

Gina Medem

Jewish Fighters in the Fields of Spain

(Dedicated to the hallowed memory of the Częstochowa heroes:
Adam Dawidowicz, Heniek Guterman, Leon Inzelsztajn and Godet.)

For I will teach, if possible, the stones to rise against earth's tyrants.
(Lord Byron; [Don Juan])

The Spanish Civil War was the laboratory of world Fascism, where Hitler, with the aid of his partners Mussolini and Francisco Franco, prepared the global slaughter of 1939-1945.

The bloody attack of the Spanish hangmen did not come suddenly.

The European peoples of an array of lands had courageously and doggedly opposed the Fascist dictators, such as [Pierre] Laval in France, [Józef] Piłsudski in Poland, Prince [Ernst Rüdiger] Starhemberg in Austria, the Spanish Falangists Lerroux¹ and Antonio Maura, [and] the Belgian, Swedish and Finnish Fascists.

It began with uprisings in 1934: the February Days in Vienna, Graz and Linz - the uprising of the common masses under the slogan of "*Einheitsfront*" [United Front]. As always, the bourgeoisie helped the Fascists to stifle the uprising and they hanged the [Socialist] leader of Graz, Koloman Wallisch and that of Linz, Reichelberger. The irate French workers and progressive intelligentsia responded to the provocations of the Cross of Fire [*Croix-de-Feu*]² of [Jacques] Doriot³ and of [León] Degrelle⁴ with battles in the streets of Paris, Marseilles and Lille, and sealed the victory over Fascism with their blood. France's great capitalist 400⁵ families, headed by [Philippe] Pétain, betrayed the people - handing them over to Hitler.

In Spain, the land of the greatest poverty and the greatest luxury of the feudalists - of whom just thirteen families owned 67% of the entire Spanish soil - the Popular Front [*Frente Popular*]⁶ government, which came forth with the slogans, which had been popular for centuries, of an agrarian reform for the landless peasant and agricultural labourer, of labour legislation and a minimum wage for the urban workers and craftsmen [and] for social support and public schooling, came to power in February 1936.

The spring began for the people of Spain - schools [and] hospitals for the poor, the parcelling out of the gentry's land under the leadership of Minister of Agriculture Vicente Uribe [sic Uribe], medical care for children and mothers - all this was like a dream come true for the enslaved, starving Spanish folk who, for centuries, had been ruled over by the Catholic Church, the hated *Guardia Civil* (the police) and the brutal bloodsuckers the grandees and marquises of the Spanish court, such as Marquis De Espinas, Prince Oliva [?] and the like.

¹[TN: As the Spanish politician Alejandro Lerroux was not a Falangist, this is likely to be a reference to Manuel Hedilla Larrey.]

²[TN: A nationalist French league of the inter-War period, led by Colonel François de la Rocque.]

³[TN: Founder of the ultra-nationalist "Parti Populaire Français" (PPF).]

⁴[TN: Leader of the Belgian clerical-fascist Rexist Party; although active in Belgium, his views would have been propagated throughout the French-speaking world.]

⁵[TN: Used figuratively, as in "New York's Four Hundred".]

⁶[TN: Coalition of numerous left-wing organisations.]



Jewish fighters in the fields of Spain

On a hot summer day in 1936 - 18th July - the People's Olympiad, the proletarian sporting competition to which hundreds of competitors from abroad had been invited, was to commence in Barcelona. Among them, a group of Jewish children from working Paris also arrived - children from our⁷ cultural institutions in France. Everything had been prepared so that the Olympiad should become a festival [celebrating] an international sporting competition of the working masses in

Europe's progressive countries - as a countermeasure against the Nazi Olympics,

which the workers did not attend. But, instead of songs and a march with banners down the Avenida Catalunya at seven o'clock in the morning, shots were fired from the Spanish Army's barracks, with which their commanders in Madrid, Valencia, Barcelona and Malaga giving the signal for the rebellion against the Popular Front's new democratic government.

This was on 18th July 1936 - a date which has forever remained in our memory, because it also signified the end of a new blossoming for the thousands of Jews who had come to Spain at the call of Foreign Minister [Fernando] de los Ríos [Urruti] - the great-grandchildren of the Sephardic Jews expelled, during the Inquisition, from Turkey, Greece, Macedonia and the Land of Israel, as well as the new immigrants from Poland, Germany, Austria and France, whom antisemitism had driven out to seek for new homes and whom the Spanish Popular Front government had welcomed broadly and heartily, after February 1936, in Spain.

