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## «I WANTED TO AVENGE THE SPILLED INNOCENT JEWISH BLOOD»: RESISTANCE OF MIZOCH JEWS DURING THE HOLOCAUST

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### ABSTRACT

*The purpose of the study* is to uncover the resistance of Volyn Jews during the Holocaust at the local level, in particular the uprising in Mizoch (Mizocz) ghetto in October 1942 and the struggle of Jews after its suppression. The author finds out the background, course, and consequences of the uprising in the ghetto, rescue and survival strategies, and the further fate of the Jews who later struggled in various partisan units, and joined the ranks of the Red Army, etc.

*The scientific novelty* of the study is in the fact that, for the first time in the historiography of the Holocaust, the resistance of Mizoch Jews to the Nazis during the uprising in the local ghetto, and the implementation of their individual and collective resistance as the members of various units and groups are studied. New, previously unpublished sources are introduced into scientific circulation.

*Conclusions.* The resistance of Volyn Jews to Nazism during the Holocaust at the local level is analyzed in the research paper. The uprising in Mizoch ghetto had the following stages: the creation of an underground in the ghetto, preparation for the uprising – getting cold weapons (they couldn't have got any firearms), beginning of the action during the liquidation of the ghetto, setting fire to the houses, fighting with the ghetto guards, and the escaping of some Jews to the 'Aryan side.' Among the participants of the uprising were the representatives of the Judenrat. During the fire, some Jews died in the flames committing suicide in order not to give themselves up to the occupiers. In this context, setting fire to ghetto houses should be considered as a set of actions for the carrying out of the uprising.

After the liquidation of the ghetto, the active forms of Mizoch Jews resistance included both individual struggle (attacking the occupiers, harming their lives and health) and fighting in organized groups (participation in Soviet partisan units, Ukrainian underground, Polish self-defense, Czech groups, and detachments of the Soviet Army). Jews took revenge for the death of the representatives of their nation and their relatives not only to the German occupiers, but also to civilians who participated in the slaughtering of the Jews.

Thus, the Jews were not submissive victims of the Nazis but actively resisted from the first to the last days of the occupation on an individual and group level. The uniqueness of the Jewish resistance consisted in the absence of a single political center for the Jewish partisans to get orders from, and its specificity was in the exceptional cruelty of the Nazi regime against the Jews in comparison with other occupied peoples.

*Keywords:* Holocaust, uprising in the ghetto, Mizoch, Jewish resistance to Nazism, Western Volyn

## «Я ХОТІВ ПОМСТИТИСЯ ЗА ПРОЛИТУ НЕВИННУ ЄВРЕЙСЬКУ КРОВ»: ОПІР ЄВРЕЇВ МІЗОЧА ПІД ЧАС ГОЛОКОСТУ

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### **АНОТАЦІЯ**

**Мета дослідження** полягає у висвітленні опору волинських євреїв під час Голокосту на локальному рівні, зокрема повстання у мізоцькому гетто в жовтні 1942 р. та боротьбу євреїв після його ліквідації. Автором з'ясовано передумови, хід і наслідки повстання в гетто, стратегії порятунку та виживання, подальшу долю євреїв, які надалі боролися в різних партизанських загонах, у складі Червоної армії тощо.

**Наукова новизна** статті полягає у тому, що вперше в історіографії Голокосту досліджено опір мізоцьких євреїв під час повстання у місцевому гетто, реалізацію індивідуального та колективного опору нацистам у складі різних загонів і груп. До наукового обігу введено нові раніше неопубліковані джерела.

**Методологія** дослідження базується на принципах науковості, об'єктивності, історизму, проблемно-історичного, пошукового, хронологічного методів, а також методах аналізу та систематизації. Важливим став метод усної історії.

**Висновки.** Проаналізовано опір волинських євреїв нацизму під час Голокосту на локальному рівні. Повстання в гетто Мізоча мало такі складові: створення підпілля в гетто, підготовка до повстання – збір холодної зброї (вогнепальну зброю не вдалося зібрати), виступ під час ліквідації гетто, підпал будинків, боротьба з охоронцями гетто та втеча частини євреїв на «арійську сторону». Серед учасників повстання були представники юденрату. Під час пожежі євреї гинули у вогні – чинили акт самогубства, щоб не дістатись окупантам. У цьому контексті підпал будинків гетто слід розглядати як сукупність дій для реалізації повстання.

Після ліквідації гетто активні форми опору мізоцьких євреїв включали як індивідуальну боротьбу (напад на окупантів, нанесення шкоди їхньому життю та здоров'ю), так і в організованих групах (участь у радянських партизанських загонах, українському підпіллі, польській сомообороні та чеських групах, частинах Радянської армії). Євреї мстилися за смерть одноплемінників і родичів не лише німецьким окупантам, а й цивільним жителям, які брали участь у вбивствах євреїв.

Таким чином, євреї не були покірними жертвами нацистів, а чинили активний спротив з перших до останніх днів окупації на індивідуальному та груповому рівнях. Унікальність єврейського опору полягала у відсутності загального політичного центру, якому підпорядковувалися б єврейські партизани, а специфіка – у винятковій жорстокості нацистського режиму стосовно євреїв у порівнянні з іншими окупованими народами.

**Ключові слова:** Голокост, повстання в гетто, Мізоч, опір євреїв нацизму, Західна Волинь

One of the relevant, but understudied pages of the history of the Holocaust is the coverage of the Jews' resistance to the Nazis during the Second World War. In the Soviet Union, the Holocaust, as well as the resistance of the Jews to the occupiers, did not become the subject of special research and were almost not studied in the scientific field. An image of Jews was formed as defenseless victims who were unable to resist

and voluntarily went to their deaths. In independent Ukraine, in the conditions of the reconsideration of the issue, the approach has changed.

In the period from 1945 to 2015, about 6,000 research papers and 350 studies in monographic format were published in Ukraine, and over 180 theses, devoted to the Resistance movement in Ukraine, were defended. However, in all those works, the issue of Jewish resistance is rarely mentioned and insufficiently studied. The progress of the thorough study of the issue was often held back by an insufficiently available source base, which could be used by the scholars who could have shown the facts of the struggle against the occupiers. Such issues should include the resistance of Jews in Ukrainian ghettos, in particular, the uprising in Mizoch ghetto.

*The purpose of the research paper* is to uncover the resistance of Volyn Jews during the Holocaust at the local level, in particular, the uprising in Mizoch ghetto in October 1942; to trace the fate of the Jews who escaped. This page of history remains understudied in both foreign and Ukrainian historiography of the Holocaust. This is the first research publication intended to fill this lacuna. The author finds out the background, course, and consequences of the uprising in the ghetto, rescue and survival strategies, and the further fate of the Jews who later struggled in various partisan units, in the ranks of the Red Army, etc.

*Analysis of the most important studies and publications.* In modern historiography of the Holocaust, important steps have been taken to overcome the stereotype of the Jews' inability to defend themselves against the occupiers. In the Soviet Union, Jews were considered primarily as victims of the Nazis, and called 'Soviet civilians.' Materials about the struggle of the Jews were publishing, but they were considered primarily within the framework of the Soviet underground partisan units' activities<sup>1</sup>. One of the first scholars in independent Ukraine, who thoroughly studied the issue, was Ster Yelysavetskyi. In his monograph<sup>2</sup> and publications<sup>3</sup>, the participation of the Jews in the partisan and Soviet underground movements is uncovered, the uprisings in the ghettos and camps in the western regions of Ukraine are mentioned, and the information is given on the participation of the Jews in partisan units and in the underground struggle in Ukraine.

