

Who is the Kozienicer, Who Writes About The Holocaust?

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The four notebooks of an unknown Kozienice author were found after the War.

On the banks of the Vistula–waters, among forests of tall pine trees, on a side of the Radom–Lublin Railroad, lies the old, historic Jewish town of Kozienice. The question is well known, why Kozienice? Because it was there that the Kozienicer Maggid lived. And even though it is already more than 100 years since the large entourage of the Maggid lived there, till this day, when you come into the town you can still feel the influence. When you come into the town you feel it. You can see it in the historical buildings, in the conduct of the inhabitants, and also in their daily lives.

When an inhabitant encounters troubles, he goes to the Maggid's grave to pray. Women go to the Maggid's Mikve (ritual bath) – for it serves as an amulet. Merchants swear in the Maggid's name, and even Christians accept such vows, because they also fear and respect his memory. Among the Christians, to this day, there are legends, which are passed down from generation to generation about the holiness of the Maggid. They know that the well-known, Polish Prince Yozef Poniatovski, visited the humble dwelling where the Maggid used to live, and that he inscribed his name on the wall like all visitors from every corner of Poland. Each one feels it is his obligation to inscribe his name on the day of his visit.

The majority of the inhabitants are Jewish, skilled workers in the shoe industry, who used to produce for the large cities, and earned their livelihoods in this way. In general – a town like all Jewish towns, with but one advantage over them – its “yichus” (proud ancestry). The historical places of Kozienice are: The Maggid's Shul, which he alone built and put 100 gold “rendlech” (coins) into the foundation (according to the town archive); the modest house where he was born and lived his entire life, and his Mausoleum on the cemetery. In Kozienice can also be found the large historic palace of the last Polish King, Zygmunt August Poniatovski, which tour excursions used to visit because of its historic value, its royal splendor and beauty, on which was engraved the seal of roominess and comfort of a Polish King. The Christian sector of the town consisted mainly of folk–Germans, and not far from the town was to be found the large German colony, Vilki. The Germans lived on very friendly and neighborly terms with the Jews. They would rent Jews their houses and gardens, sold their grain to Jews, and in general were very friendly. That's how everything looked until

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War Atmosphere

For a long time there hasn't been such a successful year – the peasants revealed to the Jews of the town. The Jews are pleased. They won't have to get angry at the vacationers, who arrive and cause everything to become more expensive by their buying up everything. If it's a plentiful harvest it will be good for all ...

And strange, it doesn't occur to anyone—there's serious talk of war...the old are frightened...the young wager small bets on it: It isn't, it won't be... “He” only threatens the world... He's bluffing...He wants more concessions, but actually fight – he's afraid. They“ are hungry” (this is specifically stated in “Moment”); the “boycott” has ruined them (it was clearly stated in “Radio”)...They can't fight...They don't have the tools... (writes the “Hayntike Naves” and all of the world press)...The recesses, between the afternoon and evening services, last longer due to intense discussion of politics...Knowledgeable ones said that the war is unavoidable. The few taverns in town, where there were radios, were besieged by people, who wanted to hear the news. The disquiet grows” from day to day. No one has the patience to work. Everything is disturbed, nervous and tense.

A great many military personnel drive through town, on the way to Demblin (an airport), and Pionek. This is disturbing. This irritates the situation even more. The point of culmination – is Wednesday, when the pink placards appeared on the streets, placards announcing general mobilization. The elderly tremble; their hands shake even more – to have lived to see another war; they thought they had had enough for even the generation of grandchildren, with the other war (WWI). Again blood, again tears, again destruction! The youth cries... Heartrending scenes occur. All stand and cry, when young Reizman, two weeks after his wedding, has to part from his wife and go to the front... The tragedy is even greater, because from the same family two other brothers and the father have been called up. They leave at home an old broken-up wife and mother. The men are transported to Demblin. The whole town escorts them. Among the escorts there are also a few who will have to leave on the morrow.

Women cry and wail. Polish police beat the women and children, who are clamoring among their husbands and fathers. The police exhort them with patriotism, because they cannot part from their loved ones. (The patriotism of the Polish police – is a chapter by itself...) In town it is tragically quiet. You can feel it with all the fibers of heart and soul. Crowds jam the grocery stores. They create emergencies. Everyone can feel the cloud which hangs overhead, and the storm, which is approaching.?

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All the Germans to Bereze

Who in town didn't know the Yiddish speaking Goyim? “Folks–Deutschen” (Folk–Germans) – was already a later name. They lived peaceably with their Jewish neighbors. The Poles had a bundle of trouble from them. They would beat the Polish farm–hands, exploit Polish workers, and in general ignore the orders of the Polish government. They only obeyed their own “village–judges”, and the judge knew that he is representing Berlin and not Warsaw. The Polish authorities tried to meet them half–way, but this had just the opposite effect. The more rights they were given, the more they demanded, and even further neglected their duties as Polish citizens. They were on friendly terms only with the Jews (mainly to anger the Poles), and when the Poles proclaimed a “boycott of the Jews” in town, the first “boycott breakers” were these Germans. Only during the last few weeks before the war, did they begin suddenly, as if by command, to hate their Jewish neighbors. They stopped coming, and didn't want to deal with Jews under any circumstances, and wouldn't even respond to a Jewish “good morning”.

They also vigorously provoked the local Polish population. On a beautiful morning we noticed that all the chimneys of the German colony were painted red. Also the chimneys of the German houses in town were painted red. We realized that these were signals for the enemy, and by order of the Skladkovskin, all of the German men were sent to Bereze concentration camp. In automobiles they were transported through the town. The attitude of the Germans was brazen. They would cry insults at the Polish officials, screaming “Heil, Hitler!”. Their attitude was so aggressive, that the Police, in self–defense, had to use rubber clubs. In sealed autos they were transported to Bereze. While they were still on the way, their German brothers appeared, not in automobiles, but in planes, and dropped bombs only on the houses whose chimneys were not painted red.

The Bombardment

The night before. We heard enthusiastic talks on the radio. The talks disturb the mood. “We will win, because we must win!”. As soon as the megaphones are quiet, the heart gets this weird feeling. Maybe it's the fear of the night? The surrounding darkness? Because it is already dusk. We hear only the tread of the duty patrols. It happened on Friday, September 8, 1939, before dawn. The town was awakened by the sound of planes overhead. We heard frequent nearby explosions. The houses shook and windows fell out. We heard screams. We run to help, but the planes are directly overhead, and are dropping heavy bombs, on “Military–Targets” on the peaceful civilian population. From all over town come the terrible reports. Many streets are aflame, and the number of casualties grow from hour to hour. The bomb–shelters do not help; even there, destruction and casualties are great.?