This date, on which Hitler - with the silent approval of the great democracies - enslaved Spain and began torching the lands in northern and eastern Spain, was [the beginning] of the abyss which opened, years later, before the millions of Jews in Eastern and Western Europe.

We shall not forget this date, [also] because thousands of Jewish fighters, from throughout the globe, covered the Jewish name with glory, honour and recognition. With their blood, they soaked the old Spanish homeland, from which the brutal, feudalistic Catholic Church had expelled their great-grandfathers and grandmothers five centuries before.

This⁸ explains why, in February 1936, when the Popular Front won, Jews began returning to Spain - from Tarnopol and Tel-Aviv, from Berlin and Rome, from Athens and Łódź [and] from Constantinople and Trieste.

And when, at dawn, the shot from the barracks was heard in Barcelona and Madrid, they [viz. the soldiers] led the Jewish secondary school pupils, sportsmen and teachers away to the French border, and [then] went back to fight *against* the officers of Franco's clique - against officers from Spain's wealthiest families - for the soldiers took no part in the coup in Spain's three largest cities. They were opposed to Franco [and] for freedom, for land, for bread [and] for the Spanish people.

⁷ [TN: As the author, Gina Medem, was the wife of the Bundist leader Vladimir Medem, "our" institutions presumably mean the Bundist ones.]

⁸ [TN: Presumably the fact that they regarded Spain as their ancestral homeland.]

Spain became the centre of the world's attention. A bloc of states organised, which consciously and consistently assisted Franco with all their tremendous means of power - armaments, money, propaganda and auxiliary troops.

This [attention] was manifested most clearly in France, the country bordering Spain and the only country which, through the mouths of its common masses, proclaimed unreserved support for the Loyalists in Spain. From there - from Cerbère, a little border town between France and Spain – people, who had come from twenty-eight [different] countries to aid the Spanish people in its heroic war against Franco, began in the night to make their way in small files over the rocks of the Pyrénées Mountains. With enthusiasm and willing to risk their own lives, they went - young and middle-aged, without speaking one word of Spanish; people of all professions, [levels of] knowledge and religions, with but one single purpose - not permitting Franco and the global Fascism to defeat the people of Spain - for behind the Spanish nation was standing the family of all the peoples of Europe, thinking with beating hearts about their own Fascism at home.

They went up against cannon, machine-guns and Nazi aeroplanes, which sowed death and destruction - without having any military training yet themselves. The greater number had been, for many years, in Fascist prisons and concentration camps in their own homelands.

The border town of Cerbère saw thousands of young men and women, who entered Spain and put themselves under the orders of the Loyalists, forming the famed and glorious International Brigades. On the battlefields of Spain, there were five International Brigades: the XI Thälmann Brigade, the XII Garibaldi Brigade, the Polish XIII Brigade (named after Jarosław Dąbrowski), the French XIV Brigade (*La Marseillaise*) and the XV Abraham Lincoln Brigade – the Americans.

The Jewish labourers and craftsmen from Polish cities and *shtetls*, the *émigrés* from Paris, Brussels [and] Antwerp, from Holland and Czechia, from Austria and the Land of Israel - in December 1937, when the Polish XIII Brigade was fighting at the front in Aragón, organised a Jewish alliance, by decision of the headquarters of the 45th [sic 35th] Division, whose commander was the Polish General Walter⁹ - today's hero of the battles for Warsaw and Śląsk, with the Soviet-equipped and armed Kościuszko Division¹⁰ which, together with the Red Army, marched across Poland in a victory-march on Berlin. The Jewish company in the Palafox Battalion¹¹ was named after the Jewish worker who was shot in Lemberg [Lwów] in 1929 - Naftali Botwin.

In memory of this martyred hero, who shot the Polish spy and traitor [Józef] Czechowski [sic Czechnowski], in the trenches of Aragón, by a little candle, face to face with the enemy, who were some thirty feet from the Polish combatants, the first historical Jewish combat alliance in Spain was organised, with its own commander and battlefield Yiddish journal, which was published every month - "*Botwin*".

For the first time in five hundred years, Jewish [viz. Hebrew] type was sent from Paris, with which to print - in Albacete, not far from the ancient university city of Murcia¹², where the Spanish monarchs' anti-Jewish laws were once printed – a Yiddish newspaper, *Der Freiheits-Kemfer* [The Freedom Fighter]. On the front page was printed the Polish Brigade's motto: *For Your Freedom and Ours*.