Israeli scholar Shmuel Spector, in his monograph on the Holocaust of Western Volyn Jews, based on the memoirs of the leaders and participants of the Soviet resistance movement, highlighted the activities of the Jewish underground, and the uprisings in Volyn ghettos and camps<sup>4</sup>, as well as the reaction of the Jews to the Nazi genocide in Volyn<sup>5</sup>.

Yitzhak Arad analyzed the resistance to Nazism of the Jews who lived in the Soviet

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<sup>1</sup> Слободянюк М. Єврейський рух опору в Україні: від контексту до концепту. *Український історичний журнал*. 2020. № 3. С. 67.

<sup>2</sup> Елисаветский С. Полвека забвения: евреи в движении сопротивления и партизанской борьбе в Украине (1941-1944). Киев, 1998. 400 с.

<sup>3</sup> Елисаветский С. Евреи в антифашистському Опорі й радянському підпільно-партизанському русі в Україні. *Український історичний журнал*. 1995. № 3. С. 59-72; Елисаветский С. Евреи в движении сопротивления и партизанской борьбе в Украине (1941-1944). Партизанское движение в Украине в годы Великой Отечественной войны. *Єврейський опір в Україні в період Голокосту*: зб. наук. ст. / за ред. М. Тягло. Дніпропетровськ : Центр «Холокост», 2004. С. 68-283.

<sup>4</sup> Spector S. The Holocaust of Volhynian Jews, 1941-1944. Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1990.

<sup>5</sup> Spector S. The Jews of Volhynia and their Reaction to Extermination. *Yad Vashem Studies*. Vol. XV. P. 159-186. URL: [http://www1.yadvashem.org/untoldstories/documents/studies/Shmuel\\_Spector.pdf](http://www1.yadvashem.org/untoldstories/documents/studies/Shmuel_Spector.pdf)

Union, their struggle in partisan units, described individual acts of Jews' resistance in Rivne ghetto, and the facts of Jewish revenge not only in Soviet but also in other partisan detachments and self-defense units<sup>6</sup>. In the context of the Jews' participation in partisan units, scholars Oleksandr Gogun<sup>7</sup> and Serhii Yekelchuk<sup>8</sup> emphasized various difficulties. Anti-Semitic prejudices and reluctance to accept unarmed Jews into the ranks of the partisans occurred frequently.

The works of Karel Berkhoff<sup>9</sup> and Oleksandr Kruhlov<sup>10</sup> are among very important studies in which information about the organization of uprisings in Volyn ghettos, in particular, quantitative data of the participants, can be found.

Roman Mykhalchuk highlighted the confrontation and resistance of the Jews of Mizoch in the context of the Holocaust study. In the monographs devoted to the Holocaust in Rivne region<sup>11</sup> and the period of the Second World War in Mizoch<sup>12</sup>, the author considered the uprising of the Jews of Mizoch as a constituent part of the resistance of the Holocaust victims during the Nazi occupation. In a separate research paper, the scholar analyzed the fate of the Jews after the crushing defeat of Mizoch ghetto and their survival strategy<sup>13</sup>. Nowadays, studies on the historiography of the resistance movement, in particular the Jewish one, are conducted by Mykola Slobodianiuk<sup>14</sup>.

*The research sources* that have recently become available (translated from Hebrew) and which are introduced for the first time are the memories of Mizoch Jews (Dovid Flitter, Wolf Ochs, Max Weltfreint, Miriam Kashuk-Szprync, Baruch Flitter, Asher Gilberg, Yankev Mendiuk) from Memorial Book of Mizoch (Mizocz; sefer zikaron). Another source is an oral collection of memoirs, stored at the University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education (testimony of George Ganzberg, Isaac Rozenblatt, Claire Boren, Emil Goldbarten). It is supplemented by a collection of Jewish testimonies from Israeli Yad Vashem Archives (Jona Olikier, Gala Kopyt, Jacob Mendiuk).

Important sources are stored in the State Archives of Rivne Oblast, where

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<sup>6</sup> *Арад И.* Они сражались за Родину: евреи Советского Союза в Великой Отечественной войне. Москва: Мосты культуры; Гешарим, 2011. С. 389-390; *Арад И.* Катастрофа евреев на оккупированных территориях Советского Союза (1941-1945). Днепропетровск: Центр «Ткума ЛТД»; Москва: Центр «Холокост», 2007. С. 747.

<sup>7</sup> *Gogun A.* Indifference, Suspicion, and Exploitation: Soviet Units Behind the Front Lines of the Wehrmacht and Holocaust in Ukraine, 1941-44. *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*. 2015. Vol. 28, Issue 2. P. 379-400.

<sup>8</sup> *Єкельчук С.* Український досвід Другої світової війни. Київ: Медуза, 2020. 270 с.

<sup>9</sup> *Беркгоф К.* Жнива розпачу: життя і смерть в Україні під нацистською владою. Київ: «Часопис „Критика”», 2011. С. 79.

<sup>10</sup> *Круглов А.* Энциклопедия Холокоста. Еврейская энциклопедия Украины / ред. *И. Левитас*. Киев, 2000.

<sup>11</sup> *Михальчук Р.* Смерть і виживання під час Голокосту: терени сучасної Рівненщини. Рівне: Волинські обереги, 2022.

<sup>12</sup> *Михальчук Р.* Мізоч: трагічні сторінки історії. 1939-1955. Київ: Видавничий дім «Кондор», 2022.

<sup>13</sup> *Михальчук Р.* Порятунком євреїв в Мізочі під час Голокосту у свідченнях жертв: відеоджерела Інституту візуальної історії та освіти фонду Шоа університету Південної Каліфорнії в США. *Пам'ять нетлінна: Голокост на теренах нашого краю. Науковий збірник «Велика Волинь».* Матеріали Міжнародної науково-краєзнавчої конференції (Бердичів, 13-14 вересня 2021 р.). Вип. 62 / Упоряд. *П.С. Скавронський*. Бердичів: ФОП Мельник М.М., 2021. С. 226-238.

<sup>14</sup> *Слободянюк М.* Антифашистський рух Опору в Україні...; *Слободянюк М.* Єврейський рух опору в Україні... С. 66-79.

documents about the mass murder of Mizoch Jews in October 1942 are accumulated (the official act of the Extraordinary State Commission (ESC), and the observer's diary, which describes the «solution of the Jewish problem» in Mizoch).

Jewish resistance to Nazism during the Holocaust can be defined as the implementation of any actions aimed at neutralizing the actions of the occupiers. According to the definition by Saul Friedlander, “any steps taken by the Jews to block, deflect, or slow down the Nazis’ actions were the elements of everyday resistance.<sup>15</sup>” In modern historiography of the Holocaust, separate concepts ‘resistance’ and ‘confrontation’, using by scholars when studying the issue, are singled out. Dan Michman, for example, notes that scholars define ‘resistance’ as taking actions for self-preservation (as opposed to inaction or submission). The ‘confrontation’ can be carried out in various aspects (in particular, cultural, religious, etc.)<sup>16</sup>. It is distinguished from the usual inert way of life by the element of conscious action. The term ‘resistance’ is used to denote armed actions. Thus, ‘resistance’ can be defined as a higher form of ‘confrontation.’

