

DOCUMENTS

Who Murdered Professor Israel Friedlaender and Rabbi Bernard Cantor: The Truth Rediscovered¹

Michael Beizer

Right under my window some Cossacks were trying to shoot an old silvery-bearded Jew for spying. The old man was uttering piercing screams and struggling to get away. Then Kudrya of the machine-gun section took hold of his head and tucked it under his arm. The Jew stopped screaming and straddled his legs. Kudrya drew out his dagger with his right hand and carefully, without splashing himself, cut the old man's throat.

—Isaak Babel, "Berestechko," *Collected Stories*

In July 1920, two emissaries of the Joint Distribution Committee of American Funds for the Relief of Jewish War Sufferers, which was later renamed the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC, AJJDC, or the Joint), Professor Israel Friedlaender and Rabbi Bernard Cantor, were killed in the territory of the Ukraine while on a mission to distribute relief among the Jews who were victims of war and pogroms.

The Jewish population of the Ukraine suffered tremendously in the course of the hostilities that took place for six years following the beginning of World War I. After the revolutionary upheavals of 1917 and the German occupation in 1918, these hostilities developed into a civil war between the troops of the Ukrainian Directory, the Voluntary (White) army of General Anton Denikin, the Bolshevik Red Army, and numerous local gangs. According to various estimates, the number of Jewish victims of war and violence ranged from 50,000 to 200,000. As many as 200,000 children were orphaned. And up to half a million Jews were left destitute.²

American Jewish Archives Journal

Established in 1914 to provide relief for Jews who had suffered from the pogroms, the Joint started its work in Poland under the guidance of Dr. Boris Bogen who arrived there in February 1919. With him was an Overseas Unit, which subsequently grew to include 126 people, among them experts in sanitation, child care, and economics. Members of the unit wore United States army uniforms.³

A JDC special commission arrived in Europe in January 1920 and attempted to secure the Soviet government's permission to enter the Ukraine to assess the situation of Ukrainian Jews and render them urgent assistance. The commission was comprised of Judge Harry M. Fisher of Chicago, Max Pine, a Jewish labor leader from New York, Professor Israel Friedlaender, and Morris Kass. Judge Fisher and Mr. Pine decided not to wait for permission, and in March traveled to western Volyn and Podolia, which had been occupied by the Polish troops in the summer of 1919. Professor Friedlaender remained in western Europe. "The situation which the two commissioners found upon entering the stricken region was indescribably terrible."⁴

On April 20, 1920, an agreement was signed in Warsaw between the head of the Polish state Josef Pilsudski and Simon Petlura under which Poland recognized the Directoria as the supreme power in the Ukraine in exchange for concessions of Eastern Galicia and Western Volyn. A Polish offensive in alliance with the Directoria troops immediately followed. Although they captured a sizeable part of the right-bank Ukraine and on May 6 entered Kiev, in June of the same year they had to retreat under the onslaught of the Red Army.

The most extensive and cruel pogroms were carried out by the troops of the Directoria in 1919. The Poles and the Bolsheviks also staged Jewish pogroms but at much greater intervals and with less brutality. In September 1920, the revolutionary council of the First Cavalry Army commanded by Budenny disbanded one of its divisions that had engaged in pogroms.⁵

Polish occupation of a large piece of the Ukraine presented opportunities for the JDC unit to offer relief to a greater number of Ukrainian Jews. Early in May two members of the unit reached Kiev, namely, Dr. Charles Spivak, Special Commissioner for Health and Sanitation, and Captain ElkanVoorsanger. They found the plight of the Jewish population appalling, including 20,000 penniless refugees and 10,000 orphans with no one to take care of them.⁶ Spivak and Voorsanger gave local Jewish leaders 3,000,000 rubles to be used for relief and sent four railway cars with essential items from Warsaw to

Kiev.

Meanwhile Professor Friedlaender also decided to proceed into the section of the Ukraine still occupied by Poland, that was shrinking as the Red Army was advancing. He went to Volyn and Podolia with Meyer Leff and Morris Kass. Besides distributing relief, Professor Friedlaender attempted to prevent the retreating Polish troops from victimizing the Jewish population. In some cases he succeeded.⁷ He also wanted to meet General Pilsudski, commander of the Polish army, and ask him to order his men to refrain from committing atrocities against local Jews. In Kamenets-Podolsky he met Rabbi Bernard Cantor, who was distributing JDC funds among local Jewish relief committees.⁸ On July 5, 1920, Friedlaender joined Cantor who was returning to Lvov via Proskurov and Tarnopol. A Jewish leader named Grossman of Tarnopol, went with them. They set out at six in the morning but as they were approaching the shtetl of Yarmolintsy, their car was attacked by men of the Red cavalry unit that had broken through the frontline taking control of Yarmolintsy for several hours. The three passengers (Friedlaender, Cantor, and Grossman)—mistaken for Polish officers and a landowner—were killed but the chauffeur escaped. On the following day the Polish troops again entered Yarmolintsy and it was only on July 9 that the Red Army captured it for good (Documents 5 and 6).

Friedlaender (1876–1920) was born in Kovel (Volyn) and educated at Berlin and Strasbourg universities. He was an expert in biblical and medieval Arab literature as well as a Jewish historian and public figure, holding the position of Professor of Biblical Literature and Exegesis at the Jewish Theological Seminary.⁹ He was married to Lilian Ruth Bentwich with whom he had three sons—Herzl, Benzion, and Daniel Balfour—and three daughters—Carmel, Judith-Susannah, and Nachomo Joy. He belonged to the American Jewish elite, was affiliated with a score of Jewish organizations in the U.S., and was a member of the JDC. He was also an ardent Zionist (as evidenced by the names he gave his sons) and a romanticist striving to be a hero of his people, not merely an armchair scientist. He sought danger. His personal participation in distributing the JDC relief in the Ukraine was not part of his duties, but he could not possibly be refused a trip to eastern Europe.¹⁰ According to Dr. Meyer Leff, who worked with Friedlaender in the Ukraine, “The tragic end of Professor Israel

American Jewish Archives Journal

Friedlaender shocked, but did not altogether surprise his many friends, especially those who were associated with him in his perilous mission. . . . He was ready to die for his people.”¹¹

Rabbi Cantor (1892–1920) was only twenty-eight years old when he was killed. His service record was not as impressive as that of Professor Friedlaender’s and he was not part of the elite. He came from an Orthodox family with many children and owed the fundamentals of his religious education to his father and brother-in-law. Later he studied at the University of Cincinnati, the University of Chicago, and at Hebrew Union College. Before his trip to Europe he was rabbi at the New York Free Synagogue and had some experience as a social worker. While in Lvov “he was engaged to be married to a very handsome and intelligent young lady,” Ms. Irma Abramovich from a respectable local family.¹²

Even against the background of tens of thousands of Jewish victims in the Ukraine, the death of these two people was of special significance. Never before had JDC employees who were American citizens been killed while discharging their duties. Later it happened only once, on August 16, 1967, when the Joint Executive Vice-Chairman Charles Harold Jordan (1908–1967) was killed in Prague. The fate of Professor Friedlaender, a renowned scientist holding a high position in Jewish public circles and with influential relatives and friends, has attracted the attention of historians and journalists since his death.¹³

Yet from the outset, the circumstances of the murder were distorted by the press both due to the inaccuracy of the information coming from a place so far away as well to political biases. An editorial in the New York socialist newspaper *Forverts* of July 13, 1920, played an important part in this “information war.” The editorial unequivocally refuted the information that the JDC emissaries had been killed by Red Army men and stated—without offering any evidence—that the murderers were Poles, or some of Petlura’s men wearing Red Army uniform, or bandits with whom the chauffeur conspired. It was even hinted that the Polish authorities might have been involved:

It’s nonsense. Nobody will believe that Bolshevik soldiers attacked Dr. Friedlaender’s car while not a single Bolshevik soldier was around and could not be there at the moment of the murder. Only Polish troops could be there. And if someone

The Truth Rediscovered

believed the story that the attackers were indeed wearing Bolshevik uniforms, then he would have to infer that they were men from the Petlura gangs or bandits of some other Ukrainian gang leader who often wear the same uniform as the Bolshevik soldiers. However, there is no need for suppositions of this kind when the main suspect is the chauffeur himself. His account about the Bolsheviks and of how he escaped arouses strong suspicion that it was he who killed [the emissaries], alone or together with other Poles, for the purpose of robbery or for some other reasons.

The question remains whether the chauffeur made up the version about Bolsheviks himself or he was prodded by someone else; after all, the best way to shift the suspicion away from him was to invent the story about the Bolsheviks. Therefore, in its news item on the murder *The New York Times* could find no better heading than "Red Bandits Killed Dr. Friedlaender." The main thing here is that the emphasis is on the word "Red," which makes it unnecessary to look for the true murderers.

We strongly doubt that given the situation in Poland and in Ukrainian regions occupied by Poland, it will be possible to learn the truth about the murder. And if the chauffeur were a Pole, which is quite possible, the chances of uncovering the truth are very slim indeed. The annals will show that it was the Bolsheviks who attacked the car and committed the murder. Whatever angle you look at it from, this is the most convenient answer for political reasons.

There are some who believe that Polish government officials are involved in the murder. It is possible that some Polish official circles feared that Professor Friedlaender might come away with an unflattering report on the attitude to Jews in Poland. We cannot examine these fears in earnest because we have no evidence to substantiate them.¹⁴

As this passage shows, the editorial was purely political, namely, to clear the Bolsheviks of suspicion inasmuch as the newspaper's editors and readers favored the Bolsheviks over the Directoria troops or the Poles.¹⁵ The Bolsheviks were said to be the only force protecting the Jews against pogroms.¹⁶ Since the official American stance was anti-

American Jewish Archives Journal

Bolshevist, the publication of any unfavorable information about the Bolsheviks was interpreted as anti-Soviet propaganda in Jewish socialist circles and therefore refuted.

This was not the only such case in American history. During World War II the Jewish public gave a similarly hostile reception to Ismar Elbogen's historical monograph *A Century of Jewish Life*, in which the responsibility for pogroms against Jews in the Ukraine in 1919 was placed on the Red Army along with other armies. It was the reason for the second edition of the book being "revised."¹⁷

The *Forverts* was not alone in calling the chauffeur's testimony into question. Employees of the Joint Overseas Unit did not trust it either. Their suspicions were based, first, on the fact that the chauffeur remained alive while the rest were killed, and, second, that he did not urge the Polish soldiers whom he encountered to rescue the Americans, but instead convinced them to avoid the battle and return to Dunaevtsy. Further, it appeared suspicious that he did not immediately tell the JDC's representatives in Kamenets what had happened although he spent the night there on his way back home to Lvov. In addition, his testimony was at odds with the testimony of a Polish army officer whose car picked up the chauffeur not far from the murder scene. Leo Gerstenzand, the JDC worker who interrogated him in Warsaw, told him straightforwardly: "I have two things against you. That you, being a Jew, did not tell the Captain to see what happened and did not tell exactly that there were two soldiers there, and that you did not step in at the Committee's and give your account there."¹⁸ In fact the driver was simply terrified and did everything possible not to return to the scene of the murder. He realized, of course, that he left his passengers in the moment of mortal danger, and thus preferred to avoid meeting with Dr. Leff.

It must be pointed out that newspaper publications distorted not only information related to the killers of the JDC emissaries (although this was the main point), but also other circumstances of the murder, such as its date, place, motives, number of victims, presence or absence of eyewitnesses, and other details.

