

# Soviet Jewish Partisans

Compiled and edited by JACK NUSAN PORTER

[The following are true stories of Soviet Jewish resistance to the Nazis during World War II. Translated from Russian into Hebrew by Binyamin West (Heym Hayu Rabim, 1968, Tel Aviv) and from Hebrew into English by the Magal Translation Institute, Ltd., Tel Aviv, the stories are among many that have been compiled and edited by Jack Nusan Porter in his Jewish Partisans: A Documentary of Jewish Resistance in the Soviet Union During World War II (forthcoming in June in two volumes from University Press of America, 4720 Boston Way, Lanham, Md. 20801).]

## WOMEN SPIES

By Grigory Linkov

[Col. Grigory Matveyevich Linkov was an engineer and an important Communist Party official who organized and led one of the parachutist detachments that played a major part in reactivating the partisan movement in Byelorussia, 1941-42. Under the name "Batya," he was one of the most famous and successful Soviet partisan leaders. Linkov's second-in-command was David Kemach, a Jew, who later organized the execution of Wilhelm

Kube, Reichskommissar of Byelorussia. "Women Spies" is from Linkov's 1951 book, The War Behind Enemy Lines, published in Moscow. - J.N.P.]

... On his way back from a combat mission, Commander Anatoly Tziganov brought along with him seven new fighters, including two women. One was young and beautiful, so everyone called her "The Bride." Tziganov said that the new fighters had helped his company raze two farmsteads and a large alcohol factory with a considerable stock of products for the Nazi invaders.

I had a great liking for Anatoly Tziganov since the time of our joint activities behind enemy lines. I took his words seriously. This time his company had fulfilled with great success its combat mission between Baranovich and Minsk, with the active participation and daring acts of the two women fighters. According to him, "The Bride" had done outstanding work. The other woman had taken part in disarming the guards on the farmstead in the region of Nisvizh and had proved to be quite a good fighter.

But I was not convinced by the proofs that Tziganov adduced concerning the fighting ability of the two women. The Hitlerites at that time were doing their best to search out the partisan bases, and for that purpose they used mainly women. Women spies could reach us only as members of partisan companies, where they had been accepted as loyal members after they had concealed all their contacts with the Gestapo. The participation of women in razing a farmstead and an

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alcohol factory which had already been in the hands of the fascists was not proof enough of their loyalty to the partisans. In order to gain full confidence, one had to do something of great importance against the invaders.

I gave orders that I wanted to see the papers that the women had carried on them, if there were any such papers at all, and also to check up on certain biographical details concerning them. In the evening, two passports were brought to me, one bearing the name of Yelizavita Vasilevna Alexova and the other bearing the name of Vera Shamenskaya. The two passports had been issued in Minsk at the beginning of 1942, that is, seven months before the women came to us. Alexova was registered as a Russian and Shamenskaya as a Pole. I also learned that both spoke good German. Supposedly Alexova had worked as an interpreter for the Hitlerites.

I could not sleep all night for fear that women spies had come into our partisan base. In the morning I made up my mind that I should not have any suspicions concerning the validity of my doubts. Accompanied by a few hand-picked young men, I went in the direction of the position commanded by Alexandrov, where all the "new-comers" were grouped together. I had decided to talk with the women to interrogate them thoroughly, before issuing the order to have them executed.

The first one to be called into the earth hut was Alexova. I asked her to tell me how she had found her way to the partisans. I listened to what she was saying. She spoke in a quiet, composed manner while she related to me the story of her life. She gave details of her work as an interpreter for the fascist commander in Minsk, and how she had decided after a quarrel with him to run away to the parti-

sans in the forest, a thing which she did at the first opportunity.

Her words gave me the impression that she was lying all along. I could not make up my mind. "To hell," I said to myself. "Doesn't this girl think that she is endangering herself by giving such evidence?" Or perhaps all that was a skilled move played by an accomplished woman spy who knew how to treat her life with indifference?

While listening to Alexova, I did not ask any questions and did my best to give her the impression that I was satisfied with the story she was relating to me. "Well, you may go now and do whatever you like," I told her, and let her leave my earth hut.

I then gave the order to bring in Shamenskaya. I also ordered that as soon as Shamenskaya entered the earth hut, Alexova was to be arrested.

