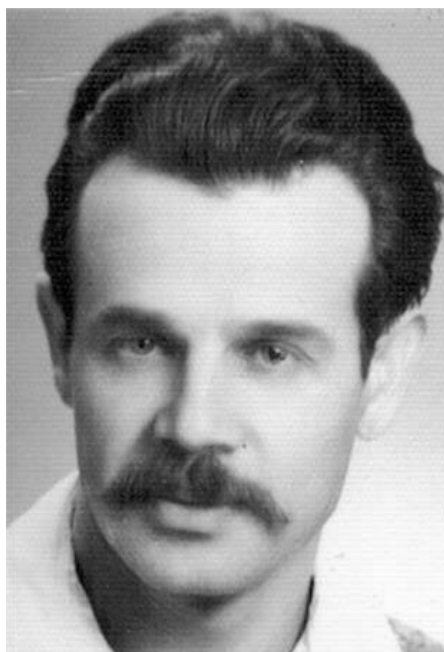


Mazal Levi Danieli and Moshe Libman, Jaffa 1951

Szprinze Libman, Chana's sister, married Moshe Ayalon, of Russian origin, and settled in Rishon LeZion. Sandel and Fela Kilsztajn, and Natan and Chawa Dorsmann settled in Ramle (Ramlah); Jacob and Genia Kilsztajn in Haifa; and Chaim Fiszel and Estera Libman in Givat Olga/Hadera.



Szprinze Libman, Rishon LeZion



Moshe Ayalon, Rishon LeZion



Genia Rosenberg, Haifa 1962



Jakob Kilsztajn, Haifa 1962

Chana was released from military service on November 26, 1948, because she had a child. Michal joined the Israeli Army on April 17, 1950. While Michal was in the Army, on July 9, 1951, the second child of Michal and Chana was born in Dajani Hospital in Jaffa, at 100 Yerushalayim Boulevard. The boy was named after his maternal grandfather Samuel (Shmuel).

עמוד 3		נש"ב - 118764	
א ת ה ו ת		משוחררת מגיוס גם ל.../ילדים)	
מרכזה הגיוס 19		מספר 19	
48	דצמבר 48	48	נובמבר 48
49	אפריל 49	49	מרס 49
49	ינואר 49	49	פברואר 49
תחילת בעס התעודה		שם המשפחה שם פרטי שם האב	
תחילת בעס התעודה		שם המשפחה שם פרטי שם האב	

Chana Kilsztajn, license issued by the Ministry of Defence 26nov48

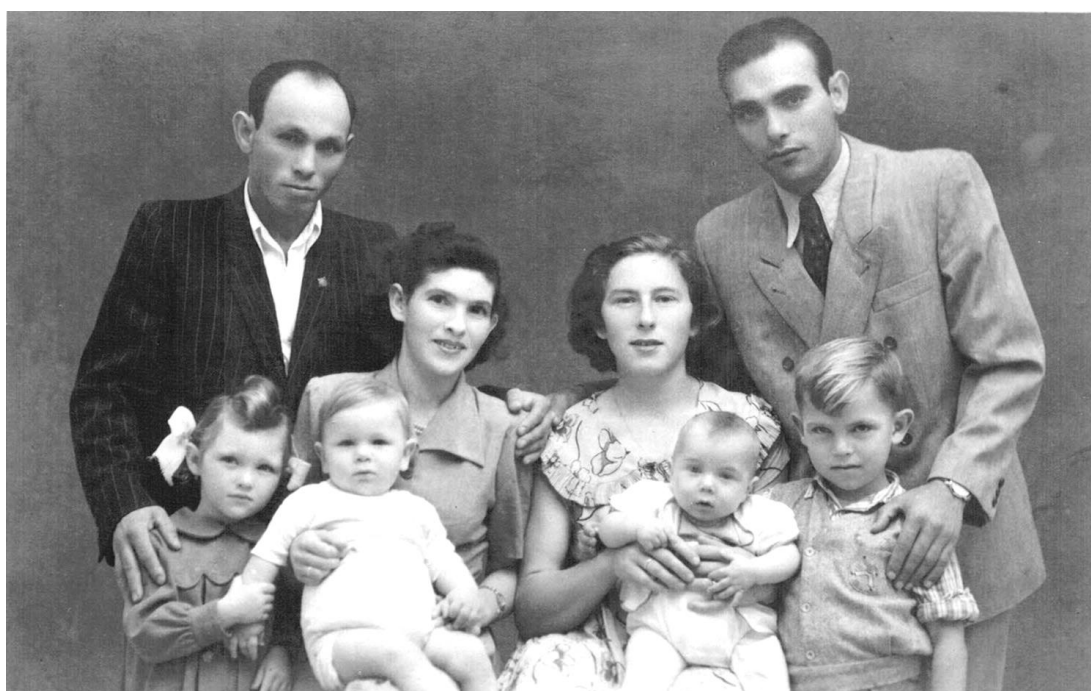
Michal was allowed to visit his wife and newborn son and came home carrying his rifle, which was of his responsibility. On October 17, 1951, when he completed 18 months of regular service, almost 30 years old and with two kids to raise, Michal was released from the Army and remained in reserve, being called for temporary service every six months.



Michal, Israeli Army 1951



Military Reserve Card, 17oct51



Adina, Michal, Samuel, Chana, Fela, Zwika, Sandel and David Kilsztajn, Jaffa 10may52



Raizel, Adina, Samuel and Chana, New Year Card, September 1952

After serving in the regular Army, Michal began to work on house construction. The Israeli economic situation was very difficult and food rationing was still in force. The condition of the family was very precarious, despite the food parcels that Chaim sent regularly from the United States to the brothers Michal and Sandel. At work, Michal had to carry heavy bags of cement on his back. As a joke, the family tells that one day, when Michal returned home very hungry, Chana put more water in the soup to alleviate her husband's hunger.



Michal, Jaffa 1953

In 1953, after surviving the Forced Labor and Concentration Camps, losing his parents, family, city, being expelled from his homeland Poland, DP Camps, the war with the Palestinians, tired of living in the middle of wars and deprivation, Michal decided to emigrate with his wife and children to the United States, where his brother Chaim Kilsztajn was living and from where were coming the food parcels that he was sending regularly to help the brothers in Israel. My mother, at first, did not want to leave, she who had already been deported from Poland to Siberia and lived in a DP Camp in Germany. My mother wanted to stay in Israel, where her mother and two siblings were also living. Nevertheless, my father insisted, and we left.

Chaim Fiszal Libman, Chana's uncle, his wife Estera, their son Efraim (Frank), born in Lodz, and their daughter Chawa (Evelyn), born in Israel on March 21, 1952, also left Israel. They emigrated to Melbourne, where Chaim Fiszal's sister Chaja Hela Libman and her husband Aaron Barowski were living. They landed in Australia on November 18, 1954.



Estera, Chaim Fiszal, Chawa and Efraim Libman, Hadera July 1952

In Australia, Chaim Fiszel Libman worked as a house painter, a profession he learned in Poland with his brother Shmuel Libman, Chana's father. Chaim passed away in Australia on April 26, 2012, at the age of 101, leaving children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. In his tomb, Chaim Fiszel Libman insisted to have a plaque in memory of his parents, brothers and sister exterminated in the Holocaust unburied.



Most of the survivors who immigrated to the newly created State of Israel landed stateless. The Government of Israel only formalized its nationality and the issuing of Israeli passports on July 14, 1952, when the country's military situation acquired relative stability. Israeli passports were issued by the Ministry of Immigration in Jerusalem, one passport per family, which included the two spouses and all their underage children. Even so, obstacles to emigration, such as reimbursement of expenses incurred with immigration, have caused many survivors to leave Israel as stateless persons.