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The destroyer dominates every corner. The sky is clear. They can see very well where to drop the bombs and they bomb without let–up. People run around half deranged by fear, because there is nowhere to hide from a frightening death. Mothers run with their children in their arms seeking refuge. The ill are carried in their beds, but no one knows where to go. The streets are filled with people, screaming, crying and reciting the confessional before death.

Suddenly, as if by a command, all run to Radom Street which leads to the nearby forest. All at once, the entire town, women and children, grabbing food, run into the forest. But not all reached the forest. The planes chased after them with bombs, and the scene is gruesome as we see how R'Moshe, the Ritual Slaughterer, is carrying with him to the forest, the remains of his torn–asunder wife.

The Town Hides in the Forest

Friday, before sunset. The Jews are in the forest. In the same forest where they used to promenade in the evening leisurely and forget the workaday worries. In the calm sunset shadows of the trees they gathered, in the same beloved place, at the same hour...and with so much fear, and fright not knowing why or wherefore. They remain calm without being ordered to do so, because this is what the heart commands. Nobody knows the enemy's position, how far away he is from here. We see only those who are fleeing in panic, without any order, with arms and without arms, with shoes and barefoot, soldiers and officers of the Polish army. They

cross the Vistula River in boats, and the planes target the moving boats. The unarmed soldiers, with screaming find their death on the River Vistula.

And new water flows, as if nothing has happened. The river runs again in its quiet natural fashion. Night falls, darkness, pitch black. From near and from afar shooting can be heard. We lie on the ground. It gets cold. Every so often we see projectiles which light up heaven and earth, and in everyone's heart there is darkness. Every so often family members ask each other if they are still here and how they are. We can hear how Jews are softly reciting the Psalms from memory. From time to time the silence is rent by a moan and a voice: "Oh, Holy Maggid! Please intercede for us!" We hear a woman's voice: "Oh great God! Forgive us all, for a whole town of women did not kindle and bless the Sabbath candles today!"

A quiet movement. All begin to murmur quietly. Nobody knows what, but everyone nearly has heart failure from fright... They say, that a figure is approaching... It appears to me a military man... What does he want here? Maybe he's come to tell us that the enemy has been driven back? That we are returning to the town? We want to get close to him, to hear from him alone, what he has to say, but we are told to remain seated where we are. The officer, in excited calm, said as follows to the Jews around him:

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"Our government has fled Warsaw already. The army has collapsed... He heard that the Jews of the town are in the forest. He was always a friend of Jews. He's from Vilna... He has a wife and mother there. He requests that his name be recorded, Jozef Dembski. Write to them and inform them that I've taken my own life?" He didn't finish his recital – a shot was heard... He falls... There is an indescribable commotion... We want to run... We fall to the ground, and we soon discover, what a great tragedy has been enacted here. He is dead. He was a patriot. He didn't want to become a prisoner of war! We are afraid that they might say that the Jews killed him. The elders say that we should immediately dig a grave, but we have nothing with what to dig. We find some branches and we also dig with our bare hands. We do it quickly and quietly. And when he was already buried, we Jews were able to breathe freely.

After such a fearful night – day came. Jews didn't know what to pray for. Night – when the plane and bombs are silent, or day – since we want to know what is taking place in town, what happened to our homes and possessions. There is no food left to eat. But hearts pound, since it is day and who knows what the day has in store for us. But we are still under the influence of the night. The head is still in a daze, and Jews have to remind each other. "We have to remember: His name was Jozef Dembski from Vilna. As soon as we can – we shouldn't forget – to write."

The Sabbath Conference

Like lightning, nobody knew from where, the rumor spread that the Germans were already in town. But how is it possible? The whole war is only a week old – and already in Lublin? Impossible! Jews don't want to believe it. What does it mean? They? The Germans? We read our fill about their cruelty and persecution of Jews. They! They! Have arrived in town? What do we do? Go back to town? Turn ourselves over to the hangman? Maybe we should run for it – even further and deeper into the forest. And as if by itself a conference was organized. All. Old, young, religious, freethinkers, men, women, all people were beating their

breasts, beseeching forgiveness. “This is” calls out one “because we used to read about the cruelty in Czechoslovakia. At lunch we would eat meat and for dessert, Jewish troubles...”

“This came” says an old man “because we didn't observe Shabbat.” “Why they came here is not important. What is important is that they are here, and we have to think about what we can do because with each passing moment we are in mortal danger.” Jews cry and yummer. Women wring their hands. Young men tear their hair. “What do we do, what do we do?”?

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The debate centers around a young man, who came running from the town, and says that he couldn't control himself, and before dawn he ran to the town to see what was taking place in his home. He met the Germans, and they asked him: “Where are the Jews?” He answered and told them that all of the Jews are in the forest, having fled the bombs. They told him to say that if by one o'clock the Jews don't return to the town, they'll shoot up the forest. Indescribable confusion reigned. Every one took sides. Some said that we should return, because we had already gotten a taste of. their bombs. We had already heard of their deeds, and their warnings are not just threats. Others said, and among them also the head of the community, that we should head for Lublin, through the forest, together with the retreating Polish army. A very small group decided to follow the head of the community, and parted from their relatives and went deeper into the forest in the direction of Lublin. The majority, with heavy hearts, decided to return to the town, trusting in God.

Back in the City

The scene of returning to the town is unforgettable. They arranged themselves in the following order: A train of 2000 people. First the elders; in the middle the youth, and the women completed the train, so that the youth could protect them. Each one was carrying a small package on his shoulders. They felt instinctively that the present return was not to their own homes, but to a new exile. They don't want to, but there is no alternative. Every little while they rested, not because of tiredness, but because they wanted the journey to be prolonged. They don't want to meet with “them” yet! And maybe a miracle will occur.