*Shamenskaya sat calmly in front of me as Alexova had done before her.*

"Tell me, please, how did you get here?" I asked her, looking straight into her eyes.

The woman was disturbed. I had the impression that she was considering what to say and what to hide. I waited with patience for everything she had to say:

"I am Shamenskaya, Vera Mikilovna, from Poland," she began. "Until the war broke out and during the war, I had been living in Minsk. When the Hitlerites came to our town I did not know where to go. Many Germans knew Polish, and I knew a little German, so I had no difficulty in finding a job as a waitress in a restaurant."

I listened to her without moving my eyes from her lips.

"Once," she went on, "I had a quarrel with the manager of the restaurant. Because of that I was fired. On the same night I ran away into the woods to the partisans."

"How long were you in the woods together with Alexova?" I asked.

The woman cast a frightened glance at me. "We . . . we . . . were together for about six months."

"Perhaps you could tell me something about this woman?"

Shamenskaya's tension mounted. To go on lying was dangerous. She blushed and became increasingly excited.

"I don't know this woman at all and I cannot tell you anything about her," said Shamenskaya, fighting her inner feelings.

"Well, then, it is all clear to me now. I'll have both of you shot," I said very quietly.

She stood up in consternation. The soldier who was standing at the entrance to the earth hut aimed his rifle at her. The woman paled and clung to the wall, her strength ebbing. I made a move to leave.

"Comrade commander, allow me to add a few words to what I have just told you," Shamenskaya pleaded.

"Speak." I stopped, waiting for the confession and the self-incrimination of a spy caught in the cobweb of her lies.

"Pardon me, comrade commander, but all that I have told you is one big lie," she said, and began to sob. "I . . . We . . . thought that everything would be all right as it has been so far . . . but now I realize that I shouldn't keep on doing this. . . . Both of us, this young woman and I, are Jews."

Without thinking about it, the soldier lowered his rifle.

"She is a distant relative of mine, and I can tell you a lot about her. Everything. All I have told you has been due to the fact that our passports are false."

This announcement made me mad. I wanted to curse her but I restrained myself.

"And how can you prove that you are a Jew?"

"Among your men are three Jews. If you will allow me to talk to them, they will testify that both of us are Jewish women."

"How do you know that we have three Jewish comrades here?"

"Can't anyone tell that they are Jews?"

At Alexandrov's position there really were three Jewish fighters, but one couldn't tell by the looks of two of them that they were Jews. Only I knew.

"Well," I said, "let it be as you say."

Commander Shlikov was instructed accordingly. A few minutes later the three testified that the two women were Jewish and that they had run away from the ghetto of Minsk into the woods. This evidence, of course, did not assuage my suspicions. Indirectly, we checked up on them, including their deeds in the battlefield. The facts proved that they had told the truth.

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## YIDL SHANDLOV

By Y. Lieberman

[We have no information on the author, Y. Lieberman, whose account was first published in Shmuel Persov's *Agiz* (Der Emess Publishing, Moscow, 1944). — J.N.P.]

In the neighborhood of "New Belichi" in the town of Gomel (Byelorussia), there is a street named after Yidl Shandlov. Who was Shandlov, and why was a street named after him?

Shandlov was a resident of Gomel. A simple Jewish young man. In the war, he was awarded the highest decoration, "Hero of the Soviet Union." The workers of the Gomel region do

## NAZI WAR CRIMINALS

“Nazi War Criminals in America: Facts . . . Action” by Charles R. Allen Jr. and Rochelle Saidel-Wolk is a 16-page booklet (\$2.25 plus 60¢ postage, Box 3105, Albany, N.Y. 12203) that identifies over 50 suspected Nazi war criminals and collaborators presently under investigation by the U.S. Justice Department’s Office of Special Investigations (OSI).

The pamphlet states that “According to an Israeli Intelligence report of 1961, the U.S. was the third largest refuge for Nazi war criminals in the world — after West Germany and Argentina. . . . Several government agencies — the State Department, the intelligence branches of the Army, Navy and Air Force, as well as the CIA, FBI, Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty and others — knowingly (and covertly) brought some of them into the country. . . . Not a single war criminal or collaborator, moreover, was barred at his or her American port-of-entry because of war crimes or collaboration.”

not forget those who fought for the freedom of their country in the days of that difficult war against the Nazi invaders.