The Joint could not institute an investigation in the shtetl immediately, as the hostilities still continued. Yet shortly afterward, on July 21, a commission representing the JDC was dispatched from Kamenets-Podolsky. The commission questioned witnesses and

The Truth Rediscovered

compiled ten protocols. The results of its work were formalized in a report that confirmed beyond any doubt that Bolsheviks were responsible for the murder and refuted any participation by the chauffeur in it (see Document 5). The commission's report was compiled on September 26 and sent to New York via Bucharest in late October. Meanwhile a memorial meeting for Friedlaender and Cantor was held at Carnegie Hall, New York City, on September 9. Cyrus Adler, the acting president of the JTS, who spoke there cautiously said: "They were shot down by men wearing the uniform of the Bolshevik army."¹⁹ It was an irony of fate that included in the agreement to rent Carnegie Hall was a paragraph obligating the JDC not to use the Hall for Bolshevikist propaganda.²⁰

What happened to the Yarmolinty Report later is not quite clear. Obviously, it was brought to the attention of the JDC leaders and other prominent Jewish personalities. This is clear from the correspondence of George Dobsevage (Dobsovitch), secretary of the Publication Committee of the Jewish Publication Society, and Cyrus Adler, who was active on that committee. Dobsevage prepared a review draft of the Friedlaender-Cantor Memorial Volume, intended for distribution among journalists, and sent it to Adler. The draft called the murderers "bandits." On reading the draft Adler pointed out in his letter dated January 11, 1921: "On the first page I have marked the phrase 'of bandits.' There is not the slightest doubt but that these two men were killed by soldiers of the Bolshevik army. As a matter of fact, the Bolshevik authorities have expressed regret at the death of those two men, stating that they were mistaken for Polish spies."²¹ The wording of the draft was changed to: "death at the hands of Bolshevik soldiers who mistook them for Polish spies."²² In 1940, "a HIAS official reported to Ben-Zion Friedlaender, who lived in Chicago, that 'Red partisans' mistook his father and Rabbi Cantor for Polish officers."²³

It is possible that access to the Yarmolinty Report as well as to other documents from the Joint Archives was in the past limited but not closed. At any rate, Herman Bernstein's *The History of American Jewish Relief*, written in 1928, gives a correct account of the murder based on this document.²⁴ Oscar Handlin, who wrote a book about the JDC, confirms Adler and Bernstein: "They had been shot by Red Army soldiers. . . ."²⁵

Thus, the JDC leadership investigated the murder and arrived at the truth. It also succeeded in obtaining an official expression of regret

American Jewish Archives Journal

from the Bolsheviks and compelled them to institute a search for the murderers who nevertheless were never apprehended.²⁶ The JDC made every effort to provide for the families of the dead—collecting large sums of money for them, locating and sending Friedlaender's widow her late husband's personal effects, both those captured by the Bolsheviks in Yarmolinty and those left behind in Europe—as well as to perpetuate their memories. At the same time, there is reason to believe that the JDC did not want to have the Bolshevik responsibility widely publicized and risk being libeled as an organization fanning anti-Soviet sentiment in the U.S. at a time when it was starting to provide relief to Soviet Jews on a large scale. On June 17, 1920, Fisher and Pine, who represented the JDC, signed an agreement with the Soviet government to establish the Jewish Public Committee for Aid to Pogrom Victims functioning under Soviet control (*Evoobshchestkom*), also known in its Yiddish abbreviation as *Idgezkom*. This was the channel through which relief from American Jewry began to reach Soviet Russia.²⁷ Wide publicity given to the Yarmolinty Report could have adversely affected fund-raising among those parts of American Jews who had a favorable view of the Bolsheviks and encouraged the JDC's relations with the Soviet government. After all, the JDC was the union of three organizations, one of which, the People's Relief Committee, was socialist. Rabbi Judah Magnes, a sympathizer to the Bolshevik revolution, who was influential in JDC, was also hardly in favor of publicizing the report.²⁸ Aid to pogrom victims was the priority at the time, especially since it had transpired that the murder of Friedlaender and Cantor was a tragic mistake.

The Yarmolinty Report and its accompanying documents were never published and the *Forverts* version of the murderers as either Petlura's men or the Whites or just bandits in disguise became entrenched in the public mind. A memorial article about Friedlaender in *The American Jewish Year Book, 1921–1922*, mentions anonymous "bandits" as the murderers.²⁹ *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* speaks of "the Ukrainian bandits."³⁰ Louis Finkelstein, the author of the entry, who was related to Friedlaender by marriage, did not mention the real murderers. *The Juedisches Lexikon*, published in Germany, claims that "the pogromist mob (*Pogrompoebel*)" murdered the two.³¹ *Encyclopedia Judaica* in its entry on Friedlaender gives the party of bandits, version while in its entry "American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee" one can read about a "White Russian gang."³² The

The Truth Rediscovered

“bandit” version has been borrowed from *the Encyclopedia Judaica* by the contemporary Jewish encyclopedias in Russian.³³ In his book *My Brother’s Keeper*, Yehuda Bauer claims that Friedlaender and Cantor were murdered by Ukrainians.³⁴ Baila Shargel’s book on Friedlaender, *Practical Dreamer*, is inclined to accept the “disguise” version put forward by the *Forverts* and ignores the Yarmolinty Report. The author even contends that “the details about Friedlaender’s death will, in all probability, never be obtained.”³⁵

One may speculate whether Friedlaender’s widow, Lilian, who was in close contact with Cyrus Adler and Judah Magnes, knew about the Yarmolinty Report. In any case, it appears that the results of the Yarmolinty Report never became known to her children. This can be gleaned from a letter written by Friedlaender’s son Herzl of Chicago to John C. Colman, JDC Board member.³⁶ Herzl’s letter is quoted in Colman’s letter to Ralph Goldman, Executive Vice-President of the AJJDC, dated July 20, 1981. Herzl had only a guess as to who might have shot his father but no definite knowledge of it:

No definitive opinion has ever been given as to the persons responsible for the act [the murder].

I have heard that it might have been on the orders of General

Petlura, a recognized anti-Semite, who was planning a pogrom and did not wish to be interrupted or observed; that it was the work of bandits who maybe knew that father and Rabbi Cantor were carrying gold for relief purposes; that Polish or Russian soldiers—regular or renegade—might have mistaken the uniform he was probably wearing (he possessed one as a Major in the U.S. Army, I believe) as that of the enemy.

My own guess—and that is all it is—comes from very recently reading some applicable history. It seems that on July 4th and 5th of that year (1920) the Red Army launched a massive surprise attack against Poland. The military movement was on a long front, which might well have included either directly, or for support and assembly purposes, the precise area in which the automobile and driver being used were traversing. They may, therefore, have been considered as possible spies with a shoot first and ask

American Jewish Archives Journal

questions later order. Certainly the Russians would not want to take any chances that the surprise offensive would be noted too soon. A catch to this hypothesis is that we have always been under the impression that the driver escaped.³⁷

This is the first publication of documents related to the murder of Friedlaender and Cantor. Its purpose is to bring clarity to the issue. The primary published document is, of course, the Yarmolinty Report. The records of the questioning of witnesses (in Yiddish, Ukrainian, and Polish) on the basis of which the report was written are not published for lack of space but are taken into account in my analysis of the report. Also published here are the testimony of the chauffeur and the records of his cross-examination, Dr. Leff's report, and the cover letter to the Yarmolinty Report by Alexander Landesko. I have also included a page from Herman Bernstein's "The History of American Jewish Relief," written in 1928, which has not been published and itself has become a historical document.

Documents 1, 4, and 6 are cited in their original form. Document 2 is a translation from the Polish, Document 3, from the German, Document 5, from the Yiddish. All these translations, which were made in 1920, have been collated with the originals. Geographical names and the names of people have been regularized (according to the Russian standards) and obvious distortions in the text corrected. A Russian translation of the Yarmolinty Report discovered in the Kiev Archives was used when collating the texts.³⁸

A comparative analysis of the source materials warrants the following conclusions regarding the circumstances of the murder and its press coverage:

1. Scene of the Murder

Most of the documents and newspaper reports are unanimous in placing the scene of the murder of Friedlaender and Cantor on the highway leading from Kamenets-Podolsky to Proskurov, at the entrance to Yarmolinty or near it, in the vicinity of the village closest to the shtetl known as Sokolovka.

2. Date and Time of the Murder

The murder took place between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. on Monday, July 5, 1920, or on 19 Tamuz in the year 5680, according to the Jewish calendar.³⁹ Due to the confused reports coming from Warsaw on the

The Truth Rediscovered

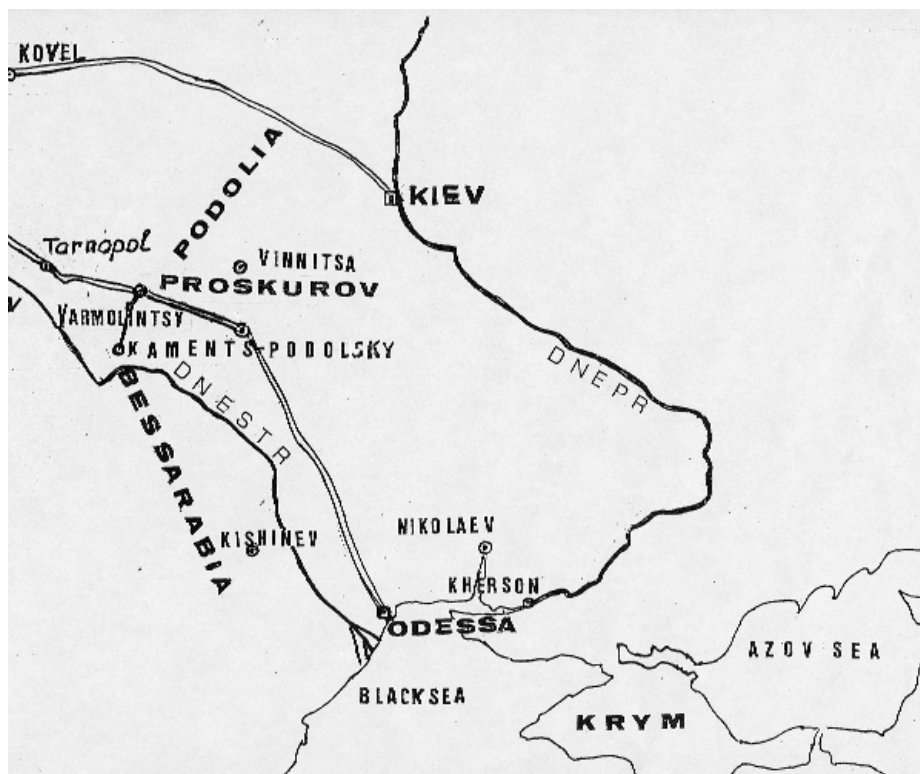
first days after the murder, the dates cited in the press differed: in the *Jewish Chronicle* and *Forverts* it was July 7,⁴⁰ and in *The New York Times*, July 8.⁴¹ The newspapers referred to the statement made by Felix Warburg, the JDC chairman who had obtained erroneous information from the outset, and to the chauffeur. In his report, the chauffeur gave the true date (Document 2) but three weeks later he first said at the cross-examination that the murder had been committed on Sunday, but later on corrected himself (Document 3). The JDC Treasurer thought that the murder date was July 9.⁴²

Especially misleading are the inscriptions on the gravestones at the Yarmolinty cemetery (see below), which indicate July 10, 1920 (24 Tamuz, Shabbat), as the date of death.⁴³ In May 1923, the JDC Moscow office sent sketches of these gravestones to the New York headquarters for Herbert Bentwich, Friedlaender's father-in-law I. M. Kovalsky, the new JDC representative in Kiev, who ordered the gravestones and attended their unveiling on the fifth and not on the tenth of July 1923, as the inscriptions on the gravestones indicate, did not correct the mistake.⁴⁴ It is not clear why the Yarmolinty Jewish community leaders did not see the error, as the date of the martyrs' deaths is certainly a memorial date in the Jewish calendar (*yohrzeit*), and it is unlikely that in the three years that passed between the murder and the stone setting it could have been erased from their memory.⁴⁵

3. Witnesses to the Murder

Document 5 establishes that besides the chauffeur there were other witnesses to the murder. A peasant standing near his house saw the Americans' car being stopped by Red Army men, the passengers rushing away, and the Red Army men shooting them. Another peasant—in whose yard Friedlaender was killed—was indoors when the murder took place, but a few minutes later came out and saw three dead bodies. Dr. Rykhlo of the local hospital testified that other peasants had also seen the murder but the version they told him was somewhat different. At the interrogation the chauffeur also said that there were witnesses to the murder, and added: "After [an] armistice is concluded I'll request the local peasants to testify about the occurrence." To the direct question: "Have you seen no one on the road?" he answers: "On the contrary, I saw peasants from the town." In his first statement he also mentioned the presence of witnesses (see Documents 2 and 3).

