

On Bloody Paths

By S. Cohen

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Author's Dedication:

Dedicated to my dead and
to my living comrades who fought and believed...

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Forward

I have collected the events, experiences and Jewish moments as a mounted messenger over the bloody paths of the battle grounds of the Great World War.

A portion of them I have published throughout the years 1918-1919 in the daily newspaper, "Der Tag" and in 1921 in the "Zeit," however the largest portion of this material is new.

The facts and descriptions are true. It is not necessary to exaggerate, because the reality was more disturbing and horrible than fantasy could describe.

My primary attention has been given to the Jewish events, heartaches and idealistic actions which riddled the narrow confines of the barracks. On the battlegrounds the Jewish spirit expressed itself more profoundly and more splendidly than in normal life.

It is possible that I have allowed myself too much personal outpouring, have given too much space to sentimentality, but in that time the great majority of Jewish soldiers felt the same.

Right on the brink, and often in the talons of death, we all believed that we stood on the brink of the freedom and happiness that the leaders of the Allies had associated with victory. And it is a deeply tragic truth that many soldiers died with a smile on their lips...

Finally, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to our dear Jewish artist, S. Raskin, for his illustrations in this book.

From the Factory to the Barracks



From the Factory to the Barracks

From the window of the clock factory where I worked one could see the Hudson River and the transport ships with their gray camouflage slowly make their way to the open sea.

When the President of the United States declared war on Germany, our curiosity rose to the highest pitch. We knew now that the ships were laden only with weapons and ammunition, as well as soldiers that had been sent quickly to rescue the Allies from their precarious situation. The younger workers at the factory waited with open concern that they would be called to serve. It wasn't long before they saw that they could have saved themselves the anxiety. The daily news came with the speed of an express train. First came the order to register all men between the ages of 21 and 31, and then you waited until your name or number would be announced. The newspapers were immediately filled with the names of the men who were called to be examined.

Early one fine morning my name was also added to the list of a dozen other young men from the factory who were called up. When I arrived early at the factory, I was greeted by my fellow-workers with cries of "Hurrah!" and general excitement, which was also imparted to the other recruits in their honor. Above all the young men who had already been called were celebrating.

Nu, you were also selected, bye-bye and off to France. Cohen will for sure beat the Kaiser! You are sticking with the Allies? Nu, brother, I am sorry for you! The Germans will grind you to ashes! – That last comment was proudly uttered, fraught with meaning by a German.

I took the questions and remarks with youthful good nature. I was steel and iron for the Allies because I had taken in the vow by the Allies to free the world from despotism and above all the promise of full freedom for the Jewish people.

But, deep in my heart it was difficult. What sort of a major, dangerous path lay before me to travel? However, there came to me a powerful inner voice, a saving grace, that as a Jew I had to show how far we were able to sacrifice for a just cause, and afterward how much good would benefit my much troubled folk. And with even more enthusiasm I began agitating and lobbying with the Allies for those who for pacifist or other motives had argued against them.

It did not take long for the second postcard to come. In just a few days I was in one of the "Draft Boards." That means everything went from just talk to a real fact. It became stronger and clearer for me when I saw the other recruits, many of them accompanied by their mothers, fathers and often with a young wife and kids. Their outward coolness belied the fright, worry and tears. It made such a painful impression on me that I understood for the first time what was coming before me, and how great would be the sacrifice.

When my turn came, I answered the clerk's questions that I was a Jew, that I came from Russia, was a citizen. At the question, am I for the Allies and would I go willingly, he looked at me with a somewhat mocking smile... Nearly everyone had tried to avoid giving him a direct answer because they still hoped and searched for a miracle or some political pull that would allow them to get out of the danger of going to the war.

Move the limbs, take measurements, tap around, look at the teeth, the doctors examined me. Since they were very pleased with what they saw, all I had to do now was wait until I was called to the caserne.

As I was leaving I ran into one of my friends, “Kingstein.” I didn't need to ask him if he was accepted, his mother was hanging on his neck crying bitterly. To the extent that I could, I tried to comfort her, but my heart was in a knot. When I left them I was overcome with a longing for someone, someone close to me, who would throw their arms around my neck and cry over me.

— — — —

With cries of 'Hurrah!' and with orchestra playing the recruits were led to the train station and loaded into the train cars. I came to the station accompanied by my sister, my brother and his wife. In that moment I forgot about myself. They were so pained by my departure. They were so troubled and they looked at me with eyes that said volumes, but their mouths remained silent. When the signal was given to leave, the mass of family members and onlookers broke out with a loud 'Hurrah!' The cheerful cries of the riders had, through their cheers, broken the hysterical complaints and cries of the mothers and wives. Even my brother made a gesture toward the railroad car as though he wanted a chance to say everything at once... The complaints and cries sounded like they were coming from a bad dream, like from a terrified herd of miserable lambs. Thank G-d, the train hastily departed and they disappeared along with the smoking factories and houses of the city.

Fields and forests, trees and little houses went by. Their brightness and frozen stillness worked to calm my soul. Before me stood a long road of suffering! Nu, so what? Is it new for we Jews who live with everyone else's life and fight in everyone's wars...

There is Fort Dix already. We left the train carrying our baggage, and in a long row we followed the lead of a old soldier. And that moment was the first time I saw what a soldier is supposed to look like. The fellow also gave us a chance to see what it felt like to be a soldier... It was a little difficult to follow him, maintain our rows, be counted, walk in the proper manner, not slouch; It was the first time for us that we had to walk and stand the way someone else wanted us to rather than the way we wanted to.

We walked past barracks that were still under construction. On the sides of the road we met groups of soldiers who were ripping out old tree stumps and smoothing out the paths. One of them called out to us: “Hi, rookies, tomorrow you, too, will be using picks and shovels. You've falling into it now!”

Pains and Groans

On the first night we had to sleep on the floor, on a little spread-out hay. Throughout the evening older soldiers who had already been there several weeks, told us about the new life that was awaiting us. About the kind of work we would be doing; which sergeants were the best and which were the worst. Just as I was going to sleep, my thoughts got all mixed up and filled with images of drunken sergeants.

Early the next morning they called each of us by name, gave us some instructions, and gave us tin plates and spoons. They put us into long rows and under the leadership of some sergeants they took us to the mess hall.

By this time I was really hungry, but the smell of the food was miserable, and in my head the words were whirling around saying, "It is pork, pork, pork!" With a slow impatience the long line of soldiers moved along, shoulder to shoulder. Shuffling from one foot to the other we stretched our necks to see over the shoulders of the one in front of us to get a glimpse of what was ahead. And right here at the beginning we made the acquaintance of the famous "beans." But for we Jews the food was not only foreign, but disgusting, because what they cooked was always swimming with chunks of pork and pork rind. Once in my plate fell a piece of pork rind that was so big you could have made a pair of shoes out of it.

After a few days we were outfitted with soldier clothing and spent more time doing military drills. If someone showed themselves not very adept at doing the required moves, and responded with an unhappy face to the yelling and the abuse of the old-timers, he would attract more abuse and be told: "You G-d damned rookie. Do you think you are still back at home? You are in the army now!" – You had to shut up and do as told.

After practice we would curse and grind our teeth at the drill sergeants. Any time two soldiers got together and talked, the only topic would be figuring out a way to get out of the army. Very, very few were taking seriously the aims of the war. But even those men had to keep quiet or join in with the others in order not to disturb the prevailing bitter sentiments.

At night, when most of us were sleeping on our cots, exhausted, after a full day of drilling, turn right, turn left and physical training, we returned to our bunks. The trumpet had long ago ordered us 'lights out,' I was almost asleep, when my neighbor, and strapping gentile, woke me up. Do you hear? Do you hear? He shook me awake. I collected myself, gave a listen and immediately understood what he meant: In the darkness and stillness of the night here and there and in a corner you could hear stifled groans and whimpering like children do.

"And you are crying, too, Blum!" I said when I heard my neighbor sobbing.

"Oh, devil, no, I'm not crying! I'm not a crybaby!" He defended himself. For a while everything was quiet, but soon I heard irregular breathing. He had sat up on his cot and bent toward me and began whispering to me.

"By G-d, I will murder him the first chance I get! Even if I find a way to get out of this army, I will shoot him down in the middle of the street like a mad dog." "In this damned country it is all about bribes and fixes," he went on. "I shouldn't have been drafted. I have a wife and three small kids, and was certain that they would not take me, and the chairman of the draft board knew good and well that I

had to feed them, because I am, after all, no big business man. But he has a grievance against me, he could have spared me. He had to fill a quota, and since he wanted to release a friend's son, a healthy, strapping young idler, and I can show you that he has taken money from a lot of people. Understand? Those who have money can be freed from their sacred duty to the country. But he has come up against a hard nut. If he doesn't get me out, I will denounce him!" He finished, but remained sitting on the side of the bunk for a short while before laying back down. And for hours you could hear him turning in bed and sighing.

The next day he was embarrassed, but under the veil of night, wrapped up in bed covers, his feelings spilled out. And every new moan, every stifled sob torn from him against his will cut through the heart like a knife. And even the strong Autumn wind was like a muffled whine against the windows and ran through the window vents on the ceiling.

As the nights went on the groaning, little by little, stopped. It began to be heard less often, and finally it was confined to our hearts, and could only be seen in the corner of our eyes. In the later nights – when basic training was nearly done, when we were more or less trained soldiers, in full uniforms, and had target practice, got our ribbon, made it through bayonet practice, then the barracks were filled with a more healthy atmosphere and laughter during the long evening hours.

In groups, sitting on a couple of cots pushed together, many spent their evenings playing cards or throwing dice. – It was strictly forbidden, but we quickly figured out that a lot of things that were strictly forbidden could, with a little or a lot of concentration, be done anyway. Card playing, crap games were among the most prohibited, and that is why they were the most common practices. Bringing liquor in the barracks was an even bigger offense, but that didn't make any difference. The ones who were the worst offenders were the high-ranking officers themselves. Our top sergeant was the biggest drunk.

Once when he was particularly besotted, we had a really comical experience. It was about 8:30 in the evening. The soldiers who had spent the evening in the Young Men's Christian Association building, were returning and getting their cots ready to bed down. The ones who were playing cards or craps were hurrying to get one more play in before 'lights out.' At that point our top sergeant, a man who had served around twenty years, suddenly jumped up from his alcohol-induced stupor with a noise and a ruckus that brought all of us to our feet.

"Boys, why are you silent? Why are you looking at me like idiots? They are already in Hoboken. They are bombarding our coasts! The Statue of Liberty has been shot to pieces!" He screamed this with bugged out eyes, gesturing wildly with his hands; from the surprise we were all standing there, not knowing what was going on, but he was still agitated and threw himself on a group of card players scattering their cards and money all over the floor and began yelling even louder: "Why don't you say something? Run and get your guns! Can't you hear how the Germans are bombarding the American shores?" With these last words we broke out with such loud laughter that the walls shook, and at the same time there was a frightful noise, running around and cries of: "The Germans are coming! Get 'em boys! Hunt them down! Kill 'em!"

We grabbed the drunk sergeant and ran him here and there. Then he started to come to himself and figured out the situation he had caused. At first he tried to pretend it was a joke, and later angrily ordered us to stop. But this time we didn't let him off lightly. Until late in the night, well after 'lights out' we cried out, meowed and barked like cats, dogs and simply wild cries and calls without any care for his angry, drunken threats that he would get even with us.

But not looking ahead to what could happen is a bad idea, because he was still there the next day, like every other morning, the first to get up and screamed at us with a loud voice: “Rise and shine.” which means, “Get up out of bed and smile!”

Day In, Day Out

The days were becoming shorter. Outside it was darker. We were standing, but far from smiling.

We had just gotten out from under the warm covers. It was cold in the barracks. You could see your breath. Men shivered. Groans came from all sides, and the top sergeant was still there.

“Hey, shake a leg!” – Which means in his language, move faster. Soon he blew his whistle and we ran down the steps and onto the road to line up in rows. A few did not stand where they were supposed to, there was some jostling and shoving along with some rude cursing to boot. The sergeant came to some of us and lifted up the hem of their overcoats and saw that they were not wearing socks with their boots: They didn't have time to put on socks and leggings. He got mad:

“You are a soldier like I am a vaudeville dancer!”

But no one laughed. We waited for an officer, and when he came he was still drowsy and glistening with the early morning damp. The sergeant called out:

“Attention!”

Everyone snapped to, shivering in the cold. The sergeant called:

“Abelov!”

“Here.”

“Ash!”

“Here.”

And so on in alphabetical order. A few were missing. They did not have enough time to come down. They would soon get their punishment.

The buglers began to play, but the notes were grating. Their frozen lips could not bring forth the round tones they needed to sound. After they played, the company was dismissed. They went up the steps to make their beds and put on the missing parts of their uniforms. Then a long line formed at the mess hall.

After eating and washing the tin mess kit, we grabbed our guns. The bugle called out again. A long line of soldiers formed up with their bayonets at their side. The officers returned, our names were called out again, a pair of commands, “Squads right!” and the line was momentarily broken. We reformed in groups of four, side by side, row after row – and marched out into the field.

On the field we had several varied drills, marching in several formations, directions and speeds. After that we fired at bulls-eyes painted on the targets, until mid-day.

In the afternoon we followed the same program of training until late in the evening until it was time for 'retreat.'

'Retreat' is a sort of traditional military ceremony. You have to be neat, clean and, when the command comes, the company of soldiers must form up in straight rows. The trumpet calls and the playing is longer, prettier and more artistic. One trumpet call comes for the American flag. At that, everyone must stand perfectly still, you can't even move your eyes. The Colonel and the officers salute the flag, which is lowered for the night, and so ends our day until early the next morning.

It is possible that the coming day will be lighter, since right after breakfast we will have physical exercises, and after that the music officer comes and for a half hour we will sing various songs.

The songs are military, with the famous, "Hail, hail the gang's all here," but some friends like the best the song about their home – "Back Home Again in Indiana."

Bayoneting

A more difficult day was practice. The harder the task the more the sergeant screamed at us: “G-d damn you! You aren't at home anymore, you are in the Army!”

From sun up to sun down, they kept us in the field. We were drilling now with real guns and bayonets instead of sticks. They had set up several dummies, and putting us in rows and we had to run toward one after another with bayonets ready, bellowing, screaming, cursing while running toward a figure that was a piece of wood or a man-sized bag stuffed with straw. That was the drill. A long thrust, a short thrust a cut in the throat, a strike with the butt-end of the rifle. Keep running and give the next soldier in line room to do the same. Such a scene took on the appearance of a dance of wild Indians.

During one of the drills the blond officer joined in. He was the one we all hated because of his strictness, and his inclination toward blood sports. More than the other officers, he was demanding and pushed us to run the drills wilder and to bellow like crazy people. When my detail made a run at the dummies, he said that I did not yell loud enough. He stopped us, and called me out and made me go back through the whole course. I tried to yell and bellow but nothing came out the way he wanted. Five times I went back through the run and the more tired and exhausted I became, the less I was able yell with any force, until finally I decided to fall mute – I was not going to yell any more. The others, it seems, figured out my decision and emboldened me with their glances. Finally the officer stopped me, ripped the rifle from my hands, and with foam on his lips screamed: “Are you going to a picnic? Are you going to synagogue? Can't yell? Don't you know that you have to stab the German before he can make a move? This is how its done: watch G-d damn you!” And angry, red in the face, with his veins popping out, he ran the course screaming madly and finally coming to a stop next to me. With drops of sweat running down he panted: “See, Jew, how you stab a German?” He threw the rifle in my face, but I just managed to catch it before it hit me.

“Are you still on the side of the Allies?” – Some of the Jewish and Christian soldiers asked, ribbing me. But grinding my teeth, I didn't answer them.

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That evening a representative of the Jewish Welfare Board came to us and asked the Jewish soldiers to meet at the Young Men's Christian Association building because a young rabbi had traveled from Philadelphia to meet with us. I was happy to hear the news. It was a bright ray of hope for the misery and discord among the Jewish soldiers in the camp. My heart was more bitter that night than most other times, but even if it were many times worse, it would be worth it if it served to relieve some of the suffering of the Jewish people! The next time I will bellow, bellow like a wild Indian if that is the order from the superior officers who will make us into freedom fighters...

When we gathered around the young rabbi, several went to him with various questions, I, also, took heart and laid out the plan that I had carried in my heart for a long time. My introduction to it was –

Since we Jewish soldiers have been torn from the streets of our Jewish neighborhoods and can no longer do anything for them there, I think all the Jewish soldiers from all the army camps should agree that part of their army pay should be contributed to the Jewish Relief for the Jewish victims of the war, and for the rebuilding of the homeland in Israel. The money should be collected by the government

with our approval and withdrawn automatically from our army pay.

The rabbi and the others present thought well of the plan, but everything was left right there.

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A few days later word started to go around saying that we would soon be transferred to another army camp, and, sure enough, they had us assemble and they called out the names of the men who would be sent to Camp Gordon. Mine was one of the names called that would be sent farther south.

The commanders of the companies did their best to give us a good send-off. First, they granted all of the men who were to be transferred, leave to go home and say good-bye to their families. Then, when they returned to camp there were several farewell evenings.

The programs for the farewell evenings were carried out with a true American style: Fist fights, wrestling, over-salted and over-peppered couplets and songs which for the most part put fourth Jews as you figure they would... Everyone had a hardy laugh, and also the Jews laughed... And we had to laugh along with them, because that is the best way to handle the so-called witticisms and jokes targeted at Levy and Cohen in the realm of wit and fun: One Jewish soldier, a New Yorker, a certain Friedland, from the 16th Company, beat in a wrestling match one of the champions of Camp Dix, Private Wengerof from Bayonne, a champion. With that all of the Jews in the company also won. Word went around among the gentiles that if you messed with the Jews, their "Big Brother" Friedland or Wengerof would take up for them.

The celebration was over and we grabbed our famous kit-bags and marched to the train to continue our journey. The people in the places we rode through were already quite used to the spectacle of trains packed with soldiers passing through. At the first stations where we stopped the people looked at the boys who were traveling toward the South and for a train packed with 600 soldiers they brought two big baskets of apples and a few hundred cigars. But the farther we traveled the less attention was lent to us. It was disappointing and a little comical to see, how at the train stations and in the doorways of the houses we passed we saw women with feeble hand gestures who hardly acknowledged the boy's cries of "Hurrah!" Hardly moving a hand, just a lazy raising of the hand followed by its heavy fall. Later another lazy wave and heavy hand-fall and so on. It was as though lifting their hand and greeting the soldiers cost them something.

And the soldiers yelled and waved every time they saw a living person, - torn away from their loved ones and dear ones, separated from them with an iron wall, all we wanted was to elicit a smile, a little empathy, and recognition from those who would remain, so we called out, waved our arms to the free people on the other side of the window. But seeing that they did not respond, we fell silent.

I sought out my buddies, my Jewish boys, the Cohens, the Levys and Goldsteins, and we continued our much-loved discussions about our unforgettable home, about Camp Dix, Camp Gordon and exemptions.

The 45 hour trip on the way to Camp Gordon flowed like pitch, except for the few hours when we, the Jewish soldiers, got together again for our beloved talks about the state of the world, about Zionism, and about the prospects for the Jewish people obtaining Palestine after the war. Then we talked about

literature and music. The men's faces beamed: Kreisler, Gluck, Ellman, Zimbalist, Gudovski, Altschuler, Jascha Heifetz – Heifetz, ach Heifetz! How skillful, perfect pitch, how sweet his tones are: His violin weeps, his violin sings, and out flows the loving sadness like mother's prayer when she blesses the candles. And these discussions, were standing reminders of our homes, the dear, loving people we left behind there, while we sped farther and farther past fields and woods until we came to Camp Gordon, which is 18 miles from Atlanta, Georgia which has, besides its Negros, executioners and sunshine, for us Jews also the harsh memory of the Leo Frank case, which played out there.

In Camp Gordon

Simultaneously, with our party at Camp Dix more groups of soldiers come in from other camps, some from the far West. Among them were a small number of Indians and Mexicans. They brought us all together in an auditorium. Divided into groups of twelve the newcomers were quickly absorbed into specialized units. When I got to my new group they let me in on the secret that we were going to be assigned to the artillery. Once they were finished dividing us up, our group was driven to the hospital station. We had another examination, more shots and only then did a little, old officer take us one by one to ask us about our education, profession and the like.

When he asked me about my skills and what I knew, I told him among other things about my knowledge of music. “That is good!” He encouragingly shook his head, and soon sent me along with a few others to Barrack 9, Block P. When we walked in, good cheer filled our hearts. On the sign we read: “Headquarters 321st Field Artillery” – A big, sergeant with a massive build, greeted us without any ceremony, and with the same manner he might use to load old uniforms in a warehouse, he ordered a corporal to give us bedding, indicating our places and handing out sacks for the straw mattresses.

When I arranged my bedding and laid the blanket out better to please the sergeant, I noted to my great pleasure that my window looked out onto a woods which started just on the other side of a wide path. Farther on was a chain of low mountains over which the sun was just setting and coloring the everything with fantastic hues and shadows. The newness of the place and my misery of the last few days flowed together with the sadness of the dying day. I felt with my whole being just how far away I was from my loved ones, how cast out and alone I was.

One image after another passed before my eyes in the twilight of the sunset; Father's grave in a stetl in the Chernigov gubernia. Mother's in Kiev, two sisters spread out in other places in Russia and a brother – We don't know where. Together and scattered. From a warm nest and now scattered over thousands of miles far and wide, over Russia, America, Canada. I will soon be crossing over the Atlantic to France, a place I have never even dreamed of. If I survive, then after the war I will go to Eretz Israel. Oh G-d! The strongest wind doesn't carry the thinnest dust as far as the diaspora has carried the Jews.

“A new soldier?” A voice made me awake from my dark thoughts.

