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JEWISH PARTISANS IN THE SOVIET UNION DURING WORLD WAR II.

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October 1995.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

Although the Soviet partisan movement in the Second World War was one of a kind, in the sense that it was far more substantial than any comparable phenomenon in the West, the Jewish role within it had its own historical peculiarities. If Jewish motives for taking up arms against the occupying forces of the Third Reich were much the same as those of other partisans, they were forced to come to terms with the anti-Semitism not only of their Axis foes, but of so-called collaborators, anti-Nazi but anti-Soviet nationalists, and anti-Nazi but anti-Semitic Soviet partisans. This subject has not been explored by Soviet historians for obvious ideological reasons and the scant literature in English so far is limited largely to eye-witness accounts and insufficient statistics, which this thesis makes use of. Its purpose is to attempt to ascertain the Jewish contribution to the Soviet partisan movement and the circumstances, some of them unique, that defined it.

RESUME

Bien que le mouvement partisan soviétique pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale fût seul en son genre, dans le sens qu'il était beaucoup plus important que n'importe quel phénomène dans l'Ouest, le rôle juif à l'intérieur de celui-ci avait ses propres particularités historiques. Si les motifs juifs pour prendre les armes contre les forces occupantes du troisième Reich étaient plutôt pareils à ceux des autres partisans, les juifs ont été forcés à faire face à l'anti-sémitisme non seulement de leurs ennemis Axis, mais aussi des soi-disant collaborateurs, nationalistes anti-Nazi mais anti-soviétiques, et partisans soviétiques anti-Nazi et anti-sémitique. Ce sujet n'a pas été examiné par les historiens soviétiques pour des raisons idéalistes évidentes et la litérature anglaise peu abondante jusqu'à maintenant est limitée en grande partie à l'évidence portée par les témoins et aux statistiques insuffisantes, que cette thèse utilise. Le but est de tenter de vérifier la contribution juive au mouvement partisan soviétique et les circonstances, quelques-unes uniques, qui la définient.

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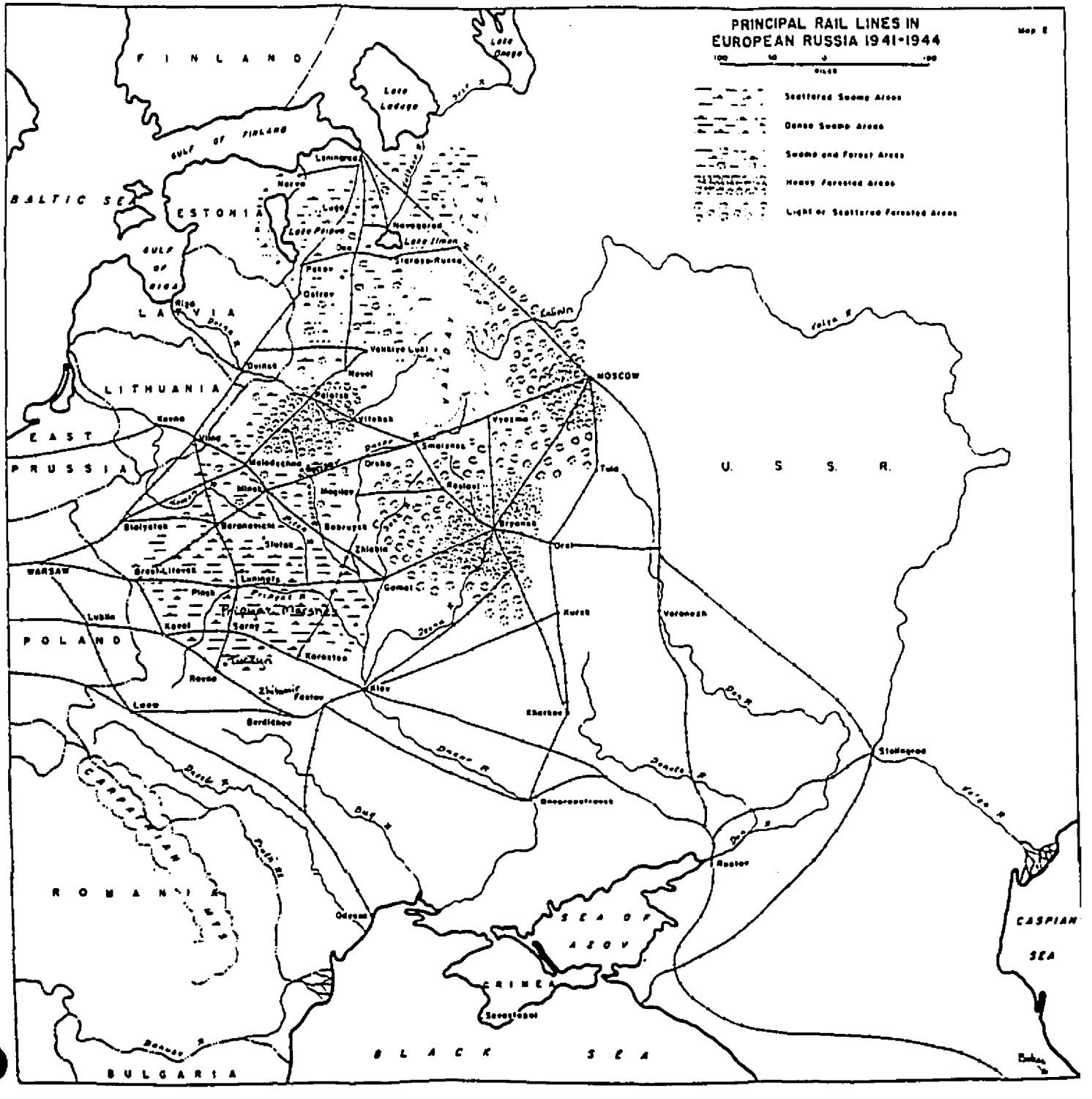
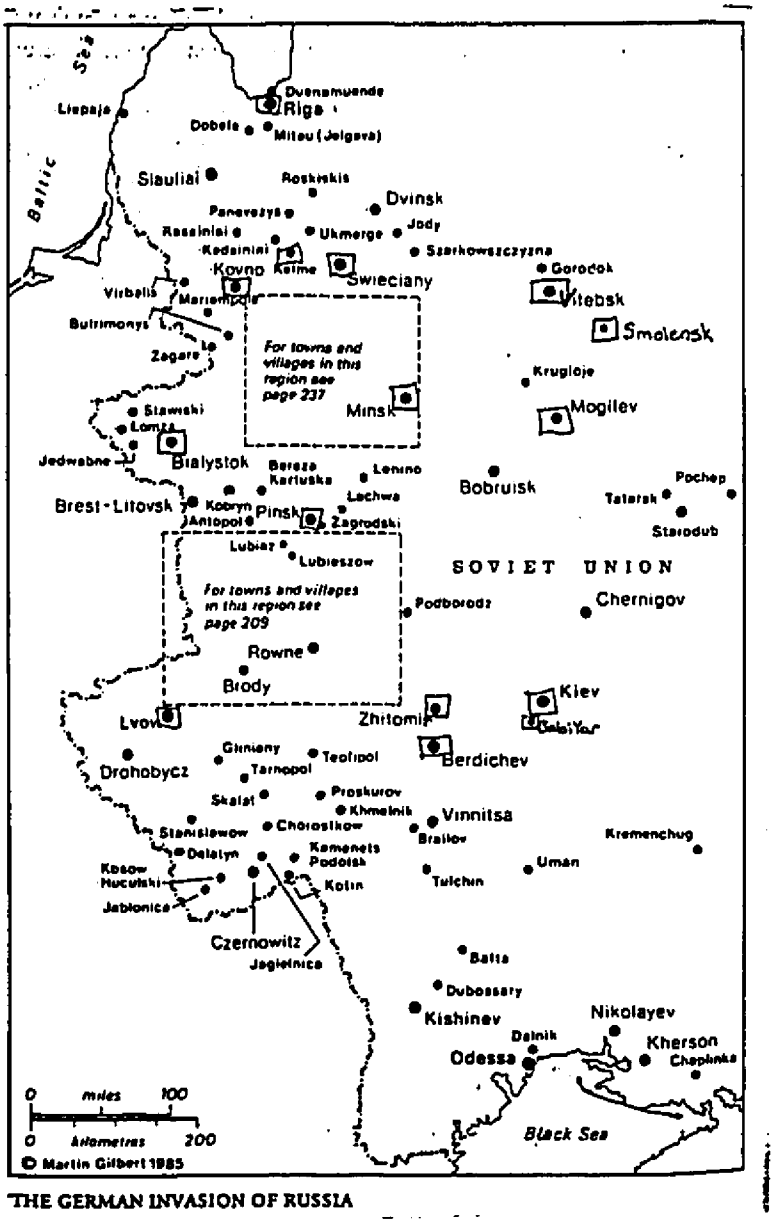


Principal rail lines in European Russia, 1941–1944.

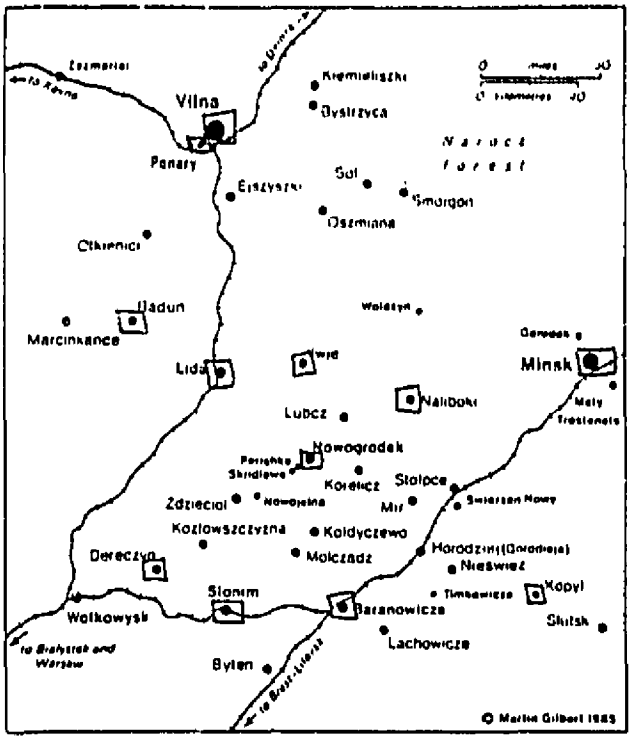
Source: Howell, Edgar. The Soviet Partisan Movement, 1941-1944. Dept. of the Army, August 1956.



THE GERMAN INVASION OF RUSSIA

Source: Gilbert, M. The Holocaust. Great Britain, Fontana/Collins, (1986), p.156.

Cities and villages mentioned in the text have squares around their locations.



THE NOWOGRODEK REGION

Source: Gilbert, M. The Holocaust. Great Britain, Fontana/Collins, (1986), p.237.

THE VOLHYNIA

Source: Gilbert, M. The Holocaust. Great Britain, Fontana/Collins, (1986), p.209.

INTRODUCTION: JEWS, THE SOVIET UNION, AND WORLD WAR II.

Much has been written about the Second World War and the Holocaust. There are many books describing in detail the torture and murder of Jews by the Nazis. There is also a considerable amount of information about the national resistance movements in the German-occupied countries. Many people have heard about the Warsaw ghetto uprising and of the bombing of the Auschwitz crematorium, however, few realize that in almost every ghetto and camp there was an underground movement and efforts at resistance. I previously did some research regarding the extensive and varied German Jewish resistance to the Nazis in Germany. Although I chose to deal with every action consciously taken by individuals or groups, armed or unarmed, organized, semi-organized, or spontaneous, that was in opposition to the Nazis and their supporters, I did not find any evidence of a Jewish partisan movement in Germany. Armed resisters were few and far between. The Baum group, named after Herbert Baum, is one of the few that is known. It is credited with sabotage work at the Siemens Electric Motors company where most of its members did forced labor and was responsible for the fire and subsequent death of five Nazis at the "Soviet Paradise" exhibition on May 18, 1942.[1]

The group included Communists, Zionists, and others. Despite their differences of opinion, they were united by their hate of Nazism and their feeling of solidarity with

the Soviet Union.[2] Two surviving members of the group, Charlotte and Richard Holzer, reported that the group's activities increased following the German invasion of the Soviet Union.[3] This prompted my curiosity about the Jewish resistance in the Soviet Union, and in particular, the armed Jewish resistance.

A comparison of the German and Soviet Jews shows that unity and cohesion among the Jews was as difficult in the Soviet Union as in Germany. Some Jews wanted to attack the Germans while others felt that if they "behaved" they would survive, at least for a little while. Like the Jewish partisans in the Soviet Union, the Baum group resorted to confiscating valuables in order to procure funds, arms, and food. The Baum group stole valuables which were about to be seized from wealthy Jews by the Nazis, whereas the Soviet Jewish partisans seized theirs from collaborators and peasants, that is, their enemies.[4]

Here the similarities between the German Jews, and in particular the Baum group, and the Jews in the Soviet Union end. The Baum group was short-lived while the Jewish partisans fought throughout the war. The Jews in the Soviet Union faced a unique situation. They were the specific targets of the German invaders, were forced to live in ghettos, and were being killed as part of Hitler's Final Solution. Hitler argued that Judaism and Marxism were the two perils threatening the existence of the German people.[5]

In *Mein Kampf*, Hitler claimed that "the Jewish politicians were masters of 'dialectical perfidy,' their very mouths 'distorted the truth.' Marxism was a Jewish device, a Jewish trap."[6]

Thus the Jews found themselves in the awkward position of having nowhere to go and having to battle on two fronts. They faced being killed by the German invaders or being in an unpredictable environment, particularly in Ukraine and Belorussia where they faced antagonism or threats from anti-Semitic Soviet partisans as well as from the Banderovtsy and Vlasovites, who, in a way, shared the same motives as the Zionists. They wanted their own place and were fighting for their right to self-determination and autonomy. Their methods, though questionable, were understandable considering the history of Ukraine and Russia.

Anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union had ancient roots. During the nineteenth century, anti-Jewish violence often turned into physical conflict, popular persecution, and even pogroms. As Martin Gilbert points out, both the church and the state claimed that the Jews were enemies of Christianity and intruders in the citizens' lives.[7] In Russia, prior to 1917, the Jews were subject to special laws. They were obliged to live in strictly defined areas in the south western and northwestern parts of the empire. They were prohibited from purchasing landed property or settling outside of the towns, and could alter their status only by

converting to Christianity.[8] Prejudice was most deeply rooted in Volhynia, White Russia, and Ukraine. At the end of the First World War, pogroms against the Jews continued undiminished. The Ukrainian Nationalist leader, Simon Petlura, and his followers are said to have killed thousands of Jews, at that time.[9]

Following the Bolshevik revolution, Jewish religious and cultural activities associated with synagogues faced some persecution though the Soviet regime was rather ambivalent towards the Jews in those years. Around one thousand Jewish schools were closed in 1922 to 1923, however this was primarily done by the Jews themselves who wished to show their loyalty to the revolution.[10] Sven Steenberg states that the Jewish question was not a problem for most of the Russians as they were accustomed to a multinational state. Those who expressed anti-Semitic feelings often pointed to the high percentage of Jews among the Communist leaders as justification.[11]

The Jews tried to fight for their rights as best they could but found little support. In Russia and, later, the Soviet Union, Jews were considered a nationality even though they had no country and were largely a religious group. Yet in 1901, the Bund demanded that the Jews be recognized as a nation and wished to function as the Jewish working class' exclusive representative.[12] This, of course, did not occur. The various political parties of the early 1900s, including

the Social Democrats, the Socialist Revolutionaries, and the Constitutional Democrats, claimed that they supported equality for the Jews but did little, if anything, to actually help them as a separate entity.[13]

Up until 1912, the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks rejected cultural autonomy on the grounds that this maintained barriers between the various national proletariats. Nationalism was viewed as a bourgeois phenomenon, which was not in the interest of international socialism.[14] However, the idea of national-cultural autonomy slowly gained support among the Mensheviks and, in 1917, it was officially incorporated into their platform.[15]

Lenin believed in the self-determination of the proletariat of every nationality and that workers therefore should remain united under centralized communist control. In individual, exceptional cases it was legitimate to support demands for the creation of a new state or the formation of a federal bond.[16] Since Lenin too considered nationalism a bourgeois phenomenon, he accepted the orthodox Marxist view that it would vanish with its collapse.[17] In 1918, in an attempt to prevent the slogan of national self-determination from undermining socialist unity, Lenin had the newly formed national republics overthrown wherever possible, including the Belorussian Rada. He also supported the Bolshevik invasion of the Ukraine.[18]

Stalin became an active chairman of the Commissariat of

Nationality Affairs in the spring of 1920 and slowly began to turn it into a more powerful organization.[19] He did not go along with Lenin's thesis on the relationship of the Russians toward minorities, which as a Russian, Lenin could afford to castigate, and used basic Communist assumptions to his advantage. As Richard Pipes puts it, for Stalin

> the unity, centralization, and omnipotence of the Communist Party, the hegemony of the industrial proletariat over the peasantry, the subordination of the national principle to the class principle - all those Communist doctrines which were in fact responsible for the plight of the minorities- were axiomatic and beyond dispute.[20]

Stalin came to place greater emphasis on the Soviet Union than on the world revolution; and on the Russians within the Soviet Union rather than on a multi-national Soviet Union.[21] In the late 1920s and in the 1930s, he chose centralization imposed by Moscow over federalism and favored social conservatism and Russian chauvinism which promoted Russification as well as anti-Semitism.[22]

In Ukraine, in 1917 and 1918, the successes or failures of the Ukrainian government to establish a solid foundation for the peaceful and independent existence of the newly-created Ukrainian state was mirrored by the fortunes and misfortunes of the Jewish community.[23] A new Ukrainian government was proclaimed on July 16, 1917. All minority groups were to be provided with a status of full equality. Unfortunately, Kerensky's Provisional Government refused to recognize the Ukraine's demand for autonomy. In reaction to

the Bolshevik *coup* on November 7, 1917, the Ukrainian People's Republic was established on November 20.[24] After this, there was a period of confusion, extreme violence, and anarchy. As control over the army declined, pogroms occurred daily. The Bolsheviks invaded in January 1918. Animosity between the cities and the villages grew. The Jews, traditionally viewed as exploiters and speculators, were blamed for the misfortunes of the country. They also came to be identified with Communism, which made murdering Jews merely an extension of the anti-Bolshevik struggle.

Although the government itself opposed the pogroms and threatened punitive measures, it was powerless to prevent the population and troops from acting on their own.[25] During the late 1920s calm was restored, often by brutal means, but eventually an organization came into being yet again to fight for Ukrainian independence. Known as the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), it was led by Yaroslav Stetsko. In 1940, the OUN split in two with the mostly older members following Andrei Melnyk and the younger, more uncompromising members following Stefan Bandera, who was the western Ukrainian leader. Both formed military units which trained in German-occupied territories.[26] In March 1941, Stefan Bandera's group issued a declaration calling for Ukrainian independence and individual freedom.[27] Members of the Bandera faction then officially declared Ukraine's independence in Lviv on June 30, 1941. A pogrom against the

Jewish population followed the radio announcement.[28]

In 1942, the OUN became more military than political and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army, or UPA, was created. According to David Marples, groups within the UPA formed a security service that interrogated, tortured, and terrorized the population and collaborated with the Nazis. Known for executing Jews, attacking entire villages, and indiscriminately killing anyone suspected of supporting the Soviets, the partisans knew and feared the UPA.[29] The Germans arrested OUN leaders under Stetsko and placed Bandera under house arrest. From then on, he did not play an active role in the events, being sentenced to death for his revolutionary activities, although the sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment.[30] Later, Bandera was released together with supporters who returned to Ukraine to continue their earlier activities. Some, including Bandera, feared recognition and recapture and made their way to Western European countries.[31]

Denounced by Soviet historians, reexamination of Bandera's actual role since 1989 has shown that a majority of the UPA members opposed the Germans. Individual policemen, and not members of the UPA or SS, were for the most part responsible for atrocities against the Jews, though some UPA leaders were known to hold anti-Semitic views.[32] Bandera, dubbed a traitor by Stalin's regime, has been rehabilitated following the collapse of the USSR and in

some towns and villages in a newly independent Ukraine, his statue has replaced that of Lenin.[33]

Apart from Bandera's group, the Vlasovites were also feared by the Jewish partisans. Major General Andrey Andreyevich Vlasov was of peasant origins. He had enthusiastically supported the revolution and had a successful career as a Red Army officer. He experienced and was able to see at close hand how Stalin and his regime acted. He was captured by the Germans in 1942 and received good treatment from them. All of these events combined caused him to turn against Stalin and the system.[34] He did not consider it treason to collaborate with and accept aid from the Germans -nor, after all, had Lenin in 1917- in order to destroy Stalin's regime. He justified this by noting that a majority of the population wanted Stalin overthrown.[35] This was a reasonable assumption since, in several instances, when the German soldiers invaded the USSR, they were greeted as liberators with bread and salt. The loss of millions of lives in Stalin's purges, the labor camps, and the forced collectivization were still fresh in Soviet minds. On January 14, 1942, a Red Army Captain wrote in his diary that many of the villagers had collaborated with the invaders and had betrayed the partisans.[36]

Vlasov became the titular head of the Russian National Committee which was founded at the end of 1942.[37] The Smolensk Manifesto was the first issued by the Vlasov

Movement and described the committee's program which called for the Red Army to join its army and fight side by side with the Germans.[38] General Vlasov later wrote an open letter explaining why he took up arms against Bolshevism. Throughout the letter, it is clear that he is anti-Bolshevik and anti-Stalin. There is, however, no hint of animosity towards the Jews.[39] In the movement's Prague Manifesto of November 14, 1944, there was no criticism of the Jews, despite pressure from the Nazi authorities to include anti-Semitic statements.[40]

The Vlasov Movement was not a "right-" or "left-wing" organization. Anti-Semitism was not part of its ideology, though some serious charges were lodged against the movement.[41] In an outline of courses from the Dabendorf Propaganda School, the courses on "The Jewish Question" and "Jewry in Russia" were anti-Semitic in their content and linked the anti-Bolshevik struggle with the Struggle against Jews.[42]

Vlasov sought the opposite of what the present regime represented, that is, justice, private property, individual security, and freedom from oppression. Germany's National Socialism was not desired nor was it considered suitable. Vlasov's initial high esteem for the Germans grew into distaste and disillusionment, however, he continued to use their resources[43] and Stalin responded by denouncing Vlasov, along with several others, as traitors and spies. Thus the

Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued a decree on April 19, 1943, in accordance with which the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR condemned Vlasov and his supporters to be hanged.[44]

In order to defeat the Germans, the Soviet Union relied not only on the Red Army, but on the partisans as well. The Bolsheviks had made extensive use of partisans in the Civil War of 1918 to 1920, but the Soviet partisan movement as organized during the Second World War was unique. It constituted the largest in Europe and became more and more closely linked with the army and with the Communist Party, towards the end of the war. Indeed, the Central Staff for Partisan Warfare was attached to the Supreme Headquarters of the Red Army. Marshal Klimentii Voroshilov, the Minister of Defence, was commander-in-chief of the movement. Panteleymon Ponomarenko, First Secretary of the Communist Party of Belorussia, was made Lieutenant-General and Chief of Staff. He appointed and dismissed partisan leaders, signed Central Staff orders, and generally directed operations.[45] By 1944, the partisan movement became a powerful arm of the Red Army.[46]

The partisans, or guerrillas, were members of bands of irregular troops who took part in the war independently of the principal combatants and engaged in many risky enterprises. They knew the countryside well, and operated in small groups using the forest, swamps, mountains, and so on,

to their advantage. Choosing their targets carefully,[47] they weakened German positions, harassed fleeing troops, and helped with the "clean-up" and reorganization of areas that were freed from the Germans. Jews played a substantial role in the movement and in many cases, even initiated the resistance groups. They found it difficult to choose what actions to take and when. The unique aspects of Jewish life under German occupation, in the ghettos and as partisans living in the forests, led to drastic changes in their lives. Sticking to their own groups and making themselves valuable to the partisans as specialists were the main methods by which the Jews fought back and the means they used for self-preservation. They segregated themselves, as the Nazis had segregated them, but for different reasons.

The Jewish role has not been properly assessed in Soviet studies of partisan warfare. Literature on the subject in English is also scant -although not for the same reasons-. Hence the purpose of the present essay is to answer a question rarely posed and unanswered: What did Jewish partisans try to achieve and to what degree did they become involved in the very peculiar circumstances that prevailed on the Eastern front? The sole scholarly study of the subject, Jewish Partisans: A Documentary of Jewish Resistance in the Soviet Union During World War II, by J.N. Porter, was only published in 1982. Porter's parents, ironically, themselves took part in the Jewish partisan

movement in the Soviet Union; his father was a commander and his mother was a cook.