Nobody speaks... A whole community of Jews is on the move and nobody speaks due to the mute grief and sorrow. The elders tremble... The young cry... And it is worthwhile mentioning that it was the women and the mothers who calmed and consoled the others. We were already close to the town, and met a well-known peasant whom we asked: “What's happening in town?” Everyone encircles him and he says: “By the skin of my teeth I escaped the persecutors. They are beating everyone, and take them away in autos... The young break out in a spasmodic wailing. One, Michvel Horovitz, calls out to his father: ”Father take a knife and slaughter me, as our grandfathers did during the Crusades, and don't hand me over to the hangmen.“ We feel that this is his youth speaking and a majority of the youth would heroically choose such a death, the death of martyrs rather than be demoralized by physical tortures. We can already see the first house of the town. We are passing the hospital, which we can hardly recognize. It has been destroyed.” For two hours without letup it was bombed, even though the Red Cross flag could be seen from a distance. There were more than 60 casualties there, among them, two pregnant women.?

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How is it possible not to be afraid of such barbarians, since life is so cheap to them? Nothing can stand up to them or in their way, and the most elementary ethical principles mean nothing to them. These sad thoughts are interrupted by the sound of a passing auto filled with soldiers, who with wild murderous shouts called out: “Death to Jews!” Jews wince and then calm each other as soon as the auto passes, but the calm lasts but a moment.

The Welcome From the New Owners

Like destructive-angels, there was suddenly heard the sound of flying autos filled with soldiers. The autos circled the entire train. Fully armed soldiers jump out. With their rifles and fists they began to beat murderously: men, women and children, whomsoever their guns or fists could reach. The men they grabbed by the beards and pulled and tore. Others began to cut the beards with their bayonets and also cut flesh in the process. The fear is indescribable...we feel as if we've been attacked by wild beasts. The soldiers yelled so wildly that they gave the impression that they were the ones being attacked. On the other hand the Jews were so disturbed, upset and lost that they almost didn't scream at all. In the midst of the beatings, they saw before them a young man, a “hunch-back”, the son of Saul, the water-carrier. They removed him from the train and immediately shot him, before everyone's eyes...People turned to jelly at this atrocity. His mother began a frightful screaming and yammering. But suddenly a shouted command:

“Quiet! Stand still! If not – everyone will be shot on the spot! We are going to search everyone, to make sure that you are not armed!” And right there, in the middle of the street, they searched everyone, and found the bit of money – zlotes and dollars – which all had taken with them as they fled. They confiscated all of it. Also the women were searched by the soldiers in a most brutal and hateful fashion. What could they, the helpless Jewish women, unfortunately, able to do for their shame, since they were left standing, half-naked, in the middle of the day. They simply looked upon them with disgust, and when they had stolen all of the Jewish “arms”, and stashed it away, there came another order: “Forward march!” Surrounded as they were by the watchful soldiers, all, men, women, and children, were escorted into the town, into the church on the courtyard.

The Seven Departments of Hell

Broken and exhausted from the past few days, on Sabbath eve, September 9, 1939, they arrived in the church of the courtyard, and thought that they would be held there for a while and then sent home.

But, unfortunately, it was here that the real tortures began, consisting of humiliations and inquisition like tortures.

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To begin with, a soldier demanded: “All men to one side, and women to the other!” At that moment there began a wild chase of soldiers who are securing “order” by stamping with their feet. You could distinctly feel that they were lacking the limbs for beating Jews. When they were already separated, there was another strict

search for “arms” – meaning Jewish possessions. And if, by chance, some money still remained in someone's possession, it was now, during this strict search, taken away. The sun set. Night falls. People are lying in the street shivering with cold, but we are pleased that they too, the evil ones, are going to sleep, so that we too, even on the street in the cold, will be able to catch a nap. It's already a few nights that we haven't slept.

All of a sudden – we hear, from inside the church, frightening shouts. All of the Jews sit up. “What happened?” We hear someone screaming inside. They are torturing somebody. At night in the dark, it is especially frightening to hear. “Gevalt! Gevalt! Oy! Oy! Oy!” We shudder from fear, and all ask: “Who? Who is missing?” But nobody knows. And maybe someone had remained in town? Again screams. We listen carefully. But suddenly it got quiet. Thank God! Perhaps the persecutors have ceased their Inquisition. The door of the church opens. We see soldiers carrying out a sanitary portable litter. They carry it over, light it up with flashlights, and oh...oh... there lies therein a “lump” of a person, his entire face bloodied, and his clothes. He is moaning quietly. Everyone wants to see, maybe he'll be recognized. But in vain. The soldiers say: “We will make all of you like this, you dogs!” They order room made among the Jews. They put down the cot. They take out several shovels, and order that a “grave” be dug. We hear him groan, and want to say that he is still alive, but are too frightened to say a word. The hands are trembling with fear. The soldiers are also very serious. They aren't beating anyone, but they shout: “Faster, faster!” The grave is ready. He groans. The soldiers call over a couple of Jews, and tell them to throw the body from the cot into the grave. The knees give way. They barely hold up and don't collapse. The Jews move their lips, as if asking his forgiveness. Revenge is God's. They throw him into the grave and we hear a loud “Oy!”

The flashlights light up the inside. They order the grave filled in. Again the order is carried out. The soldiers take the cot and reenter the church. Jews are aroused from their stupor. They cry softly. They run to the “undertakers”. Perhaps they recognized the Jew? But they are upset and can't speak to anyone. They lie crouching on the ground. Their teeth are chattering. One asks for a drink. They rub his hands and feet to warm him. They move away from the grave of the “unknown martyr”. They cuddle against each other like helpless lambs. Again it quiets down. Some fall asleep from weariness, and others lie awake and can't fall asleep out of fear. Again noise... Again Germans... Again shouts... They light up with flashlights and tear the coats off the men... Have these robbers suddenly found honesty? The women and children are cold and they must have the coats.?

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The Hanging

It begins to dawn... The day of September 10, 1939. It's cold. We are broken. We feel that we haven't eaten for two days. “Get up! ... Get up, you lazy dogs!” They tell us to line up in four rows, old and young, but not the women. They are going to have a bit of sport now. Running!... Faster, faster... and whoever falls, is beaten with rubber hoses, murderous blows... “Stand still! Stretch out on the ground!” We lift ourselves!...Run!...Fall!...Run!...The young hold fast, but the older ones fall and are beaten mercilessly. The “sport” lasted for an hour. Now we'll work...All must work...Carrying brooms and shovels, we're ordered to sweep the courtyard. Jews with beards are told to sweep the courtyard with their beards...A party of Jews are sent to clean the toilet facilities, but not with rags and brooms, but with their bare hands...They forced people to eat excrement. People vomited and fainted away.