Now I, too, live in the “New Belichi” neighborhood in Gomel, at 1 Miazhdonarodnaya Street, flat 21. Here also lives the family of this hero — his father, mother and sister. I will remember our meeting for a long, long time.

I am listening with great interest to the account of the old communist, Abraham Shandlov, the man from Gomel. With pride he speaks of the boyhood and school days of his beloved son, and especially his heroic exploits during the war —

In 1937, Shandlov finished the seventh grade of a Jewish school, and in 1939 he finished high school. In the years 1939–1941 he studied in Gomel at the Teacher’s Institute, graduating about one month before the outbreak of the war. At that time he was sent to work at a school in western Byelorussia. But the war prevented him from continuing to work in the profession of his choice.

Three Shandlov brothers and one sister went to war to defend their country. Yidl was the first to go. He was only 20 years old. In Aug., 1941 he was sent behind enemy lines by the commander of his company in order to report on the enemy forces and the intensity of their attack. Shandlov put on civilian clothes and succeeded in reaching Gomel.

In the town of his birth, Yidl gathered highly valuable information and started on the way back to his base. On the way he was arrested by a German patrol. While the fascists were looking into his papers, this daring scout suddenly jumped aside and tossed three hand grenades at the Hitlerites. The patrol was wiped out but the sound of the explosions drew the attention of other soldiers. Shandlov met them with fire. Pandemonium arose. In the meantime, Shandlov succeeded in escaping and bringing back to his commander the information he had gathered.

By the end of 1942, while Shandlov was operating behind enemy lines, he was appointed head of a group assigned to observe traffic on the roads and watch the movements of the enemy. The ground scouts made a thorough examination of the roads, went through a destroyed village and approached the village graveyard. At a distance they saw a thick forest. On its other side about 40 German carts were moving along the road, laden with arms. Shandlov decided to set a

trap to stop and strike at the enemy forces.

He deployed his fighters among the ruins of the village on both sides of the road. When the German carts approached the place where the ground scouts were hiding, Shandlov and his men fired their machine guns and tossed a number of hand grenades. Out of fear, the fascists threw down their arms and ran away. In this manner Shandlov's men captured an enemy field gun, several pistols, scores of automatic rifles and many cases of ammunition. At the place of battle were numerous fascist corpses. For this daring exploit, Shandlov was awarded the "Red Flag" medal.

Shandlov was then sent to an officers course and returned to his company as a full-fledged officer. In the course of one battle to capture a hill, he and his soldiers repulsed some 20 enemy attacks. For this exploit he was awarded the "War of the Fatherland" medal, first class.

*In Feb., 1945 Shandlov was at the head of a sniper company. This company was the first to cross the Addra river. On Apr. 16, 1945 his company succeeded in getting into the enemy bunkers and ditches on the western shore of the Addra in the region of Grass-Nedarf. The fascists brought in their reserves and mounted an attack on Shandlov's company. For two hours the brave Soviet fighters succeeded in repulsing the enemy attack. The Germans launched another attack, their fourth one, now supported by tanks. Shandlov's partisans were running out of ammunition. At this point Shandlov, together with two fighters, dashed forward and, firing armor-piercing bullets, first hit the lead enemy tank, then the second and the third.*

In the meantime the Germans had outflanked the hero. Their aim was to

## After Yad Vashem

By MICHAEL ENGEL

*"Forgetfulness leads to exile, while remembrance is the secret of redemption."*

The Baal Shem Tov

**T**ransmigration of souls of  
martyrs of victims  
into this single soul or  
I who am memory  
and them  
contain within myself history  
nothing emanates from me  
without them

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capture him alive. His two companions were killed. To repulse alone the German attacks was very difficult. He was running short of anti-tank bullets as well as ammunition for all three rifles. Sensing Shandlov's critical situation, the Hitlerites rushed towards him. A fierce battle ensued. Defending himself with his bayonet, he stabbed to death several fascists, but eventually received a blow on the head which stunned him. Later when the Soviet companies drove the enemy back, they found at the place of battle the body of officer Shadlov surrounded by 48 dead fascists.

On May 15, 1946 the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR decided to award First Lieutenant Yidl Shandlov the title, "Hero of the Soviet Union."

The people of the "New Belichi" neighborhood in Gomel have put out a special album dedicated to the life of this Jewish Soviet patriot, Yidl Shandlov, "Hero of the Soviet Union." ■