A considerable part of the Jews who were housed in the DP Camps in Germany, Austria and Italy and immigrated to Israel, tired of living in the midst of conflicts with Muslim Palestinians, wars, and deprivations, decided to abandon the Jewish Home in search of the Promised Land on the other side of the Atlantic Sea. However, the possibility of obtaining an entry visa for the United States or Canada in Israeli territory

was remote. Many Israelis decided to return to Europe as a bridge to America, which earned them the nickname of returnees, which included both Israeli passport holders and stateless “Israelis”. The returnees’ route to the New World, *Di Naye Velt*, passed through Paris or Vienna, and ended in Munich, more precisely in the last Jewish DP Camp operating in German territory, Foehrenwald, located in Wolfratshausen, a city near Munich. The American agencies Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society – HIAS and American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, known as JDC or Joint, provided assistance to refugees in Foehrenwald and helped them to obtain entry visas abroad; and the more successful they were in the returnees’ settlement, the more waves of Israelis landed in Munich.

Of the 750,000 Jews who immigrated after the creation of the State of Israel between 1948 and 1953, 43,000 left the country in 1952 and 1953, which constituted an uncomfortable anti-Zionist posture, a betrayal, an *aliyah* backwards. When asked why they were leaving the country, many of the emigrants said that his wife was unable to adapt to Israel’s climate. Poor economic conditions and a lack of prospects for getting out of poverty were systematically declared; but moral conflicts related to the oppression of the Palestinian people were never mentioned, it was taboo. This so-called re-emigration led to manifestations in Israeli Parliament for the damages caused by these emigrants to the new Jewish State.

43,000 Persons Left Israel in Two Years, Knesset Hears

November 12, 1953

JERUSALEM (Nov. 11)

Approximately 43,000 immigrants left Israel in the course of the last two years, it was reported in the Israel Parliament today by Itzhak Raphael, head of the Jewish Agency’s immigration department. This number, he said, constitutes two-thirds of the total of immigration into the country during the same period.

Mr. Raphael asked Parliament for an urgent discussion of the subject. He insisted that ways must be found to check the trend. “The bringing in of those who later leave the country costs us strenuous work and much money,” he argued.

Replying, Minister of Interior Israel Rokach stated that the picture was not as Mack as painted by Mr. Raphael. He disclosed that there was a proposal to grant passports only to those who had lived at least two years in Israel. There is also a proposal to make certain amendments to the “Law of Return,” he said.

The Minister of Interior emphasized that he is not worried about the number of people who left the country in view of the fact that re-emigration has not increased in the last ten months. He said that he knows of no country from where there is no re-emigration. He suggested that Mr. Raphael would have done better by speaking about increased immigration rather than complaining about re-emigration.

Jewish Telegraphic Agency – JTA

The period of austerity and rationing in Israel ended in 1953. The conflict with the Palestinians and the neighboring Arab countries, however, was aggravated in 1967, with the occupation by Israel of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. However, there was also some progress towards peace in the region. Egypt recognized and established diplomatic relations with Israel in 1979, and Jordan in 1994. In 1993, in Oslo, the Palestine Liberation Organization – PLO signed an agreement with Israel, constituting the Palestinian National Authority in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In 1994, PLO chair Yasser Arafat, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres received the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts in the Oslo Accords.

When asked where they are from, the Palestinians who for decades are living in Refugee Camps say the name of their hometown in Israeli territory, even though only their grandparents have ever lived there. The Israeli writer David Grossman described the situation of the Palestinians in the West Bank in *The yellow wind* and of the Palestinians in Israel in *Sleeping on a wire*.

Jews have always been humanists, defenders of justice and averse to violence by nature. The current belligerent state of Jews in the Middle East is the result of the exodus of European Holocaust survivors who lost their homelands; the approval of the Partition Plan for Palestine by the United Nations; and the mass emigration to Israel. Contemporary Israeli Hebrew literature embraces humanist ideals and has Abraham B. Yehoshua, Amos Oz and David Grossman as its three top exponents, combative militants for peace in the Middle East. Chava Alberstein, Israel's most popular singer, is also an important voice in defense of Palestinian rights. There is no salvation for just a part of humanity, the universe can only be restored as a whole, *Tikun Olam*.

For Jews who do not support the policy of the State and Israel towards the Arab population, the Yiddish language has been an alternative, a flag for their identity as a Jew. Along with language, literature, music, and the entire millenary culture developed by the Jewish people in the Diaspora are being rescued, a culture that the Nazis and Israelis were unable to destroy. The literal translation of the Yiddish word *gevald* is violence, but *gevald* is used as 'help, violence!' because the Jew, in the *Ashkenazi* tradition, wants distance and does not encourage violence.

São Paulo

In early August 1953 Michal Kilsztajn sold the room in Jaffa to buy the ship tickets to the United States for him, his wife Chana and their two children, Adina, five years old, and Samuel, two years old. While they waited for the trip, the family stayed in Ramle at the home of Michal's brother Sandel. In the first days of September Sandel and his son David took them to the port of Haifa. Fela, Sandel's wife, gave Michal as a gift the 50 dollars she had got by selling her house in Sosnowiec. Michal, from the deck of the ship, threw a can of beer to Sandel who was standing on the dock. The ship was also carrying many other Israeli families leaving for America. The passengers landed in France in early September 1953 and went to Munich, to wait for the visas and the transfer to the United States.

The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 authorized the immigration of Jewish survivors to the United States; however, on August 7, 1953, President Eisenhower signed the new Refugee Relief Act of 1953, which favored the immigration of Italians, Greeks and residents in communist countries; and restricted the entry of Jews in the United States.

Therefore, the returnees on the way to the United States ended up being stranded in Munich, Paris and Vienna. Given the large number of returnees stranded in Germany, German authorities and Jewish organizations agreed, on August 17, 1953, to register all 687 returnees who were in Germany. German authorities installed a police post in Foehrenwald to prevent new returnees from entering; and Jewish organizations promised to provide for the emigration of these 687 returnees until February 1954, and not to assist possible new returnees from Israel.

Michal, his wife and children, as well as all new contingents of Israeli returnees who arrived in Munich from August 17, 1953, prevented from entering Foehrenwald, found refuge in the city's main Orthodox Synagogue at 11 Neuberghause Street, on the corner of Moehl Street (Möhlstrasse). On November 4, 1953, 150 returnees, men, women and children, were accommodated in the Synagogue. In addition to these, another 70 returnees who arrived in Munich after August 17, 1953, spent the night in different small accommodations throughout the city but spent the day in the Synagogue. Möhlstrasse was Munich's main Jewish commercial street, and housed the headquarters of HIAS, at

37 Möhlstrasse. The Joint headquarters was on the corner of Möhlstrasse, at 3 Siebertstrasse.

The facilities of the Munich Orthodox Synagogue in the historic Lauer Villa, which was a temporary refuge for returnees, evidently did not offer adequate conditions to accommodate 150 immigrants, especially when compared to the facilities of the Foehrenwald DP Camp, which were considered exemplary. Yet, reports at the time, both German and Israeli, described a catastrophic surreal picture of the lives of these immigrants in the Synagogue, in order to discourage future waves of Israeli immigrants and to stop the exodus. The reports were careful in describing the daily lives of people in the Synagogue, who must have gone out of their minds, bordering on suicide, wallowing in squalor and filth, sleeping on the floor on dirty mattresses and rugs, men, women and children, with extremely precarious access to water and sanitation. Poverty these immigrants did know, but, ironically, the picture of the Synagogue painted by the reports looked more like that of their own houses, or rather, the rooms they inhabited and crowded in, with improvised kitchens and shared bathrooms, even after five years living in Israel.

