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He, Josef, knew Comrades Erlich and Alter were still in prison, and that the State Department in Washington, by orders of President Roosevelt, was continuously inquiring about them and demanding their release. Also, the British government and all the free, fighting countries were requesting, from the Soviet government, to free Alter and Erlich.

However, very unfortunately, one fine day, the sorrowful news arrived that Erlich and Alter had been sentenced to death by a Soviet court, and the sentence had already been executed. The alleged accusation against them was that both of them, Erlich and Alter, had been in Hitler's service.

These dreadful tidings truly devastated Josef. He simply could not go to work. *Gevald*¹! How could they accuse precisely these noble men of aiding Hitler, may his name be obliterated? How could the world believe that? Did the Soviet power-holders possess [any] scrap of honesty [at all]? Had they not murdered Erlich and Alter just because they opposed dictatorship, because they were democratic socialists and belonged to the Bund?

For hours, Josef went about the streets of New York, seeking an answer for his himself to this horrible crime. What had really been the purpose of this senseless murder? Why? How?

In his great despair, Josef went to the editors of the Yiddish Communist newspaper *Morgen Freiheit* [Morning Freedom] and asked to see Mojsze Katz, a member of the editorial board, whom Josef knew from those years back in Warsaw, when Katz was a member of the SS Party and a contributor to the bygone *Der Frajnd* [The Friend] newspaper.

Mojsze Katz received Josef in the editorial room. He recognised Katz. He had aged a bit, but was [still] the same Mojsze Katz. Without preambles, Josef retrieved the paper from his pocket and showed Katz the news of the Erlich-Alter murder. Katz started to stammer and make excuses, "We don't know what's happening there. It's a war. Reports are sometimes true, and sometimes not". Josef left Katz in disappointment. He felt the great lie even more. Katz's stumbling words convinced him to an even further extent, that a dark abyss lay between the idea of socialism and the Soviet order.

With his head bowed and in a dejected mood, Josef came home late in the evening. Tired from walking about all day, he collapsed on his bed. In his heart, he felt even more how cherished and sacred is the ideal of true socialism! Honoured be the teachers and martyrs Erlich and Alter! "I shall always hold sacred your memory", Josef swore with tears in his eyes.

Lying thus all alone on his bed, Josef remembered the day when he had parted company with Comrade Henryk Erlich. At the time, it had certainly not occurred to him that Erlich would fall victim to such a vile calumny! [That] Erlich, the fighter against the Fascists, should actually be

¹ [TN: Yid., lit. "Violence!" (Ger., "Gewalt"); interjection of alarm, also used to express shock or amazement.]

accused of the unbelievable suspicion of collaborating with Hitler - could there be a greater lie? Anyone who came in contact with Erlich and Alter knew how loyal and devoted they were to the impoverished Jewish masses in Poland! They truly had not rested, if only [given the opportunity] to alleviate [the plight of] any Jew and assist him, regardless of whether he was a Bundist or not. Indeed, Erlich and Alter had elicited the greatest respect from all the Jews, and even their ideological opponents! Again and again, Josef asked himself, "Why? How?" These questions did not cease to torment him.

With increased passion, Josef now cast himself into the work of aiding the Jews in Poland, and especially his *landsleit* - as if wishing, by this work, to forget and ease his inner sorrow and agony for the demise of his beloved Labour leaders, Erlich and Alter.

In his heart, Josef was now even more bound to the idea of the Bund. If he had sufficient strength and the means [to do so], he would have returned to Poland to be with his comrades in the ghetto and wait until the day of victory arrived.

But, seeing no possibility of carrying this out, he would at least dedicate his strength to collecting materials and monetary means, to enable the completion of the book in which his hometown would be immortalised². He would also see to it, as far as possible, that all the more money was gathered for the Jews in the ghettos, when the time came and they were liberated!

Josef's fate also befell him to come in contact with all the Warta *landsleit*, who were in America and Canada. Josef began travelling from town to town, just like the *meshulach*³ of bygone times, in the home of old. He saw *landsleit* in New York, Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles and Canada. He was in Toronto and Montreal.

Without exception, everyone, be it former Bund party members or even the party's rivals, including religious Jews and those with communist tendencies - the Bund's permanent opponents - welcomed him in a friendly and comradely manner. *Landsleit* everywhere responded warmly with considerable amounts of money. Josef felt great warmth on the part of his *landsleit*. He sensed there were still comrades and *landsleit*, here in America, who were strongly concerned with the fate of the Jews in Poland. For Josef, this was a consolation after his sad and disappointing experiences.

This hearty welcome, wherever he arrived, strengthened Josef in his desolation. He thought, "I've remained alone, the sole survivor of my family. My family's inheritance - the ashes scattered across the world - is also part of the millions of annihilated Jews". Josef felt as if he was carrying some of this ash within his heart. He would remain hollow and empty all his days and years.

How can one forget? How can one erase this great tragedy from one's memory?

² [TN: Obviously ref. to the book "Czenstochover Yidn" (New York, 1947), to which the author also contributed numerous pieces.]

³ [TN: Heb., "emissary"; term used in past centuries in ref. to an emissary sent to the Diaspora to raise funds for the Jewish communities of the Land of Israel.]

The poet Jacob Glatstein rightly says, “A misfortune for which there are no words!”⁴.

The earth will forever call for the innocent blood of the millions of innocent men, women and children which it soaked up! Forever - to the end of all generations!



⁴ [TN: Likely ref. to the verse “And remember – we have no words for this misfortune.” (Jacob Glatstein, “Gedenklieder – In Remembrance (Poems)”, NY 1943, p. 80)]