Endnotes

1. Eschwege, Helmut. "Resistance of German Jews Against the Nazi Regime," in Leo Baeck Institute Year Book, (1970), p.175.
   At the beginning of 1942, Goebbels organized an anti-Soviet exhibition in Berlin. The arson at the exhibition aroused admiration among anti-fascist circles. Some misgivings were expressed since the Gestapo would, and did, use the incident as a pretext for increasing its actions against the Jews. Most of the Baum group was subsequently arrested, tortured, and killed, along with several hundred other Jews.(Ibid.)
2. Ibid., p.170.
3. Ibid., p.172.
4. Ibid., p.174. The Baum "victims" were informed and approved of the robberies.
5. Hitler, Adolf. Mein Kampf. London, 1939, p.61-62, as cited in Gilbert, Martin. The Holocaust. The Jewish Tragedy. Great Britain, (1986), p.26.
6. Ibid., p.64, as cited in Gilbert, p.26.
7. Gilbert, p.20.
8. Pipes, Richard. The Formation of the Soviet Union. Communism and Nationalism. 1917-1923. Cambridge, (1964), p.5-6.
9. Gilbert, p.22.
10. Kochan, Lionel and Richard Abraham. The Making of Modern Russia. Great Britain, (1983), p.356.
11. Steenberg, Sven. Vlasov. New York, (1970), p.99.
12. Pipes, p.32-33.
13. Ibid., p.29-31.
14. Ibid., p.33.
15. Ibid., p.34.
16. Ibid., p.36.
17. Ibid., p.41-42.
18. Ibid., p.108.
19. Liber, George O. Soviet Nationality Policy, Urban Growth, and Identity Change in the Ukrainian SSR, 1923-1934. Cambridge, (1992), p.156.
    In 1918, S.D. Dimanshtein became Stalin's deputy at the Commissariat of Nationalities and was responsible for Jewish affairs.
20. Pipes, p.291.
21. Liber, p.152.
22. Ibid. These ideas had begun to ferment earlier on. In an article on December 12, 1917, Stalin had asserted that national self-determination could not be permitted to serve as a cloak for counterrevolution. This became justification for the purges unleashed by him in the Ukraine and other republics in later years.(Pipes, p.109.)
23. Hunczak, Taras. "Simon Petliura and the Jews: a Reappraisal," in Ukrainian Historical Association, (1), 1985, p.8.
24. Ibid., p.9-10.

25. Ibid., p.20-21.
26. Marples, p.66.
27. Ukrainian Congress Committee of America. Ukrainian Resistance The Story of the Ukrainian National Liberation Movement in Modern Times. New York, (1949), p.37-38.
28. Marples, David R. Stalinism in Ukraine in the 1940s. Great Britain, St. Martin's Press, (1992), p.66.
29. Ibid., p.67.
30. Ibid., p.76.
31. Ukrainian Congress Committee of America. Ukrainian Resistance. The Story of the Ukrainian National Liberation Movement in Modern Times. New York, Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, (1949), p.35.
32. Marples, p.77.
33. Ibid., p.81.
34. Steenberg, p.40. In order to not endanger his military career, Vlasov's wife had publicly repudiated her parents after their land was confiscated and they were accused of being Kulaks. Vlasov then, secretly, supported them.
35. Ibid., p.71.
36. Ibid., p.33.
37. Fischer, George. Soviet Opposition to Stalin: A Case Study in World War II. Cambridge, (1952), p.37,41.
38. Ibid., p.60.
39. Strik-Strikfeldt, Wilfried. Against Stalin and Hitler. Memoir of the Russian Liberation Movement, 1941-1945. London, (1970), p.255.
40. Andreyev, Catherine. Vlasov and the Russian Liberation Movement. Soviet Reality and Emigré Theories. Cambridge, (1987), p.203.
41. Fischer, p.152.
42. Ibid., p.187-191. Dabendorf was the center of the Vlasov Movement's propaganda work.
43. Steenberg, p.113-114.
44. Ibid., p.226.
45. Cooper, Matthew. The Phantom War. The German Struggle Against Soviet Partisans, 1941-1944. London, Macdonald & Jane's, (1979), p.29-30.
46. Dallin, Alexander. "Partisan Movement in World War II," in McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Russia and the Soviet Union, p.411. The partisans of the RSFSR, the Ukraine and Belorussia provided enormous assistance to the Soviet Army. Among some of the names of partisans which will always be connected with the Great Patriotic War and the history of the Soviet people are: V.A. Andreev,...S.A. Kovpak,...M.I. Naumov, D.N. Popov, S.V. Rudnev, A.N. Saburov, A.F. Fedorov,...and many others. (Info USSR, p.213.)
47. Eckman, Lester Samuel, and Chaim Lazar. The Jewish Resistance The History of the Jewish Partisans in Lithuania and White Russia During the Nazi Occupation, 1940-1945. New York, (1977), p.8-11. (Will be referred to as Eckman/Lazar in future references.)

WORLD WAR II

The Second World War began with the German invasion of Poland that had been predetermined by the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact which came into being August 23, 1939 and was modified on September 28, 1939. On September 1, Germany attacked western Poland and, by September 18, the Polish army was defeated. Britain and France ordered the Germans to withdraw and declared war against the Third Reich on September 3, following its failure to meet the ultimatum's deadline. The Soviet Union, in accordance with the non-aggression pact, did nothing until September 17, when the Red Army entered Eastern Poland. The Soviet Union annexed Eastern Galicia and Western Belorussia in September 1939. On February 11, 1940, the German and Soviet governments signed an economic agreement in order to render the British blockade ineffective. Lithuania and the Vilna area, Latvia, and Estonia were annexed by the Soviet Union in June 1940, and Bessarabia and northern Bukovina in July.[1]

The annexation of these new territories and populations increased the Jewish population of the Soviet Union, from approximately 3,080,000 to 5,250,000.[2] This Jewish population was deeply shocked -as were others- by the swift capitulation of Poland to the Nazis, which is why most welcomed the Soviet presence. Jews hoped that it would protect them from the Germans. When the Red Army entered the newly annexed territories, the Soviet authorities began to

impose Soviet-style administrative, economic, cultural, and social frameworks. A policy of Ukrainization and White-Russification ensued. The Jews came to be regarded with suspicion as the inherent antisemitism of the population resurfaced. Paradoxically, many Jews were accused of being Nazi spies. Arrests, investigations, and deportations were frequent.[3] Jewish refugees from Nazi-occupied territories raised the suspicions of the NKVD (secret police) by trying to maintain contact with friends and family members they had left behind. Middle class Jews suffered owing to the nationalization policies imposed by Soviets authorities. Most of the intelligentsia, (except teachers, who were needed), survived unemployment by the sale of personal belongings and the support of relatives. They sold furniture and family heirlooms in order to barter them for food, since at a time of scarcety (where the civilian population was concerned) money itself no longer inspired confidence. Some young Jews went off to work and sent their ruble earnings back to their families in order to help them. They worked in the Ural coal mines, and in industrial plants and collectives in Belorussia, the Ukraine, and Russia.[4]

Just over one year after the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, on December 18, 1940, Hitler ordered preparations for "Operation Barbarossa," the invasion of the USSR. Meanwhile, on January 10, 1941, a German-Soviet economic agreement was concluded and in May 1941, Stalin

officially recognized the new situation brought about in the Balkans by German expansion. The peculiar amity of the Nazi and Soviet dictators took a critical turn on June 22, 1941, when the army of the Third Reich invaded the USSR without a declaration of war. The Germans attacked in three simultaneous directions; towards Leningrad, Moscow, and Ukraine and the south-west. In response, Stalin proclaimed the "Great Patriotic War," which to Russians recalled the Napoleonic invasion, when the country was also defended by the use of a "scorched earth" policy and the employment of partisans. Twenty days later, on July 12, the British and Soviets concluded an alliance. One month later, on August 14, the Soviet government and the Polish government-in-exile signed a military agreement. The Soviet government declared that all agreements with Germany regarding the partitions of Poland were revoked.

Red Army soldiers were in full retreat. Some hid in the forests or were hidden by peasants, while others simply fled. A number of soldiers were captured by the Germans and were placed in camps where many died. The Germans moved on towards Moscow, meeting with strong resistance at Smolensk and failing to capture the Russian capital, although some German units did manage to reach Moscow's suburbs. The bitter battle for the city lasted from October to December 1941. Leningrad was besieged for 28 months, and also never fell into German hands even though most of western Russia

was occupied. This was a key area as it contained two-thirds of the heavy industry and eighty per cent of the population. Yet much of the industrial plants and as well as the workers had been evacuated to the east using the Siberian railroad.

In early December 1941, the Germans began a strategic retreat brought about by the Red Army's successful defence of Moscow and an exceptionally cold winter, for which the infantry of the Third Reich was even less prepared than the Soviets. The Red Army then began its winter offensive which lasted until the Germans' counterattack in May 1942. The main target of the German summer offensive was the Caucasian oilfields, and in particular the main Baku oil area in Azerbaidjan. They managed to regain some territory previously occupied, but on November 19, the Soviet counteroffensive began. The German troops were surrounded in Stalingrad and surrendered in February 1943 after Hitler had refused to allow Von Paulus, his commander, to withdraw and German relief forces failed to break through the Russian lines. The Red Army's successful offensives continued, culminating with the drive towards Berlin in January 1945, and ending in May following the city's capture. This brought the war in Europe to an end.[5]

How did the German invasion of the Soviet Union affect the Jews? Germany occupied most of the Soviet-annexed territories, including all of Belorussia and much of the western Ukraine. Unconcerned about the local population's

reaction, the Nazis behaved without restraint and they immediately began mass killings of Jews as part of the Final Solution.[6] *Einsatzgruppen*, mobile killing squads, followed the German army into the Soviet Union and slaughtered the Jews in two waves, from June to October 1941 and again in January 1942. The Baltic states, White Russia, Ukraine, and the Crimea-Caucasus area each fell under the control of *Einsatzgruppen* of battalion strength.[7] These mobile units had unlimited power as they were independent of the army and consisted of 500 to 900 men. The Germans often recruited Ukrainians, Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians as auxiliary police when they needed greater numbers.[8] The areas that were occupied by the Nazis were divided up politically and administratively into areas under civilian German rule. This included Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, part of Belorussia, Ukraine, and an area under military rule which included German-occupied Soviet Union.[9]

In the regions annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939-40, evacuation of Jews was impossible due to the rapid advance of the Germans. In the first wave, the *Einsatzgruppen* advanced 600 miles into Russian territory. Many Jews were ignorant of what awaited them and chose not to flee. Approximately 15,000 Jews, mostly Soviet officials, escaped while 220,000 to 225,000 Jews remained in German-occupied Lithuania.[10] Many of the Jews who had fled to the Caucasus and the Crimea were overtaken by the Germans' quick advance

in the fall of 1941 and the summer of 1942 and were killed. Large-scale massacres occurred widely. Between October 23 and 25, 1941, about 26,000 Odessa Jews were killed. By April 16, 1942, approximately 90,000 Jews were killed in the Crimea and the area was declared free of Jews.[11] Approximately 4 million Jews lived in the areas occupied by the Germans, and of these, some 3 million or so were murdered. The rest were saved by deportation, evacuation, drafting into the Red Army, or by joining the partisans. Few of the Jews who remained in the cities and towns survived the war.[12]

The Nazis established ghettos in western Ukrainian and eastern Belorussian cities such as Vilna, Kovno, Shavli, Bialystok, Riga, Minsk, Mogilev, Zhitomir, and Berdichev. In many places, the Jews were killed before ghettos could be established.[13] In the fall and winter of 1941, those Jews who were not immediately killed, were segregated, registered, forced to wear the yellow star, being only permitted hand luggage and deprived of food. Usually, this meant starvation or freezing to death. Many were shot in nearby woods and ravines. The ghettos were set up in the decrepit outskirts of towns or were improvised on empty lots, in decayed halls, factories, huts, and warehouses. Closed ghettos were mostly set up in the second month of the German occupation in places with large Jewish communities and regional towns. Open lots, fenced in with barbed-wire,

often served as ghettos in these areas.[14]

The ghettos were decimated by the Germans in 1941 and 1942. The German administration of Lithuania initiated the extermination operations carried out in Eastern Lithuania, between January 1942 and July 1943.[15] In Western Belorussia and the RSFSR, twelve of the twenty-three ghettos were destroyed before the end of 1941, and six more within the first two months of 1942. In Ukraine, forty-three of the seventy were liquidated before the end of 1941, and the rest by mid-1942. The Germans and local police would surround the ghetto, telling the Jews to gather in order to be evacuated. They were then led to nearby forests or ravines and shot.[16] The worst massacre took place at Babi Yar, outside Kiev, where over 33,000 Jews were killed between September 29 and 30, 1941.[17] Similar mass executions took place at Ponary, Polykovichi, Ilovsky Yar, the Ninth Fort, Mogalenshchina, and numerous other killing grounds.[18]

The Minsk ghetto, with a population of 80,000 to 100,000 Jews was created on July 20, 1941, and was the fourth largest ghetto in Eastern Europe.[19] The Jews of Minsk, like those of other Soviet towns, had no organized religious body or political movement to turn to. Thus, unification and organization of the Jews was difficult.[20] It is estimated that 175,000 of the 220,000 Jews living in Lithuania were killed between July and November 1941, while the rest were enclosed in the Vilna, Kovno, Shavli, and Swieciany

ghettos.[21]

Bialystok, Polish up to November 1, 1939, then Belorussian until June 27, 1941, was incorporated by the Germans into the German province of Eastern Prussia. This was no doubt, at least in part, due to the fact that Bialystok was an industrial center, especially important for its textile industries.[22] The 200,000 Jews of the district "enjoyed" special political status under the Nazi occupation.[23]

When Vilna was added to Lithuania, the number of Lithuanian Jews increased by 80,000 from 150,000 to 230,000. In the last months of 1939, it is estimated that 15,000 Jewish refugees reached Lithuania from German and Soviet-occupied Poland. Included in this figure are survivors of the liquidations of the Swieczany, Rzesza, Bezdany, and other ghettos.[24] Approximately 5,000 Jews managed to emigrate before the Germans came, and a further 5,000 were deported to the Soviet Union in June 1941.[25] In the last phase of the liquidation of the Vilna ghetto, *the "Jerusalem of Lithuania,"* the German command gave the order to wipe out every remnant of Jewish life and spirit. Jews were gathered and shot in parks, squares, cemeteries, and so on. Sometimes they were gathered in buildings, particularly synagogues, which were then set on fire. At the same time, Germans wrought their fury upon the Torah scrolls by stepping on them, ripping them into pieces, and burning them.[26]

When Jews began escaping from ghettos in larger numbers, the Germans intensified their campaign of terror. Jews were now dog-tagged to make identification easier.[27] A new daily policy of collective responsibility was implemented. If an escaped Jew was identified, in retribution his immediate family (parents, spouse, children) as well as his labor camp leader (the person who supervised him during forced labor) were killed. This was intended as a deterrent for Jews considering fleeing to the forest.

Endnotes

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   In Eastern Galicia (Western Ukraine) and Western Belorussia, there were 1,220,000 Jews, living mainly in Bialystok, Pinsk, Grodno, Rovno, and Lvov; there were 300,000 living in Western Poland, including Polish-Jewish refugees who had fled from the Nazi-occupied territories; there were 250,000 Jews in Lithuania, living mainly in Vilna and Kovno; 100,000 lived in Latvia and Estonia, mainly in Riga; and 300,000 Jews lived in Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, mainly in Kishinev and Chernovtsy.
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PARTISANS: BEGINNINGS OF SOVIET ARMED RESISTANCE

Mountains, forests, or swamps are ideal territory for partisan warfare, but there were few mountainous areas in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. Soviet partisans attempted to make use of the northwestern part of the Caucasus and the foothills, the small Yaila range in the Crimea, and the Carpathians in western Ukraine, but had little success due mainly to the fact that the local populations, such as the Tatars, were uncooperative and opposed the Soviet regime.[1] The most "successful" partisans in the northern Caucasus operated in the swamps of the Kuban river delta.[2]

Much of the German-occupied territory was flat and open except for small swamp and forest areas along the waterways. Any detachment that tried to operate in these areas was attacked and destroyed by the Germans.[3] The northern part of the occupied territories was forested and had numerous swamps and lakes. The Pripet marshes were too deep, however, to be used. The partisans based themselves, instead, in better-drained forest areas of Bryansk, in smaller swamp regions, and on the fringes of the Pripet.[4]

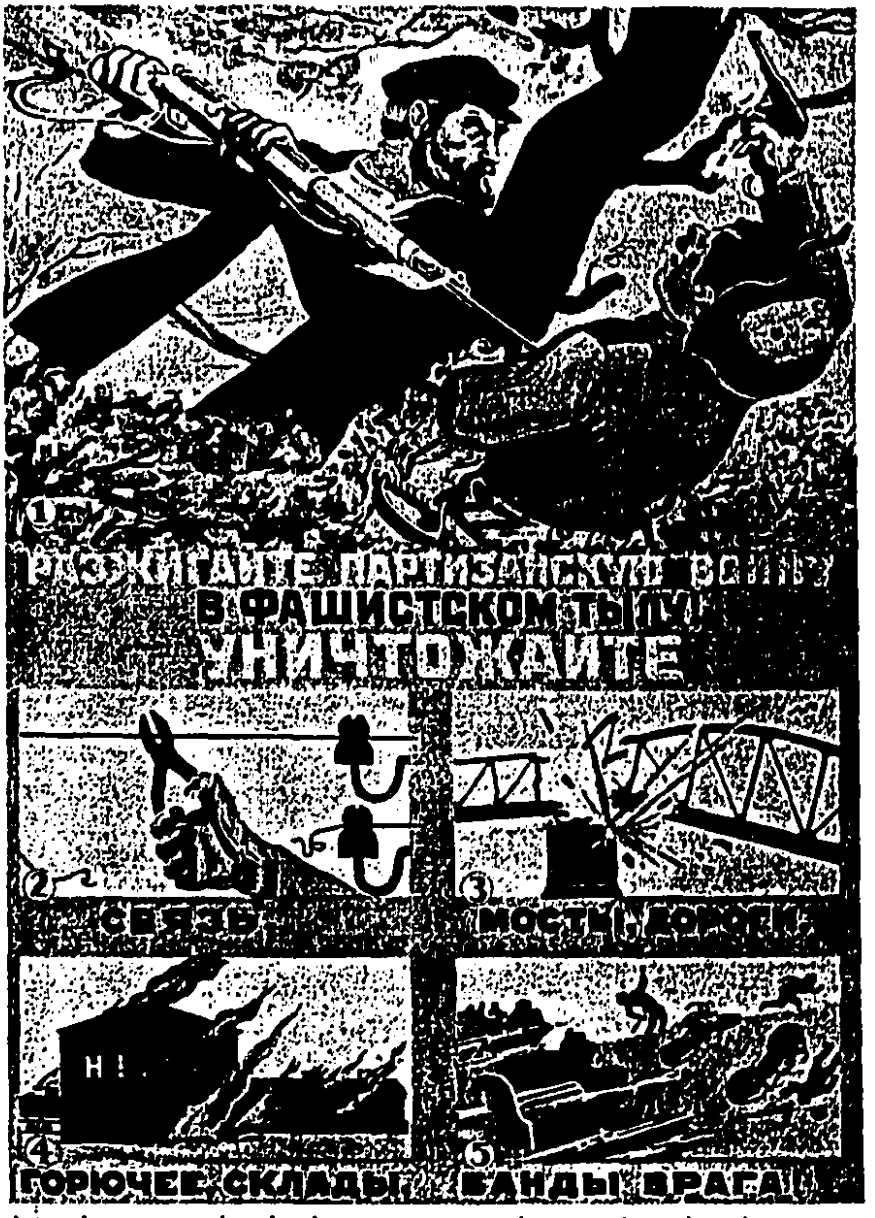
Little information is available on the early stages and planning of partisan activity before 1941. It appears that on June 27, five days after the war began, Nikita Khrushchev, head of the Ukrainian Communist party, gave detailed instructions to a provincial Party secretary

regarding the organization of partisans.[5] According to John A. Armstrong, it is almost certain that some contingency planning had taken place before the war began, otherwise it is highly unlikely that instructions could have been issued within a week of the outbreak of the war.[6] Twelve days after the invasion, on July 3, Stalin gave his celebrated speech on Soviet radio in which he called for the creation of partisan detachments:

> Partisan units must form up on the occupied territories. Diversion groups must attack enemy troops and spread war throughout the country by demolishing and destroying roads and bridges, and cutting communications; by setting fire to forests, enemy depots and transport convoys. Conditions in occupied territories must be made intolerable for the enemy and his accomplices by unrelenting assault and destruction.[7]

A district committee meeting in Ukraine followed Stalin's speech at which a short report on decisions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Ukraine taken after Stalin's speech was made. The report called for the creation of partisan groups in threatened districts of Ukraine, for the training of some members in the handling of mines, and the laying of foundations in the forests for partisan bases with provisions, arms, and explosives.[8] (See picture next page.) Khrushchev was to lead the partisan movement in the Ukraine.[9]

The Soviet partisan movement did not develop uniformly. In Armstrong's view, there appear to have been three distinct stages of development: June to December 1941,



A partisan poster showing how to prosecute the struggle against the German invader.

The text reads: "Spread the partisan war in the fascist rear! Destroy communications, bridges, roads, fuel supplies, enemy units!" Source: Cooper, M. The Phantom War, Macdonald & Jane's, 1979.

December 1941 to Autumn 1942, and autumn 1942 to summer 1944. The first stage was unsuccessful. It was hoped to have small partisan groups distributed throughout the administrative subdivisions of the occupied territories, and it was assumed that the local population would help. It turned out, however, that they were unsympathetic, being convinced that the Soviet system had been shattered and would not be reestablished. However, the partisans were mainly city men, lacking knowledge of the forest and of the rural way of life. They suffered enormous losses and achieved very little of military significance.[10]

On July 18, 1941, the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party issued its first official call for partisan warfare against the German invaders. It called for the creation of a vast movement even though there was little that the political and military leaders could do to help in terms of guidance, arms, radio equipment, clothes, and medical personnel. The partisans were left to their own devices.[11] The official Soviet history of the war blames Stalin for this lack of support. During Lenin's time, the Party kept a register of those who had been trained in underground and partisan activities and had worked to strengthen the defensive capabilities of the country. Stalin had purged the Party of all of these people in the 1930s.[12]

The second stage, December 1941 to autumn 1942, began with the repulsion of the German attack on Moscow.[13] The

population became less convinced that the Soviet system would not be reestablished and became less inclined to accommodate itself to harsh German rule. Escaped Soviet soldiers united together in small groups for protection and attacked Germans in order to obtain food.[14] At this time, few partisans operated in Ukraine or the RSFSR steppe provinces.[15]

The Soviet government went to much trouble to organize these soldier-partisans, to supply them, and to bring them under central control. Radio and air contact were used, and "parachuters" were dropped in order to contact the soldiers. These new partisan groups or brigades numbered between 350 to 2000 men each. There was a tendency among many of the partisans to avoid very risky or strenuous operations. After much hardship, many had attained some relative security and comfort. Few had any local roots, although many became attached to local women. The partisans were not inclined to incite German attention or retribution upon their villages. This revived partisan movement, though impressive in numbers and in potential strength, accomplished little of military worth in proportion to its size and the amount of territory that it controlled. It did, however, demonstrate that Soviet power was not "dead."[16]

The third stage, from autumn 1942 to summer 1944, involved much movement on the part of the partisans. In the Belorussian and northern RSFSR regions, the partisans' main

objective was to attack the German forces, particularly isolated or unguarded German units and installations, and to interrupt communications, and engage in sabotage of various types.[17] The ensuing counterattacks obliged the partisans to move and break their ties, at least for the time being, with the local area. The amount of armed conflict continued to remain rather limited, however.

The Bryansk forest region was seen as extremely strategic and the partisans in it were of great importance. It was close to major German military positions and to the northern limit of the east Ukrainian steppe. The location was soon to cease being strategic with the German withdrawal only a matter of time, following their defeat at Stalingrad in late 1942.[18] The Bryansk forest thus came to be seen as a base from which to extend partisan activities to new areas.[19] In 1943, the Ukrainian partisans needed to transfer from the southern areas of the Bryansk forest to the west and southwest.[20] The German and Soviet soldiers fought in this area but failed to penetrate the swamps surrounding the town. This gap, the Bryansk gap, stretched over a considerable distance and allowed both soldiers and civilians to move between the German-occupied area and the Soviet area.[21]

The third stage also featured "Roving Bands." They moved in units for hundreds of miles and kept mainly to the forest. Many of these bands moved into Ukrainian territory.