The most well-known examples of resistance were the uprisings in Warsaw Ghetto, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Sobibor, etc. Much less information is available about the armed resistance of the Jews in Ukrainian ghettos. It is known that in the summer of 1942, 18 Jewish combat groups were created just in the Western Volyn ghetto, but armed uprisings took place only in Tuchyn, Kremenets, Lutsk, and Mizoch<sup>17</sup>.

The Jews’ resistance during the Holocaust in the ghetto was usually planned to be performed in two interrelated forms: uprising and escape. In conditions of total superiority of the occupiers, the uprisings could not be successful. In addition, there were various difficulties that complicated or even nullified such actions. As the scholar Shmuel Spector noted, most of the Volyn ghettos were small, many of them comprised a few dozen houses, sometimes the entire ghetto was one street, and the number of prisoners did not exceed a few thousand people, which made it very difficult to organize resistance<sup>18</sup>. The urgent question for the Jews was where to go after escaping: outside the ghetto, they were in danger not only from the Germans and the policemen, who pursued the escapees, but also from the residents who were set anti-Semitic, and could surrender the Jews to the authorities for a reward.

Another factor influencing the (im)possibility of resistance was the position of the Jewish councils. To a greater extent, the leadership of the Judenrats was opposed to uprisings, believing that in the case of open resistance to the occupiers, all Jews would perish. As it turned out later, that was an erroneous policy, because in those cases where the Judenrats helped the rebels, there were fewer victims, as evidenced by the cases in Tuchyn and Mizoch.

Karel Berkhoff noted that corruption and favoritism flourished in most Jewish councils, and in every ghetto, there was only a minority that advocated open resistance. In the ghettos of Dubrovychytsia, Sarny, Ludwipol, and Volodymyrets, the Jews bent on struggle made plans for resistance, but the councils forced them to stop. Jews from

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<sup>15</sup> Фрідлендер С. Голокост. Єврейська цивілізація: Оксфордський підручн. з юдаїки, ред. Мартіна Гудмена: у 2-х т. Т. 1. Київ: Дух і літера; Дніпропетровськ: Центр «Ткума», 2012. С. 462.

<sup>16</sup> Михман Д. Историография Катастрофы. Еврейский взгляд: концептуализация, терминология, подходы и фундаментальные вопросы. Вып. 1. Днепропетровск: Ткума, Дива, 2005. С. 242-243.

<sup>17</sup> Єлисаветський С. Євреї в антифашистському Опорі... С. 60.

<sup>18</sup> Spector S. The Holocaust of Volhynian Jews... P. 213-214.

Dubrovnik who worked outside the ghetto planned to disarm their guards and escape, but the Jewish Council warned them that if they did not abandon that plan, it would send them to the camp. In the same way, plans for armed resistance in Kovel and Dubna were thwarted<sup>19</sup>.

Thus, the uprisings that were being prepared in the ghettos of Sarny, Ostroh, Ludwipol, Dubrovytsia, Volodymyrets, etc. were not carried out, in particular, due to the positions of the Jewish councils<sup>20</sup>. In some of those ghettos (Ostroh, Dubrovytsia, Vysotsk) the procurement of weapons was not completed<sup>21</sup>. Similarly, the rebels could not come to an understanding with the members of the Judenrats in Volodymyrets, Ludwipol, Ustyluh, and Horokhiv<sup>22</sup>.

Ster Yelysavetskyi noted that the formation of resistance groups in Volyn ghettos in quantitative terms reached 18 until the summer of 1942<sup>23</sup>. However, the uprising succeeded only in the ghettos of Tuchyn, Mizoch, Kremenets, and in Lutsk, where there were labor camps. The historiography of the Holocaust contains remarkably little information about those acts of resistance. Martin Dean noted that when the Lutsk forced labor camp was liquidated in December 1942, the Jews, who had failed to escape, decided to fight back. They were armed with one pistol, axes, and knives. Battle lasted several hours, most of the rebels were killed, and some of them committed suicide<sup>24</sup>. The most covered is the uprising in Tuchyn on September 24, 1942, which is considered to be the most organized uprising in small ghettos. The Jews managed to pile up firearms and cold weapons and distribute them among 60 rebels a week before the liquidation of the ghetto.

In Mizoch, events went on according to a different scenario where the Jews did not manage to pile up firearms, but only cold weapons (knives and axes). The preparation of the uprisings in Mizoch and Tuchyn had many common features: the organizing of the underground, the active participation of the Judenrat representatives in it, the piling up of weapons, the beginning of the action during the liquidation of the ghetto, the burning of houses, the fight with the ghetto guards, and the escape of some Jews. Among the features distinguishing the uprising, the natural and geographical specificity of the town should be noted. Unlike Tuchyn, which is located in dense forests, Mizoch is located in the southern part of Volyn, with less dense forests and more urbanization, which might have influenced the hiding of victims.

About 1.700 Jews were gathered in Mizoch ghetto<sup>25</sup>. The uprising arose during its liquidation on October 13, 1942. Resistance to the Nazis was prepared in advance during the summer and fall of 1942. According to the plan, Max Weltfreint and his cousin Eliezer intended to purchase weapons in Zdolbuniv. However, it was not possible to implement the intentions, because just at the time of fulfillment of the idea, the liquidation of Zdolbuniv ghetto took place. When Eliezer got to Zdolbuniv on

<sup>19</sup> Беркгоф К. Жнива розпачу... С. 79; Михальчук Р. Смерть і виживання... С. 115.

<sup>20</sup> Елисаветский С. Евреи в движении сопротивления и партизанской борьбе... С. 93.

<sup>21</sup> Елисаветский С. Полвека забвения... С. 50.

<sup>22</sup> Spector S. The Holocaust of Volhynian Jews... P. 224-225.

<sup>23</sup> Елисаветский С. Полвека забвения... С. 44; Елисаветський С. Євреї в антифашистському Опорі... С. 60.

<sup>24</sup> Dean M. Forced Labor Camps for Jews in Reichskommissariat Ukraine: The Exploitation of Jewish Labor within the Holocaust in the East. *Eastern European Holocaust Studies*. 2022. Vol. 1. P. 15-16.

<sup>25</sup> Холокост на території СССР: енциклопедія / гл. ред. І. Альтман. Москва: Рос. політ. енциклопедія (РОССПЕН): Научно-просветительный центр «Холокост», 2011. С. 947.

October 11, 1942, the ghetto there was going through its last days and there was no possibility of purchasing weapons. He returned to Mizoch, while Weltfreint stayed in Zdolbuniv still with the hope of getting weapons. Together with nine other Mizoch Jews who worked there and hid in the cowshed, he witnessed the destruction of Zdolbuniv ghetto<sup>26</sup>.

The burning of ghetto houses played an important role in the organization of the uprising. Scholar Shmuel Spector noted that the escape of the ghetto prisoners during the arson that distracted the guards was the only way to escape in the conditions of Volyn ghetto<sup>27</sup>. Oleksandr Kruhlov noted that the arson was entrusted to a youth underground organization that existed in the ghetto. The leaders of the Judenrat knew about preparing the uprising and took an active part in it<sup>28</sup>. Among the representatives of the Judenrat who took an active part in the confrontation and perished there were: Abe Stiefel, Jojne Niemirower, Szmuel Bunis, Melech Gosak, Moniek Ridner, Taler, and the Head of the Jewish police Blumenkranz Armed with axes and knives, the rebels tried to escape in the general bustle caused with the fire<sup>29</sup>.