⁹ [TN: Codename of Gen Karol Waclaw Świerczewski.]

¹⁰ [TN: The 1st Infantry Division of the First Polish Army.]

¹¹ [TN: Part of the aforementioned XIII Dąbrowski Brigade.]

¹² [TN: Albacete and Murcia are only relatively "near" each other, as the shortest distance between them is almost 130 km.]

Hundreds of young and middle-aged fighters pass before my eyes and before my heart. My arrival in Madrid, as member of the Anti-Fascist Writers Congress¹³ in June 1937, was [made] spellbinding through an episode which no modern film director could have staged.

As it travelled down Madrid's largest and widest street, Avenida Prado, the convoy of automobiles (we drove from Valencia and Barcelona to Madrid in eighty-four cars) came, for a while, to a stop in order to meet with the representatives of General [José] Miaja, the commander of Madrid and the Madrid front. A young, blond soldier was running excitedly along the length of the convoy, holding in his hand the *Neue Presse*, a Yiddish newspaper from Paris. He was waving the paper like a flag, waiting for some member of the writers' congress to identify himself as a Jew and stop him. That is, in fact, what I did and the young soldier's joy was indescribable. Knowing that the congress would be opened in the evening, he had taken leave from the front - which, as noted already [?], was twenty minutes by tram from the city centre - and he had set out in search of a Jewish writer. When I asked him his name and gave him mine, he became even redder and hotter... "*Gina Medem!* The lads at *Puente [de los] Franceses*¹⁴ will never believe me that I saw you..." So I wrote my name and the date on that same newspaper, in jest.

We agreed that, on the following day, some of his comrades from the battalion would come to the congress of writers, to the official welcoming. He also managed to tell me his name - Feldman. Then the cars started moving and he set off – running, as he had come, and waving his newspaper. I never saw him again as, that same evening, the Fascists carried out one of their blasts under a house where a tunnel had been dug to other lines, and he was wounded, together with a group of Spaniards.

The next day, a few Polish-Jewish frontline combatants came to greet us - Sewek, Józek Mazel and Benjamin Lypszyc, known as "Barcelo Lorento", a member of the Bundist *Zukunft* Youth Organisation in Warsaw and one of the few Bundist workers who came to fight in Spain.

Józek Mazel ("Suliński") – born in Russia and educated in Warsaw, later a member of the editorial [staff] of the Polish Brigade's weekly, the *Dąbrowszczak* - was the inspirer and the actual indefatigable archivist, who aided me in publishing my book in Madrid, *Yidn - Freiheit-Kemfer* [Jews - Freedom Fighters]. He provided me with countless interesting details and dates pertaining to the XIII Brigade, in which the Naftali Botwin Company was later organised. With pride, he pointed to the fact that, under Gerszon Szyr¹⁵ and Capt. Elbaum, the first commanders of Botwin, Spaniards, Greeks and Jews from many lands had fought - Matias Katz from Hungary, Jona Brodski from the Land of Israel, Efroim Wauzek, Szlojme'le Feldman, Rotenberg and many, many others.

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The Polish Jews had the largest representation in the Spanish battalions, because the majority of [Jewish] emigrants came from Poland - the first Fascist country in Eastern Europe, with an outspoken Fascist *Sanacja*¹⁶ regime.

It is of no importance that those young Polish lads came from Paris, Brussels, Argentina, the Land of Israel or Austria - their motherland was Poland. The first Jew to fall at the gates of Madrid, soon after arriving in Spain and after just a few hours on the battlefield, was Albert Nachumi ([Aryje] Wajc), a young fighter from Poland, who was living in the Land of Israel. His memory was sanctified in Jewish Paris which, in 1938, organised a historical museum of documents from the Spanish Civil War,

¹³ [TN: Officially known as "The Second International Congress for the Defence of Culture."]

¹⁴ [TN: Bridge of the Frenchmen; railway viaduct in Madrid.]

¹⁵ [TN: Commissar of the Palafox Battalion; his real name was Micha Reger.]

