

Dr Benjamin Orenstein

## Harry Klein

Harry [Herszl] Klein, the son of Reb Mojsze-Mordche [Moszek-Mordka] and Rywka Klajner née Zilberszac, was born in Częstochowa [in 1916], and comes from a family of prestigious lineage. His father, as soon as he completed his daily business dealings, would sit and study [Torah]. He was an *Aleksanderer Chassid*<sup>1</sup> and was revered among the religious Jews in Częstochowa in general, and among the *Aleksanderer Chassidim* in particular. He gave his children a strictly religious education and strove that they should walk in his footsteps.

Reb Mojsze-Mordche was deeply shocked when Harry, once, declared to him that he would become a contributor to the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit*<sup>2</sup>, which was edited by Chaim Wajsberg. It was enough to see Reb Mojsze-Mordche's gaze then to know the mood into which had put him. In order to prevent misunderstandings, Harry Klein avoided coming home for several days, so as to let the anger and vexation abate.

Harry Klein showed communal inclinations. He was very young when he became a member of *Poalei Agudas Yisroel* and, afterwards, switched to *Mizrachi*<sup>3</sup>, where he was one of the most active members.

When the Second World Slaughter broke out, the Klein [sic Klajner] family was in Częstochowa. The first gruesome killings, carried out by the Germans, were on "Bloody Monday". Reb Mojsze-Mordche and Harry were captured were then by the Nazis and imprisoned in the church on the New Market Square [Nowy Rynek]. Reb Mojsze-Mordche was freed in the evening and Harry was held for several more days at the barracks.

The hounding, persecution and brutality of the Nazis became more acute from day to day. In the beginning, this took the form of capturing [Jews] for various kinds of unpaid forced labour, during the course of which they were beaten and tortured.

Harry Klein was caught for a transport to be sent away to Germany. He managed to escape at the last moment. From then on, he was very careful and hid at home inside a wardrobe. This was actually a small cupboard and no one could imagine that a living person would be able to hide in such a small one. In that hiding place, inside the small cupboard, he managed to dodge the forced labour until the horrific days of the liquidation of the "Big Ghetto".

During the selection, he was together with his parents. His parents and a grandson of theirs were selected out and sent away to Treblinka. Harry Klein and his two brothers and two sisters were transferred to *Metalurgia*. Upon entering *Metalurgia*, his youngest brother was

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<sup>1</sup> [TN: Follower of the Polish Chassidic dynasty originating from the city of Aleksandrów Łódzki, whose Rebbes (leaders) bore the surname Dancyger.]

<sup>2</sup> [TN: aka "Di Cajt" (The Time); Nonpartisan (BBWR) paper for Częstochowa and Radomsko that was published in 1928-1935. Although the Nonpartisan movement attracted various factions with different ideologies, a Socialist – and thus irreligious – element was prevalent there.]

<sup>3</sup> [TN: While Poalei Agudas Yisroel was an ultra-orthodox political party and trade union, the Mizrachi Party was more Zionist and less fanatically religious.]

detained and sent away to Treblinka. Several days later, a selection took place and his older brother Jakow was apprehended and he shared the fate of his parents.

Following the establishment of the "Small Ghetto", Harry was [living] with his two sisters. This did not last long as, one day, when he was leaving the "Small Ghetto" to go to work, he was detained and deported, along with a large group, to Bliżyn. Once the Bliżyn camp was liquidated, he was sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau, after that to Oranienburg and then to Sachsenhausen and Landsberg. Shortly before the downfall of the Nazi regime, the camp was evacuated and the "death march" began. The march on foot continued until [reaching] the Allach camp near Munich. On 1<sup>st</sup> May 1945, the American army liberated the camp.

In 1946, Harry Klein and a group of printers were summoned to the Central Committee of the Liberated Jews in Munich concerning the organisation of a Jewish printing press to publish a newspaper in Yiddish. The difficulty at the time was that there were no Yiddish [viz. Hebrew] types. Yiddish types were manufactured and the newspaper entitled "*Unser Weg*" [Our Way] began to be published. It was the first newspaper in Germany in the Yiddish language after the Second World War.

In Munich, Harry Klein lived together with his two sisters, who were later married. Harry Klein then met his current wife in Munich, who comes from a fine family in Olkusz. Her maiden name is Chana Bornsztajn. She is the sole survivor of her entire family. Her father, Reb Icchok, her mother Maika and her brother Josef perished at the hands of the Nazis.

At the end of 1948, Harry Klein, along with his wife and also one of his sisters, travelled to Montreal to his brother George Klein. Here, he already found his second sister and his brother-in-law - Mr and Mrs Charles Konarski.

Immediately upon arriving in Montreal, Harry put himself in contact with the Society and held the office of Secretary. He was afterwards elected Treasurer, an office which he holds to this day.

Harry Klein performs an entire array of important duties for the Society. He makes appearances, speaking at the memorial services, helps organise the Ladies Auxiliary to conduct the annual money shower and takes an active part in all the society's activities.

When the Society decided to publish this book, Harry Klein was chosen Chairman of the Book Committee. He dedicated much time and effort to collect material and funds for this book.