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The Malarskies

(The story of a *Częstochower* family)

Abram Malarski, the father, was a native of the *shtetl* Sejny, in the *gubernia* [province] of Suwałki. His mother was the daughter of a rabbinical judge. His father, Zelig, was the son of a blacksmith, who was famed throughout the Suwałki region for having once had the opportunity of shoeing the horse of [Tsar] Nikolai I. As a reward for his good work, he was exempted from paying taxes.

At the age of three, Abram was left motherless. He was raised in the house of his grandfather, the rabbinical judge, until his father took him with him to Nowy Dwór [Mazowiecki] in the Warsaw *gubernia*. He becomes a rope-maker's apprentice, standing fourteen hours a day by the spinning wheel and suffering from hunger and cold. After three years, he becomes a journeyman.

At the age of twenty-one, he marries Szajndla Tac [sic Top or Tob¹], a daughter of Luzer and Blima [*née* Rytenberg] Tac in Nowy Dwór. Szajndla's parents - the grandparents of the *Częstochowa* Malarskies - kept orchards and grassland around the Wisła River and ran a dairy farm.

Abram Malarski abandoned the rope-making trade and became a harness-maker. By then, his father Zelig², who had previously been employed at the Nowy Dwór fortress, was the owner of several [horse-drawn] omnibuses, which transported passengers and goods to and from Warsaw.

The [Malarski] family's first two children, Jidl and Rojza, were born in Grandfather Luzer's house. Szajndla, the mother of the Malarskies, being the mother of two children and not yet twenty years old, still could not come to terms with the lifestyle in her parents' home. She was drawn to a different life.

Lajbisz Berman, a son-in-law of her extended family, was a model for her. Grandmother Jochewed, who occupied herself with [the care of] orphans and neglected children in town, found him next to the bathhouse, banished from home by his step-parents³. She brought him up and let him study⁴, married him to her daughter and was very pleased with him. At first, he was an accountant. Afterwards, he became a *подрядчик* [Rus, contractor] of food for the military in the fortress. His children studied in Warsaw. One of his daughters took part in the Zionist Congress in Basel. She would tell her cousin Szajndla about her experiences in the big world. She made a strong impression on Szajndla, [who was] practically a village girl.

Over time, however, Szajndla, in loyal union with her husband, the modest rope and harness maker Abram Malarski, brought to this world an entire generation of ten children - four sons and six daughters. They moved to *Częstochowa* and later to America and, with their struggle and work in the home of old and here in America, they have earned renown amongst *Częstochowa* Jews.

¹ [TN: According to the archival records provided in JRI-Poland, **Abram-Wolf Malarski** married **Szajndla Top** in Nowy Dwór in 1877.]

² [TN: Appears as *Eliasz* in the records.]

³ [TN: It is unclear whether these were adoptive parents, or if one of his biological parents died and the remaining one remarried, after which that parent also died, whereupon the stepparent married someone else, with whom the child lived until he was expelled.]

⁴ [TN: Instead of sending him to work, as most would have done at the time with an abandoned child.]

The Malarskies in Częstochowa

Only one of the ten young Malarskies was born in Częstochowa - Mojsze (Morris). The rest - Jidl, Rojza, Dawid, Chaim-Szlojme, Chaja-Ruchel, Hudes, Jetta and Laja (Lina) - were born in Nowy Dwór. With the aid of Grandfather Luzer, and particularly of Grandmother Blima, who had an ingenious way of "helping" count the money that came in in the hundreds for the winter fruits, the family, which by then already consisted of eleven people - parents and nine children - were able to move to Częstochowa. Dawid became a locksmith. The other older children went off to work in the large and small factories, where Częstochowa's poorer children were employed. In 1901⁵, Jidl Malarski, a tinsmith by trade, married a Częstochowa girl and settled there. Sometime later, he secured a position for his father Abram in the Crafts School's harness-making department.

The first event [which they] experienced in Częstochowa was the pogrom of 1902. At the time, the family was living in the *Talmud Torah* building, and they hid with all the neighbours on the brick building's fourth floor, where the stones of the *pogromczykes* did not reach. Just then, the father was in Radomsko. By the time he returned home, the pogrom was over.