12 noon. People became a bit happier since they expected lunch, for no strength is left...But the soldiers remarked cynically: "We are going to lunch, and you aren't getting any food...Jews wanted this war – let them die from hunger"...After this kind of lunch came the order: "Women and children are being freed, and the men must remain here." The soldiers add: "They will all be shot here, these enemies of the world." An indescribable wail rises up from the women... They don't want to leave the men...But they are "freed" from the courtyard with the stocks of the rifles. The farewells are tragic, frightening. Who knows if they'll ever see each other again? The women circle the fence and call through the cracks in the fence, in order to pass something to eat to the men. Everyone shares whatever they've obtained. But not much is obtained...They feel that after the pause something will arrive. A soldier comes out and announces: "The Jews must tell where Rabbi Perlov (the Rabbi of the town) is to be found. If not, they will all be hanged..."

You can imagine the panic and the fear among the Jews. The Rabbi isn't here, because during the bombardment he left for Lublin. So they took the most prominent citizen, a great scholar and the richest man in town, Shmuel–Moshe Korman, led him to a tree, and hanged him in the sight of everyone. At the last moment, they cut the rope...He fell from the tree...And when he came back to himself, they hanged him again, and again cut the rope...Korman began to beg them to let him die...but this was the answer of the hangmen: "A dog is killed. But a Jew is worse than a dog...A Jew is tortured..." The inquisition lasted for several hours. It's already the fifth time that he's been hanged...Every Jew that cries out in fear, is beaten...They will do the same to everyone here. Mrs Korman has found out what they're doing to her husband. She ran with one of the German folk to the commandant, and for fifty thousand zlotys, and other things, the hanging was ended.

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The Resurrection of 60 Jews

On Monday, September 11, 1939, we also slept in the courtyard...Again the wild awakening, again "sport" and again beatings. Life has already become unbearable. What will happen? Till when will we be tortured like this here? We feel as if the strength is simply fading away...We eat only that which is smuggled in through the fence. And the soldiers beat the women murderously when they catch them in the act. We are told to line up. An elder passes along and picks out 60 Jews. "Come along!" They give them shovels and order them to march. But to where? Nobody knows...They lead them into the nearest forest and they order them to gather up the scattered arms, which were thrown all over the forest, by the retreating soldiers...And they are warned that if they attempt to flee they'll be shot. They worked in this way until noon. The elder tells everyone to gather in one place. He speaks to them: "Since the Jews are the world's enemies, they and Chamberlain provoked this war, so they must dig for themselves a grave!" The Jews began to plead and to cry. They fell at his feet – but nothing availed. They must dig, and if not, they'll be shot on the spot immediately!

All is lost? Jews begin to recite the final confessional. They dig for themselves a large communal grave...They wet the ground with their bloody tears. They dig lazily, slowly since the shovels fall from their hands. Knees cave in. They fall with the shovel...They can't look each other in the eye. They don't know which one of the "four deaths" will take place here. They dug a large grave...He told them to lie one on top of the other in the grave...Jews fall on each other's necks; they say farewell to each other; beg forgiveness from each other...cry out the "Sh'ma Yisroel", and walk, alive, into the grave. He called over the soldiers to cover the grave. Jews lie spread out with their eyes closed. They can't open them due to fear. First they hear how one soldier calls out: "Carol! We don't need it!" And they hear again how the Dusseldorfer man–eater says to

them: “Get up!” Two of the 60 Jews, Gozshetshansky and Baruch Manela went insane as a result of this incident. Two young men went out of the grave grey, as two white doves..The remainder barely returned to the church in the courtyard and informed the remaining Jews not to worry since Jews have a great God! If they were resurrected from the grave, then they'll certainly go out of the church. They took upon themselves, every year, on the same day, to celebrate it as a holiday, and to give charity for the miracle which occurred to them...Jews in town say that the soldier, who had called out to save them, was not a soldier, but the spirit of the Holy Maggid.

Emptied Dwellings

All of the torture—acts took place in the church square, but into the church itself Jews were not allowed, with the excuse that the Jews, by their presence, will defile the place. But on the fifth day, September 13th, an order came: All Jews must enter the church. And there the Jews encountered a new disaster:

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A lack of air! The torturers had figured out that even though it was cold in the courtyard, by day the Jews have plenty of fresh air to breathe. So they took approximately 2000 people and stuffed them into one room, so that they would immediately choke for lack of air. People began to faint...R'Chaim Kleinboim, 65 years old, a prominent figure and great scholar, fell down. Jews wanted to save him, keep him alive; so they asked for water from the guards. They received a cynical answer: “All of your days here are numbered, so it doesn't matter if this Jew dies a day earlier!” They wouldn't let anyone out to take care of his physical needs. When Jews had to go, the “religious Protestants” designated a special place – by the Altar.

You cannot imagine how odiferous and choking the air became. In addition, every little while, soldiers would come in and make a grand entrance, demanding that a wide aisle be made for them to pass through! They didn't want the dirty Jews to touch them. Jews choked, but the walls couldn't be stretched, and the bloodthirsty soldiers would beat them with rubber hoses till blood flowed. They tore wounded and opened holes in heads – only for the pleasure of seeing Jewish blood flow. The Jews felt as if they had fallen among hungry wolves. And here the tragedy became even greater, because inside the church no food could be obtained from the outside. Jews prayed: “O' Lord of the Universe, may death come from your hand, and not from these evil—doers!” We were in this Hell for a day and a night. On the sixth day, in the morning, an. order came that everyone leave the church. They lined them up, but they had become shadows of human beings – broken, tortured and starved. They ordered them to wait. It didn't take long, and they brought a transport of “Polish irregulars” who had been captured around Koziernice. We could recognize in these blackened, weakened and tattered soldiers, that they had really been Polish soldiers, who had looked so trim during maneuvers. They could see how the Jews looked and the Jews could see how they looked, and with silent glances these “brothers—in—sorrow” expressed their sympathy.