American Jewish Archives Journal



The Truth Rediscovered



American Jewish Archives Journal

The matter of the witnesses also had a pragmatic aspect: to obtain insurance for the dead. Herbert Bentwich addressed Julius Goldman on this matter in particular and he answered that “the [insurance] Company should be asked to be as reasonable in their demands as may be possible, as I fear it will be rather difficult to obtain evidence in the required technically legal form.”⁴⁶

4. Who Were the Murderers?

The fact that the murders occurred before the Reds had permanently captured Yarmolinty made it possible for *Forverts* to claim that they could not have been the murderers and that the chauffeur’s story was a fiction.⁴⁷ The day before, on July 12, the *Forverts* told its readers an intriguing detail—that the car had been captured by three masked (!) bandits.⁴⁸ On July 16, the *Jewish Chronicle* wrote of three men wearing Bolshevik uniforms. A week later the same paper skipped the word “Bolshevist” and said: “by three men in uniform.” On July 25, *The Jewish Relief News* (New York) published by the American Jewish Relief Committee (a part of the JDC) told its readers about “ten armed bandits,” and later, on August 15, about “Bolshevist bandits.”⁴⁹ *The New York Times* reported: “by bandits” (July 11), but later, on July 16, specified: “by Bolshevik bandits.” Evidently, the newspaper saw the two notions as synonymous because elsewhere in the same issue there was this addition: “It is a significant fact, however, that the robbers were in Bolshevik uniform—another illustration of the impossibility of distinguishing between Bolshevism and brigandage.”⁵⁰

Document 5 confirms the testimony of the chauffeur that Friedlaender and Cantor were killed by Red Army cavalry men, in all probability from the First Cavalry Army under Semen Budenny’s command, which had launched an offensive against the Polish-Ukrainian forces in this area (see Document 6). On October 12, 1920, the Jewish historian Semyon Dubnov, who was in Petrograd at that time, learned from the noted Zionist Yakov Klebanov that Friedlaender had been killed and robbed by no others than the Reds.⁵¹

5. Motives of the Murder

The main cause of the murder was mistaken identification. Everything points to the fact that the soldiers did not know what the

The Truth Rediscovered

U.S. Stars and Stripes looked like (one of the passengers was displaying it), nor could they identify a U.S. Army officer uniform, and therefore had no idea whom they had stopped. They told their commanding officer and the onlookers that they had killed Polish officers and a landowner (see Document 5). That was why they did not shoot the chauffeur (according to Dr. Rykhlo's testimony); the chauffeur was not a serviceman and they did not place him in the exploiter class. That Friedlaender and Cantor started running could have been their fatal mistake. Had they not done so they might have had a chance to remain alive.



*Desecrated graves in the Graveyard.
(Courtesy Roberta Louis Goodman)*

Doubtless robbery and anti-Semitism could also have been motives. The Red Army men stripped the dead bodies naked and took all their belongings. However, attributing the attack on the JDC emissaries to the robbery motive alone, as did some publications, in particular *The New York Times*, was an overstatement. This version was based on the unverified information received from Warburg that Friedlaender and Cantor had a large sum of money with them—\$400,000.⁵² *The New York Times* wrote: "Conditions in the Ukraine are such that financial aid can be distributed only in cash, and therefore both the murdered men carried large sums with them."⁵³ As Meyer Leff pointed out in his report, Friedlaender and Cantor actually had no American money with them at the time of the murder. Rather, they only had a few thousand Polish marks and Russian rubles. Dr. Leff, who was in Kamenets-Podolsky when they set out from this town on their last journey, surely knew how much money they carried. His testimony is corroborated by Document 5, which says that the Red Army men were giving children the captured Polish marks (they could not make use of them themselves) and gave some of the captured things to local peasants. In his speech at the Carnegie Hall Cyrus Adler likewise stated: "They had no considerable funds with them."⁵⁴

Anti-Semitic motives also must be excluded. The Red Army men probably did not even realize that their victims were Jewish because

their appearance was drastically different from the Ukrainian Jews.



*Israel Friedlaender restored monument.
(Courtesy Roberta Louis Goodman)*

6. The Forgotten Third Victim

When Jechiel Lisawoder and Mathias Sigal, members of the inquiry commission investigating the murder, requested people from the Yarmolinty community to assist them in their mission, the first reaction of the assembly was surprise that they were talking about the murder of only two men when actually “they had found and buried three.” In the course of the investigation the commission had established that the third victim was a man of about sixty and that the upper tooth plate and a right-side truss were found near his body (see Document 5).

Dr. Leff’s report revealed the last name of the third man: Grossman of Tarnopol. In a letter to Felix Warburg, Julius Goldman described him: “The latter [Grossman], I wish to state right here, was an old gentlemen of 73 years of age and a man of wealth and standing in the local Community, which they had just visited.”⁵⁵ In the testimony of a Polish soldier who attended the funeral of the murdered, three dead bodies are mentioned (see Document 5). Bernstein also notes that “they also shot Mr. Grossman, the Russian Jew who was in the car” (Document 6). There was no mention in the American press of a third murdered man. Nor can any information about him be found in the memorial book about Friedlaender and Cantor or in Bauer’s and Handlin’s books about the JDC or in Shargel’s biography of Friedlaender or in the relevant encyclopedia articles. The death of a local Jew who was not an American aroused no interest.



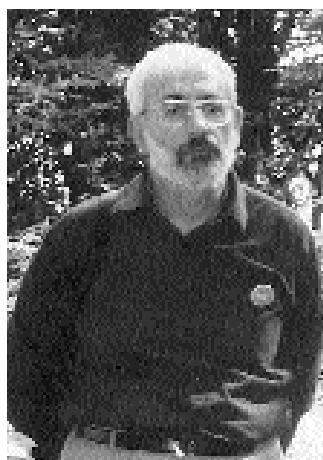
*Restored marker for Friedlaender
(Courtesy Roberta Louis Goodman)*

7. The Burned Car

Friedlaender and Cantor used a Fiat on their last journey. The car

The Truth Rediscovered

was moving slowly, not more than 25 *versts* an hour because it had “blew out” tires and there were no tires to replace them (Document 3). A horseman could easily catch up with it. Therefore the travelers stopped when ordered and did not even try to escape although the command “Halt!” came from behind and the road ahead was not blocked (Document 1). At the interrogation the chauffeur testified that the Bolsheviks had set fire to the car, saying that he had seen the smoke coming from the car from a distance of half a *verst* away. He invented the story of the burning car to justify his unwillingness to return to the murder scene, even to retrieve the car. The JDC employees and the Jewish press did not trust his testimony in essence, yet they believed his lie about the burning car even though the soldiers had no time to set it on fire while the chauffeur was running. Details of the burned car, coupled with the story of masked robbers in disguise and a large sum of stolen money, fueled the imagination and was reminiscent of a Wild West movie. The burned car figured in the *Forverts* and *Jewish Chronicle* reports. Leff’s report mentioned the testimony of a Polish soldier who saw an “overturned car” (Document 1).



Michael Beizer.
(Courtesy Roberta Louis Goodman)

Actually, however, the car was not burned; it was not even seriously damaged by the Red Army men.⁵⁶ They only made peasants push it into a yard, planning to recover it when the Red Army entered Yarmolinty. According to the testimony of the peasants, however, the first to seize the car were Polish soldiers (Document 5). As it later transpired, it was Directoria soldiers who were the first; the Poles took it from them and returned to the JDC Warsaw office early in 1921. The JDC New York headquarters gave up the idea of transporting the car to New York as a memorial of the dead. The Warsaw office was instructed either to use the car if still in a suitable condition or to sell it.⁵⁷

Documents:

Document 1. [Dr. Leff’s Report], July 14, 1920.

Document 2. Account of the Attack Near Yarmolinty (Statement of the Chauffeur), [July 8, 1920].

American Jewish Archives Journal

Document 3. Cross-Examination of the Chauffeur. July 26, 1920.

Document 4. [Cover Letter by Alexander Landesco to the Report of the Inquiry Commission sent to the JDC Headquarters (New York)]. October 25, 1920.

Document 5. Report of the Commission to Inquire into the Killing of [] Prof. Israel Friedlaender and Dr. Bernard Cantor. September 26, 1920. [Yarmolinty Report]

Document 6. Excerpt From Herman Bernstein, *The History of the American Jewish Relief: An Account of the Activities and Achievements of the Joint Distribution Committee*, New York, 1928. (Unpublished manuscript, AJJDC Library), vol. 2, 270–73.

Epilogue: The Fate of the Dead Bodies and of the Graves

The JDC's initial intention was to bring their bodies to the United States. As early as July 13, the *Forverts* reported that "preparations are underway to bring the bodies of the two martyrs here."⁵⁸ A week later Julius Goldman wrote to Felix Warburg from his Paris office: "We shall endeavor to recover the bodies of Prof. Friedlaender and Doctor Cantor and shall make such disposition of them as their relatives may direct."⁵⁹ It had turned out, however, that the bodies were already buried at the local cemetery. Besides, to bring the bodies from the Ukraine was not an easy thing to do, as Podolia had been captured by the Bolsheviks and the matter had to be negotiated with them. Numerous gangs were still plaguing the area. In reply to the request of Friedlaender's widow Lilian to exhume Friedlaender's remains and bring them to Palestine for burial, the Joint's secretary Albert Lucas followed the advice of Dr. Frank F. Rosenblatt who cabled from Tallinn in December 1920: "Soviet authorities in principle have nothing against [it]. Owing [to] various technical difficulties [I] advise execution plan be deferred several months and not before my personal visit Ukraine and grave. That region [is] still infested by various bandits."⁶⁰ Meanwhile it came to the attention of the JDC Warsaw office that "the body of Mr. Grossman. . . had already been removed by his sons who live near Yarmolinty."⁶¹

In 1922, the JDC's negotiations with the Soviet government about the exhumation of Friedlaender's and Cantor's bodies and transporting them to the U.S. were evidently resumed. This time the negotiations were interrupted at the request of Friedlaender's widow, who before that, after long hesitation, had moved to Palestine. She

The Truth Rediscovered

wrote to Cyrus Adler: "On no account do I wish them [the remains] removed to America. There might be a time when I might consider their removal here, but it seems much more likely that they will remain where they are."⁶² Lilian was not sure whether she was going to stay in Palestine and wanted to erect a temporary tombstone on the grave of her late husband. "Of course, the final arrangements cannot yet be made for I may either decide to remove the body to Palestine if I settle here permanently," she added in the same letter.

The Joint did as the widow wished. In 1923 modest monuments were erected on the graves of its two workers. The ceremonial unveiling took place on July 5, the anniversary of their murder according to the Gregorian calendar, attended by a representative of the local authorities, local Jewish public figures, and the Kiev JDC representative.⁶³ A Jewish businessmen from the nearby shtetl Dunaevtsy spoke at the ceremony and expressed his confidence that "the black hands" of "the butcher" will be punished.⁶⁴ He refrained, however, from saying openly who the murderers were. The Joint paid for designing and installing the monuments, which cost fifty-five dollars.⁶⁵ The wrong dates of death were inscribed.

Years passed and the graves of the JDC emissaries were forgotten. The Ukrainian province was declared off-limits to foreigners. In 1938, the JDC, or rather its branch, the Agro-Joint, had to close its office in Moscow, and its senior employees, who were Soviet citizens, were put behind bars or executed.⁶⁶ The Jewish population of Yarmolinty dwindled as Jews migrated to larger USSR cities, and almost all of those who remained were killed during the German occupation. The cemetery was neglected, most of the graves damaged and covered with earth, and the tombstones smashed or stolen by local people. Friedlaender's and Cantor's monuments either collapsed or were knocked down, overgrown with moss and covered with litter. The photographs on the monuments were missing. In the postwar Soviet Union, the JDC's activities were banned and the Joint itself was seen as an American intelligence organization, something like a CIA branch. Therefore the Joint could not visit the graves and take care of them.