According to the testimonies of Gala Kopyt, George Ganzberg, and other Jews, before the liquidation of the ghetto, the Jews came to an agreement that in the case of an action, they themselves would set fire to their houses so as not to leave anything for the Germans<sup>30</sup>. Isaac Rozenblatt recollected: "Many houses where Jews lived were set on fire in Mizoch, let's say, inside the ghetto. Those who were the owners of the houses set their houses on fire.<sup>31</sup>" According to Jona Olikier, not only men but also women took part in the arson. In particular, he remembered his wife's sister, who ran up to the wall of her house and poured kerosene from a bottle onto the wall: "The flames broke out and all around began to burn, everything was on fire, as the Jews set fire to one house after another.<sup>32</sup>"

At the same time, when the fire took place, there was a danger of dying (burning) in the flames. George Ganzberg recollected that when his house was next to set fire to, he did not permit it, because people were hiding inside in the basement and he was worried that they could have died. Ganzberg associated himself with a group of arsonists and noted that "in the night from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> [October 1942] we set fire to the ghetto.<sup>33</sup>"

The setting up of fire was quickly spreading around. There was a risk that the fire from the ghetto would reach the buildings of the town. Stating about the dangerous situation, Ukrainian Mykola Slobodiuk recollected: "The town has begun to burn. They said: 'The town is on fire'.<sup>34</sup>" In his diary, the witness from the village Derman wrote down: "The Jews in the last moment of their lives saw at least one way to avoid death.

<sup>26</sup> «How I Was Saved from Death in Mizoch» by Max Weltfreint, in Memorial Book of Mizocz. URL: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Mizoch/miz029.html>

<sup>27</sup> *Spektor S.* The Jews of Volhynia...

<sup>28</sup> Холокост на території СССР: Енциклопедія... С. 587.

<sup>29</sup> Yad Vashem Archives, Jerusalem, Israel (YVA). Testimony 0.3/2223, Jona Olikier; *Михальчук Р.* Смерть і виживання... С. 115.

<sup>30</sup> YVA. Testimony 03/2232, Gala Kopyt. Арк. 6; USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, Los-Angeles, USA (USC SFI VHA). Testimony 46431, George Ganzberg.

<sup>31</sup> USC SFI VHA. Testimony 38507, Isaac Rozenblat.

<sup>32</sup> YVA. Testimony 0.3/2223, Jona Olikier. Арк. 8.

<sup>33</sup> USC SFI VHA. Testimony 46431, George Ganzberg.

<sup>34</sup> USC SFI VHA, Testimony 38669. Nikolai Slobodiuk

They set the town on fire.<sup>35</sup> The author wrote that at nine o'clock, firefighters were called out to Mizoch. There was a fire and smoke at the scene: "The fire was gaining strength more and more. The whole town was in a black cloud of smoke." At the same time, the synagogue also burned down – "a place where you can hear day and night the loud prayers of the Jews."<sup>36</sup>

The picture he saw reminded the author of the diary about Napoleon's capture of Moscow: "I looked at that, and immediately I imagined a picture when Napoleon was approaching Moscow, and the Katsaps fled and left the whole large city behind. Although it is just a small town, but after looking at the painting 'Moscow is Burning' it seems that it is exactly the same... There, from that sea of fire, a terrible hellish roar is heard, a terrible scream is everywhere; that toothy flame, which is gaining more and more every second, because, look, it's still burning there, and in the other place, where there is the largest concentration of Jewish tattered houses, a circle of fire explodes again and the flames merge into one big, wide, and terrible column. The whole town is on fire; a black cloud of stinking smoke covers the sky."<sup>37</sup> The author noted that, thanks to the firefighters, the fire was extinguished. Jona Olikier<sup>38</sup> and Assia Raberman recollected that the non-Jewish Christian population of the town came to put out the fire<sup>39</sup>.

Also, the author of the diary reflects that in other places where Jews were slaughtered earlier, the actions were not as cruel as in Mizoch. Comparing the liquidation of the ghetto in Rivne with Mizoch, he describes the differences. In Rivne, most of the victims were driven together, because "the Jews did not yet believe in such things, and fewer of them ran away", and in Mizoch, fewer were managed to be driven together, and more were killed on the spot. While in Rivne the action took place without fire, in Mizoch "there was a big fire at the hands of the Jews."<sup>40</sup>

The arson, the uprising, and the destruction of the ghetto took place simultaneously. There was commotion everywhere. Gala Kopyt recollected that "people were running to all directions like mice in a trap. Mothers and fathers were holding their children's arms. My colleague's brother, Motek Mizocz, was lying on the street. He was wounded in his belly, one could see his bowel outside. He was pleading: 'Kill me!'. I saw how children were dragging their dead mother by her legs and head that was hit by the milestones. We were unhinged. We didn't know where to escape and we were running in a roundabout manner along with the others."<sup>41</sup>

During the uprising, the fire took the lives of about 200 people in the ghetto. Such information is considered official because it is recorded in the act of the ESC<sup>42</sup>. S. Yelysavetskyj<sup>43</sup> and O. Panasenکو also rely on it in their studies: "many Jewish

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<sup>35</sup> Державний архів Рівненської області (ДАРО). Ф. Р-30. Оп. 2. Спр. 83. Арк. 11зв.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. Арк. 12.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. Арк. 11; Михальчук Р. Мізоч... С. 74.

<sup>38</sup> «The Struggle for Life» by Yona Olikier, in Memorial Book of Mizocz. URL: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Mizoch/miz090.html#Page104>

<sup>39</sup> TOLI Assia Addresses Ukraine 1st Cut (Ukrainian). URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7MIETgym-g>

<sup>40</sup> ДАРО. Ф. Р-30. Оп. 2. Спр. 83. Арк. 10зв.

<sup>41</sup> YVA. Testimony 03/2232, Gala Kopyt. Арк. 6.

<sup>42</sup> Государственный архив Российской Федерации (Москва). Ф. 7021. Оп. 71. Спр. 59. Арк. 6; ДАРО. Ф. Р-534. Оп. 1. Спр. 3. Арк. 196.

<sup>43</sup> Елисаветський С. Євреї в антифашистському Опорі... С. 60.



families, in order to avoid executions, took such an extreme step as suicide. In the fall of 1942, the Jews of Mizoch set fire to the entire block of the town where they lived and the whole families threw themselves into the fire. A total of 200 people died during that mass self-immolation.<sup>44</sup> At the same time, there is a list of 175 exterminated Jews of Mizoch<sup>45</sup>, who may supposedly be victims of arson in the ghetto. Many Jews managed to escape from the ghetto. Oleksandr Kruhlov noted that a total of 850 (50%) of Mizoch Jews managed to escape<sup>46</sup>. However, the issue of the number of those who survived remains debatable. Among other debatable issues is the time frame of the uprising. In his memoirs, Mizoch survivor Perets Goldstein from Goshcha wrote: “We learned that when the slaughter began in Mizoch, the Jews started a big uprising. The killers were given a fierce battle for two full days.<sup>47</sup>” However, considering the forces of the occupiers and the Jews, “fighting for two full days” seems hardly probable.