Famous brigades that took part in this movement were those under the command of M.I. Naumov, S.A. Kovpak, and A.N. Saburov. They were followed by other partisan groups. By the summer of 1943, the partisans controlled the forests east of Volhynia.[22] These incursions led to limited military accomplishments but, in 1944, the roving bands were used to extend the Soviet partisan movement into neighboring countries.[23]

According to Reuben Ainsztein, the partisan movement only became an effective element in the Soviet war strategy following the creation of the Central Partisan Staff on May 30, 1942.[24] The Central Staff became the main headquarters of the Soviet partisan movement. It took another year to create and impose a centralized system of command and control of the partisans and underground activities. In midsummer 1942, it was in radio contact with only 10 percent of the partisan groups. By mid-November, the number doubled. By January 1943, there were 424 radio transmitters among the partisans, allowing the Central Staff to communicate directly with 1,131 detachments. Numerous partisan units continued to operate independently.[25] Communication with unoccupied parts of the country increased partisan morale and convinced the local population of the authority of the partisan commanders.[26] Armstrong quotes M.I. Naumov:

> A partisan staff which had a radio station was, in the eyes of the population, an official organ of Soviet power, and a detachment commander with whom Moscow dealt was an official representative

> of the Soviet state for both partisans and population, its plenipotentiary in the occupied territory. Personally, I consider that the very greatest service of the Ukrainian Staff of the Partisan Movement during that time was the organization of widely ramified radio connections between Moscow and the population of the temporarily occupied regions.[27]

In 1943, the system was perfected by grouping partisans along national-territorial lines with the larger Soviet republics having their own national movements.[28] These units or Partisan Confederations, included brigades, battalions, divisions, details, and so on. (See Appendix 1) Radio contact, couriers, and emissaries kept the larger units in touch with Moscow. Supplies were airlifted to the partisans and some partisans were trained in Moscow in special military skills for partisan tactics and then were sent back behind enemy lines.[29]

Ainsztein cites the official Soviet history estimate on the number of Soviet partisans at 865,440 in the Soviet-occupied territories. They killed, wounded, or took prisoner 1.5 million Germans, their allies, and local collaborators. These numbers include the Red army soldiers caught behind the Germans' advance who fought behind the Germans' lines until they could rejoin the Red Army, as well as, those in the partisan reserves.[30] Jack Porter puts the total at 400,000 to 500,000 partisans. These numbers do not include agents, saboteurs, demolition teams, doctors, nurses, cooks, and support personnel.[31]

The decision to organize a partisan movement and to

resist the Germans was not an easy one for the Jews. There are a number of Jews who immediately began to do so. However, even later in the war, during the third stage of its development, when a movement clearly existed and the number of partisans was increasing daily, some Jews continued to hesitate to join them. This was due to the specific dilemma they alone faced. This dilemma was further complicated by their religious beliefs and the manipulation of those beliefs by the Nazis.

THE JEWISH DILEMMA

When the Germans attacked the Soviet Union, most Jews believed that the Red Army would quickly defeat the Germans and overcome the attack. Tens of thousands of young men volunteered for the army and those who could have fled did not and were overtaken by the advancing German army.[32] In Pinsk and many other places, the German *Aktionen* killed most of the youth as well as men from the ages of 16 to 60.[33] The community leaders and the intelligentsia of the western regions were also quickly killed off by the Germans.[34] Thus, most of those who would normally have organized resistance groups and joined the underground were dead.

The remaining Jews, initially, did not believe in nor did they even fathom the possibility of mass extermination. There was no precedent for this, and besides, the world would not allow it.[35] Many believed that if they survived the successive *Aktionen* that they would not be harmed. The

Judenrats, Jewish governing bodies set up by the Germans, encouraged such false hopes. Many members of the Judenrats believed in the possibility of saving the survivors only if they could show the Germans that they were "useful Jews" and if they did not aggravate the Germans.[36] The Judenrat system, in many cases, hindered the organization of underground and partisan movements. They argued that the movements endangered Jewish lives and brought extermination closer. The Jewish underground, heeding the Judenrats' warnings, did everything possible not to endanger the ghetto populations. They were convinced, though, that there would be no deliverance without a struggle and as they were facing extermination, armed resistance was crucial even if there was no hope of survival.[37] A compromise was reached: an uprising could only be started if the majority of the Jews believed that the Germans intended to kill all the Jews of a particular area.[38] The populations of the ghettos became apprehensive and participation in many cases was withdrawn.

The Jews were essentially an urban element of the population who had few, if any, contacts with the villages. They had a fear of the forest and preferred to remain living under a roof, in a home.[39] Part of the difficulty for the Jews lay in their being a national minority who knew neither the areas nor the roads to the fighting.[40] In terms of physical ruggedness, the Jews were usually inferior to the non-Jewish partisans. Their urban lifestyles and diets, and

their lack of physical sturdiness did not make them feel strong enough to survive in the woods.[41] The rural Jews were more rugged but formed a small percentage of the Jewish partisans. For the most part, they lacked military education and had no training in the use of arms. Most had evaded military service due to discrimination.[42] Though few Jews knew of tree-felling and digging, there were many cobblers, carpenters, and locksmiths among them. The Jews also held a virtual monopoly when it came to providing doctors and nurses for the partisans.[43] In this way, they were able to compensate for their "physical" limitations and their lack of expertise in guerrilla warfare.

Most of the Jewish partisans joined their movements or groups in 1942 and the first half of 1943. At this time the Germans were still powerful in the occupied territories of the Soviet Union and the Soviet partisan movement did not have a strong foothold. At the end of 1943, it was relatively easy to join the partisans due to the fact that the Red Army was gaining victories. However, by then, there were hardly any Jews left to join.[44] Earlier in the war, Jewish relations with non-Jewish partisans were difficult, that is, when contact could be made. This was in large part because of the isolation of the ghettos from each other and especially of the smaller ghettos from which the partisans came.[45] For those who decided to go to the forest, the decision often came later in the war when everything was

more difficult. They needed to procure arms and make contacts with the outside. The procurement of arms left behind by fleeing soldiers would have been easier at the beginning of the war before the peasants had seized and hidden the weapons. They also needed to get past the barbed wire surrounding the ghetto and the sentries guarding the ghetto. Initially, the ghettos had not been closely guarded and escape was relatively easy. Later, there were garrisons in the villages, pickets at bridges and roads, surprise ambushes, and peasants and guerrilla bands who were as anti-Semitic as the Nazis to be taken into consideration.[46]

An important personal and moral issue that confronted ghetto Jews was the concept of family responsibility. It was a difficult decision to leave one's elderly parents, wife, children. Those who remained with their families displayed great courage, yet were the very ones needed by the resistance. Many preferred to die together than risk the uncertainty of life in the forests.[47] Jews who had living family members felt a restriction on their freedom of action and a reduction of their personal initiative.[48] The youth were the prime candidates for escape to the forests but in many cases, they were also the only source of support and income for the family.[49]

According to the Torah, each Jew is responsible for his fellow Jew both in times of prosperity and adversity. The Nazis, aware of this, threatened them with the endangerment

of the entire ghetto's population in the case of rebellion.[50] The Jewish view of life saw Jewish survival as essential and thus saw physical resistance as dangerous and with little assurance of survival. They felt it was safer not to organize an underground but rather to recognize their spiritual and moral superiority.[51]

The decision to go to the forest was often more difficult than agreeing to "simple" resistance and compromises were frequently made. In Bialystok on February 27, 1943, Mordechai Tenenbaum concluded an underground meeting with the following:

> The stand taken by the assembled comrades is clear. We will do everything possible to enable as many as can be mobilized for this purpose to join the partisan war in the forest. Everyone else from our midst who remains in the ghetto will have to react with the first attack on a Jew. There is no desire in us to bargain for life, but it is necessary to face objective conditions. The most important thing is to preserve to the last the dignity of the members of our Movement.[52]

The ghetto Jews would learn of unsuccessful attempts to reach the forest and would be discouraged from attempting to escape. The Gestapo used this fear to their advantage. In the Minsk ghetto, the population had to gather every Sunday in Jubilee Square for roll-call. They were warned that Jews who fled would be killed by Russian partisans. If they remained in the ghetto, and promised to work hard, they would be allowed to survive.[53] Captured partisans were left hanging in public for days as a warning to others. (See picture next page.)

A warning to others hung round a dead partisan's neck. The German version reads: 'We are partisans, and have been shot by German soldiers'.

or so M. Cooper states. The translation should read:...*and have been shooting at German soldiers*. (The Ukrainian version repeats the same warning). Source: Cooper, M. The Phantom War, Macdonald & Jane's, 1979.

One must also consider what the Jews' motives were for deciding to resist and fight. The two main motivations were revenge and survival. The motive of each respective person dictated how they behaved and the decisions they made. The Jewish partisans avenged Jewish blood and honor and in some cases managed to salvage Torah scrolls from the enemy.[54] Irving Porter lived in Ukraine. In 1942, he left his family and went to the forest to join the partisans. Two days later, his family was killed.[55] Jack Porter said at his father's funeral that Irving "was forced into killing Nazis. He took *nekumah* against them. Revenge."[56] He took revenge for the twenty-five dead family members who were shot down in a ditch and covered with lime all in one night. However, he only killed Nazis during battles. He could not kill them face to face.[57]

Other partisans sought survival, as well as, life and death with dignity. Often that meant leaving the ghetto for the forest. Tuvia Bielski is one of the prime examples of those who was motivated by survival. He was not interested in military glory. His only goal was to save as many Jews as he could. Jews were sent into ghettos to rescue others so that they could live and survive.[58]

More often than not the idea of waging war against the Germans was seen as more important than saving lives and often led to a quick death. Dr. Yehezkel Atlas, Alter Dworecky, and Hirsch Kaplinsky distinguished themselves as

outstanding partisan leaders and courageously battled the enemy. Unfortunately, by the end of December 1942, they were all dead.[59] Irregardless of their motives, resistance usually began in the ghettos as this was where the remaining living Jews were concentrated. The Jewish dilemma figured prominently here. Even so, it would seem that important work was done in the ghettos, the birthplace of much of the Jewish partisan resistance.

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"On August 1, 1943, an article in the *Geto Yediot* (No.50) reminded the ghetto of the words and warning of the Ghetto Representative: that as of the latest order received from the German authorities, all Jews were collectively responsible for their actions. Said the article: `It is the duty of every Jew in his behalf as well as in the behalf of the ghetto to inform of any activity which might endanger the existence of the ghetto.'" (Eckman/Lazar, p.34.)
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56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Tec, Nechama. Defiance. The Bielski Partisans. New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, (1993), p.80.
59. Ibid., p.81.

Appendix 1

The smallest independent partisan unit was the detachment or *otryad*. It could vary from 50 to 80 fighters to several hundred. These fighters were organized in platoons and companies. Most of the *otryady* were named after their commanders, famous heroes, or cities. Four to six *otryady* were combined into brigades or *brigady* and several brigades would form a brigade group or *soedinenie*. Some brigade groups became partisan divisions, such as Kovpak's Sumsk Brigade Group. Every member of the partisan movement had to swear an oath. They swore to carry out the orders of their commanders, not to give up fighting the enemy, to assist the Red Army without regard for themselves or their lives, to die rather than surrender, and swore that should they fail to uphold their oath they should die a dishonourable death at the hands of their comrades. (Ainsztein, Jewish Resistance, p.280, Iwens, p.142, and Cooper, p.10.)

GHETTOS

The ghettos became places where Jews organized themselves and where they were recruited for the partisan movement.[1] Sometimes several underground organizations would be formed within one ghetto in order to cater to the various desires of the Jews. As time passed, these groups merged or united to fight their common enemy. Once these groups became organized, goals had to be set. Some groups preferred resistance inside the ghetto while others sought to join the forest partisans. Refugees from the small towns who escaped during the massacres were absorbed into the larger ghettos. Their knowledge of the neighboring villages and forests, as well as their experience in forest life and their mobility made them important to underground activities.[2]

The first group of surviving Jewish Communists in Kovno began to resist and organize as early as September 1941. At the end of 1941, the various Communist groups joined together and created the Anti-Fascist and Partisan Organization of the Kovno Ghetto, with Chaim Yellin as the main leader.[3] In the beginning of March 1942, the Partisan Organization and the Zionist Brotherhood, formed in November 1941, created the joint Anti-Fascist Organization. Among its leaders was Moshe Levin, commander of the ghetto police and a member of the Zionist Revisionist organization.[4]

The Antifascist and Partisan Organization initiated important work in the ghetto. Its numbers grew daily as did

its influence among the ghetto population. Members were able to obtain and set up a powerful transmitter from which, every day, they transcribed news summaries about Soviet victories and important events from the Soviet information bureau and distributed the leaflets in the ghetto.[5] The underground also started sabotage operations and though small, each caused some trouble for the Germans. Bills of lading on train carriages and cargo destinations were changed, engines and machines sabotaged, wires cut, and tires punctured.[6] The organization's main task was to recruit partisans for the forests and to procure arms for them.[7]

Part of the problem lay in the fact that the closest forest with partisans in it was in White Russia, 200 kilometers away. The Communists established a Jewish Partisans' Committee in the winter of 1942 following contact with partisans in the forests.[8] Chaim Yellin had contacts with underground Communists outside the ghetto and from the Lithuanians he learned that there were "Red Partisans" in a forest 150 kilometers away. He set out to meet the partisans who trained him in sabotage work before he returned to the ghetto. He organized groups and arranged for their transportation to the forest, always accompanying each group and then returning to the ghetto. The Gestapo eventually caught him, but he cut his throat to avoid being captured alive.[9]

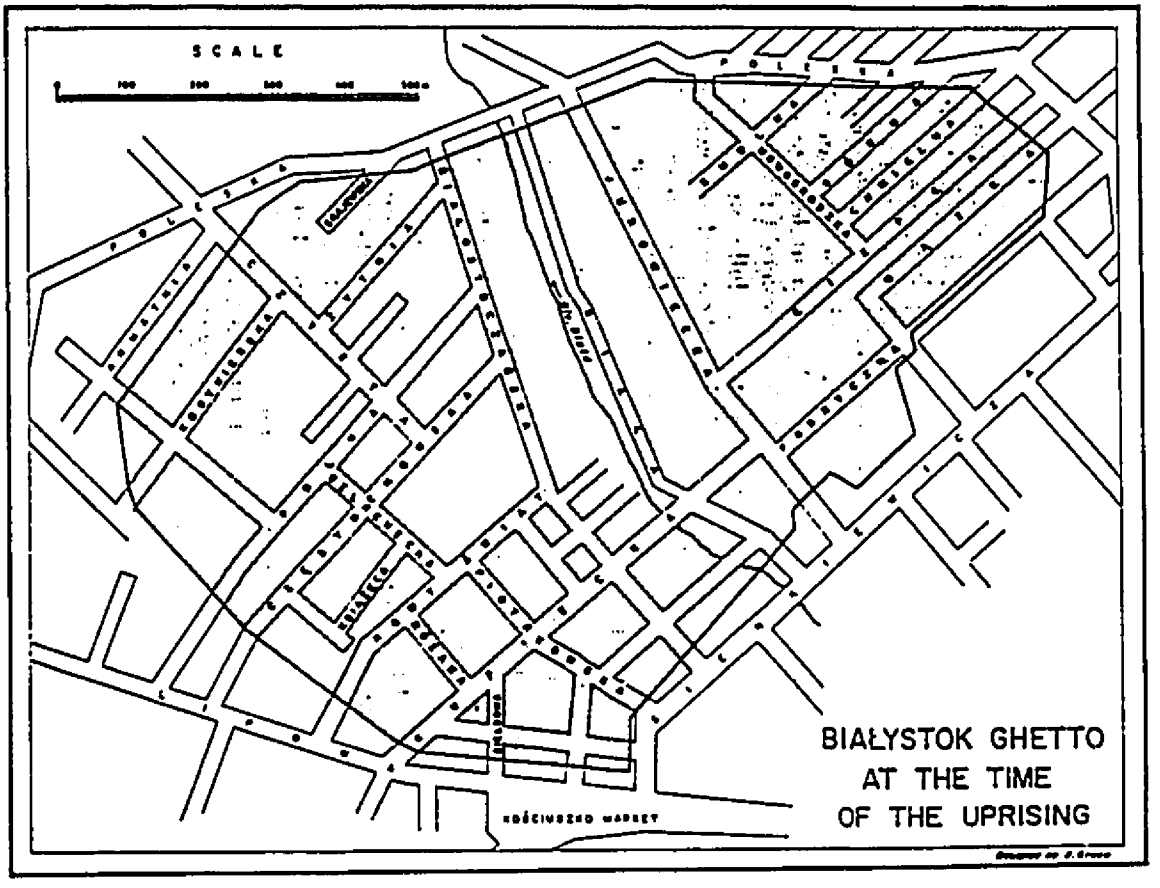
By late 1943, there were two separate bodies coordinating partisan activities within Kovno ghetto: the 'Black Staff', a secret inner council that organized groups, departure times, and obtained transportation, arms, and supplies for partisans leaving the ghetto for the forest, and the 'Public Committee', which raised funds for arms and for equipping the partisans who were leaving for the forests. The committee's treasurer was the pharmacist Aizik Sribnicki, also director of the ghetto dispensary.[10]

Yohanan Elkes did all in his power as head of the Judenrat to warn the population of dangers and along with the local Jewish police force engaged in resistance activities. Workshops were established in the city in order to employ "useless" Jews, who were engaged in underground work, and thus save them from the Nazis. Elkes helped people to leave the ghetto and reach the forests.[11] The deputy chief of police, Michael Bramson, was one of the first Jews to acquire a weapon in the ghetto and he used it to train members of the underground.[12] Jacob Verblovskii, along with other Jewish police made sure that workers smuggling weapons and ammunition into the ghetto in their tools were not detected during searches at the entrance-gate. They also helped partisans leave the ghetto along with groups of outside workers in order not to be noticed.[13] Arrangements with Lithuanians were made to take care of and hide the children of those who joined the partisans. Emissaries would

search Kovno and its environs looking for families willing to adopt Jewish children.[14] In this way, partisans who left for the forest could be reasonably certain that their children were safe.

Bialystok received special treatment from the Germans, as previously mentioned. (See ghetto diagram next page.) The Jews, though badly treated, were not killed as quickly as the Jews in other ghettos, since they were needed by the German entrepreneurs to work in the factories. The entrepreneurs were able for several years to intercede on behalf of their Jewish workers and prevented or limited some of the *Aktionen* and transports. As long as this was the case, most of the Jews felt it was safer to remain in the ghetto than leave for the forest. The underground, which had connections with the head of the Judenrat, who covered up for it but opposed open rebellion, remained divided for several years until it eventually united under the leadership of Mordechai Tennenbaum-Tamarov. Under Tenenbaum's leadership, it was decided to postpone any revolt thus sacrificing some Jews in the hopes that more arms could be obtained or that the Red Army would liberate the ghetto.[15] The search for arms was never-ending. Guns and other weapons were smuggled into the ghetto and hidden in caches. Grenades were a common weapon collected by the partisans.[16]

As the war turned and the Germans retreated, the



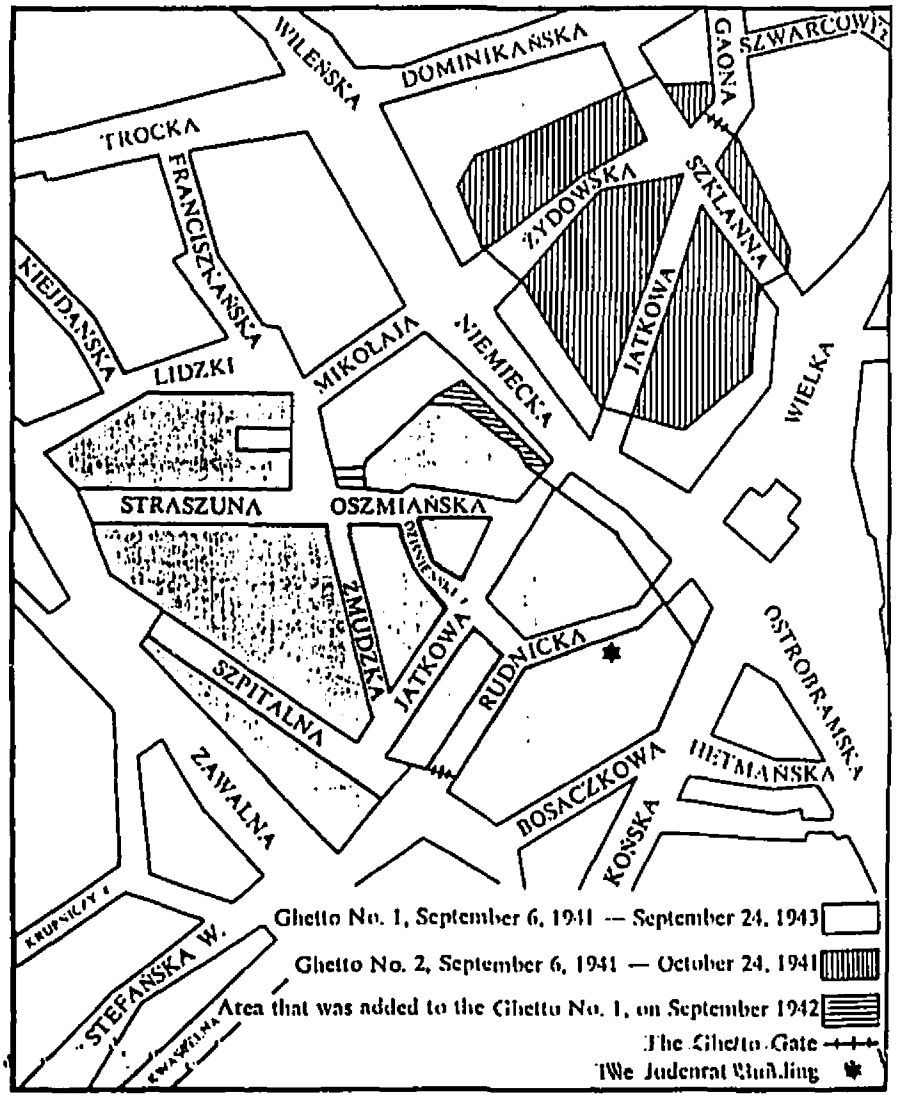
Source: Ainsztein, R. Jewish Resistance, Paul Elek, 1974, p.520.

Bialystok Jews lost their privileges and liquidation seemed imminent. At this point, the underground became increasingly active. Transports increased in the summer of 1943. Just before the final liquidation, Tennenbaum wrote an appeal to the ghetto in which he told the Jews not to trust the Gestapo. He urged them to avenge the deaths of their friends and family members, to flee to the forests to join the partisans, and to escape with arms.[17] (See Appendix 1)

In August, the last transport from Bialystok took place. On August 16, the revolt, led by Tennenbaum, began. However, the Germans had come with heavy artillery, prepared to encounter resistance. There were many casualties, including some Germans, and the masses, frozen by fear, did not follow the partisans.[18] Some of the fighters succeeded in burning equipment and stocks of raw materials before they were killed.[19] A few, including a group of young women headed by Chaika Grossman, managed to cross over to the Aryan section of Bialystok and continued their anti-Nazi activities from new locations, by maintaining contacts with the partisans in the forests.[20] In this way, Eronya Klibanski and Chaika Grossman were able to send the few ghetto survivors to the forest. For a time, they supplied provisions to the group in the forest until Soviet partisans and parachutists reached their district.[21]

The Vilna ghetto had a very active underground, with several secret organizations. (See ghetto diagram next page)

Plan of the Vilna Ghetto



Source: Arad, Yitzhak. Ghetto in Flames, Yad Vashem, 1981, p.122.

Towards the end of 1941, there were several youth groups operating in Vilna: the Communists, headed by Itzik Wittenberg, Hienna Borowska, and Berl Sherezhnevski, were the largest group. Betar was the second largest group. Nissan Reznik and Shlomo Entin led the Zionist Youth and Abba Kovner led Hashomer Hatsair. Although the leaders and groups maintained some contact, they were not prepared to cooperate.[22] Itzik Wittenberg contacted his Communist comrades as well as the organized Zionist youth movement and the two groups joined together in late 1941 to form the United Partisans Organization under his leadership, with Abba Kovner and Josef Glazman as his deputies, each in charge of one of two battalions that made up the UPO.[23] The rallying cry was "Lisa calls us."[24]

The UPO was organized like an army with groupings of units and battalions, and with specific rules of conduct.[25] It illustrated the ability of the Jews, who had no military training or experience, to learn quickly how to organize and wage guerrilla warfare. The individual cells met twice each week, and the cell leaders met Josef Glazman every week as well. They educated the cells regarding resistance and revenge, thus gaining fresh support and forming new cells.[26] A mass convention was held in the ghetto on Chanukah, in 1941. Glazman met with several Betarists and urged them to resist and not to resign themselves to annihilation.[27]

The Vilna ghetto underground issued the following

proclamation to the Jewish partisans:

> Let us not permit ourselves to be led like sheep to slaughter. Jewish youth, do not believe those that are trying to deceive you. Out of 80,000 Jews of Vilna, only 20,000 are left. Before your eyes our parents, our brothers and sisters, were taken away. Where are they, those hundreds of men kidnapped and taken to forced labor by the Lithuanians? Where are the naked men, women and children who were taken out in that night of terror of the "provocation"? Where are the Jews of Yom Kippur? Where are our own brethren from the other ghettos? Those who are taken out of the gate of the ghetto will never return. All the Gestapo roads lead to Ponary and Ponary means death. You, the people who have within you seeds of despair, do not be deluded. Your children, your husbands, your wives are no longer. Ponary is not a labor camp. All there were shot. Hitler plotted to destroy all the Jews of Europe. It was the fate of the Lithuanian Jews to be the first ones. Let us not be led like sheep to the slaughter. True, we are weak and helpless, but the only response to the murderer is self-defense. Brethren, it is better to die fighting, like free fighting men, than to live at the mercy of the murderers; to defend oneself to the last breath. Take courage.[28]

This proclamation was issued by Abba Kovner and it was believed that he wrote it. There exists, however, a Yiddish manuscript dated January 1, 1942, entitled "Don't Go Like Sheep to Slaughter," that contains the same text as that identified as Kovner's, though its author is unknown. The Yiddish text also has these additional sentences: "We urge Jewish women to abstain sexually from German soldiers. We urge Jewish policemen to help their brethren."[29] Yitzhak Arad attributes it to a Jewish Pioneer Youth Group and includes a copy of the handwritten proclamation in his book Documents on the Holocaust.[30] Abraham H. Foxman claims that the text was read on January 1, 1942, at a memorial meeting

held by the Hechalutz Movement in memory of the Jews who had been killed at Ponary.[31]

In February 1942, Wittenberg contacted some Soviet parachutists who had been dropped in the Skrabouchany forest. Soon after, underground organizations were set up on the Aryan side of Vilna. In the summer of 1942, the first big act of sabotage was carried out outside the ghetto. Vitka Kampner, Itzhak Mackiewicz, and Moshe Brause executed the plan and blew up a German military train full of soldiers and ammunition. Itzik Wittenberg praised the operation and stated that it showed the Germans that they were not safe even though far from the front and that German soldiers on their way to the front would be demoralized before reaching his destination. It also showed that the UPO was a force to be reckoned with.[32] Acts of sabotage in the work places were often not planned by the underground command, however they were regarded as positive by the leaders and were encouraged.[33]

The acquisition of arms was a constant problem for the partisans. The arms seized from German arms depots were not enough. It was difficult to purchase pistols, and even more so rifles and machine-guns because of the constant increase in price and the danger in purchasing them. Thus, the underground organizations built up stocks of other weapons, such as, axes, bayonets, knives, and bars. Molotov cocktails and hand grenades were produced in the Vilna, Kovno and

Shavli ghettos.[34] Often, it was too dangerous to smuggle the weapons into the ghettos, and so they were put in hiding places outside the ghettos, often in cemeteries or in huts.[35] The Struggle-Yechiel group obtained most of its arms from the Gestapo warehouses where several of its members worked. From time to time, those who worked for the Gestapo were permitted to bring wagonloads of items into the ghetto for their families. As the gate guards never checked these wagons, the organization's members took advantage of this privilege to smuggle in weapons that they had stolen from the warehouses.[36]

In late 1942, Wittenberg met with members of the "Alksnis" group, who were in radio contact with headquarters in Moscow. Wittenberg wanted Moscow to be informed of the UPO's existence and wished that it be recognized as a Jewish combat organization ready to revolt when the ghetto was to be liquidated, however, it was recognized only as a link in the Soviet partisan movement.[37] Wittenberg was in a dilemma. As a Communist, he was bound to follow the Soviet line, as emphasized by the Alksnis group, which called for active combat against the Nazis, however, his organization had been created to rise up within the ghetto as a means of defense against final annihilation.