As soon as the soldiers saw how the Germans are beating Jews, their own Jew—hatred was aroused and they began to murmur: “We didn't want this war. They instigated this tragedy.” With each passing moment the Jew—hatred grew. They forgot all about the common enemy. They indicated that they were barefoot, with torn feet, and that the Jews are still whole. The Germans permitted some of them to tear the boots, shoes and clothes off of Jews. They demonstrate their unused courage and bravery on the helpless Jews; with a fury they

tear off shoes and clothes and let them stand naked and barefoot. The captured “heroes” in this way showed their depravity and inhumanity. The Jews, on the other hand, held fast and understood that the soldiers were being thrown a Jewish bone as a reward for their bravery. They were also immediately quartered in the stalls of the courtyard, and the Jews returned to the church. On the morrow, the seventh day, in the morning, everyone was again lined up in the courtyard, and Jews over 45 were beaten and thrown out of the courtyard.?

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The younger ones, on the other hand, were told to remain. They felt that they were lost. They look at the older ones, who still hadn't gone home, but had remained standing in order to bid farewell, with pain and tears, to their children, whom the hangmen loaded into armored vehicles, in order to take them to an unknown destination...(to Radom in a concentration camp).

They were old and grey as a result of the seven days. Broken and barely alive they returned to their homes (those that were still whole after the bombardment.). Many women don't even recognize their, own husbands...The men don't recognize their homes, because the Germans robbed and emptied them. But more important – they had removed the joy from the homes: They had removed the young men and children and husbands and carried them off to torture and extermination.

The New Order

When Jews had recovered, they began to think about how to earn a zloty for a livelihood. They wanted, bit by bit to return to commerce and skilled labor. But every day there were new proclamations and directives to produce order in the city. An order came that peasants must not sell food products to Jews. The death penalty was decreed for anyone who defied this order. With this there was sown in the region unrest and disorder. We are living human beings who must buy food, and the peasant wants to sell his produce to Jews, because in exchange he can get kerosene and salt; and so there began to be smuggling on a large scale. It involved attempts to catch the “offenders” and the passing of bribes. They, the German's, quickly learned to take bribes. The wheelers and dealers became known to familiar Germans, and these were the first steps of the “new order”. Two weeks after the holiday of Succos, on a nice early morning, Gendarmes came and drove the Jews out of the two main streets, where prominent Jews lived: Radom Street and Warsaw Street. They didn't let them take anything, not even their household effects. They drove them into the narrow crowded streets, and their homes were occupied by poor families of folk–Germans. Jews stand by and see how their hard earned possessions are taken over by their former “good–neighbors”.

The driving of all the Jews into one, crowded quarter, understandably worsened the sanitary conditions. The Germans said, that the Jews are spreading disease, and that it was really for that reason that they had to institute “The New Order”. When Dr. Krueger, a folk–German would inform about a case of typhus, the soldiers used to come into the Jewish quarter and shoot the sick person as he was lying on his sick–bed. For this reason they shot the 10 year old, only Shapiro son (16 Church Street) as he was lying in his sick–bed, at the time when his mother was at the drugstore, having a prescription filled. The “New Order” also posted an announcement, that all women, as a “sign of shame” must cut off their hair; and the men their beards. They also requisitioned from the dirty Jews their quilts and blankets for their soldiers, and took from the “infested” homes furniture and beds for the officers. Jews would be thrown out of food stores and bakeries, and they

were forbidden to go to the villages to buy food. Everything was forbidden to Jews. And as “payment” for this treatment, the New Order demanded of Jews – labor and to let themselves be tortured.

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Labor and Blows

On the day after Yom Kippur, the “Black Ones” (SS) came! They beat Jews viciously and grabbed them for forced labor. The invitation to forced labor came in the following manner: They “would come out in the street, and as soon as they would see someone who looked Jewish (it was still before the yellow star), they would with a blow on the head invite him to come to work. They would take them to clean highways and roads, but they would also have the Jews do special “work”. They would order them to dig pits and then fill them in. They would have them gather rocks and later have them return the rocks to the place where they had found them.” At work, they weren't fed. Vicious beatings till blood would flow, and verbal abuse of the foulest kind. This went on daily. It was of no use to attempt to hide, because the “Blacks” would from 7:00 a.m. go from house to house, search attics and cellars, and find those who attempted to hide, and shoot them on the spot. In spite of the fact that they were so abused at work, Jews stopped trying to avoid it by hiding. The weakest would be taken for the hardest work. And to top it off they would demand that the Jews sing while working.

They brought the equipment to photograph the “working” Jews. At such times they were ordered to laugh and smile, so that in the photos it would be obvious how “thankful” the Jews are for the work, and how pleased they are with the New Order. Once, on that “bloody Thursday” (that's what it was called in town), there was literally not a single Jew whose blood didn't flow. From early morning the Sturmfuehrer and about 100 “Blacks” (SS) invaded the town and made visits to Jewish homes. “He” would first tear the Mezuzos off the doorposts and stomp them with his feet. Every Jew that he met, either he or his accompanying henchman would beat mercilessly till blood flowed. When they would already see blood, they would calm down, leave the victim alone and continue further on their “chase”. For “labor” they would especially take the “fatter ones” and those that were dressed elegantly. They met the assistant mayor, Dr. Gonsher. Our town did not consider him a Jew. He simply looked like a Jew. They stopped him and asked: “Are you a Jew?” It didn't take long till, calmly and with dignity, he answered: “Yes, I am a Jew!” He began immediately to feel the taste of a Jewish beating. They took him in among a whole group of Jews, who were disturbed not only from the beatings that they were receiving, but also from their new “brother in misery”, the assistant mayor...

When the group was already in the courtyard, the SS leader came out with a Torah in his hands, carried it over to Dr. Gonsher, and told him to burn it...Jews turned to stone at this scene...They did not know how the “new Jew” would react...Dr. Gonsher became very pale and again answered calmly that he cannot do it...They fell upon him with rubber truncheons, and stomped him with their boots. “You must do it!” shouted the SS leader. And he hit him with his fists. But Dr. Gonsher categorically refuses to do it. The SS leader burst with anger and tells him that he won't leave here alive. It doesn't help. They beat him over the head. He falls covered with blood. Next to him lies the Torah, soaked with his blood, but whole...He orders that the dirty Jew be taken away. The Jews took him and with great effort, were able to keep him alive for a short while.?

