

Poems Written Following the Liberation

Szulim Bergman, the son of the well-known Yiddish author Luzer Bergman (A. Kundas¹), was in the USSR for the entire duration of the War. Upon his return, he went throughout the whole of Poland seeking his family. While in Częstochowa, he wrote the poems *I am Looking for You*, *My Father*, and *How Much Longer?*



Photo №51: [Szulim Bergman]

I am Looking for You

*I am looking for you,
Week in and week out,
In piles of papers and journals.
In big, black frames,
Notices: I am looking for you,
FATHER, MOTHER...*

*I am looking for you,
Avruhom, eldest brother of mine;
For you, Icchok'l, clever and handsome;
Cypke'le, the little musician, the smallest,
Also Chaja'le, almost the prettiest.*

¹ [TN: Although Luzer Bergman was indeed a well-known Yiddish author, we have found no other source mentioning the pseudonym "A. Kundas". It could be that this was a nickname derived from his work "Dem Kudas" (The Trickster), which is mentioned in the subsequent poem "My Father".]

*I am looking for you,
Father, Mother, sisters and brothers,
Where are your limbs?
In Treblinka! All of you are there.
Alive, the murderers burnt you!*

*I am looking for you,
Father, Mother – for what sins
Were you burnt, dear children?
It is because all of you were Jews
That this misfortune happened to you.*

*I am looking for you,
Week in and week out,
In piles of papers and journals.
In big, black frames,
Notices: Revenge! For you, innocent Father, Mother!*

My Father **(in place of a *matzevah*)**

*“Father, I shall always remember you.
Your son Szulim.”*

I

*In a frosty, dark, fear-filled night,
You lay dreaming, absorbed.
A novel of freedom, life and luck –
Will this ever come back?*

II

*You were remembering your childhood years,
When you travelled with your father to the Rebbe,
You studied the Talmud, Mishnah and the Bible,
And foreign languages a great many in number.*

III

*Later a writer, a humourist, you were,
You wrote for everyone with pseudonyms -ten:
“The Polish Shtetl”, “Kotzker Tales” and the beautiful monologues
“The Trickster”, novels and also for the little children.*

-IV

*You raised your children with culture and wisdom;
A father who gave them to the very last bite;
You learnt and you studied almost all of the children –
And hoped to have contentment from each one on his own.*

V

*On a Friday night, during the meal, did you remember
At the table about writing? You completely forgot.
You sang and played with all of us for a long time,
Enjoying yourself, patting us with affection and joy.*

VI

*Murderers came to cut short the poem of your life,
Sentencing YOU to death without any court;
They burnt your creation – not a trace of it is left;
There is no longer any mark – not even a grave.*

VII

*In a frosty, dark, fear-filled night,
Father, I was thinking of you.
A poem of blood, of heart, for your spirit –
Father! In place of a headstone for you – REVENGE!!!*

How Much Longer?

I

*How much longer? Three words and one question;
The martyred folk in its hopeless situation.
Do we have long to wait for the horizon of joy?
Our redemption – is it already soon to arrive?*

II

*How much longer, the troubles and pain on foreign soil?
Answer us, God – Are we to be thus ruined for much longer?
Scattered and dispersed, the remnants of the tragic folk,
Who see no purpose and see no point...*

III

*How much longer? The blood of six million was spilt –
For whom? Answer, God – for what?
Some have freedom, others have bread –
What do we have? Exile, pain and death!*

IV

*How much longer? Enough already! Enough exile, enough pain.
To be dependent on others for so long already...
We, too, must have freedom, joy and bread.
Enough! No more six million, no more death!*

V

*How much longer? Three words and no longer a question –
For us, the hopeless situation has ended.
All of us are going – all of us together –
To build and defend a country of our own!!!*

The Cursed Symbol

*With power you have stormed into our lives,
To destroy the ethical aspirations and desires.
You, Swastika! Destroyer of human joy,
Cursed symbol, manifestation of misfortune!
Instead of joy, faith, love, hope and bread,
You have given death to the pearl of mankind.
You, Swastika! You are the manifestation of war
And the singer of the bestial, savage Horst-Wessel-Lied².
You devised the theory of Rassenschande³,
Yet you yourself shamelessly defiled your people and land.
Loathsome symbol! You made concentration camps –
All you thought of was to torture people and kill them.
Disgust and contempt are what you gained.
Disappear, you, with those who served you.
Revolted symbol! Fortunately, you have lost,
And you have earned your defeat well.*

(Gardelegen, near Magdeburg, July 1945)

² [TN: Anthem of the Nazi Party, which, among other things, includes the lyrics “Millions are looking upon the swastika full of hope, The day of freedom and of bread dawns!”]

³ [TN: Ger., “racial defilement”; theory whereby the Nazis prohibited sexual relations between “Aryans” and non-Aryans.]