Following negotiations, the two sides agreed that a UPO group would go with Alksnis to organize a base in the forest region near Vilna, a group of instructors would be sent to

the base for combat training, and the UPO was to gather important information from the major economic and military points in Vilna. Acts of sabotage were to continue. Alksnis promised aid to the UPO and to provide firearms and explosives at the outbreak of the ghetto uprising. Meanwhile, two members of Alksnis were provided with false papers so that they could operate within the city.[38]

New organizations continued to be formed in order to accommodate the various views of the Jews in the ghetto. The Struggle-Yechiel Group was less selective in member recruitment than the UPO and sought to be a mass movement, saving as many Jews as possible by sending them to the forests. The organization believed that Jews would go because they had nothing to lose.[39]

In the summer of 1943, negotiations began between the UPO and the new organization regarding merging the two groups. It was agreed that the Struggle-Yechiel group would continue its evacuation work but if the revolt began before the evacuation was completed, they would fight alongside the UPO. Shlomo Brand joined the UPO headquarters and worked as a liaison between the two organizations. Relations slowly grew warmer. When the Gestapo demanded the surrender of Wittenberg, it was Natan Ring, a member of the Struggle-Yechiel Group, who was the first to bring the information and thus Wittenberg was able to go into hiding.[40] However, in order to save the underground organization's unity and to

save the ghetto from massacre, at least for a time (the Germans had threatened to destroy the ghetto if Wittenberg was not surrendered to the authorities), Wittenberg surrendered to the Gestapo on July 16, 1943. (See Appendix 2) Kovner took over as leader of the UPO.[41] The Struggle-Yechiel group, disillusioned by Kovner's behavior, began to operate separately once again and succeeded in sending most of its members to the forest.[42] In August 1943, the Jewish underground in the Bialystok ghetto revolted and a proclamation calling for revolt was issued by the UPO on September 1, 1943.[43] (See Appendix 3)

Underground ghetto organizations were not limited to Bialystok, Kovno, and Vilna. Almost every ghetto had some form of organized resistance. In the Baltic area, each ghetto was isolated from the others and from the outside Jewish world. Despite this, their spirit of resistance did not falter. Young women carried out much of the daily technical work within the ghettos and maintained contact between the cities and ghettos.[44] Almost all the underground organizations in Lithuania had access to a radio and could listen to foreign broadcasts which were then printed in the form of summaries for the ghetto populations.[45]

In Slonim, the partisan movement had broad contacts among the Jews. They were organized in units, or cells, of five. The cells were led by commanders who reported to Anshl Delyaticki, a partisan chief. The Judenrat yielded to the

partisans and helped as best they could.[46] The Judenrat in Minsk, headed by Ilya Mishkin, was also a center of resistance. The Jewish communists commanded an underground inside the ghetto and had contact with a communist underground (under the command of a Jew) outside the ghetto. The city underground was betrayed and disbanded, however, the ghetto underground was able, with the firm and efficient cooperation of the Judenrat, to smuggle arms and approximately 10,000 people out of the ghetto and into the forests.[47]

In Minsk, as in other ghettos, it was necessary to outwit the Gestapo. Whenever people were sent to the forest, forged medical certificates were produced showing that the individual had died from grippe or pneumonia. In this way, their names were removed from Judenrat records and their families did not fear as much for night-time visits and murder by the Gestapo.[48] Later on, the ghetto commandant decreed that all the Minsk Jews had to sew a white patch on their clothes with the exact address of the wearer and every patch had to show the official stamp of the Judenrat. The underground countered by preparing extra patches that contained various addresses.[49]

Once the decision to go to the forest was made, more decisions had to be made and new dilemmas faced.Though escape from the ghettos was difficult, it was achieved in various ways, some more successful than others.

ROAD TO THE PARTISANS

Flight to the forest was not a guarantee of life, for in fact, it meant the beginning of new dangers and much hard work. At the beginning of the war, armed resistance groups were few and far between. Not many Jews chose to flee to the "security" of the forest at the beginning of the German invasion, and most of those who did, went with the expressed desire to fight the German invaders. Numerous Jewish partisan "pioneers" paid with their lives early on and little is known about them. Some survived and their achievements are documented and known. Shalom Bas (Rakziecki), a teacher from the town of Zhetel, near Slonim, and a soldier in the Red Army, organized the first partisan group in the Lipiczany wastelands, which later became a key partisan base.[50]

Most of the Jews who were absorbed into the Byelorussian partisan movement from the small towns on the eastern and southern borders of Lithuania were concentrated in the Nacza forests, approximately 50 miles to the south of Vilna and in the marshy Koziany and Narocz forests, approximately 90 miles to the east of Vilna. The first Jews to reach the Nacza forests did so virtually unarmed at the end of 1941. Many Jews from Radun joined the groups of Jews in the forest in May 1942 following the ghetto's liquidation on May 19. The groups accepted Jews from other small towns as well as from Vilna and soon numbered 300 to 350 people. Some of them

Explain

organized themselves into fighting groups and family groups. The few arms in their possession came from local peasants and Soviet prisoners of war. In February 1943, they were organized into a disciplined framework under the command of the Red Army by the parachutist Stankiewicz, who then became commander of the *Leninskii Komsomol* which was later to grow into a brigade.[51] Armed Jews began to arrive from the Vilna ghetto and were absorbed into the units. Stankiewicz attempted to organize the recruitment of additional Jews from Vilna despite the opposition of the ghetto police and reservations on the part of the UPO. Twenty-eight Jews were brought out, though most were killed in a German ambush on their way to the partisan base in Nacza forest. After that, few organized attempts were made to bring more Jews to the forest.[52]

On July 24, 1943, at 5 am, twenty-one members of the UPO marched out of the ghetto gate like a column on its way to forced labor, with pistols, machine-gun parts, and automatic rifles concealed in their clothes.[53] Joshua Gertman had come from the forest to lead the armed Jews to his camp. When they passed through Nai-Vilaika, some fourteen Jews who were working there joined them and they entered the forest approximately 10 miles from Vilna.[54] Their guide later betrayed and abandoned them when they were almost surrounded by Germans on their first night in the forest.[55] The inexperienced partisans were overwhelmed and though they

killed several Germans, nine UPO men also fell.[56] Only fourteen Jews survived the ambush and were able to reach the Narocz forest where they were well received by Brigadier Fiodor Gregorowicz Markov's Belorussian partisan brigade. They had heard about the group's close call with the Germans. Markov, following long negotiations, gave his approval for the Jewish partisan group "Vengeance" to be formed.[57]

Their escape caused the subsequent deaths of 32 immediate family members, of the 32 brigadiers of the work groups to which the dead Jews had belonged, and of 80 Jews who were taken to Ponary.[58] The UPO fighters nevertheless kept up their exodus throughout September 1943. By the fourteenth, five groups, totalling 150 men, left for the Narocz forests. There, they joined Markov's group and created the "Battle," "Victory," and "Death to Fascism" groups.[59] The UPO did its best to supply the fighters with weapons and ammunition, but many willing fighters remained unarmed.[60] The last of the UPO fighters decided to flee to the forest on September 23, 1943, the day of the final liquidation of the ghetto, despite the fact that the ghetto was surrounded by a ring of German troops by escaping through the sewer system.[61].

The partisans from Kovno ghetto also went to the Rudnicki forests. The first group, led by commander Eliahu Olkin, left on November 23, 1943, on foot. Most of them,

including Olkin, were captured by the Germans. A few did reach their destination. The second group, disguised as labourers going to work outside the ghetto with two Jews disguised as Germans, left in a truck on December 14 and reached the forest safely. The labourer disguise became the main method of reaching the Rudnicki forest.[62] Most of the Kovno Jews formed the cores of the "Death to the Occupiers," "Perkunas," and "Struggle" detachments. With many Jews in the Adam Mickiewicz detachment, as well as the entirely Jewish "Avenger" and "Death to Fascism" detachments, Jews formed the largest "national" group in the Green Forest Brigade which was commanded by Henrikas Zimanas, a Jew.[63]

On December 24, 1943, a group of Jews escaped from the Ninth Fort. They divided into four groups. One of the groups made its way to Kovno ghetto where the Anti-Fascist Organization helped them to reach the "Death to the Occupiers" detachment in the Rudnicki forest. The other three groups depended on the good will of the Lithuanian population while they attempted to reach areas inhabited by Polish or Byelorussian peasants. Only fourteen of the sixty-four Jews escaped capture by Germans and Lithuanians.[64]

Soviet Jews were often the ones who formed the first nuclei of partisan resistance. In some rare cases, the Jews fled to the forest in anticipation of German occupation of their regions and formed partisan units and family camps. Such was the case in the Mogilev township of

Kostrykovichi.[65] The Soviet Jew Linkove had acquired experience in partisan warfare during the Civil War. He volunteered for service behind enemy lines and was dropped with other volunteers in the Lepel area in Byelorussia in September 1941. Along with David Keymakh, he organized partisan units and anti-German resistance.[66] Approximately 500 Jews from Gluser, a small town in the Bobruisk region, fled to the forests led by Moshe Uritskiy, known as Kiselev. They formed the core of the Kiselev Detachment.[67]

In December 1941, the Jews of Minsk received news that the Russian partisan Bystrov was ready to accept Jewish partisans. Six Jews led by Boris Khaimovich, a former manager of a textile mill who had 6 years of experience in the Red Army, left the ghetto in two horse-drawn carts that contained false bottoms. Along the route, they met the Russian Kudryakov who showed them where 13 rifles and 4000 rounds of ammunition were hidden. The Jews hid the arms in their carts, removed their yellow star patches, and drove through Minsk to the Bobrovichi forest in the Rudensk District, approximately 18 miles south-west of Minsk. They built a dugout and sent one of the group back to Minsk to lead more partisans out. After two more groups were brought to the forest, the entire group of Minsk Jews set out for Bystrov's camp. A guide was sent from Bystrov's camp to bring further Jews from Minsk to the camp. Khaimovich organized a machine-gun platoon with some of the new Jews.

The platoon grew into the famous Stalin Brigade.[68]

On April 10, 1942, a group of 48 partisans escaped from the Minsk ghetto. They marched out of the ghetto along with the other workers with grenades in their pockets and rifles in their sacks. When they reached the outskirts of Minsk, they tore off their yellow patches and followed the road to Slotsk in small groups of 2 or 3, walking ahead at some distance from each other. Those who survived the trip regrouped some forty kilometers from Minsk, obtained directions to the forest where they formed a company named "Kutuzov" after the great Russian commander who defeated Napoleon.[69]

The demand for sending more men out of the Minsk ghetto continued to increase. The Committee introduced the partisans to underground railway workers. Kuzcetsov, later head of the partisan brigade "People's Avengers," headed this group that hid Jews in the coal bins of the train engines which brought them to stations nearest partisan bases. More than 500 Jews were transported to the partisans in this way.[72] The Minsk ghetto managed to send some 10,000 Jews to join the partisans, a large number whom were drafted into the Frunze, Lazo, and Budyonny detachments. Family Detachment 106 was established and served as a reservoir for the Zhukhov brigade.[71]

Jewish refugees from the Svencian ghetto and its surrounding hamlets were among the first Jews to join

Lithuanian units after having roamed the nearby forests for several months. The Zalgiris brigade recruited some 50 Jews who had not been accepted into other units mainly because they lacked arms.[72] In September, several Jews sent from Narocz and Koziany forests by Ziman were absorbed into the "For the Homeland" detachment which was part of the Trakai brigade. In November, more Jews were accepted into the detachment from hideouts in villages in southeast Lithuania. Some Kovno Jews were able to reach and join the "Free Lithuania" detachment of the same brigade. Others joined the "Liberator" detachment.[73]

The Slonim Jews began leaving the ghetto as early as June 1941. On June 22, Anshl Delyaticki and Dr. Blumovich went into the forest to join the Shchors detachment.[74] Others continued to leave after that. They were met in a village by partisans with a horse and wagon, and were pleasantly surprised when Anshl greeted them with the familiar "sholem-aleydhom."[75] Yakov Fyodorovich was the commander of the Jewish unit that these new recruits were to be part of.[76] Anshl led several groups out of the ghetto.

The leaders of the underground in Koldyczewo camp, including Liebel Zeger and Kusznier, organized an escape for the 95 Jews in the camp so that they could join the partisans.[77] The escape was set for March 22, 1944, at night, when the Germans and the Byelorussian overseers were at a ball. Each Jew received a small bottle of poison, in

case the escape was unsuccessful. Ninety-three managed to escape and the doors to the barracks were mined so that when the Germans came to wake them, there would be an explosion. They were successful; 10 Germans died and the entire barracks burned down.[78] Some of the escapees went to Polesia, the Pinsk swamps, and the clearings of Naliboka. Most went to the Naliboka forests and joined the Bielski brigade.[79]

Autonomous Jewish partisan units were established in the spring and summer of 1942. They were made up of Jews from Slonim, Baranowicze, Dereczyn, Radun, Nowogrodek, and Maniewicze. They joined up with small groups of Russian soldiers. Some of the Maniewicze Jews joined Nikolai Koniszczuk and founded the Kruk division which fought in the Volyn area, in western Ukraine, from late 1942 to late 1944. There were over 200 Jewish fighters in this detachment and, although it was led by a Ukrainian Communist, all his assistants were Jewish. He was a respected commander and knew the territory well.[80]

A group of partisans was founded in the summer of 1941 by the three Chaluzin brothers, Shmuel, Yitzhak, and Zvi, and their cousin Jacob Zak, some Jewish farmers from the small town of Kelme, in western Lithuania. They hid their families among the peasants and helped Jews from the Kovno and Shavli ghettos to escape and join their ranks.[81]

Once in the forest, their lives became quite different from

that of the ghetto. There were no rules in the forest and danger lurked behind every tree. There were some similarities, though. The Jews had fled the persecution and anti-Semitism of the Germans in the cities only to face similar attitudes among the partisans.

ANTI-SEMITISM AMONG THE PARTISANS

In the early stages of the partisan movement, there was a strong tendency for the Jews to remain in separate groups/units for reasons of security and because of ties of kinship. They knew that many of the partisans were anti-Semitic and felt there was safety in numbers. Some of the Jews who joined non-Jewish partisan groups resorted to hiding their Jewish identity. A large percentage of the partisans were indifferent. They left the Jewish fighters alone, not becoming their friends and not slandering or abusing them either.[82] The Central Partisan Command tried to eliminate anti-Jewish behavior with limited success. As the partisan movement became more organized, the Soviets tolerated less and less recruitment on ethnic lines. Jewish partisan units were broken up and the Jews spread out among the Soviet units.

The Jewish units faced many dangers in the forest, such as the roving bands of extreme right-wing Ukrainian nationalists who fought the Poles, the partisans, and the Jews. The Banderovtsy were particularly feared and were reputed for killing their victims with knives and axes rather than rifles or guns.[83] They handed the bodies over to the Germans in exchange for salt,

Contradiction to earlier statements re OUN

kerosene, and matches. Many of the Jews who escaped the "evacuations" fell victim to the Banderovtsy.[84] The Vasilievtsy partisans (near Slonim) were also known and feared among the Jews. They were rumored to strip Jewish partisans of their weapons and drive them deeper into the forest whenever they were encountered.[85]

Jews, including children, in non-Jewish units often hid their identity. In the forest, Mickail, a Russian who acted in this way, warned one of the newer recruits who was also Jewish to beware of the Nazis and of his Russian comrades. He told him that he had to do everything he could to save himself from the enemies who lived in the forest and who fought side by side with him against the Germans.[86]

The Jews encountered anti-Semitism from above and from below, from the commanders and institutions, and from regular partisans on their own initiative.[87] Among the Soviet partisans, there were many who hated the Jews and who showed it in word and in deed at every opportunity. Many Jewish partisans and their families were shot in the back by non-Jewish partisans. Robbery, rape, and savage manhandling often accompanied the murders. These acts against both inactive and active fighters were more frequent earlier in the war when the central control and discipline in the units was lax.[88]

The Jewish partisans of Unit 51, formed on July 1, 1942, spoke to each other in Yiddish despite the fact that they were surrounded by Russians and that racial slurs were sometimes

heard. They were led by commander Lieutenant Yakov Fyodorovich, a Jew from Homel, who always gave his commands in Russian.[89] After Fyodorovich died, a new commander, Guzhevski, replaced him. He soon announced that women, children, and older people were being separated from the 51st unit in order to remove those who were hampering the entire brigade.[90] Sokolik said that it sounded to him like the Nazi selections of "useful" and "useless" Jews. He was warned that he had a "wagging tongue" and that he should be careful that he did not lose his head as well as his tongue.[91] Since the number of partisans had increased, it no longer mattered that the partisans on the list had risked their lives in the ghetto to obtain arms and supplies for the partisans.[92] The Jews were permitted to keep their weapons and some ammunition, and they were also allowed to purchase potatoes and bread from the peasants, but not meat. This decree implied that only among the Jews were there partisans who were not ready for battle. Though there were lazy, cowardly, panicky people among the other nationalities in the brigade, they were never separated.[93] On December 19, 1942, Unit 51 was formally dissolved and its members were divided among the units 52, 55, and 56.[94] The central partisan leadership in Moscow felt it was better not to have separate Jewish partisan units as this fed German propaganda among the general population that the partisans were mostly Jews who had escaped from the ghettos along with some non-Jewish bandits.[95]

During massive manhunts, Germans searched for and killed any

partisans they could find. Many of the partisans blamed the Jews and either killed them or banished them from their units, leaving them to wander the forests without food, proper clothes, or weapons. Those who were permitted to remain with their groups were often humiliated, interrogated, and threatened. The interrogations lasted hours. Jews were asked if they would continue to fight the Germans with as much dedication as they had prior to the manhunts. A few even had to beg for their lives.[96]

In general, Jews who reached the forest could easily enlist in the unit. Girls and women with Aryan features were severely interrogated to make sure that they were not spies. A Jewish camp near Kopyl was established one kilometer from the main camp and numbered, in 1942, about 40 Jews, consisting of young males, some young women, and some older people from the district of Kopyl. Weiner, a party member from Kopyl, was appointed provisional commander of the Jewish base by the Russians who considered him to be trustworthy.[97] At the end of August 1942, the Soviet Command appointed Gilchik, a Russian Jew from Kopyl and a scout for the partisan command, commander of the Jewish unit.[98] Later, in 1943, a group of over fifty unarmed Jews were ordered to be separated from the partisans. A group of unarmed Jewish fighters were also separated from the main camp. These separations, the unpunished murder of the Jewish fighter Possessorski by Russian partisans, and the removal of Gilchik from his command indicated a deliberate attempt by

the brigade to arouse discontent and rebellion among the Jewish partisans.[99]

Whether they wanted to or not, Jews were often given the more dangerous combat assignments and duties in order to discourage anti-Semitic talk about their ineptitude in combat or their cowardice. However, Jews continued to be blamed for the defeat or failure of Russian partisans in combat or in carrying out diversions.[100] Non-Jews were often credited with acts of heroism committed by Jews. In the beginning of 1943, in some of the Russian detachments, the atmosphere became so tense that Jews feared going on missions with non-Jewish fellow fighters.[101]

The Soviet parachutists of 1943, in the Ukraine and Byelorussia, opposed anti-Semitic practices and quietly cleansed each detachment of most of the anti-Semites, alleged German agents, thieves, and other disruptive elements. Some were shot, others disbanded from their units, while some were simply disciplined. Strict military discipline was introduced; drinking of alcohol, card-playing, and stealing from the local population were strictly prohibited on pain of death.[102] Israel Gutman, an Israeli researcher, said that after permanent contact was made with the Soviet high command, anti-Semitism became somewhat restrained in Lithuania and Byelorussia.[103] However, Moscow was far away and could not completely control partisan behavior. The leadership of the partisan

movement considered it necessary to scatter the Jews among the non-Jewish detachments. They knew of the strong anti-Semitic feelings of some of the partisans and hoped that by scattering them, they would attract less attention. It was hoped that the anti-Semites would be less likely to accuse the Jews of cowardice in cases of defeat or retreat since the whole unit was no longer Jewish. Despite the division and separation of the Jews, they were still frequent targets of anti-Semitic hostility.[104]

Two partisans from Squad 67, Mickail and Gregor, fell asleep on guard duty in the village of Okuninovo when their replacements failed to show up to relieve them. This was a serious offense among the partisans as alert guards were crucial to the security of the entire group. The prejudice of the Russians against the Jews was clear in the sentence pronounced against the two partisans. Mickail was sentenced to death by shooting and Gregor was sentenced to one month in the stockade near staff headquarters.[105] In another partisan group, Natan Ring, Schwartzbard, Itzkovich, and Keves were killed by fellow partisans. They had received the death sentence, being charged with treachery for allegedly maintaining contacts with the Gestapo in the ghetto. The sentence and explanation was read out to the partisans after the executions had taken place. It was believed that anti-Semitism had been the real reason for their deaths. Everyone knew Natan was a courageous fighter and that the charges

were baseless but there was nothing that could be done.[108]

Not all of the Soviet partisans were anti-Semitic. Some went out of their way to help the Jews. Some non-Jewish partisan commanders called on Jews in the ghettos to flee to the forests. Radionov, the Russian commander of the "Death to the Occupiers" partisan unit, Bistrov, and Markov, were such men.[107] Radionov met with Chaim Yellin in Kovno in the summer of 1943 and accepted Jews from the Kovno ghetto.[108] Many Jews left Vilna to join Markov's unit and they formed the Jewish brigade "Revenge" which consisted of 260 men. Later, Markov's sympathetic attitude changed and he ordered most of the Jews to hand over their weapons to unarmed Belorussian partisans. All of the unarmed Jews were then ordered to leave the camp.[109] A.P. Feodorov, a former commander of a partisan brigade, a Hero of the Soviet Union, and Major-General, said that his brigade included fighters of various nationalities, ages, and of both sexes. He claimed that they fought side by side like brothers.[110]

Hundreds of Jewish partisans received decorations, including the Order of Lenin and Hero of the Soviet Union, showing that the Supreme Command and the commanders of partisan brigades and detachments recognized and appreciated the Jewish fighters. There were some complaints about double standards of behavior and that many Jewish fighters were not cited or were given citations that were not commensurate with the worth of their acts of bravery.[111] Atlas and his

men were cited for distinctions and received Soviet decorations though they were not recognized in their capacity as Jews but as Soviet members of the general resistance movement.[112]

Endnotes

1. Kermish, Joseph. "The Place of the Ghetto Revolts in the Struggle Against the Occupier," in Kohn, p.307.
2. Levin, Dov. Fighting Back. Lithuanian Jewry's Armed Resistance to the Nazis, 1941-1945. New York, Holmes & Meier, (1985), p.107.
3. Ainsztein, p.700.
4. Ibid., p.400-401.
5. Porter, volume 1, p.180.
6. Ibid., p.180-181.
7. Ibid., p.181.
8. Eckman/Lazar, p.63-64.
9. Kaplan, "The Partisan Movement in Lithuania," in Jewish Spectator, (October 1966), p.22.
   "In July 1945, soon after the war, Chaim Yellin was awarded, posthumously, 'The Order of the Great War for the Fatherland-First Class,' by the Supreme Soviet."(Ibid.)
10. Eckman/Lazar, p.68. Aizik, a Labor Zionist and a member of the Zionist group in the ghetto, helped Jews to hide and join Soviet partisan units once they had left the ghetto. He also hid a radio in the cellar of the pharmacy which served the underground clandestinely. (Tory, Avraham. Surviving the Holocaust: the Kovno Ghetto Diary. Cambridge, Ma., Howard University, (1990), p.136 [footnote by Dina Porat].)
11. Bauer, p.139-140.
12. Tory, p.129 (footnote by Dina Porat).
13. Neshamit, Sarah. "Beginnings of the Partisan Movement in the Kaunas Ghetto," in Extermination and Resistance, vol.1, published by Ghetto Fighters' House, Kibbutz Lohamei Haghettaot, Israel, (1958), p.138.
14. Neshamit, "Rescue in Lithuania During the Nazi Occupation (June 1941-August 1944)," in Rescue Attempts During the Holocaust. Proceedings of the Second Vashem International Historical Conference-April 1974, Jerusalem, Yad Vashem, (1977), p.318.
15. Bauer, p.132.
16. Birman, Ziphora. "Grodna and Bialystok," in Barkai, Meyer, ed. The Fighting Ghettos. Philadelphia and New York, J.B. Lippincott Company, (1962), p.141.
17. Steinberg, p.250-251.
18. Grossman, Chaika. "Within the Walls," in Barkai, p.164.
19. Steinberg, p.251.
20. Bauer, p.132.
21. Klibanski, Bronia. "The Bialystok Underground," in Jewish Spectator, (November 1969), p.12.
22. Lazar, Chaim. Destruction and Resistance. A History of the Partisan Movement in Vilna. New York, Shengold, (1985), p.34.
    Betar-The Youth Organization of the Zionist Revisionist Movement, organized in 1925 by Ze'ev Jabotinsky (Ibid.,p.14)
    Hashomer Hatzair-(The Young Guard) A left-wing Zionist youth organization which stresses collectivism in Jewish

workers' settlements in Palestine, founded in 1924.(Pilch, Judah, ed. The Jewish Catastrophe in Europe. New York, American Association for Jewish Education, (1968).