In early November 1953, there were three categories of Jewish refugees in Germany – legal refugees (who had not immigrated to Israel); the 687 semi-legal returnees registered on August 17, 1953; and the illegal returnees who arrived in Germany after that date. The first two categories were housed in the Foehrenwald DP Camp (the second category had to leave Germany until February 17, 1954); and the third category, the illegal returnees, was housed in the Orthodox Synagogue and around. In addition to returnees on German territory, the returnees who were in Vienna and mainly in Paris were also stranded in Europe.

On November 4, 1953, at dawn, a large contingent of German police invaded the Synagogue in Munich, where 150 Israelis, men, women and children were sleeping, without a visa for Germany, let alone for the United States or Canada. The German police arrested the 67 men housed in the Synagogue from August 1953 on, the date of the new US Refugee Relief Act, and of the agreement between German authorities and Jewish organizations.

My father, who would turn 31 the next day, November 5, went to celebrate his birthday in prison with his new 66 wandering fellows, who became his friends forever, Polish Jews from Belzyce, Brody, Ciechanow, Czestochowa, Drohobych, Hrubieszow,

Kalisz, Katowice, Krasiczyn, Lodz, Lublin, Mezritsh, Nasielsk, Przytyk, Sosnowiec, Stanislowczyk, Warsaw, Zamosz; and Jews from Austria, Belgium, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Ukraine and other countries, that survived the Holocaust in Nazi German Forced Labor and Concentration Camps, or in Siberia and other places in the Soviet Union; lost their families and were expelled from their cities and their countries; emigrated to Israel, fought against poverty and the Arabs; decided to go to America; and ended up back to prison in Germany. Certainly, the prison facilities were significantly better than those in the synagogue, at least in the description given by the German and Israeli reports. Women and children were not taken into custody and remained in the very precarious facilities of the Synagogue. Samuel, the youngest child of Michal and Chana, was sent to a hospital in Munich with acute bronchitis.

German Police Raid Munich Synagogue; Arrest 67 Jewish Refugees

November 5, 1953

MUNICH (Nov. 4)

A large number of German police early this morning raided the main Orthodox synagogue here and arrested 67 sleeping Jewish DP's who had within the past ten weeks returned from Israel to Germany without valid entry visas.

Fourteen of the arrested Jewish refugees were sentenced immediately by a local court to two weeks' imprisonment each for illegal entry. The others will come up for trial tomorrow and Friday. The arrested Jews are all men. No women and children were taken into custody.

Jewish Telegraphic Agency – JTA

With the intermediation of HIAS and Joint, two alternatives were offered for the illegal immigrants displaced from the Munich Synagogue, to return to Israel, or to go to Brazil, which only in August 1953 had effectively canceled the restrictions imposed by Secret Circular 1127 of 1937 on the entry of Jews in the country. The Jews housed in the Synagogue had no relatives or acquaintances in Brazil. Michal said he had never heard that there was a country named Brazil, but someone said it was near Argentina. He also didn't know where Argentina was, but at least he'd heard of a country with that name. Michal's situation in Israel wasn't good when he had the room in Jaffa, which was sold to buy the tickets to the United States. Now, without a home, the proclaimed Israel was not an alternative, and he opted for the unknown Brazil.

Almost all 150 illegal returnees, which were housed in the Munich Synagogue, anchored in Brazil. Brazil also received a significant part of the 687 semi-legal returnees housed in Foehrenwald; and the returnees stranded in Paris and Vienna; as well as Israeli immigrants with visas issued in Tel-Aviv. HIAS and Joint paid for the transportation and took responsibility for the settlement of these immigrants in Brazil. Most of the Brazilian permanent visas for the illegal returnees housed in the Synagogue and for the semi-legal returnees housed in Foehrenwald were signed by Edison Ramos Nogueira, Consul of Brazil in Frankfurt AM, who headed the Brazilian government's negotiations with the Joint. David Lins, Consul of Brazil in Munich, signed some of the entry visas to Brazil.

Each of the families of returnees who held an Israeli passport received a single-entry visa number, valid for the couple's spouses and underage children. A Consular Qualification Form was provided separately for men and another for women, both with the same visa number. Children, in general, were included in the mothers' forms. Stateless family members, even minors, as a rule, received individualized forms and numbers.

On November 30, 1953, 40 Israeli passengers who were expelled from the Synagogue in Munich, besides 10 other Jewish passengers, embarked in Hamburg aboard the French transatlantic Claude Bernard to Brazil. Claude Bernard also brought non-Jewish permanent immigrants from Europe, including 41 Portuguese and 30 German citizens.

FORTY JEWISH "ILLEGAL RETURNEES" LEAVE GERMANY FOR BRAZIL

HAMBURG, Dec. 1. (JTA) -- Forty ex-DP's, who left Israel within the past few months and came to Germany, boarded a vessel for Brazil today under HIAS auspices. They belonged to the group of 150 Jewish "returnees" whose male members were arrested in the recent German police raid on Munich's main Orthodox DP synagogue, and were sentenced to brief jail terms for illegal entry. HIAS hopes to arrange for the emigration of similar groups to South America in December and January.

Jewish Telegraphic Agency - JTA

INTERGOVERNMENTAL GOVERNMENT FOR EUROPEAN MIGRATION REIMBURSEMENT MOVEMENT TO BRAZIL ON MS "CLAUDE BERNARD" EX HAMBURG/GERMANY ON 30TH NOVEMBER 1953											SOUTH AMERICA NO. 11 BRAZIL NO. 1 REVOLVING FUND CASES			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Ser. No.	Ref. No.	N a m e s	Country of Citizenship & last hab. residence	Rel.	Mar & Fam. Stat.	Sex	Date of Birth	Age	Country & Place of Birth	Occupation	Nos. of Passport	Date & Place of Issue	Visa No.	Date & Place of Issue
21	MUN	KILSETAJN, Michal	Israel/Ger/ Munich, Neuberghauserstr. 11	Jewish	M/HF	M	05.11.22	31	Pol/Bedzin	merchant	37801	31.08.53	1318	07.11.53
22	"	"	"	"	M/FU	F	05.10.28	25	Pol/Mizic	housewife	"	"	"	"
23	"	"	Chana	"	S/FU	F	12.02.48	5	Ger/Rosenheim	minor	"	"	"	"
24	"	"	Samuel	"	S/FU	M	09.07.51	2	Israel/Jaffa	minor	"	"	"	"

Board money: N I L Inland transportation: N I L Sponsor: H. I. A. S.
 Landing money: N I L Destination: Sao Paulo, Avenida Ipiranga 652-9 andar

Claude Bernard's passenger list, 30nov53 (extract)

CLAUDE BERNARD REPÚBLICA DOS ESTADOS UNIDOS DO BRASIL MODELO S.C. 139
 3a/22/37 FICHA CONSULAR DE QUALIFICAÇÃO 324391

Esta ficha, expedida em duas vias, será entregue à Polícia Marítima e à Imigração no pòrto de destino

Nome por extenso Michal Kilsztajn
 Admitido em território nacional em caráter permanente
(temporário ou permanente)
 Nos termos do art. 9 letra - do dec. n. 7967, de 1945
 Lugar e data de nascimento Bendzin / 5.11.1922
 Nacionalidade israelita Estado civil casado
 Filiação (nome do Pai e da Mãe) David e Eitel Kilsztajn
 Profissão comerciante
 Residência no país de origem Wolfratshausen

	NOME	IDADE	SEXO
FILHOS MENORES DE 18 ANOS			

Passaporte n. 37801 expedido pelas autoridades de Ministério da Imigração, Jerusalem na data 31 de agosto de 1953
 visado sob n. №1318
 ASSINATURA DO PORTADOR: [assinatura]

Consulado _____ do Brasil em Frankfort/Meno
7 de novembro de 1953
 O CÔNSUL: [assinatura]

NOTA—Esta ficha deve ser preenchida à máquina pela autoridade consular, sendo as duas vias em original.