In the 1970s, Herzl Friedlaender made inquiries about the place of his father's grave and the answer he received was that it was in a military zone into which foreigners were not allowed. "And I had the wish to visit the grave site and maybe arrange to have the remains

American Jewish Archives Journal

moved to Israel. A fantasy, I suppose!"⁶⁷ he wrote.

In 2000, while working with Friedlaender and Cantor's file in the AJJDC Archives, I came across sketches of the monuments made in 1923. Having learned that there were still remnants of the Jewish cemetery in Yarmolinty, I asked the Kiev branch of the Joint to check if the monuments had escaped destruction. Igor Ratushny, director of the Khmelnytsky Hesed Besht charity organization supported by the Joint, visited Yarmolinty with his colleagues and, guided by the sketches he had been sent, found their remnants at the cemetery.⁶⁸ In July 2001, on the 81st anniversary of Professor Friedlaender's death, at the request of his relatives and with the assistance of the JDC, his remains were moved to Jerusalem and reburied with due ceremony on the site of the Bentwich family on Mount Scopus. The remains of Cantor were left in Yarmolinty at the request of his relatives and his tombstone restored. See note.

Michael Beizer was born in St. Petersburg in 1950. He graduated in the USSR as an engineer-physicist and worked as a computer programmer. He was active in the Jewish culture movement in the 1980s. After emigrating to Israel in 1987, he earned a Ph.D. in Jewish history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Dr. Beizer currently teaches Russian Jewish history at Hebrew University, and works at the Former Soviet Union department of the AJJDC. He is the author of The Jews of St. Petersburg (JPS, 1989); The Jews of Leningrad, 1917–1939: National Life and Sovietization (in Russian, Gesharim Publisher, 1999, the Antsiferov Prize of 2000); and Our Legacy: The CIS Synagogues: Past and Present (Gesharim Publisher, 2002).

NOTES

1. The research and writing of this paper was supported by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The author would like to express his gratitude to Asher Ostrin, director of the CIS programs of the JDC, for his interest and support of the research; Sherry Hyman, Shelley Helfand, Misha Mitzel of AJJDC Archives in New York, and Sarah Kadosh of JDC-Israel Archive in Jerusalem, for their excellent archival assistance; to Olga Steshenko (Kiev), for her locating the Russian version of the Yarmolinty Report; Michael Stavnitser (Kiev) and Igor Ratushny (Khmelnitsky), for their role in rediscovering the graves of Friedlaender and Cantor; to Dr. Avraham Geenbaum, Dr. Vladimir Levin, and Rabbi Meir Schlezinger (all the three in Jerusalem) for their advice; and to Prof. Jonathan Sarna for sharing his ideas and his encouragement to prepare this publication.

2. Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917–1920*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 110; Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper; A History of the American Jewish Joint*

The Truth Rediscovered

Distribution Committee, 1929–1939, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1974), 9.

3. Herman Bernstein, *The History of American Jewish Relief: An Account of the Activities and Achievements of the Joint Distribution Committee* (New York, 1928 unpublished manuscript, AJJDC Library), vol. 2, 244.

4. Ibid, 264. See also: Report from Judge Harry M. Fisher and Max Pine, Commissioners to the Ukraine, Warsaw, April 6, 1920 (hereafter cited as Fisher and Pine Report), AJJDC Archives, AR 19/21, #247.

5. *Short Jewish Encyclopedia* (in Russian), vol. 8, col. 1226.

6. Bernstein, 266–67.

7. M. Leff, report of August 23, 1920. AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frames 4384–88.

8. In publications and archive documents Cantor is often referred to as “Doctor” although he had only a master’s degree.

9. On JTS in the 1920s, see Eli Ginzberg, “The Seminary Family,” *Perspectives on Jews and Judaism: Essays in Honor of Wolfe Kelman*, ed. Arthur A. Chiel (New York: Rabbinical Assembly, 1979), 117–26.

10. On Friedlaender, see: Baila R. Shargel, *Practical Dreamer: Israel Friedlaender and the Shaping of American Judaism* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1985).

11. Dr. Leff, report of August 23, 1920.

12. Julius Goldman to Felix M. Warburg, July 12, 1920, AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frame 4165. In August 1920 she emigrated to the U.S. and became Irma May (Reel 8, frames 488, 2894.)

13. Friedlaender was the son-in-law of the well-known British Zionist, Herbert Bentwich. Friedlaender’s widow Lilian left for Erez-Israel after her husband’s death. Her sister Carmel married Jewish Theological Seminary Professor Louis Finkelstein. Her brother, Norman Bentwich was General Attorney in Palestine in the initial years of the British Mandate. Her elder daughter Carmel married Shimon Agranat, who later became the President of the High Court of Israel. Friedlaender’s sister Maryla was married to another JTS Professor Boaz Cohen. Rabbi Judah Magnes, a prominent public and political figure, was a close friend of the Friedlaenders.

14. *Forverts*, July 13, 1920. Baila Shargel in her *Practical Dreamer* quotes another passage from the article, alas, dating it incorrectly (Shargel, 34).

15. “The Bolshevik coup may at first have seemed as unfortunate to Jews in the United States as it seemed to Jews in Russia; but the Jewish massacres by General Denikin’s white armies soon made the Bolsheviks seem decidedly preferable.” (Peter G. Filene, *Americans and the Soviet Experiment, 1917–1933* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 164. Also in Zosa Szajkowski, *Jews, War and Communism*, vol. 2, (New York: KTAV, 1974), 205.

16. This thesis was constantly used by the Bolsheviks themselves in internal propaganda. Mikhail Kalinin, Chairman of the RSFSR All-Russian Central Executive Committee, said in his address at the Second Conference of the Jewish Sections in 1919: “The Jewish petty bourgeoisie must know that only Soviet power will protect it against pogroms.” (*Zhish natsional’nostei* (*The Life of Nationalities*), 1919, No. 23, 2).

17. Jonathan D. Sarna, *JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture, 1888–1988: A Centennial History of the Jewish Publication Society* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 200–02.

18. There were three soldiers present, not “two.” Document 3.

19. Memorial Meeting [for] Israel Friedlaender [and] Bernard Cantor whose lives

American Jewish Archives Journal

were sacrificed July 5, 1920, in cause of Israel and in the service of humanity. Carnegie Hall, New York City, September 9, 1920, AJJDC Archives, Reel 8, frame 339.

20. AJJDC Archives, Reel 8, frame 10. On the Red Scare in the U.S., see Zosa Szajkowski, *The Impact of the 1919–20 Red Scare on American Jewish Life: Jews, War and Communism*, vol. 2 (New York: KTAV, 1974).

21. AJJDC Archives, Reel 8, frame 409.

22. AJJDC Archives, Reel 8, frame 422.

23. According to Baila Shargel, *Practical Dreamer*, 34. On the fate of the children of Israel Friedlaender, see Ginzberg, 121–22.

24. Bernstein, 271. Bernstein was known as anti-Communist (Szajkowski, 192). It is hard to say whether Bernstein's book on the JDC remained unpublished because of political considerations.

25. Oscar Handlin, *A Continuing Task* (New York: Random House, 1964), 34.

26. See Document 6 following this essay. It should be noted that the regret of the Soviet authorities was never made public in the USSR.

27. On Evobshchestkom, see Mordechai Altshuler, "The Jewish Public Committee for Aid to Pogrom Victims" (in Hebrew), *Shvut* 9 (1983): 16–34.

28. Arthur A. Goren, ed., *Dissenter in Zion, From the Writings of Judah A. Magnes* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 24.

29. J. Kohn, "Israel Friedlaender," *American Jewish Year Book*, vol. 23 (1921–1922), 79.

30. Louis Finkelstein, "Israel Friedlaender," *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, 450–51.

31. *Juedisches Lexikon*, (Berlin, 1928) (reprinted in 1982 and 1987) col. 826. The author of the entry calls Bernard Cantor "George Kantor."

32. "Israel Friedlaender," "American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee," *Encyclopedia Judaica*.

33. *Short Jewish Encyclopedia* (in Russian), vol. 9, Jerusalem, 1999, col. 439–40; *Russian Jewish Encyclopedia* (in Russian), vol. 3 (Moscow, 1997), 250.

34. Bauer, 12. It is worth noting that in the introduction to his book Bauer mentions Bernstein's manuscript, in which the true story of the murder is given.

35. Shargel, 35.

36. Herzl returned from Palestine to the United States around 1930 and was an executive of the Jewish welfare agency in Chicago (Ginzberg, 121).

37. AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frames 3974–75.

38. The State Archive of the Kiev Province, collection R-3050, inventory 1, file 197, 6–7.

39. In Document 5, the time is 9 a.m. in the morning, in Document 2, it is 11 a.m. In Document 3, 10–11 a.m. The original of Document 5 gives the date in the Jewish calendar, the translation gives the Gregorian.

40. *Jewish Chronicle*, July 16, 1920, 11; *Forverts*, July 12, 1920.

41. *New York Times*, July 11, 1920. The article says "Last Thursday," which would have been July 8.

42. From JDC Treasurer, July 23, 1920, AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frame 4012.

43. For the sketches of the gravestones, see AJJDC Archives, Reel 8, frames 535–36. See also Yair Sheleg, "After 81 Years, He Rests in Peace," *Ha'Aretz*, July 13, 2001.

44. AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frames 535–36, 543–45. See also Secretary of the London Federation A. M. Kaizer, letter to the Joint (NY), May 9, 1923, Bogen's letters

The Truth Rediscovered

to New York, May 9 and September 19, 1923.

45. The facts cited looked weighty enough for me to initially accept the date on the headstones as the true date and the officially recognized date as erroneous. This is precisely why July 10 was indicated as the date of the death of Friedlaender and Cantor in the JDC Memorandum that appeared on July 2000.

46. Julius Goldman to Felix Warburg, July 19 [?], 1920. AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frame 3959.

47. *Forverts*, July 13, 1920.

48. The publication of this detail shows to what extent *Forverts* editors ignored the real situation in the Ukraine at that time, for criminals could very well do without masks as they were actually never tried and punished.

49. *Jewish Relief News*, July 25, 1920, and August 15, 1920.

50. *The New York Times*, July 16, 1920.

51. Simon Dubnov, *Kniga Zhizni* (A Book of Life), (St. Petersburg: Peterburgskoe vostokovedenie 1998), 450. Friedlaender translated and promoted the publication in the West of Dubnov's books on Jewish history in Russia and Poland.

52. *Forverts*, July 13, 1920; *Jewish Chronicle*, July 16, 1920.

53. *The New York Times*, July 13, 1920.

54. AJJDC Archives, Reel 8, frame 339.

55. Julius Goldman to Felix Warburg, July 1920. AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frame 3959.

56. "The commander asked if the car was damaged and the answer was negative." (Document 5).

57. AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frames 4449, 4491-92.

58. *Forverts*, July 13, 1920.

59. AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frame 3959.

60. AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frames 4040, 4047, 4051.

61. Kovalsky, to JDC (NY), October 22, 1920, AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frame 4398.

62. Cyrus Adler to Felix Warburg, November 6, 1922. AJJDC Archives, Reel 8, frames 531-33.

63. Photographs of the Unveiling Ceremony, AJJDC Archives, Reel 8, frames 543-46.

64. AJJDC Archives, Reel 8, frame 541.

65. AJJDC Archives, Reel 8, frame 534.

66. On the history of Agro-Joint, see Jonathan L. Dekel-Chen, "Shopkeepers and Peddlers into Soviet Farmers: Jewish Agricultural Colonization in Crimea and Southern Ukraine, 1924-1941," (Ph.D. diss., Brandeis University, 2001). See notes.

67. AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frame 3955.

68. See Sheleg, "After 81 Years," and Yan Toporovsky, "Taina Poslannikov," *Okna* (appendix to *Vesti*), July 12, 2001.

*American Jewish Archives Journal***Document 1:** Dr. Leff's Report, July 14, 1920¹

Professor Friedlaender and Dr. Cantor left Kamenets-Podolsky six o'clock Monday morning, July 5, 1920. With them was a Mr. Grossman from Tarnopol. They went in a Fiat, which was operated by chauffeur Singer of Lemberg. They were going to Lvov by way of Proskurov. The following morning, on July 6, the Polish Garrison was hurriedly evacuating Kamenets-Podolsky, and it was rumored that on the previous day there was a rebellion of the peasants against the Polish power at Yarmolinty. A little later, a Jew from Dunaevtsy came to inform me that two Americans were killed near Yarmolinty Monday morning.

I hurried to the local military headquarters where I was told that the chauffeur Singer was brought there the previous night. It was related that Russian soldiers attacked his party near Yarmolinty Monday morning; that he alone escaped; that the chauffeur left for Galicia in the automobile of Capt. Kulwiec of the 6th Polish Army by way of Skala; that a detachment of soldiers in a military automobile was ordered to the place of the accident and that news was expected in a few hours. I wanted to proceed to Yarmolinty but my chauffeur refused to take me to Yarmolinty for fear of the Bolsheviks. An hour later the Chief of Staff told me that the detachment could not reach Yarmolinty, but that on the way they were told by various people that two Americans were killed the previous morning by Bolshevik Soldiers. I asked the chief to allow me to go to Yarmolinty in a military automobile but this could not be granted for military reasons. Meanwhile, our chauffeur warned me that unless we would leave Kamenets-Podolsky within an hour he would leave us. Mr. Kass and myself then decided to try to reach Yarmolinty through Proskurov via Galicia. On the way we stopped in every town to enquire the whereabouts of chauffeur Singer. At Borshchev we found an automobile squadron that had passed through Yarmolinty the previous night and the soldiers told us that the local peasants told them of the death of two American officers and that Yarmolinty Jews took the bodies away on Monday. Near Chortkov our automobile broke down and we had to proceed to Lvov by Railway. At Stanislav I tried to communicate with our Lvov office and the American Consul by telephone without success. Mr. Kass remained at Stanislav with the automobile and I proceeded to Lvov. I arrived there ten o'clock (p.m.) Wednesday, July 7. I went to the Red Cross immediately and found

The Truth Rediscovered

the office closed. Miss Abramovich, (Dr. Cantor's fiancée) whom I met in the street, went with me to the Red Cross home. I told two Red Cross officers what happened and asked them to lend me or rent me an automobile to proceed to Yarmolinty, but they told me that they had only one Dodge which they thought could not stand the strain of the trip. They expressed regret in not being able to help me in any way. I then went to the Polish Commandant, Col. Linda, and asked him to help me obtain a military automobile. He was very kind, and sympathetic. He explained that under the existing military conditions it was impossible to grant my request, but he told me that there was still one automobile left in Lvov, which I could buy. I bought the automobile about one o'clock (a.m.) July 8, Thursday morning. We then found that the tubes and tires were requisitioned and it was impossible to get others. I went to the Red Cross home to get tires, tubes and an American Flag. A young officer was up, expressed his regret that there was no material in the house and that the storehouses were inaccessible at that hour. He stated that all he could do for me was to give me the only flag left in the house, size 2 x 2 inches. I asked him to report to the Chief that it was very urgent to get me what I demanded as we were anxious to leave at once. I explained to him the urgency of the case, that it was possible that the two Americans were lying there wounded without medical assistance. He went up and came down and told us that he was sorry but could not help us.

At three o'clock we woke up Commandant Linda and asked his aid in the matter. He explained that he could do nothing until the following morning, as he had no power over the Automobile Department. The following day, after much trouble, we succeeded in straightening out the formalities at three o'clock. Meanwhile, Mr. Kass arrived with the broken automobile. He was very anxious to accompany me, but for obvious reasons, I preferred to go with Mr. Sybert, who volunteered to go along with me. In the morning I found chauffeur Singer who told me that as they were passing a village three kilometers before Yarmolinty, Professor Friedlaender and Dr. Cantor told him to stop. He then heard shouts from behind "Stoy."² Presently, three Russian soldiers came up to the automobile and began to point their guns at the passengers. Professor Friedlaender and Dr. Cantor went out on one side of the automobile and the chauffeur and Mr. Grossman on the other. The chauffeur told the soldiers in Russian that

American Jewish Archives Journal

these were men of an American mission that these men were not military men, that they came to help the poor with bread and clothes, and they should be allowed to go. The soldiers were still pointing their guns, and Professor Friedlaender and Dr. Cantor began to run. The soldiers then went after Professor Friedlaender and Dr. Cantor. He then utilized the opportunity and jumped over a fence from where he saw that the soldiers fired and Dr. Cantor fell. The soldiers also fired at the chauffeur but he escaped. At that moment he heard the sound of an automobile coming towards Yarmolinty. He jumped in front of it, stopped it and made it go back. At Dunaevtsy he related this to the Commandant who sent a detachment of soldiers to Yarmolinty ordering Singer to go along. Singer refused to go on the ground that he was a civilian. Later he was taken to Kamenets-Podolsky and he reported to the Chief of Staff but did not report to me because he heard that the Americans already left Kamenets-Podolsky. He did not want to go back with the soldiers to Yarmolinty because he did not want to risk his life (#).³

We arrived in Tarnopol that evening. At the headquarters we were told that staff of the 6th Army left Proskurov and was expected at Tarnopol that night. We waited and succeeded in talking to the Chief, Col. Kesler. The following day, July 9, at 1 p.m., he advised us not to go to Proskurov as the Bolshevik Army was then between Proskurov and Tarnopol that a sanitary train was attacked by the Bolshevik cavalry the previous day and that the wounded were afterwards terribly disfigured by the peasants. We nevertheless decided to go ahead as far as we could and asked him to give us the necessary papers. He sent an officer with us to Lt. Stombolsky of the Intelligence Department. The officer recognized me from a previous meeting at Proskurov and told us that our trip was superfluous as there was no doubt left but that the Americans were killed and that we could get the testimony of an eye witness from a member of his staff, by the name Stefan Rausz. The latter was warned in the presence of his superior officer to be careful, as his testimony would be scrutinized and that he would probably have to appear before high officials and this matter was of international importance. He then gave the following testimony in German and in Polish:

On Monday morning, July 5, 1920, I was traveling in an automobile from Novaya Ushitsa to Proskurov. About three

The Truth Rediscovered

kilometers before Yarmolinty, I noticed from some distance, several people moving around a stationary automobile. Among those people, I recognized one who had a beard and glasses, in a uniform similar to yours. They were pursued by the soldiers. At that moment, I was stopped by a man (the chauffeur of the Americans) who told me to return as the Bolsheviks were shooting. I had no force with me⁴ so I turned back, taking the man (the chauffeur of the Americans) along. Later in the day I passed that place with soldiers. We met Bolshevik cavalry and fired some shots at them. I believe that one was hit, and all ran away. I then saw that the auto was overturned and three dead naked bodies were lying near it. Later, a second Lieutenant and Sergeant of the Dowodstwo Etapu Dunajowzy⁵ went in that neighborhood and were told by the people that two dead Americans were found there. (##)

We obtained an American flag from Major Munday of the A.R.C. [American Red Cross]. He acted like a real man. We decide to try to get into Yarmolinty or to get as near Yarmolinty as possible by way of Gusyatin. We arrived there the same night, Friday. The military commander could give us no information, as they had no communication with Yarmolinty. Practically all of them had heard of the atrocity and a good many of them told us various details. One related that the Bolsheviks retained the American dollars and distributed only the rubles and marks (###); another related that the Bolshevik commanding officers was [sic] very angry and reprimanded the soldiers for killing the Americans, and a Sgt. Jacob Dronk of the same Garrison stated that he had heard from a Pole Priluzki⁶ that the Americans were killed with cold steel. It was also related that the Jewish community wanted to photograph the bodies, but that the only Jewish photographer in town was afraid to do so for fear of the Bolsheviks. Mieczyslaw Gostlowski, Depot Commandant of Yarmolinty, told us that the Bolsheviks raided Yarmolinty Monday, killing the Americans, and pillaging the hospital, and that they were driven out the following day, that the Poles retained the town until Friday night when they were obliged to withdraw, that he had with him a soldier by the name of Jan Szpakowski who saw the dead bodies in the cemetery. Szpakowski was called in and in the presence of the officer, he was told of the gravity of his testimony and warned

American Jewish Archives Journal

to tell fully what he saw and heard. He testified in Polish as follows:

I, the undersigned, Private of the 3rd Regiment of the Kielzi raon[??], [?]th Company, Jan Szpakowski, declare that Friday, July 9, 1920, I saw on the Jewish cemetery of Yarmolinty the corpses of three men which a Jew who was with me, the name of whom I do not know, told me were the Americans who were murdered near Yarmolinty, on Monday, July 5, the same Americans who were going from Kamenets-Podolsky to Proskurov. I went to the cemetery because I was anxious to see the bodies of the murdered Americans of whose death I heard before. As far as I know the Americans were lying all three in a grave, covered only with a board since Tuesday and that the Jew, who at my order showed me the dead bodies, only lifted the boards and I saw that their faces were covered with blood and it was impossible to recognize them (S) Jan Szpakowski

Counter-signed Misczyslaw Goskowski

We then proceeded in the direction of Yarmolinty, but three kilometers away from Gusyatin we were stopped by the last soldiers who were just returning from a battle with the Bolshevists, several of whom were wounded, and told us that the Bolshevik Army in full formation was only a few kilometers away. We then were compelled to return.

(signed) Meyer I. Leff

July 14, 1920

Warsaw, Poland

#The chauffeur makes the impression of an extremely nervous and frightened individual and his statement is apparently not entirely correct in details.

This Stefan Rausz did not speak of any shots fired at the Americans, that he only saw the Americans moving around the automobile and the soldiers pointing the guns at them, while according to the chauffeur's testimony he heard the shooting and saw Dr. Cantor fall.

Professor Friedlaender and Dr. Cantor carried no American

The Truth Rediscovered

money and they had only a few thousand marks and rubles with them.

I wish to go on record as stating that in all my dealing with the higher Polish officials I have met sympathy and willingness to help in any way possible.

NOTES

1. AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frames 3960-63.
2. "Halt!" in Russian.
3. The "#" Character is used for Leff's footnotes, as it is in the original.
4. According to Document 2, he had two chauffeurs and four telephone operators.
5. Military Command of Dunaewtsy.
6. Must be Prilutzki.

American Jewish Archives Journal

Document 2: July 8, 1920

Appendix to Dr. Goldman's Letter # 220
(Translated from the German by Maximilian Hurwitz)

Account of the Attack Near Yarmolintsy
(Statement of the Chauffeur)¹

At six o'clock in the morning Dr. Cantor, Professor Friedlaender, Mr. Grossman of Tarnopol, and I set out from Kamenets-Podolsky in the direction of Proskurov. Against my will!

Towards eleven o'clock, while passing through a village near Yarmolintsy, we were fired at from the rear. By order of the American commissioners I stopped the automobile. We alighted and stood alongside the car. Three Russian soldiers approached with guns leveled at us and, halting in front of us, pointed their guns at me.

As I know the Russian language, I tried to explain to them that we were not soldiers, but neutral American commissioners, who wished to help the poor. The three armed men made no other reply than "What! Americans!" (*Tchto! Americantsy!*) When Dr. Cantor and Prof. Friedlaender saw that my words had produced no effect, they began to run away and immediately the three Russians fired at them. I availed myself of the opportunity, jumped over a fence and took shelter behind some houses, although the Russians fired at me, too. While running I looked back and saw Dr. Cantor press his hands against his chest and fall. What happened afterwards, I do not know. Everywhere small groups of peasants and their women were looking on.