23. Steinberg, p.231-232.
24. Ibid., p.232.
    The rallying cry was "in memory of Lisa Magoun, the young Vilna Jewess who had smuggled herself into the neighbouring ghetto of Oszmania. When she reached the square she had begun to harangue the Jews at the top of her voice imploring them to flee from the Germans, or to fight the Germans but never, never to allow the Germans to take them to Ponar. She was identified and assassinated, but a number of Oszmania Jews owe their lives to her." (Ibid.)
25. Eckman/Lazar, p.24. Each commander had two couriers, one for emergencies and one in reserve. The personal conduct of each partisan was clearly defined. They were to be prepared to do battle and not to panic but to remain clearheaded throughout, even in defeat. When called to mobilize, if a partisan could not find his own commander, he was to report to the commander of another group in his unit. If the commander was silenced, or if there was an emergency facing the ghetto or panic and flight among the people, the UPO fighters were to mobilize without waiting to be ordered to do so. Everyone had to keep contact with the center. A substitute command was chosen in case the command staff was captured or killed. If separated from the center during battle, the fight was to continue independently. Commanders could also try to organize greater groups to lead into battle. Any and all weapons were to be used, including knives and sticks. A fighter could only leave the battle field by an order from his commander. In any other case, to leave was considered treason. Ammunition was limited and it was forbidden to waste even a single bullet. During battles, weapons were seized from the enemy. If a fighter was wounded and could no longer fight, he had to surrender his weapons and ammunition to another fighter. If a fighter was killed, his weapons and ammunition were immediately salvaged. (Ibid., p.24-26.)
26. Lazar, p.33.
27. Ibid.
28. Eckman/Lazar, p.23-24.
29. Ibid., footnote p.160.
30. Arad, Documents on the Holocaust, p.433-434.
31. Foxman, "The Resistance Movement in the Vilna Ghetto," in Suhl, Yuri. They Fought Back, New York, Paperback Library, Inc., (1967), p.165.
    Hechalutz-(The Pioneer), a Zionist youth organization which stressed individual fulfilment through work and life as farmers in Palestine.(Pilch)
32. Lazar, p.40-41.
33. Levin, Fighting Back, p.143.
    "In March, sacks of produce were partially filled with

snow which caused the contents to rot; in April two hundred liters of benzine were poured into the sewers; in May, a box of rare medicines was broken in a military hospital; in June, filters were removed from six hundred gas masks; in July; the batteries of ninety-eight army cars were irreparably damaged by the addition of too much water; in August, one thousand pairs of army boots were spoiled."(Ibid., p.144)

34. Ibid., p.141.
35. Ibid.
36. Lazar, p.87-88.
37. Arad, Yitzhak. Ghetto in Flames: The Struggle and Destruction of the Jews in Vilna in the Holocaust. Jerusalem, Yad Vashem, New York, Ktav Pub. House, (1981), p.251. The group consisted of six pre-war natives of Vilna who had been parachuted into the Rudniki forests south of Vilna.
38. Ibid., p.252.
39. Lazar, p.85-86. The "Struggle Group" was organized in March-April 1942 by Borka Friedman, Natan Ring, chief of the ghetto's Police Station No.1, Shlomo Brand, a veteran Betarist and a leader of the Workers Brigade that worked in the Gestapo warehouses, and Dr. Leo Bernstein, director of the Judenrat cultural department.(Lazar, p.86) Friedman was a friend of Glazman and had been a member of the UPO but withdrew his participation and formed a separate underground organization due to a personal rivalry between himself and Glazman for the Betar leadership in the ghetto. Also, Friedman did not agree with the narrow structure of the UPO being based mainly on youth movements.(Arad, p.264) In November-December 1942, Friedman met with Scheinbaum, who was head of the "Yechiel" group, another underground organization. The two factions decided to merge and Scheinbaum became the leader of the new organization.(Ibid., p.265.)
40. Lazar, p.89.
41. Ibid., p.75.
42. Ibid., p.89.
43. Guttman, Yisrael. The Holocaust and Resistance. An Outline of Jewish History in Nazi Occupied Europe (1933-1945). Jerusalem, Yad Vashem, (1972), p.41.
44. Syrkin, Marie. Blessed is the Match: The Story of Jewish Resistance. London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., (1948), p.179-180.
45. Levin, Fighting Back, p.147-148.
46. Alpert, Nachum. The Destruction of Slonim Jewry. The Story of the Jews of Slonim During the Holocaust. New York, Holocaust Library, (1989), p.142.
47. Bauer, p.146-147.
48. Smolar, Hersh. The Minsk Ghetto. Soviet-Jewish Partisans Against the Nazis. New York, Holocaust Library, (1989), p.87.
49. Ibid.
50. Eckman/Lazar, p.12-13.
51. Levin, Fighting Back, p.182-183.
52. Ibid., p.183.

53. The best and bravest fighters were chosen for the first group, along with those who were in danger of arrest if they remained in the ghetto, including Josef Glazman. The codename of the group was "Leon" in honour of Wittenberg. (Lazar, p.76.)
54. Eckman/Lazar, p.33-34.
55. Lazar, p.78.
56. Eckman/Lazar, p.34.
57. Lazar, p.119. The "Vengeance" battalion was commanded by the Soviet Jew Butenas Rogovsky, a former Vilna ghetto policeman. Josef Glazman was the staff officer and Chaim Lazar was a unit commander. (Ibid., p.40.)
58. Eckman/Lazar, p.34.
59. Ibid., p.36.
60. Ibid., p.41.
61 They had previously prepared an escape route. A hiding place had been built under the smokestack of a lime kiln, from which the fighters could access the city's sewer system. Some fighters were alone, others in groups. Each group had a sewer worker to guide them through the system. They had to crawl through pipes on hands and knees with their weapons and documents strapped to their bodies. The sewers varied from 6 feet wide (under the main streets) to 18 inches (under narrower side streets). They crawled for four hours. One group became lost, a few fainted while others went mad, and one committed suicide. The bilge and the dirt rose to their heads but they had to keep moving or else they would have drowned. They also could not speak because their voices would have been heard through the sewer lids. They exited the sewers into the courtyard of the Lithuanian criminal police building. Sonia Madejsker and two Lithuanian policemen met and led them to the cellar to dry off. (Lazar, p.119) The fighters were paired off and given directions. Despite all the soldiers and Gestapo agents present in Vilna, they managed to reach the cemetery, dig up their weapons, and move on.(Eckman/Lazar, p.37-38)
Sonia Madejsker was an important partisan for these new recruits. She travelled between the forest and the ghetto, establishing connections with the partisans in the forest, and supplying guides and directions for the groups leaving the ghettos. (Ibid., p.36.)
62. Ibid., p.66.
63. Ainsztein, p.701.
64. Ibid., p.703.
65. Ibid., p.281-282.
66. Ibid. p.282. David Keymakh later organized the execution of Wilhelm Kube.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid., p.471.
69. Porter, vol.1, p.95-96.
70. Smolar, p.39.
71. Steinberg, 257.

72. Levin, Fighting Back, p.186.
73. Ibid., p.187.
74. Alpert, p.151-153. Anshl had been warned by a member of the Jewish police that an order from the Gestapo had been received for his arrest.
75. Ibid., p.200.
76. Ibid., p.201.
77. Koldyczewo was a part of Byelorussia that had belonged to Poland prior to the war. It is near Baranowicze. "The carpenters Bukouski, Koren, and Rawicki were ordered to drill holes beneath the barracks wall adjoining the tannery. The holes were then well camouflaged. The electrified barbed wire fence, only five meters away from the tannery, was cut by the locksmith Erlichman and the blacksmith Peissach. The tools for this purpose were acquired by the locksmiths Norman, Szenicki, and Romek. Before the wire was cut the Jewish electrician of the camp made a short circuit." Foxman, Joseph M. "The Escape from Koldyczewo Camp," in Suhl, p.189-190.
78. Ibid.
79. Ibid., p.190.
80. Foxman, "Resistance. The Few Against the Many," in Kowalski, Isaac, ed. Anthology on Armed Jewish Resistance, 1939-1945. Brooklyn, N.Y., Jewish Combatants Publishers House (1984), p.89, and Porter, vol.I, p.20.
81. Yellin, M. and D. Galperin. "The Partisans of the Kovno Ghetto," in Porter, vol.I, p.189.
82. Bar-On, A. Zwi. "Jews in the Soviet Partisan Movement", in Kowalski, Anthology, vol.4, p.181.
83. Porter, vol.I, p.21.
84. Ibid., p.22.
85. Alpert, p.208.
86. Granatstein, Yechiel. The War of a Jewish Partisan. A Youth Imperiled by His Russian Comrades and Nazi Conquerors. New York, Mesorah Publications, Ltd., (1986), p.35.
87. Bar-On, p.102. "Anti-Semitism `from below' here means feelings and actions directed against the Jewish partisans as Jews by the non-Jewish partisan on his own initiative and without direct connection with the institutions and laws of the Soviet partisan movement; whereas anti-Semitism `from above' will be defined as discrimination against Jews, originating in an unfair attitude to the Jewish partisan on the part of the partisan institutions, namely, the immediate commander, higher commanding officers including the commissar of the unit, the high command, the partisan court-martial, etc."(Ibid.)
88. Ibid., p.181.
89. Alpert, p.253. Unit 51 was part of the Shchors detachment.
90. Ibid., p.288.
91. Ibid., p.289.
92. Ibid.

93. Ibid.
94. Ibid., 302.
95. Ibid.
96. Granatstein, p.122-123.
97. Cholawski, Soldiers, p.87-88.
98. Ibid., p.93.
99. Ibid., p.147-148.
100. Schwarz, S. The Jews in the Soviet Union. Syracuse, N.Y., (1951), p.327.
101. Ibid.
102. Alpert, p.317.
103. Gutman, Israel, as quoted in Porter, vol.I, p.20-21.
104. Schwarz, p.327.
105. Granatstein, p.37-39.
106. Lazar, Destruction, p.158-159.
107. Neshamit, "Rescue in Lithuania," p.326.
108. Smolar, p.29.
109. Neshamit, "Rescue in Lithuania," p.26-27.
110. Feodorov, A.P. "Partisan Friendship," in Porter, vol.I, p.86.
111. Bar-On, "Jews in the Soviet Guerrilla Movement," in Kowalski, vol.4, p.97.
112. Levin, Nora. The Holocaust, p.370. The nationalities of others were not mentioned either.

APPENDIX 1

Mordechai Tamarov-Tennenbaum's appeal to the Bialystok ghetto, August 1943.

BROTHER JEWS!

Agonising days are upon us. We are not only threatened with yellow armbands, hate, perfidy, insult and humiliation, now death itself is hanging over us. Our wives, children, mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, have been led to their doom and thousands more will follow.

In these days that decide whether we live or die we issue the following appeal: first, I would have you know that five million European Jews have already been killed by Hitler and his executioners. Barely ten per cent of the Jews in Poland are still alive. More than two million Polish Jews have been subjected to every conceivable form of torture in Chelmo, Belsen, Oswiencim, Treblinka, Sobibor, and other death camps.

I assure you that whoever is taken from the ghetto is going to his death!

Have no faith in the Gestapo's tempting propaganda based on alleged deportees' letters. These are the brazen lies that pave the way to the giant crematoria and the burial pits in the heart of the Polish forests; all of you are doomed to die.

We have nothing to lose!

Do not deceive yourself that work will save you. The first 'action' will be followed by a second, the second by a third-right to the last Jew! The division of the ghetto into different categories is nothing but a perfidious enemy manoeuvre to ease their task by sowing false illusions among us.

JEWS!

Our destination is Treblinka. There we shall be gassed, then burnt like mad beasts. Do not go like lambs to the slaughter! We may be too weak to save ourselves, but we are strong enough to defend our honour as Jews and as human beings, strong enough to show the world that even though we are in chains, we are not conquered.

Do not go meekly to your death. Fight for your lives to your last breath. Stand up to your slaughterers with your teeth and nails, with axes and knives, with vitriol and iron bars. Extort from them blood for blood, a life for a life.

Do you intend hiding in rat holes while they take away your nearest and dearest to humiliation and death? Will you sell your wives, your children and parents, and your souls for a few more weeks of abject slavery? Rather let us ambush the enemy, kill him, seize his weapons; let us oppose the murderers and if need be let us die heroically and gain immortality by our death.

We have nothing to lose but our honour!

Let us not sell our lives cheaply! Let us avenge the annihilated communities! When you leave your house set fire to it! Set fire to the factories, demolish them! Do not allow our assassins to be our beneficiaries as well!

Young Jews, follow the example of generations of Jewish fighters and martyrs, the doers and the dreamers, the pioneers and the builders. Arm yourselves and fight!

Hitler will lose the war. Slavery and oppression will be wiped out, leaving the world purged and purified. With such a radiant future before you why die like dogs! Escape to the forests and join the partisans.

But do not flee from the ghetto unarmed for you will certainly perish. Do your duty by your country, opposing the destruction of the ghetto and escape width arms to the forest.

All you have to do is to seize one weapon from every German in the ghetto.

Be strong and courageous.

(From Lucien Steinberg's Not as a Lamb, p.250-251.)

APPENDIX 2

Reason for Itzik Wittenberg's surrender to the Gestapo.

On July 15, 1943, one of Wittenberg's contacts was caught by the Nazis. On the evening of the same day, the leaders of the fighter's organization were ordered to appear before Jacob Gens the chief of the Jewish police in the ghetto, to provide an explanation. The commanders appeared at the appointed hour, and after a short period S.S. men broke into the office by the side door with their guns pointed at the fighters. They were ordered to identify Wittenberg, but refused to answer, until Gens himself pointed him out. Wittenberg was handcuffed and taken in the direction of the gate of the ghetto but his captors never succeeded in getting him there. The ghetto fighters attacked the S.S. men and in an exchange of fire succeeded in freeing Wittenberg. Instead of attacking the ghetto and destroying it with Wittenberg inside, the S.S. handed Gens an ultimatum that he must turn Wittenberg over to them before 3:00 am or they would destroy the ghetto and all its inhabitants.

Due to the tempestuous situation created in the ghetto after Gens repeated this ultimatum, it was necessary to extend the time to 6:00 am. At first, people were unwilling to believe Gens' testimony that the Germans intended to destroy the ghetto. Two camps quickly emerged: representatives of the fighters, who believed that under no circumstances was Wittenberg to be given over to the Nazis; and those who supported Gens and demanded that it was necessary to spare the ghetto and give Wittenberg over to the Germans at the appointed hour, so as not to endanger the entire ghetto for the sake of one man. The exchanges between the two sides reached the proportions of a civil war in the eyes of the Nazis, who stood on one side waiting for the time to run out. The fighters opened up negotiations with the chief of police with the intention of offering a voluntary fighter to deceive the Germans or to claim that Wittenberg escaped. But Gens rejected the suggestion. The fighters were close to despair, seeing all their preparations for the fateful day collapsing because of one incident, and they demanded that Wittenberg give the order to fight. But Wittenberg was not prepared to allow Jew to fight Jew until his fighters reached their real enemy. Full of confidence, he walked out into the deserted street, approached the ghetto gate, and turned himself over to the Germans. He was subsequently tortured and died.

(Encyclopedia Judaica, volume 16, p.591-592.)

APPENDIX 3

Proclamation by the F.P.O. Calling for Revolt in Vilna, September 1, 1943.

Jews, Prepare for Armed Resistance!

The German and Lithuanian hangmen have reached the gates of the ghetto. They will murder us all. They will take us, group by group, through the gates.
That is how they took them in their hundreds on the Day of Atonement.
That is how they took them at the time of the White, the Yellow and the Pink papers.
That is how they took our brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, our children.
That is how they took tens of thousands away to their death.
But we will not go!
We will not let them take us like animals to slaughter.
Jews, prepare for armed resistance!
Do not believe the false assurances of the murderers, do not believe the words of the traitors. Whoever is taken through the gate of the ghetto has only one road ahead-Ponary. *And Ponary is death.*
Jews, we have nothing to lose.
Death is certain. Who can still believe that he will survive when the murderers kill systematically? The hand of the hangman will reach out to each of us. Neither hiding nor cowardice will save lives.
Only armed resistance can save our lives and honor.
Brothers, it is better to fall in battle in the ghetto than to be led like sheep to Ponary.
Know that in the ghetto there is an organized Jewish force which will rise up with arms in its hands.
Rise up for the armed resistance!
Don't hide in the *malines*. You will fall there like mice in the hands of the murderers.
Jewish masses
Out into the streets!
Those who have no arms get hold of an axe.
Those who haven't an axe take hold of an iron bar or a cudgel!
- *For our murdered children,*
- *For our parents,*
- *For Ponary.*

Strike the murderers!
In every street, in every yard, in every room, within the ghetto and outside the ghetto.
Strike the dogs!
Jews, we have nothing to lose. *We can save our lives only if we kill the murderers.*
Long live liberty! Long live armed resistance!
Death to the murderers!
Command Staff
United Partisans Organization-F.P.O. (Fareinikte Partizaner Organizatsie)
Vilna Ghetto
September 1, 1943
(From Yitzhak Arad's Documents on the Holocaust, 459-460.)

MISSIONS

The main activity of the partisans was to go out on "missions," which varied in distance, time, and type of operation. While some partisans set out to procure food, others sabotaged the German war effort. The procurement of arms and supplies and other services was considered, among the partisans, to be inferior to such operations as mining trains, attacking enemy garrisons, and destroying lines of communication.[1] The partisans, however, understood the importance of each and every operation, as Nikolai Nikolaevich Bobakov, a squad commander in the Minsk forest, suggested when he told his commanders that:

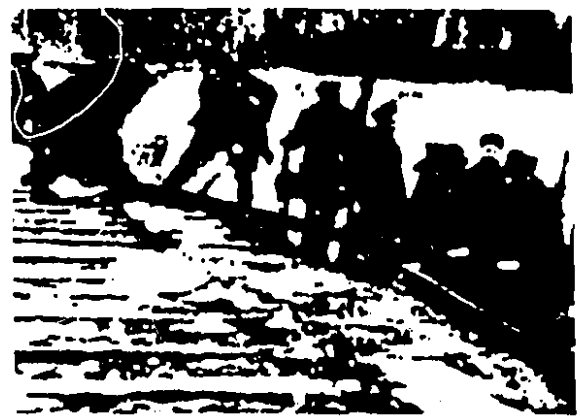
> The life of every heroic partisan is very valuable. Any one who dies is a tremendous loss to us. Therefore every plan of action brought up here has to be thought out well; it has to have a maximum effectiveness. We reckon generally that one partisan behind the enemy lines is worth seven soldiers facing the German forces at the front....
>
> A small team of partisans, four or five men, has the ability to derail a train with tanks and troops speeding to the front. The men can just send it flying off to crash down a steep embankment.
>
> So figure for yourselves how important is every usual, ordinary sabotage action that we carry out. How many people's lives we save in the homeland, on the battlefronts, by plaguing the enemy behind the lines, by sabotaging and destroying some of their military strength in the terrain that they've captured, and by preventing their military shipments, as much as we can, from getting to the front.[2]

Many of the missions involved disrupting German communications. At first, the partisans simply cut the wires which the Germans easily repaired. Then, the partisans began

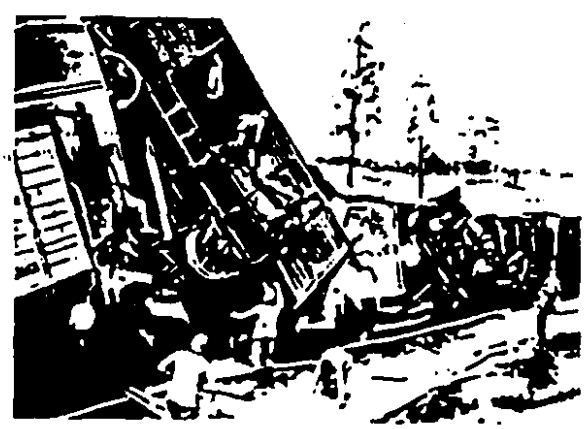
cutting the poles down but the Germans stuck the shortened poles in the ground again and rewired them. The partisans then took to cutting the poles into small pieces. This required coordination among them as they had a limited number of saws. The Germans retaliated by inserting trip wires in the poles that detonated mines when the saw touched the wires. The partisans therefore chose men from nearby villages who were hostile to the Jews and forced them to cut the poles down. The Germans were thus killing their own collaborators. As a result, they stopped mining the poles.[3]

In 1943, after the Chapayev unit had organized a new camp, Yitzhak Arad, along with four others, mined the railroad track between Novo-Swienciany and Podbrodzie. He had received only brief training in mine laying prior to the mission.[4] After several weeks in the forest, the Jewish partisans under the Jewish commander Moris Greinman, were given explosives to blow up German transports on the railway line linking Koenigsberg and Kovno to the Russian-German front. They had a map of the area and were able to trace the railway lines on it. They also knew the directions and the roads that led to these lines. The main issue was to locate a good spot for the mine. It was preferrable to find a high spot for the explosives to rip up the rails as this would force the train to roll downhill at high speed and crash, increasing the damage. (See picture next page.)

The Germans created difficulties for the partisans by



Derailing the tracks...



The results....

Source: Porter, J.N. Jewish Partisans, University Press of America, 1982, p.280-281.

cutting down all the trees along the railway lines and mining the areas. The partisans risked being seen in the open by German, Ukrainian, or Lithuanian patrols and risked being killed by the mines before they even reached the railway.[6]

There were four explosives groups (which consisted of the best fighters) that took part in the first train demolition missions. They were led by the commanders Iser Shmidt, Abba Kovner, Shmuel Kaplinsky, and Chaim Lazar, who was wounded in the hand before having placed the explosives.[6] Scouts later reported that no trains had passed for 24 hours following the explosion and that several Germans had been killed while many more were wounded. Within 2 months, there were fewer transports passing along that line and five months later, there were no longer any transports at night for fear of the partisans.[7] (See Appendix A -one of the few documents that details the daily operations of a partisan unit.)

Edgar Howell, in his book on the Soviet partisan movement, states that many of the "successful" rail demolitions must have done none or little damage considering the volume of traffic that continued to flow following the attacks. He states that "as far as can be told from the record the Germans listed as successful any demolition charge or mine which was actually set off, irrespective of damage, and as unsuccessful, any charge removed or disarmed

prior to detonation."[8] The partisans viewed the demolitions as successful if there was damage and an interruption of traffic on the railway line. The successful activities of 22 partisan units that emcompassed 90 percent of the Jewish partisans in the Lithuanian movement appear in the table below.