CLAUDE BERNARD REPÚBLICA DOS ESTADOS UNIDOS DO BRASIL MODELO S.C. 139
 3a/22/38-39-40 FICHA CONSULAR DE QUALIFICAÇÃO 325390

Esta ficha, expedida em duas vias, será entregue à Polícia Marítima e à Imigração no pòrto de destino

Nome por extenso Chana Kilsztajn
 Admitido em território nacional em caráter permanente
(temporário ou permanente)
 Nos termos do art. 9 letra - do dec. n. 7967, de 1945
 Lugar e data de nascimento Mozsio / 5.10.1928
 Nacionalidade israelita Estado civil casada
 Filiação (nome do Pai e da Mãe) nascida Libman
 Profissão comerciante
 Residência no país de origem Wolfratshausen

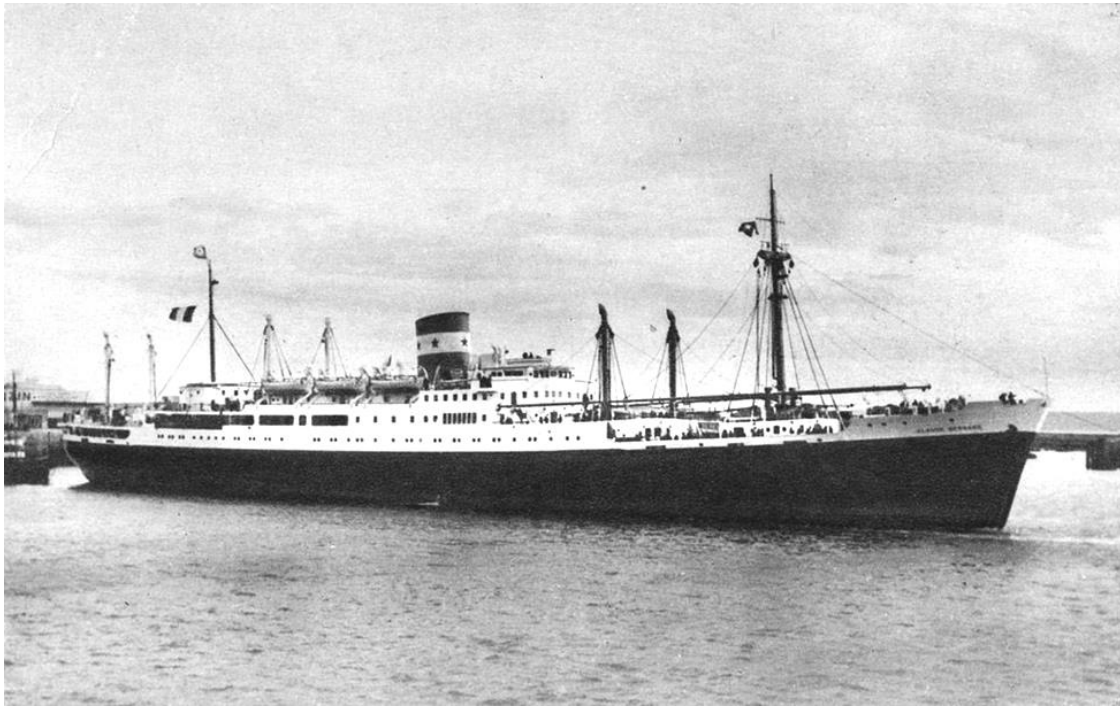
	NOME	IDADE	SEXO
FILHOS MENORES DE 18 ANOS	<u>Adela</u>	<u>5 anos</u>	<u>fem.</u>
	<u>Samuel</u>	<u>2 anos</u>	<u>maso.</u>

Passaporte n. 37801 expedido pelas autoridades de Ministério da Imigração, Jerusalem na data 31 de agosto de 1953
 visado sob n. №1318
 ASSINATURA DO PORTADOR: [assinatura]

Consulado _____ do Brasil em Frankfort/Meno
7 de novembro de 1953
 O CÔNSUL: [assinatura]

NOTA—Esta ficha deve ser preenchida à máquina pela autoridade consular, sendo as duas vias em original.

The trip from Hamburg to Brazil took 20 days. Michal, Chana, Adina and Samuel landed at Port of Santos on December 19, 1953. From the city of Santos, they were transferred to the Hostel of Immigrants in São Paulo, current Immigration Museum, where they stayed for three days.



Claude Bernard, Compagnie Maritime des Chargeurs Reunis

SECRETARIA DA AGRICULTURA
DEPARTAMENTO DE IMIGRAÇÃO E COLONIZAÇÃO
SEÇÃO DO EXPEDIENTE
CERTIDÃO DE DESEMBARQUE

AUTOS: DIC - Nº 55 745.....
Do imigrante: SAMUEL KILSZTAJN.....
Pôrto de desembarque: Santos.....
DATA DE DESEMBARQUE: 19 de dezembro de 1 953.....
Vapor: " Claud Bernard".....
Data do nascimento: 2 anos de idade, por ocasião do desembarque.....
Cidade Natal:.....
Nacionalidade: israelita.....
Sexo: masculino.....
Estado Civil: solteiro.....
Alfabetizado: não.....
Profissão:.....
Religião: israelita.....
Filiação: Michal Kilsztajn e Chana Kilsztajn.....
Chefe da Família: Michal Kilsztajn, pae do interessado.....

Samuel Kilsztajn, Landing Certificate 19dec53



Hostel of Immigrants, São Paulo

Other illegal Israeli immigrants who had been displaced from the Munich Synagogue and opted for Brazil boarded the French transatlantic Charles Tellier, Louis Lumière, Bretagne and Laennec, that anchored in Santos, respectively, on January 3, 22, and 27, and February 5, 1954. Strong bonds of friendship and mutual trust were established between the Israelis who were arrested in Munich in 1953 and immigrated to Brazil. Many families have become an integral part of our family, like de families of Avigdor Lenczner from Czestochowa (*15mar1916), David Rosenberg from Warsaw (*16dec1924), Yosel Reis from Lubicz (*9dec1907), Chaim Romesz from Mezritch (*13may1926), Isak Piernikarz from Lodz (*4may1916), Leibel Kleinman from Zamosz (*14may1915) and Leon Strulovici from Moinesti (*5mar1925). Avigdor Lenczner and David Rosenberg later became my father's partners in his business.

• • •

Jews have been present in Brazil since the Portuguese Colonization in the 16th century. A large number of the Portuguese who arrived in Brazil was composed of New Christians and some have secretly maintained their Jewish identity despite forced conversion. Until the 18th century the Inquisition persecuted and burned many Brazilian

families accused of Judaism. Nowadays in Brazil, there is a Jewish revival by these Judaizing Christians called *Anussim* or *Marranos* (pigs). Luciano Canuto de Oliveira, in the Serido region in the State of Paraíba, and Mordechai Moreh (Marcos Moreira da Silva), founder of the Synagogue *Beith Israel* in São Paulo, are two exponents of this movement.

In the 19th century, there was a migration of Moroccan Jews to the Amazon; and of Jews from Alsace to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Since the end of the 19th century Brazil was one of the destinations of the Jews who left Eastern Europe fleeing from the *pogroms*. This immigration increased significantly in the second half of the 1920s, after the United States, Canada, Argentina and South Africa limited immigration. Until WWI Eastern Europe was part of the Russian Empire; and the Middle East was part of the Ottoman Empire (Turkish). Therefore, the *Ashkenazim* arrived with Russian passports and the *Sephardim/Mizrahim* arrived with Turkish passports, which is why they were called, respectively, Ruski and Turkish. Most *Ashkenazim* immigrants, who spoke Yiddish and were fluent in many other languages, but had never had contact with Portuguese, which they called *Brazilianish*, went to work as peddlers, *clientelshik*, *klaper* (the one who claps at the doors). Sales were made at home and on installments, still unusual at the time in São Paulo. Those who managed to prosper later devoted themselves to commerce and textiles, the manufacturing jokingly known as *shmates*, rags. From the 19th century until 1933, about 50,000 Jews immigrated to Brazil. Several reports of Jewish immigration in São Paulo during this period were collected in the book *Passagem para a América*.