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The SS leader couldn't calm down, and runs again into the city. A young man, Yitzhak Ravitzky, passes him. He orders Yitzhak to stand. The young man tells him that he is running to fetch a doctor for his wife who is in

labor. He beat Yitzhak, stomped him with his feet, and accuses him of knocking over a soldier as he was running. The young man begs for mercy, because his wife needs a doctor immediately, since her situation is desperate...The young man was sent off to a concentration camp! The unfortunate wife wrestles painfully with death...She sees that her husband hasn't returned...She waits, she waits...But the child cannot wait. Due to her fear, she delivers a dead child. When she came back to herself, they told her that her husband was away with a work battalion...

Racial-Shame

It is worthwhile noting that, on the one hand, the evil-doers degrade the Jew; but, on the other hand, these very same degenerates, the officers, raped a Jewish daughter. It happened late at night. Two officers came to the home of Dr. Gonsher's wife, who herself was a dentist. (At the time she was sitting Shivah for her husband, whom the Germans had tortured to death). They had come, ostensibly to remove machines...She asks her daughter to go and bring them...The officers go along...The wife hears from the other room her daughter's terrible screams...She wants to run in, but the door is bolted, and the officers tell her that if she doesn't calm down, they will shoot both her and her daughter on the spot...It continues...The officers exit and tell the wife that if she reports this incident to the commandant, they'll set fire to the whole town. The mother goes into the daughter's room...They exchange silent glances...The daughter wants to drink ammonia, but the mother prevents it.

“My child. Because of these barbarians, we have lost your father and my husband...He died courageously...You, my child must stay alive...You are young, and must continue to live...The shame is not yours, but it is their shame!”

The Maggid's Shul in Flames

It was Simchat Torah. They were conducting the Hakkofos (carrying of the Torah Scrolls around the synagogue), but like mourners, without the joy; without singing, and foremost – everyone wanted that they should be over already...Everyone wanted to be in his own home already...When everyone had returned home already, and gone to bed – at about midnight – the entire town was rocked by a tremendous explosion...But no one knew what had occurred...No one is allowed out on the street. We hear a second, a third...We don't know what to do or what it means...And perhaps – there begins to stir a flicker of hope – maybe the British are bombing, and the Germans will have to flee...And if bombs are falling again, they can also hit the “unpainted chimneys”?

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Jews again began to pack their few remaining possessions, the bedding, linens and household items...Suddenly, we see that the sky has turned red, and the town is lit up...We see that it's a huge fire, but we don't know where...or what exactly has happened: Jews had noticed during the last few days, that taxis filled with German officers had come frequently to the Maggid's Shul. They would go inside, look around, take photographs, from every angle, and drive away...Others said that the German nation has a feeling for

“historic buildings”. It is an attraction for them to see a primitive but artistic work, such as the ancient gold-trimmed ark in the Shul...Others said that we shouldn't be naive – in the Berlin and Frankfurt synagogues there were also things to see, and these synagogues, together with their artistic vestments were burned.

It is necessary, therefore to remove, gradually, a little at a time, from the synagogue, whatever possible, and foremost the Torah Scrolls, holy books, and historic precious vestments, since we can expect unpleasant surprises.

The SS commander and some soldiers came on Simchat Torah, after midnight, and went into the Shul. They found there two Yeshiva Bachurim (young men) who were strangers, not from Kozienice, who had stayed because of the war, and would sleep in the Maggid's shul. They were, first of all, beaten and tortured, and not allowed out of the shul. Then the evil-doers poured blasting powder all around and set fire to it. The shul was immediately engulfed in flame. They awakened the nearby neighbors, men and women, told them that the shul is burning and ordered them to bring water to put out the fire...Everyone grabbed whatever could hold water, ran to the wells, filled the utensils with water and ran to extinguish the fire in the beloved Maggid's Shul...But when they approached the shul with the water the soldiers, with sadistic laughter, poured the water on them, soaking them from head to toe. Afterwards they brought the old Rabbi, R'Yosef Shapiro, to observe...They threw him into the flames, pulled him out and then threw him in again. His clothes began to burn and they pulled him out again until he fell into a faint. And then, when the Rabbi was lying faint, and from inside the shul could be heard the cries of the unfortunate Yeshiva Bachurim, and the entire shul was engulfed in flame, the soldiers encircled the building and with wild fanaticism began singing the song: “When Jewish blood spurts from the knife”... (The Horst Vessel Song).

If the wild, barbaric tribes of the jungles would have come, on that night to this European town, they would certainly have said the following: “We also know this kind of work, but we use drums to drown out the cries of those we are torturing...But you do it even better – without drums, without musical instruments, but with song, with unabashed enthusiasm...” On the same night, they also burned down the town's House of Study.

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Vandalism

On the morrow, Simchat Torah in the morning – the ruins of the Maggid's Shul are still smoldering, Jews pass, they don't stop...They glance at the ruins of their holy site in the town, shed a tear, and go on their way...But the vandals don't calm down. Their thirst for torture hasn't yet been sated. They go today from house to house and search for Torah scrolls, religious books, etc. and ordered them to be brought to the place where the Maggid's Shul had stood. Jews are disturbed! What does this mean? What will be done with the Torah scrolls at that place. Will they have Hakkofos there? And why the books? But they don't allow time for thoughts. They beat the Jews till blood flows and hurry them along – faster, faster! In one place, in a cellar, they found a hidden set of the Talmud, that had been published in Vilna. (20 large volumes). So they went to search all of the cellars in town...The scene was frightening: Jews carrying Torah scrolls, accompanied by soldiers...Women and children carrying holy books, and uniformed Germans guarding them...Many scrolls and holy books were gathered. They ordered that everything be placed on the ruins of the Shul. Almost the whole Jewish population of the town was driven together. They chose the oldest and most prominent and ordered them to set fire to the scrolls and the books...They refused...They were beaten and tortured...They must do it! The scholars of the town indicated that according to Jewish law, this is not a case where one must

forfeit his life, rather than comply. In but three instances must a Jew martyr himself rather than comply: When forced to idol-worship, sexual excesses, or the spilling of blood. Otherwise he may comply in order to save his life. With tears and blood, and with trembling limbs, the elders poured kerosene on their holy possessions – and silently prayed that this would not be looked upon as sinning...And they were ordered to set them afire...Jewish scholars, who would sit day and night and learn a “page of Gemara (Talmud)”, Jews whose minds had been sharpened through their immersion in the holy books, and drew comfort and hope from them, now with their own hands had to set them afire. When all was already smoke and ashes, there came the order to dance!...Jews must dance around their burning holy books. They beat them and they danced. Again a command: “Sing!” Jews cried...danced...and sang around the ashes of the burned Maggid's Shul, and around the fire and smoke of the burning scrolls and books...And this is how it is to be entered in the new chronicles of Kozienice – that in the year, 1939, Jews celebrated their Simchat-Torah Hakkofof – two weeks after the Germans arrived in the town.