“Yes! I answered the questioner as I turned to him. To my great joy I recognized in the strongly-built, medium height, blond corporal – a Jew.

“A Jew?”

“A Jew!”

“Are there a lot of Jews in the company?”

“With you, that makes fifteen!” – He answered. He told me his name, “Corporal August.” Soon some more Jewish soldiers came along and introduced themselves: Esh, Goldstein, Aronson, Rome, Cohen and so on for all the new men.

They explained to me that our units is part of the 82nd Division which had taken over the whole camp and were preparing to go to France. They also gave me advice on how to best get along with the

officers and the sergeants, and promised to help me, but just at that moment we heard someone yell: "Cohen!" Another Cohen answered. But the huge sergeant came straight over to me: "I mean you. First thing in the morning you will report to the kitchen," then he walked away calling out other names.

The Jewish soldiers and some of the Christians started laughing at my fresh acceptance, but soon another Jew came to me, he seemed to me to be an American-born, and comforted me: "Don't worry, you will be getting more of the same. They like the new rookies!"

Kitchen Police – Jew Jackson

The head cook, a short, dirty, redhead with squinty eyes, took me in readily. First he introduced me to the other "Kitchen Police," or in the short form, KP's. But neither I nor the others were happy with the introductions and we looked at each other like enemies and schlemazels.

One of them, a tall one with a face like a fox, looked to me to be a Jew, but I did not take it into my head to cozy up to him.

The redhead set me down to peel potatoes and harassed me to do another sack.

"Put on an apron, my good man, or you will smear your full-dress suit, and don't cut your hands, only the potatoes!"

He had the others cutting meat, cleaning out the ashes, chopping wood, making the fire in the oven and other small jobs.

When the men came in to eat we KP's were set to standing in a row behind the counter that separated the kitchen from the mess hall with the long benches. With long spoons we plopped the delicacies into their plates.

My job was to deal out the simple boiled potatoes. The one next to me, pieces of meat. The third – beans. The pudding was distributed by the squinty-eyed cook himself, and the soldiers were the most interested in him. With schmaltzy smiles they said a friendly word to him, a joke, a compliment, and all the while looked around with greedy eyes at how much pudding he dumped in their plates. But the cook did not pay attention to everyone's flattery. For most of the simple soldiers he did not even grace them with a look from his ugly eyes.

"Halevay. If only you were by the pudding!" My friend said to me in Yiddish as he came to my station. "If only..!" I answered with a bitter sigh, and spooned out an extra potato onto his plate.

After the meal we KP's played out a real comedy with yelling and fighting. But we soon got a feeling for just how much power the redheaded gentile had.

None of us wanted to wash the big, thick kettles, pots and cans, and hearing all the commotion, he slowly came out from his corner where he had laid down to rest. He stood there for a while in silence looking at us with tight lips.

"Hey, you!" He shouted at "Red," get a mop and wash the floor – Stop smoking that pipe!" : "You, Stretch, he pointed at Fuchs, scrub down the tables."

“And you,” he pointed at me, “Get to the pots.”

“I can't, I have never washed pots.”

“Really! I will give you gloves!” He threw them to me then started showing me how to do the job.

“Crawl into every corner, – use your finger, you horse! Don't you know that with cold water you can not get rid of pork fat? Use hot water, you jackass!”

Jackass or not, I had to do what he said.

It wasn't until late after supper that he turned us loose, but not all that easily. He placed his hand on his heart and bowed slightly, glaring with his eyes and wished us, “Until we meet again, very, very soon!”

We went up to the second floor to our beds, which for we soldiers was our whole home.

At our heads were our rifles, books, newspapers, clothes and other personal items. In the early evening hours we sat or laid down on our beds, talking or writing letters home, under the weak light of the electric light-bulb hanging from the ceiling.

Some of my Jewish friends came to me, and when I got out of my overalls, “Esh” asked me if I liked KP better here than Camp Dix.

“Except it would be a lot better if we had our Jewish boy, “Jeep-de-Blood.” [?]

“Once was enough with him,” Rome joked.

“Along with him was Tall Jackson... Ay, was that an evil goy!” Corporal August said.

“He should live like he was a goy. He was a regular kike.” Rome turned to August and they started to argue about whether Jackson was really a goy or not.

When I asked about him, they told me that Jackson made himself out to be a Christian born in Romania, and he adopted an American name when he came to America and laughed when the Jewish boys asked him if he was a Jew.

“Me a Jew? – Never!” He said in protest.

I looked again into Jackson's face. He was in the middle of a group who were in a heated game of craps, so much so that they were all sweating. This time he made a throw and snapped his fingers.

“Ha! – Come on baby!”

“Ha! – Come seven... Ha! – Come seven!”

I saw something Jewish in his whole body and in his voice and I decided to go fishing for this sap.

I went looking for a Jewish soldier from another company, one born in Romania, and brought him to our barracks. He should try speaking to Jackson in his mother tongue -- Romanian.

In the middle of the game, which was really getting going, our 'real' Romanian went up to him and began speaking in a hard "Volachish." Some of the gamblers looked up and said, "What kind of a monkey language is that?"

Jackson looked like a rooster among humans, not understanding a word that was said to him.

"Hey, boys!" August turned toward the tumultuous circle which had grown bigger. "Look at the g-d damned fool, shame on him and his nation. He says he is Romanian. We brought a man that he could speak Romanian with, but he doesn't understand any more than a jackass."

"What is he then?"

"What the devil is he?" The gentiles asked.

"He is a Jew!" August shouted out with a laugh.

And from that time on none of the Jews or gentiles called him by his adopted name, just "Jew."

In a short time he begged the Jewish boys in a pure Yiddish: "Nu, to the devil with you all, call me Jankel, but just back off!"

With us he was, so to speak, passed through: Jewish after all. But it was otherwise with the gentiles. While the Jewish boys were calling him by his real name, the gentiles were still naming him "Jew" or "Jew Jackson."

Christ Killers

During the following days of drills and various work details we had been given, I got to know the new men better. I noted that there was more order and better leadership. It was feeling like a strong organization, with a solid and clear goal and iron leadership. A short time later I got an unpleasant surprise. One evening, after the drills, the officers called out the names of the men who would be advanced to a higher rank. They called me to report to the band master as a bugler, to learn the military signals. First thing the next morning I got my trumpet and took it to the little woods. The same little wooded area that I could see from my window.

This point marked the end for me of drilling and all the usual hard work details. I could wander over the woods and fields with the other buglers, or even alone, with my thoughts and dreams.

Due to the unusual freedom the buglers enjoyed, the other soldiers called them "The Graft [sic] Squad." To excuse ourselves before the other soldiers, we tried to stay out of their sight as much as possible. We selected the most distant place to gather, an empty spot in the woods. We laid a fire that we would sit around in a circle, or lazily lay down on the grass and with puffed-out cheeks try to bring forth from the trumpet the many signals. The art was an easy one. The sergeant who taught us the art didn't belabor us. On top of that he was a big drunk, like most of the soldiers from the regular army, and he only bothered to come to us when the captain of our company chewed him out saying his buglers were "rats" and worthless.

Once, after he had been chewed out, he came to us and had everyone gather around for a lesson. This was the first time he noticed me and realized I was a Jew. He was drunk as usual and blowing hot air. But more than to the others he was picking on us, the two Jews: "If you were peddling fish, you would know how to blow a horn by now." He would say that every time we made a mistake. Little by little he fell into his usual role. He laughed at the army and told us not to take the captain to heart, and not even the general. "All the army is good for is to walk around by yourself and drink schnapps," he would end.

We on our side were most pleased that he got back his good-natured, youthful mood, and we wondered at his amazing musical technique that he was famous for. But the pieces he played were so difficult that he could hardly take a breath. When he did catch his breath he would yell, "Oh, this was a Christ killer!" With that he would wink at us Jewish boys.

When he was away from us we would get back to playing our instruments. The sun was blazing everywhere, but it could not reach us through the thick foliage of the trees, but in those spots where it did reach the ground it killed every blade of grass and every flower. Between the dried blades of grass there were often little lizards darting about that you could hardly see because of their greenish color which was the same as the surrounding grasses. At times I noticed that my friends would look at me mischievously and laugh. I would instinctively tap my pockets and immediately felt cool, slippery body with little feet. I quickly figured it out. "It's a lizard." It jumped onto my hand and looked at me with its terrified eyes. I flipped it to Philip Letchlov, right at his face and hit the mark. He was the one who slipped it into my pocket. We spent a lot of time catching lizards and throwing them at one another. Little by little the game degenerated into a brawl, and when I threw a moldy mushroom at a guy, hitting him square in the face, he threw himself on me with his fists, screaming, "You Jew Christ killer!"

"I will strangle you," I said and went for him. It would have been even more bloody if friends hadn't mixed in.

Our Jewish Club

In my first letter I wrote – In Camp Gordon there are about 3000 Jews, so, one can not pass by a group of soldiers without seeing a prominent Jewish nose.

But unfortunately it did not go farther than the nose, because all the Jews saw little of each other. Other than the characteristic Jewish faces, the diligence, the ability to quickly learn whatever they put their mind to, there was not much to differentiate the Jews from the other soldiers. But those who wanted to could be Jewish and show their Jewish pride. For the most part, the Christians handled it with tolerance. Often, however, it was easier to carry oneself, speak and act like a Christian soldier, because, not having to rely on their Christian tolerance, they were more down-home and friendly with those Jews who were the most Americanized.

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Many felt that way. And for the sake of ease, they held in their Jewishness... The only place the Jewish soldiers could go to seek out their brothers was on Friday evening at the “services” which were run in the spirit and format of the Jewish Welfare Board in an auditorium of the Young Men's Christian Association. The spirit of this organization toward Jewishness and folklore has already been described in the Jewish press. It is enough to say that we in Camp Gordon were in the same situation as in the other camps. We came every Friday evening seeking our G-d in order to warm our Jewish feeling and soul, and found an experience without a face without meaning. A dry 'service' and a sermon that you could guess what the content would be, ended our service to G-d. Usually we came away from such Friday evenings deflated, and felt just a miserable as we did during the rest of the week from drilling, if not more so due to the bitter disappointment.

We did get some comfort from the contacts we had with the nearby Jewish community in Atlanta. It is simply a wonder where all of the brotherly love came from that they showed us. The best of all was that it was not being done through institutions or parties but rather from individuals. Rich or poor they came to the Allies Progressive Club in the Zionist shul, where the Jewish soldiers could come together and do a lot to chat and create a homey atmosphere for the Jewish soldiers. They took men into their homes for the few free hours we had. Through the loving and intimate contact from the whole household they got close to those people, just like they were old friends.

As soon as we got back from Atlanta, it all went away and we once again felt miserable and lost in the huge camp and felt even more intensely the emptiness of the Friday evenings. Fewer and fewer soldiers came to the 'services' and it appeared as though the little bit of Jewish life in the camp might wither and die if it were not for the past and active Zionists and Zionist Workers.

Once when I went to Atlanta, going into the Allies reading room, I found the usual small groups of intellectual Jewish soldiers huddled around newspapers and books. In a neighboring room they were divided up along the usual party lines as in civilian life: For and against Zionism due to the Jewish Congress, relief questions and so forth.

It was an unusual sight to see men gesticulating and arguing in a pure Yiddish while wearing Uncle Sam's uniform.

Among the debaters one's striking appearance stood out. A strapping young man with a prominent

forehead and gray, earnest eyes. With his loud voice and Litvak accent his voice dominated the others when he yelled:

“Assimilated is what you are! You are a scourge on the Jewish folk!”

On the way back to camp we rode together and made plans about starting an organization, a national club for Jewish soldiers, and we even made up lists of the people we would invite to the initial planning meetings.

The next evening when I went to Odess's barrack, several of the gentile soldiers came at me calling out:

“Odess! Another Jew is coming!”

“He wants to organize a Jewish army.”

“Send them to Jerusalem.”

“Better yet, give them some pushcarts.”

I saw some friends and acquaintances sitting around Odess's bunk. They belonged to other regiments and other organizations. Odess quieted us down. They respected him because he showed so much commitment to the Jewish community. Then we got down to the task at hand. First we wrote down a platform, which read something like this:

Name: National Club for Jewish Soldiers

Every Friday evening after the services in the YMCA building 151, Jewish readings, declarations and so forth.

Agitate for the Allies particularly for the Balfour Declaration. Support all Jewish works such as Zionism, Relief and the Jewish Congress.

Spread Jewish news among the less informed or Americanized Jewish soldiers

One of Odess's friends, a Christian sergeant, listened very attentively to our discussions, and when Odess at the fellow's requests explained to him all that we were talking about, he sat with us for a long time acquainting himself with these Jewish issues. Finally he said, turning to us all and pointing to the camp's Christian soldiers, mostly Polish and other immigrants:

“Don't mind them, they aren't true Americans.”

In the coming several days we continued to pursue our goal.

The two welfare board members, Mr. Ross and Mr. Ginsberg, at the beginning looked askew at our organization. They pointed out that we did not know how the men 'up there' would take to the idea, but we explained to them categorically that we wanted to express our Jewishness according to the way we understood it, and the first thing we wanted to do was to hold a Hanukkah evening, and they gave in.

The feelings in the camp for one of the 'welfareniks' slackened somewhat, when he advised us how to

get along with the Christians. He said: "I have gotten along well with the Christians, and do you want to know how? – Throughout the four years I was in college they never knew if I was Jewish or a Christian."

Hanukkah in Camp

The joy of the club members when we learned that finally we were going to take the first steps was indescribable. They started getting ready for a big holiday with extraordinary enthusiasm and love. Then came the long-awaited Friday evening, the 14th December, and as soon as they came into the auditorium of the 151st YMCA Building they could see the amazing difference: The auditorium was packed to overflowing. In addition to the benches which were full, every other available place was taken, right to the walls. On the stage was a beautiful menorah which had been brought in from Atlanta, and was shining brightly. Even brighter sparkled and beamed the faces and eyes of the onlookers.

The evening was introduced by a representative of the welfare society, Mr. Rom, who had been leading the Friday ceremonies. Then he introduced fellow-member S. Adam as the chairman for the evening. Mr. Adam made some very cordial comments about the Soldiers' Club which had committed to do all the work in order to nationally promote a revival and well-being for the Jewish people, and also mutually for the Jewish soldiers' welfare. After that he spoke about the meaning and the story of Hanukkah. His later remarks about the English Declaration called forth great joy and elation from the audience.

The opening ceremonies continued with fellow-member Genet who sang the American song of praise. Member Schwartz played the song "Hope" with piano accompaniment from member Blum. The audience stood as one man and sang along. It made our hearts joyful to hear the strong, young voices singing songs of hope. In the tones of "Hope" that we sang that night, we heard a powerful cry of freedom from a people who had waited such a long time for freedom. We did not want to break off from singing this Jewish hymn which we repeated again and again.

Then, member Ravitz blessed the Hanukkah candles with the true bent of a Jewish cantor. Member Kranik sang "Eli Eli." Member Green recited "Cup" by Frug and "Jewish Freedom" and "The Little Light" by Morris Rosenfeld. Member Schwartz, an industrious student from Priochnikov, played "Moishele and Shlomele" by Hayim Nahman Bialik on his concertina. A. Fogel read "Nerves" and "Hanukkah Gelt" by Scholem Aleichem.

Members Pavel and Karp sang the "Song of Exile" and "Mamenu." "Amerika" was sung by members Schwartz and Blum with a concertina accompaniment. The evening closed with the singing of the Worker's Zionist Oath.

For a long time people could not tear themselves away from the hall and the people, with their many dear and beloved brothers.

Finally, we had to go back to the barracks which were miles away, before lights-out. Groups disbursed in all directions and in the stillness of the night you could hear the Yiddish voices calling out "Shalom Aleichem," hearty laughing, the sounds of "Hope" and also the sorrowful tune from the song, "Oh Oh Mamenu!" – You could hear a mournful voice which was all the more poignant in the stillness of the dark night.

A puzzled guard with a rifle on his shoulder showed himself, looked at the unusual group, then went away disappointed into the darkness back to his post undoubtedly thinking to himself: "What's with

the Jews?”

And the “Jews” returned to their barracks but took a long time to get to sleep. Thousands of thoughts and feelings were crowding into the heads of the Jewish soldiers. A happy Friday evening and many joyful eyes had a hard time closing.

That is how we celebrated Hanukkah. It is also interesting to note that the Welfare Board members were unusually surprised with the success. They saw what the people wanted and they promised to do everything in their power to help.

Above all it was the new-comer, S. Zuckerman, who had with his sincere brotherhood drawn us all in.

Our first attempt with Hanukkah had convinced us, that the Jewish soldiers longed for a homey atmosphere and were ready to work to create it even in camp, in spite of it most times being very hard to do so...

Some of the non-Jewish soldiers made a few innocent comments like: “I hope the Army doesn't become Jewish like New York.” The weaker Jewish soldiers were frightened and shrunk back, laying low for a while, but it was enough to go to them with the magic words: “Come brother!” And he came with outstretched arms and with a burning flame of love for his people and their dreams.

A Petition for Palestine

“May G-d be with you and guard you from all harm!” These were the words our mothers pronounced to accompany us on our way. The same words were the ones that Uncle Sam wished us when he made his last “Good-bye” from the edge of the sea.

It was no longer a question of believing or not believing, when one is surrounded by bad storms that toss you about and threaten to grind you into powder, you will believe, you will want someone to turn to in the bitter hour of doubt or fear. You will want someone who can decide and act otherwise than the men who shoot and bayonet and that which is waiting for you on the battlefield. From the first day the Christian soldiers brought their G-d with them and he immediately felt at home, there in the cloisters. But our G-d that the Jewish soldiers brought with them was like our people – in exile. There was no one to help us connect with Him, to bring him to us in a homey manner, until D. Tannenbaum was sent to us from Command. Lightning-fast the news spread through the camp, that we too, the Jewish boys, would have our own chaplain. We waited impatiently for Friday evening when we could see him. Many of us were worried: “Would this be just another disappointment?” But to our joy and pride, it wasn't a joke. When we finally saw our military rabbi and got to know him. Even the first look at him captivated us. His tall, proud demeanor, dressed in the uniform of a 1st Lieutenant, with a true Jewish face that shown through with a good Jewish soul. And with his brotherly speech and questions back and forth with the boys about their fate, he drew them in like to a magnet, and our club became even more active.

For a long time we had been thinking about a petition to the President, in which we would implore him, in any following peace conference to support a Jewish homeland in Eretz Israel. Finally we took the last step to go through with the plan, and the Jewish Soldiers Club turned to the camp Command for permission. Then signatures would be collected from all of the Jewish soldiers and the petition would be sent to Washington. The Jewish boys were eager to obtain permission and then get to work. The text of the petition was something like this:

A Request from Jewish Soldiers

Mr. President, every heart that beats for the welfare of mankind has with trembling joy listened to your words regarding the American position in this war, when you said that, “We are fighting for Democracy and the freedom of oppressed nations.”

The heavenly and noble position of the American people will shine like a bright pyramid for coming generations.

Also the hearts of the Jewish people, which is the prince among the oppressed nations in suffering, have never given up hope to once again become independent, and have lived so for thousands of years. They tremble with the great hope which rang out so powerfully and admirably in your words. By this hope will we live easier and lighter through the horrible misfortune throughout all of the lands on all of the fronts where our blood flows and our lives are lost in such great numbers.

We, the undersigned Jewish soldiers from Camp Gordon, Atlanta, Georgia, serving the American interests and ideals as Americans, exalted by our holy goal and mission against the black and deceiving hand of the armed autocrats. We will not forget for a minute that beyond our American brotherhood, which we carry with thankfulness and pride, we also belong to the ancient people of Moses and the

prophets and from every fiber of our being we tremble with the thought that our people might remain in exile. That the other weak and oppressed peoples should awaken to a new, free sun, but the ancient people of Israel should remain barred from their ancient land, where they brought forth the bible, the land for which so many Jews are longing, with the same ardor as the days when the Roman legions, the spiritual fathers of today's German rulers, overcame us and drove us out.

We appeal to you, the great President of the great American people, that you should help us obtain our holy land when you sit at the table at the peace conference, which, we hope with our whole hearts, will be conducted and decided in the high and beautiful spirit of the Allies, which will be clearly and beautifully embodied by you.

And we, the undersigned Jewish soldiers, will with more courage and skill fight. And if we fall on the field of battle our last cry will be, "Shema Israel!" Our death will be lighter if our eyes can behold with their last look upon the bright world and on their mother's figure displaying the picture of a rising sun over a blooming Jewish Zion."

It should be mentioned that the leaders of the Welfare Board also gave their heartfelt approval to the petition, and the National Club formed a committee to turn to the military Commanders asking permission to send the petition. To begin with we heard from the first lieutenant at headquarters of the 321st Field Artillery. He assured the committee of his deepest sympathy with the cause. However, he did say that the request would have to be approved by several higher levels before we received final approval. It was the wish of the Jewish Club of Camp Gordon Soldiers, that there should be the same or similar petitions circulated in the other camps where there are Jewish soldiers. We are convinced that in this great time we should turn our forces to help in raising up our people. And in addition to what we may do on the field of battle, we should take advantage of every opportunity to make our voices heard.

It is interesting to note that I had the petition translated into English from someone who was in the "Officer's Training Camp," where there were a large number of Jews who were training to be officers (a lot of whom I have forgotten the names). He and the other Jews were pleased and moved by the work.

News came in the camp that a Jewish battalion was being formed in New York and for many of the Jewish soldiers in our camp it spawned fantasies. More than one evening we sat around imagining how good it would be to join them and go overseas, to the land of our dreams, fighting for our people's good and for their full freedom. Several did not content themselves with the fantasy, and reached out to several places to see if there was a possibility that they could, being in the American Army, join the Jewish battalion, but they discovered that it was impossible.