Late in the spring of that same year, they moved to the courtyard of the *Szajkete's*⁶ building in the Old Market [Stary Rynek]. The new dwelling had two entrances - one from the courtyard through the Old Market, and the other (the "main entrance") through the windows and the alleyway into ul. Warszawska, or through Horowicz's coal storeroom.

The flat was a dark one - the sun never reached it. The damp in the walls never dried. The workshop, with all kinds of leather goods on the walls, filled the house with the smell of raw leather. But with the advent of the Freedom Movement in 1904-1905, a great light of hope and fighting for a more beautiful life arose from this house, and spread to all corners of the poor Jewish streets of Częstochowa. The Malarskis' house became the centre of the SS Movement, which took hold of Częstochowa like a wildfire.

The dark attic above the dwelling, next door to Blima the *Fiftern* [⁷], always noisy and full of rags, was the stash of weapons and a place to hide. The house was hung with various frames edged with multicolour paper projections and, behind them, camouflaged with bricks, packs of literature were concealed. The red flags were in a completely separate hiding place in the wall, next to the oven. There were two ovens in the house - one was made of metal, for cooking, and the other one of bricks. The second one was never kindled - it served more important purposes.

The bang of a revolver shot was very frequently heard from the house. This was when they were testing the revolvers in the dark attic. Guns [also] often went off while being oiled or cleaned. On one occasion, one such bullet flew past a whole gang of children who were curious to see what the older ones were doing. From fright, the children dropped down like [rag] dolls.

One of the couriers, who took the weapons over to where they were needed, was the red-haired, silent but fearless Hudes (Sofa⁸). She would put half a dozen revolvers into her apron, throw on a shawl and set out for the appointed location.

In the nights, a cart would often drive up to the "main" entrance, viz. through the alleyway and up to the window next to the coal storeroom, and unload sacks and packs that had just been smuggled

⁵ [TN: In JRI-Poland records, we find that Judka Malarski married Brandla Golda Fajtel/Berlikson in 1900.]

⁶ [TN: The "Szajkete" would be the wife of someone named Szaja, or Szajke.]

⁷ [TN: פיפערן in the original; definition unknown.]

⁸ [TN: Short for Sofia.]

across the border in Herby⁹. The father, Abram Malarski, would hide them in holes under the floor and cover them back up with dirt.

In the morning, the mother, Szajndla, would take two baskets with fresh buns to [sell to] the city's wealthier housewives. This was a supplement to her husband's meagre earnings. But in these baskets, under the buns, there were other things.

Jidl lived in Blachownia¹⁰ and worked in the factory there. From there, it was just seven miles to the border in Herby, through which shipments of weapons and literature passed. On Sundays, he came into town. Then, the house of the Malarskies was very crowded with the people who came to discuss very important matters.

The house was very often raided by the police during the night, who searched and rummaged in all the corners, usually finding nothing. They would throw the children out of bed and turn over the hay-mattresses. Szajndla was already accustomed to this and had her method of opening the suitcases, which comrades passing through had left behind, and showing [the police] the crates filled with old bits of leather from her husband's work¹¹.

Many, many pages could be written, describing the unpretentious heroism and martyrdom of [just] one of the Jewish mothers of a revolutionary family in those days. Szajndla, the mother of the Malarskies, was an example.

She [once] treated one of the gangsters, who demanded "payment" for the spot in the Old Market, to such a thwack in the face, that nobody dared pick a quarrel [with her again]. With the Chief of Police and his helpers, with whom she very frequently had the occasion to fight for her arrested children, she employed a different means - "diplomacy". There were several Malarskies, *keinehora* [no evil eye]. [So], for instance, when one time, following the explosion of a bomb on the ul. Kolejowa [Railway Street], they detained Jidl. She argued with the Chief of Police that Malarski the revolutionary was abroad, and that the Malarski, who had been arrested, owed God for his soul¹². He was a married man, who lived peacefully with his wife and child. (The "peaceful" Jidl, as a tinsmith, prepared devices that exploded with such a boom, that it made the whole city tremble.) Once Jidl was already in America, she turned her "diplomacy" around the other way, thus protecting Dawid.