Also the Poniatovski Palace in Flames

They consider themselves above all races, more important than all, and from the conquered nations they will wipe out all traces of independence and freedom. Nothing will stand in the way of their holy mission – not art, antiquities or history! Since the human being has lost all meaning for them, why his art or creativity?

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And in this way, on the 17th of October they burned the historic Poniatovski Palace. And they did this right in the middle of the day...This was also done with blasting powder, with explosives, with noise and with laughter...And here also the Christians go with clenched fists, pale...This was something they didn't expect...Such splendor, such architecture, such an extensive library with antiques...Must this all go up in smoke? Why? They didn't understand, the Poles, that it begins with Jews, and the Germans, who can burn synagogues and scrolls of the Torah, can also destroy and burn magnificent works of art and thousands of precious books...

Crimes and Punishment

History will certainly remember to record that the German code of punishment began with – shooting! For them this was the smallest and most insignificant punishment...Not only for military offenses, but also for civilian crimes...Because officially it was declared, shortly before the occupation of Poland, that we were to have civilian rule in place of the military rule. There was no proclamation which did not end with the warning that if it would be defied – the offender would be shot...Whether it was for “black-marketeering”, or the baking of white bread, or leaving the Ghetto without a pass, or falsifying questionnaires...for everything – shooting! And indeed, we knew full well that this was indeed the mildest punishment meted out by these cruel monsters, because how many thousands of Jews were not privileged to receive such a quick death. Their punishment was that they were allowed neither to live or to die, only to be tortured again and again...until these martyrs gave up their souls in agony...

We have reached the point where, before we can record an incident of a shooting, we must preface it with a justification, even though we know that their cruelty surpassed all bounds. But history must record every fact. The entire Jewish population of the town was crowded into three narrow, small streets (previously there had been fifteen). They took away bread and air. They were forbidden to go out to the village, and there was not contact whatsoever with any other city. What should Jews do? Perish? In spite of the anguish, Jews wanted to live. They hope that it will again be good, again a world...What do Jews do? They go out at midnight to the "cemetery" (a kilometer from town), at the risk of their lives, but what can they do? From there they go on foot, or in a peasants conveyance – to Radom. If caught in this offense – they are shot on the spot. Once there were eight victims in one day. They seized a vehicle with eight passengers, six Radomer Jews and two Kozenice Jews, but they did not shoot them on the spot...They brought them to headquarters, in the courtyard. The community exerted all of its influence on the folk–Germans, but to no avail. The bloodthirsty evil–doers want only blood! They were offered ransom money – but they wouldn't hear of it...They appealed to their "sense of honor" to release the women, at least, but the crime is so great that nothing will help, and they did indeed shoot them right there in the courtyard...They let them out again, but in sealed coffins...The two Kozenice victims were the two sisters: Chana and Freyda Tzucker, from Magitover Street, one 18 years old, and the other 20. The other six were Radomer. In this way, unfortunately, fell the martyrs one after another, for the crime of wanting to live.

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Here, again a horrifying fact occurs: The Jews were confined to a few streets, but at the beginning they were not fenced in, but only the boundaries were marked with the warning, that if. Then they would shoot! For the grownups that was enough of a warning – but what about the children? Were they to be kept under lock and key? The mothers thought: "What if they should sneak out? What would they do to the children?" They (the mothers) were, in fact, neglectful the first days, until...until the evil ones displayed their culture...In those first days they shot three –little children because they had stepped over their "limits" for no particular purpose or destination; but probably because one of their playtoys had rolled over...

The Extraordinary Dr. Neuman

"Who was he?" was the big question asked by Jews. His name was beloved by Jews, but he, himself, was an enigma. Jews from Kozenice held the view that the Holy Maggid endeavored that they should have something unusual! In no other town was such a thing heard of! A uniformed German, an officer, should so greatly love Jews, and actually sacrifice his life for them! He is worthy of having his name historically inscribed – for a blessing! Dr. Neuman came from Berlin (his home town) and took over the management of Kozenice's military hospital. The Jews saw him for the first time at the ruins of the Maggid's Synagogue with photographic equipment. Not just that one time, but on several consecutive days. Already the Jews recognized him – he comes openly to show the world his sorrow! Children came to love the tall German, with his apparatus, and they became very friendly.

The German distributes sweets among them, converses with them, questions them as to where they live, how it is with them, what do their parents do, and what would they like to achieve? At first the children were afraid to speak to a German about such things, but the kind eyes of the German, and even more, the good sweets that were so generously distributed, made the youngsters talkative. They tell him about their difficult and bitter life

and how Jews return day after day from laboring for the Germans, and that at home there is no food. The children note that there are tears in the German's eyes. What is this?! A German crying because of the suffering of Jews? And herewith, 10 year-old Shmuel Prager stops the conversation and tells that his father came home today with a swollen foot, as a result of being struck by a soldier, and is now lying down and can't move. Dr. Neuman asks the boy "Where do you live, little one?" The boy becomes fearful, and will not reveal where he lives under any circumstances! Until Dr. Neuman takes him by the hand and goes along with him. He accompanies him all along Magitova Street until they reach number 26. A poor tailor – Prager lives in a basement. He lies in bed with a swollen foot. He sees the German and becomes frightened – the poor unfortunate tailor. Dr. Neuman approaches, examines him, prescribes a salve, and orders him to remain in bed. But afterwards he goes to the community and requests that they send a local doctor to Prager. Not so much because of the prescription, but in order to get a statement from the doctor, that he is unable to work for a few days.

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It was already then forbidden to German soldiers to visit Jewish homes. Secretly, Dr. Neuman would daily bring medicine and bread for the poor family – sometimes even fuel and sugar – until the ailing Prager was back on his feet. Modestly, Dr. Neuman said: "You owe me no thanks. I am just fulfilling a humane duty." (Remember that a German military doctor is speaking.) "When you hear of a Jew who is ill, have your son come quickly to me in the hospital. I will understand why, and I will come to you and you will take me to the sick person." Understandably, such a story could not be kept secret, and it quickly spread through the entire town. Dr. Neuman acquired a tremendous practice. The sick and weak already knew that there was a free German doctor who also dispenses medicine and even a little food gratis! And above all, he is so courteous, so noble, that he gives courage and comfort, day after day!