Springtime and Jewish Camp Songs

(A letter from camp)

We didn't even notice when Springtime came to the camp. It was already green, and there were already flowers blooming here and there, and the flowers that were strewn around G-d's world were not aware of the glint of a bayonet, the rattle of gunfire and the tramping of soldier's boots. G-d called them forth, and they came and wanted to come to beautify our world...

We continued to drill just like we always did. We hiked mile after mile in the open spaces behind the camp. But now the distances did not seem so far because each felt in their whole being the song of nature all around us, and our footsteps were lighter.

Our Jewish boys, the various operators, slick smiling characters from the East-side, were bristling with joy with every smile from the lovely Spring. For a little while they forgot the various cares and headaches. They went into raptures over every budding blossom, from every chirp and peep of the little birds in all the trees and bushes.

“See, Jim, what kind of a bird is that singing now? Do you hear? Do you hear? What do you call him?” One of our boys asked a gentile friend.

“That is a golden robin,” Jim answered him. He was no longer surprised by his Jewish friend. He was used to his odd characteristics, and he answered patiently his additional questions: “A blue bird is singing, there are humming birds everywhere, every tree with the pink leaves is a peach tree, and every one with white leaves is a wild dog tree,” and so it went on during the whole march with a rifle and a heavy pack on the back, and also the Christian soldiers who had started out telling a couple of risqué stories, were influenced by the Jew's questions, and began really looking at G-d's wonderful world. When Sunday came at the YMCA building there were bunches of fresh flowers, in the vases on the long desks.

Springtime came and we sang along with the birds. At night there were a large number of singing groups were founded under the auspices of the National Club of Jewish Soldiers, and members L. Weinstein, S. Lies, Kranick, S. Teper, L. Teper and G. Genet were instrumental in founding the groups.

It was no longer unusual among us to hear Jewish songs. We also had a large collection of Jewish folk songs, with which members S. Lies and Garelik were the undisputed masters. Also the club invited all all of the Jewish soldiers to take part in a concert of Camp Gordon Jewish songs. Our boys knit their brows, searched the surrounding mountains, in the heavens, and even looked deep into their own hearts and songs sprung up like mushrooms after a rain. Two songs won the prize, which originated from ordinary sources.

Member S. Lies, parody of A. Reyzen's song, “What does this mean to us?” is the first and we sang it with the melody from the original:

What does it mean to us, the bugle
what good does it do to listen to it?

With its screeching, with its blasting
with its disturbing of the morning quiet.

I'm sleeping and it is cold,
I want to sleep just a little more.
But it doesn't help me at all
I don't want to get "Kitchen Police" duty.

What does it mean to us, the sergeant,
What good does it do for me to listen to him?
Face left, face right,
Don't stand just there, don't slack off.
Clean the floor and wash the stairs
Polish the spear and clean the rifle,
Do it exactly like we told you,
Or you will never get a pass.

What does it mean to us, the captain,
What good does it do me to listen to him?
With his sharp and severe glance,
With his orders, with his warnings.
They're making of me a killing machine
Without a life, without any pleasures,
Dedicated only to fighting,
To learning how to kill and drill.

What does it mean to me, my life,
What good does it do me to listen to it?
Rotting and withering in the barracks,
Burning up in Summer, freezing in Winter,
Eating beans and shedding tears,
Sleeping on a hard, straw sack,
Leaving behind a dear world
And waiting for Democracy.

Second place was taken by a parody of H. N. Bialik's "Moishe'lech and Schmule'lech", by Sam Cohen, which was also sung in the original melody"

Under Camp Gordon's trees
March Moshe'lech and Schmule'lech
Rifle'lech on their shoulder'lech
In Uncle Sam's clothes'lech
Far from their warm home'lech,
Shop stands and store'lech
Oy, how it tugs at your heart'lech
For the dear Mama'lech.

Only one thing is needed: Jew'elech,
Deep in their heart'elech,

That which heals the deep wound'elech,
And weaves the good dream'elech,
They yearn for Jewish deliverance'lech,
Glimmering in the distance like star'elech,
From Zion's high mountain'elech
And better times'elech.

These and other songs were sung on various occasions. Successful or not successful for the moment they helped forge the Jewish life in camp and beautified the little time we had before going “Over There.”

We were all very pleased when Odes told us that we had received a huge number of Yiddish books that Joshua Gordon from the People's League had given us.

That very evening he brought them to our Club. Like hungry bees the boys circled around the books.

“Ah, there is my Sholem Aleichem!”

“What? Kašrileyķe?!”

“Kašrileyķe!”

“Give it here, you miscreant!”

“There are magazines! For me the 'Troike,' Look for 'Chus,' the 'Stern!' You could hear people calling out.

“Destroyed Worlds by A. S. Sachs” another called out. But here Odess mixed in and yelled like a commander giving an order:

“Give me that book!”

“Nevias” at first did not want to give it up, but when Odess calls, there is no help for it. When Odess got the book back he sat down at a table and waving the book in the air he showed it to us and said:

“Brothers! Private Joseph Peff says that he is a comrade, an internationalist, and he doesn't care if the Jewish people go under. I will give him this book and he will see how an ordinary, learned comrade describes with so much love the little Jewish villages with their deep Jewish customs. He should see, that comrades can also love their folk.

“Peff” took the book but not wanting to look like he was giving in, he made a remark with his crafty voice:

“I will never believe in your Zionism and in your Allies!”

And immediately two opposing parties gathered around Odess. It was at the same time comical and tragic to see their battle. Would there be or not be a war? It was very incongruous, the uniforms the heated typical Jewish gestures and the clashing worlds of convictions and ideals...

The Echos from the Zion Legion

The movements of the Zion Legion [British Jewish Legion 1917 – 1921] made a strong impression on the Jewish soldiers in Camp Gordon.

Each new group that rallied to our white and blue flag, and went off to fight for our people in Zion called up a fresh outbreak of joy, even among our most Americanized boys.

The enthusiasm of our friends in the National Club and the other “Jewish Jews” was assured. It sometimes reached comic proportions.

We saw how a Jewish soldier showed a cutting from a Jewish newspaper of a picture of the Legion to a group of Christian soldiers, and read to them about the sayings and the marches of the Legionnaires. At first they made fun of our “boy,” who, in his enthusiasm, had forgotten to translate the article into English. But when they finally understood what it was about, they became serious and looked with great respect on the reader. It was clear that the Jews wanted liberty and were fighting for their country. That was something else. Yes, Jews had raised their heads and the Christians understood that we had a right to it.

Schwartz, Lubavniker and Feingold – Those are the names of our three dear comrades, Galitzianers, who together with the other Austrian subjects were freed from military service. We got the news that they had enlisted in the Jewish Legion. Today, who can compare to the proud comrades from the National Club who see their reflection in the three comrades: Schwartz, Lubavniker and Feingold.

Ignoring what we all knew, that we couldn't transfer to the Jewish Legion, one of us, F.R. Raskin, wrote a request to his commander asking for permission to join them and fight alongside of our brave brothers. Many of us waited to see what answer he would receive. If he should be successful, then we would all write our own requests.

The efforts of A.B. Steinberg were tragic. The whole time he had tried to get out of the service on the grounds that he was underage, not a citizen and physically weak. But once he realized that the Balfour Declaration was not just a piece of paper, that they were serious about it, he went to his captain's office, stood there like a rock and said: Captain, I am giving up my efforts free myself from the army!” The captain was very pleased to hear his explanation. However, he did wonder about this sudden change of heart. In answer to the captain's questions, Steinberg replied in his broken English that, “Since England and the Allies have guaranteed that Eretz Israel will become a Jewish land, and since many young Jewish men have fought under the Jewish flag, I want to go also.” The Captain promised to help, and in speaking with higher officers he put forth Steinberg as an example. He said: “In Eretz Israel or in France, with such soldiers we are sure to win this war...”

In the meantime our Club decided to send a letter to our combatants who were already in the ranks of the Jewish regiment, and to those who were on the way there, and also to those wanted to join up with them.

Here is the letter that we prepared for them and read in front of the Club:

“To our dear and beloved comrade legionnaires.

From our rifles, from the ranks of Uncle Sam's army in Camp Gordon, we send to you, dear brother legionnaires, our cries of joy. Bravo, brothers and fighters, who have felt within you the eternal stormy blood of our struggle, which has and always will defend its right to a free life.

Dear brothers! Your steps which bring you closer to the place of battle for our so garlanded homeland, ring in our hearts like the steps of the Messiah upon whom our people have so long awaited, and with such faith throughout all time and in every corner of the world.

Among the masses of brave fighters in the English army, we will watch for you and follow with halted breath your every move.

Dear brothers! After the English hoisted high the Jewish flag in the eyes of the whole world, and at the same time spilled the blood of their best sons conquering for us one section after another of our holy lands, we have watched, your brother soldiers from Camp Gordon, with the greatest of excitement to see if in American Jews there would not only be heard cries of 'Hurrah' and monetary donations but whether they would follow the wonderful example of the Israeli and English brother-legionnaires and sacrifice their own lives.

To our great joy, pride and pleasure from the greatest enthusiasm to which there is no end, when we heard about the creation of the Jewish Legion and about the great love and respect that our reawakened Folk demonstrated when you started on the path to the great struggle.

Dear brothers! You must forgive us that our sense of wonder at your deeds has made many of us jealous of you. You lucky ones will have the privilege in this great tragic moment in the history of the world, in this great decisive battle for our people's freedom, to fight on that ground soaked in the tears of so many years of longing and craving from our people. You will fight under the same skies which are full of the dreams of our Folk; under the same heavens, that will finally see the day, which must and will come – the day when our people will sow and reap, be happy and spin their g-dly dreams, sing their eternal songs of freedom! So many of us would like to go and fight side-by-side with you and with spilled blood and with cries of agony along with you sanctify and bless forever the rights of our martyred-folk and our stolen land.

But nothing remains for us but a single comfort. Which is that we will be fighting under the great and noble flag of America, which has taken the side of right and freedom for all mankind, and will certainly not forsake our people when the great hour of peace arrives.

Dear brothers! Go and be assured that you will be watched with great wonder and anticipation by our ruined brothers in Romania, Galitzia and the once unfortunate Russia. Thus do our brothers from the various hell-holes of the world send you their blessings and best wishes. They will pray to G-d that He should strengthen your hand in this holy struggle, and when finally it comes that they can work and live free on the land soaked in your blood, their children will plant flowers on your graves and they will sing, and dancing in a circle, they will plait flowers in their hair and will bless you with more love every following Spring that renews and enriches our then happy people in the lap of our now happy land.

Be healthy and strong, dear brothers, and we beg of you: When you tread on our holy ground with your steady resolve to fight for our freedom, laughing in the face of death and like our forefathers, the

Maccabees, you will bring freedom and happiness to life. In longing you must not forget; if it is possible to speak to our mountains and valleys and to the heavens above our land, then tell them of our great love for them.

Be healthy dear brothers! Together we will hope, that both you and us, will come out of this bitter struggle and will be together to enjoy the fruits of our accomplished goal and will live in happiness on our freed lands in the brotherhood of a free and joyful family which will finally understand how to resolve conflicts and how to achieve freedom and justice in a peaceful manner without death and blood-spilling.

From us, your brothers from Camp Gordon, the executive committee of the National Jewish Club:

S. Ades
S. Cohen
Z. Dashevski
H. Epstein
A. Steinberg
B. Bernstein
Moris Rosenblum
and Katovitz

When the Night Leaves Rustle

Among the great number friends that we, Jewish soldiers, have had among the people of Atlanta, there were some who were more intimate and nearer, who demonstrated a greater interest in our in our spiritual life and struggles. They acted almost like members of our National Club, helping us arrange our undertakings in camp as well in Atlanta. And the closer the time came for us to debark for France the more intimate and tighter our relationships became between us and the Atlanta group, even coming to camp for our business meetings that we held every Tuesday evening. When we accompanied them to the edge of the camp after their visit thanking them, they assured us that they did it not only for love of us, but for themselves, because they felt miserable and abandoned and we had brought to them a great gift, a rejuvenation to the little bit of Jewish life which up til then had only been smoldering.

One Friday after our usual gathering, to which our friends from Atlanta, Miriam Brooks, Reytsel Lesnov, Yossel Yampolski and the elder Schmucl Yampolski, who we loved for his clever, witty, folksy humor, we decided to make this an exceptional night and not go back to our barracks but to stay among the trees that bordered a dense woods. There were some who did not like this 'fantasy' and they left. But there was still a large group and we all sat down on the wet grass. It was a dark night. A warm, light breeze ruffled the treetops which seemed to sigh in their sleep from the light rustling of the leaves. Deeper in the woods there was a more prominent rustling and cries of the nocturnal birds. From the other side, where the camp was located, the lights in the windows of the barracks began to go out in an orderly fashion as though they were also soldiers sounding off by columns: One, two, three, four! – And with every extinguished light the night became even more dark and thick.

“Should we smoke?”

“Yes!”

“But hide the light, just like you were at the front.”

After a short period of thought and silence, little by little we fell into our usual conversations. It was very valuable for us to get together and to be able to speak from the heart.

“Salant” recounted a comic scene that affected his whole company. A Jewish soldier from his platoon was just a hairs breath away from breaking into tears. At last night's Retreat they called out the names of the soldiers who had earned promotions. They did not call his name as corporal like he had anticipated. He had already bought his corporal patches. It never bothered him when people called him “Jew” or by his family name, but in his disappointment he began to complain that he did not make corporal because he was a Jew...

Salant argued with him, pointing out that of the 16 Jews in the company 9 were corporals or sergeants, but he stood his ground, countering by saying that if the 16 were all gentiles, then they would all be non-coms by now. – That's how National he became all of a sudden.

“Have you heard about N., from the depot brigade?” Levin asked us, and recounted that lately N. had been acting like he was mentally disturbed. Recently he came up with something new: Every morning when the company is called out for “policing duty,” that is to say, picking up trash from around the barracks, instead of him trying to avoid this dirty job, he stays longer than everyone else. The sergeant screams at him to get back in formation, grab his rifle, but he continues walking the grounds. “What

are you searching for?" they ask him. He doesn't answer. When they gather around him with laughter and catcalls, he ignores them. He just keeps looking. Then the sergeant grabs him by the collar, gives him a shake, and asks him, "Hey, loony, tell me what you're looking for!" He answers: "I'm looking for my discharge papers." And then the whole company fell out searching the yard for *their* discharge papers.

Stolper tells us that when he was on guard duty last night he heard crying and a ruckus coming from someone fighting in the guard-room. He wanted to slip over to get a look at who was getting such a murderous beating, but he was afraid he would get arrested. (Later we found out, it was a guy who refused to go to France.)

Odess gave us the content from a lecture that an officer gave. It was in the field where they had dug trenches to practice shooting and bayoneting. During a 15-minute break the officer called together the company and asked them if they knew anything about the Germans that we were going to fight. Some men called out, "They are Boches, they are beasts!" and other unprintable names. But the name-calling ceased suddenly and dissolved into a strange grin as they looked around and noted the German-American soldiers, their comrades...

The officer began his lecture. He said that when the Germans capture an American it is all over for him. They beat him to death, cut out his tongue and sometimes they do something even worse. He heard of one case where they caught three Americans soldiers. And, "Can you guess what they did to them? – You won't be able to guess!" After a tense pause the officer said, "They shattered their legs with the butt of a gun over a stone. – – – – –"

The whole company, instead of being horrified – laughed to themselves. Others gritted their teeth and looked at him with eyes that would have been happy to shoot daggers at him.

Makrinski told us that in his company their officer is an intelligent man and lectures them quite differently about the same topics.

Intelligent, yes, intelligent, no. But with every additional outpouring of their heart, the darkness around us seemed to get thicker and the rustling of the leaves more suffocating, in our throats was a stifled wail.

"Let's get back before they sound taps." In groups of one and two we split up, and headed in various directions without being seen.

Passover in Atlanta

Finally we arrived at the blessed eve of Passover, when we received our passes to go to Atlanta for our beautiful holiday.

Then suddenly Atlanta, which was not used to seeing a lot of soldiers on the streets during the weekdays, was flooded with a few thousands of Jewish soldiers who were rushing to a prearranged home, to their Atlanta friends who had written and invited them, for G-d's sake, to come for the 24 hours that they were free. And they came. Not just to enjoy a wonderful Seder meal, but to celebrate for the whole duration of their pass.

There were many sad hearts, but there was one sorrow that could not be hidden. Memories of home and the worried mothers and fathers that resided there; The memories of the Seders when everyone was sitting down together with their dear ones and love, clutched at everyone's heart. But in Atlanta there were a lot of good Jewish mothers, with the same good Jewish hearts and souls, that Jewish mothers all over the world have. The Atlanta mothers understood the tragedies that the "boys" endured, and they did everything they could to make us feel happy and comfortable, and their entire households pitched in. There wasn't the slightest pretense of ordinary hospitality. It was true and intimate!

When I got to the Alliance building where the soldiers had been sent as though to a market, going here and there for Seders, I ran into one of the organizers, Mr. Davis, who I already knew to be a down-to-earth guy. And as usual this time, like all the other times, he had me get in his Ford which was already overloaded with merry friends. He had put together our group, by that I mean, Liss, Gorelik, S. Ades and a half-dozen other soldiers.

The woman of the house and her children gave us a bright and cheery welcome. They directed us to the delicious treats and we showered her with compliments.

Liss, the littlest, palest and most lively soldier in the whole camp, soon got to his favorite theme: Cursing the army and the war.

"You will never see me in France! There is already a sign!"

"What do they want with my poor life? Do I say that the Allies are unjust? They are absolutely just, but why should I join in with my one and only head?" He joked.

Immediately we split into two parties and debated the question as to whether the Allies would carry through with their promises.

When some young ladies came in, the guys little by little drifted away from the tables and gathered around the girls with chivalrous regard. There was something a little tragic in their longing to spend even one hour with an ordinary Jewish daughter, perhaps for the last time....

After the initial flirting and joking they went over to the Victrola, and with the thirst of men who might be parting forever from the free, loving world, they began playing love songs.

"Play Caruso!"

“Play Alma Gluck!”

“Zimbalist!”

“McCormick!”

“Quiet, quiet” shouted Liss. “We will listen to all of them. They are all kosher, Jewish children.”

The woman of the house that many of us called by her first name, Reytsele, never tired of satisfying our every caprice, and we all enjoyed the classical songs. We all grew serious, each with his own thoughts, until Odess, the big Jew, a Litvak and fiery soldier, started up an Hasidic dance, and snapped everybody out of the serious mood. It turned out to be the old Noyekh kletzmer from the far away stetl in the old homeland. More joined in the circle around him with his back hunched over his fiddle and they spun around him in a real kosher dance even Bubbie Brinne with Aunt Dvoshe. They both hitched up their skirts and locking eyes with one another they lost themselves in Noyekh's music, and his heartfelt Jewish melodies.

On our faces you could see a melancholy smile, that nearly caused tears to well up and caused our hands to tremble. People still sang, free and without any tricks... From out of a corner Yossel popped out, the comedian from Atlanta. He leapt into the center of the room, stamped his foot, did some wild steps flinging his arms, throwing his whole body into it until the sweat poured down off of him. His glasses flew off right away. One after another of us were pulled into the whirling dance of ecstasy and forgetfulness. Suddenly, in the middle of all of this turmoil, Liss jumped up on a chair and laughing through his tears he cried out:

“Jews! Jews! Do you know why I don't want to sacrifice my life?”

At that moment we all froze in our tracks as though dead, but the Odess came forth:

“Well, I'm going!” As he pressed his balled fists together. “I want to go because I am sick of living in exile. I want to fight for Eretz Israel.”

“Your Allies are lying!” Y. Peff shot back at Odess.

“If they are lying, I will have someone to call liar. Until then, they have promised us our freedom, and the Jews must show them that we can pay the price!” Odess cried out with his Litvak accent.

So they continued to argue until the children fell asleep and the morning star had climbed high in the clear, deep heavens.

Exhausted after throwing around all of these verbal jabs, people stretched out on the floor, and in sleep they drew closer one to another in a brotherly row.

This is how we spent the 24-hours of our beloved Passover in the homes of our Atlanta brothers.

Our hearts skipped a beat when we saw the huge Seder that was arranged by the Welfare Board with the help of our chaplain and the very capable Jewish women, Mrs. M. Zion, Mir Pidleman and many others. It did not take long to discover that a big, public Seder can also carry with it a beautiful Jewish sentiment. The arrangers of the event made sure that it would be that way, and it will not soon be

forgotten by those who took part.

The long, beautifully decked-out tables in the Alliance Hall all had lighted candles and flowers. However, the most beautiful decoration was the 700 Jewish faces of our “boys” who had cleaned up specially in honor of the holiday. They were guided to their places by the Jewish women who had forgone their own Seders in order to serve the “boys.”

Chaplain Tannenbaum led the first Seder, and Rabbi Marks – the others. On both evenings they did not miss out on the required ceremonies of a true orthodox Seder. For the benefit of the Americanized Jews and guests, the Haggadah was available in English translation. Spirited discussions were held by our Chaplain Tannenbaum, Rabbi Marks, Rabbi Solomon, the president of the Alliance, Mr. Lichtenstein, and V. Krenegshober. Also at the table were a few Jewish officers. Captain S. Berlin and Lieutenant H. Goldman were at the speaker's table. We also had a Christian guest, Chaplain Paul Taylor from the 325th Infantry Regiment who we welcomed with exceptional love and enthusiasm, because without regard to the huge amount of difficulties involved, he brought the “boys” from the 325th Regiment to the first Seder. The difficulties that had to be overcome were due to the fact that the Regiment was on the way to the rifle range and was under strict orders not to let any of them miss out. Nevertheless, Chaplain Taylor worked it out so that the Jewish “boys” were released and he accompanied them personally to the Seder. He spoke warmly about the Jewish people and the Jewish soldiers.