¹⁶ [TN: This movement, headed by Józef Piłsudski, ruled Poland between 1926-1935.]

named after the first hero, Albert Nachumi (Wajc). Soon afterwards, a Jewish fighter [named] Landau fell, then Kirszenbaum and Natan Czak - author of the Dąbrowski Brigade's battle-hymn, which was sung by all anti-Fascist Poland, and the combatants in the field.

It is hard to write about the glorious life and struggle of the Spanish People without calling to mind the glorious, modest and heroic figure of [Baruch] Bobrus Nysenbaum - the working child from Warsaw, whose older brother was murdered at the age of twenty by the Warsaw *Defensywa* in 1934, during a metal[workers'] strike in Warsaw and who, at the age of sixteen, was the sole provider and maintainer of his mother and the five younger children. With all his youthful fervour, he plunged into the war against Fascism in Poland and was soon thrown into the Polish-Fascist murder-pit of Kartuz-Bereza¹⁷ - the concentration camp that did not have the shame before Dachau, [Bergen-]Belsen¹⁸ and the later Majdanek. Kartuz-Bereza, where people became cripples overnight by being murderously beaten with rubber bludgeons, contracted tuberculosis from sleeping naked on the asphalt in the winter [and] from which young men emerged with white hair, following the inquisition-like investigations of [Wacław] Kostek-Biernacki and Wojciechowski.

And Bobrus Nysenbaum endured everything. He counted the days to his release and studied the map of Spain - drawn from memory from his meagre months of schooling as a child and hidden from the prison guards under the lice-ridden hay mattress. In the light of his weak, flickering, little lamp, Bobrus prepared for his legendary quest in Spain, where he dreamt of avenging all his mother's blows and torments at the hands of the gendarmes by the prison walls and his beloved brother's death.

His journey – with no papers, no money and no knowledge of the languages of the five foreign countries across whose borders he needed to steal (Czechia, Austria, Switzerland and France, as well as including Poland and the Spanish border) - sounds like a legend: arrests, hunger, sleeping on the benches of the Prater Park in Vienna, going with the *étape* [transport of inmates] from one prison to another, until the Jewish *kehilla* in Geneva gave him clothes and a little money, and he arrived in Paris. Now he was finally happy. He set off for Spain. After some brief training in Albacete, the location of the instructional courses for the International Brigades, Bobrus joins the Polish Palafox company at the front in Huesca, where he takes part in the battles for Zaragoza.

The battalion advances. They drive back the Fascists. Bobrus is in a machine-gun unit. His only love is his Maxim, a heavy machine-gun. He polishes it and oils it, like a favourite plaything. From it, he discharges loads of rounds against the Fascist murderers - for the brothers tortured to death in Kartuz-Bereza, for the murder of Naftali Botwin, for the hangmen of Cáceres, where General [Antonio] Aranda machine-gunned 1,800 Spanish workers for refusing to fight against the Republic.

The battalion went deep into the Fascists' hinterland. They proceeded onwards for three days. The Moroccan cavalry surrounded the battalion – the unit had gone too far out and had no cover from the artillery. It had been a heroic march forward, but they were alone. A command is given to retreat to their own lines and Bobrus, with a small group of machine-gunners, cover the battalion's retreat to the Loyalist lines - being already so close to Zaragoza, that they could see the city's lights. "We are coming back, none of us will be missing", Bobrus sings the Dąbrowski [Battalion's] hymn, mowing down the hordes of Moroccans. The battalion fights its way through. The group of machine-gunners grows ever smaller. Only Bobrus remains. And here, already in Villamayor de Gállego, discharging the last round of ammunition, Bobrus falls from a sniper's Fascist bullet, with the song on his lips, not far from the first lines of our trenches.

¹⁷ [TN: Ref. to the Bereza Kartuska prison.]

¹⁸ [TN: Although the camp at Belsen only became an extermination camp in 1943, the Germans held POWs there since the invasion of Poland in September 1939.]

Bobrus is gone - the boy from ul. Żelazna, the young, iron-strong martyr of the Polish prisons, his mother's beloved son, the supporter of the Spanish People and its best protector, the best shooter in the Warinski Company¹⁹, [and] the founder of the battlefront newspaper *Adelante*²⁰ (Forward).