Dr. Neuman Worries About the Head of the Yeshiva

With utmost devotion, he did everything possible for the greatest scholar in town, the Kozienicer head of the Yeshiva, who had become critically ill. Dr. Neuman examined him and told him that it was very serious, but he would do whatever he was able to do. And he kept his word! This time too, you could see his self-sacrificing courage on behalf of Jews. First, he brought special medications from the hospital, and when that didn't help, he appealed to the commander for permission to use the military hospital's x-ray machine for the Head of the Yeshiva, with a special permit for him to come to the hospital daily. The commander warned Dr. Neuman not to become too committed to Jews. But the warning went unheeded. Dr. Neuman continued to request the x-ray equipment, and insisted that it concerned his personal friend.

The commander is cognizant of his service as a military doctor, and his outstanding excellence as an officer! And so, he permits him to use the x-ray machine. If someone could have seen the joy and rays of happiness beaming from his face when he ran to the Rosh-Yeshiva and called out: "My friend, you will get well!", he would certainly have said that he is hearing the oracular voice of an idealistic humanitarian love! But the commander readied a surprise for him! That very same day he sent him away to Polav for a period of 10 days, to oversee improvements in Polav's military hospital. The Jews in Kozienice did not know where Dr. Neuman had disappeared. Immediately rumors spread that he had been arrested because of his contacts with Jews. The Jews became very despondent. They feared reprisals against them. And then, behold, in 10 days, Dr. Neuman

again appears in town. He comes to the Rosh–Yeshiva in an agitated state, for he realizes that he was thus “repaid” for his friendship to Jews. He swallows the “bitter pill” and redoubles his efforts to help Jews.

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He advises the Rosh–Yeshiva to go to Warsaw, and gives him a letter for a doctor of his acquaintance, who administers the Radium Institute of the hospital in Warsaw. He requests that the doctor cure the patient with radium treatments to be administered free of charge. (The family is in possession of Dr. Neuman's letter, for it was never delivered.) Dr. Neuman also sends food products to Warsaw for him; for at that time, the first winter, food products were difficult to come by in Warsaw. When Dr. Neuman sees that it takes 6 weeks for news from the Rosh–Yeshiva, delivered by his personal courier to arrive, he announces to the family in Koziencice that he wants to visit the sick Rosh–Yeshiva personally. He asks for his address in Warsaw, and requests that the family write of his coming so that the family with whom the Rosh–Yeshiva is staying will not be frightened when he appears.

When the Rosh–Yeshiva returned in a deteriorated state and Dr. Neuman noted that the end was near, he came often to spend time with him, especially on Friday evenings. As the decree not to visit with Jews in their homes became stricter, and obtaining food became more difficult, Dr. Neuman would send bread with a young gentile boy for the ailing patient. When the Rosh–Yeshiva died, Dr. Neuman cried like a small child who lost a very dear friend. It would be extremely interesting to relate the themes of their intimate talks together. Many curious things about Dr. Neuman's life in Germany became known, but our space is limited. We will describe in brief, some of his interesting biography as it pertains to historical value, and his friendship for Jews.

Dr. Neuman was born in Berlin and received degrees in medicine, the humanities and philosophy. He always desired to be in the company of Jews. So much so, that, in school, he was called “Jude”. Most of his friends were Jews. After Hitler's takeover, he spent much enjoyable time with Jews. He hid many Jews from the SS storm troopers. In Berlin the SS caught and beat Rabbi Ezra Funk. At that moment, Dr. Neuman came by and endangered himself in order to rescue Rabbi Funk. Afterwards, because of that incident, he had a duel with an SS officer and was left with a scar on his head. He loved Germany but hated the regime. He would say: “He who is an antisemite cannot be a friend of humanity.” One time, in the midst of a conversation, he suddenly became quiet, his eyes hazy, and he spoke of a family tragedy. He relates, in a low voice: “I had a 14 year–old son. Against my will he became a member of the Hitler Youth...Now he is dead...Thank God! If he would have lived, I would have hated him because of the Jewish Question, and there would always have been conflicts between us! Better that he is dead!”?

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Dr. Neuman had in the basement of his home in Berlin, a library of pro–Jewish books, which he would lend his acquaintances. This was actually high treason. He also supported the Yiddish cultural community and the German Aid Society with donations, as was evidenced by the receipts he had. Dr. Neuman turned, officially by letter, to the head of the Jewish community in Koziencice, telling him that they must immediately, without hesitation, establish an infirmary for the poor Jewish sick. It should appear as if it were being done for sanitary reasons, but in actuality it was because it had become almost impossible for him to minister to the Jewish sick. Dr. Neuman contacted the town's Jewish doctor, Abramowitch, and requested him to spend several hours each day at the infirmary. He also appointed him as Director of the infirmary.

It became apparent that nothing could even begin, because of a severe shortage of medications. The commandant would not even issue a travel permit to buy the medications in Warsaw. “Let the Jews die!” was his answer! But Dr. Neuman found a solution. For a very large sum of money (many thousands) he was able to obtain medications from the military hospital, and thanks to him, a beautiful Jewish infirmary was established. His second request was to set up a communal kitchen for the poor. And the third request was the crown of his achievements in Kozenice – The Orphanage! All of these were established with his wholehearted moral support. He visited all three institutions in an official capacity, and praised them all very highly. He constantly spoke about the Jewish creative spirit!

His work came to a halt with the military order that was conveyed to him – “To the front!” At the beginning of November, 1940, Dr. Neuman left for the front. In his home he left a picture of himself, on which were inscribed the words: “The suffering of the tortured – is my suffering!” It is our duty to inscribe the most worthy, Dr. Neuman in our Kozenice War Memorial Book. First, because he was indeed the only ray of light in the bleak and black stormy time when his fellow Germans were spilling Jewish blood in abundance, like water, and their greatest pleasure was to see “that Jewish blood spurts from the knife!” But one other thing made it incumbent upon us to eternalize his name – and that was the objectivity of the Jewish historians from ancient times to this very day. Among all the Hamans, we have also remembered to eternalize those non-Jews who have helped us in our most trying times – such as Charvonah, who is mentioned favorably in the Book of Esther – “May Charvonah be remembered for good!”