Targets of Successful Partisan Attacks

	No. of derailed trains	*No. of locomotives*	*No. of railroad cars*	*No. of plants*	*No. of storehouses*	*No. of bridges*	*No. of vehicles*	*Railroad tracks (in miles)*	*Lines of communication (in miles)*	*No. of tanks*	*No. of enemy soldiers*
The Vilna detachments	242	113	1,065	12	12	35	257	1,409	4.2	11	4,809
The Kovno detachments	31	40	157	10	5	18	64	370	27.3	1	774
The Svenčionys (svencian) detachments*	143	135	766	21	—	15	48	946	140.4	26	650
The Trakai (troki) brigade	45	—	171	1	5	15	13	374	215.0	—	400
Total	461	288	2,159	44	22	83	382	3,099	355	3	6,633

Source. Staras, *Partizaninis judejimas Lietuvoje, Vilna, 1966 p. 229.*

Source: Levin, Dov. Fighting Back, Holmes & Meier, 1985, p.195.

Sometimes partisans had to make long treks from one area to another. In 1943, a group of partisans made a 200 kilometer journey from the Narocz forest to the Rudnicki forest in order to safely deliver some transmitters. They travelled by night and as much as possible avoided rivers, railways, and main highways.[9] When a whole brigade was on the move, the units were spread out over a large distance. The local peasants and the Germans thus had an exaggerated notion of the size and strength of the brigade and this false perception was to the advantage of the partisans especially since many of the German police garrisons either

took up defensive positions or fled.[10] Kovpak, a Soviet general, became a legend when he led his men deep into German territory, and swept through Bielorussia, Ukraine, and the Carpathian Mountains of eastern Galicia. Several motorized divisions were moved from the front to oppose him and the Germans even put a price of 50,000 gold rubles on his head.[11]

The partisans created the impression of being strong, organized, disciplined, and well-armed. The peasants believed large Soviet forces were moving about. In the second half of July 1942, the partisans ambushed a German military convoy in Rayuvka. It was a large and serious defeat for the area's German garrison. The battle lasted more than six hours and while the partisans suffered slight losses, the Germans suffered 35 dead and wounded. The German army was shamed and the local population was brought closer to the partisans.[12] Frequently, in various regions, public buildings used by Germans were set on fire at night and arms depots and repair shops were destroyed.[13] German convoys were frequently ambushed by partisans hiding on higher ground overlooking the road. Although the size of the convoy and the element of surprise were factors, the ambushes usually proved to be effective. With sufficient warning, several groups would unite to ambush larger convoys. If reinforcements could not be found or failed to arrive in time, the larger convoys were allowed to pass to the dismay

of the nearby partisans.[14]

There were also revenge missions in which German collaborators were executed for massacres and individual murders they committed. Mottele, one of Diadia Misha's partisans, blew up a building full of high ranking Germans. Gertrude Samuels portrayed his feelings and those of his commander in the following way in her book Mottele:

> Mottele couldn't utter a word at first because of his excitement. But slowly he calmed down. He looked at the red sky, and clenched his fist, and he cried out, "That's for my parents, and for my little sister! Not pity, but vengeance now, Papa!" He was saying for all of us, this boy, and it was for me [Diadia Misha]-for my parents, for my wife, and my own little daughter, Fanny, who was thirteen.[15]

The partisans procured food by attacking food collection depots. Communication between the depot and German headquarters had to be cut. Ambushes were set up in case the gendarmerie managed to call for help and Germans came. While some partisans fired on the gendarmerie to keep them in the bunkers, others raided the depot.[16] The partisans raided farmers known to be German sympathizers and delivery carts on their way to the depots to fulfil their quotas. Later on in the war, farmers exchanged produce for protection with the partisans. In some areas, family groups would supply labor in exchange for a share of the produce.[17] The peasants often did not like giving food up to the partisans, and even less so to the Jewish partisans. They treated the Jews with contempt and refused to help them. They quickly discovered

that a Jewish bullet was just as effective as a Russian one.[18] They refused, however, to admit they were partisans and called them "Jewish bandits" in their complaints to the Germans, in which they claimed the Jews robbed them of their possessions and gave them no rest.[19]

Each partisan had a specific role to play on the mission he went out on, as well as in the base camp where he lived. In order to make this system efficient, each partisan developed a specialty of his own which for Jews was an important asset as this made them more valuable to the partisan units. In some cases, it enabled them to join non-Jewish units and to survive the war.

PARTISAN SPECIALTIES

Partisan specialties included combat, sabotage, scouting, and many others. Experts in sabotage, guerrilla warfare, and radio communication were trained in Russia to work with partisan groups. By the end of 1942, there were thousands of these experts operating behind German lines, mobilizing the partisans in the forests into more efficient fighting units. A special ministry was created to coordinate and supply partisan campaigns.[20] Each partisan group or unit had reconnaissance groups and some even had mounted scouts. These partisans would keep track of German activity in the surrounding areas and report back to their commanders. Scouts were well respected for their fighting abilities and knowledge of various kinds of intelligence work.[21]

When the partisans were not out on missions, there was work to be done in the camp. Workshops were set up and the specialists went to work. Weapons were tested and repaired, tailors made new clothes and repaired old ones, cobblers made boots and leggings, and so on. Propaganda literature was distributed to the local population with the help of printing presses in the barracks, in the forest.[22]

Gunsmiths were in great demand. Many of the repair workshops in the Rudnicki forest detachments, including "Death to the Conquerors" and "Avenger," were founded and operated by Jewish locksmiths.[23] The Peneusov family, a father and his two sons, set up a metalworkers' workshop in the forest. They were very good at repairing weapons for the partisans in the Jewish camp where they resided. The three contributed greatly to improved relations between the Russians and Lithuanians and the Jewish camp since they repaired weapons for them. As payment, they asked for damaged and out-of-use weapons which they later rendered operative thus increasing the Jewish arsenal.[24]

Most partisans regarded the tasks of preparing and distributing food, setting up and operating health installations, maintaining a constant supply of fuel and water, and guard duty with a rather low opinion even though they were essential. Old men, women, invalids, and injured men were employed in these activities which became important means of absorbing Jews into the partisan units. Often, when

possible, the people who fulfilled these roles also went out on missions with the regular fighters. Not everyone regarded the tasks with condescension. Nina Kosterina wrote in her diary that she considered the sentries as courageous and described them as brave children.[25]

Many of the forest guides were children who had mastered the basic rules of the underground. They were often the courriers who led groups of Jews out of the ghetto and to the partisans in the forest. In the Minsk ghetto, a sort of secret password- The Youngsters -emerged. Although most knew that it was the children leading partisans out of the ghetto, few knew their names.[26] Sima (12 years), Banko (13), and David (13) were three of these "Youngsters." They went to the ghetto armed with loaded pistols so that they would not be captured alive by the Germans. They were efficient, showed no fear, and carried out orders with strict discipline.[27] According to Nora Levin, Banko gave his final instructions by addressing the people like a commander speaking to soldiers.[28] For months, children like Banko led hundreds of Jews to the partisans, travelling hundreds of miles.[29] Bunia Hammer, 12 years of age, knew every trail and bush from Minsk to the forest and led more than 100 Jews to freedom. He died while fighting the Germans.[30] Sima Peterson, 11, saved many Jews. On one trip back to the ghetto, the Gestapo learned of her arrival. They murdered her mother and two younger brothers in an attempt to capture

her. She remained hidden, armed with a gun. She did not kill them but remained a disciplined partisan and carried out her orders to bring Jews to the forest. David Kliansky escorted 25 people from the ghetto each time he made the trip. Tonitchka Gimpel had the special assignment of returning from the ghetto with physicians.[31]

Special training for going on missions, guard duty, scouting, and for general survival in the forest and swamps took place in the forest following the arrival of new recruits. Lieutenant Fyodorovich, commander of the Shchors detachment, rebuilt the morale of the Jews by introducing an atmosphere of military discipline. His specialty was his knowledge of partisan warfare. He divided the 120 men into 3 companies and each company into 4 units.[32] He began by giving elementary basic training for new recruits. They did target practice, learned to camouflage positions, and to move silently from one position to another, to cover fellow soldiers when necessary, to throw grenades, and to march in utter silence so that even a cough had to be suppressed. He also taught them how to interpret various sounds among the rustling of the leaves, how to differentiate between a real echo and a simulated one, how to tell the direction a shot came from, and how to "read" footsteps. He taught them to be bold and daring and to abhor cowardice.[33] A partisan from another partisan group said that she learned to "smell" Germans, who smelled of a mixture of cigarettes, chocolate,

and spicy soap. Survival depended on the developed sharpness of the partisans' eyes, ears, and noses.[34] Fyodorovich also awoke the partisans' Jewish consciousness by speaking Yiddish with them during relaxation times and talking about what was happening to the Jews of Europe.[35] In the evening, the partisans spent their free hours around the campfire. The actions of the day were reviewed. Acts of heroism as well as correct military moves were praised, while foolish or timid behaviour and unfulfilled missions were heavily criticized. After that, the mood relaxed and a friendly, family-like atmosphere prevailed.[36]

There were special services that required professional knowledge and which were highly esteemed by the partisans such as doctors, nurses, printers, cartographers, and translators. Markov and other senior commanders tried to recruit Jewish doctors and even sent special units to the ghettos to bring them to the forest. Most of Markov's detachment doctors were Jewish. This was also the case among many of the partisan units in the Rudnicki forest.[37]

DOCTORS, NURSES, AND MEDICAL TREATMENT

In the early days of the partisan movement, medical supplies and personnel were lacking in the forests. Wounded partisans who were in urgent need of medical care and surgery were smuggled into the ghettos where underground doctors cared for them. If they had to stay for a prolonged period, they were given forged identity papers and were

registered in the Judenrat.[38] Dr. Kulik was one of the underground's doctors in the Minsk ghetto whose private office at the hospital was converted into an emergency clinic where partisans received "minor" treatment and surgery. Dr. Kulik and Dr. Minkin treated badly wounded and sick partisans as well.[39]

There were plenty of patients. Poor nutrition, constant humidity, poor sanitary conditions, and ill-fitting (or lack of) clothing, weakened the immune systems of the partisans making them more susceptible to such conditions as ulcerated jaws, blisters, scabies, boils, furunculi, lice, typhus, and so on.[40] Thus, one of the main responsibilities of the doctors and nurses was to organize a sanitary service. The partisans lived in bunkers or earth huts, in which overcrowding was a problem. Three to four partisans lived in each bunker, while the huts, which were meant to house approximately thirty people, often served as living places for a hundred. The stifling air prevented the kerosene lamps and candles from burning and they often blew out alone.[41]

Partisan hospitals were often in far-off spots, under constant guard. Whenever possible, the sick and wounded accompanied the partisans when they were on the move. The hospitals received the best of the available food. During raids on the enemy, the partisans acquired medicines and bandages, as well as, weapons. In many places in Ukraine, the partisans were in contact with doctors, nurses, and

pharmacists who supplied all that they needed. A Jewish doctor, posing as a non-Jew, worked in the small town of Rozhitsa, in the district of Volyn. He did a lot for the partisans and kept them supplied with medicines and instruments.[42] Nearby villagers often came to the forest seeking medical treatment but, even more often, the forest doctors went to the nearby villages to treat the sick and wounded.[43]

In some cases, there were no doctors and a doctor would be "borrowed" from a neighboring village or town. Such was the case for a partisan unit in the swamps of Pinsk. Volodya and a young partisan disguised themselves as a peasant woman and sick boy, respectively. They drove a farm wagon into the town of Yanova, near Pinsk, and went to "visit" the local doctor. They conscripted her and took her to the forest without anyone noticing.[44]

The Bielski detachment had its own medical staff. Russian commanders and their mistresses who sought medical attention from these doctors, brought gifts, usually food, which helped to feed the people of the camp although they were not enough to eliminate the need for food missions.[45] Dr. Atlas, the most famous Jewish partisan doctor, provided medical assistance to the early partisans before he too became a partisan.[46]

Dossia Baskina was a medical nurse for the partisans. She took part in most of the battles, bandaging the wounded

and removing them from the field of battle while enemy bullets flew by. She saved the lives of 49 wounded fighters and officers in this way. She would circulate among the entire group, when it was on the move or at a camp site, care for those in need of medical treatment, and give words of encouragement to those who needed it.[47] Prior to the war, she had received training as a midwife and so often helped village women about to give birth and treated babies in German-occupied areas.[48] Dossia was also an expert saboteur and helped to blow up sixteen enemy convoys. She received two medals for her courage and daring exploits.

Doctors enhanced the respect and authority the partisans enjoyed with the locals by visiting the sick in neighboring villages.[49] Many took part in military operations as well as took care of the sick, and often procured their own medicines. In order to compensate for the shortage of medications, the medical staffs resorted to unconventional methods, such as using bullet powder creams and boiled milk injections.[50]

Weather and climate were always a consideration for the partisans. Bad weather was good because it hid tracks and the partisans could move around more freely since German guards were less likely to go outside. However, bad weather also created problems for the partisans. During the mass manhunts, many fled deeper into the Minsk forests. The heavy mists and fogs, combined with the Jews' lack of knowledge of

the local topography led to many walking by mistake into the muddy swamps.[51] When it was cold and damp or hot and humid, and windy, they were affected and often became ill. Winter and snow was a big problem. The foliage from the trees no longer hid their movements and if there were few snowfalls, the partisans were trapped as their footprints would disclose their whereabouts. Many fell ill or froze to death. The Bialystok partisans had a particularly hard time in the winter of 1943. Larger units that controlled more extensive forest areas and villages within it were not as bothered by the snow and could move around more freely.[52] On December 8, 1941, Nina Kosterina wrote a letter to her mother in which she complained of a sore throat from having slept on the snow in the woods while out on a mission.[53] Some partisans could move about by wrapping themselves in white cloth to avoid detection (See picture). Horsedrawn sleds provided a silent means of transport for the partisans in snow-covered terrain.[54] Most, however, were not so lucky. The slightest activity attracted the Germans' attention and food ran out before the snow melted away. The partisans resorted to eating bark from the trees, and sometimes frozen potatoes that they dug up in the fields.

Medical personnel and services were not limited to the fighting units. Hospitals were set up in many of the family camps. Injured or sick fighters, whether Jewish or not, were frequently brought to the family camps for the doctors and

Camouflaged in white covers, made from parachute fabric, during winter operations

Source: Arad, Yitzhak. The Partisan, Schocken, 1980, p.140.

nurses to care for. These camps also provided many other services for the fighting partisans, who usually paid for them with food or other necessities of life.

FAMILY CAMPS AND WOMEN PARTISANS

Family camps, or detachments, were a primarily Jewish phenomenon. Their primary aim was not to fight Nazis but to save lives.[55] Unlike non-Jewish partisans, Jews felt the necessity of bringing their families with them to the forests despite the serious difficulties this created. They were convinced that if their families were captured by the Germans, that they would be killed.[56] As a result, family camps, or civilian camps, had to be established to accommodate the elderly, the women, and the children. They could generally but not always be found wherever there were concentrations of Jewish partisans in Jewish or Soviet units. Occasionally, a family camp and a partisan group were combined in one unit.

Most of the family camps in Belorussia and Volhynia were founded in 1942. In early 1943, when the organized Soviet partisan movement took over control of the partisans operating in western Belorussia and northern Ukraine, the Jewish family camps were accepted as a *fait accompli* and the Soviet partisans reconciled themselves to their existence.[57] In the Kruk detachment, in Volyn, western Ukraine, there were four family camps consisting of over 1000 Jews. The Ukrainians had also established some camps for their

families and the Poles had a camp for those fleeing from Germans and Ukrainians.[58]

The non-Jewish partisans were not happy with the family camps. They did not feel that they were contributing to the fight against the Germans and felt they were a nuisance even though the camps did their utmost to be self-sufficient and independent. One major point of contention was food collection. Both groups had to collect food from nearby peasants and the fighting partisans did not like to share what little there was with the non-fighters. In some cases, as in the Naliboki forest, the difference that existed between a family camps and the partisans was ideological. The family camp, led by Elkes, a tailor and member of the Nacha partisans, was composed mainly of shopkeepers and small businessmen, was capitalistic in its beliefs and saw no purpose in the Communist doctrine adopted by the Nacha partisans and their leadership.[59]

Most of the family camps, especially the larger ones, were able to organize themselves as service and maintenance units. They provided medical services, weapon and equipment repairs, and food preparation for the combat units. The armed nucleus of these family camps was often able to take an active part in fighting the Germans without neglecting its duty of protecting the family camp. The Jews of the family camps tried and often succeeded in becoming useful and productive elements for the Soviet partisans, who lacked

those services in their own units.[60]

The camps were located deep in the woods, in faraway spots, and on islands in the swamps. Whenever the partisans moved, the family camps moved with them. In the earlier days, attempts were made to save as many from the Nazis as possible, including men, women, children, and the elderly. As the companies acquired more weapons, young and middle-aged men and women were able to join the fighting units. Those who did not had their own responsibilities. Old women repaired clothes, did the washing, cooked, and knitted socks and mufflers, while old men mended shoes, tailored some clothing, and did a little furrier's work. (See picture next page.) The children took care of the animals and collected seeds and various foodstuffs.[61] Some camps set up farms where wheat and barley were sowed and mowed. There were flour mills and bakeries which provided the partisans with bread. There was also a large number of cows, sheep, goats, and horses. These Jews were behind-the-line partisans and helped those on the frontline.[62]

Dadya Petya's partisan company was the first one to be organized in the Vitebsk district, in the region of Lake Loklomsk. The partisans organized Jewish workers in small neighboring towns and helped organize sabotage groups. In September 1941, they were beginning to receive a steady stream of refugees from the small towns, including youth, old men, women, and children. They had no alternative but to

Sewing workshop in the Budnony Partisan Unit, 1943 (Menkin Collection, Courtesy of Yad Vashem Archives, Jerusalem).

Source: Tec, Nechama. Defiance, Oxford University Press, 1993.

set up a civilian camp. The partisans then went to work in the Baranovichi region. They helped a group of Jewish fighters from the village of Svinitsa bring Jews out of the Baranovichi ghetto. They then came into contact with the Shchors unit, in August 1942, and after it grew into an independent company, it joined the brigade.[63]

The Bielski family camp in the Naliboki forest is one of the more well-known family camps as it was probably the largest. It was set up in 1942 by the Bielski brothers and consisted of approximately 80 Jews. The Bielskis' and other commanders' main objective was to rescue as many Jews from the ghettos as they could, as well as those in hiding. They maintained contact with Dvorets, Novogrudek, Lida, and other neighboring towns and ghettos. When these ghettos were liquidated, hundreds of Jews managed to flee to the forest and join the camp.[64] In 1943, its numbers had increased to 1200. Approximately 400 of these were armed and went out on missions. The rest performed various tasks inside the camp, which contained a kindergarten, a yeshiva, some merchants and some indigents.[65] Not far from the Bielski camp was the Zorin camp, named after Zorin, a Minsk Jew. In this camp, there were approximately 600 Jews from Minsk and Smolensk. The Zorin camp sent messengers to Minsk and Bielski sent messengers to Lida, Novogrudek, and Ivye in order to help Jews flee the ghettos. The Yada camp had 200 Jews in it, and there were approximately 1000 Jews in the Lipiczansk forest,

near the town of Zhetil.[66]

Women formed an important part of the family camps, where they lived and worked. Some also fought side by side with the men, as for example in A.P. Brinsky's (Dadya Petya's) group.[67] Partisan life was difficult for the women. They had to take care of the sick and the wounded, they washed clothes and dishes, and they cooked. The men often did not want the women to fight as they felt that they were supposed to protect the women. The women endured the same hardships as the men did. They tolerated food shortages for long periods of time, wore whatever clothing they could find and sometimes even wore "raffia" shoes.[68] The women, however, did not tolerate not being given arms. In an article he wrote, Dadya Petya remembered a request he received from Rina Guz.

> Dadya Petya! My military record shows four enemy trains destroyed. You know full well that I have military privileges, and my privilege to get arms is not less than that of the others. Give me an automatic rifle, I hereby request you, dear Dadya Petya![69]

According to Dr. Jack Porter, there were some women in almost every partisan detachment and Jewish women were active in nearly all of the units that had Jewish men. They numbered 2-3% and sometimes as much as 5%. They were mainly used as scouts and intelligence agents because men of military age were more conspicuous and were liable to be arrested on sight.[70] Jewish women with Aryan features often had a hard time being accepted into units, and when they

were, it was after long grilling and testing sessions to make sure that they were not Nazi collaborators sent as spies. However, once accepted, they frequently did infiltration and assassination work. Halina Mazanik worked as a domestic for General Kube. It was she who placed the time bomb under his bed and killed him.[71]

Unlike non-Jewish women, Jewesses went to the forest to avoid death. They knew it was harder for a woman than a man to be alone. Rape and murder were real threats for them. They understood that powerful men could give them protection and that the more powerful the man, the more likely they were to remain alive, though this often depended on the woman's willingness to become the partisan's mistress.[72] Acceptance into a Soviet detachment was not solely based on sexual promiscuity since not all women were prepared to trade sex for protection and many of the women lacked the youth and good looks necessary to make the exchange desirable for the men. Women were acceptable if they were physicians, nurses, good cooks, and so on.[73] Some of the women worked as courriers for the Partisan staffs.[74]

The Bielski and Zorin *otriads*, in the Belorussian forests, along with other Jewish camps, had a policy of unconditional acceptance of all Jews irregardless of sex or age. Unfortunately, it was hard for women to learn of the existence of such camps, and once they did learn, to reach them safely.[75]

Babies were a huge risk to the entire camp and unwanted pregnancies were a heavy burden for the women to bear. Abortions were common and were performed with inadequate instruments and without medication.[76] Dr. Hirsh was the Bielski camp's physician and gynecologist. He performed numerous abortions on women from the Bielski otriad as well as from surrounding Russian detachments. As payment for his services, Dr. Hirsh received fat, pork, flour, and other foodstuffs. Those who could afford it paid with gold coins. The Bielski camp women were accommodated free of charge if they could not afford his fees.[77]

Towards the end of the fall of 1942, when the Germans decided to clear the Kozyany forests of partisans, the Spartak command decided to divide the partisans into small groups and to retreat to the forests in eastern Byelorussia. The Jews in the family camps bore the brunt of the German attack. They had no reconnaissance force and learned too late of the concentration of German units preparing to set siege to the forest. Even if they had had warning, their mobility was limited by the older people and the children and they would probably still have died.[78] Yitzhak Arad states that thousands of family camp Jews died in the Volcha-Nora forest in October 1942, in the Lipichan forest in December 1942, in the Kopyl forest in February 1943, in the Kokhov, Kozyany, and Naroch forests in September 1943, and in the Naliboki forest in early 1944.[79] Few survived in

the Kozyany forest, and those who did elude the Germans were those who had been able to find shelter in the marshes where the Germans had difficulty searching. The Spartak units returned in the spring of 1943 but found few families left. Most of the survivors went to live in family camps near the Chapayev base.[80]

In 1943, the Germans made a coordinated attack on the partisans in the Narocz and Kazan forests from two sides, in a triangular cordon. They combed the forests, destroyed partisan bases, and set fire to villages suspected of aiding the partisans.[81] Some partisans managed to escape the cordon by crossing some railroad tracks. However, some local peasants spotted them and led the Germans to their hiding place. The Jews were ambushed and only one woman survived to tell the story.[82]

It is unknown how many Jews found shelter and refuge in the family camps. Many of them were killed in German manhunts, as well as by the Polish underground, the Ukrainians, the Soviet partisans, and local peasants. Many also died from famine and various diseases.[83]

The lack of unbiased, scholarly literature, particularly in English, on the Jewish partisans in the Soviet Union results in a dependence on personal, eyewitness accounts, most of which were written in the post-war years and are therefore to varying extents unreliable or at least questionable in terms of accuracy. A look at some of these

accounts does, however, permit some insight into the impact or influence Jewish partisans had on the Soviet partisan movement. (Some of these accounts appear in Appendix B.)