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Every city in Poland left both Polish and Jewish sons under ancient olive trees or in vineyards, whose names have become legends – the names of pioneers in the fight against Hitler and Nazism; names that will continue to be hallowed, as long as there is at least one progressive person in the world - for they were our first teachers on the battlefield, who did not separate word from fact [or] slogan from action; for they were the inspiration for the “brethren of the forest” - for the heroic Jewish and non-Jewish partisans, who fought four years later, in 1941-1944, on the roads of Kielce, Lublin, Częstochowa, Warsaw, Tarnów, Lemberg [Lwów] and Łódź against the same Hitler and Franco, who had been unable to take Madrid with weapons in hand.

Every city in Poland has a dear name in the cemetery in the vicinity of Madrid. It is a special cemetery - [that] of the International Brigades. And it is a pathetic yet proud coincidence that the first name on the first grave reads, “Issy Kupchik, Brooklyn, New York...”²¹ And Kupchik was one of the lucky ones - he died in the hospital, among witnesses; a nurse held his hand [and] a physician administered medicines to him, without betraying, [even] with a glance, that his death was nigh.

But [what about] Albert Nachumi (Wajc), the Polish-Palestinian wanderer? But [what about] Jungkraut, Mojsze Landau, Chaim Elkon, Warszawski and the Częstochowa hero, Capt. Adam Dawidowicz and his fellow townsman, the talented sculptor and painter, the child of the working class, Heniek Guterman?

Where is their last repose? Under which tree, beneath what pile of ruins do their mangled corpses lie? Burrowing feverishly, the paramedic was forced to lie flat, like a worm, to bring the dying hero [back] into our lines, in order to protect him from desecration on part of the savage Moroccans.

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My first meeting with Heniek Guterman took place in Madrid, at *Dąbrowszczak's* editorial [office]. I saw a young, very pale soldier, on whom the uniform lay broad and crumpled - it had not been tailored to his [measurements]. He noticed my glance and said, with a smile, “I’m not [dressed] elegantly, I know. The blame falls upon the Polish judicial system”. He had the fine, bashful smile of men who seldom smile. But then, his slender face with the grey-blue eyes and the narrow nose suddenly became young and beautiful - usually, it was worried and old. This was in the autumn of 1937, following the battles at Quijorna and Brunete, when the wounded returned to the front and new groups of volunteers arrived in Figueroa [sic Figueres], near the French border.

From Józek Mazel, the editor of *Dąbrowszczak*, I learned that Heniek Guterman had just sat for four years in the Kielce prison, that he was twenty-six years old and that he was a great talent - a sculptor and a painter. I understood why he always sat in the coldest and darkest corner of the large hall, where five national groups were working on five battlefront journals. He was of such extreme shyness, that he allowed no one to view his work. He had just arrived from the front for a couple of weeks rest, because he had lost weight and his commander, Zygmunt Moliec, had sent him to

¹⁹ [TN: Part of the Palafox Battalion.]

²⁰ [TN: This paper's title was actually in Polish – “Naprzód.”]

²¹ [TN: According to historical sources, Issy (Isidore) Kupchik was from Montreal, Canada, and he was killed in action in June 1937 in Segovia.]

Madrid. He then was working on a magnificent marble figure, which depicted the fight and death of the first Polish commander of the Polish Mickiewicz Battalion, a coal miner from France [who had been] born in Sosnowiec, named Antoni Kochanek. He fell near Madrid²², protecting the famous “*casa blanca*”²³ – the little, white house which the Fascists had set on fire, and where the heroic Leon Inzelsztajn, a Częstochowa shoemaking worker, also fell.



Heniek Guterman

As Heniek Guterman was coughing incessantly, we, the Polish group, got together and went, during the hours when the Fascists were not bombing the city, to look for a small electric oven with which to heat the house.

Heniek disapproved of this matter. One needs to make oneself tough, he argued. “It is only you Americans, who are so spoilt that you need to have steam and central heating. We are soldiers at the front - and Madrid *is* the front.”

However, the Italian, French and American editorial staffs warmly supported the Jewish project - and we went out in search of an oven. A cunning fourteen-year-old Spanish boy, Mario, sniffed out the little oven [that was] hidden in a half-empty shop, as if from [under] the earth. The merchant did not wish to sell it to us, claiming that he “only had things for the front”. But Mario told him that, if the front were to be heated with electric ovens, Franco might - God forbid - gain access to Madrid²⁴. The oven changed hands for 180 *pesos* and, in the large hall of the brigades’ headquarters, laughter reigned when the oven was passed along on a long, long line from one editorial table to the next. The only one who did not warm himself was Heniek Guterman.