Reaching a barn, I begged two women to conceal me inside. They refused. I began to hide in the hay, but noticed that the women were watching me. Knowing that they would betray me, I shoved one of the peasant women and she fell, while I ran on through the village in the direction of Kamenets.

While running, I heard an automobile approach. I ran to the highway and halted an army motor truck, which carried a captain, two chauffeurs, four telephone operators, and a few civilians. I told them what had happened and the captain ordered that I return to Dunaevtsy and report the matter to the military authorities. In Dunaevtsy I reported the case to the local commanders, Captain

The Truth Rediscovered

Ferenz and Lieutenant Kazak. They sent a detail of soldiers with two motor trucks to the scene, and I had to go along. On the way we met many gendarmes and soldiers, who told us that there were very many Bolsheviks there. After I was disarmed, the ensign let me go back. On my way back I met a first lieutenant in charge of a supply train and related to him all that had happened. He told me that a peasant had come from Yarmolinty and reported that two plundered corpses were lying alongside of an auto. I rode to Kamenets in a motor truck, and got some food at the station from the Swiss relief mission, as I was without any means whatever (my blouse, cap, letter-case, money, and license were left in the automobile). Early in the morning I reported the case to the General Staff at Kamenets, and then we proceeded to Tarnopol, and from there by train to Lvov.

It happened at eleven o'clock, a.m., Monday, July 5, 1920.

Signed: Filip Singer.

Lemberg, Jagiellonskagasse No. 20.

NOTE

1. AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frames 4375-76.

Document 3

Warsaw, July 26, 1920

Translated from the Polish by L.M.H.

Cross-Examination of the Chauffeur ¹

Mr. Prylucki [P]: When did you start out? Did you go with them from Kamenets? At what hour?

Chauffeur [Ch]: We started out on Sunday at 6 p.m.²

P: Why do you write in your report that you made the trip "*gegen meinen willen*" (against my will)?

Ch: Yes, I wrote so, I was afraid and I told Mr. Cantor that I should beg very much that we should not drive out there. We started out at six o'clock from Kamenets.

P: How did it happen? Before Yarmolinty? What is the name of the village?

Ch: It is a small village, a suburb, I don't know its name.³

P: Well, how was it?

Ch: It was ten or eleven o'clock when we drove out. We had reached the village. Suddenly a shot was heard. I did not hear the shot, because the motor worked loudly. The gentlemen began to cry out. I saw a smoke and hence I conclude that it was a shot. Some one shouted: "Stop!" I stopped, I looked around and observed three arm [*sic*] men. Of course that moment we jumped off the car.

P: Who, we?

Ch: The three of us and one civilian. We stood at the left of the motor. The civilian jumped off on the other side. The armed men jumped up to a distance of three paces in front of us. I asked them (quotes in Russian): "What do you wish, this is the American mission which is helping the poor people." One of them said some foolishness and fired a shot.

P: What do you mean by a foolishness? What foolishness.

Ch: I don't want to repeat it now. I am embarrassed.

P: All right then, what happened after?

Ch: They fired at me.

P: What do you think? Did they shoot to frighten you [or] to make a hit?

Ch: I have no means of knowing that.

P: Are you writing about that shot in your report?

The Truth Rediscovered

Ch: I think I did write, but I don't recall, I was so unnerved.

P: But you remember well about the shot?

Ch: After armistice is concluded I'll request the local peasants to testify about the occurrence.

P: You remember well that they fired the shot while you were standing?

Ch: Yes, then I saw that we won't make any headway with them. My gentlemen went behind and began to run away in the direction of Proskurov. I kept on standing. They began to fire. I escaped over the wattled hedge, over a fence, it was a hedge made of wattle as usual in the country. They began to fire on me. While I was running away I looked around and saw Mr. Cantor grab hold of his chest.

P: How could you see when the fence was there?

Ch: The fence was low.

P: Have you seen no one on the road?

Ch: On the contrary, I saw peasants from the town.

P: Have you beaten anybody on the road? Didn't anyone stop you?

Ch: I just struck one woman. I ran thru the village. No one stopped me.

Mr. Gerstenzang [G.]: Were the peasants, whom you met on the road, armed?

Ch: They were not, they belonged to the local population.

P: Then you saw three soldiers? How were they dressed?

Ch: They were in Russian uniforms.

G: What do you call a Russian uniform?

P: Maybe you can describe how they were dressed.

Ch: In gray military cloaks, lambskin caps, long swords and muskets. They belonged to the infantry.

G: Do you know how the Denikin⁴ soldiers are dressed?

Ch: I don't. I only knew that in winter the Russian army wore such caps.

P: What happened next?

Ch: I heard a noise. At the start I did not see if it was an automobile or the telegraph wires. I kept on running further to Gusienice.⁵ I noticed an army motor truck in which sat a captain, an assistant, and other people.

G: How far was this from the place of the occurrence?

Ch: It was about a *verst*.⁶ I stopped the auto and told them about the misfortune. The captain replied that we would go to Dunaevtsy and report at the military post.

American Jewish Archives Journal

P: Then you stopped their car? Could you see their car?

Ch: No.

P: Don't you remember the name of the officer whom you stopped?

Ch: I don't know, I think he is in Lvov, he could have been found, perhaps.

P: When did it happen?

Ch: On the 5th, on a Monday.

P: You say that the Polish automobile that you stopped couldn't see your automobile and yet the officer in his report writes that he saw the automobile and even quite closely. He says he saw your automobile, he saw the Americans and saw the Bolsheviki who chased after them. And you say, you couldn't see anything. The officer writes in his report: "At that moment the chauffeur came and said that the Bolsheviks were firing and that we should return."

Ch: It is out of the question that they could see the car.

P: The officer says, that at the time you stepped up to him, he saw the soldier run after the Americans,⁷ one of them had a beard, probably Friedlaender. It is important that you recollect well. You are testifying one way and he another way.

Ch: This is out of the question, impossible.

P: How much time elapsed from the time that you saw Cantor drop down to the time that you stopped the military car.

Ch: I don't know for a certainty, but more or less three quarters of an hour.

P: What explanation do you give, why the Bolsheviki did not look for you?⁸

Ch: I am not sure, maybe they did.

P: Have you long been a chauffeur?

Ch: Yes, long.

P: Of what nationality and of what religion are you?

Ch: Jewish, and also of Jewish religion.

P: Later on, when you left Dunaevtsy, you did not want to travel in the same automobile.

Ch: I traveled for six *verst*. The automobile was an army car. The officer said he was going on to wage war and ordered me to get off the automobile. There I met a lieutenant. A peasant said that he first saw two dead bodies lie, now a third one is lying there too.

P: Did they have a weapon?

Ch: Mr. Cantor had a revolver. But of what good that? We met general

The Truth Rediscovered

Romer and he told us that we could make the trip.

P: And you had no weapon.

Ch: No, no weapon.

G: And what would you have done had you had a weapon?

Ch: With a weapon much can be done.

G: Why did you jump off the car?

Ch: We all jumped off. We stood up around the motor. What could I do?

P: Still, maybe you will explain, why the officer saw the automobile and you did not?

G: How many automobiles did you stop?

Ch: Only one automobile.

P: You said that they had been shot. How can you tell, when you saw nothing?

Ch: Why just as one falls so does the other.

P: How many people were on the automobile?

Ch: Six persons.

G: You, being a young man, knew that you were driving social workers. You meet six armed men in an automobile and you couldn't tell them to drive with you in that direction to beat off those soldiers from them.

Ch: I couldn't give orders to the captain, he could have understood for himself that he should have to drive there.

G: But you could have requested them.

P: Would it not have been better had you told him to drive there—that one had already fallen? Why, he could have been only wounded and not killed.

G: Did you notice that he was killed?

Ch: They were firing a good deal.

P: Why didn't you beg the captain to beat them off?

Ch: That though [*sic*] didn't occur to me.⁹ I felt very foolish at the time.

P: You meet a motor truck with six soldiers. If bandits were noticing six armed soldiers in an automobile they would run away. Did you tell the captain that there were three soldiers there?

Ch: The captain said that it might be necessary to make the trip there, but the soldiers began to tell him, that maybe there were more of them there and were dissuading him. The captain said that in that case we would ride to the military post to report.

P: Who first started to run away, Friedlaender, Cantor or you[?]

Ch: That's what saved me, that those gentlemen began to run away

American Jewish Archives Journal

first.

P: Were you dressed in civilian clothes or as you are dressed now?

Ch: In civilian clothes, not in this suit.

G: You say it was hot and you claim that they were wearing military cloaks and ran.

Ch: Yes, they ran.

P: Then this happened around eleven o'clock?

G: Did you speak in Dunaevtsy with the Jews?

Ch: I couldn't even get near to Jews.

P: And later you arrived in Kamenets. Did you report in Kamenets to Dr. Leff?

Ch: I was too unnerved. We began to pump in (take on) benzine (gasoline) at the station. The military officer (captain) told me the auto had driven of an hour before. Here Dr. Koppelman also drove up.

G: When did you see Dr. Koppelman for the first time? He was not on that auto which you stopped on the causeway? He is a young man.

Ch: Yes, a brunette, Jacob Koppelman, I think.

G: We are returning to Dunaevtsy, but here is a question.

P: Well, when you came to Dunaevtsy, what did you do there[?]

Ch: They said it was nonsense to ride there. They said there were 2000–3000 Bolsheviki. The refugees rode to Kamenets. So, for the second time I returned at 4–5 p.m. I found the motor truck. We waited till midnight. Dr. Koppelman stepped into the same auto. We drove from Kamenets to Tarnow.

G: When you were there at the captain's, how many persons were there?

Ch: The telephone service, the lieutenant, about ten persons were there.

G: There was no Jew there? You are sure you spoke with no Jew?

Ch: Only while I drove to Kamenets Dr. Cantor said to one Jewess, a refugee, she should come alone [*sic*]¹⁰ that we would travel together. That Jewess I saw later in Dunaevtsy. I spoke with her—near the military post. And she went away.

G: How long did you talk to her? There were no civilians, Jews? Did they hear what you spoke with her?

Ch: There were perhaps some Jews from Dunaevtsy. They heard. One Jew traveled on an army automobile, then I drank tea in his house in Dunaevtsy,¹¹ I was altogether without means.

P: Where did you see him?

The Truth Rediscovered

G: So you drank tea in his house? What is his occupation?

Ch: I don't know. He traveled to Proskurov.

G: Was the captain there? Two chauffeurs?

G: But you understand, our concern is to furnish as much material in this affair as possible. In the meantime, we have you and two other officers. And that Jews were in the car. This will furnish us with plenty of material.

P: You don't know what his name is?

G: If you saw him would you recognize him?

P: How much time did you spend at his house?

Ch: About two hours.

G: Don't you think that being a co-worker of the JDC your first duty was to step into the office in Kamenets and notify them of the occurrence?

Ch: I informed by telephone the Relief Committee in Kamenets, that an automobile should come and fetch me.

G: What you did in Dunaevtsy, I am not interested in. You make a trip to the bureau, why didn't you yourself do it? You knew that Mr. Friedlaender was there and the Committee is interested in this news.

Ch: As soon as I came to the staff, they all knew it already.

P: But it was your duty to go there.

G: And why didn't you go there? I can't understand.

P: Did you hear the question? Were you very depressed or just crazy?

Ch: I was very crazy. I drove to Tarnopol and gave an account to Mr. Parnass.

G: What did they do there? Why, from Tarnopol it is near to Proskurov.

Ch: About ten *verst*.

G: Can't you explain in any other way what you say in your report, that you made the trip "*gegen meinen willen*" (against my will).

Ch: Everyone said, that the gentlemen with me should not make the trip. I explained to Mr. Cantor that he should not go, I said that the Bolsheviki were there. He laughed. The same his fiancée and her mother said.

G: Did they make trip together with you?

Ch: To Tarnow.

G: I have two things against you: (1) that you, being a Jew, did not tell the captain to see what happened and did not tell exactly that there were two¹² soldiers there, and (2) that you did not step in at the Committee's and give your account there.