Max Weltfreint recollected his escape from death as follows: “without thinking long, I ran to the fence surrounding the ghetto. I was not the only one involved in the attempt to escape from the encirclement; there were dozens of us brave people. The guards shot at us, hounded dogs on us, and even chased us. Some of the escapees were killed, and some were wounded and captured, I ran for my life and hardly reached the village of Hurby.<sup>48</sup>” An example of individual rescue during the uprising was written down by Miriam Kashuk-Szprync: “I remember my parents and their parents, all our loved ones, surrounded by killers, running and seeking salvation. Screams and shots are heard. The corpses of those who tried to escape are already lying on the fence of the ghetto. That time we were like mice looking for a gap to escape from the claws of a predatory cat... We all looked crazy. Terror raged, wives fought with husbands, fathers with children, and young people with elders. As if an unknown force pushed me to the fence, and I jumped to the other side, not far from the police, who did not let anyone out. But they didn't notice me.<sup>49</sup>”

Many Jews were killed when they tried to escape. Ukrainian Mykola Slobodiuk, a witness to the tragedy, said about one of the cases: “He [the Jew] has already escaped, broken through that blockade, from the ghetto. And he came to the river, crossed it, and began to run through the vegetable gardens. So they started shooting at him. And I saw how he was killed.<sup>50</sup>” In this context, a description of the events of the author of the diary from the neighboring village of Derman should be given: «there were also escapees, but the bullet caught up with them and knocked them down on the spot. Many, many escaped, many were killed on the spot, and many were driven for to be put to death later. What a change at one day. What can be done in one day... The town had turned into hell, into a great ruin, where there were many terrible things. The Jews in the last moment of their lives saw at least one way to avoid death. They set the town on fire.<sup>51</sup>”

In such an extreme, it was difficult to maintain psychological calm. Not all Jews could

<sup>44</sup> Панасенко О. Рівненщина: Сторінки минулого. Рівне: Будинок науки і техніки, 2001. С. 252.

<sup>45</sup> УВА. М33/1095. Список знищених євреїв Мізоча (175 чол.).

<sup>46</sup> Круглов А. Энциклопедия Холокоста... С. 149; Михальчук Р. Мізоч... С. 75.

<sup>47</sup> Спектор S. The Jews of Volhynia...; Елисаветский С. Полвека забвения... С. 45.

<sup>48</sup> «How I Was Saved from Death in Mizoch» by Max Weltfreint...

<sup>49</sup> «Bits of Memories from the Holocaust Period» by Miriam Kashuk-Szprync, in Memorial Book of Mizoch. URL: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Mizoch/Mizu090.html#Page95>

<sup>50</sup> USC SFI VHA. Testimony 38669, Nikolai Slobodiuk.

<sup>51</sup> ДАРО. Ф. Р-30. Оп. 2. Спр. 83. Арк. 11зв.

withstand psycho-emotional and physical stress, some lost their reason. Dovid Flitter recollected his mother, who “lost her mind and laughed uncontrollably.”<sup>52</sup> Wolf Ochs saw his neighbor Azriel’s daughter who got mad and run into the fire<sup>53</sup>.

The reaction of the Jews who were aware of the end of their lives often took on a distinctly religious nature. Miriam Kashuk-Szprync remembered her 80-year-old grandmother “with a burning face, thin hands stretched to the sky,” who prayed to God: “Lord of the Universe! I want to come to you. But please, not by the hands of murderers.”<sup>54</sup>

The murderers themselves and their accomplices tried to turn the situation to their advantage. According to the memoirs of the Jew Wolf Ochs, his mother-in-law was saved only by giving a ring to a German and thus survived. Other Jews who tried to escape were shot: “I myself saw how they shot Katschke, who was 90 years old,” Ochs told<sup>55</sup>.

In those extreme times, the relationship between parents and children was sometimes rather specific. Parents tried to save the lives of their children, but situations occurred when they had to sacrifice them for the sake of saving the community. Miriam Kashuk-Szprync recollected her mother’s advice about the rescue: “Manichka, you are young, save yourself. My death will be pleasant if I know you are saved, I will go to the pit dancing if I do not see you there.”<sup>56</sup> Baruch Flitter recollected his mother taking out a bag of gold coins and distributing them among her children when he received “her last blessing for the unknown road.”<sup>57</sup> Nahum Zeev Kopit recollected that on the day the ghetto was liquidated, his mother, in her last moments of life, secretly tried to get the youth outside the ghetto walls. She almost succeeded, she could not have saved only her first granddaughter, Tzipkale, who lost her life together with her parents<sup>58</sup>.

However, there were other, opposite situations. For example, Jewess Raizel, had to strangle her daughter with her own hands, because she did not stop crying, and a whole group of Jews could be found in the hiding place<sup>59</sup>. Gala Kopyt recollected that when the Jews were hiding in the shelter and the children were crying, the parents were giving them some kind of tranquilizer tablets, “maybe sleeping pills.”<sup>60</sup>

The policemen’s search for ghetto prisoners was easier due to the fact that the executioners knew their victims. For example, when Ukrainian policemen and Germans were searching houses at dawn, the Jew Dovid Flitter heard a German policeman, “our good friend”, angrily shouting that he had seen none of the Flitters at the meeting place, that is, the executioner knew his victims. As Flitter noted, “We crawled off deeper into our holes and held our breath, waiting for the night.”<sup>61</sup> Some of the Jews were shot on

<sup>52</sup> «Dovid Flitter Tells His Story», in Memorial Book of Mizocz. URL: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Mizoch/Mizu111.html>

<sup>53</sup> «That Was the Beginning» by Neta Shtern, in Memorial Book of Kremenets. URL: <https://www.jewishgen.org/yizkor/kremenets3/kre339.html>

<sup>54</sup> «Bits of Memories from the Holocaust Period» by Miriam Kashuk-Szprync...

<sup>55</sup> «That Was the Beginning» by Neta Shtern...

<sup>56</sup> «Bits of Memories from the Holocaust Period» by Miriam Kashuk-Szprync...

<sup>57</sup> «Dreams are Not False Omens» by Baruch Flitter, in Memorial Book of Mizocz. URL: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Mizoch/Mizu123.html>

<sup>58</sup> «In Remembrance of Our Little House that was Destroyed» by Nachum Zeev bar Yerachmiel Kopit, in Memorial Book of Mizoch. URL: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Mizoch/Mizu261.html#Page275>

<sup>59</sup> «The Struggle for Life» by Yona Olikier...

<sup>60</sup> YVA. Testimony 03/2232, Gala Kopyt. Apk. 6.

<sup>61</sup> «Dovid Flitter Tells His Story»...

the spot by the occupiers. It is known that the Jews Baruch and his wife Feiga fell ill, and when the other Jews were driven to the death march, they did not leave the house and were shot at home in bed<sup>62</sup>.