The young man was held in rare esteem. When he said something, it was like law for himself and those with him. Once he completed the sculpture and it was sent to France as a means to raise aid for the army in Spain, Heniek was given another mission - to illustrate a Polish brochure, which had been written by the XIII Brigade, entitled “*The Rifle and the Heart*”, for the mothers and sisters in Poland. Heniek asked me to find types for him to draw among our Spanish and Polish nurses and employees of the kindergartens. In the evening, we would sit in the headquarters’ kitchen, where it was warm because we still had coal from Asturias, and while the women were knitting, sewing or making parcels for the front, I spoke with them and asked them to pose for Heniek. When he was in need of male types, in the evening, we would walk with a “*salvoconducto*” [safe conduct] - a permit from headquarters - along the streets of dark, overcast Madrid and enter a small “*bodega*” [tavern], where old “*milicianos*” (anti-aircraft defenders²⁵) sat with a glass of wine, awaiting an alarm. Heniek would sit at the table, silent and serious, and ask me to conduct conversations with the “*Madrileños*” [natives of Madrid] and not to look in his direction. (He only knew how to say one thing in Spanish – “*¡Fuego al enemigo!*” or “*Fire at the enemy!*”) But the old bakers and joiners from the suburbs soon realised what was going on and, one time, they wanted to take him to headquarters - “Why would you be drawing our faces? For whom is this intended?”

But [after showing them] his military [ID] card signed by General Miaja and a few explanations, the “*hermano Polaco*” - the Polish brother - resumed his drawing. I saved the album when I left Cataluña, and there is still a little picture there that he drew of me, when he had needed to illustrate a woman writing a letter to her son in Spain. Heniek Guterman only told about himself one time,

²² [TN: According to historical sources, Kochanek fell in Almadrones, a village 95 km NE of Madrid.]

²³ [TN: We have not found any ref. to this “white house”; the author herself identifies it on p.163 as the “*Casa de Campo*” (Country House), which is the name of a very large park in Madrid through which the frontline passed, and which may also have once contained a little white house, but this needs to be proven.]

²⁴ [TN: Most likely due to the fact that the soldiers in the trenches might actually be able to sleep, thus compromising their vigilance.]

²⁵ [TN: The term “*miliciano*” means “*militiaman*” in general, and not necessarily anti-aircraft personnel, although the word includes the latter as well.]

when he left once more for the front, in the direction of Lérida, after the Fascists broke through to the ocean in 1938.

He had lost his parents early on. Each of the relatives took in one of the children. So, Heniek was brought up with his uncle, his brother with another uncle, and his sister with an aunt. The children were separated and Heniek became lonely at an early age. He attended the "*szkoła powszechna*" [primary school] in Częstochowa. At the age of fourteen, he became a tailor's apprentice - at first, [he worked] with his uncle in Częstochowa and, later, travelled to work in Warsaw. That is where the true school of life opened up before him. He made the acquaintance of young, progressive Polish workers and he went to evening courses to learn the language and history of Poland, alongside other studies, which the few years in the primary school had been unable to give him. He goes on the path of a class-aware worker, takes part in organising widespread anti-Fascist work among the Polish and Jewish workers in Warsaw, and returns to Częstochowa as a mature, capable, young man with a desire to fight for a free Poland, and with the dream of developing his artistic talents in the field of sculpture. But, he is arrested in Częstochowa, in connection with the wave of protests against the bloody suppression of the peasants' strike in Poland. His arrest results in a sentence of four years imprisonment.

He uses these four years to educate himself even further, as far as this is possible within the framework of a Polish prison - a place of such sanguinary attacks as the murder of political arrestees during a hunger strike, like the tragic occurrence in the Kielce prison which Heniek recounted. After completing the four years, he came to see his family and, at once, left for Spain.

Withdrawn, yet a resolute and courageous combatant, he volunteered for a nightly reconnaissance mission during the battle for the city of Lérida.

He left his trench before dawn - never to return. No traces of him were found when they went to look for him. It was thought that the Fascists had captured him on his way and tortured him to death, for Heniek would have allowed them to hack him to pieces and would not have talked.

His smile and the gleam in his eyes have remained with me. When I asked him to create the title page for my Spanish book on the Jewish fighters, he drew his own features in rather grotesque, bold lines. His steel helmet clings lovingly to his rifle - and both are symbols of his combative workers' nature.