After the Nazis took power in Germany in 1933, until the end of WWII, some 15,000 Jewish refugees were able to immigrate to Brazil, despite the polemic and tortuous Secret Circular 1127 of 1937, followed by Secret Circular 1249 of 1938, which restricted the entry of Jews into Brazil. Maria Luiza Tucci Carneiro, in *Citizen of the world*, analyzed the profuse correspondence of the Brazilian diplomatic corps impregnated by the anti-Semitic ideology of the fascist governments of Getúlio Vargas and Dutra, which blocked the entry of thousands of Jewish refugees from Nazi Europe in search of asylum. *Carta de chamada*, organized by Marília Levi Freidenson, brings together several reports of Jewish immigrants from this period in São Paulo.

In line with the racial ideology that dominated the entire world in the first half of the twentieth century, Brazilian elites, in their immigration policy, followed the principle of whitening the country, in order to improve its race, without expressing any decency in

relation to the Africans who compulsorily immigrated to Brazil until the middle of the 19th century. According to racial ideology, white was synonymous with Aryan and, therefore, Jews, however pale they were, could never be considered white.

Legislation restricting immigration of Jews into the country was circumvented on several occasions, and this contradictory practice extended even after WWII, until the end of the Dutra Government. Restrictions on Jewish immigration into the country began to be relaxed in 1951 and were only effectively canceled in August 1953. Between 1937 and 1951, many Jews who immigrated to Brazil submitted themselves to be pro-forma baptized Catholics. From 1951, with the prospect of industrializing the country, Jewish mechanics and technicians, in addition to farmers, began to be accepted in Brazil. Cooperating with the US authorities, Edison Ramos Nogueira, Consul of Brazil in Frankfurt AM, in a correspondence dated April 16, 1953, invited Akiva Kohane, representative of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in Munich, to discuss Jewish immigration to Brazil. After the discussions between Edison Ramos Nogueira and the Joint, in August 1953, a large contingent of Jews began to be permanently admitted into national territory, regardless of their professional qualifications.

J. T. A. News

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8/13/53

BRAZIL ORDERS CONSULATES NOT TO REQUEST ETHNIC ORIGIN INFORMATION

RIO DE JANEIRO, Aug. 17. (JTA) -- The Brazilian Foreign Minister has issued an order to all Brazilian consulates abroad instructing them not to request information regarding the ethnic origins of applicants for visas to enter Brazil.

In the past, a number of Brazilian consuls asked such questions and then refused to issue visas to persons who declared themselves to be Jews or Negroes. The present application form, however, still requires an applicant to state his religion and therefore may be used by consuls who wish to discriminate against Jews.

Jewish Telegraphic Agency – JTA

From 1951, especially from 1953, many Holocaust survivors who were still in Europe and those who had previously immigrated to Bolivia and other South American countries anchored in Brazil. In addition, the country received a large number of Holocaust survivors who had previously immigrated to Israel and then decided to emigrate – the 150 displaced illegal returnees from the Munich Synagogue; a significant part of the 687 semi-legal returnees registered in Germany on August 17, 1953; those who continued to arrive in Munich after this date; the returnees stranded in Paris and

Vienna; and many Israelis who received Brazilian visas in Tel-Aviv. Chaim Rapoport, the Yiddish writer who had participated in the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War, was among the illegal returnees held and imprisoned in the Munich Synagogue; Hadasa Cytrynowicz, a Yiddish professor and writer, immigrated directly from Israel to Brazil in 1954. René Decol, in *Jews in Brazil: exploring census data*, estimated that 15,243 Jews immigrated to Brazil between 1950 and 1959.

The *Ashkenazim* who immigrated after WWII were called *griner* (green, greenhorn), in contrast to the *geler* (yellow, ripe), the old Jew refugees from the *pogroms* and the rise of Nazism in Germany, who had already been incorporated into the Brazilian society and culture. Joseph Berger wrote the history of the intricate insertion of his *griner* family in American society after WWII. In the 1950s', a new generation of Jew immigrants, *Sephardim*, arrived in Brazil expelled from the Arab countries in retaliation of the creation for the State of Israel in 1948 and the Suez War in 1956.

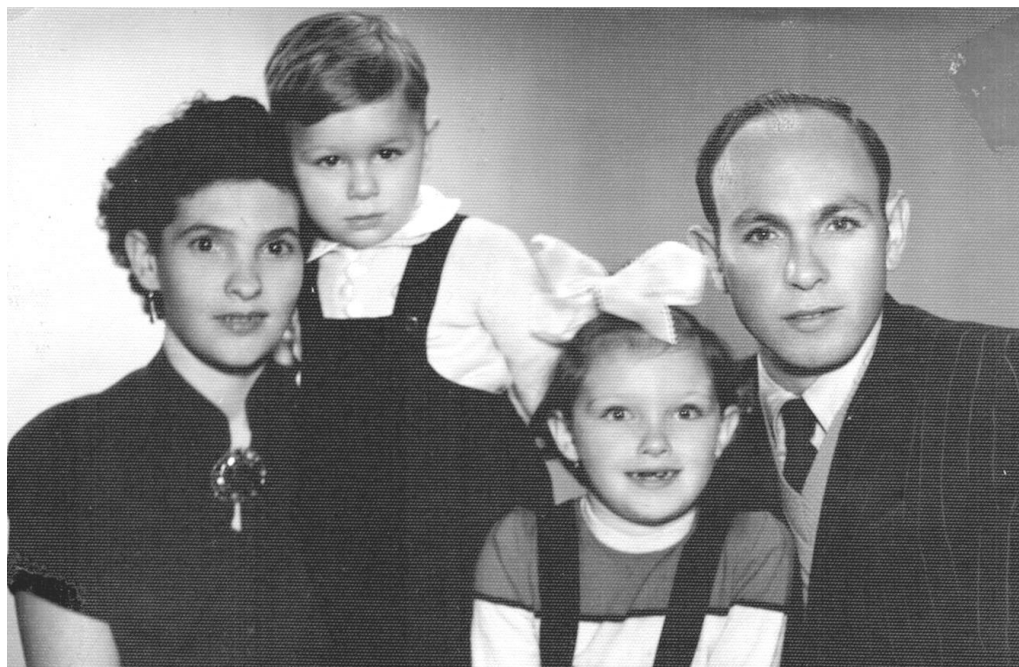
Until recently, the term "Jew" was considered derogatory in Brazil and was replaced by the euphemism "Israelite", which is still used by some people and remains in the names of the Jewish institutions created in Brazil during that time. Even I have not completely overcome the weight that the term "Jew" had in my childhood in Brazil. In Portuguese, the verb "*judiar*", derived from "*judeu*" (Jew) is widely used in Brazil as a synonym for mistreatment.

• • •

HIAS had given for each family an amount equivalent to three months of hosting in Brazil. Michal housed the family in Hotel Tupy in 306 Gusmoes Street. When he went down, he bought a whole bunch of bananas, which was a *delicatsesse* in Europe at the time. Brazil was quite different from Poland and the many countries in which my parents had been before arriving in Santos. My father became fascinated with Brazil, the Country that welcomed his family. The Brazilians' joy was contagious, everyone was good, communicative and affable. A paradise for those who had left the Old for the New World. People received them with open arms, despite the previously declared anti-Semitism of the country's political elites.