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18. Lazar, p.135.
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20. Kahn, p.117.
21. Levin, Fighting Back, 198.
22. Yellin, M. and D. Galperin. "The Partisans of the Kovno Ghetto," in Porter, vol.I, p.186.
23. Levin. Fighting Back, p.194.
24. Lazar, p.148-149.
25. Ginsburg, Mirra. The Diary of Nina Kosterina. London, Valentine, Mitchell, & Co. Ltd., (1968), p.178.
26. Smolar, p.95.
27. Greenstein, Jacob. "Children-Courriers in the Ghetto of Minsk," in Suhl, They Fought Back, p.259.
28. Ibid., p.261. He gave them specific orders to follow him and obey his every command. He instructed them on procedures should they encounter Germans and threatened that anyone who caused panic or disobeyed orders would be shot without warning.
29. Levin, Nora. "Resistance and Rescue: Jewish Partisan Groups During the Holocaust," in Kowalski, vol.4, p.71. Banko died in August 1943, during a German attack.
30. Smolar, p.95-96.
31. Ibid., p.71-72.
32. Alpert, p.238-239.
33. Ibid.
34. Rubin, S.W. Against the Tide. The Story of an Unknown

Partisan. Jerusalem, Posner & Sons Ltd., (1980), p.113-114.
35. Alpert, p.239.
36. Ibid., p.248-249.
37. Levin. Fighting Back, p.194.
38. Suhl, "The Resistance Movement in the Ghetto of Minsk," in Suhl, They Fought Back, p.253.
39. Smolar, p.36.
40. Lazar, p.148.
41. Andreyev, p.113. For the bunkers, they dug deep ditches in the ground. The ditches were lined with heavy logs and covered with a roof of logs topped with dirt and grass as camouflage from low-flying reconnaissance planes. The bunkers had fireplaces, built with bricks that the partisans gathered from bombed out houses in neighboring villages. Three to four partisans lived in each bunker. They usually slept fully dressed with their arms next to them.(Riwash, Joseph. Resistance and Revenge: 1939-1949. Montreal, Presses Elite, (1981), p.57.) To build huts, the partisans cut flexible twigs, bent them in a half circle, and stuck the ends in the ground. More twigs were braided on the top and sides. For the roof, bark was peeled off the trees. Straw was spread inside to protect against the dampness of the earth.(Bar Oni, Byrna. "Life Among the Partisans," in Laska, Women, p. 273.) The straw did not really keep the partisans dry and the field lice constantly bit them, making it difficult to sleep.(Ibid., p.274.)
42. Brinsky, "Meetings and Events," in Porter, vol.I, p.130.
43. Andreyev, p.114.
44. Granatstein, p.154.
45. Tec, p.109.
46. Eckman/Lazar, p.52-53.
47. Feodorov, "Partisan Friendship," in Porter, vol.I, p.87.
48. Ibid., p.88.
49. Brinsky, p.131.
50. Tec, p.172-173. There was a shortage of medications and so, the medical staff used unconventional methods. The powder from bullets, which contains sulphur, a disinfectant that fights infections, was mixed with fat to create a cream that cured all kinds of skin diseases, including boils and furunculi. Injections of boiled milk were also used for various skin infections since they caused a fever which helped mobilize the body's immune system to fight the infection.(Ibid.)
51. Granatstein, p.142.
52. Grossman, Chaika. The Underground Army. Fighters of the Bialystok Ghetto. New York, Holocaust Library, (1987), p.367.
53. Riwash, p.55.
54. Ginsburg, p.191. Colonel Kuprianov, Chief of Army Personnel for the USSR People's Commissariat of Defense,

General Headquarters of the Red Army, sent a notice to Nina's mother on January 20, 1942, to announce that Nina died in December 1941 while fighting for the Socialist Homeland. (Ginsburg, 192.)

55. Arad, "Jewish Family" in Rescue Attempts, p.334.
56. Steinberg, p.256-257.
57. Arad, p.334.
58. Brinsky, p.125.
59. Kahn, p.89.
60. Arad, p.351.
61. Brinsky, p.125.
62. Suhl, Yuri. Uncle Misha's Partisans. New York, Paperback Library, Inc., (1967), p.93.
63. Brinsky, p.121-122.
64. Lazar, p.178.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid.
67. Petya, Dadya. "Women Partisans," in Porter, vol.I, p.129.
68. Ibid., p.129-130. "Raffia shoes were shoes made of soft leather or rubber, somewhat like Tennis shoes, for moving quietly through the forest." (Footnote, Ibid., p.130.)
69. Ibid.
70. Porter, "Jewish Women in the Resistance," in Kowalski, vol.I, p.291.
71. Ibid., p.293.
72. Tec, p.156.
73. Ibid., p.157. Most of the Jewish women who were accepted into Russian units became mistresses of partisans and usually of officers. Some of these mistresses were later sent to the Bielski camp when their officers were pressured to terminate the relationships.(Ibid.)
74. Eckman/Lazar, p.49.
75. Tec, p.156-157.
76. Ibid., p.167.
77. Ibid.
78. Arad, The Partisan, p.117.
79. Arad, "Jewish Family" in Rescue Attempts, p.339.
80. Arad, The Partisan, p.117.
81. Lazar, p.124.
82. Ibid.
83. Arad, "Jewish Family," p.336.

Appendix A

OPERATIONS DIARY OF A JEWISH PARTISAN UNIT IN RUDNIKI FOREST, 1943-1944

Serial No.	Date	Operation	Number of Fighters	Name of Commander
1	10/7/43	Destruction of telegraph link along the Grodno-Vilna road in the section between Pirciupie and Tetiance. More than 50 telegraph poles were sawn through, the wires were cut and the insulators broken. Three units took part in the operation: "Avenger," "To Victory" and "Death to Fascism."	35	I. Czuzoj & Aron Aronowicz
2	10/11/43	Destruction of telegraph link along the Vilna-Lida road, in the section near Krzyzowka. More than 70 poles were sawn through, the wires were cut and the insulators broken. Three units took part in the operation: "Avenger," "To Victory" and "Death to Fascism."	25	[Name erased in original document]
3	10/23/43	The telephone and telegraph were destroyed along the railroad from Lida to Vilna, in the Jaszuny-Stasily section, not far from Gudelki. Three units took part in the operation: "Avenger," "Death to Fascism" and "To Victory."	25	Ch. Magid and Brand
4	10/43	Three road barriers [were destroyed] at the approaches to Rudniki; two on the main road and one on the road through the forest. The action was carried out simultaneously by three groups. Three units took part in the action: "Avenger," "To Victory," and "Death to Fascism."	55	Chaim Lazar, N. Ring, and Aronowicz
5	10/29/43	Sabotage operation in the city of Vilna: Four transformers and a mechanical water conveyor were destroyed with the aid of English mines. Carried out by a sabotage party consisting of four partisans: Witka Kempner, Matys Lewin, Rozow and Chajele [Szapiro]	4	

Serial No.	Date	Operation	Number of Fighters	Name of Commander
6	11/2/43	Sixty people were brought to the partisans from Vilna. The group was brought by Witka Kempner and Chajele. It arrived safely.	2	
7	10/17/43	Destruction of two bridges in the village of Zagarino and blowing up of two engines on the narrow-gauge railroad line. There was a small force of Germans stationed in the village at the time. Fighters from three units took part in the operation: "Avengers," "To Victory" and "Death to Fascism."	40	Aba Kovner and ...[name erased]
8	11/3/43	The fighter Dobka [Debeltov Doba] brought three armed fighters to the partisans from Wilna: Drut, Mostowicz and Anglenik.		
9	11/43	Purpose: To take arms from the village of Kursze. Four rifles were captured from the Shaulists:* Wiersocki and the forester. The fighters of the "Avenger" units took part in the action.	7	Aba Kovner
10	12/14/43	Purpose: To take the arms from the armed village of Posol. During the operation [German] troops stationed at Rakliszki were summoned from the armed villages in the neighborhood. A two-hour battle ensued and as a result several Fascists were killed or wounded.	40	Kaplinski Szmulka
11	12/43	In the town Olkieniki, where a force of two hundred enemy troops was stationed, 300 kgs. of turpentine were confiscated from the turpentine factory.	5	Jacob Prener
12	12/43	A bridge was burned in the village of Darguze. The bridge had been built on the new road from Vilna to Orany, in the section between Olkieniki and Pirciupie. The operation was carried out under fire from the troops stationed in Olkieniki. There were no losses. Fighters from two units took part: "Avenger" and "To Victory."	40	Aba Kovner Chanan Magid
13	12/27/43	A train was blown up on the railroad from Vilna to Grodno. An engine and ten cars were derailed: [the train] had carried men and supplies.	6	Didalis [Isar Shmit]

Serial No.	Date	Operation	Number of Fighters	Name of Commander
14	12/31/43	A train was blown up on the railroad from Vilna to Grodno, near Landwarow station. The engine and twenty-one cars carrying troops and supplies were derailed. The train had been on its way from Warsaw to Vilna.	6	Aba Kovner
15	12/31/43	Discovery and capture of Gestapo agent Uczkurolis from Dajnowa village near Ejszyszki.	7	Chaim Lazar
16	12/31/43	Discovery and capture of Gestapo agent Andriuszkiewicz from Dajnowa village. Those who took part: Lipenholc and Wilka Kempner.	2	Lipenholc
17	1/44	Blowing up of a boiler and 100-horse-power steam engine at the cardboard factory at Olkieniki. The factory, that is, the machinery and the steam engine were to have been transferred to Germany.	6	Misza Lipenholc & Jacob Prener
18	1/44	Blowing up of a train on the railroad from Vilna to Grodno, in the section between Matuzy and Szarkiszki. It was not established how many cars were derailed. About two hundred Italian soldiers returning from the front were killed.	6	Szmulka Kaplinski
19	1/44	In the operation to destroy the armed village of Koniuchy, 30 fighters took part, of the units "Avenger" and "To Victory."	30	Jacob Prener
20	3/44	Obstruction and mining of the Grodno-Vilna road in the section near Nowe Macele. Fighters from two units took part, "Avenger" and "To Victory."	30	Abrasza Resel
21	3/13/44	In the course of an operational patrol near the village of Skorbuciany the following were captured: a Dutchman Henk Dekker, a Pole, Gestapo agent Rysiek Luksza, and two Turkomans.	12	Lipenholc Brand Szlomo
22	3/44	As part of the general plans of the "Lithuanian Brigade" two units of "Avenger" and "To Victory" destroyed 120 poles along the railroad line Vilna-Lida, in the section near Mereez.	38	Ch. Magid Lipenholc

Serial No.	Date	Operation	Number of Fighters	Name of Commander
23	3/18/44	The Vilna units were ordered to carry out the destruction of telephone and telegraph links between the town Ejszyszki and other centers. The two units, "Avengers" and "To Victory" sawed off 75 poles on the road from Grodno to Orany. In the operation wires were cut and insulators broken.	36	Chaim Lazar Ch. Magid
24	3/44	During a patrol near Cieciorka four men were caught who had escaped from a concentration camp for prisoners of war near Suwalki. All four were accepted by partisan units.	3	A. Resel
25	4/16/44	On "Railroad" day** and as part of the general operations which the Vilna units had been ordered to carry out, 300 rails were blown up by our units on the Vilna-Lida line, in the section between Stasily and Jaszuny.	40	[erased]
26	4/44	Barricade on the road from Zygmunciszki to Niewojniance.	20	Ch. Magid
27	4/44	The building of the "White Poles"*** was burned down in the village of Niewojniance.	40	I. Czuzoj & ...[erased]
28	5/10/44	Ambush on the Grodno road in the section between Pirciupie and Zygmunciszki. Two units, "Avenger" and "To Victory" took part. Eleven Germans were killed. Booty captured: 6 rifles, 4 hand-grenades, 4 grenade throwers, and 2 "Degtyarov" machine-guns.	70	Pietrujtis Ch. Magid Brand
29	5/23/44	At the turpentine factory in Olkieniki 360 kgs. of turpentine were confiscated and 2,000 kgs. were destroyed.	3	Ch. Magid
30	5/27/28/44	Capture of arms from the village of Jurkiance. Twelve rifles of different types were confiscated, with ammunition. At the same time an arms search was carried out in a number of houses in the village of Krumince. Two rifles, a pistol and a hand-grenade were taken. On the way back two "White Poles" were taken prisoner and the following arms in their possession were confiscated: one semi-automatic rifle, one rifle, one revolver, two hand-grenades and ammunition.	35	

Serial No.	Date	Operation	Number of Fighters	Name of Commander
31	6/3/44	At Melachowicze protection was given to the arrival of a group of survivors from Vilna, who are about to join the partisans. Eight persons arrived, four of whom were accepted by our unit: Nisanelowicz, Basia Nisanelowicz, Bielic, Rundbaken; four were accepted by the unit "To Victory."	15	Natan Celnik
32		Near Rudniki a patrol found a group of some tens of persons engaged on building a short railroad line. Working tools were taken from the group and they were ordered not to continue with the work. Eighteen spades were taken back to the base.	4	[erased]
33	6/7/44	In the town of Olkieniki the turpentine and tar factory was blown up.	8	Jacob Prener
34	6/22/44	An engine and two railroad cars were derailed on the Vilna-Lida road.		Szlomo Brand
35	6/25/44	In the town of Zagarino one German was killed and one wounded.		Benia Lewin
36		On the Vilna-Lida railroad line the rails were blown up for a distance of one kilometer. There were 40 explosions.		Szlomo Brand
37	7/3/44	Burning of bridges used by troops stationed in the town of Rudniki.		Jefremow
38	7/4/44	Train blown up on the Vilna-Lida railroad line. One engine and cars carrying men and supplies were derailed.	30	Szlomo Brand
39	7/8/44	Vilna-Lida railroad line blown up for a distance of two kilometers. Three units took part.		Szlomo Brand

Moreshet Archives, D. 1.4650.

• Members of a Lithuanian nationalist organization that collaborated with the Germans. Armed members of this organization took part in Jewish extermination *Aktionen.*

•• "H-hour" for a widespread operation that was to strike simultaneously against the railroad network and behind the lines of the German front-line army.

••• A.K. Command.

Source: Arad, Yithak. Documents on the Holocaust, Pergamon, 1981. Doc.211, p.463-71.

Appendix B

Eyewitness Accounts of Partisans and Partisan Groups

SHLOMO ZORIN

Zorin, a Minsk Jew, had been a partisan in the Russian civil war. He was arrested while living in the Minsk ghetto and while imprisoned, he met Colonel Semyonov, a Russian. At the end of 1941, both succeeded in escaping to the Starosolski forest, some thirty kilometers from Minsk. Zorin was appointed commander of a group led by Parkhomenko in which, although the General Staff was non-Jewish, the majority, approximately 150 men, were Jewish. Zorin was appointed commander of the group. With the liquidation of nearby ghettos in late 1942 and January 1943, many Jews escaped and streamed to the forest. The refugees had no weapons and most were unfit to fight. Arguments between Jews and non-Jews increased, culminating in a clash with the commander. Parkhomenko took Zorin's gun from him and placed him under arrest.[1]

Semyonov, who was one of Zorin's unit commanders, advised Zorin to form a special group. Zorin gathered all the refugees, whatever their age or sex, and formed the famous 106 Detachment. He moved his group to the Naliboki forest where the Russian partisans protected them. The group was small, around 60 people but by the end of the war, Zorin commanded over 700 Jews.[2] Semyon Gochenko commanded a Soviet unit that included Jewish children. The boys and girls

learned to use weapons and act as guides for the adults. They grew up to be fighters and helped to establish the Zorin family camp.[3] During the German retreat, Zorin's group ambushed the soldiers who were fleeing through the forests. Zorin's foot was wounded in one of the battles and he was forced to have it amputated.[4]

HIRSCH KAPLINSKY

On August 6, 1942, the Zhetl ghetto faced its second massacre. A group of 180 Jews with fighting ability managed to escape to the Lipiczany forest and formed a partisan group headed by commander Kolya Vachonim, a Russian. This group along with some other Jewish partisans, mainly mobilized youth who had escaped in April and May 1942 from Zhetl, united under the high commander, Hirsch Kaplinsky, also from Zhetl where he had been the leader of the Hashomer Hatzair. His family was killed by the Germans but he managed to escape to the forest. He slowly obtained arms for his men. They joined forces with the Russian partisans in battles against the Germans.

Kaplinsky always led his men personally into battle. His battalion helped suppress the Lithuanian garrison at Mirovscyzne Estate, the German garrison at Zakliscyzne Estate, and battled with the Germans and Lithuanians in the village of Patzatovsdcyzna, all in the vicinity of Zhetl.[5] Kaplinsky and his men helped defend the villagers of Dubrovka against the Germans' attempt to kill them. They

were also actively involved in the destruction of German garrisons, first at Ruda Yovarska, and later, at Motzevitz. Kaplinsky was determined to seek revenge for the death of his family. Wherever he and his men went, they sought out farmers who betrayed or murdered Jews and killed them.[6]

Kaplinsky was injured in the German siege of the Lipiczany forest. As he returned, bleeding, to his unit, he attempted to retrieve a sub-machinegun. Some anti-Semitic partisans killed him in December 1942 as he called for them to help him.[7] Kaplinsky's men later joined with the Russian partisan unit Borba as a third Jewish company.[8]

KOVPAK

Sidor Artiomovich Kovpak was one of the chief organizers and a central commander of the Soviet partisan movement. (See pictures next two pages.) He fought behind enemy lines on the steppes of Bryansk, in Byelorussia, in 1941 to 1942. In the fall of 1942, his battalion received orders to cross over to the right bank of the Ukraine and Byelorussia. Kovpak and his men fought at Polesia on the Dnieper shore. Kovpak personally led his men across the Desna, Sozesh, and Pripet rivers.[9]

He helped others to organize themselves. Y.Y. Melnik was the commander of a partisan unit created by Kovpak in the woods of Bryansk. Kovpak left a partisan unit at Melnik's disposal to help him organize his first fighting companies; "For the Fatherland," "Red Partisan," and "Death to

S. A. Kovpak (right) and S. B. Rudnev.

Right S. A. Kovpak, left, A. I. Kornyev ("Grandfather Frost") at the observation post.

Source: Kovpak, S.A. Our Partisan Course, Hutchison, 1947.

C. A. Roonak

Major-General S. A. Kovpak, Twice Hero of the Soviet Union.

Source: Kovpak, S.A. Our Partisan Course, Hutchison, 1947.

Fascism." The camp was in the Kninailsky forest with the village of Lumyenko as its headquarters.[10]

In the summer of 1943, Kovpak's battalion was ordered on a mission to the Carpathian Mountains. On their way, he and his men destroyed a large supply of oil destined for the Germans on the Ukrainian front. He was injured in 1944 and had to return to the Soviet Union.[11]

Gregory (Grisha) Loubiennisky joined one of the Kovpak platoons as a fighter. During a confrontation with the enemy, his unit commander panicked. Loubienisky saved the unit from defeat by taking charge. He became a company commander, and, later, platoon commander.[12] In May 1943, Kovpak's men failed to cross the railway between Gomel and Kalinkovichi, in Byelorussia. The Germans launched a great attack against the partisans, who decided to retreat. Two companies were surrounded and cut off by the Germans on the other side of the tracks. Grisha found a gap in the German ring and led the two companies out without having to fire even a shot at the enemy.[13] The German high command nevertheless claimed to have killed Kovpak, Rodniev, and all the fighters. Before Hitler could award them medals, Kovpak and his men were active again behind enemy lines in southern Ukraine.[14] During a German attack on the partisans at the village of Nova Krassnitza, in north-central Ukraine, Grisha's company bore the brunt of the main attack. Few survived the battle. Grisha was killed by a mine splinter

that entered his chest.[15]

Michael Elhanan (Misha) Robinov was a reconnaissance man and liaison man for Kovpak's partisans. As a scout, he showed much initiative and courage, and armed with only a few weapons, he often reached places that seemed inaccessible.[16] Robinov was actively involved in the battles in the Carpathian region. Following a victory against the enemy, Robinov was wounded. A shell exploded close to him and a splinter penetrated his lung. It was the first time that Misha showed fear. The next day, Robinov refused to be carried on a stretcher and started to walk. He regained his strength after a few days and healed while on the march.[17]

KRUK

Nikolai Konishchuk, alias Kruk, was mobilized in Kiev in 1941, by the Soviets and was taught methods of sabotage before being sent back to his district to organize partisan groups.[18] He was unsuccessful in recruiting young Ukrainians but was able to recruit young Jews. He almost always refused to accept anyone into the partisan ranks unless they were armed.[19] Dov Lorber says that Kruk kept close to the Jews so that he could be a respected commander of a unit rather than an ordinary partisan.[20] The Jewish boys in his unit excelled at forcibly entering villagers' homes and confiscating goods.[21] However, they did not limit themselves to collaborators' homes. Kruk received complaints about their behavior and he had to take severe measures against the

partisans involved. Melinka (Dov Lorber) was slapped by Kruk in front of everyone. Others were forced to return the things they had stolen. Kruk took great pains to protect the integrity of the partisans toward the village population. He tried to settle all complaints quietly before they reached headquarters and Dadya Petya.[22]

According to Dov Lorber, Kruk was very humble about himself at the beginning of the war but towards the end he became increasingly egotistical and aggressive against his aides and friends.[23] In time, his behavior toward the Jewish fighters also changed and became antagonistic. He chose one of the Jewish women fighters to be his "house secretary" despite the fact that he was married and had children.[24] Lorber states that:

> he began to live a life of ease in the woods, the life of an "omnipotent" ruler. A dismantled house was brought from the village of Lishnivka for him and was set up in the woods. His "wife's" mother was the head cook, and she managed, with difficulty, to supply him with food that he liked.[25]

Some of the leaders did not like Kruk. They felt that he lacked the qualifications of a military leader. They criticized him for the lack of discipline of his men and they disliked the fact that he had a family camp. They even called him the "Jewish Messiah."[26]

At the beginning, the non-fighters and the fighters were all in the same camp. Asher Flash, one of Kruk's partisans, recalled a hungry boy that Kruk had ordered him to frighten

during Chanukah in 1942. The orphaned boy, Yideleh Melamedik, had snuck out of the camp several times to beg for food from peasants. Kruk feared that the boy would be captured and that he would reveal the camp's location or that his tracks would be followed. He ordered Asher to frighten the boy into staying in the camp and said that if Yideleh left again he would be shot. Asher did as he was ordered and Yideleh never left the camp alone again.[27]

Kruk did not kill off the Jewish partisans despite those who tried to make him do so, particularly the commander of the Nasiekin partisans. General Dadya Petya, while on an inspection tour, learned of a planned attack by the Nasiekin partisans against Kruk. The commander Nasiekin was removed and sent to the Soviet Central Bureau in White Russia and Dadya Petya remained with the Kruk partisans for four months.[28] He organized the fighters and installed military discipline.[29] The unit was split and a family camp was set up for those who couldn't fight. Lorber knew Dadya Petya well and frequently met with him. He claims that Dadya Petya was interested in Jews, and that some thought Petya was Jewish himself though he never admitted it.[30] Dadya Petya reprimanded Kruk with harsh words for shooting a young Jewish boy who had requested to leave the base with his relatives. Later, Kruk shot another young Jew who had stolen some bread from the kitchen to give it to the family camp.[31]

Dadya Petya's visit did not change Kruk's behavior.

Once, a mine failed to explode and Kruk blamed Dov Lorber. Kruk came very close to killing him but did not due to the intervention of his "wife." He simply removed Lorber from the position of division commander. When he went to submit a report to Dadya Petya, the staff commander ordered that the mine be brought before him. He discovered that the explosive material was of low quality which had resulted in the mine's failure to work and ordered Kruk t reinstate Lorber as division commander since the unit was entirely Jewish. Lorber compiled a list of thirty men he wanted. He included two Ukrainians, very familiar with the surroundings, for reconnaissance. He also picked two friends, Yitzhak Kuperberg and Zev Verba, as section commanders.[32]

Though he had his good and bad moments, he was determined to accept Jews into his unit and they respected him for that.[33] However, according to Lorber, Kruk was responsible for the death of a Jewish family, of another youth, and of others. For this reason, Lorber puts Kruk in the same category as that of many other Ukrainians, a murderer of Jews.[34]

BIELSKY

The Bielskis lived in Nowogrodek and the surrounding area. When the Germans made plans to move all the Jews into a ghetto, Tuvia, Zus, and Asael, made plans to move their parents into the forest. (See pictures next two pages.) Unfortunately, they were too late. On December 8, 1941, more

Tuvia Bielski and his wife Lilka, 1945 (Courtesy of Lilka Bielski).

Asael Bielski, Second in Command of the Bielski Partisan Unit and Commander of the Fighters, with his wife Chaja Bielski. Photo taken right after liberation in the summer of 1944 (Courtesy of Chaja Bielski and Moshe Bairach).

Source: Tec, Nechama. Defiance, Oxford University Press, 1993.

Zus Bielski, Head of Intelligence Operations in the Bielski and the Ordzonikidze Partisan Unit, 1942–1944 (Courtesy of Sonia Bielski).

Source: Tec, Nechama. Defiance, Oxford University Press, 1993.

than 5000 Jews were killed in the ghetto.[35] The Germans caught their father, mother, and two of their brothers, put them in the ghetto and, from there, to their death.