But we were not solely occupied with the Haggadah and the four questions. A wonderful supper was served, and the women ran from one table to another to make sure that nothing was missed. The only thing lacking was the cup of red wine which is such a beautiful accompaniment to Seder. The reason for that was that Georgia was a 'dry' state, and we had to make do with lemonade.

All Seder'ed out, stomachs full, the “Chad Gadya” song sung along with the other Haggadah songs, the crowd made its way out onto the street. We spent a long, long time walking through the Jewish neighborhoods with the Jewish Mama-Papas and the beautiful, young daughters of Israel and the children. The mixed groups were together until late in the night.

Resounding, hearty laughter, loud Yiddish discussions, mixed with sharp Jewish witticisms could be heard from all corners of the quiet street. From among the newly blooming trees here and there you could hear someone singing a Yiddish song. And in other corners further on it was quieter as though the night was holding its breath and you could hear “Oy, oy, Mamenu” and “Oy, oy little orphan, little fallen tree,” and other such words which pressed heavy on the heart, and caused a catch in one's throat.

But someone took it upon themselves to awaken everyone from the bad dream, from the melancholy mood that had descended on us and with exceptional boldness and beauty they broke out in a wild, Russian kazatsky, in a Hassidic hopke, triggering more resounding laughter and talking and once again the eternal Jewish “Brothers don't worry! Better times are coming!” got the upper hand.

Past Leo Frank's Gallows

For the third and last time we had to go from Camp Gordon to Marietta for target practice with our artillery before we would be sent to France.

The night before our departure we had to prepare for a full inspection and immediately after the last trumpet call for 'Taps' we were all busy with washing our things. But more than just washing out things, we were equally busy talking our hearts out with one another.

“It looks like we will be debarking soon. Boys, did you read about the last battle on the Marne? Fifteen thousand men fell in battle just around one hill.” – This is how we talked in chopped off phrases to one another about the horrors that awaited us there. And while washing their shirt or blouse each thought about whether these would be the last outfits they would ever wear, and who would fall over there in a pool of blood before breathing their last breath.

The bugle call early in the morning found most of us still awake. Few had closed their eyes throughout the night. The full inspection and the whole early-morning procedure was accomplished quickly as usual, and to the sound of the military orchestra we marched off laboring under the heavy, full packs on our backs.

This time more than before the Jewish soldiers seemed to be closer to one another, thank G-d! Next to me was “Esh” Goldstein and Corporal August. We were in the “Landing Squad” (First row).

“Gee!” the sergeant remarked with a wry smile, “This is a regular Jewish march!”

But we didn't care. We were used to such comments and smirks... We deliberately began speaking Yiddish even louder. He should hear it and drop dead. We agreed among ourselves that under no circumstances would we back down or fall-out until we reached Marietta.

It was a long way. Our goal was 24-miles away. But it was so beautiful out! We went through old forests, and between high mountains. In the third hour of our march we went through a wide valley, with a rapid river and golden water. Crossing over the river on an old wooden bridge we could see through the open windows and doors of an old abandoned water mill.

We had done this march three times and recognized places and trees. The only new thing was the flowers. This time they spread out from under the high grasses and greeted us with the lovely summer, and I looked at the flowers as old acquaintances. They were the same ones that I recognized from my old home in Russia, and I thought back to that happy time, when a child would delight in the thought of war as a fantastic adventure and spectacle. – How different it is now...

The hours of the march weighed heavily on us, and the closer we got to Marietta the heavier our hearts grew. After a mile and then another mile, we would come to the little woods where they lynched Leo Frank.

We were already well acquainted with the little woods and the area around it. It was located just before the entry into Marietta. Between the trees you could see a smokey cotton gin mill, and beyond that a single farm. That is where Leo Frank was hung from a middle-sized tree.

When a visitor entered that little woods, a number of ragged, filthy little children would run out, and after examining the visitors for a short while, the older children would take their finger out of their mouths dig around in their shirts and bring out postcards saying: “Mista, mista, dis de Jew” – You would take from them the gray, poorly framed picture. Yes, that is it, there was something white hanging from a rope in the tree. You could only make out the feet, skinny, bare, tense. Then after you bought a couple of postcards from them, the little shegetz's would get excited and friendly and guide you to the tree. And there he was and that was the branch that they threw the rope over... It was exact, just like in the photo.

The trunk of the tree is nearly black, but slivers of it are missing as if little by little people are carrying it away. In some places letters have been cut deep into the tree: “Frank no more” – “Jew gone to Hell” and other similar inscriptions with countless names that were carefully and clearly carved.

Tired, very tired we were by the time we got to the little woods. The packs on our backs had grown to a gigantic mass, our bodies and clothes were soaked in streams of sweat, our heads were spinning and our feet were like two barely attached appendages that wouldn't follow orders. Several soldiers had already fallen out and were sitting by the side of the road protesting and cursing. But once the dark little woods were visible in the distance, everyone seemed to forget their exhaustion, they were revived. The Christians were showing an angry fire in their eyes, and by us, the Jewish soldiers, you could clearly see how we were holding back feelings of horror and pain.

“Hey, Levi, that's where they hung your cousin! Hey, Goldstein, that's were they did in your sheeny brother!” These and similar remarks started to fly around the soldiers. We answered them by calling back, “Barbarians,” “Pigs.” When people really started getting angry we reminded them that their G-d was also a sheeny. That last one got them even more angry, until the officers had to mix in who, up to that point had only grinned and turned their heads the other way.

Before passing through the little woods we had to calm down so that we could march sharp and strong since the whole town would be out to meet us and applaud us. But instead of calming down the Christians ran to the woods, made a circle around the tree reading the inscriptions with great gusto, and began immediately to cut away twigs, slivers or bark as a souvenir of the tree where the “G-d damned Jew was hanged.” They took care to send them back home so their Mama's could keep safe this rare souvenir and, G-d forbid, it should go astray. For us Jewish soldiers it weighed heavy on our hearts that these Christians were our brother soldiers that we were going to gunnery practice with to learn how to hit the targets, and later to give up our lives in a war for brotherhood and justice for all nations...

When we entered Marietta the officers shouted the proud and uncompromising “Attention!” And it was like an electric shock went through the columns. We evened up right away in a proud, professional formation with an even and measured stride: One, two, three, four. The people applauded. Their eyes glowed with wonder and love for their “boys.” And, oh, as brash, smart and professional. August, Esh Goldstein and I made up the first row... From our whole being it was as though we cried out: “We despise you open and you covert enemies! See how a Jewish soldier lives and marches!”

By the time we had our tents pitched on the other side of Marietta it was already long past nightfall. The sky was clear and filled with stars. When I crawled out of my tent my whole being was seized by the magical spell around me. The towering, mighty trees had dipped their lowest branches to touch the tops of our happy little dwellings. Between the highest branches glimpses of blue streamed down on us. It twinkled and bathed us in a deep blue expanse. Below by the edge of our camp a pretty stream came down from the nearest mountain. I would have so loved to wander over its slopes and continue

on between the high pine trees which stretched their trunks high, high as though in invitation to the eagles to build a nest on their peaks. Once I tried to climb to the top of one to look out in amazement at the landscape around us, which seemed to be frozen in a silent fear that even a single fragment of its beauty might be diminished.

My comrades lit a fire and prepared themselves to go to sleep. But I was drawn away. I looked away in the direction where the mountains stood, but couldn't see them through the thick trees. It was as though a magnet attracted me to go to the edge of the camp. From the tents you could hear soldiers snoring. When I got to the little stream I could just barely make out my beloved, mysterious mountains in the distance.

“Come!” They drew me on. “You know, don't you, how welcomed you would be by us, how glad we would be to spread our paths out to you. And in the first shimmer of light from the dawning day you would see from my heights your beloved countryside, the rising sun, who would send to you the first-born beams of light that would awaken your soul with kisses from the butterflies to the golden robins, from the grasses to the oldest oak in the clouds above...”

I was drawn to their call. I crossed the little stream, and with every step my craving grew stronger throughout my whole being. But suddenly a shiver, like a stream of cold water coursed over my body.

“Hoo-hoo!” A sharp cry was heard from the side of the stream where the mountains lie. And before the sounds of the echoes in the night subsided, from the other side of the stream another hearty cry was heard:

“Hoo-hoo-hoo!”

Who was calling? Just one question, one thought came into my head. – It is Frank. – They were hauling him up in the tree. He struggled, the rope closed around his throat. – Murder! Let him go! But in a moment I came back to myself: What a fool I am. It is the call of the mountain owls that were flying around on their nightly hunt.

This time we quickly finished our target practice. We worked more intensively than the previous two times. Early in the morning we hitched the horses to the cannons and drove them deep into the fields, taking with us the field kitchen, medical detail, and all of the instruments necessary to find and calculate the distance to the targets that we would be shooting at. The cannons would be hidden in bushes or behind hills imitating the correct positioning on a battlefield. After they were in place each officer had to do his calculations and fire at the target as ordered by the colonel. After each order we reset the cannons and watched to see if we hit the target. If the colonel was not pleased he stopped the firing and explained the error. It went on like this until late in the night when we ended the games. We harnessed the horses again and in a long line we made our way back to the camp and to the longed-for food and rest.

At a feverish pace we put things in order, took care of the horses, and a long line quickly formed of tired, hungry soldiers. We got our food portions from the field kitchen which was set up outside. We got our food and we sat down on the bare ground under the thick trees. We looked like a large band of Gypsies.

On the fourth day we got the command to pack up and head back to camp.

We Prepared the Way

(A letter to a friend.)

It feels like we are far away from the battlefields where the great struggle is raging with such violence. We still have a long, difficult trip to make before we reach France's unhappy shores where hell has gathered all of its horrors and forces to shake heaven and earth. But the storm has not yet reached us.

Uncle Sam is clenching his fists even tighter and has resolved not to let go or let Wilhelm rule the world. We have heard his voice and seen his determined look. And that means that very soon we have to leave this place and go "over there." Our life in camp is one of tense waiting from early morning until late at night. Everything breathes of being in the grasp of the unavoidable

The last call of the trumpet that calls out over the camp late at night, summons nearly all of the soldiers to a sound sleep, saying to them: "Sleep, children, have no cares!" But last night nearly all of the soldiers heard the last trumpet call... The lights had long been out, but the soldiers tossed from one side to another. In the tones of the once comforting night call we heard the mountains and fields that we had become accustomed to say to us, "Be healthy." Then the night was split apart by the sharp whistle of a passing locomotive. For the sleepless soldiers the well known image of long columns of soldiers came to mind. Soldiers both black and white, four in a row marching quietly to the station with packs on their backs and rifles in their hands. A sharp command, and the straight columns fall out into small groups that disappear into the railroad cars. Another train whistle – and the train departs.

Everyone awaits his time to go "over there," and that time gets nearer and nearer.

How does each and every one of us feel? That is difficult to say. Each man is world unto himself.

It seems like the same John and Abe were still muttering that they were not going to go and fight. And now that the horrors of the wild Germans had grown even stronger, they were still asking themselves the same big question: "What does that have to do with me?" The only ones who can answer John and Abe's question are John and Abe themselves – They go...

If someone goes and fights, it will be a victory for justice. It doesn't make any difference if you do it from conviction, or if you do it because the people around you are yelling at you.

In the usual commotion in camp the Jewish world in camp stood out. The Jewish soldier was more separated from camp life, because in addition to the bonds which were obvious to others, the Jewish boys on every Sabbath and Sunday were more involved with Jewish Atlanta. And who knows how many hearts beating under those uniforms were attached with threads of love to the beautiful daughters of Israel in Atlanta. We already had one wedding where the bride and groom were from our group and we stood under the wedding canopy in our uniforms.

We were busy visiting our Atlanta friends one more time. This is how one pale, young soldier begged for pity from his sergeant: "Give me a pass to Atlanta, it is a matter of life and death!" When the sergeant denied the request, it pushed the pale, young man to take extreme measures: He took from his shirt a picture and showed it to the sergeant: "See, I want to propose to her." The sergeant smiled and replied in a hearty voice, "We'll see to it!" And that means that another young heart will rejoice in

Atlanta and for those precious hours he will vacillate between care and joy until the moment comes when he must part at the coming of an uncertain morning...

Suddenly, without any advanced notice, they began sending the special units from our division to the ports in such a way that no one knew which ones would be going next. Nearly everyone in our group began to get together more often to exchange news. One night before we left we were able to figure out that we were about to leave due to the increased inspections and the issue of additional provisions.

The Last Club Meeting

The conference room at our club was packed. Also there were our dear friends from Atlanta. We didn't even have to beg the chess players and debaters to be quiet while we held our meeting, because all of them were occupied with the one big question: What will happen to our club and to the little bit of Jewish life that we had created there?

"I am shipping out very soon," said our secretary. "And me too," said a second and a third. We began to think of ways that we could leave behind the gains we had made. We selected some officials from those that we thought were going to stay behind a little longer.

Once we finished with the practical side of the matter, we began to talk heart to heart. Those who were already on their way had asked and promised those who remained behind that they should, for G-d's sake, protect the Jewish club. Retain the Jewish name and keep an eye on the Welfare Board representative who looked askance at the Zionist practices of the club. And, for G-d's sake, stick up for our war victims.

After the multiple warnings for the remaining members, we turned to addressing the remaining business. One item of business was to present the Atlanta community with silk American and Jewish flags as a token of our thanks to our dear Atlanta brothers for their love for us.

Finally, there were the parting words and every word and every trembling voice was yet another sign of friendship and brotherly feelings between one another. For the hundredth time we declared our love for our people and our endless longing and craving for their liberty and happiness, at the price of our blood which we carry to the battlefields.

"Sing the Oath, the Hope!" the group cried out. And some responded, "We swear, we swear!" But the chairman halted them. It was already too late, we shouldn't sing, but taking the Oath with us deep in our hearts, that we can do.

"Stay healthy comrade Adam! Stay healthy comrade Salant! And two true hearts pressed together. In the corner we heard a kiss. The sound of the Oath, the Hope were drowned out by a bugle call, an order for all in camp to go to sleep. But everyone carried deep in their hearts together with the faces of our friends who had to leave us the determination to do our duty with full knowledge and with the dream of a better world for mankind and final justice for our repressed people.

Stay healthy friends! It won't take long and we will also be over there.

Each went to his barrack, and slept through the night until the uncertain morning.

And it came. In a few days my regiment was awakened at 2 AM and sent with full packs to the train.

En Route

On our way from Camp Gordon to the ship, they often had us get off the train and march through the streets of a nearby town. In one neat, pretty town we had an unusual heartfelt experience. Young and old, and especially the young women had with every gesture, every cry and every look, expressed their love and hearty good luck wishes. And we did everything we could to appear one of the gang, and march like professional soldiers. On each soldier's face you could read: See how good we muster, how we stay in step, how the earth trembles under our feet. They understood and clapped their hands even harder, cried out and followed us in a thick mass.

Just think of the many young hearts and for how long they will ache until this war is over. It is possible that "theirs" already blooms there. But in the mean time, young people know nothing of happiness, and the pretty girls, modestly, looked at us with clear, meaningful eyes saying "We mean this," and sent us kisses through the air and gave us flowers.

Among the enthusiastic crowd we noted an elderly woman with a twisted face. Her lips moved, as in silent prayer, she clapped her hands, but after a while they were still. She interlocked her fingers and lowered her broken hands. Her face shown with the motherly smile of a mother full of pride for her strong children with their red, round faces. But her eyes glistened with tears of intense pain and fear for their fate.

At another station where we sat for quite a while, but did not get out of the train, we, as always were surrounded by a large number of Red Cross ladies, who gave us cigarettes and snacks. Close to the railway car, a woman with a child in her arms walked by looking intently in each of our faces. She went back and forth several times as though looking for someone in particular hoping "Maybe I will see him." The child smiled at us and babbled with his red lips, but the mother's eyes were holding back tears.

She did not find him – She stood off to the side and for a few minutes turned her head away from us, then looked back to us again. The "perhaps" was gone. That is why she no longer held back the tears.

What could we possibly do to comfort her? How? We all got together to talk about it, and avoided staring at her. Once we noticed that she was a little calmer, we called out to her, and gave her the flowers we had just received and gave her child some of the treats to eat that we had just gotten from the Red Cross ladies.

And once again we heard the old, well-known story: He wrote to her that he was shipping out and it was 'possible' that he might come through here on Tuesday.

When the train began to move and we were forced to part from her, we saw her in the distance, pull herself up to her full height. With her child in her left hand, she thrust her right fist into the air and yelled out to us: "Give one for me to the Kaiser!" – With all our strength we called back to her: "Yes, we will!"

Among the many descriptions of the World War, when they want to show the great suffering and pain of innocent people, one of the most pitiful chapters is the one where partings are described. But the

one thing that brings the full weight of understanding and horror of a tragedy like war is the shock and pain of a mother, wife or lover's cry of pain when the last second of the last hour comes when they must finally let their arms go and release the dearest, the most loved, them, who had been looked upon like the rising sun, who had been looked upon with such hope. And it often happened that due to military reasons, they were robbed of this 'pleasure.'

I have seen many such soldiers. The departure from their own camp is very difficult and very painful. So instead of saying "Stay healthy" to your wife or mother, you say it to the fields and woods, to the lonesome tree on the land that you see in the distance as you travel on the train to the embarkation point. And when you see on the station platforms, total strangers, or farmers with their horse and plow who send us their heartfelt "Stay healthy" and blessing, it is a great help and comfort. But the deeper wound will not heal.

At the Crossroads

Along the whole way we were met and accompanied by bells ringing in the cloisters and the loud factory whistles. From the factories we saw men and women workers watching us from every window and door, and they waved at us with their handkerchiefs in hand. The women and girls blew kisses out out way, and the nearer we got to New York the more noisy and heartfelt became the welcome. But the train continued on without stopping and left all of that behind.

“My house!” – One man cried out as the train pulled into Jersey City. He threw his whole body against the window, stuck his head out, and called out to anyone we passed with a “hurrah!” but it soon unsettled him. His “hurrah” became stuck in his throat, stifled and cut off by his sobbing: “My house, Mom, oh, Mom!” He stuck out his hand when we were a little past... “Did you see her?” we asked him. “Yes, I saw her,” he said, but his eyes told us that he was not so sure. Outside there were so many mothers, so many sisters and loved ones there in the streets, windows, doors and on the roofs of the houses straining to recognize someone among us as the train sped by. Soon everything disappeared before our eyes. The train entered a tunnel traveling under New York. Camp Mills, the camp that we knew was the last portal to going “over there.”

What a filthy camp – It is only for a few days, but how unpleasant is it to stay in half-tumbled down, canvas tents made for eight people. But no sooner had we crawled inside to stretch our legs after the long trip, we were called out into the rain and darkness to carry our belongings and the boxes, bundles and instruments of the officers and the regiment. It wasn't until dawn that we were finished with the task and could crawl back into our tents. But we did not sleep. Many of us were close to our homes which we had not seen for a long time. We agreed that each of us Northerners should look for a chance to say a final “Stay healthy” to our families before they put us on the ship. Laying there in the dim glow of the single light the forms and faces of our loved ones floated through our imaginations. In that one moment we wanted so much to know how things were going at home – – Do they know that I am here? – – Yes, they know. They must surly have received the letter. – – What are they thinking, what are they talking about, what do they want to do? And perhaps they are out there in the field behind the fence that encircles the camp?? – With that thought I went outside and listened, but it was dark and raining. The last couple of steps one of the guards stopped: “Hey, give us a cigarette,” – “Guards aren't supposed to smoke.” “Oh, to the devil with all the things you're not supposed to do.” He called out as he lit the cigarette.

“Listen to how the night carries sounds, and the night sky is illuminated from the street lamps.” He too, was far, far away in his thoughts, even as he made his rounds in the mud and rain that soaked one to the bone.

“Are you a Northerner?” I asked him. “Only 40 miles from here. Only one more day and we will get our passes,” he comforted me.

The much-awaited early morning came and right after roll call the Top Sergeant was inundated with requests for leaves to go home for the promised 24-hours. The volume of requests was so great, that only 33 percent were able to go each day, and we were only scheduled to stay here a few days. I threw myself into the lines and managed to get my name recorded as the 16th. That meant I was among those who were sure to go, because that certainly had to be the beginning of the list. Finally, we were assembled in lines and eagerly listened for our name to be called. But, what is going on? My name was not called, and after the first shock of surprise I went off to the Captain to get justice, but as soon

as I caught sight of him my courage failed me – A tall, broad-shouldered giant with almost child-like features on his face and in his eyes. He had the reputation among us soldiers as being one of the most murderous gorillas one could ever meet up with. We knew that our troubles only served to give him pleasure. Our appeals to him were always answered with the famous response: “Shut up, salute – salute – salute – and get out –.” Gathering up my courage, I explained to him my difficulty: Such and such, my name was 16th. He examined me and my things closely. “So,” he said, “You didn't get the pass?” – He thought a while with lowered eyes, and with a half-puzzled and half-malevolent smile. He had the clerk look through the list of applicants. “Yes, your name is among those who should have gotten a pass!” the clerk answered.

In that moment everything was clear. The Top Sergeant had given my pass to one of his “bottle and glasses” friends, someone who wanted to see New York and especially the New York saloons.

“I can't help you,” the Captain told me and looked at me with the eyes of a cat, who takes pleasure in seeing the mouse trapped in his claws.

“But Captain, I haven't seen my family, and we are about to ship out,” I countered, not knowing what argument to put before him.

“I can't help you,” he said more forcefully.

“I beg you, Captain, perhaps you can give me an extra pass?”

“An extra pass, you want? Why should you get one? Oh, yeah, you just said. Were you not guilty of something lately?”