Michal spoke Yiddish, Polish and German. He also spoke Russian, which he learned in the Concentration Camps; and Hebrew, which he learned in Israel. However, he had never heard Portuguese. Michal went to *Jardim da Luz* (Light Park) in the neighborhood of *Bom Retiro* (Good Retreat) and met some Russian Orthodox Christians

from Vila Zelina, São Paulo neighborhood that is still the home of descendants of Eastern European immigrants, mainly Russians and Lithuanians. Michal with his wife and the kids eventually moved to Vila Zelina to save the money he got from HIAS; and shortly afterwards settled in a small house in Prates Street, in *Bom Retiro*.



São Paulo 1954

Bom Retiro has always been a neighborhood of immigrants that, at that time, housed Portuguese, Italians, Greeks, Armenians and mostly Jews. After three months at Prates Street, the family moved to 108 Joao Kopke Street, near the floodplain formed by the confluence of Tamanduatei and Tiete rivers. Joao Kopke Street, although a few blocks from downtown, was still not paved. In winter, during the period of the June festivities, bonfires burned in the middle of the street and the residents roasted sweet potatoes amid the ashes. In January, in the rainy season, the river always overflowed and the neighborhood kids, for some little money, used to cross pedestrians with boats from one side to the other of the street. The athletic clubs Tiete and Floresta (Esperia Club during WWII was forced to replace its Italian name) use to practice Olympic rowing on the Tiete River and there were several soccer fields spread across the floodplain. The charming *Jardim da Luz* had streets, boulevards, bandstand, lakes, islands, bridges, mysterious caves, tadpoles, fish, ducks, sloths and many trees.

The multiethnic *Bom Retiro* has the largest historic architectural heritage of São Paulo City, the Pinacoteca in *Jardim da Luz*, the Polytechnic School designed by Ramos

de Azevedo (current Historical Archive of São Paulo), the College of Pharmacy and Dentistry (Oswald de Andrade Cultural Atelier), the Carmelite Convent (Sacred Art Museum), the Luz Railroad Station (Portuguese Language Museum), the Sorocabana Railroad Station (São Paulo State Symphony Orchestra), the Central Office for Disinfection (Emilio Ribas Public Health Museum) and the Sorocabana Building that used to house the Political Police (Dops) and now houses the Memorial of the Resistance of São Paulo, among others.

In the 1950s' there were still no supermarkets in São Paulo, nor hermetically packaged food products. People bought food at grocery stores and warehouses, and the products exposed were sold by weight. You asked for 200 grams of biscuits and the seller picked up one 20 liter container, took some units and packed the cookies in a brown paper bag. Customers' purchases, paid monthly, were recorded by the owners of the establishments in notebooks, which played the role that our credit cards do today.

The many grocery stores in *Bom Retiro* were specialized in Jewish food. During the week everyone bought rye bread with the baker's name 'Jaime' written with irregular holes in the crust of the bread. When Jaime, for some reason, was distracted, all *Bom Retiro* had to eat rye bread with burnt crust. One Sunday night Jaime got drunk and *Bom Retiro* wake up the next morning without bread. For Shabbat, everyone bought the hallah made with white flour. At the rear of the grocery stores lay huge barrels of herring in brine and *zoyere ugerkes* (cucumber pickles). In street markets, people bought live chickens that were taken to be sacrificed by the *shoichet* (butcher) in Guarani Street, according to the Jewish kosher tradition.

Street vendors used to sell thin twisted bagels; and an elderly lady, with a huge wicker basket, like in Warsaw, sold the bagels and *keiss kuchen* (cheesecake) on the sidewalk of Ribeiro de Lima Street, in front of Weltman Jewish bookstore, between Graça and Jose Paulino streets. The whole world fit inside *Weltman*, World man, where yiddish books and records could be found. The elegant Marconi Cinema at 76 Correia de Melo Street gathered the children in Sunday matinees. The sessions were twofold and, during the intermission, the marble counter bar displayed several rows of the characteristic bottles of Coke filled out with "gooseberry" drinks. The bottles of Coke with "gooseberry", although translucent and exuberant, were one of the trademarks of the humble life of São Paulo City in the fifties.

Walking through the streets in Bom Retiro you could meet fellow citizens of Bendin or Mezritsh that fate brought to Brazil; other times you could find companions

from one of the six Lager that Michal went through, or from the DP Camps he was housed after the War; Jews that use to live in Liegnitz, the city where Michal and Hanna met and married; neighbors of Jaffa; and the immigrants who were lodged in the Synagogue in Munich, were arrested and finally settled down in Brazil. When researching the entry visas in Brazil of my parents' friends, I realized the origin, until then unknown to me, of some friends of my childhood for whom I felt great affinity, like Shlomo (Sloima Szykman), who was the son of a friend of my father in Bendin, and Rubens (Reuven Plapler), whose parents had lived with mine in Liegnitz. In addition, several elementary school classmates at *Renascença* in Bom Retiro were also children of Polish Jew survivors, were born in Israel and arrived in Brazil, Abraham Eidman, Anita Strulovici, Rebeca Schmuskowitz, Baruch Roth, Dorit Drezner, Amalia Pelcerman, Emanuel Friedmann, Zvi Gorny, Batia Steinfeld, Edna Baruch, Aviva Markovits, Dov Wajnberg, Baruch Werthaim and Mazal Nachmias, among others. The Jews, who for centuries lived confined in the ancient *shtetls* of Eastern Europe, brought with them marks from the countries where they wandered – their children. Leibel and Zelda Kleinman, who were housed in the Synagogue in Munich, for example, arrived with four children in Brazil, the first born in Poland, the second in Russia, the third in Cyprus and the fourth in Israel.

Bom Retiro remains a neighborhood of immigrants. Many Jews still live there, but Koreans and Bolivians are nowadays dominant. The other day I met a Korean lady whose family had been converted from Buddhism to Christianity while still inhabiting South Korea. From her point of view, Judaism and Christianity are all the same and she said that Israel was always at war for its inhabitants to emigrate and spread the word of Jesus Christ for the World.

Shoah Foundation interviewed 771 Jewish Holocaust survivors that mentioned or immigrated to Brazil; 558 of these interviews were recorded in Portuguese. Among the survivors of Bendin, who affectionately refer to each other as *Bendiner*, the destiny also brought to Brazil Bela Bogota; Adam Ptasznik, his daughter Jadwiga and his son Marjan Ptasznik; Ala Lubliner; Lazar Feldberg and his wife Betty Schwimmer; the brothers Aron, Berish and Moshe Wolf Danek, and his wife Yenta Laudon; the brothers Leib and Chaim Zawader; Grisha Szykman; and the brothers Chaim and Icek Feiman, among others. Bela Bogata, Marjan Ptasznik, Ala Lubliner and Betty Schwimmer recorded interviews for the Shoah Foundation

Bela Bogota (Bugaty) Lustman (*4may1927), daughter of Aron Moszek Bogota (*26oct1884) and Sura Cwerin (*15may1890), lived in Bendin in 1939 at 12 Podzamcze Street. Bela arrived in Brazil on February 20, 1947.

Adam Ptasznik (*15may1889), son of Zygmunt and Barbara Ptasznik, lived in Bendin in 1939 at 34 Kollataja Street. Adam, widower of Ruchla Laja (Rosa) Openhein Blumenfrucht (*1886), arrived in Brazil on June 29, 1949. His daughter Jadwiga Ptasznik Offen (*15nov1912) and his son Marjan Ptasznik (Mariano Tasnik) (*10feb1919) arrived in Brazil, respectively, in 1947 and 1949.

Ala (Laja) Lubliner Gartner (*3jun1926), daughter of Isidor (Izrael) Lubliner (*18jun1889) and Fela (Fagla) Borenstein (*16feb1893), lived in Bendin in 1939 at 12 Czeladska Street. Ala arrived in Brazil on March 31, 1948.