Besides her children, she was also mother to dozens of other revolutionary activists, who hid in the house, [up] in the attic. Many of them needed to be smuggled across the border and, for many, it was necessary to obtain *pótpaski* (certificates to cross the border). One of those, who often sought refuge with her, was Aron the Red (Aron Singalowsky). Once, he showed up at the house pursued by the police on a Friday, at the very moment Szajndla was lighting the *Shabbes* candles. She interrupted the ceremony and hid Aron somewhere.

The greatest misfortune occurred when she [once] fell while running about and broke a leg. For a long time, she walked on crutches. The leg did not heal properly and she suffered terrible aches. That same winter, Dawid, who was working illegally in another city, was arrested and sent with the *étape*¹³ to Częstochowa. With the aid of the crutches, Szajndla set out on a *dorożka*¹⁴ to see Dawid at the [prisoners'] barracks. In the summer of 1906, following the explosion of the bomb on ul. Warszawska, mass arrests were made. A great number of visitors came to see the detainees, including Szajndla. In

⁹ [TN: In the years 1815-1915, Herby was on the border of the Russian Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia (German Reich).]

¹⁰ [TN: Locality 11 km (6.8 miles) from Częstochowa.]

¹¹ [TN: The illegal contents of the suitcases would presumably be hidden in the crates under the scrap leather.]

¹² [TN: Yiddish expression meaning that he was a poor, innocent soul.]

¹³ [TN: Russian road prison for the transport of inmates.]

¹⁴ [TN: Known as *droshky* in English; a low, four-wheeled open carriage used especially in Russia.]

the great tumult, she and Dawid blended in with the visitors and walked out freely. After that, with Jidl's aid, who was already sending money from America, she journeyed to Breslau [Wrocław] to have her leg operated on. Following surgery, she went for convalescence to her father's, in the orchards by the Wista.

Even there, she was not able to rest completely. Dawid, who was supposed to be abroad, was caught with an SS printing press on the third floor of a building on ul. Krótka. He and the printer jumped out the window. The police shot after them. Both managed to escape. The news reached Szajndla. She was already then suffering from diabetes, as a result of her hard and agitated life. At the end of that same summer, Dawid left for America and settled in Chicago.

Dawid Malarski

Dawid Malarski was one of those people whose names become legends.

By trade, he was a locksmith. He completed all his studies in Nowy Dwór, both in *cheder* and as a locksmith. He came to Częstochowa in 1902 and, soon afterwards, joined the first workers' circle organised by the SS. The labour movement in general, and the SS in particular, was at the time made up of a chosen few. Dawid Malarski, with his tenacity of a pioneer, fearlessness of a revolutionary and excitement of a child before whom a new world has been revealed - a new ideal in life - was precisely the one who led the masses behind him.

His greatest merit as a revolutionary consisted not of words, but of deeds. He was entrusted with the most difficult and perilous jobs - taking illegal literature across the border and sending it over to other locations, organising the self-defence [squad] and protecting the movement from spies, defending the Jewish populace against pogroms, organising the printing presses and the hazardous work inside them - Dawid Malarski's hand was in all these things.

Spied on and chased in Częstochowa by the Tsarist spies and police, he would vanish from the horizon for a while - to soon reappear when a printing press fell through, or some other unusual thing happened.

When the police uncovered an SS press on the first storey of a house on ul. Krótka, he was there with a typesetter from Piotrków. Dawid sprang out the window into ul. Krótka unharmed. But the "young typesetter lad" sprained his foot when he jumped and was unable to run. Under fire from the police above, Dawid raced back to the spot where the comrade lay and carried him away to a secure location.

In America, he tried to quench his fiery temperament with education. He studied and went to college¹⁵. He was also active in the ST [Socialists-Territorialists] and the [Yiddish] School Movement.

A serious illness which beset him years ago has torn him away from the communal work in which he is now sorely needed.

Laja (Lina) Malarski

She was still a child when she arrived in Częstochowa, but already brought with her the strong impressions from the little *shtetl* of her birth, Nowy Dwór, which was as large as the walk from one grandparent to the other, the visits with Grandmother Blima, who lived in the "Piasek"¹⁶ and always

¹⁵ [TN: In English in the original (קאָלעדזש).]