“No, sir!” I answered. But I quickly explained that there was an assembly of soldiers that I missed, because it was in an unexpected and uncertain hour, and most of the soldiers missed it. I knew very well that among the soldiers who received their leave, nearly all of them who were the first to get leave to go home, were ones who also missed the assembly. I decided, come what may, to tell him that and I ended with a question that sounded much stronger than a request: “If it was right to hold this against me more than against the other soldiers?”

Very desperate, I became insistent. A dispute arose between us about just and unjust, but he became more impatient and with the eyes of an animal and bared teeth he turned back to me as though he were about to throw himself on me with his balled fists.

When he turned, he found in my salute a convenient excuse, and what if it is unjust? Nu, if so, I'll give you justice. Go to the sergeant in charge and tell him that the Captain gives you 5 fatigues (special work details) and after that you will come back to me and we will see if you get a pass or not.

A sharp cold look and a contemptuous smile, – that is all I could do to answer him, however if I could have murdered him in that moment, I would have done it with the greatest pleasure. When I wanted to get away from him, he found in my salute yet another opportunity to wear me down and made me repeat the salute several times, remarking: “Make that sharper, make that sharper!” and I did it with gritted teeth.

“Sergeant Huey, be so kind as to give me 5 fatigues, those are the Gorilla's orders,” I said when I came into his tent.

“What's going on? Why?” – he asked me, surprised.

He knew that I had one of the best records of as a soldier. When I told him the story of the pass and how the Captain treated me he leapt up from his desk suddenly and threw his pipe to the ground.

“That damned dog, that...” He couldn't control himself and spewed out ugly, deadly curses. Someone should just shoot him, they should. Wait, we are almost 'over there.' – He still could not calm himself down, and finally he told me to relax, he was not going to give me any work. That did not make me very happy. The tough question: “What should I do.” – How can I get home and spend some time with my friends and family – bored into my mind.

When I walked out of Sergeant Huey's tent, my help arrived. The help was my solid decision: “Go!” Go under any circumstances! The decision was strengthened even more when I noted that there was a special watch being setup around our regiment, and I needed to hurry before they were fully at their posts with orders not to let anyone in or out without permission.

Like a thief I slipped past their eyes, for a while I lingered behind some bushes. Then I went over the field without looking back until I got to a spot where there was a farm. I climbed over the fence and only then was I free to breathe.

On this wide path I quickly encountered other soldiers. At first I thought they were military police and I slowed my steps, however I quickly realized that they were just like me, walking off the grounds of the fort and headed to New York.

The second evening of my illegal visit I was in a hall for a meeting of the National Socialist Committee. In the corridor that led to the meeting hall I met comrade Schnitzer. He, too, had left the fort without leave, and we speculated on what sort of punishment we were going to receive. What bothered us more than the punishment, was the fact that we could not join the Jewish Legion. Only now when we were, so to speak, ripped from our Company, did the thought come to us that we might be able to fulfill our desire and go to fight in Eretz Israel. And indeed, we both decided that in the morning we would dress in civilian clothes and go to one of the recruiting stations for the Legion.

The street I had to take to get home was deserted in the late night hours, but it seemed to me that lurking in the shadows was the Captain and all the soldiers from my Company and that I was about to be arrested as a deserter. Several times the thought went through my head, “What are you doing, the regiment is about to ship out?” But then my strong resolve returned: “In the Legion! In the Legion!”

When I got home I sneaked in quietly without waking anybody up and sought out my civilian clothes. However, my oldest nephew heard the noise from a book I knocked over when looking for a light. Seeing him with his wide-open eyes, I could find no other way out but to tell him my plan and beg him to help me, and the best way to do that would for him to be silent until I had left the house. The boy was shocked and upset by the unusual scene, but he got control of himself and trembling in all his limbs he began to argue, alarmed at what might happen to me. In spite of my every effort to keep him calm, he started out quietly, but as he continued on his voice got louder and he began to yell with a sobbing voice: “I'm afraid, I'm afraid!” Everyone in the house got up and came running just as they were, and when they figured out what was going on it degenerated into a real tumult like they had caught me and were taking me to the scaffold. One closed the window, another lowered the fire to

make it darker in the room, and my sister with her frail hands clutched at the rest of the civilian clothes that I was going to put on. "Little Brother of mine, what are you doing, they will catch you, you will be lost."

My arguments didn't help, nor did it help when I got angry with them. I had to give up my plan and my promise to comrade Schnitzer that we would join the Legion. (Schnitzer fell in battle near Narai[?], France on Yam Kippur, 1918. He was part of the original committee we founded on the second day after Rosh Hashanah with the purpose of creating a conservatory for Jewish music.)

I immediately took an automobile and drove back to camp accompanied by my nephews Louis and Clem. The poor boys were feeling exceptionally bad, mostly because of spoiling my plan, but the closer we came to the camp the more I began to think about what a bad impression it would make on my Company, how triumphantly mean the Captain would look at the remaining Jewish soldiers, when he found out. I shared my thoughts with them and that calmed them down a little.

Finally, we arrived. Not wanting to get arrested at the entrance I ran to the guards, and instead of waiting for them to ask me for a pass, I went to the first guard and excitedly asked him where to find the 321st Light Artillery because I was one of the regiment who received a telegram saying that we were moving out. "Oh, too bad, too bad, it looks like you are already too late," he said to me with sympathy and concern and then quickly pointed, "See over there about a mile and a half beyond the campfire burning there."

Happy that my ruse worked, I was off between the barracks and the other buildings. Overhead was a clear, starry sky and everywhere you looked you saw the pointed tents in straight rows. Many of the men were laying down, others looked like they were getting ready to march off to the ship, but almost none were asleep. Quiet talking could be heard beneath the sheets. I couldn't hide and listen in. I knew quite well what these unhappy men were talking about in this late hour.

I took great care not to lose track of the campfires that had been pointed out to me where the men from my regiment would be sitting around. There was something fatal, frightful in the light the campfire threw on the surrounding tents. The closer I got the deeper the upset pressed in on me, but I had to continue on, to my unknown punishment, and even worse than everything else, I would have to stand before my Captain again. This time I would not get off with having to salute him several times. I would have to go to him formally just like a weak twig carried by a fierce torrent. I would not be a Legionnaire. I was afraid my Company was gone, but thank G-d they were still there. A familiar voice called to me, it was our guard, and in a friendly manner he let me pass. Like a thief I slipped into my tent. All my tent mates were sleeping in their uniforms with their hats on ready to march. One of them had prepared my backpack ready for my return and not wanting disturb him, I laid down in a corner and began to think about Schnitzer, when one of my tent mates woke up and the first thing he said was: "Good boy, Cohen, bravo! If only I had as much courage as you!" Yet once more see and put my arms around my aging mother.

On the Atlantic Ocean

Persevering before the risk of German spies and under strict, secret orders, we set off to our transport ship and found our own cubbyholes. Until the ship had gone a good way out, we stayed below decks. Only from a few open port holes could we look out upon the waves. It was difficult to see through the darkly tinted glass whether it was day or night. From time to time the big ship would shudder due to the workings of the huge engines. We sailed on. The water began to slam against the sides of the ship: “They are going” – The water said with a hidden murderous intent, and a sort of hidden fright filled us for what might come in the next moment.

A group of Jewish soldiers got together and looked out of a darkly colored window, just barely, they could make out the walls and houses of a town. In one house in the far distance we saw a light in the window. One of us said quietly: “It's possible that the burning light was lit by the Jewish mother of a Legionnaire.” We all knew what he meant by that, because we had all recently read how a mother of a Legionnaire had taken a vow to keep lighting a candle until her son, who was away fighting in Eretz Israel, came home again. We did not know if this was the town where the remarkable Jewish mother lived, but just in thinking about it, that it was possible that this was the light we had read about, cheered us up. And the wish filled out hearts that the light would continue to be lit, and illuminate the Jewish heavens and bring our repressed people a little of the promised happiness from the Allies and our great President.

The secrets about the methods and means that the Navy battled submarines were so great that all information was withheld regarding the number of submarines sunk, and the locations. They restrained themselves from bragging and taking credit for the sinkings in order to preserve the uncertainty and spread fear among those we had to destroy “In order to keep the world safe for democracy.”

Like so many of the Jews from Essex, Grand and other streets in the big Jewish-American ghettos, I had already crossed the Atlantic, but what a huge contrast it was between the two trips. Then the waves seemed so threatening, the endless water around us pressed on our hearts and implanted a painful feeling of helplessness in the face of the deep sea whose turbulence tossed the ship from side to side. It was as though the sea was teasing us with a murderous threat. I will sink you, but first I will play with you for a while.

Also this time the waves were stormy. This time sailing to war and possible death, the ship was like a toy, a cork which was rocked and thrown according to the caprice of the mountains of water. But the feeling of helplessness and fear was not there – The first time we were frightened immigrants traveling to an unknown world – but now that one is an armed, well provisioned fighter in an army headed toward a goal that will make the world better and more just. Now when the waves roar threateningly on all sides, they did not cause anywhere near as much fear. And if the waves wanted to understand why, I would answer their threats: Your efforts are useless, we are not the least bit afraid.

The mastery of the men over the abyss of the sea was demonstrated beautifully by the destroyers that accompanied our ship. With the speed of water spiders they darted around in the water on all sides of the transport ship. And when the destroyers split the waves in front of them they seemed like mischievous brats filled with a murderous urge to poke their noses deep in the abyss to strike at the hidden Germans. Not finding them, they lurched back up and looked for them elsewhere. Then they once again split the waves before them searched with a thousand eyes deep in the churning waters. If you just glanced at the skill with which they carried out their protective duties you felt that they were

not hiding or avoiding the submarines, but they were looking for a fight. The soldiers who gathered on the deck to watch them started to almost wish for a chance to see a battle between the little scamps and the submarines. They had so captured our attention and our sporting spirit that we climbed up on the biggest cannons and with the calmness of giants watched from there all around us and waited for the chance to see them tangle with the Germans. That chance did not come for a long time, and our sporting spirit was disappointed, nearly fooled. We did get a little consolation in one sense, with the two alarms that sounded and caused quite a bit of commotion.

Only then, after we had gotten used to our surroundings, and calmly walked the deck, or wiled away the time in pleasant conversation groups, or gathered around the “know-it-alls” who could tell you everything about the world, and even about all of the mistakes the Kaiser made, and the premiers of the various nations, and so forth – Only then, when some blessed young man discovered that it was possible to yell: Land! Land! just to fool everybody, that is when an unusual tumult arose when someone yelled: Submarine! Submarine! And in only a couple of seconds one would have thought that Hell with all of its horrors had fallen upon us. The heavy cannons quickly turned in the indicated direction and through flame and smoke they sent out their death sentence. The ship made a sudden turn following a precise command. Our little companions the destroyers shot like arrows toward two specific points. Suddenly the water around our ship heaved. That was from the bombs thrown at the enemy submarine. After the frightening explosion which it seemed would have destroyed everything around us, it soon became quiet and still again. The transport continued on its way, but everyone was ready for any eventuality with everyone standing at the ready in orderly fashion to board the lifeboats. The destroyers with great skill went about their work. A couple of them stayed at the location where the sub was sighted and circled there for a long time, then returned to their place in the escort.

For a long time we couldn't rest. A debate arose and people wanted to know if the submarine was sunk. Right away Mr. Know-it-all came forth and recounted that he heard it directly from the mouth of such-and-such officer that they had indeed sunk the submarine, and what's more, not just the one, but two, and so forth. But also there was no lack of comedians who made jokes about the whole incident with comments like: It turned out to be just an empty can of beans that was peacefully bobbing on the waves that was mistaken for a submarine periscope, and they reduced the innocent can to ash.

And so on and so on, be we all felt a little better afterwards. We had all experienced a little something of the real war, smelled a little gunpowder and perhaps had a real chance. Like some of the Jewish boys said: We had been dipped in the Mayim Acharonim [ritually washing one's fingers after a meal]. At any rate we all looked with a little more respect at our lifebelts, that we now went around in like barrels, and in the lifeboat drills that required us to go every once in a while when the horn blasted in our ears, often forcing us out of our beds in the middle of the night.

Things were a little more lively among us and people told tales about submarines that had been sunk. But if you got around to asking them how they knew about the sinkings, you would get the well known answer: Somebody told me! We still don't know to this very day what the torpedo ships who circled around for a while said to one another in their silent language... The wonderful, deep sea is richer by one more secret for a long time, and who knows – perhaps forever.

The closer we came to our destination shore, the more dangerous were the waters we had to cross. But we all felt more calm. For the most part we were disenthralled with the supposedly all-powerful German submarine service. A defenseless cargo ship or passenger ship, a hospital ship which is armed only with the sign of the Red Cross, those can be easily sunk, but not us, well armed and watchful.

And so, with a calm mood and with our thoughts drifting between far, faraway America and the shore that we referred to as “somewhere” in France, somewhere in England, and so forth, we put together a small group of Jewish boys and ran a characteristically Jewish discussion. With the Jewish thirst to get to the bottom of things we turned our attention to submarines, asking one another what would have happened if our ship had been sunk? How wide and deep in the water would a sinking ship carry everything around it? “What good would clever tricks do for you?” another answered, when you are sinking into misery? But the people posing the questions were not satisfied and asked further: Can you sink a submarine with a turd, and if you are sucked down with a sinking ship, would the air escaping from the ship carry you back to the surface? “Yes, brother,” someone answered, “You would be spewed out, but your lungs would be crushed by the water pressure.” That really is a sad story – Then you heard the typical Jewish Ay-ay-ay. And when someone sighed, it clutched the heart of many.

I am put in mind of Captain Watson [Stanley H. Watson]. I wouldn't describe him if he did not represent a particular type of officer who came for the most part from being office clerks or empty-headed athletes. They were delighted to find themselves suddenly elevated to positions of power above their fellow citizens. At one of our first lifeboat drills where those who had been assigned specific duties, everyone executed their tasks, then immediately thereafter the trumpet sounded “recall,” and we began to disburse from the lines. Just then a second signal sounded, calling us back. This time all the soldiers were driven to the platform at the most forward part of the deck. The officers didn't know what was going on. But we quickly saw that they wanted to give us an administrative lecture. And, oh devil, the speaker was going to be the tall and hearty Captain Watson. With his eyes on the ground and in a cold, brash voice he delivered the following lecture: “Well, men, you should know that we are going to fight, that means, to kill and be killed. The shores of our home no longer exist for us. Forget that you have mothers, fathers and children. You are nothing more than a null and all you have to do is to follow orders, and follow them without question, without discussion. You should not question even a single word. But there will always be those among you who will find ways to make fools of themselves, then – You see this one or that? – He takes his revolver from the holster, and fires it into the air over our heads. – “You see this one or that?” He asked again in a clear voice looking at us with his piggy eyes, “Well, I will shoot any such person, the way one shoots a mad dog.”

It was remarkable to observe the faces of the soldiers who were standing near me. I could read such a revolting spirit, but this time, under the circumstances, standing in a compact mass on the deck of a ship, hearing the brash lecture from the Captain, the reaction was at first surprise then later – helpless, discouragement.... He continued to talk along the same lines for a while then ended by reading to us a number of regulations about discipline, about censoring our letters, with a final word about what we can and can not do. It turned out that there was not a single word about what we 'may' do. It was like a massive weight was suspended over our heads, and writ large was a giant, “You may not.”

Passing Ireland

We knew that by the eighth day of the voyage we should spot land because we could already see dark blotches on the horizon and flocks of sea birds. Some of them stayed with us the whole way. Who knows where they came from? We thought they came from some seashore and flew out to bathe in the sunshine and ride the waves for a little while. I experienced a sense of wonder edged with a little anxiety when I saw a large mass of water well up and build itself into a giant mountain before passing us by and crashing with such force that it filled the trough of the wave with foam. Aha, a sea bird landed in the middle of the white foam, and seemed unconcerned when she slipped under another white wave, then another and so on without end.

From the distant shore came flocks of sea birds and they began to circle all around the ship, looking into the ports where the wastes from the ship were tossed out. The birds dipped and dived close to us as if begging for us to feed them from our hands.

And during the whole time that the biggest birds flew to and fro over the ship just above our heads, or squabbled in the still water behind the ship where we left behind bread and orange peels, the soldiers propped themselves up one on top of the other on the side of the ship facing the shore which was getting more and more distinct. From there we saw rise in the sky like flying monsters some seaplanes from the coast guard. The soldiers began to argue about which shore they were looking at, and what people might be living there.

“Dear, dear old Ireland!” – Sobbed a young, sentimental Irishman, and then a short while later: Ach, how beautiful! Ach, how dear! Ach, how beautiful my old Ireland is!”

“What's with you? Did you see your three-leaf shamrock?” A bystander asked him.

The joke was not successful. Everyone was quiet and watched the wonderfully beautiful, fantastic shore, which flowed together with the sea such that you could not easily tell where one began and the other ended.

The sun began to set deep on the horizon with the most beautiful colors in a sunset that I have ever seen. The mass of men stood there, moved by the sight of land, but they had still not agreed upon what shore they were looking at. It wouldn't even help if you were an expert, had a geographical map or heard what the steward or the old sea-hands had to say about it, because we knew very well that we were not allowed to know such things, even now when we already knew...

With the last rays of the sun, which had secretly melded with the blue of the sky behind the peaks of the mountains, the birds also slowly disappeared. For a while I stayed by the dreamy Irishman and a few other boys on deck. The sounds of the soldiers who returned to their cubbyholes gradually faded. In the thick darkness the only sounds were the footsteps of the guard on watch, who with a slow pace measured his post on the upper deck above us, and the whoosh of the still waters.

From close by the little destroyers who had escorted us winked at something with their sharp little eyes. A wink – and they were gone, a wink – and everything was totally dark and still. Only in the distance, there, where the sun had set, was the only star on the horizon.

“See? That is an Irish lighthouse!” – said the proud, sad Irishman and bent even more over the ship

railing as though he wanted to see something beyond the light. Or, who knows, perhaps he was hoping to hear from that shore a song that would speak to his heart so warmly and lovingly!

Who knows? Maybe it is his shore. But where is mine? – The thought came to my mind like a heavy weight. A shore, that I first saw eight years ago. Where I have been bent over a worktable and had very little time to look around me, it is now across an immense ocean; and the shore to which my heart and my mother's heart was drawn to and longing for, – Or, that shore, where so many of my dear, longed-for friends are being carried on other ships, soon to fight and die for our people's freedom. Or, the shore from which came so many of our best sons, the Legionnaires. Or, the dear, yet unknown shore that is so far away!

“Good night, friend!” And I went below deck to my little corner. For long, unending hours sleep eluded me with a tumult of thoughts and feelings until sleep finally came to me.

In France



In France

Early in the morning I was awakened by the sound of the chains that secured the freight as the ship was being unloaded. The ship was now sitting still and tied to a dock in some port.

We had arrived at the much written about and much excitedly awaited “Over there.”

“Officer! Please tell me what city are we in?” someone asked.

“It is such-and-such city,” the officer answered. “But you can not write home about it. The fact that we are in France, that you can write.”

And in a very short time not only were we on French soil, but we were on the train with our packs headed to some camp where we could catch our breath and make the necessary preparations for going into battle.

“So, those are Frenchmen!” the boys said looking with great curiosity at the faces and clothes of the railway worker and a few civilians who looked back at us with very little curiosity. Obviously, they had already seen quite a few like us. – Yes, those are Frenchmen. The same noses, the same eyes, the same faces as other folks. What's more, you could see in those faces the signs of a long four-year war. There was a quiet, calm earnestness of men who had for a long time been in close proximity to Hell.

We tried to talk with them – Bey... Mey... It didn't work! One of us came up with a plan and first gesturing to the mass of Americans, then to the lean Frenchmen and to one middle-aged woman dressed in dark clothes he said something like this in French, “American, Frenchmen, allies... Allison” – He quickly corrected his mistake, and we all got a good laugh out of his Yankee error. The simple Frenchman thought we were laughing at him and he began to slowly back away.

But how surprised we were when a young French girl that we had not noticed said with a coquettish air: “Oh-là-là.” We understood her because in one of our soldier's song books is the line: “Oh-là-là sweet Papa, will we sing to the French.” Right away the girl was surrounded by our boys making cheerful clamor.

The train pulled out and we plastered ourselves against the windows with greedy eyes to see France. Our officers had told us earlier that France is a hilly and wonderfully beautiful land. We were not in any sense disappointed. And if the intensity of a people's patriotism has any relation to the beauty of their country, then I do not wonder at the love of these people for their land. Such a wonderful corner of the world is easy to love. One could wander over those hills and valleys forever toward forgetfulness and dreams.

“Biscuits! Biscuits!” – We heard a child-like voice behind the window of the train car. I looked out and saw a couple of children in bright, black aprons running after our train car with all their might. They stretched out their hands, their faces distorted in crying out that one word that I heard so clearly with my whole soul: “Biscuits! Biscuits!” Without thinking about it, I threw them my packet of biscuits. Oh, devil! The packet hit a rock we were passing and fell to the ground. The younger one stopped to pick it up, but the older one kept running after us crying, “Biscuits! Biscuits!” It sounded to

me like the bleating of a hungry little lamb.

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It is remarkable how quickly one gets used to the surroundings and thoughts when one travels, but so it is. – It is no use, it is unavoidable. – The truth of this I have experienced myself and seen it in others when we had traveled deep into France and, tired, had not found any place to stretch out in the crowded train cars. And to rest, to lay your head down somewhere became overpowering after such a long, tiring way.

It is remarkable how we had forgotten in the moment about all of the dangers the sound of the wheels were bringing us closer to. We had given very little attention to the loaded Red Cross trains that went by us in both directions as we traveled “over there.” In truth, we wanted to see from time to time what was going on in those cars, but nothing. Only the first car had lighted windows, where you could see some men and women in white uniforms with a red cross on their arms. In the rest of the cars the window shades were pulled down. Only occasionally in a corner of a window you might see a pair of eyes in a pale face peeking out. They flew by too fast. They flew by without the time to tell a hundredth of their story. They were gone in an instant, carried away by the sound of the wheels, leaving behind only a hardly glimpsed spark of a mirrored flame of hell...