Dovid Flitter recollected how the Ukrainian policemen found his old and blind grandfather. Without his glasses, he was as helpless as a child: "When the killers found him and my grandmother, they started beating them and broke my grandfather's glasses. We heard how he piteously begged for his glasses to be returned, and how the killers beat and mocked him.<sup>63</sup>"

The Jews blame their reflections to be the reasons for the defeat of the uprising. Among them, they call insufficient courage in their own actions. George Ganzberg, analyzing the resistance in the ghetto on the example of a group of Jews with whom he tried to escape from the encirclement, recollected: "In every passageway, there was one small Ukrainian [policeman] with a rifle. I think we could overpower him very easily. Why we didn't, I don't know. He started shooting, one fell, another fell, and we all turned and ran back. I am analyzing the situation now and think, I don't know, we probably weren't ready to fight. I do not know. Cowardice, or whatever it was, we ran away.<sup>64</sup>"

Dovid Flitter wrote down similar memories. He and a group of Jews tried to escape from the ghetto over the fence: "That night we crawled out of hiding place and reached the ghetto fence. There were two Ukrainian policemen armed with two rusty rifles. We started begging them to let us through, but in vain. They drove us away with mockery and threats." Flitter noted in his memoirs that it was foolish and senseless because about 30 young people who begged two killers armed with two rusty guns could easily run away and be free. However, as he notes, "Instead of doing that, we ran back to our hiding places.<sup>65</sup>"

The Jews' rescuing strategies during the action consisted in hiding in houses and hiding places in the ghetto. Isaac Rozenblatt survived because he ran in time with other Jews: "I ran after them and saw a barrack in which there was an attic with stairs. I saw them go upstairs, and I followed them... it was a small crowded attic where everyone was on top of each other.<sup>66</sup>" He stayed there for about two days, and on the third night, most of the Jews decided to leave the shelter, because they could not bear the terrible conditions of their stay (great thirst, lack of water, and defecating in one overcrowded room). The few Jews who remained made a mistake because they were captured the next day.

Miriam Kashuk-Szprync remembered how she and other Jews hid in the granary of the mill: "For three days and two nights we lay motionless at the bottom of that pit. I felt that I was weakening. I was suffocating. I begged the others in the pit to let me go, but they refused, saying that it was better to burn alive in a big fire... than to get into the hands of the Germans." Eventually, the Jews agreed to let her leave the pit on the condition that she would not expose a secret of their hiding place if caught<sup>67</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> «Baruch Pliter» by Baruch», in Memorial Book of Mizocz. URL: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Mizoch/Mizu251.html#Page258>

<sup>63</sup> «Dovid Flitter Tells His Story»...

<sup>64</sup> USC SFI VHA. Testimony 38507, Isaac Rozenblat.

<sup>65</sup> «Dovid Flitter Tells His Story»...

<sup>66</sup> USC SFI VHA. Testimony 38507, Isaac Rozenblat.

<sup>67</sup> «Bits of Memories from the Holocaust Period» by Miriam Kashuk-Szprync...

Another survivor was George Ganzberg, who dug a pit in advance because he suspected the liquidation of the ghetto. There was only enough room in the shelter for him, his father, and the Eisengarts family, with whom they lived in the ghetto. However, so many people got there that Ganzberg himself did not have enough room to hide and he remained on the street<sup>68</sup>. In the end, he managed to escape from the ghetto encirclement.

Some of the Jews believed the propaganda of the occupiers and came out of their hiding places. Several working Jews hoped they would be useful to the Nazis. For example, dentist Abba Fidelman believed his profession would save his life. He came out of the hiding place with Sheinman, his father-in-law, when he heard that if someone were found in the hiding place, they would be shot. Scheinman warned him that the Germans were untrustworthy, but Fidelman led his family to the market square of Mizoch. There, a German, with whom he was on good terms, approached him and told him to give him the watch and all valuables for safekeeping, promising to return them when the Jew continued to work for the Germans. However, Fidelman was one of the first to die in the action<sup>69</sup>.

Jews who escaped from the ghetto to the 'Aryan side' hid among non-Jewish residents and in the forests. Disappointment often awaited them since not all neighbors extended a helping hand. However, their memories show their determination and willingness to fight for their lives. The future partisan Yankel Mendiuk<sup>70</sup> noted that when the Jews began to be chased out of the ghetto on the morning of October 13, 1942, he decided to resist, because everyone already knew what 'relocation' meant. As he recollected, "a secret force whispered, 'Don't give up. Fight for your life'.<sup>71</sup>"

Courage to resist and lust for life is also evidenced in other memories of the Jews. Dovid Flitter, who escaped from the ghetto encirclement, recollected: "As soon as I took the first step outside the ghetto, I felt freer. I had become a completely different person. I felt relieved, I wanted to live. Moreover, inside of my soul, I felt the strength to fight for my life.<sup>72</sup>" He recollected meeting a Jewish woman who was about 90 years old. When she was asked why she was running away from the ghetto, she replied: "it's the same when you are hundred and one years old," meaning that even centenarians have the will to live<sup>73</sup>.

Emil Goldbarten noted that what helped him survive was his survival mindset and temper, as well as his desire to tell the world about the crimes of which he was a victim: "I lived for 16 months in the same clothes and underwear... Not taking a bath, living alone, without talking to anyone, how did I stay sane?... It's just because the survival instinct is so strong anyway, you want to stay alive... I wanted to survive to tell the world what they did to us.<sup>74</sup>"

Ida Eisengart-Pliter was sure that she survived thanks to her strong will to live: "It was this will to live that pushed me to those brave deeds. Live! Every hour of free

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<sup>68</sup> USC SFI VHA. Testimony 46431, George Ganzberg.

<sup>69</sup> «Mizoch – its Life and its Annihilation» by Asher Gilberg, in Memorial Book of Mizoch. URL: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Mizoch/mizu003.html#Page5>

<sup>70</sup> YVA. Testimony 03/1801, Jacob Mendiuk.

<sup>71</sup> «Memories of a Partisan» by Yankev Mendiuk, in Memorial Book of Mizoch. URL: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Mizoch/Mizu060.html>

<sup>72</sup> «Dovid Flitter Tells His Story»...

<sup>73</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>74</sup> USC SFI VHA. Testimony 07722, Emil Goldbarten.

breathing was worth any suffering. Live! Even without tomorrow, without hope, without a family, leading an existence of a beaten stray dog with the constant thought of danger in the head. But live! Just live! Live and hope! Fight and trick, but live!”<sup>75</sup>.

It was very difficult for the escapees to hide. After the liquidation of the ghetto in Mizoch, the Nazis issued an order to have lists of the people who lived in the houses<sup>76</sup>. There was a death penalty for hiding the Jews. Therefore, numerous memories of Jews show that finding shelter with local residents was a big problem. Jona Olikier recollected: “I was moving from one acquaintance to another looking for a place to rest for a day or two, but I was lucky only once to find a place where they pretended not to see me while I slept in the barn at night. Mostly I was kicked out with threats, and sometimes even with beatings.”<sup>77</sup> When he once visited a Ukrainian acquaintance, his son called the police. As he noted, some local residents took risks and helped the Jews, but most of them just gave food, and “shelter was not even discussed.”<sup>78</sup>

Isaac Rozenblatt met various people during his wanderings in the vicinity of Mizoch. For example, his former shepherd friends, with whom he was friends before the war, turned into traitors and wanted to surrender him to the occupiers. However, a woman whose cows he pastured, saved him and helped him to escape<sup>79</sup>. During the hiding, according to Rozenblatt’s memories, it was not hunger or lack of food that bothered him the most, but the cold and the lack of an opportunity to warm up: “I was not lacking food, I was given to eat. But they didn’t shelter me, I didn’t have a place to sleep, and I didn’t have the opportunity to warm up even a little. First of all, I wasn’t so interested in food, what I needed was a little warmth to keep me warm.”<sup>80</sup> The villagers did not want to take any risks and were afraid to hide him because they knew that if a Jew were found, the owner of the house would be killed. Therefore, they often advised Olikier to go to the forest, where there were Jews and partisans. He was saved by a Polish family, which also suffered from persecution in 1943. When Mizoch was released, he was with the partisans for some time, and later moved to Argentina<sup>81</sup>.