¹⁶ [TN: Pol., "Sand"; according to the Yizkor Book "Pinkas Nowy Dwór", the "Piasek" was a poor part of the *shtetl* from where sand was taken to sprinkle on the floors in honour of Shabbes and holidays.]

treated her to buttermilk and sweet *challah* [holiday bread], and quite particularly from Grandfather [Luzer's] orchard, where one could eat the best fruits that fell from the trees, and where the whole family, young and old, comprising over seventy grandchildren, would gather on *Shabbes*.

Little Laja received her first instruction at [Reb] Mojsze-Mordche's *cheder*. The *Rebbetzin* [viz. his wife] taught the Hebrew in the prayer-book with a pointer, and helped pronounce the words of the Holy Tongue. Tuition fees were five gilden¹⁷ a month. For bringing the few gilden, the *Rebbetzin* rewarded one with sweets.

Afterwards, she had already learnt to read and write, and carried a copybook and the textbook "*Русская речь*" [Russian Speech] with her. Later, due to the poverty at home, her father taught her himself while he worked.

In 1904-1905, the Freedom Movement's Częstochowa intelligentsia organised scholastic circles in private homes. Laja studied in a circle in the house of a dentist. In this wealthy home, the children were also treated to tea and *ciastka* (cakes) – this, to them, was like heaven on earth.

Already as a very young child, Laja helped her mother make a living, taking the baked goods to the rich housewives. She usually carried a little basket. When her mother broke her leg, she and another sister hauled the big baskets - which were probably larger than herself.

She was frequently sent to Jidl, in Blachownia, with a basket of food. On her way back, she would transport things in her basket that were a secret to her. The road to the Herby train, which at the time was some way off behind the city, and afterwards on the train itself to Ostrów, and from Ostrów with the woods to Blachownia, was for her an intense experience of joy and fear.

On one occasion, her father was waiting for her at the Herby train - and with a *dorożka* no less. This was a great riddle for her. One day later, the bomb was thrown on ul. Warszawska.

The Constitution¹⁸ of October 1905 was, to her, as if a great holiday had dropped down from heaven. Hence, the winter [of 1906], with the state of war, searches in the houses and the arrests that intensified immediately following [the Manifesto], was twice as difficult for her. The military patrols would stop the mother and daughter in the street, and they were often searched.

It must be added, that these were the experiences of a child aged between eight and ten.

The Malarskies in America

The family's emigration to America began in 1906. Jidl travelled first, followed by Dawid. The third to travel was Abram Malarski himself, by then already an upholsterer. He was followed by the third son, Chaim-Szlojme, who had just returned from military service and had brought back a wife with him from there. After that, three sisters made the journey - Chaja-Ruchel, Hudes and Chana. They were followed by the eldest sister, Rojza, with her two small children, Majer and Zelda. The family's two youngest children [also] travelled with her - Jetta and Mojsze. The last to emigrate were the mother Szajndla and Laja (Lina). This was in 1910.

All of them settled in Chicago. This was the happy reunion of the entire family, which had for years been scattered and dispersed - with some in military service, some in prison and some in America.

¹⁷ [TN: A gilden is a 15-kopek coin; between 1850-1917, Russian currency was used in Congress Poland.]

¹⁸ [TN: Aka "October Manifesto"; document issued by the emperor Nicholas II that in effect marked the end of unlimited autocracy in Russia and ushered in an era of constitutional monarchy. (Encyclopaedia Britannica)]

The house was always full. Two sisters were wed within a year of arrival. All the other children had friends. The house was always open to all. The dining room resembled a homely tavern. Unfortunately, this did not last long. The diabetes that Szajndla, the mother, had beaten back at home, travelled with her to America. On 19th May 1913, she departed from this world, leaving behind a severe depression on the entire household that had just been revived, and on an eleven-year-old child - Mojsze. Abram Malarski lost his position and, with two of the youngest children, moved to a tiny little town in Indiana.

In 1925, Jidl died. In 1931, Chaim-Szlojme died. Nevertheless, the large Malarski family in America continued to branch out and multiply. They continued the work here, loyal to the ideals that had been brought from the home of old.

Jidl organised the *Nowy Dwórer landsleit* here and was the first chairman of the *Nowy Dwórer Aid Society*.