“That train must be carrying wounded,” I said to one of the eight men in our train compartment.

“Yes, yes!” he answered slowly, as though he had seen such sights for years and years.

I was a little disappointed at his indifference and said a little angrily:

“It could be that some of them will die on the way to the hospital, and their soul will fly out of the window.”

“Let them fly! And if they are smart, they will land in one of the French wine cellars,” he answered with the same indifference and turned his tired head while placing his hands on his chest and nodded off amid the rocking of the car and the clacking of the tracks.

I did not bother him any more. I saw in him the same determined American soldier like the several hundred thousand others with their total absence of doubts and questions about the war and its horrors.

If he had seen the wounded and heard their groans, he would have hardly glanced at them.

“But would you like to have a little corned beef to eat?” I said, taking out a can of it from our reserve.

“Eat!”

He gave it a lazy look. We both chewed on it without tasting...

What a wildly different land it was that we were traveling through. It was beyond my wildest dreams, but remarkable how I felt so closely bound to the hills and valleys there. To me it looked like they had been arranged by the hand of an artist.

Perhaps the proud, brave French did not want the sympathy I felt for them, perhaps it offended them.

I did remark on one occasion when the face of a young lady went white, when she saw her young boy come running to our train car. Looking with greedy eyes at our hands and calling to us, “Un sou, Biscuits, Un sou.” Maybe even the proud, green hillside didn't want my sympathy either. But when I saw the pretty, little hamlets spread over the hills, and in many cases the little, four-windowed houses dug deeply into the mighty hillsides, and when I saw in every corner of the land where the train traveled, enough room for song and happiness – It clutched at my heart until my tears fell for the bloody world, for unhappy France. And whether I am allowed to say it before the censors or not, it makes the pained, human heart and the ever-afflicted Jewish soul to cry out: “Enough blood! Enough tears! Enough playing soldiers, crowns and blood sent by the devil but done in G-d's name by the Kaisers and Kings!”

Once again I glued myself to the window and took in the panorama that changed before our eyes. Over and over again I thought that somewhere I had seen ponds and meadows like that where sheep and cows grazed. In many places it seemed like old, well-known voices were speaking to me. That tree with the white trunk there is something of a close relative. After thinking for a long while I remembered that it was the round berioza [birch] tree that ornamented the Russian landscape from shore to shore. It is the same berioza tree with the heart-shaped leaves on thin branches that rustle so softly and help one to a dreamy sleep when one lies in their shade on a warm, sunny day like today. Right from my childhood on I loved this noble tree, and even now, traveling “over there” where so many never return, I made plans that in the future, if I came home safely, I would decorate my home in Eretz Israel with beriozas, – from my front door to the street they will grow higher and wider and they will with their soft voice tell the stories that are nearest to my heart.

“Look, boys, there's our camp!” someone called out from the next train car. We looked in the direction he pointed out and saw our temporary new home where we would rest for a while and prepare ourselves for the great struggle ahead between the “brutal world and the better world.”

The soldiers were happy with the end of the long voyage they had to make. And with the pleasant look of the dwellings with the surrounding greenery as far and wide as the eye could see, it spoke warmly to we tired wanderers.

I was very pleased with our first new place in France, because beckoning me were a million heart-shaped leaves from a group of nearby berioza trees.

Light and Shadow in France

On the sign at the railway station I read the name “La Courtine.” This would be our last camp where we would make the final preparations and receive all the armaments and materiel we would need to arm ourselves when we moved to the battle line.

The first impression was very pleasant: There were a lot of hills all around us, on which were old, well-built barracks, gray, two-story buildings, from an old French artillery camp. The hills were in a circle around a beautiful, green valley with a wide stream running through it that emptied into a lake. On the other side of the stream a water-wheel turned that belonged to an old mill. Farther on was a deeply sunken path which led to the massive, gray buildings in the village which were ringed with old, well kept wine gardens.

Being born a city-boy, I was very pleased when we came into a little village made up mostly of farmers who had a sense for business. Because of the temporary camp they started trading and peddling, calling out, fruit, nuts, and above all, wine. Before I went to walk through the town, since I had been issued my pack, I organized all of my things in one of the sturdy barracks. Getting a good spot in a barracks is the first concern of any soldier. If one is not gifted enough, he has to sleep outside in one of the little tents where only two men can lay down one next to the other. In that case it is also good to be short. If not – then your feet will be lying under the blue cover of the sky.

Delighted with my success, I was able to stay away from my new home until evening. It was rather far to the village, but what does a mile or two mean to a soldier? I was off in my beloved fashion – over the fields, along the hills which had been planted by experienced hands and were in full bloom in the early Summer. My first thought was: “What an able and industrious people the French are!” – Only the steepest parts of the hills which surrounded the village were covered in wild bushes, mostly showing dry, gold-colored leaves; But, where there was room for a horse or ox to go, the plow went also. The fields and gardens seeded with crops told their tale of work and of a happy, prosperous home.

When I got to the village it was late afternoon.

A short, French peasant was slowly driving his cows, who were ignoring the barking of an impatient dog which was trying to hurry them up with his baying to get them home faster and to his own corner in the barn. They had quite calmly gathered together by the edge of the water, under the thin branches of the young berioza trees and low bushes that were so thick by the shore of the fast-flowing mountain stream that danced the whole length of the valley until it fell into the lake and disappeared driving the old Frankish water mill.

From the next hill in the distance beyond a sparse copse of trees, one could see a herd of sheep; There, too, was a dog among the bushes who kept the frightened sheep together. They maintained their distance and ran from him. The shepherd walked calmly ahead tapping out the way with his long staff. The wind and the bushes caught his wide black apron, jerking and blowing it in all directions, as if they wanted their darling to stay with them and listen to the bird songs of the last evening hours.

Where is the war? What war? – My heart was welling up with a feeling of joy as I neared the village which looked so peaceful with its white, plaster houses and big windows set in thick walls that were ringed with greenery and partially covered with old moss.

I continued on a narrow path hemmed in by thick rows of hedges until I entered the village. The walls that enclosed the houses had openings. Counters with a variety of goods had been set up. Most of them had signs saying, “Cafe” and “Salon de vin.” It didn't matter if you went into the “salon” through a small door, or if you went through a wide courtyard strewn with a farmer's old broken farm equipment, – it was still called a “salon” and be done with it. And since they were all wine salons, you could hear the cheerful voices, cries and laughter coming from all sides.

After continuing through the noisy part of town, I eventually got to a much more quiet street.

Only a few soldiers had stumbled into this part of the village and saw with sober eyes the sober part of town.

A few women, dressed in black, stepped out of the darkness. They looked at us with a strange indifference, like people who had already survived for centuries, and did not bother themselves with appearances, with curiosity about things. They wanted to see the inner core of the thing. Their eyes seemed to say to us: “We will soon see what you will do, you young, healthy boys.”

Over a narrow sidewalk came a sickly French soldier struggling to make his way, with missing limbs and balancing on his crutches. On his chest were a pair of medals. When he saw us, he smiled with a half-brotherly, half-joking look as though to say: “Wait, just wait, you red-faced little soldiers!” –

On the far corner of the street I saw a church that was barely standing under the weight of years. I went through the low semi-circular door and was immediately blinded by the colorful decorations and the various statues. In every corner there was an attempt at beauty, architecture and art. The statues and the flowers, the chandeliers, the pulpit and the alter dimly illuminated by the weak light coming down from the ceiling and a few lit candles. I was pleased with the silence that reigned in Jesus' house. Finally I had found a little corner that was untouched by the sights and sounds of the world tragedy. I began to pull together my thoughts and feelings when I heard a quiet, stifled groan coming from one of the dark corners of the church. I got a little closer to that spot and saw two forms with bowed heads. It was two women wearing black mourning dresses. One of them had a child with her. Her head was bent to the ground and her hands covered her face. Tears were flowing between her fingers. Her whole body and bent shoulders were shuddering. Next to her knelt an older woman. Her thin meager arms were calmer, but her contorted face, which was suspended over the head of the young child, was distorted with pain and pity.

I felt like I was crowding them in G-d's house, and I immediately left with a fast and quiet step – back to the barracks.

In my heart I was shaken right to the ground by the scene I had just witnessed. I tried to forget the whole world, and I sat down on the steps leading into the barrack.

Like a giant, deep blue canopy the sky covered the whole area. In the far distance the roundness of the canopy was broken at the horizon by the mountains. The full moon played with the few passing clouds on their way elsewhere. I now began to consider things: Where have I seen a similar sky? A similar picture? – That is when I felt someone's arm around my neck. It smelled like wine, and close to my face I saw a pair of drunken eyes and the face of our trombone player.

“Cohen, Cohen!” he smiled. “Ya know what I heard there in the village? Someone said that from a whole “band” only five were left. Only five!” – he stammered as he lifted himself from the step.

In and around La Courtine

Another week has past and we are getting closer to the dance. My first weeks in France would make you think of a nice vacation. Plenty to eat. To tell the truth, they overdid it somewhat holding forth on training topics, but there was enough time left over to go into the village, or to see a movie at the Young Men's Christian Association building. And when the soldiers came back to the barracks around 9 PM, they talked and laughed to their heart's content. Happy and a little, as one says, tipsy, buddies. Their hearts filled with joy for the many thousands of young Americans.

It is not very pious to joke about sobriety, but laughter and feeling happy, – that is the desire of the American soldier. And even when he has spent his last franc he goes to the village to watch the others drink wine, and comes back to the barracks noisy and staggering just like a drunk, so that others will think he had a good time. Laying down on their beds they tell stories and joke about the state of the world. No one is left out. They get started on the officers and the top sergeant, about whom they sing this song:

I would rather be a backyard dog
Than to be a sergeant and to work hard.

Another tells about a waitress at the 'salon' who has an international reputation because she has as a 'friend' an Irishman, an American, a Jew, a Negro, and so forth.

A drunk Irishman who was laying on his bunk recollected the time when he was in the navy where he had a friend named, "Barney." Sometimes he spoke tenderly with him and sometimes he argued with Barney... He went on to say that his friend, Barney, was the best fighter in the world. "Barney, Barney! – He yelled out with all his strength – "You will be the first president of Ireland!" – The guys fell apart laughing and goading the drunk on so as to keep him talking and the rest of them laughing.

And that sort of thing went on until late in the night and 'lights-out.' It always ended with naughty stories about the French girls, or as the American soldiers where used to calling them: French dames.

Stories about the loathing and shame of the fallen French women brought on sad thoughts. It is not within my power to take on the great tragedy of the French women who had to carry such a large portion of the weight of the Great War and the moral burdens step for step. Around the various wine houses, stores and stands, around countless army camps all over France, down to the big cities where the rows of fallen women were, the numbers grew with murderous inevitability. And when a nice young person traveled or for example, when they went on vacation, or on a errand to a big city like Bordeaux, Paris or Marseilles, it was there they would see a whole army of women walking the streets, you could see how true it was.

Things were much better in the country, in small villages and farms. I could easily observe it, because as a bugler I had a lot more time and freedom to go wherever I wanted. The best place under all circumstances was far away from camp. It is the truth, as a bugler you didn't get any "patings" [?], but the further away you stayed from officers and sergeants, the healthier you were, and the less work you had to do. The farther away you were from camp, nature was more beautiful and the most lovely where few men tread. There is where one sees and hears better the bird's song, and all the creatures that flit and fly between the trees, the bushes and the meadows in the hot summer months. It is also very pleasant to write a letter there to home, to 'her.' And even lazily stretching out on the fragrant

grass among the white chamomile and the bluebells bloom is better, more comfortable and more treasured than doing the same thing on your bunk back at the barracks.

Once, chasing down a snake, I came on to a field where a woman was cutting hay with a scythe. Two others followed her and spread the hay so it would dry faster.

When I neared them, they gave me the same suspicious look they would have given other soldiers, and stopped their work in order to keep an eye on me. It did not take long for me to win their trust. When I took the scythe out of the hand of the youngest and prettiest farm girl and clumsily began to cut the high grass, I won their trust. They laughed heartily and started showing me how to hold a scythe.

We worked together for quite a while, talking to one another, they in their language and me in mine, – I even spoke Yiddish to them. But we did not understand each other very well except when we were using hand gestures. We worked on like that until mid-day, and they invited me to partake in their noon meal. I agreed and they took their simple foodstuffs out of little baskets. It included a bottle of milk and a bottle of wine. While we were eating, the younger girl began to talk to me. It was one of the hundreds of thousands of such stories that were being told all over France.

Her husband went off to the Great War and never returned. The “pas bon boche” (Bad Germans) killed him. “Boche pas bon, boche pas bon” – She said tightening her fists. I shook my head in agreement. But she did not calm down and continued to speak with bitterness. Even without understanding the words, the meaning was clear. In her words I could also detect her feelings against “La guerre” (the war). It was there at lunch that I first noticed how pale their faces were, how broken their bodies were under the great burdens they bore. In their clear blue eyes under the thick black brows there was such sorrow, such a fearful protest against the destruction of the world and the slaughter.

How could I possibly comfort her? Even if I could speak her language and talk to her? After thinking for a moment I got up and went and got the snake I had killed. I made her understand with words and gestures that I had killed it, and soon I would be going forth to fight the “pas bon boche.” She accepted my comforting with great enthusiasm and began to see me as a hero: Drink more milk, drink more wine! – She brought the bottles to me and bid me with her clear blue eyes. But an inner voice called to me and asked: Why should men compensate death with death? Is that what our prophets desire? Will that heal the countless, pointless, deep wounds from so much sorrowful and grievous wrongs that have occurred? Can one purify the conscience of the world with that, which so many hands and minds want to soil with hot, human blood?

Traces of Russian Soldiers

Our camp looked almost like a battlefield in miniature. Day and night over the pebble roads rolled all sorts of cannons and wagons loaded with supplies. All sorts of different military units showed themselves then disappeared overnight. Our unit had already received its cannons, revolvers, gas masks as well as horses and mules to pull the cannons. Each one of us was assigned a specific work duty, some around the artillery, others – around the supplies; another unit for the headquarters and the battalion commander. I was assigned to the second battalion of the regiment as an aide. My job on the battlefield would be to carry messages from headquarters to the second battalion commander.

The training became so hard that you fell off your feet with exhaustion, and then after the strenuous day of hard work, they would call us out to assemble on the hill, where the Jewish Captain “Adler” from the 319th Field Artillery would lecture us on how to avoid the gas attacks, how to reach the German lines and so forth.

Those who were selected to be 'runners' received horses to ride, and they immediately began teaching us the art of riding with such care as though they wanted to make us into Cossacks. Not once did the horse throw me after I learned the art of riding. From that moment on I had one duty: To care for my horse and keep him clean. Not once did my horse jostle me or trample me once he understood that I had toward him the friendliest feelings and respect.

Once, while feeding our horses in a group of old trees near the stream, I noticed on one of the trees a deeply cut cross and inscription. I looked at it and to my surprise I read: “Timoch Patiufa” July 1916. “Igor Ivanov,” and other names – Russian names. How did Russians come here? I called my buddies. They wondered also until Corporal August came by. He cleared it all up for us, namely, that here in camp were soldiers from the Russian Expedition that the Czar had sent to help the French troops, but after the Russian Revolution they fragmented. Some of them remained loyal to the Allies, but the majority said that they did not want to go back to the front. It ended in a big shootout where hundreds died on both sides.

“Where did they bury them?” Letchkov asked. “Somewhere around these trees,” Corporal August answered in a mysterious voice, and we thought the French may have buried them in a common grave.

As we wandered over the fields we often tried to locate the graves, but without success. It remained a mystery for us and left us chagrined...

The trees around us kept their silence. It is possible they were buried under this earthen hill, which was distinguished from the surrounding greenery by yellow sand. That is where they buried horses that had been brought back from the battlefield wounded by gas or artillery when they could not heal them. That is also where some prostitutes hung out that came from the surrounding villages. They ran after the soldiers in the field, because in the camp or the villages they were strongly forbidden or chased out. It made you feel bad to see these fallen women, how they would come out from between the bushes and with a brash demeanor call out to the soldiers in a broken English: “You come on, you get killed just same. Deux francs only.” And their argument worked. With a cynical laugh and remark, the soldiers answered: “I'm coming to you, prostitute, to spit in your face.”

Later came more stringent medical and other inspections, but it was nothing more than a comedy because no one ever was rejected... However, that meant that soon we would be going to the front. The faces of the soldiers became more earnest. They went more often to the village to get drunk and into the high grass with the prostitutes...

A Tragic Jewish Kazatsky

One evening when I returned to my barracks there was some tumult going on. The gentiles were upset and were making angry comments to us.

“What do you say to your Joseph Peletz?” Corporal Crawley asked me.

“What's up? What happened?” I asked him.

“He danced a Jewish kazatsky in the madhouse!” He answered with the same evil smirk, as when he made other anti-Semitic remarks.

After some more questions I learned that Peletz had gone out of his mind. It was clear to me that this was a sort of Jewish tragedy, that played out before us in the barracks.

Peletz was a young man of 18 years, who had, in spite of the protests of his parents, volunteered for the army because he was captivated by the Balfour Declaration. He was born in America, but had a very romantic nature and used to say this war was also a Jewish war. So far, so good. But he had a weakness which was to hang out with the Christian soldiers and to want be with them like they were close brothers. They tolerated him less than the other Jewish soldiers, because of the distinctive Jewish features in his face and his gestures. The more he tried to draw near to them the more they pushed him away until it drove him mad. The Christian soldiers said to us with malevolence, that he had frightened himself into a mental breakdown when he heard that soon we would be going to the front.

And now whenever anyone passed by his prison window, Peletz would yell at them: “Tell Sergeant Banner I want to see him! Tell the Captain he should make Aronson a sergeant, he is a good fighter!” He would make other such recommendations and suggestions in order to improve the army's ability to defeat the Germans...

The Anti-Semitic Chaplain

Some of the Jewish soldiers wanted to arrange a little religious service on Friday night, because were going to be moving out in a few days. We did not have a Jewish chaplain at this time so I went to the Christian chaplain for my regiment. People told me about him, that he was a little bit of an anti-Semite and an even bigger fool. When I went to him I noticed he was a little put-out to have to talk to me, and he muttered to himself in his usual quiet manner.

“I will help you with your service,” he said with phony friendliness, when he heard our request: “But why do you need it? Most of you will not be going in the trenches!”

“What do you mean?” I asked in surprise.

“There!” He started stuttering. “Don't take it the wrong way, but don't you know that most of the Jewish soldiers are tailors and are with “ordinance” and with supplies?”

“Not true!” I interrupted him. “Don't you know that in our division alone there are more than 2,500 Jewish soldiers, and of them perhaps ten are tailors. And they only do it because the commander ordered them to, because they and also you need to have a pressed uniform to go and preach about Christ's love to Christian soldiers.”

He tried to wriggle out of my accusation, but I stopped him with my silent salute.

When I told my buddies about the incident, we decided to do without his help, to obtain the big pavilion for our prayers, and made do by gathering in an empty barracks where Sergeant Rubin selected the pages and we followed him, remembering as much as we could, because only a few of us had prayer books that were brought from home. The ones the Welfare Board promised us were still somewhere in America...

After prayers we tried to do like we did back at Camp Gordon, but this time it didn't work. With each of us the slight we had just experienced was too fresh, even though it came from an idiot.

Our hearts were hurt too deeply. When going to fight in a war for justice and ideals, we didn't expect to have Jewish problems in the army, but they were thrown in our face...

Letters about Jewish Sorrows and Joys

July 3, 1918

The Jewish soldier has distinguished himself in service, and I will now be writing about it. The time will come for collecting and classifying the various service records. Only then will the full measure and good quality of the services of the Jewish soldier in the American army be known. It will not matter what the feeling and opinions are of the Christians, be they officers or enlisted men toward the Jews in their units, or of Jews in general. One fact will be clear and one opinion will be held, that is that the Jew is a capable person and can be relied upon.

Truly, it is not in men's nature to assume that others are smart and capable, and when it comes to Jews the tendency is even more stark, sharper, but there in active combat where the Southerner will often be good friends with a Negro; where a native-born man called "Knacker" often shows himself to be a big, weakling, who trembles like a leaf for his skin. Whether he wants to or not he has to admit that Harry Goldstein, the Jew or Washington the Negro are "Good boys." Because that which they asked Knacker to do, and what he did with the fear and turmoil of a coward, Harry and Washington carried through like brave warriors. Furthermore, you can obtain the best service from Harry and Washington, and from any man when you acknowledge them. So, like it or not, they should be elevated to the position they deserve.

Back in the time of the early camps when they were first forming the American army, the Jewish boys besides the ordinary work details, were given jobs for which they had particular skills and experience, such as tailoring, purchasing, management of army supplies and other areas that required management. In those camps every regiment needed a Jewish tailor. If there was no money to transport his machines from home, the captain or the major would authorize the expense from the company's funds. The officers and the more well off soldiers could live it up when finally, with the help of Abe, they could go out on the town in pressed and proper uniforms and hats. If the regiment had a canteen and they needed a gifted salesman, they turned again to the Jewish boys. So it was in all aspects of the soldier's life when they needed someone with the ability to manage. It is a fact that you can hear from anyone you ask, that if the mess-sergeant was a Jew, the food would be of better quality and better prepared.

And the same thing that you saw in the camps, you would also see on the lines. Also there the Jews had their own occupations in addition to their regular duties, and no one could accomplish it better than the Jews.

As an example I will tell you about a Jewish cook named Esh. It wasn't just by his name, J. Esh, that the company knew he was a Jew. Nature had bestowed upon him every detail of the Jewish physiology in full measure.