After escaping, George Ganzberg and other Jews were 5-6 km away from the ghetto. However, it was dangerous to stay in one place, because escapees were pursued. He noted that “A Jewish life was worth a bucket of molasses. Do you know what molasses is? Due to the fact that there was a sugar beet processing plant nearby, the Germans or the authorities offered every peasant a bucket of molasses for a Jew. Therefore, a bucket of molasses was more expensive than the life of a Jew.”<sup>82</sup>

Staying in the forest was even more difficult if there were women and children with men. Max Weltfreint noted that with the lapse of time, women and children appeared in his Jewish detachment of 20 people. Thus, three or four men had to find food for everyone<sup>83</sup>. The constant danger was a companion of Jewish life. They were the targets

<sup>75</sup> «The Horrible Days» by Ida Eisengart-Pliter, in Memorial Book of Mizoch. URL: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Mizoch/Mizu098.html>

<sup>76</sup> TOLI Assia Addresses Ukraine 1st Cut (Ukrainian). URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7MIetgym-g>

<sup>77</sup> «The Struggle for Life» by Yona Olikier...

<sup>78</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>79</sup> Михальчук Р. Порятуюнок євреїв в Мізочі... С. 228.

<sup>80</sup> USC SFI VHA. Testimony 38507, Isaac Rozenblat.

<sup>81</sup> USC SFI VHA. Testimony 38507, Isaac Rozenblat.

<sup>82</sup> USC SFI VHA, Testimony 46431, George Ganzberg.

<sup>83</sup> «How I Was Saved from Death in Mizoch» by Max Weltfreint...

of attacks by various groups that could not always be identified. One such case was recollected by Max Weltfreint: “Before I even realized what was happening, I saw Jews fleeing in different directions. Shots were heard. I jumped to my feet and started to run. I ran into Germans who shot at me from the ground but had not hit me. Later, when I left my hiding place, there was an oppressive silence around me. I wanted to know about what had happened to my friends and started searching where we were attacked. I came first; then Baruch Pliter, Meir brothers, and Herschka Rozenblatt appeared. We went to search together and found the dead... In the morning, we dug a pit and buried all of them in a mass grave... We could not have found Asher Mullman, the boy Ben-Tzion Olikier, Yaakov Rozenshtein, one of Lipshitz’s daughters, and the lawyer Zatz. Later, we learned from the villagers that they were caught alive and hanged in the forest.<sup>84</sup>”

While hiding in the forests, the Jews tried to unite in groups. Joint efforts made it easier to survive and resist attackers. Having acquired weapons, they took revenge on those who were involved in the murder of the Jews. Jona Olikier, together with other Jews in Hurby and Kamiana Hora, took vengeance on local residents who, according to Olikier, tortured Jewish families. Subsequently, in 1943-1944, their detachment was defeated, and they joined the Czech underground in Buderazh Cheskyi and Borshchivka<sup>85</sup>. Olikier lived in the village Andrushivka, which the Ukrainians nicknamed ‘Palestine’ because of the large number of Jews living there. In 1943, his group of 5 Jews, 2 Poles, and a Czech set fire to Baliarnia, where the Volksdeutsche lived, among which was Ihnatovych, who exposed a secret of the hiding place with 10 Jews who were killed. A resonant incident was the avenger of the Jew Yitzhak Wasserman and the Pole Jurgielewicz for the killing of the Wasserman family committed by a Polish peasant<sup>86</sup>. After a neighbor’s information that the Germans were approaching the Pole’s house, where the Jews were hiding, the host of the house took the Wasserman family out into the field and killed them there with his accomplices (only Moshe Maizlitsch escaped). It turned out that the situation was staged, and the gold and jewels of the Wasserman family were taken by a Polish peasant<sup>87</sup>.

After the retaliatory actions of the Jews (especially Yitzhak Wasserman) against their offenders, they started to be respected and feared in the region. Local residents tried not to visit the forests, and if there was such a need, they did it with fear. In the entry dated December 17, 1942, the author of the diary from the village Derman described his trip through the forest to Zelenyi Dub and noted his fears: “what would happen if a gang of bandit Jews came out of the pine thicket? But I tried not to think about it and walked quickly, I attempted to leave that terrible forest as soon as possible.<sup>88</sup>”

In their struggle against Nazism, the Jews were the members of various partisan units and groups, but the preference was given to the red partisans who claimed their internationalism<sup>89</sup>. Becoming members of a partisan unit for Jews was not an easy task. As the scholar Serhii Yekelchuk notes, if the partisans saw a camp with a Jewish

<sup>84</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>85</sup> YVA. Testimony 0.3/2223, Jona Olikier. Арк. I.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. Арк. 13-14.

<sup>87</sup> «How I Was Saved from Death in Mizoch» by Max Weltfreint...

<sup>88</sup> ДАРО. Ф. Р-30. Оп. 2. Спр. 83. Арк. 30.

<sup>89</sup> *Gogun A.* Indifference, Suspicion, and Exploitation... P. 383.

population, they usually did not take them in because they did not want to take civilians without weapons and experience<sup>90</sup>. Oleksandr Gogun aptly describes the attitude of Soviet partisans towards Jews during the Holocaust with the words “a mixture of indifference and mistrust.”<sup>91</sup> Since German propaganda claimed that the Judeo-Bilshovyks were guilty of everything, that’s why the leaders of the Soviet units did not want to give a reason to accuse the Soviet side of Judeo-Bilshovysm. Therefore, the Ukrainian Staff of the Partisan Movement was against the establishment of separate Jewish partisan units<sup>92</sup>.

Partisans did not want to take unarmed civilians into their ranks, because it burdened the units, especially when women and children appeared. Claire Boren, a Jewess from Mizoch, noted that in the forest she and her mother lived separately from the group of partisans because the latter did not take children<sup>93</sup>. Dovid Flitter recollected that when the Jews tried to join the Soviet partisans, they were required to have weapons as a condition for joining<sup>94</sup>. In this context, Kayla Goldberg-Tzizin mentioned that “the partisans only tolerated our presence near them. They did not allow us to join them, because they demanded in exchange for our joining a lot of weapons, which we could not get.”<sup>95</sup> For the same reason (lack of weapons), Isaac Rozenblatt was not taken into the unit. Only over time, he managed to join the unit, but just because there he met his cousin Shoshek Ostrovetskyi<sup>96</sup>.

It should be noted the occurrence of anti-Semitism in the Soviet units. In some groups where there were many Jews, the fight against anti-Semitism was possible, but if it was not so, it was difficult to counteract. Max Weltfreint recollected that Nahum Poliack and his two daughters, Kayla Goldberg, several escapees, as well as Yisraelik Erlich and Baruch, managed to stay with the partisans. However, two were killed by partisans for some misdeeds or simply because they were Jews<sup>97</sup>. Evidence of the Jews slaughtering by Ukrainian partisans-Banderites can also be found in the memories of the Jews<sup>98</sup>. After all, fate was not always kind to the Jewish units. Yitzhak Arad told in his study about a partisan group of 28 Jewish fighters from Mizoch and nearby villages who were killed by UPA fighters. The Jews had a lack of weapons, so they were eliminated in mid-April 1943<sup>99</sup>.

