



## The extermination of our people in Torchin by Jack Kolnick and Aaron Katz

In the Hebrew month of Sivan exactly two weeks past Shavuoth 1941, Torchin was occupied by the German Vermacht. They were met by some of our people with mixed feeling. Some still had faith in the German people. Others, too few, evacuated with the Russians.

The Germans immediately began a systematic documentation and registrations.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of their invasion they force Jews into hard labor. One week later on Sabbath an edict was issued, ordering the entire population of about 1300 Jews to assemble near the big Synagogue.

There a Yudenrat was appointed, a group of 12 men responsible to the German command. An order was issued to don white bands with the Star of David on the left arm.

On the Sabbath, the 9<sup>th</sup> day of Ab all Jews were commanded to assemble in the open space near the Russian church.

Forty able bodied men were picked, among them the father and brother of Aaron Katz. With shovels on their shoulders. They were marched to Boyan, three miles north east of town.

About 2 hours later, after checking names, 210 persons, among them 6 young women, all capable, young, the brains and brawn of the town, were forced into trucks that carried them into the woods of Boyan.

All of the 210 persons were shot and thrown into the pit previously dug by the former 40 selected, who were killed in the same manner.

The Ukrainian police were assisting the Germans in all their bloody acts, many times outdoing them in cruelty.

After this massacre, a new tyrant by the name of Wallenshus took over command in Torchin. His orders were to collect all moveable possessions from the Jewish population, such as gold, silver, copper, furs, clothing of every kind, and other valuables.

Shortly before the creation of the Ghetto in February 1942 every Jew was forced to wear a yellow band on his arm. The Ghetto consisted of the portion of the town formed by the two rivers, as far as the open area below the Russian Church.



The day our people were forced into the Ghetto seven men lost their lives.

A day later "an attractive offer" was made. Whoever volunteers for heavy labor at the front lines near Kiev will be free from the ghetto. Out of the fifty young victims, only one, Shmuel Shuster, who later gave his life for Israel, managed to return to Torchin.

A sister and her friend.

Life in the ghetto

Strict rules were established in

the ghetto. Overstepping a boundary was punishable by death. Still many risked their lives to bring food in for the starving.

In the early days of the ghetto some bread was allotted per person but soon after, that too was denied them. The internees were forced to shift for themselves. Many were helped by having their valuables smuggled out secretly by those leaving for forced labor, to be exchanged for bread

A community kitchen was established where only those working could obtain some food. Many hungry Jewish children were trying to get into the kitchen for some food but were beaten and chased away by the German organized Jewish police.

Most of the members of the Yudenrat gave in readily to the Germans. At one time an order came demanding cloth linen thread and women's underwear. When two of the appointed, Joseph Ehrlichgerict and Hananie Goldberg, expressed doubt of its feasibility two others were asked who answered in the affirmative. The first two were killed on the spot. The same day, the Ukrainian police killed eighteen others, among them women and children, to quiet a protest in the Ghetto.

### Aron Katz: The Mass Murder

The mass murder was carried out on Sabbath, the 9<sup>th</sup> day of Elul, 1942.

Eighteen men, each a skilled craftsman, were spared. The rest were forced into huge trucks and taken to the Jewish cemetery where everyone was stripped, thrown into the previously prepared mass grave, and shot. This massacre lasted from 10 in the forenoon until 7 that evening.

Aaron Katz

Soon after the slaughter the German beasts continued their conniving tactics. They proclaimed that no more Jews were to be eliminated since every employable was essential to them. Three days later, when a number came out of their hiding they were rounded up and shot.

About forty especially skilled craftsmen were spared. Of these the younger and stronger ones began to conspire how to cheat death.

With the cooperation of Krut and Staske

They dug underground underneath the row of stores opposite the small church close to their workshop.

They dug for three weeks preparing a hideout for about 10 people.

O: My brothers survived because they ran out of the ghetto. My father said at the time of the first Scheetah (slaughter) they chose him and a few other people and gave them an Ausweiss, which meant they wouldn't get killed. The Jews were so stupid they thought the Ausweiss would keep them alive.

**Shanka Krutt**

Aaron Katz survived because the German commander, Wallenschuss, gave him an Ausweiss. Aaron was a saddler. He made beautiful saddles for the German's horse. That's why Wallenschuss kept him alive until the last minute. The German had a dog named Trouff. So Aaron Katz made that dog a special shoe of leather. And he made whips that the German used to whip Jews.



Aaron Katz had a uniform. In it he had a pocket with a gun with 8 bullets. He figured if anything happened he would kill the German and then he would kill himself. The last day, Aaron came to the German commander and Wallenshuss told Katz to hide. "If not you'll be killed like a dog."

When the Gestapo came, Wallenshuss told Aaron to hide.

On December the eighth the final slaughter was perpetrated. On that day four more men were taken into the hideout making a total of 14 survivors.

Gregory Nichenkov, a grandson of Burtish who was a partisan for the Russians took some Jews into his home. They were with him until freed by the Russian army.