American Jewish Archives Journal

P: Are you handy with a gun? Had I been in your place I could have done a lot.

Ch: What could I alone do? Later still some peasant ran up to us and said that one soldier had been killed. Polish soldier.

G: You say the automobile was burned? How do you know that?

Ch: We saw the smoke.

G: Was this far away?

Ch: Half a *verst*, we were constantly looking backwards.

G: Why do you judge that the officer couldn't see them and why do you judge, that this smoke came from the automobile? The smoke could have come from a chimney.

P: Had they been Bolsheviki they would have taken the car for themselves.¹³

G: If the bandits wanted to stop you from the behind, why should you have stopped at all?

Ch: That was just the fault of the gentlemen.

G: I would have stopped only had the blocking of the road been in front of the car.

Ch: I stopped at the order of the two gentlemen at about fifteen paces away.

G: How could they be fifteen paces away?

Ch: [*sic*]¹⁴ Why this was an automobile, wasn't it?

Ch: It was hot, the tires blew out, we rode slowly, twenty-five *verst* a minute. (an hour?— Translator).

P: Didn't they say anything before they fired the shot? That's strange. Just try to recall.

Ch: They didn't say anything except that word.

G: Now the examination is closed. At four o'clock you will go with Mr. Rubenstein to the American consul for the final examination.

NOTES

1. AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, #33, frames 3964–72. For the source in Polish see: Reel 7, frames 4338–47.

2. Should be 6 a.m.

3. The name of the village was apparently Sokolovka (see map).

4. By the time of the incident the Denikin's army was already defeated by the Reds, its remnants retreated to the Crimea and joined the forces of Admiral Wrangel. Denikin resigned.

5. The location is not identified.

6. One *verst* measures about 1.07 km.

The Truth Rediscovered

7. According to the evidence of Birman, who was in the car (Document 5), the officer could not see the Russian soldiers. He could lie in order to explain why he had given an order to return to Dunaevtsy without trying to save the Americans.

8. The explanation could be that the soldiers decided to spare the driver as being not military or upper class (see evidence of Dr. Rykhlo, Document 5). The driver could not admit that, as he was afraid to be suspected of collaborating with the soldiers. For the same purpose he claimed: "They fired at me."

9. Should be: "That thought." He thought of saving his own life, of course.

10. Should be: "along."

11. It was Birman (Document 5).

12. Must be three.

13. Being on the enemy's territory the soldiers could not take a slow car with them (it was dangerous), and most probably could not drive.

14. Should be "P" or "G."

American Jewish Archives Journal

Document 4

American Joint Distribution Committee
Romanian Office
Alexander A. Landesco, Regional Director¹

Bucharest. October 25, 1920
Str. C. A. Rocotti[?], 32

Joint Distribution Committee
20 Exchange Place
New York City, U.S.A.

Gentlemen:

Enclosed are reports made by Mr. Mathias Sigal, a member of the J.D.C. at Kamenets-Podolsky of an investigation made by himself and Mr. Jechiel Lisawoder, upon the very scene, of the facts in connection with the martyr's death of Prof. Friedlaender and Dr. Cantor.

Four photographs accompany the report.

The reports were handed by Mr. Sigal to our Committee at Chernovitsy which asked me to forward same to you.

The reports are, of course, of the very highest authenticity and of paramount historical value in connection with the sad event to which they relate.

Please, acknowledge to me the receipt thereof.

Respectfully
[Signature]
(Alex A. Landesco)
Regional Director for Romania J. D. C.

Enclosures.

NOTE

1. AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frame 4401.

Document 5

Translated from the Yiddish by Maximilian Hurwitz
District Relief Committee of Kamenets-Podolsky

REPORT

-of-

The Commission to Inquire into the Killing of the American Relief Commissioners Prof. Israel Friedlaender and Dr. Bernard Cantor. The Commission Consisted of Jechiel Lisowoder and Mathias Sigal.¹

Acting upon the instruction of the Committee, we, the members of the Commission, set out on July 21, 1920, for Yarmolinty, Podolia, the scene of the fatality. Stopping at Dunaevtsy, on the way to Yarmolinty, we inquired whether there were any persons there who had any information bearing upon the event, and were directed to one Mayer Solomon Birman. Questioned by us, he related the following:

On Monday, July 5, at about 9:00 a.m. an automobile, flying the American flag and proceeding in the direction of Yarmolinty, passed Birman's house.² Shortly afterwards Birman also left for Yarmolinty in a Polish automobile carrying troops. On approaching Yarmolinty, they noticed a man run toward them in the distance and motioning them to halt. When he drew nearer, he told them that he was the chauffeur of the machine in which the American commissioners had been travelling from Kamenets toward Proskurov. When they arrived in a village before Yarmolinty, three soldiers attacked the automobile and murdered the commissioners, although the latter protested they were Americans. He, the chauffeur, succeeded in escaping. On hearing this, the soldiers immediately returned to Dunaevtsy, taking along the chauffeur. The latter stayed all day in Birman's house, and in the evening departed for Kamenets together with the same Polish soldiers (for details see Protocol No. 1).³

Arriving in Yarmolinty on July 22, 1920, we (i.e. the members of the Commission) requested the representatives of the local *kehillah* council⁴ and JDC relief committee to call a joint meeting of their members. Our request was forthwith granted. At the meeting we explained to those present the nature of our mission and asked them for their cooperation in investigating thoroughly and gathering evidence regarding the killing of the American relief delegates, Prof. Israel Friedlaender and Dr. Bernard Cantor. The meeting assigned four men to assist us. Thereupon we proceeded to take the testimony of

American Jewish Archives Journal

persons who were the first to reach the scene of the murder and who had looked after the burial of the victims. Right here a few of those present expressed surprise that we were talking of only two victims, when, as a matter of fact, they had found and buried three. To this we replied that the Kamenets committee knew of only two relief delegates who left Kamenets that day for Proskurov, namely Prof. Israel Friedlaender and Dr. Bernard Cantor, and that the inquiry would establish the identity of the third one.

Mendel Wachsmann,⁵ a member of the Yarmolintsy *kehillah* council, testified that on Monday, July 5,⁶ between ten and twelve o'clock in the morning, a Bolshevik patrol passed through the town. Immediately afterwards rumors began to circulate that on the Kamenets turnpike road, not far from the township (or borough) hall,⁷ three slain Jews were lying, and that they were American relief delegates. Wachsmann and Jacob Grosser,⁸ another member of the *kehillah* council, proceeded to the spot where the bodies were lying. On the way thither they met a group of peasants, who upbraided them for bothering about the slain "Poles." "The Poles," said the peasants, have done us enough harm, and it serves them jolly right." Approaching the bodies, we pointed to the sexual organs as proof that the victims were Jews, not Poles, whereupon some of the peasants expressed regret. On closer examination, Mendel Wachsmann and Jacob Grosser, saw that there were three victims. One a man of 60, was lying on the right side of the road, near the house of the peasant Petro Cossack, and close by the body was found a set of artificial upper teeth. The second, a young man of twenty odd years, lay on the other side of the road, close by the house of the peasant Urina Liss, and near him were found the following papers: (1) a pass dated Lvov, June 27, 1920, and good till July 10, 1920, made out to the name of Bernard Cantor; (2) the blood-stained part of a check, made out to the same name; and (3) a receipt for two thousand marks, to the same name. The third victim, a middle-aged man, lay in the yard of the peasant Stepan Bisvostchik.⁹ People who stood near the body said that they recognized it as that of one of the American commissioners who had passed through Yarmolintsy a number of times.

Abraham Fingerut, another member of the *kehillah* council, testified that he and two other *kehillah* council members, Isaiah Ferdman and Beril Kleinman, having obtained permission from the authorities to bury the victims, conveyed their bodies in two wagons

The Truth Rediscovered

to the town and left them in the small synagogue (Beth ha-Medrosh), where they remained over night, Israel Malken and Noto Scheinbarg acting as a guard of honor. Early the following day (July 6, 1920),¹⁰ the victims were buried at the Jewish cemetery at Yarmolintsy.

On the body of the victim who was found in the courtyard of Stepan Bisvostchik, the following objects were found: (1) a cockade; (2) a strip of a shirt with a mark on it; (3) gold cuff buttons on one side of which were engraved the initials "I. F.",¹¹ and a Magen David on the other side; (4) an epaulette with initials "J. D. C."

On the body of the old man a truss was found.

After listening to these reports, we (i.e., the members of the Commission) showed those present the photographs of three American relief delegates: Dr. Leff, Prof. Friedlaender, and M. Kass.¹² They pointed to the picture of Prof. Friedlaender as that of the victim found in the yard of Stepan Bisvostchik. With this, the meeting adjourned. (For further details see Protocol No. 2)

On the following day we proceeded to question all those who knew something or other about the tragedy.

Stepan Bisvostchik testified that early that day he was standing near his home and watching the Bolshevik patrol which had arrived. Soon the soldiers ordered every one to go indoors as a Polish armored car was coming. He obeyed and went into the house, closing the door behind him. Presently he heard the noise of an automobile coming to a halt, and this was soon followed by the report of several guns. A few minutes later he opened the door and saw the body of a man lying in his yard and two more bodies on the road. The Red Army men were stripping the slain men of their clothes. They also ordered the neighbors to drag the machine into Bisvostchik's yard, and this was done at once. The machine remained in his yard a couple of days until it was taken away by the Poles. (Stepan Bisvostchik refused to sign any paper.).

Doctor Rikhlo,¹³ the superintendent of the township hospital for epidemic diseases, related that on Monday, July 5, at about 10 a.m., a group of Red Army soldiers¹⁴ came to the hospital to search the place for Poles. Finding one sick Polish soldier,¹⁵ they took him out to the courtyard and shot him. They also suspected him [the doctor] of being a Pole, but thanks to the intercession of local peasants, who insisted he was a Russian, they let him go.¹⁶ Then the Red Army men went to the shtetl. He, Dr. Rikhlo, remained standing on the balcony of the

American Jewish Archives Journal

hospital.¹⁷ Presently he saw an automobile coming up the Kamenets road. One of its passengers, who set beside the chauffeur, was waving a large American flag. After it passed the hospital and advanced a short distance in the direction of the town, he saw it halt and then heard several shots. Peasants coming from that direction afterwards told him that the Soviet soldiers¹⁸ had stopped the machine, ordered the chauffeur to step aside, and then shot the passengers. The peasants' children had Polish marks in their hands, given to them by the Reds (for further details see Protocol No. 3.)

Andrei Kolbasuk, who lives opposite to the place where the murder occurred, reports that early that day he had been summoned to the township hospital. Arriving there, he found that Red Army soldiers were after the physician, insisting he was a Pole. The peasants who were present succeeded to convince them that the physician was a Russian. Thereupon the soldiers left the hospital and set out in the direction of the town, while he, Kolbasuk, went home, stopping beside the gate of his house which is hard by the highway.

Soon an automobile came up the Kamenets road carrying passengers who were [*sic*]¹⁹ military uniforms. When the machine had reached a point opposite the house of his neighbor, Stefan Bisvostchik, it was stopped by a volley fired by Red soldiers who were concealed in the ditch at the roadside.²⁰ The travelers jumped out and began to run. Then the soldiers got up and fired after the fleeing men. One of the travelers fell near the yard of Petro Cossack, another²¹ near the yard of Urina Liss. The third, pursued by a soldier, tried to run into the yard of Stepan Bisvostchik. As he reached the gate,²² he turned around and seized the soldier's gun. The soldier wrested the gun from him and struck him a blow in the chest. The traveler succeeded in running a few feet into the yard, but was soon struck down by a bullet. The soldier then rushed up to the fallen man and sabered him. The chauffeur, as soon as the machine came to a stop, escaped through his (Kolbasuk's) garden in the direction of the neighboring woods (for further details see Protocol No. 4).