Lazar (Leo) Feldberg (*25aug1922), son of Aron Feldberg (*20oct1894) and Rachela Schwimmer (*27may1896), lived in Bendin in 1939 at 14 Pilsudskiego Street. Betty Schwimmer (Szwimer) (*6may1926), daughter of Szmul (Samuel) Schwimmer (*9nov1899) and Frymeta (Hanna) (*8out1898), lived in Bendin in 1939 at 6 Gornicza Street. Lazar and Betty were first-cousins and arrived in Brazil on April 24, 1953.

Aron (*6mar1920), Berish (Berek) (*1917) and Moshe Wolf Danek (*10mar1915), son of Nusyn Danek (*1887) and Sura Hinda (*1890), lived in Bendin in 1939 at 15 Podzamcze Street. Yenta Laudon (*15apr1924), daughter of Abram Laudon (*16mar1887) and Sura Zlata (*13dec1882), lived in Bendin in 1939 at 17 Browarna Street. Aron arrived in Brazil on June 12, 1953; Berish arrived on November 8, 1955; and Moshe Wolf and his wife Yenta Laudon arrived on July 4, 1958.

Leib (*26jun1917) and Chaim (Ajzyk, Jaime) Zawader (*15mar1926), son of Hersz (Hersh) Zawader (*1dec1889) and Chaja (*30nov1886), lived in Bendin in 1939 at 29 Kollataja Street. Leib and Chaim arrived in Brazil on December 7, 1953.

Grisha (Gregori) Szykman (*16oct1914), son of Shlomo (Szlama) Szykman (*21mar1879) and Etlia Mendlowicz (*15apr1875), lived in Bendin in 1939 at 30 Modrzejowska Street. Grisha arrived in Brazil on 20 August 1958.

Chaim (*7oct1926) and Icek (Isac) Feiman (*2mar1919), sons of Shulem (Szulim) Zysman Fajman (*1885) and Mirla Jacopovic (*1895), lived in Bendin in 1939 at 4 Browarna Street. Both immigrated to Bolivia after WWII. Chaim arrived in Brazil on January 12, 1963; and Icek arrived in Brazil on November 16, 1966.

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In 1954, São Paulo had over 2 million people but was still a relatively quiet city. São Paulo celebrated its fourth centenary in 1954 with the slogans “São Paulo cannot stop” and “The fastest growing city in the world”. In August of the same year, Brazil was moved by the suicide of President Getulio Vargas. Soon after came President Juscelino Kubitschek, with unparalleled joy and a bright smile on his face.

The intersection of Ipiranga and Sao Joao avenues was the high point of the city, surrounded by majestic theaters and restaurants. It was the busiest corner of São Paulo nights. The city was all cut down by tram tracks. Casa Verde tram departed from Sao Bento Square in downtown and ran through the commercial Jose Paulino Street, former Immigrant Street in *Bom Retiro*. In the evenings, in the residential area, the kids used to play in the middle of the street while their parents carried the chairs to chat with the neighbors on the sidewalks. Then came the Industrialization Plan, the construction of Brasilia, the cars and the TV, which made the adults collect their chairs from the sidewalks and their children from the street.

The first years of the family in São Paulo were not easy. To relieve the family budget my father always rented one room of the small apartment in Joao Kopke Street to a bachelor friend. For those who lived in Concentration and DP Camps, privacy was meaningless.

On January 21, 1955, Raizel, Chana’s mother who was living in Israel, emigrated to Brazil. In Raizel’s first week in São Paulo, Michal and Chana went out at night and Raizel stayed home taking care of the two children. The kids from the street, for fun, knowing that the old lady, who did not speak a word of Portuguese, was alone in the house with the children, heaped up at the gate and began to ring the bell continuously. Raizel panicked and began to scream and throw water out of the window to scare the kids. I was three years old and could not understand what my grandmother was screaming. Only much later, as an adult, I deciphered the desperate sound I kept in my head, it was *Pogrom! Pogrom!* Raizel no longer wanted to be alone at home at night and went out every time that she heard some buzz about her daughter and son-in-law going out.



Ipiranga and Sao Joao Avenues, São Paulo 1954



Santo Antonio Street, São Paulo 1956



Floods in *Bom Retiro*, São Paulo 1943

In 1956, my father and Berish Danek, one of the *Bendiners* that fate has also brought to São Paulo, managed to get horses and buggies, which stayed overnight in a small farm in Vila Zelina, and went out early in the morning to sell clothes in the streets as peddlers.



Chana entered her third pregnancy and, on October 22, 1956, Malvina was born (Malka, the name of the paternal grandmother of Michal). At home, Michal was an extremely severe man and feared by everyone but Raizel, who was a very practical and independent woman. Chana was very romantic and had genuine adoration for her father she had lost when she was eleven year old. Her father was a very loving man starting with his surname, Libman. Chana was the loving and helpful Jewish mother who took care of home and the children. She loved to make cakes, pastries and jam. In January, at the time of Ives noir grapes, she used to buy boxes and more boxes of grapes, and the kitchen became a factory that produced pies, jars of jam, syrups and wine for Passover.

The children, who had no relatives in Brazil, were very proud of the company of grandma, who, further than practical and independent, was a funny woman, spent the days in the sewing machine, made butter cookies and told stories in Yiddish. Raizel Libman drank black tea with so much pleasure that it is impossible for me to have black tea without thinking of her.



Raizel with the family, São Paulo 1957

However, Raizel didn't get used to Brazil and returned to Israel in 1958, where her two other children Moshe and Szprinze were living. Raizel went by ship, carrying back to Israel the huge trunk, the sewing machine and her spring mattress. In Israel, at the age of 65, Raizel still married a very nice old man who spoke Esperanto and brought to her house a huge cabinet clock. Raizel spent her last years in an elderly home in Israel and died at the age of 77, not before organizing a hunger strike against the poor quality of the food served in the elderly home.

After grandma Raizel left for Israel and Malvina began to speak, the official language of the house, which until then was Yiddish, was gradually being replaced by *Brazilianish* (Portuguese). Brazil was developing economically and, in 1958, Brazil won its first FIFA World Cup. It was also in 1958 that Michal, with the help of Avigdor Lenczner, fellow since the Orthodox Synagogue in Munich, managed to set up a small factory of wool sweaters and family life improved significantly. The factory, on the first floor of a building on the corner of Ribeiro de Lima and Aimores streets, was called "Mon-Avig", which sounded French but was derived from Moniek (Michal nickname) and Avigdor, the name of his partner.



São Paulo 1959

Michal and Chana became Brazilian citizens in 1961. In 1966, at 44 years old and 13 years in Brazil, Michal was having a comfortable life. However, the country was under a Military Dictatorship and had serious political problems, which resulted in the dissolution of the National Congress. It was at that time that Michal and Chana went to the Comodoro Theater at Sao Joao Avenue to watch *Battle of the Bulge* produced in 70mm Cinerama and projected onto a screen of gigantic proportions and extremely curved, which gave an overview that made the viewer feel within the movie.



Michal had seen the horrors of WWII live but, only at that time, he realized the dangers of the War. Facing the Nazi German counteroffensive at the end of the War and the casualties of the US Army that would free him from Mauthausen/Ebensee Concentration Camp, Michal began to sweat cold and had to leave the theater in the middle of the film. While he was in the War, he had to fight for survival and had no time to worry about the horrors of the War. Now, sitting comfortably in the armchair of the Comodoro Theater, he found himself in the middle of the War and could not endure on the screen the hazards that he had experienced in life. Michal became traumatized and had to undergo psychiatric treatment to digest the horrors through which he had passed during WWII.

To a greater or lesser extent, Holocaust survivors acquired neurotic disorders. Vladek Spiegelman, in *Maus*, is described as a hero during the War, but as an unwanted person during his old age. Vladek spent years of famine during the War and could not throw out food. In Art Spiegelman's comics, Vladek says "I cannot forget it... ever since Hitler I don't like to throw out even a crumb." Art's answer is shocking "Then just save the damn special K. in case Hitler ever comes back..."