Heniek Guterman! We shall seek out your grave in free Spain, which we will help to liberate once again. This we promise you today, in the autumn of 1945, while the dead in Spain are unable to sleep, while a new war rages in Asia against colonial peoples.

Heniek Guterman spoke only once about his family, meaning his sister somewhere in Częstochowa and his brother, whom I encountered in Amsterdam in 1939, and I told him about that silent, strong brother of his, and he said to me, "Already, as a child, Heniek displayed strength. He never complained about anything. He wanted to study, more than anything else. And he never asked for anything."

His personal life was also cut short. Prison separated him from his life companion - both of them were [sent] away, to pay for desiring a free Poland with their best years, and their short meeting in Spain was cut short by death.



Leon Inzelsztajn [pic left] was a worker from Częstochowa, a cobbler by trade. In about 1934, he travelled to Belgium, when the Polish *Defensywa* were after him, because he was known to be the organiser in his trade of shoemaking. He was in the group of Franco-Belgian volunteers that came to Spain. He was assigned to a company of machine-gunners in the Dąbrowski Battalion. Being a politically accountable activist with great courage and discipline, he was always where the danger was the greatest, where the young, inexperienced volunteers were face to face with the enemy's murderous fire [and] could easily fall into panic – then, his valiant, loud voice would be heard, as his machine-gun mowed down the ranks of the attacking Fascists. In this manner,

when his company was surrounded from all sides, he made a way all by himself with his machine-gun for his comrades, enabling them to reach a grove of olive trees.

The little white house, the “Casa de Campo” [Country House; park in Madrid], became the tomb of the best [and] the most committed volunteer in the International Brigades. They sensed, with their every nerve, that the whole world was looking at them, that the brief, feverish, Spanish newspaper reports ignited a storm of exhilaration among the nations, and that their actions, their heroism [and] their death would further the cause of the Spanish people, and save it from going under.

The enemy approached the “white house”, an outpost of the Loyalists, which they had been unable to take. The Moroccans hurled grenades into the house, setting it on fire. Inside was a group of French-Polish volunteers, with Leon Inzelsztajn among them, loyal to his tradition of being in the very blaze.



When they barricaded themselves in the upper stories and the building was in flames, some tried to jump out the window - into the arms of the Moroccans, who were already drunk with their victory over the “*Rojos*” [Reds], as they called the Republicans. But, Leon does not lose [control of] himself. He suggests letting themselves down on a drainpipe from the roof - once they had slid down the drainpipe, the four [could] easily jump down to the ground. Leon's plan succeeds. He, too, makes it down. [They split up into] two groups [and] set out in two directions to search for their battalion. The Moroccans are still shooting. Of the four, two fall - Leon Inzelsztajn is the second one.

The suffering of a brave heart had come to its end. Madrid's blood-soaked soil swallowed up the boy from Częstochowa.

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He was a captain on the battlefields of Spain. His name? Adam Dawidowicz. His trade? An artistic painter. He spoke very little about himself. We only knew that, in order to come to Spain, he had interrupted the painting studies he had undertaken in Paris [and], later, in Brussels.

At first, Adam Dawidowicz was in the General Wróblewski Company, named in honour of the hero of the 1871 Paris Commune²⁶. Afterwards, this company became the Jarosław Dąbrowski Battalion,

²⁶ [TN: Revolutionary Socialist government that controlled Paris from 18th March to 28th May 1871.]

also named in honour of a Polish fighter against Tsarism and against the Prussians at the barricades of the Paris Commune. He was a strict, disciplined and systematic soldier, who soon began setting out on the Madrid frontline's first battles in the hills of the Jarama [River], where he was promoted from private to "teniente" (lieutenant), and then to captain.

They took an interest in the young fighter-painter at the division's headquarters, where the commander was the Polish General Walter (Karol [Wacław] Świerczewski, head of the Kościuszko Brigade in Warsaw in April 1945, alongside the Soviet Army). He proceeds to the front in Huesca, where he heads the machine-gun battalion. This was one of the hardest and bloodiest battles for the road to Zaragoza, and several attacks were beaten back by the Fascists, who had greater superiority in materials and men. The battalion lost a large number of seasoned veterans - [the] trained combatants of the winter victory near Guadalajara. The [story of the] battle at Huesca was sung by the Jewish workers' poet and soldier from [the] Praga neighbourhood in] Warsaw, Olek Nus, who had developed a talent for poetry on the front. He became the author of the Polish XIII Brigade's best fighting songs.