For many years, Dawid was one of the most active figures of the ST (Socialists-Territorialists). Later, he became active in ICOR [Organisation for Jewish Colonisation in Russia] and in the Sholem Aleichem Institute.

Rojza, Chaja-Ruchel and Hudes were active in the parent's unions of the Sholem Aleichem Schools and in the *Nowy Dwórer Aid Society*.

Laja (Lina) belonged to the Left-wing *Poalei Zion* in Chicago, was active in ICOR, became one of the first members of the *Częstochower* Patronage for the political arrestees and also temporarily secretary of the organisation, when Groman travelled to New York, [and also] belongs to the [Jewish] People's Fraternal Order and is active in the Parents Committee of the Order's schools.

The third and fourth generations of Malarskies, here, consist of twenty-three grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. Almost all of them attended Yiddish secular schools. The eldest grandchildren, Maks [Majer] and Zelda, Rojza's children, studied in the first National Radical School of the ST in America, of which Dawid was one of the founders. The younger ones attended the Arbeiter-Ring Schools. Dawid and Chaja-Ruchel's children went to the Sholem Aleichem Schools. Lina's daughter, Beverley, studied at a school of the [Jewish] People's [Fraternal] Order.

All the Malarskies without exception have participated in the aid work for *Częstochowa*. [Abram] Malarski's grandchildren have also already taken part in this work. One of them is Zelda, Jidl's daughter.

In 1923, with the aid of Lina, Dawid, Hudes (Sofa), Rojza and Zelda, a banquet was organised in honour of Flw Chrobolovsky's departure for *Częstochowa* and Dawid, the toastmaster, managed with his extraordinary energy to raise \$200 for the I.L. Peretz Primary School in *Częstochowa*.

The Malarskies' family chronicle would not be complete without the story of the youngest son, Mojsze (Morris):

Morris Miller

The Malarskies' "unrest" gave him, too, no repose. [Living] together with his father in the small Indiana town, at the age of sixteen he joined the American Army during the First World War, under the name Morris Miller.

After the War, he joined the Navy and became a sailor and sent his father letters from faraway places, with signatures from rabbis to the effect that he had not forgotten to say *Kaddish* after his mother.

When he would come home after long wanderings, he was like a stranger amongst the family. He had practically forgotten the Yiddish language. The only Yiddish words that he still remembered were, "Vayst, Tatte" [You know, Dad]. His father, Abram, would reply to him, "Ich vays, ich vays" [I know, I know] - by which he meant, "You are lost to the family".

And yet, he returned. This was during the years of the Depression. The Malarskies were active in the leftist ranks. He is drawn into the movement, begins to attend workers' schools and studies political economy, Marxism etc. He makes appearances at mass gatherings and inspires his listeners.

He also becomes active in workers' theatre and has great success in the sketch *Waiting for Lefty*¹⁹. He wins a scholarship to study dramatic arts and becomes very popular with his character roles.

As a veteran of the First World War, he participated in the march on Washington and was the leader of a column. The papers gave Morris Miller extensive publicity at the time, and he rose to leadership.

He changed completely. He married and bonded with his family. Over the course of the Second World War, he worked as a fireman at the Inland Steel Company in Indiana, and he now dedicates himself to theatre as a communal activity.

The Malarskies participated in the Second World War with a grandchild, G. (Zelig) Goodman-Malarski, Clara's son (he is in the picture²⁰ with his son, a great-grandchild of the Malarskies).

But, during the prelude to the Second World War, in the Spanish Civil War, Chaim Miller, Dawid Malarski's son, left the university where he was studying chemistry and travelled to Spain to join the Loyalists.

The Malarski family is described here not as an exception, but as a model of the life of our Jewish common masses.



Szajndla Malarski



Abram Malarski



Chaim-Szlojme Malarski



Hudes Malarski



Morris Malarski



Jidl Malarski

¹⁹[TN: 1935 play by American playwright Clifford Odets.]

²⁰[TN: This picture is in the section "Częstochowers in the Fight Against Fascism", p. CXXXV, but only one individual appears in it: Jerry Goodman-Malarski, most likely this same G. or Zelig. Perhaps the photograph was originally larger and included his son as well.]