Michal's friends, Holocaust survivors, had many habits in common, including card games and vodka. Leon Sztajman and Laibl (Leon) Mondrzejewski, former owner of Europe Restaurant in *Bom Retiro*, were inseparable friends. They lived playing cards for pennies. My father was very attentive and had a prodigious memory. In the middle of a rummy game, he knew which cards were in the hands of all the other players, including his partner, for whom he threw required cards on the table. Every Saturday and Sunday mornings, for decades, they were in the *platzel* for a *schnaps* in Europa Restaurant. The owner of Europe Restaurant also sat at the table and took part in the *schnaps*. One of the friends raised a toast, *lehaim*, to life, and they all emptied the glass in one sip; then another *lehaim*; and still another... When the red-haired waiter Usher served vodka at the other tables (in the *schnaps* table it was not necessary to serve vodka), he poured one dose for the customer and another for himself... so, he was drinking one shot per table. Usher, who was tall and slim, bent down to talk to the customers at the table, carrying a napkin folded over his arm, that even dirty fat seemed chic to him. When the Europe Restaurant closed its doors, the *schnaps* was not over, it moved to other restaurants in the neighborhood.

Michal was known in *Bom Retiro* by the Yiddish kindly nickname Moniek, *die schuster*, the shoemaker, in reference to his father who was a shoemaker in Bendin. On

the street, he was very popular and considered such a good, generous and correct man who loved to help people, that he was constantly being called to arbitrate disagreements in *Din Toyres (Beit Din)*, the rabbinical courts of the Jewish community. He was a simple person who never had or drove a car and never lived more than three blocks from the workplace... and from the *platzel*.



Laibl Mondrzejewski, Michal and Leon Sztajman, São Paulo 2003

My father's friends and their families were and still are very grateful to him, who always worked hard, had a good hand and was lucky in business. Moreover, those who did business with him ended up taking advantage of his good fortune. People get emotional when they meet me and insist on telling me that all the merchandise they bought from my father were sold like water; that he had helped them buy their first house without asking for guarantees etc. etc.

Michal and Chana Kilsztajn settled permanently in Brazil, where they left children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Chana passed away in 1979 and Michal at the age of 88 in 2011. In addition to his personal data, *Shulem* is the only word engraved on his tombstone in São Paulo Jewish Cemetery.

You open your eyes, the sun is shining and the sky is blue. You close your eyes, open them again after a while, and some clouds have covered the sun and the sky has turned gray. However, above the clouds, the sun is always shining.

In Memoriam

פ' נ' ⚡

ת'נ'צ'ב'ה'

Relatives named in the text and exterminated in the Holocaust unburied
(not including relatives, especially children, of whom we do not even know the names).

Michal Kilsztajn's relatives: grandparents, **Malka Kilsztajn** (*1865), **Josef Telner** (*1865); great-uncles/aunts, **Chaim Kilsztajn** (*1861), **Doba Rozenblum Kilsztajn** (*1889), **Shlomo Kilsztajn** (*1881), **Brucha Najman Kilsztajn** (*1876), **Zlata Kilsztajn Panski** (*1874), **Berek Panski** (*1878), **Izrael Kilsztajn** (*1883), **Rachla Kanarek Kilsztajn** (*1881), **Estera Kilsztajn Jakubowicz** (*1886), **Chaim Lajzer Jakubowicz** (*1886); parents, **David (Aron Dawid) Kilsztajn** (*1898), **Eidel Telner Kilsztajn** (*1900); uncles and aunts, **Fela Kilsztajn Rosencweyg** (*1899), **Lejbo Rosencweyg** (*1898), **Sura Chawa Kilsztajn** (*1908), **Chil Rozenfeld** (*1910), **Ruchla Laja Telner Zylberband** (*1896), **Zalman Zylberband** (*1889), **Labj Wolf Telner** (*1903), **Hinda Prajzer Telner** (*1906); brothers and sisters, **Heindel Kilsztajn** (*1916), **Salomon Kilsztajn** (*1918), **Feigel Kilsztajn** (*1926), **Berel Kilsztajn** (*1929), **Iakhet Kilsztajn** (*1931), **Majer Kilsztajn** (*1932), **Rivka Kilsztajn** (*1935), **Shiel Kilsztajn** (*1937), **Chawa Kilsztajn** (*1941); sister in law and nephew, **Fradla Lachtikier Kilsztajn** (*1925), **Awrum Lewek Kilsztajn** (*1942); first cousins, **Ruchla Gitla Kilsztajn** (*1933), **Estera Chaja Kilsztajn** (*1934), **Hinda Kilsztajn Rosencweyg** (*1932), **Heindel Kilsztajn Rosencweyg** (*1934), **Golda Kilsztajn Rosencweyg** (*1936), **Zysl Kilsztajn Rosencweyg** (*1939), **Fajgla Telner Zylberband** (*1915), **Rywen Telner Zylberband** (*1917), **Sura Liba Telner Zylberband** (*1926), **Chaja Gitla Telner Zylberband** (*1927), **Hersz Telner Zylberband** (*1928), **Chana Telner Zylberband** (*1931), **Sura Golda Telner Zylberband** (*1936), **Nacha Telner Zylberband** (*1938), **Icchek Telner** (*1930), **Gecel Telner** (*1932), **Jakob Telner** (*1934), **Moszek Telner** (*1936); other cousins, **Yaacov Kilsztajn** (*1896), **Osna Testyler Kilsztajn** (*1901), **Fryda Kilsztajn** (*1931), **Michuel Rozenblum Kilsztajn** (*1922), **Ruchla Rozenblum Kilsztajn** (*1925), **Mania Panska Rozenblum Kilsztajn**, **Malka Kilsztajn Panski** (*1911), **Malka Kilsztajn Litmanowics** (*1906), **Moszek**

Chil Litmanowics (*1880), Jakub Hersz Kilsztajn Litmanowics (*1926), Chaskiel Kilsztajn Litmanowics (*1928), Abram Sucher Kilsztajn Litmanowics (*1929), Ita Ruchla Kilsztajn Litmanowics (*1932), Majlech Kilsztajn Litmanowics (*1934), Szprinza Kilsztajn (*1916), Chaja Kilsztajn (*1920), Yehudit Kilsztajn (*1922), Rozia Kilsztajn (*1924), Tuvia Yosef Kilsztajn (*1912), Aron David Kilsztajn (*1923), Tauba Kilsztajn Jakubowicz Sobel (*1910), Mordka Szloma Sobel (*1906), Izrael Kilsztajn Jakubowicz Sobel (*1934), Gala Kilsztajn Jakubowicz Cukierman (*1912), Szaja Cukierman (*1909), Aron David Kilsztajn Jakubowicz (*1914), Berek Kilsztajn Jakubowicz (*1916), Rojza Kilsztajn Jakubowicz (*1919), Chaskiel Kilsztajn Jakubowicz (*1923), Mendel Kilsztajn Jakubowicz (*1925), Majer Kilsztajn Jakubowicz (*1927), Dobra Kilsztajn Jakubowicz (*1930).

Chana Libman's relatives: grandparents, **Froim Libman (*1875), Chawa Bejla Peterburg Libman (*1875)**; great-uncle/aunt, **Sara Beila Peterburg Ejchenbaum (Aichenboim) (*1877), Moshe Chaim Peterburg (*1886)**; uncles and aunt, **Mordechai Libman, Sura Libman, Laibl Libman (*1908), Zlota Fiszwangel Libman, Lea Celnik, Avrum Celnik**; cousins, **Zelda Peterburg Ejchenbaum (*1900), Chawa Peterburg Ejchenbaum (*1902), Rachel Lea Peterburg Ejchenbaum (*1904), Chana Peterburg Ejchenbaum (*1906).**

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