He could not drill. He was too fat for his height. His feet were too thick and short for hiking, and for aiming a rifle his eyes were too weak. Later he was transferred to our company, where we did not need rifles. After he was assigned a position where it did not require as much drilling, and you just needed to have a little intelligence, he showed himself to be very successful. The commanders quickly discovered in him talents that were very much needed. He was a good tailor. The officers would come to him and ask him to fix this or that. Esh would do a good job, and they would dance like they were at a party and promise him good luck and they were ready to make him a general. When one of the waiters that served the officers during the good days of camp life, spilled a bowl of soup on a couple of

officers, they went looking for a good waiter. Once again they came to Esh. And once again he distinguished himself with a great success. Then he starting mixing in with the pots and pans making recommendations and thinking up various dishes for the officers. They were very pleased with this, and they made him the cook for several high-ranking commanders. And with the home-cooked food he prepared for them, like sauerbraten, various kugels, which they called 'puddings' and from time to time Jewish foods, as the officers called it, like gefilte fish, he made them a little Jewish.

Esh told us Jewish boys how once one of the officers, the highest-ranking administrator in our outfit, with a big cigar in his mouth following a good meal, praised the Jewish soldiers and the whole Jewish people. And Esh happily recounted the administrator's speech in fine detail. "Then --" Esh finished. -- "He surprised me by asking me what my nationality was... You would think he had good eyes and could see my nose, and he called me "Jacob," a true Jewish name." When I told him, I wondered if the administrator was making some kind of joke with me when he asked my nationality. Esh assured us that it was not the case, because the administrator was always straight-up with him and held him in high regard.

I am not sure that the administrator liked Esh as much as he said. Often I have found that regardless of how much people say they like a nationality, it is really the puddings that he made that they like -- in that I am certain. Where did he get the skill to make such good dishes when he is really just a ladies' tailor recently come from the Old Country? That I can answer with yet another question: For example: From where does a Jewish boy, an operator, become a chief-mechanic, and a third who was a paper hanger somewhere in Brownsville become a field-farrier? And make the transitions so quickly?

It is interesting to see how such a young man like Esh is able to communicate with the French people: He doesn't understand the language, so he uses gestures and mimics. For example, when he needs to obtain fresh eggs for his officers' breakfast, he carries with him in his pocket some egg shells and shows it to them when he need eggs. When he needs milk, he makes gestures to the Missus like he is milking a cow. The hardest is to explain to the Missus is that he wants to buy a chicken. But that doesn't faze him: He takes the Missus by the hand, walks her out to the barnyard and points at the chickens repeating to her "chicken," "buy," "chicken," "officer," until she understands.

July 12, 1918

In order to be sure you are meeting a Jew, you toss around words like: “Shalom Aleichem!” “A Judeh?” or, simply: “Hey Yankel!” And if it is really a Jew, he will answer “Aleichem Shalom.” And when two Jews in khaki meet, for the most part they have the same way of speaking and gesticulating in the same manner as they had in the old homeland. Their conversation will revolve as if in a magic circle, around such questions as:

“How are things going for the Jews in France?”

“Such a year I'm having...” – “If it wasn't for Columbus, it would have been somebody else.”

“What are people writing you from back home?”

“Ach, the same things as usual. They are waiting for me to come home quicker.”

“Are you getting Yiddish newspapers, Yiddish news?”

“Where newspapers, where news? I haven't heard anything, I haven't seen anything.”

And it seems like the Jewish soldiers are living with the idea that the Jewish world stops at France. It has become a legend that somewhere there is a Jewish chaplain – But everyone I have asked if they have seen him with their own eyes there in the lines, have answered no, but someone they know has seen the chaplain, and so forth.

I have heard the name of the chaplain, and also that he is a good and honorable person that no one can accuse of inaction – He can't make his own assignments. – But I must say that something must be done for the Jewish boys in combat, and not leave them separated from the Jewish world. And to show just how much we are separated from the Jewish world, I will with full confidence make the following statement; That in six regiments, where I know every company within those regiments, I have not heard of a single Jewish newspaper, or seen a single Jewish representative. Under such circumstances the only thing that can bring them together with the Jewish world is the letter from home. But is it a weak means of maintaining a Jewish sentiment among our boys, because, in the first place, they are written solely within the framework of family events. Furthermore, there are not enough folks at home that are farsighted enough to insert a few lines about Jewish news and interests. Meanwhile, over the sole Jewish representative stands the same “Regimental Chaplain” like in the old camps. And many of our boys praise him, and what's more, like him.

When the Jewish boys get together, they talk from the heart about their big and their little problems. And the situation begins to look like this:

The American is indeed an educated and tolerant person with an understanding of the higher ideals for which he fights, and it is very easy to coexist with anyone who possess such virtues. However, in the army there are many elements who are far from having such virtues. Those are the three-quarters and half-Americans, along with most of the Irishmen, Pollacks, Italians and the rest of the immigrant-citizens. With them there is nothing but trouble. They all have the same habit of laughing at the Jews with their mannerisms and speech, just like in normal times. For the most part they are from the lower class type of person, with less understanding of American traditions, ideas and language. But, like all of that type, they fail to recognize the immigrant in themselves. Toward Jews they are always ready at

any time to show their cheap jokes and dirty teeth. Many Jewish boys have not one, but many stories to tell about encounters with such elements. Encounters which end up for the most part in fistfights. Meanwhile a wall is being built between us and them – a wall that is thick in some places and thinner in others, but stretches all the way to the trenches...

August 10, 1918

The Jewish soldiers have also had their praises sung by our commanders and by the highest courts in the best possible way, when they addressed such things. “No racist or religious rulings will be tolerated.” – That is their motto, and they follow through with all their power and decisiveness.

In truth someone told me about an officer who had, during a military training exercise where they had to engage one another and press their fingers together. The officer yelled at the Jewish boy: “Hey, you! Do it harder, harder like you would if you were grabbing money, money, money!” – Another who was not pleased with the way a Jewish boy was marching, pointed him out and told him he shouldn't act like he was going to a “Jew picnic.” But those were big exceptions. The fact is that those officers were severely punished when the high-ranking officers found out.

Were the Jewish boys impacted? Did they get very upset? Did they take such incidents to heart?

It is difficult to answer those questions. So far as I have seen, they were not terribly disturbed by those situations. Truth be told, it was a little hurtful. It is also unpleasant to find yourself in an unofficially excluded position. The Jewish boys reacted in two extremes: Either he threw himself with great skill into the study of the soldier's craft with all his energy, or he just let things go the way they were going to go.

September 5, 1918

The outward appearance of our Jewish boys is the best you could imagine. He goes around for the most part neatly dressed and is the first to “follow the fashions.” And since the Jewish boy is a keen “crap shooter,” he always has a few francs in his pocket he can afford to buy a French khaki hat and puttees. The sporty American soldiers have adopted the French custom of going around with a cane in their hand during their free time or when they are at a rest camp or in town. Our Jewish boys have also taken up the practice when they go out in the evening, or during leisure hours. If you ask a young man so equipped where he came from, he will let you know that he just arrived a couple of days ago from the forward trenches for a rest. Since there are a lot of lover boys, especially among the Americanized Jewish boys who know a lot of 'catchy' songs and couplets and can tap out with their feet a really good 'jig,' they gather around themselves a circle of French and American soldiers. With one word – they are surrounded by everyone who wants to hear a joke, have a laugh and see how to have fun. And our “Daves,” “Jacks,” and “Hymies,” don't make them beg for it. They amuse themselves and all around them. Such young men have their duties light and good. No one jumps on them to tease them about their Jewish roots because, in the first place the perpetrator would be quickly cut out of the group. The officers would make them the object of mockery with a few chosen remarks. In the second place, such “Jacks” and “Hymies” have their devotees, worshipers even, who will not let a freckle fall on them, and

will stand by their friends. Our boys are very aware of the value of their talent and strength. They frequently make good use of it. Even the not so talented Jews enjoy some of the benefits of what the “Jacks” and “Hymies” accomplish.

“What do you think of our buddy?” I once tossed out to one of the crowd that was surrounding “Jack.” Some of the young guys were singing and cutting up.

“Why!” He answered me cheerfully, “Just like you see him now, the Jew is just like that in the trenches. That Jew can even keep the Boches amused.”

September 17, 1918

Autumn arrives. The August pages of my descriptions began with the words – Hard, hard! – And it is not only on the heart, but also on the desert all around.

Lately I have had a lot of difficulties to get through because Autumn has coincided with a heavy increase in military trains going by during the last days of Summer.

There will be more victories. The Germans will be driven back. We don't doubt for a minute that the last thing that remains for them to do is to run. And to run until the Kaiser loses his crown; run until no more foolish Germans are left that are willing to pay with their lives for the ambitions of the Kaiser. Meanwhile we think of the German soldiers and the Kaiser as one, and when we see soldiers marching by who are going “On the job,” or when they see us with the “barkers” (cannons), we all can say, one to another: “Boys, let's get done with them and go home!” And when we give a short answer, but without a shadow of a doubt: “We'll get it done!” – Those are not empty words.

It is difficult for a Jew to be a soldier, even under the best of circumstances. Even in the brave ranks of the good and rich Uncle Sam. When one fights or when one rests, he bares the weight of his rifle and feels constricted in the uniform. It is hard for a free and peaceful man to be an ideal friend to his rifle, to deal with it with your whole heart and soul. Or even to love the death industry, in the same way the Kaiser with his Junkers love it. That is why we search for something to turn our thoughts and eyes toward, so to say, to relax. And dear Summer with its extraordinary richness, displays such beauty, such lovely spots, so many dear things, feelings and thoughts!

Even the Summer nights were often sleepless and unsettled. In Summer nights before closed or open eyes memories arise, images that bring a difficult unrest, or through the entry to the pup tent might come from time to time the song of a night bird. Sometimes the croaking of the frogs, the chirping of the grasshoppers and the murmur of the trees over our head – worked to witness and slowly engender heavy thoughts. Also during Summer days you would lose your strength due to the long hikes with a heavy pack and the rifle, even heavier. But when you finally got a chance to sit down and rest, when you had caught your breath, wiped the sweat from your face, it never failed that something after a while would make you forget the whole world. It might be a yet unknown field, or a flower by the side of a dusty road, or an industrious ant comically working hard to move a piece of bread that was too big for him which you had broken up and gave him from your hand. Your buddies would gather around and laugh and even bet on him: Whether you bet or not, you still won.

The Summer also plucked at your heart as when a farmer in a uniform sees in the distance someone

following a horse with a plow. The fields call to him with a painful intrusiveness: Come! – But he can not... But the joys of Summer are greater, more overwhelming. And when I see its riches come together, ready to depart, when the colored leaves begin to fall and mix in with the mud, when you wander over dying fields, when the bird's songs are less and less every day – it is very sad. Then you feel like a beloved gift or a dear friend has gone away and left you. I will allow myself to say, even if it is not an allowed feeling, that even our increased singing can not take the place of Summer pleasures in our everyday life. We are certain of victory, for us that is a fact; but G-d knows if another Summer will come for many of us...

On the Battlefield of Saint-Mihiel



On the Battlefield of Saint-Mihiel

For an entire day we prepared to leave the camp at La Courtine. We were a little chagrined to leave this wonderful place and also upset by the thought that we were about to jump into the fire.

Late into the night we loaded the freight cars with weapons, horses and mules. In the middle of the night the train pulled out.

It was a dark train with lots of cars. No lights except the glow of cigarettes here and there that interrupted the darkness.

On my car there were 55 soldiers who were stuffed in there like herrings. We were tired and wanted to stretch out our legs, but then they would fall on a head or chest and be shoved away along with curses. Most ended up sitting on their packs or propped up against them. The smell of the straw in the train car was suffocating. In the car and on this same straw had also traveled mules, horses and soldiers. Each individual party had left its own bit of filth.

“Oh, its biting!” someone cried out.

“Biting? Scratch yourself!” answered a joking, annoyed voice.

“The General should have to run these risks!”

“The President!”

“The Kaiser!”

“Ah, a stampede is starting!” complained somebody scratching furiously.

That is how we traveled day and night until we reached the Toul Sector. There a portion of us got off to help in the battle which was going on there. My 2nd Battalion was sent farther on, this time marching on foot to the extreme right flank of the Saint Mihiel Sector in the Lorraine between the towns of Metz and Nancy.

The farther we marched the more I felt the nearness of the battlefield. Often units from the American and the French armies passed by. There were less and less civilians. All along the way we encountered groups of civilians with their wives and children crowded onto their 'fourgons' drawn by mules. They were moving deeper into the countryside, running away from a possible attack by the Germans. They did not say a single word to us. Their faces showed exhaustion and were careworn, their eyes looked angry, as though we were partly guilty for their misfortune.

“There is the front!” a rider called out who was traveling side-by-side with me. I looked in the direction he was pointing and saw behind a high hill some little blue stars that disappeared then reappeared anew. It was getting cold. All at once we understood the meaning of the stillness that prevailed over the fields and hills around us. Somewhere above us was the drone of an airplane engine, the pace of our horses became slower. Instinctively we drifted to the side of the road where the shadows of the trees struck by the light of the round, full moon were deeper.

“Halt!” The commander ordered us.

“If an airplane comes toward us, fall to the ground.”

We remained standing there for a half hour. Then the commander came back to our group and said that Sergeant Major Hotchins' group was going to go on with a guide. A French soldier came along and we followed him to the hill, behind which, the signal fires were burning.

With our eyes squinting from the fires, we rode up the hill. The airplane came nearer. We could see him in the clearly lit sky. “That is one of ours,” the guide assured us. In a half hour we came to a small village near the top of the hill. Soon Lt. Middleton [Edward W. Middleton] came to us. He pointed out some stalls and empty houses where we put the horses, and we climbed into the haylofts.

“Is that all there is on a front where men fight?” One of us asked in a joking tone. However, we all knew that it was far, far from everything.

In the morning in an abandoned, half-destroyed village called Landremont, we saw, other than the soldiers from our Division, a few inhabitants, who did not want to lose their houses. In moments of danger they would hide in excavated holes (dug-outs). The hills all around were filled with trenches and nets of barbed wire. Soon, over our heads, there hung, like giant monsters, observation balloons. This was a quiet sector that one had to pass through to get to the hard fighting. The little village was far from the front lines where they sent our infantry and batteries with the cannons. Our unit of the headquarters stayed there for a little while. I was able to get back to my work. Because we were far away from the front lines where the Germans could hear us, I was a bugler once again.

But in addition to that assignment, I had another – as messenger. – If our sector became 'busy' it would be a very risky job, but for the moment it was quiet.

It is true that as part of my functions I was given a little horse with a saddle and the rest of the accouterments of a rider, spurs included. I had more pity on him than pleasure and joy in riding him, because it was just my luck to have a nebekh of a horse with all the qualities of Mendele's Mare. When he looked at me with his half-starved eyes; when I saw him with his bones sticking out from under his hide, I felt guilty toward him. I tried to explain to him that it wasn't my fault that he received such a small portion of oats. I tried to make it clear that we all lived off of rations, and I, too, had to be happy with what they gave me. – But the poor horse did not understand such things and continued to beg with his eyes and search me with his muzzle. The best I could do for him was to stable him together with colts who wouldn't nip and bite him so hard. To some extent I had to administer medicine to him. But my poor horse was such a schlemiel that even among the young horses and gentle horses I would find every morning that he had been chewed on and beaten up. I would wash him and salve his wounds, and talk to him from my heart.

Poor horse! What have you done wrong that men should fight for Democracy, or for a Kaiser, a devil? Why should you suffer, hunger and be frightened by the roar of cannons, and the rattle and crash of shrapnel that doesn't make a distinction between man and beast? But doomed, little brother! I am a messenger and they gave you to me with the authority to ride you when I have to go a long distance on a mission. The only help I can offer you is a heavy, Jewish sigh.

Truthfully, I will try to see to it that he is not overworked. When I have to deliver a message to a place that is a half or three-quarters of an hour away, I will leave my horse to rest, and only take him when the destination is farther than five kilometers. Even then I will not overwork him because our sector is quiet and there is no need to rush. He can go just as he would if he were alone. What's more, when

going through a village, I will make him hold his head higher in order to maintain mine and his reputation, because in general slouching doesn't pay.

Though I got little joy from my new position as messenger, or from my poor horse, at least Nature did not disappoint me. She spoke to my heart with love so deep every time I turned to her. I was thankful for the good fortune that brought me together with her so often.

One sunny day I set out just after noon. I had to deliver an order for supplies, and the officer who gave me the order and the directions on where to go and which path to take, also uttered those well-known and much wished-for words, "Take your time." – That meant that I could dally until late in the evening. When I had finished my errand and started back, it was already getting dark. The day was starting to fade into one of those wonderful nights that carries us away from the world and all its virtues and its faults. Slowly my horse walked up the hill and searched both sides of the path for a little grass to pluck. But I pulled him back away until we came to a small woods, because on both sides of the path were grapevines that grew up from the ground and twisted around stakes. The vines were loaded with beautifully-formed bunches of grapes that looked like little pearls peeking out from under the broad leaves glimmering from the beams of the full night-princess.

I have stopped at a flat area beneath the shadows from a group of trees and let go the reins. It did not take my horse long to figure out what I had in mind and he hungrily began grazing the high grass, while I drank in the beauty of the night, and the clear sky sprinkled with stars. It seemed to me that everything around me was contemplating the great mysteries of life, including the tumultuous days with their fighting and death. One would think that the surroundings with their trenches and ditches, chopped up hills were looking out from under the moonbeams with a gentle, quiet question: Why not dream, why not forget yourself in an eternal, peaceful happiness? But I already knew from experience that the gentle question from the hills would be answered by cannons and bomb explosions. Behind the curtain of the shadows that encircled us and changed with the light, men were creeping around and lying in wait for each other, hiding from each other and acting like beasts ready to spring on one another from behind and go at the other's throat with a knife or even with their teeth if the knife is lost somewhere on the path to the other's hideout while he stumbles on twigs and thorns that grow so thick on the sides of the hills. Often the knife falls from between the teeth where it is clenched as a man crawls on all fours, because even the bravest teeth, most frightful teeth, chatter at the thought that they too can soon be knocked out instead of burying themselves in someone's neck. That is what is called intelligence work, patrol work. The job is to take someone alive if you can. If you can't – shoot, stab and run.

Meanwhile everything is peaceful and quiet here. Not a shot, not a sound from the surrounding hills. Nothing more than from time to time the arc of a signal flare that lights the sky then fades.

Leaning over the front of my saddle, I listened to the stillness around me and thought about my recent past. I lost myself in dreams when I was reawakened by some indistinct sounds. From behind the top of the hill where our trenches were, I could hear sounds in the distance rising and falling as though they were being carried on a slight wind. But they were so dear, they spoke to my heart. Is it possible that it could be a coronet? What sort of melody is that? It seemed to me that I had heard it before. No, I had myself, in blessed forgetfulness sang it, hummed the song, but why can't I recall the name of this extraordinary song under these harsh circumstances? The sound causes my heart to beat faster, even without the name. It enchants the whole area around me, as though everything around me stilled, and listening through an enchanted forgetfulness to each note.

Image after image began to come to me in the mysterious light that engulfed the surrounding hills. They began to float before me clearer between the nearby trees – Images from my mother's ramshackle house in a poor shtetl somewhere in Russia, to the noisy America where I sought so long happiness without finding it, until I fell into the ranks of this army fighting for everything that is better and beautiful.

G-d is my witness how much I have believed in the ideals of my army, how much I have idolized that great man in Washington, from whose mouth were spoken the awakened conscience of America, and of the whole world. But not merely out of love of pure truth and to full justice have I latched on to this great union of individuals who love liberty, but also out of love for my own people who have been promised freedom. And also for love of myself, because I want my home, if I will have a home, to be built together with my freed folk in our freed land.

But, does all this have to come to pass through blood and tears? To achieve this does a man have to crawl on all fours with a knife clenched in his teeth? But only tears of deep disappointment, held back for so long, now torn from us are the only answer.

What is happening, am I crying? I, the committed soldier, who is ready to fight and to lay down his life for my people, for the ideals of the awakening, better world? Oh, damn! Oh, shame! I had to laugh at my own weakness.

I gave a sharp tug on the reins, tearing my horse away from his hungry grazing on the high, damp grass, and I regained the path that led back to the village, my billet and his stall. The wonderful sounds that had so moved my heart had long since stopped. I traveled through the single street through the village which was partially obscured by the shadows of the poor, half-destroyed houses. Some without roofs, others without walls toward the street or the sides. Then the usual night-visitor arrived. – Like the buzzing of a giant bee, from overhead came the sounds of an approaching German aircraft. I recognized him immediately from the sound of his tshshu--tshshu, which ended with a strong upward accent. I looked up and saw high in the sky something like a big white summer-insect, that shone like silver under the light of the moon.

Feh! I'm not afraid of you, you damned Boche! – And I stopped on the lighted side of the street. But the night watchman ordered me to get under cover.

No use: When you get an order, you must follow it. Afterwards, when I was tending to my horse – keep this just between us – I stole a little extra oats for him before returning to my billet.

“How many Boches are flying around up there? Asked one of my comrades who was listening to the battle in the air.

“Who cares how many? Soon they won't be able to help the Kaiser any more! All they are managing to do is rob us of a couple of hours of sleep.”

“And occasionally they drop a couple of pills.”

“Do you mean C.C. pills?”

“Oh, shut up!” Someone yelled out angrily, and soon you could hear the sound of healthy snoring.

Two Storms

One early morning a French soldier went through the village knocking loudly with his baton. The sole inhabitant of the village and the soldiers gathered around him. He read from a slip of paper an important warning that the inhabitants needed to get out for their safety.