Isaak Reider related that early that day he stood on the turnpike road in Yarmolintsy, watching the approach of the first Bolshevik mounted troops. When they drew near, they asked him the way to the railway station. He showed them the way and they rode off. A couple of minutes later several of them returned and inquired after the road to Kamenets, as a Polish car was coming that way. Shortly after they

The Truth Rediscovered

were gone, several shots were heard. One of the riders then returned, got hold of a cart and went back. Presently the cart returned laden with things. By this time rumors already began to spread that the that the American Jewish delegates had been murdered (for further details see Protocol No. 7).²³

Welvil Polyak relates that early that day he was standing in front of his house. Presently a mounted soldier drew up and asked him for a drink of water. When the water was given to him, the rider remarked in Russian: "Well, we've just fixed up a Polish automobile full of bourgeois." (For further details see Protocol No. 7).

Ephraim Korn²⁴ relates that he was standing that day near the house of one Pek. With him was an officer of the Red Army.²⁵ Presently a rider drew up and reported that on the Kamenets road an automobile carrying two Polish officers and a landowner had been intercepted and its occupants shot. The officer inquired if the machine had been damaged, and was told it hadn't. Shortly afterward, Korn saw a small wagon coming up the Kamenets road, loaded with leather satchels and other things. The same rider rode up to the wagon and told the Red soldiers that gathered how he had held up the automobile and killed two officers and a landowner, that were riding in it. He added that one of the victims had defended himself heroically, even seizing his gun. When Korn learned that the victims were American delegates, he hurried to the scene of the murder. There he recognized the victim who was lying in the yard of Stepan Bisvostchik as one of the American delegates who had passed through Yarmolintsy a number of times (for further details see Protocol No. 6).

Don Hoylman²⁶ relates that the day before the murder an automobile flying the American flag drove up to his house. One of the occupants inquired where Aaron Polaner lived, as they had some money for him. Hoylman sent for Polaner. Before the latter arrived, a local Jew named Isaiah Ferdman said to the American delegates, "Why are you leaving us? They'll kill every one of us." One of the travelers, an elderly man in civilian clothes, replied, "Don't worry, you are being taken care of." The next day, when rumors began to spread that the delegates had been killed, Hoylman went to the place of the scene of the murder, and recognized one of the victims as the elderly [*sic*] man who on the day before had the above conversation with Isaiah Ferdman (for further details see Protocol No. 8).²⁷

We also succeeded in obtaining the original of the report made by

American Jewish Archives Journal

the township authorities, which contains a detailed description of the bodies (see Protocol No. 10).²⁸

As it was established that the Soviet soldiers had immediately after killing gathered up all the papers and other belongings of the victims and returned to the front, passing through the neighboring villages on their way, we went to the nearby town of Sharovka and also sent men to the surrounding villages, in order to look for papers and other articles. As a result, a number of papers and articles of the slain delegates were collected (see Protocol No. 9).²⁹

On Monday, July 26,³⁰ we arranged a memorial meeting near the graves of the martyrs, in which the whole town of Yarmolinty participated. Arriving at the cemetery, we made efforts to ascertain the exact grave of each victim. As there was some doubt about it, we questioned all who had taken a direct part in the burial: Chaim Shimcho Lipschitz, aged 45; Gershon Epstein, aged 24; Samuel Bander, aged 22; Mendel Gegrschgorn, aged 18; Jacob Bechor, aged 60, the sexton (shamos) of the cemetery;³¹ Aizik Falberg, aged 24; Kalmen Geller, aged 49, a cantor. All these agreed as to where each of the martyrs was buried. After the cantor chanted the "*El Mole Rachmim*," we described briefly the lives of the martyrs. The people wept bitterly. Lastly we took photographs of the graves as well as of the meeting, and then the people went home. We also had the scene of the tragedy photographed.³²

On the basis of the aforesaid material, we have established the following:

1. That on July 5, 1920, there were killed in Yarmolinty, Podolia, (a) Professor Israel Friedlaender; (b) Dr. Bernard Cantor, and (c) an unknown man, about 60 years old, and clad in civilian clothes. (Note by the translator. It has since been ascertained that the third victim was one Grossman from Tarnopol, Galicia.)
2. That the unknown victim had the day before the tragedy, been traveling in the American automobile with Dr. Cantor in the direction of Kamenets. This is shown by Hoylman's statement (Protocol No. 8)
3. That they were killed by a Bolshevik patrol.
(Protocols 2, 3, 4, 6, 7)
4. That the Bolshevik soldiers killed them because they took them for Poles. (Protocols 4, 6, 7)

The Truth Rediscovered

5. That the chauffeur had no share whatever in the murder. (Protocols 1, 4)
6. That the money and other belongings of the victims were carried off by the Bolshevik soldiers. (Protocols 2, 6, 7)
7. That the automobile, somewhat damaged, was shortly afterwards taken away by Polish troops. This is shown by the account of Stepan Bisvostchik.

To complete our account, we find it necessary to add, that at that time the front was located at Derazhnia, Podolia, some 60 *versts* (about 40 miles) from Yarmolintsy, Proskurov, and also the surrounding towns, was still in the hands of the Poles and Ukrainians. On July 5, 1920, the day of the tragedy, a detachment of Bolshevik cavalry, breaking through the front, suddenly appeared near Yarmolintsy and this produced a panic in the whole region. After staying a few hours in Yarmolintsy and vicinity, during which time the tragedy occurred, they departed. The following day Polish forces appeared in Yarmolintsy and the neighborhood, where they remained until Friday, July 9, 1920, when Yarmolintsy was finally occupied by the Bolsheviki.

The above is a true copy of the original.
Executive Committee of the Kehillah of Kamenets-Podolsky.

(Sgd) P. Pressman, Secretary.
(Seal of the Kehillah)
Kamenets-Podolsky, September 26, 1920.

M. H.³³

APPENDIX

List and Brief Description of the Protocols Accompanyng the Report Note by the Translator. As the substance of these Protocols, which are in the nature of signed statements by individuals, is given in the Report, wherein they are constantly referred to by number, I did not think it necessary to give a full or even abridged translation of them. Instead I list them and give a descriptive title to each of them.

Protocol No. 1. Statement by Mayer Solomon Birman.

Protocol No. 2. Report of the Joint Meeting of the Kehillah and

American Jewish Archives Journal

Local Relief Committee of Yarmolinty, July 22, 1920.³⁴

Protocol No. 3. Statement by Dr. Ivan Rikhlo, Superintendent of the Township (Volost) Hospital for Epidemic Diseases.

Protocol No. 4. Statement by Andrei Kolbasuk.

Protocol No. 5. Statement by Sheva Blifeld.

Protocol No. 6. Statement by Ephraim Korn.

Protocol No. 7. Statement by Isaak Reider.

Protocol No. 8. Statement by Don Hoylman.

Protocol No. 9. List of Articles and Papers Found Near and on the Victims.

Protocol No. 10. Report of the Township (Volost) Authorities.

NOTES

1. In the Yiddish source "District Relief Committee" is referred to as District JDC Committee. JDC is written with Latin letters. AJJDC Archives, Reel. 7, frames 4402–10. This is the 1920 English translation of the Yiddish source (see the same file, frames 4411–19). The report is based on ten protocols (see the same, frames 4420–45, and their English translations: frames 4455–76). Names in the translation are often Americanized (see List of Names). For a Russian translation of the documents (somewhat shortened), see: State Archive of Kiev Region, collection R-3050, inventory 1, file 197, pp. 6–7. The translation was registered at the Information-Statistical Department of the Kiev Commission of the Evobshchestkom in June 16, 1921. The translation is written in very peculiar Russian, sometimes to the point of incoherence.

2. In the original: 19 of Tamuz, 5680. Actually, the original says "9 p.m.," but the source says "in the morning."

3. AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frame 4421–22. I use the word "protocol" here instead of "document" (as it is in the English text), first, because the word "protocol" is used in the Yiddish (Ukrainian, Polish) sources, and, secondly, the word "document" is reserved for the documents of the present publication.

4. Words in italics are not in the translation, but they are found in the Yiddish source.

5. In the original: Waksman.

6. In the source: 19 of Tamuz, 5680.

7. The source is using a Russian word "*volost*" which generally means a small rural district. In slang it means the building of the *volost* authorities. Protocol No. 4 says that it was a former building of the rural authorities, which was occupied by a hospital. (Reel 7, frame 4433).

8. In the original: Groiser.

9. In the original: Bizvozchuk.

10. In the original: the 20 of Tamuz, 5680.

11. I. F. stands for Israel Friedlaender.

12. In the original the spelling is Lev and Kats.

13. In Protocol No. 3 (In Ukrainian): Rykhlo. AJJDC Archives, Reel. 7, frames

The Truth Rediscovered

4429–30.

14. In Protocol No. 3: the first group of mounted Red Army soldiers (frame 4429).
15. In the Yiddish source and in the Protocol No. 3: militiaman.
16. In the Protocol No. 3: "[They] wanted to shoot me too, because I begged them not to kill the sick Pole, but the peasants interceded."
17. In the Yiddish: "on the porch."
18. In the Yiddish original and in the Protocol No. 3, they are referred to as Red Army soldiers.
19. Should be "wore."
20. The Protocol 4 (In Russian) adds: "The stopped because, as it turned out later, its part was damaged by the bullets." (AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frame 4433–34).
21. Protocol No. 4 adds: "fell being shot and then was sabred."
22. Protocol 4 calls it a wicket gate.
23. Protocol No. 7. AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frame 4438–39.
24. In the original and in the Protocol No. 6: Korin.
25. In the source: where a Red Army commander was quartered.
26. In the original: Dan Hoylman.
27. AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frame 4040.
28. For the original in Ukrainian, see AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frame 4044–45.
29. For the original Yiddish see AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frame 4041–54.
30. In the original, the 11th day of Av, 5680.
31. In the original: gravedigger.
32. The translation here probably is not exact. In Dr. Leff's Report (Document 1) it is said that the local photographer refused to take pictures of the bodies at the funeral for fear of revenge from the Bolsheviks.
33. Maximilian Hurwitz, translator.
34. For the original Yiddish, see AJJDC Archives, Reel 7, frame 4423–28.

Document 6

From Herman Bernstein, *The History of American Jewish Relief: An Account of the Activities and Achievements of the Joint Distribution Committee, 1928*, vol. 2, 270–73. Unpublished manuscript, AJJDC Library, New York.

VI.

That during this period of crisis, the JDC workers literally took their lives into their hands is shown by the tragic fate of two representatives, Professor Israel Friedlaender and Rabbi Bernard Cantor. Rabbi Cantor, a member of the Overseas Unit, had come from Lvov with funds for distribution among the communities in the path of the Russian advance. Professor Friedlaender was a member of the special commission sent to the Ukraine, whose other members were Judge Fisher of Chicago, and Max Pine of New York, who had visited the Ukraine in the early days of the Polish invasion, while Professor Friedlaender had remained in Western Europe, making efforts to enter the country by way of Russia. Later, Professor Friedlaender also decided to enter the Ukraine by way of Poland and insisted on bearing his share of the dangerous work at the front. Accompanied by other JDC workers, he went into the newly occupied districts of Volyn, which were at the time being terrorized by raids of detachments of Russian cavalry under the leadership of General Budenny; the population of this region were [*sic*]¹ unfriendly to the Polish invaders, and naturally looked with suspicion upon anyone who came into the country under the protection of the latter.

When Professor Friedlaender reached the city of Kamenets-Podolsky, he found that Rabbi Cantor was there engaged in distributing funds to Jewish committees in anticipation of the misery through which they would have to live after the Polish evacuation would cut them off from the JDC help. Professor Friedlaender, who was very anxious to find the headquarters of General Pilsudski, Commander-in-Chief of the Polish troops, in order to appeal to him to warn the Polish soldiers against perpetrating anti-Jewish excesses, which the professor feared were likely to accompany the retreat of the Polish army, joined Rabbi Cantor who wished to return to Lvov. It was early in the morning of July 5, 1920, that Friedlaender and Cantor started on a journey, which turned out to be their last. They were accompanied by an elderly local resident, a Mr. Grossman, who was bound for his home in the country. At about ten o'clock the