As he was covering the battalion's retreat with his machine-gun, walking last in the ranks of the rearguard, an enemy bullet found Capt. Adam Dawidowicz and he fell on 20th June 1937.

At his grave, the battalion swore that they would avenge their beloved commander, after which they gloriously distinguished themselves in the battles of Quijorna, Belchite and Brunete. Another heart had stopped beating - the modest, proud and valiant heart of a Jew, a patriot of the tradition of freedom, [the heart] of an artist, of a child of Częstochowa.

A few months later, at the battle for [the town Morata de] Tajuña, another fighter from Częstochowa fell, also a painter - the Pole, Alfred Nadet²⁷.

He had also been in the machine-gun division and had obliterated Fascist nests, as he sat in the rocky burrows of Morata de Tajuña. Down to his last belt of cartridges, as he was crawling towards a dead comrade's machine-gun, he was hit by a sniper's bullet. A few days later, a "tącznikowy" – a liaison soldier - brought a plain soldier's rucksack to the Polish newspaper's editorial room: the few letters from his nearest, a toothbrush, several photographs and a pad with sketches from the front - a sign that we had held the position and that the body had been brought to burial inside our lines.

*



A group of Częstochowers in the Republican Army during the Spanish Civil War

Among the few documents that managed to be salvaged from the archives of the relief committee for Spanish combatants in the French concentration camps in 1940, when Paris was already occupied, I found a list of Jewish and Polish names from Camp Vernet in Southern France.

In it were included the following fighters from Częstochowa:

²⁷ [TN: Sadly, we have as yet been unable to find any mention of this individual - or indeed the very existence of his surname - in any historical sources; it is perhaps a codename, or a misprint.]

Rozental, Moryc – b. 21st May 1910, mechanic;
Broniatowski, Mieczysław – b. 5th April 1912, student;
Lubczyk, Alojzy – b. 9th September 1909, metalworker;

Rozen, Wiktor – b. 15th June 1903, craftsman;
Kuper, Szmul – b. 17th October 1917, tailor;
Wajman, Jakow – b. 24th January 1910, tailor.

This is only from one concentration camp, in 1940, when I was still in France and while we still maintained contact with the camps, and were still able to support them with the aid of the French people and of the Botwin Committee in New York and Paris (before Hitler seized Paris, of course).

When the Nazis were approaching the southwest of France, where the camps of the fighters from Spain were (in March 1939, some quarter of a million Spaniards from Cataluña left [Spain]; among them [were] army units which safeguarded the evacuation of the sick and wounded and of the archives, and which fought retreat battles against Franco's Fascist armies), the combatants smashed the gates and the [barbed] wire obstructions of their camps and went to [join] the underground, to the French partisans, who waged a stubborn war against the Nazis until the day they joined forces with the first American paratroopers in the ports of the Atlantic.

Many of the Jewish fighters perished in the battles against the Nazis. Many were guillotined by the [Philippe] Pétain²⁸ regime for fighting against the Nazis. Among them, we have the names of J. [?] Jungerman, Majerowicz, Bursztajn, Kutner and Zachariasz (the latter two had been imprisoned in the Polish Kartuz-Bereza concentration camp and had arrived in France seriously ill, not long before the War broke out). Mendel Langer was guillotined in Toulouse on 23rd July 1943. In that same city, eight fighters fell in the fight against Fascism - [they] fell by sentence of death.

One would like to hope that, among the hundreds of surviving men and women located, it will be possible to find the aforementioned *Częstochower landsleit*, who were still in Camp Vernet at the start of 1940, [and] some in Algeria, Africa. The task of locating them will fall to the activists and friends of the great *Częstochower* family, which is spread across America and which takes such a magnanimous and heartfelt part in generating aid for the already liberated communal institutions in their hometown. The tradition of the work that was once [done] for the victims of the Polish fascism, which was manifested in "patronages", and the aid through the bygone "People's Relief" and the *landsmanschaften*²⁹, has been once more revived today, in the greatest Jewish tragedy of all times. With [our] combined strength, the world Jewry shall return to life - and to the word!

Unity must be laid at the foundation of the life-building of our work of resurrection. The remnants of the Polish Jewry await this.

²⁸[TN: Chief of State of Vichy France.]

²⁹[TN: A *landsmanschaft* is an organisation of fellow natives of a town who are living elsewhere.]