The fate of the Jewish partisans from Mizoch can be analyzed in the example of Yankev Mendiuk. He managed to join the partisan unit ‘Za Rodinu’ (‘For Fatherland’) headed by Fedorov. However, anti-Semitism took place there, so he introduced himself as Ukrainian. During one of the actions, Mendiuk set fire on and blew up a house with the Germans. The enemy lost 18 dead, 24 wounded, and 16 captured alive. 8 machine guns, 20 rifles, 15 assault rifles, and 12 revolvers were taken. When the military

<sup>90</sup> *Єкельчик С. Український досвід Другої світової війни... С. 68.*

<sup>91</sup> *Gogun A. Indifference, Suspicion, and Exploitation... P. 379.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid. P. 383.*

<sup>93</sup> USC SFI VHA. Testimony 18572, Claire Boren.

<sup>94</sup> «Dovid Flitter Tells His Story»...

<sup>95</sup> «The Forest Girl» by Kayla Goldberg-Tzizin, in Memorial Book of Mizoch. URL: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Mizoch/Mizu054.html>

<sup>96</sup> USC SFI VHA. Testimony 38507, Isaac Rozenblat; *Михальчук Р. Порятунком євреїв в Мізочі... С. 229-230.*

<sup>97</sup> «How I Was Saved from Death in Mizoch» by Max Weltfreint...

<sup>98</sup> «The Forest Girl» by Kayla Goldberg-Tzizin...

<sup>99</sup> *Арад И. Они сражались за Родину... С. 389-390; Арад И. Катастрофа евреев... С. 747.*

tribunal sentenced the captured Germans to death, Mendiuk volunteered to carry out the execution: "I did it with a loud cry: for my sister, for my little brother, for my mother and everyone in Mizoch, I put a few bullets into those Germans.<sup>100</sup>" He clearly explained his actions and desire to fight: "I wanted to avenge the spilled innocent Jewish blood.<sup>101</sup>"

In 1943, Mendiuk became a member of the Home Army (Armia Krajowa, AK), where he also felt anti-Semitism: "I was especially afraid that my Yiddish word might jump out of my mouth when I was sleeping. Terrible hatred of Jews spread around in the AK division, and the life of a Jew was not worth a penny. There were times when I recognized other Jews among the members of the AK, but I was afraid to be revealed through communication with them. Maybe they felt the same.<sup>102</sup>"

At the end of the war, Mendiuk rose to the rank of lieutenant. In January 1945, he was taken into the intelligence service of the second regiment of the third division and took an active part in the battle in Warsaw. He reached Berlin wounded: "On May 4, 1945, standing at the gates of Berlin, I had got serious shrapnel wounds. I lost two fingers and my left leg was paralyzed. I had been in the hospital for three months, and when I was discharged in Lublin after the victory over Hitler, I was very disappointed that I was not destined to enter the enemy's nest in cursed brown Berlin as a winner.<sup>103</sup>"

For the Jews, revenge for the slaughtering of relatives was an additional mobilization tool and a great motivation to fight in partisan units and the Soviet army. Dovid Flitter noted the motivation of the Jews to fight: "We were free. But we also had no strength left and were exhausted, ragged, and barefoot, without relatives and friends. Alone, without a home and a future. We both decided to join the Red Army. There, we could take revenge for everything and everyone. For the youth stolen from us, for the blood of our parents and all relatives, for our destroyed home, and all the suffering and tears.<sup>104</sup>"

Max Weitfreid<sup>105</sup>, Leon Perl<sup>106</sup>, David Ganzberg (who perished in 1941 while defending Moscow<sup>107</sup>), and others are known among the Mizoch Jews who fought in the Soviet army. Andron Melnyk, a Ukrainian from Mizoch, filling up a questionnaire 'Rivne Citizen – Participant in the Battles on the Fronts of the Great Patriotic War' in 1970, to the question "Who were you especially close to at the front, did you become friends with soldiers of other nationalities, peoples of the USSR, and did this friendship consolidate during the years after the war?" answered: "There were a lot of acquainted Georgians, Belarusians, Jews, Poles, and people of other nationalities.<sup>108</sup>"

Thus, the Jews, defending themselves against Nazism, used resistance and confrontation. The term 'resistance' is used to denote armed action and can be defined as a higher form of resistance.

<sup>100</sup> «Memories of a Partisan» by Yankev Mendiuk, in Memorial Book of Mizoch. URL: <https://www.jewishgen.org/Yizkor/Mizoch/Mizu060.html>

<sup>101</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>102</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>103</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>104</sup> «Dovid Flitter Tells His Story»...

<sup>105</sup> YVA. Testimony 03/4061, Max Weltfreud.

<sup>106</sup> Шилан Є. По шляху смерті – через 50 років. *Нове життя*. 1992. 12 серпня.

<sup>107</sup> USC SFI VHA. Testimony 46431, George Ganzberg.

<sup>108</sup> ДАРО. Ф. Р-534. Оп. 1. Спр. 13. Арк. 78.



In order to organize armed resistance in Ukrainian ghettos in Volyn in 1942, 18 Jewish combat groups were established, and the actions themselves took place in Tuchyn, Kremenets, Lutsk, and Mizoch. Uprisings could not be successful given the total superiority of the occupiers. However, thanks to the organization of the resistance, the number of deaths was significantly reduced comparing with the places where there were no uprisings, since many Jews had managed to escape. The consequences of the uprisings had more of a moral than a practical effect. The demonstration of the will to resist was of great importance for the Nazis, the local population, and the Jews themselves.

The uprising in Mizoch ghetto, on the example of which the resistance of the Volyn Jews is analyzed, had the following stages: the creation of an underground in the ghetto, preparation for the uprising – getting of cold weapons (they couldn't have got any firearms), participation of the representatives of the Judenrat in the uprising, beginning of the action during the liquidation of the ghetto, setting fire to the houses, fighting with the ghetto guards, and the escaping of some Jews to the 'Aryan side.' The arson of the ghetto was an attempt to distract the attention of the occupiers and escape from the encirclement. During the fire, some Jews died in the flames committing suicide in order not to give themselves up to the occupiers. Therefore, setting fire to ghetto houses should be considered as a set of actions for the carrying out of the uprising.

The resistance of Mizoch Jews continued after the liquidation of the ghetto. Its active forms included the armed struggle of the Jews (attacking the occupiers, harming their lives and health) and their participation in various organized groups (Soviet partisan units, the Ukrainian underground, Polish self-defense, Czech groups, and detachments of the Soviet Army). Jews took revenge for the death of their nation's representatives and their relatives not only to the German occupiers, but also to civilians who participated in the slaughter of the Jews.

Thus, the Jews were not submissive victims of the Nazis, but they actively resisted. Confrontation and resistance to Nazism were carried out from the first to the last days of the occupation in active and passive forms, as well as on the individual and group level. The uniqueness of the Jewish resistance consisted in the absence of a single political center for the Jewish partisans to get orders from, and the specificity of the action was in the exceptional cruelty of the Nazi regime against the Jews in comparison with other occupied peoples.

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