

4



The year is 1904. Josef is strongly active in the illegal revolutionary movement. In addition, he is at the same time also the provider at home. That year, Josef's father, at the age of forty-two, died following a long illness. This illness swallowed up a great deal of money. Reb Duwid died of *rak* (cancer) in the stomach. For many years, Josef's mother lamented her husband's untimely death. She would always say, "That is how lottery money is spent".

Josef became the sole provider and worked in the soda factory. The factory's main foreman was a Pole by the name of Pietrek. Josef became close friends with him and even made him a member of the [SDKPiL] Party. However, later, this Pole nearly betrayed Josef.

As already mentioned above, the Bundist "*chaynaya*" was also in the factory's courtyard. Josef sat more in the "*chaynaya*" and occupied himself with political agitation and singing revolutionary songs, than he worked at the factory. In the attic, above the factory, which had no staircase and could only be accessed by putting up a ladder, lay the empty glass canisters of vitriol - and it was there that Josef found the [most] suitable hiding-place for the illegal literature. Lying there also were whole packs of *The Red Banner*, [which was] the organ of the SDKPiL Party, Róża Luksemburg's brochures *What Do We Want?* and dozens of other parcels with the "non-kosher goods". Some of these volumes were bound with the same binding as Josef's legitimate books in his home library. If the police discovered both libraries, Heaven forbid, they could easily know who was their true owner.

Once, on a cold, frosty winter night, the city *Prystav* [bailiff], Arbuzow, and the police raided the factory and began a rigorous search. They roused the entire house and demanded the keys to the soda factory. Josef's mother Gucia also had to be present during the search. Assured of her complete innocence, she went calmly with the police. She was both alarmed, and also amazed that the Gentile heads had found no other place to seek illegal literature!

But Josef's soul nearly flew out from fear. He also accompanied them to the factory. The police thoroughly searched every little corner and found nothing. *Prystav* Arbuzow inquired, "Where is the way up to the attic?"

Josef's eyes dimmed and he felt as if his legs were breaking under him from the terror. "The entrance to the attic is from the courtyard!", Josef's mother tranquilly replied.

The police put up a ladder and, a couple of minutes later - they did not have to look for long - the *Prystav's* authoritative voice was heard, "*Vsech arestovat!*" [Всех арестовать] (Arrest everybody!)

Josef's mother began wailing. She defended her innocence [by saying] that the attic was an open one and that there was not even a door or key to it. She knew nothing... And, after all, this was true - she really did not know anything. Of the entire family, Josef was the only one

who did know. In an instant, something flashed up in Josef's mind. He remembered the remaining legal books at home, which were bound with the same binding as the illegal ones - they could obviously put them on the right track. Josef resolved to destroy his books at home - but how was this to be done?

When the books began to rain down from the attic and the *Prystav's* command "*Vsech arestovat!*" (Arrest everybody!) came, Josef donned a mien of innocence and approached the *Prystav*, who had already climbed down from the attic with a triumphant air, asking him, "Я тоже?" (Me too?)

"*Pashol von!*" [ПОШЕЛ ВОН] (Go away!), the *Prystav* yelled at Josef and landed him a resounding slap. The police understood this as a command and let Josef go.

Josef took the slap as a cherished gift, and quickly ran home. When he breathlessly arrived at the house, he shouted to his sister in a choked voice, "*Take out the books!*" The entire library, which he had accumulated with such efforts, was immediately thrown down the toilet - no more library!

Josef's mother and the building's owner, Dawidowicz, were taken to the jail. The whole city was stirred with this arrest. Everybody blamed the Bundist *chaynaya* for this trouble. But Josef knew who the guilty party was.

After a few days in jail and following vigorous lobbying, the Governor sentenced Josef's mother to an [administrative] fine and also the landlord of the building to three months in prison, for having kept the attic open, thus causing the attic to become a nest of "*kramolny*" [Old Ru., seditious] literature. With great efforts, a rather hefty sum of money was raised to pay the fine, so that Josef's mother would not need to sit in prison.

For many years, Josef's sisters and brothers confronted him at every opportunity with, "That was *your* piece of work, Josse'le!" But they were not completely sure of this accusation. Josef only admitted it to them once Poland had become independent, and there was already no longer any trace of the tsarist gendarmerie.

Josef later discovered that it had been Pietrek, who had let slip word of the stash of illegal literature, in the tavern, over a glass of liquor with a policeman. But, during the investigation, Pietrek did not say who had put the packs with literature there. This saved Josef from years in prison.