Their parents were farmers and owned a mill. The brothers grew up in the country and were at home in the fields and in the forest.[36] They managed to gather 15 friends and relatives from neighboring villages, including a 9-month old baby, 2 older children, and Tuvia's parents-in-law. Of the 18 in their group, only 6 were men of fighting age.[37] Their camp was located in the Naliboka forest. They obtained six rifles from a peasant. The same day, they shot a gendarme and took his rifle and ammunition. From then on, they lay in ambush for their enemies.[38]

Tuvia became the commander of the partisan group since he was the oldest brother. He refused to imitate the Germans and kill anyone. The Jews did not listen to each other but they listened to and respected Tuvia. He felt an obligation to save them.[39] His stated goal was the enlargement of the group. He felt that this would increase the unit's strength and promote its survival. Shmuel Amarant, a partisan and historian, writes that Tuvia eagerly accepted new fugitives into his unit despite internal opposition.[40]

As the camp grew, so did the difficulty of securing supplies and the tendency and desire to divide the group into separate units. Some of the armed partisans wanted to separate themselves from the "useless" Jews. Tuvia fought

these trends. He tried to convey an attitude of national responsibility and an understanding of the immediate needs of the Jews. He insisted that every Jew who reached the camp be integrated, whether or not they were armed or able to fight.[41] He tried to accommodate even the most religious Jews. A professional "shochet," ritual slaughterer, was permitted to kill animals the traditional way. Observant Jews were given special food allotments that they could prepare in their own huts. For the most part, those who wanted to observe the Sabbath were excused from working and each evening, some of the pious men gathered in the tannery to pray.[42]

In the summer of 1942, Tuvia learned that Victor Panchenko's unit, Oktiabyr, had decided to annihilate the Bielski camp. The peasants were claiming that the Jews were robbing them. Tuvia spoke with Victor and together they proved that the peasants were lying because they did not want to give anything to any of the partisans.[43] The incident ended with an understanding between the Russian and Jewish partisans. They divided the area for the purposes of food collection so that the peasants were less likely to falsely accuse either otriad.[44] News of their cooperation travelled quickly and helped to legitimate the Bielski camp's existence. Jewish fugitives were also a little safer as the partisans and peasants were less inclined to attack them. Instead, they sometimes directed the Jews to the

camp.[45]

The wave of anti-Semitism during the summer of 1943 stemmed from the "Big Hunt" by the Germans in their effort to clear the forests of partisans, particularly Jewish partisans. Tuvia divided the camp into small groups to make it easier to move to safer areas. During their attempts to flee the Germans, the small groups became even more divided. The Jews became targets for robberies, abuse, and murder. This behavior was not limited to the Russian partisans and the enemy. Kaplan, one of the Bielski group leaders and his men robbed some of the local farmers of their money and valuables.[46] Kaplan accused Tuvia of collecting money for his own personal use. Zus and Asael confronted Kaplan, and Zus, who became angry at Kaplan's answers and attitude, shot Kaplan dead.[47] The death sentence was rarely used. Behavior and deviance were punished by a few days in prison.[48]

It was necessary to rebuild their community in order to be prepared for the approaching winter. Tuvia divided the people into teams and subteams, each with a task to perform. Building teams searched through deserted villages and retrieved such items as windows, window frames, ovens, boilers, kitchen utensils, and items for setting up a flour mill, communal bath, and various other workshops. Other teams ploughed the fields, dug for potatoes, and searched for other food to store. Some of the building teams remained at the campsite and built living quarters for the

partisans.[49]

Tuvia was not the only Bielski brother to distinguish himself among the partisans. Asael was reputed as a good-hearted, smiling man who never failed to encourage others.[50] He was a distinguished commander of a combat group and was a substitute commander for the whole division. He became famous for his espionage work. He commanded a group of cavalry which was on an inspection mission in the Terov area.[51] Zus was the only Jew on the General Staff of the Jewish Genekezer division. When they were engaged in espionage, he was commander. He was also permitted to act as a representative of the division's head Russian commander.[52]

ATLAS

In May 1942, Dr. Yehezkel Atlas' family along with the other Jews were massacred. The Germans let him live because he was a doctor.[53] He was transferred to Wielka Wola, a village which lies on the river Szczara, surrounded by large, dense forests and the estates of Ruda Jaworska, Dombrowszczyzna and Lipiczany.[54] The peasants became fond of Dr. Atlas and informed him that there were partisans in the neighboring forests. They were mainly Russian soldiers who had refused to surrender, as well as, a few local Communists that included the Jew Abraham Kopelowicz. Dr. Atlas contacted the partisans and helped them by providing medical assistance and obtaining weapons for them from caches containing large quantities of arms abandoned by Russians in

retreat.[55]

The Dereczyn ghetto, approximately 30 kilometers from Wielka Wola, was liquidated on July 24, 1942. Hundreds of Jews were killed by the Germans, Lithuanians, and local police. Many, however, managed to hide and fled to the forest the following night. Dr. Atlas met with one such group. They wished to join the partisans. Dr. Atlas led them into the forest, left them there, and then returned several times with food and weapons.[56] A few days later, he led the young men on their first mission to obtain food supplies. Each day, new Jews were added to the group from the refugees in the forest and soon a fighting unit was organized. Dr. Atlas gave the new unit the responsibility of providing food and weapons to the fleeing Jewish refugees and, also, to exact vengeance on the enemy.[57]

On August 10, 1942, Atlas led the partisans on an attack against Dereczyn and won. They equipped themselves with the booty, including good boots, leather knapsacks, shirts, small arms, and ammunition.[58] Following the garrison's destruction, Dr. Atlas addressed his men:

> "We must not settle down and take things easy!" he harangued them. "Our struggle only *began* when we defeated the German garrison at Dereczyn. Your lives came to an end in the slaughter on July 24th. Every additional day of life is not yours, but belongs to your murdered families! You must avenge them!"[59]

Dr. Atlas' partisans cooperated with the Pobeda (Victory) unit and gained much experience in battle.[60] Atlas' men were

successful at derailing trains and burning bridges. On one occasion, they travelled dozens of kilometers to burn a bridge near the town of Belitza, on the Niemen river. The Germans had used this bridge to transport military equipment eastward.[61] The bridge was in the section belonging to the partisans from the Orle division. Atlas was confronted by an officer from the Orle partisans, but the confrontation lost its hostility once the officer found out that he was talking to Dr. Atlas. The officer was embarrassed and admitted that he and his men had never thought of destroying the bridge. He praised Atlas for a well planned and executed job.[62]

Once, Atlas disappeared from camp for several days and some of the partisans became worried. Atlas returned a few days later, after having said *Kaddish* at the grave of his family in Kozlowszczyzna.[63]

Atlas, like Alter Dworecki and Hirsch Kaplinsky, witnessed the plight of the Jews and tried to help them with warnings of danger, with food supplies and with moral support. The help he offered was sporadic, unorganized, and hence often ineffective.[64] All the fighting that took place in the vicinity of his camp were carried out at his initiative and according to his plans, and almost always included his participation.[65]

DIADIA MISHA

Misha Gildenman (Diadia Misha) escaped from the ghetto with his son Simcha and sixteen other Jews. His wife and 13

year old daughter were shot during the first *Aktion* by the Germans. The massacre lasted from 4am to 4pm. That evening, the surviving Jews said *Kaddish* for the dead in the synagogue. From then on, Gildenman made plans to go to the forest and join the partisans. On September 23, 1942, the Germans and Ukrainian collaborators gathered for the liquidation of the ghetto. Misha and his group arranged to meet at a friendly gentile's home on the outskirts of the town and then they slipped out of the ghetto in groups of 3 and 4.[66] They escaped with one pistol and five rounds of ammunition. Before long, they grew into a large Jewish detachment.[67] In January 1943, a Jewish division under "Uncle Misha" was formed.[68] Diadia Misha recruited some local Ukrainian youth into his detachment in 1943, as ordered by the Partisan High Command in Moscow. He remained the commander though, with his son as chief of intelligence.[69]

Diadia Misha's partisans were very good at attacks. They were divided into small teams and attacked simultaneously. Such is the case of their attack on the town of Rozvazhez, between Zhitomir and Kiev. The mission was successful due to the small individual groups each attacking simultaneously and to the snowstorm and winds which drowned out the noises of the attack and thus prevented the Germans from coming to the rescue.[70]

Gildenman's partisans attacked a German garrison in

Alexandrovka. On their way back to the forest, they took the elder of a village that they had passed through because he was notorious for appeasing the Germans. They left a letter addressed to Baron von Helman, the commander of the German garrison, with the elder's wife. Helman and his staff had managed to flee at the beginning of the attack and had escaped to Avratz to notify the division commander of the attack. Gildenman's letter said:

> "Baron von Helman: Hitler will not destroy and annihilate the whole Jewish nation, but I and a few other Jews destroyed the entire camp of the German garrison in Alexandrovka." It was signed, "The Commander of the Jewish Partisan Group, the Jew Deida Mischa."[71]

When Uncle Misha's area was liberated by the Red Army, the partisans were incorporated into military units. Marshal Klementii Voroshilov, chief of the Partisan High Command, suggested that Gildenman remain behind the lines as an engineer, which was his profession prior to the war. He declined the offer, went through an officers' training course, and entered Berlin with the rank of captain.[72]

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2. Ibid.
3. Levin, Nora. "Resistance and Rescue: Jewish Partisan Groups During the Holocaust." in Kowalski, vol.4, p.71.
4. Kahanowitz, p.182.
5. Ibid., p.178-179.
6. Ibid., p.179.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. Braiko, P.Y. "The Kovpak Men", in Porter, vol.2., p.3.
10. Melnik, Y.Y. "Three Fighters of my Unit," in Porter, vol.2, p.43-44.
11. Braiko, p.3.
12. Ibid., p.4.
13. Ibid., p.8-9.
14. Ibid., p.9.
15. Ibid., p.5-6.
16. Ibid., p.7.
17. Ibid., p.12.
18. Lorber, Dov (Malenka). "My Life Under the Ukrainian-German Occupation," in Porter, vol.2, p.194.
19. Avruch, Zev. "The First Days in the Woods," in Porter, vol.2, p.101.
20. Lorber, p.196.
21. Bronstein, Dov (Berl). "From a Partisan's Notebook," in Porter, vol.2, p.149-150.
22. Ibid., p.150. Dadya Petya (Anton Brinsky) was a Russian commander who controlled such groups as Max, Kruk, Kartuchin, and others. (Porter, vol.2, p.229.)
23. Lorber, p.195.
24. Lorber, Dov. "About Kruk- -The Secret is Out," in Porter, vol.2, p.213.
25. Ibid.
26. Lorber, "My life...", p.195.
27. Flash, Asher. "A Hungry Boy," in Porter, vol.2, p.135-136.
28. Lorber, "My life...", p.195.
29. Ibid., p.201.
30. Ibid.
31. Lorber, "About Kruk...", p.214.
32. Ibid., p.216.
33. Lorber, "My life...", p. 196.
34. Lorber, "About Kruk...", p.216.
35. Bielski, Tobias. "Brigade in Action," in Schwarz, p.112.
36. Kahanowitz, p.179.
37. Bielski, p.112.
38. Ibid.
39. Tec, p.48.
40. Amarant, Shmuel, as cited in Tec, p.45.

41. Tec, p.45.
42. Ibid., p.195.
43. Ibid., p.74-75.
44. Ibid., p.75.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.,p.125.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., p.176.
49. Ibid., p.129.
50. Kahanowitz, p.180.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid.
53. Kahanowitz, p.176.
54. Eckman/Lazar, p.52.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.,p.52-53.
57. Ibid., p.53.
58. Tushnet, Leonard. "The Little Doctor-A Resistance Hero," in Suhl, They Fought Back, p.274.
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60. "Partisans," in Encyclopedia Judaica, vol.13, p.146.
61. Eckman/Lazar, p.55.
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63. Bornstein, Samuel. "Dr. Yehezkel Atlas, Partisan Commander," in Glatstein, Jacob, Israel Knox, and Samuel Margoshes. Anthology of Holocaust Literature, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society, (1968), p.304.
64. Tec, p.82.
65. "He himself participated in the successful attack on the German garrison at Derechin (August 10th, 1942), the engagement at Kozlovschizna (September 5th, 1942), at Ruda Yovarska (October 8th, 1942), in the bombing and destruction of the bridge on the Niemen river...(August 15th, 1942), in seizing a German plane when it made a forced landing (September 28th, 1942), in the battle against a German expeditionary force (September 15th, 1942), and in the great December 1942 siege of the forests." (Kahanowitz, p.177.)
66. Suhl, They Fought Back, p.278-279.
67. Ibid., p.11.
68. Kahanowitz, p.185.
69. Suhl, p.279.
70. Gildenman, Misha. "Diadia Misha and His Partisans: The Attack," in Suhl, p.287-288.
71. Gildenman, Misha. "We Attack a German Garrison," in Barkai, p.270.
72. Suhl, p.279.

CONCLUSION

Following the liberation of areas from German occupation, the partisan units were disbanded. Some partisans chose, as did Diadia Misha (Misha Gildenman), to continue fighting and joined the ranks of the Red Army. Others chose to remain behind to help restore order and to begin the long process of healing. The partisan movement changed its strategy in early 1944, as the Red Army advanced and the Germans were in full retreat. Some units set about striking the fleeing enemy while others remained and established underground authority in districts soon to be liberated. The partisan units assigned to certain areas were well informed of those who could be trusted in the villages.[1] Once an area was liberated, the partisan units were disbanded, registered, and taken over by the army. Some were drafted into security and "mopping-up" units while others were used in the army as regimental replacements. Officers were sent to refresher schools and rejoined the army later on.[2]

A more positive attitude developed among the partisans in the spring and summer of 1944 as the Red Army was gaining more and more territory back from the Germans. Most of the partisans became "hungry" for battle. Even the women and the children who usually remained in the camps wanted to join the missions and do their part.[3] When the Germans withdrew, the partisans began knocking on doors. They went to the

homes of collaborators, held quick "trials", and then executed them.[4]

The partisans in Bialystok could feel that German defeat was imminent in the summer of 1944. The senior German officials had left the city. Anya Rud, Lisa Chapnik, and Bronia Klibanski were the only Jewish partisans left in the city. They decided that initiative was called for. They stopped a German soldier, told him that the Germans were "kaput" and suggested that he give them his weapons in exchange for civilian clothes. They managed to get one gun.[5] Anya, Bronya, and a few others went to the outskirts of the city to greet the Red Army in the name of the underground as it entered Bialystok. Later, after the liberation, Bronya visited one of the underground's bunkers. She looked for traces of Mordechai Tenenbaum but only found a package of letters and a few rifle shells.[6]

At the end of the war, Jewish partisans, especially the Zionists, planned and organized immigration to Palestine. The Jewish partisans organized a unique group known as "Partisans, Soldiers, Pioneers," (PHH). An organization of partisans and ghetto fighters exists in Israel, and, in 1970, it began to expand into a worldwide Jewish organization.[7]

The Soviet partisan movement was the largest in Europe and assumed great importance in the official Soviet war strategy towards the end of 1942. It was able to harass the

Germans and prevent some of the men and supplies from reaching the front lines of battle. Psychologically, for the population, the partisans played an important role. They did not give up resisting the German invaders and gave people hope that one day the Third Reich would be defeated. From a military point of view, it is debatable how much they achieved. The Red Army would have defeated the Germans without the partisans, but it may have taken a little longer for it to do so and casualties would probably have been greater still. Ultimately, the partisans achieved their goal, this being to harass the enemy and to resist the invaders to the best of their ability at a time when the outcome was still in doubt.

The areas where the Soviet partisans were most active (Ukraine, White Russia, Lithuania, Eastern Poland) were areas where large Jewish communities had existed for many generations.[8] One example is the Naliboki forest which was surrounded by a close network of Jewish towns, whose inhabitants knew their way around in the forest.[9] Many of the Jews who reached the forests died. Leon Kahn says that those who survived were those who were able to accept the filth, primitive conditions, lack of security, and the steady drain on health and endurance. Those from the villages and small towns were more accustomed to hardships and had better knowledge of the areas and, thus, fared better than those from the cities.[10] Another factor that

affected their survival was that the organization and unification of the Jews was difficult since there was no organized religious body or Jewish structure outside of the Communist Party. Also, many of those who would have organized the resistance were killed early in the war. Moreover, many Polish Jews who had fled to the Soviet Union, were strangers in the ghettos and forests they reached.

The Jews believed in family responsibility and with threats from the Germans of collective responsibility, the Jews had a difficult choice to make. Many felt it was in their best interest to cooperate with the Germans. They received no help from the Soviet government or from the Allied forces. The Jewish undergrounds, with their limited means and under conditions of unspeakable terror, attempted to do what the Allied command, with its ample resources, had failed to do.[11]

The Jews' contribution to the Soviet partisan movement was often of a pioneer nature since Jews had been among the first Nazi victims in Poland. In many units, Jews formed the core of fighters, who attracted others so that their groups later grew into brigades and divisions.[12] The Soviet partisan movement absorbed almost all the Jewish companies in its zones. However, the Jewish partisans had a function additional to those of their non-Jewish comrades, namely, to protect defenceless Jews- old people, women and children. Thus, they organized family camps in the forests, and kept

them supplied and defended.[13]

It is difficult to determine the scale and size of Jewish participation in the Soviet partisan movement, especially since many of the Jews had to suppress their identity. Official Soviet histories of the Second World War do not recognize their participation in the partisan movement. E. Boltine, from the erstwhile Marxism-Leninism Institute in Moscow, spoke before the members of the Second International Conference on the History of the Resistance Movements in 1961. Boltine claimed that:

> The Soviet partisan movement was monolithic, pursued a single goal, was not torn by class contradictions, as was the case in several capitalist countries who suffered from the Fascist occupation. The desperate efforts of a handful of nationalist traitors who sold themselves to the Fascist occupiers and served them body and soul were powerless to destroy this unity and this cohesion.[14]

This follows the Party line which does not tolerate nationalism or national groups, of which the Jews are one; and it explains why the Jewish contribution was subsumed under that of the Soviets, a term that itself began to fall into disuse with the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. The same was made to apply to the other numerous nationalities of the Soviet Union. The official Soviet history of the war states that the total number of partisans at the end of 1942 was more than 120,000 and of this total over 40,000 were active in the occupied territories of the Russian Federation and over 58,000 in Byelorussia. No figures are quoted for

Ukraine, but it is stated that there were six brigade groups and 140 independent detachments. Brigade groups in Ukraine were similar to those in Bielorussia, and so the total number of Ukrainian partisans probably did not exceed 25,000 men and women.[16] Ainsztein estimates that there were at least 20,000 and possibly 25,000 Polish and Soviet Jews in the Soviet partisan movement.[18] Nora Levin similarly states that by the summer of 1943, there were over 200,000 Soviet partisans, of whom about 10 per cent or 20,000 were Jews.[17] Porter states that there were approximately 50,000 Jewish fighters on the Soviet, Polish, Slovak, Yugoslavian, French, Greek, Belgian, Dutch, Bulgarian, and Italian territories and that 25,000 Jewish partisans fought in the Soviet Union. He says, "the Jewish role should not be exaggerated, but neither should it be underestimated or disparaged."[18]

In the northern area of Belorussia (White Russia) there were some primeval forests in which a large number of Jews escaped. In 1989 Yehuda Bauer estimated that in western Belorussia alone, approximately 25,000 Jews left for the forest. In eastern Belorussia, around 7000 Jews fled from the Minsk ghetto and tens of thousands left for the forest in that region to fight the Germans. Most did not obtain arms and it is unknown how many survived the war.[18] Bauer's numbers are larger than those of Ainsztein, Nora Levin, and Porter. Irregardless, all the numbers are estimates, but they show that there was a significant number of Jewish

partisans.

The official Soviet statistics for Lithuania state that 21 per cent of the partisans were Russians, 7.5 per cent were Jews, 3.5 per cent were Poles and 2 per cent were Ukrainians. The total number of partisans varies from 5000 to 10,000. If the figure of 5000 is accepted as the most realistic, Lithuanians had 3100 partisans. Of these, 375 were Jews, that is, the Jews provided one for every 8 Lithuanian partisans. It is believed that the real number of Jews was at least double the official Soviet figure.[20] According to Dr. Dov Levin, at least 1800 Jews escaped to the forests from ghettos, labor camps, and other places in Lithuania, their distribution being as follows:

> - 450 joined fighting units of the Byelorussian partisans. Most joined the Voroshilov and Spartak brigades while many also joined the Leninskii Komsomol brigade.
> - 850 joined Lithuanian units. Most of them went to the Rudniki forest where 400 joined the Vilna brigade, 200 the Kovno brigade, and 100 the Trakai brigade. The remaining Jews joined units all over Lithuania.
> - 250 joined family camps. Of them, 70 joined the Feinstein brothers group in the Jurbarkas forest, 30 joined the Chaluzin brothers group in the Kelme forest, 50 joined the groups of Bielski and Zorin, and 50 joined the Weinstein group in the Simnas forest.
> - 100 joined fighting units outside of Lithuania.[21]

It can be assumed that at least 1650 Lithuanian Jews had set off to join various fighting units in the forests and that approximately 150 of them did not succeed in their purpose.[22]

Jews began resisting as soon as the Germans invaded the Soviet Union and those who became partisans achieved much during the war. They even obliged the Germans to recognize the power of their resistance early on. Goebbels was forced to admit that 'now we know what Jews can do if they have arms.'"[23] Wehrmachtkommissar Bremmer wrote a letter to Reichkommissar Lohse in Riga on November 20, 1941, in which he stated:

> ....the Jewish population is in the forefront of propaganda, resistance, and sabotage against the Germans in Byelorussia.
> ....in the cities of White Russia the Jews constitute the largest part of the population and the driving force of the resistance movement...and everywhere, where reports about sabotage, incitement of the population, resistance, etc. have forced us to take measures, Jews were found to be the originators and instigators, and in most instances, even the perpetrators.[24]

Reichkommissar Lohse received another similar letter from Generalkommissar Wilhelm Kube, the Gauleiter (administrator) of Byelorrussia, on August 31, 1942.

Part of the Jewish resistance included the formation of underground organizations. There was resistance in the ghettos and in the forests. The Jews sought to defend themselves, their friends and families, and their dignity. There were several ghetto revolts; some succeeded, some failed. The success of a revolt depended on its aims. In some cases the revolt was purely for the sake of revenge, i.e. to kill as many Germans as possible. Some of the revolts were in order to defeat the Germans, prevent the

final annihilation of the ghetto and to get the Jews to escape to the forests to continue the fight against the Third Reich. These usually failed. Germans outnumbered Jews, surrounded the ghettos, and made use of superior arms. Inevitably most of the Jews were killed and few escaped. Most Jews who did escape to the forest were those who left the ghettos stealthily.

Not all Jews reached the forest. For those Jews who did make it, the rifle, cartridge belt, and hand grenade replaced the yellow badge that had "stung" his body and "violated" his soul.[25] Yuri Suhl states that the ghetto Jews who became partisans played an honorable and vital role in the guerrilla movement and in the Allied victory.[26] Jews held leadership positions in over 200 detachments. Most changed their names to hide their Jewish identity. Borisov, the organizer of the first units in the Smolensk area, is an example. He was actually a Jew named Kleinman from Yekaterinoslav-Dnepropetrovsk.[27]

The Jews were also able to make themselves useful and indispensable to the Soviet partisans. Traditional Jewish skills such as those of tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, locksmiths, doctors, and nurses became important and valuable to the partisans. Many of these Jews also learned how to shoot, lay mines, throw grenades, and kill Germans and their collaborators. A number of the Soviet Jews were soldiers and officers who had escaped from prisoner-of-war

camps.[28]

The highest achievement a Jewish partisan could attain was to survive the war, die fighting the Germans, or save other Jewish lives. The Nazis sought to destroy the Jews; and their survival, albeit in small numbers, meant the Germans had failed and the Jews had succeeded. The success of the partisans, and in particular the Jewish partisans, is to a certain extent thanks to the Germans and due to the fact that the Nazis, and especially Hitler, were responsible for their own defeat. Had the Nazis recognized the support they had among the occupied territories of the Soviet Union and the anti-Stalin and anti-Communist feelings that its populations harboured, they could have won the war, at least, on the Eastern Front. Instead of collaborating with the local peoples in Ukraine, Belorussia, and the Caucasus to defeat Stalin (the Vlasov movement is an exception), the Germans mistreated and abused most of them. Those same people who originally opposed and betrayed partisans, came to avidly support them and turned on the Germans later in the war. It was Hitler's doctrine of Aryan superiority that prevented the Nazis from collaborating with the Slavs and, ultimately, from overthrowing the Bolshevik regime.

In the postwar years, particularly 1945 to 1953, there was a major wave of arrests. Those arrested were either killed or sent of to prison camps in the Gulag. Stalin was determined to root out any so-called counterrevolutionaries

and traitors. Since there are still no agreed statistics on the number who perished in this way, it is also impossible to ascertain how many were Jews.

There is a lack of information, in English, on the breadth and depth of the Soviet partisan movement, and in particular on the Jews' role within it. Objective sources are difficult to find. Historians and others are forced to rely on personal accounts, seized documents, released documents, and so on. Not only do many sources neglect to mention Jewish participation in the Soviet partisan movement, many of them are also biased. By treating the partisan movement as a unified movement, official Soviet sources naturally make little mention of Jews, as seen in Kovpak's memoirs; and this same neglect pertains to other nationalities in the Soviet armed forces.

Most of the English-language material on the subject, has been published in Israel or the United States, and it tends to glorify the Jewish partisans and place heavy emphasis on anti-Semitism. Personal accounts also tend to glorify the partisans. Many of these were written after the war and selective memory becomes a factor. By no fault of their own, surviving partisans' own accounts tend to embellish and to remember the successes while forgetting or neglecting the failures, discrepancies, and not-so-glorious events that inevitably took place too.

Some treat the information on the Jewish partisans as

suspect because it is largely based on personal accounts and memoirs of survivors few of which can be corroborated by official statistics or other evidence. This continues to pose a problem for those researching the topic as they are forced to make guesses and rely on estimates. I found it surprising that so little has been written on the Jewish partisans in the Soviet Union considering how large and remarkable a movement it was supposed to have been and that they represent a principal target of the Nazis. Hence, this essay has, where primary material is concerned, had to rely mainly on personal accounts and to references in books or articles. This latter, for the most part, lacks detail and the kind of evidence historians like to rely on.

How many Jews actually participated in the Soviet partisan movement remains unknown to this day. Some were recognized while others are still unrecognized. It is the contention of this essay that their work among the partisans played a role in the final defeat of the Germans, but the true proportions of that role can perhaps only be revealed with the study of wartime archives on the subject. Most of these are to be found in the Russian Federation, while others are scattered among the independent states that have arisen on the territories where Jewish partisans struggled and fought.

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