While serving us our dinner meal, Milentor, a waiter, trying to smile said to us: "Well, friends, eat hearty. This could be your last meal before your funeral." Among ourselves we agreed that the campaign was about to start. During the night our company was moved to a position in the dugouts near the woods. We ate, but the food stuck in our throats and choked us.

"What should I write?" one of my Christian buddies asked me. He was a farm-boy named, Don. That same question was standing before me also: "What do you write in this moment?" Later when we showed each other our letters, we were astonished at the similarities. Written there was: "My life, thanks to G-d, has been healthy and full. We are about to move out, I will write to you from there if circumstances allow."

The farmer where my battalion group was staying, was running around like he had been poisoned, the children were crying, but he stayed in the village. Two other families had packed up two wagon loads of belongings and took off on the crooked road to the next mountain ridge. We did not particularly like the civilians that had stayed in the village, but when we saw them driving away and finally disappearing from view, it gnawed at our hearts.

The order came to move out.

I will never forget that evening. Two storms crashed into one another. The powerful wind that knocked you off your feet, and the fine rain which fell like a dust cloud and made the night even darker. And when you opened your eyes after a while with the rain lashing your face, you still couldn't see anything: Not in the heavens nor on earth. The only way you could go somewhere and stay on the path and not go astray, was with a complete knowledge of the area and by listening to the squishing of the thick mud under your feet. Those who knew the way led the company, or on a transport wagon which would get stuck from time to time in the ditch along the road. Then everybody would have to get out, and unseen figures would push and pull on the wagon, fall in the mud, pick themselves up, and beat the horses who were already breathing hard. It was as though the horses were choking with their hard, difficult breathing, hacking so pitifully that you wanted to cry over the poor, innocent creatures. "Don't beat the horses!" a voice cried out, and they threw themselves at the wagons with all their strength to pull them out. "Oh, go to the devil!" someone answered that merciful fellow, then you heard the crack of a whip and the stamping of horses' hooves and men's feet. From behind someone yelled: There are more and more wagons coming.

This went on for hours. Now we all knew that it was closer, that it would only be a few minutes more. The last figures slipped past us in great haste. Hell, or storms, we had to get to our destination on time. Only a few of our men and wagons were still a kilometer away from our assigned position. But, thank G-d, all of the wagons were pulled out of the mud and back on their way. Only a few men were hanging with the wagons, most were pushing from below, not counting those who were carrying the packs. No one was talking. Only the mule-drivers cursed and beat the horses. But as time got shorter, the less they thought about pity and the rest of the world. We waited tensely.

BOOM! – From somewhere the night was ripped open by a cannon shot, like a signal. In a few seconds everything shook as though it were going to collapse. On all sides we saw what looked like shrouded flames that leaped up through the wet, thick darkness. The nearer cannons deafened us with the frequent roaring, one after another. In the whole width and breadth of the area in front of us it was like hundreds of drums were pounding with a feverish pace, similar to the noise of a hundred post wagons driving hell-bent-for-leather over cobblestone streets. The drum pounding melded into an unending, wild, deafening buzz that was pierced by the 'whizzz' of the shells which, hopefully, were flying over our heads.

We all sort of clumped together. No, we were not panicked. However, we didn't notice it, but we were all soaked to the bone. We just forgot about the discomfort. The muscles of our hands and feet, our whole bodies, were stiff, like something had separated them all. With every shell or shrapnel which flamed up like sparks and disappeared with a 'crack' ever nearer and more often, our muscles seized up even more. It seemed like we were moving too slow, slipping too often, like the hill we were climbing was too high and we were being chased by the exploding stars which were coming closer. Then a shell flew over our heads and blew up to the right of us. It was not a little spark: It was a giant, steel cluster bomb. No one was hanging off of the wagons now. Everyone was pushing them with all their might.

“Halt!” – Someone came toward us from a side path and gestured with a flashlight. We had arrived. We secured the wagons and the horses in a somewhat sheltered place and we got into our dog houses (dug-outs). Someone lit a light. Instinctively we all looked at the walls of our shelter and were satisfied with what we saw. The corrugated steel roof was reinforced with poured concrete. The walls were a pretty marble. A pair of four-footed inhabitants were surprised by our sudden arrival, but who would want to do them harm?

We sat on our packs in the glow of the single light in the dug-out, and listened to the hell outside grow in intensity and strength and rage above our heads and all around. From time to time flashes of light like lightning lit up the entrance to our dug-out. It was difficult to tell if it was the roar of our cannons or the Boche shells and shrapnel.

Little by little the fever that made our limbs shake, in spite of our efforts to suppress it with all our might, began to loosen up. A few of us even ventured out to watch the devil's dance. Inside, by the shine of the single light, we saw the French translator and in loud voices we fired questions at him.

– “What do you think of the dug-out?” It is good enough to protect us from the flashlights! – He joked.

He told us that once he was laying in such a dug-out and sheltered like this, and he could only move his head a little. He told us other such incidents. Under the roar and blasts from outside, we all believed him and were more and more amazed, and empowered, as though we, too, were a little heroic.

When he got a little tired of recounting all of his experiences, and things got quiet for a while, someone in a back corner yelled to me:

“Hey, Cohen! They are fighting for you Jews to get you your Palestine!”

I didn't have time to answer when the French translator jumped up from his place and ran to me with an outstretched hand yelling:

“A Jew? A Jew?!”

“Yes, a Jew, and originally from Kishnev, even!” I answered.

How it came to pass that a Russian Jew would end up in the French army as a translator for the Americans – is not such a surprising happening in these times.

Meantime, I was feeling more at home, and I settled down next to him and we spent a long time talking about various things, but above all about the war. I told him about the Legionnaires, about our people and about our resettlement in that land. The shells and the shrapnel did not bother us that fell above our heads, nor to the thought that at any minute the sergeant could come in and order me to ride out or go by foot with a message for the command post or the battalion several kilometers away.

Early the next morning we were brought a lot of supplies including food and even letters. Among them was a letter from my friend, Odess, who now found himself in the front lines around Noroy that they were trying to take away from the Germans.

Along with the letter, Odess included some flowers in the envelope that he picked while waiting for a night attack. I was so happy to read Odess's courageous letter which follows.

Somewhere in France. July 26, 1918

My dear friend, Cohen: –

I am feeling fine. Early yesterday we came back from the trenches. That is the second time and I am still alive, thank G-d. Not only was I in the trenches, but also on patrol and our mission was to make a visit to the trenches of the enemies of the world and hunt them down. Unfortunately, we did not get into an active fight with them during the whole 7 days that we were on the front line. Each night I had to go on patrol. Apparently, they are afraid of us and hide like a mouse from a cat. They aren't laughing any more at the American soldier. They are crying now instead of laughing. We want to fight them some more. But the next time there won't be a second time. If they won't come to us, we will go to them and let them taste our gunpowder.

The whole week was quiet, except for one night. We had an order to go out and cut their barbed wire and try and bring a prisoner back with us. Unfortunately, it did not work for us because their wire was thicker than ours. They heard us when we went to work. Four machine guns began spitting at us. But they weren't successful either. We all came back happy and healthy.

Life goes on as usual. We guard at night and sleep during the day, but I can't complain. We are all feeling very good. Right now we are a little farther from the front lines. We are relaxing.

We really like the idea of assembling the Zion Legionnaires. I have thought about them quite a bit. Unfortunately, I couldn't do anything about it, since we have been moving to a different place every week. And I have not had the possibility to see my friends in the regiment. You are

staying in one place longer than we are. Do something for me too and I will be glad to send you my share.

You write to me that I should comfort those who have need of it. Our soldiers, thank G-d, don't have need of comforting. They are in good spirits and brave, and don't worry about anything. We hope that in a short time we will all meet back in the States as victors.

Stay healthy and let's hope that our dream will be realized, and that we will live to see the hills of Eretz Israel. I am sending you a few flowers from 'No Man's Land.'

Your friend forever,

S. Odess

In the Village after a Victory

Several days of hard combat followed. We only heard the loud cannon roar of the barrage, however our infantry suffered heavily.

We won! Noroy has been taken! That is what I thought when I saw the exhausted, muddy infantry soldiers coming back from the front lines and march into the village.

The sergeants called out the names in low voices, and soon they were able to go to their billets. Afterward they went to the kitchens for some warm food. But there was a marked difference in their mood compared to earlier. There was a near holiday mood of the inhabitants and the soldiers who gathered in the village streets in large numbers. The whole village seemed to breathe easier, because the Germans who had been hammering them even with their light artillery, had been driven back so far that they could no longer hit the village, and they were still pulling back farther. We read the latest bulletins that were posted every few hours outside of the canteen. We read that we had taken such-and-such amount of ground, cannons and prisoners. We read the news and enjoyed with great gusto our chocolate bars, cookies and good cigarettes, which had just arrived in large quantities. Due to the good moods, we bought as much of these treats as we wanted.

Reading the good news along with chocolate and a cigarette, which, incidentally, we also treated the few French soldiers and children to, people gathered in the streets of the village and recounted to one another their experiences and stories of survival in their first battle. And the Dough Boys showed off their souvenirs: A canteen, knife, watch and similar articles which they had collected from the dead or captured Germans. Every article was inspected with the greatest attention. However, everyone was even more curious to hear the story that went along with each item as to how it was acquired.

I was standing in one of those groups, and saw in the hand of a sturdy Dough Boy a short German pistol.

The soldier told this story:

When we arrived in the front line trenches night had already fallen, but I did not think of sleeping for even a minute. Instead I went into a support dug-out. We knew what was about to happen. And when our artillery started to hammer out a huge barrage, a chill went all through my body... But that was nothing compared to the feeling when we got the order to go “over the top.” Truly, we saw the results of our artillery's exhaustive work which went on for hour after hour. It lit up the skies over the German trenches with exploding shells and rockets. What's more it looked like my hide might stay intact. However, when we fell out into our last formation, my teeth started chattering “My Country Tis of Thee.” And when I got to the wall of the trench that I had to climb and go from shelter to the hell outside, I felt heavy. I thought I would not be able to go over without some one's help.

“What were you thinking in that last moment before you climbed out?” I asked him.

“To tell the truth,” he answered, “I did not have any particular thoughts. Yeah, in that last moment images passed before my eyes of my street, and my house where I live in the States. The faces of my parents, brothers and sisters. I even remembered my boss and my co-workers in the shop.”

“Every one of us,” he continued, “Took out photographs, or a cross, knelt and prayed to G-d.” But –

he said before anyone asked – I didn't act as foolish as another guy standing near me. He was shaking with his entire body, had cried and knelt for the most part of the evening. Oh, yes, I prayed to G-d, but I prayed that our artillery would keep firing on them. When we finally crawled out of the trenches and saw that the whole field was lit bright and the shells and shrapnel were flying like an unending hail of fire and steel, I forgot about everything. The only thing that occupied my whole being was a burning desire to go faster, closer to the German lines and be done with them. When we got the signal that the barrage would soon be moving forward and we could advance a few yards, I felt lighter and ran forward then fell to the ground awaiting the next signal.

When we got closer to the first German trenches, we heard among the loud noises around us the rattle of machine guns. Then the barrage reached the first German trenches and we let out a wild cry. I noted that the Germans were confused and frightened, but I did not give them time to think and I sank my bayonet into one of them. I could not hear if he cried out or not, but his mouth and his eyes opened so wide that one would have thought they were cut off, as I tried to pull my bayonet from his mouth. His hands at first flew up, then quickly dropped. He grabbed my rifle as though he wanted to take it from me. To get my bayonet loose from his body, I fired the rifle. That works best in such cases. I wanted to keep going, but I noticed the pistol next to him. I took it as a memento of the first German I killed.

“How much do you want for the pistol?” I asked him.

“How much do I want?” He repeated proudly, thinking about it for a while, “You can buy it for a thousand francs.”

“What foolishness!” Someone yelled out. “In a while we will have a mountain of such souvenirs.”

I do not doubt it at all. However, I must concede that I am not yet enough of a soldier imagine the horrid tragedy that lay behind those souvenirs – The horrible bulging eyes. The hands grasping the rifle whose bayonet had pierced his body. As though somehow that last grab was a chance to save himself. I took no pleasure in the souvenirs even though they came from the guilty and condemned Germans. And when I purchased a buckle from a German belt, it was only due to a momentary curiosity about the object. Furthermore, all of this makes me angry, and the question: Is it impossible to awaken in every man a disgust for such souvenirs, drill it into their minds and etch it in their souls?

After driving the Germans away, the band assembled in their old place on the so-called “Plaza” in the village, and we gathered all around them. The scraping and wheezing of the instruments which labored to bring forth little scraps of the best music, was, for us, more agreeable than usual. The evening brought out from the orchestra primarily earnest and pathetic pieces.

Every soldier in the regiment knew the faces of the men in the orchestra. Everyone felt gratitude because they helped so many through their playing to forget themselves and distract their thoughts. That is why we immediately noticed that two of them were missing. Two instruments remained quiet...

Friends laughed and were happy when “Beck” was around. But people no longer waited with such curiosity for more of his jokes and funny faces. People listened to the music. They pulled chocolate bars out of their pockets and the band tried to toss out some cheerful, catchy tunes. But that couldn't

distract the thoughts which pressed on the mind and imprinted themselves so clearly on the faces. The horror that one had lived through for several days and was far, far from ending. The faces of those that not so long ago we had lived with, fought with and often had great fun with, that now were missing – they did not give us peace. From more than one comrade I heard, the disbelieving remark: I can't believe that John, that Dick, that Jacob are no longer with us, they have been planted in the fields of France! And they always ended with the old: "Oh, G-d dammed Boche! We'll teach you!..."

Rosh Hashanah

When Rosh Hashanah arrived we received permission to gather at several points. In my regiment and in the 325th Infantry the men went to a village called Loisy. We got together there in a horse stall, carrying some boxes and boards that we used to fashion benches. Instead of an aron kodesh we placed a large box in the corner of the stall and covered it with a 'soldier-yellow' blanket. On two stones we placed candles – Where did we get the candles? – A Jewish soldier saw them in a trench somewhere and brought them here to use.

We did not have any holiday prayer books. We did have a few sidur prayer books, and everyone thumbed through them to see if there were any appropriate prayers we could find.

It got dark, and some of the guys said that we should cover the crumbled wall so that our candles could not be seen by enemy airplanes. They boys quarreled about it for a while, and I noted how the Jewish officers and sergeants avoided mixing in with the squabbling. Something held them back from exerting their military authority...

They finally got around to covering the wall openings. The small trees outside were painted with the glimmer of the setting sun. It made one peevish. It was a little sad to see the fallen wilted, leaves and the dark red on the horizon where the sun was setting – it made you want to cry, cry with the blood of your heart for the troubled men, for the Jews in this war...

Chaplain Tannenbaum arrived. Before prayers he wrote down the names of all the men so he could send a “leshayne tovah” [Happy New Year] to the homes of each of the men attending the service. Afterwards they lit the candles and began to pray. The Chaplain read out loud – we repeated after him, word for word, and each word was spoken softly by some, haltingly, and by others with a tear which glistened on their cheeks in the light of the flickering candles like diamonds.

“And now we will say Kaddish for our fallen comrades.”

For a moment all of us were turned to stone. Tannenbaum began:

“Yitgadal ve-yitkadash, Shmei rabbah...” [May His name be magnified and made holy...]

In the darkness of the stall where the men in full battle dress stood barely visible like shadows, where only the pale faces could be distinguished, one would think, that those saying Kaddish were tomorrow's dead or today's dead.

The Chaplain left us. We still had a half-hour to spend together, and already, outside, we had decided to do something good, from the heart for our people. We settled on a plan to build a temple to Jewish music in Eretz Israel in the name of the Jewish soldiers who are fighting on the battlefields of France. Right there we all made donations for the project.

Mama, tie my shoes

My heart wept when I met Schnitzer. A strong premonition followed me the whole lonely way to Landremont to my billet. This time my premonition did not fool me.

After a number of difficult days Yom Kippur arrived. We did not have any gatherings. Many didn't even realize that the High Holy Day was here. During days leading up to Yom Kippur a cold rain fell day and night, as though both heaven and earth had grown bitter about the thousands of condemned, lost men.

Night and rain – How terrible they are. During the day you don't notice it as much. During the day you can get a little sleep – we don't get enough sleep. Fighting during the day is not as frightening as fighting at night. In the darkness it is much more oppressive when you are lying there with your own thoughts melding with the song of death. With the unending gnawing of the specter of deadly artillery shells coming at you. They are divided into two kinds in the dark skies. One makes noises like the Autumn wind and the second whines like a miserable, lost child.

So the music of death nips and rips at sleep, pushes it farther away from the death-plagued men, who remain suspended over an abyss between the unrelenting sorrow and fright from one side and the gnawing desire just for a minute to stretch out their limbs, to rest and warm themselves.

Tucked deep into their great coats, men nestled against the earth in a ditch trying to warm themselves with their own body heat and lessen the wet and cold feelings. By twos and threes soldiers huddled together closer. In such moments feelings of thankfulness and true brotherly consideration for one another grew in their hearts. The men shared their longing, respect and complaining.

“Brother, I'm hungry!” One says.

“I think I might have a bit of bread!” Says the other.

“Let's have a smoke. I have tobacco.”

“Give here.”

“When will this end?”

“The Germans are still strong.”

Above it sings, below death crackles and the brothers' bodies in the earthen trenches nestle closer together against the ground.

* * *

Schnitzer came on Yom Kippur with his medical detail which had taken over a big, deep cellar. We knew that there would be an attack. The nattering of the shells became more frequent and more angry. On the faces of the men in the cellar you could see etched the desire not to go outside. Only Schnitzer's face remained calm and thoughtful. He went to the opening of the cellar stared for a few minutes into the thick darkness, and said to his comrades: “I'm going to Company C.” – And he was off. Out of

instinct he felt his way to where Company C was located, first asking one, then another and a third, searching until he heard from somewhere a voice.

“Kingston,” he called out softly.

“Schnitzer,” a voice called back. He crawled over. With Kingston there were two Jewish soldiers. Pushing his way through some bushes he reached them. They wrapped him in their coats. Together they tried to warm themselves and shivered together in the cold.

“Isn't it odd, Schnitzer, already a couple of times we heard a voice singing on the other side,” Kingston said looking him square in the face.

“From where? What kind of singing?” Schnitzer asked.

“From there, opposite us. The melody is like the song: Flown, flown a little bird, in all four directions.”

“Hush!” One of them forced the others to listen. It was like every man's heart stopped for a minute, then started again with a thump, so hard as though pushing each drop of blood with every beat.

Accompanied by the noisy shells flying overhead, the voice was heard again, very beautiful and calm. This time it was a Hasidic song. It reminded a Jew of his heart-felt song and drew him in to the feeling of loneliness and despair. The song spread over No Mans Land and engendered bright images, images that caressed you like your dear mother's hand, but something rose in the throat, pressured and burnt. It choked you like a spasm.

“Let's answer him,” Kingston whispered to the others.

“It is possible that the singer is a German-Jewish soldier,” said someone.

“Comrades, today is Yom Kippur!” Schnitzer said almost yelling it. And as one, from each man's heart, a song arose. It was the song with the mournful melody “Kol Nidre.”

For a moment the other voice went silent, but soon it picked up the holy tones. They rose up higher and higher, soon covering everything, embracing everything.

A frightening shriek and crash interrupted the song. Suddenly, all was still. After the momentary quiet, the men's shadows on the ground began to move and in their ears was one again the frightening noise of the blast of heavy shells.

Everyone began to pat themselves. – “Whole! Whole!” They were happy to see that all of their limbs were still intact.

The voice in the distance had also stopped. Kingston was upset and began to sing again the interrupted “Kol Nidre.” The others chimed in to help, but Schnitzer remained silent.

“Schnitzer! Schnitzer!” the guys called for him.

Kingston began to pat him. Something wet and warm. “Blood” punched into his consciousness.

“He is hit!” Kingston screeched and took hold of him. They quickly carried him to the big cellar.

There, by the dim light they saw his pale face with tightly clenched teeth. He opened his eyes, slowly looked around and recognized Kingston's face, which was bent over him and the closest. In his eyes a warm flicker of life lit up.

“Kingston,” he said. “Take my collection card for the temple in Eretz Israel, – the money from my pocket.”

The doctor and all his assistants ran to help him. But their faces darkened: From his ripped off feet flowed the last drops of his blood.

He opened his eyes again and said in a faint whisper:

“Mama, tie my shoes.”

A Gift from the Jewish Soldiers in France to the Legionnaires in Eretz Israel

The following two letters will demonstrate deep meaning of the gift, beyond the material value.

I am presenting the letters in the same format they were in back in the day, and they will truly illustrate the feelings of the large majority of Jewish soldiers and how earnest they were about the promises the Allies made.

Dear Friend Edlin! –

It will surely please the Jewish streets to hear a greeting from our boys who are with the American army in France. This time we can send a special greeting which will please and fill with pride all of our homes.

It would be foolish to try to persuade ourselves or others that it is an easy job to remain in such a battle, like that which we are conducting against the Germans, and where the Angel of Death is being served by the greatest scientific means. But it is a fact that **things seem more horrible from a distance than they are in truth.**

It would, naturally, take too much time to describe everything, and we are not in a position to explain it all, but what we can say so far is that the Jewish boys in the American army **will lift up the Jewish name high by virtue of their bravery and selflessness in battle.** From every one who has been side-by-side with a Jew in combat, we hear only praise.

But even in the greatest heat of combat, under all circumstances, the Jew does not forget his Jewishness, his Jewish street with its ideals. And if it is difficult to hold Jewish services (and many times it is impossible), then another way is found to express the Jewish spirit, which strikes all the harder in accord with the broad Jewish street.

Only soldiers in this place see what it means to fight for freedom and a better life, and **have only then understood the full meaning and motives that have propelled our Legionnaires to go and fight in Eretz Israel.** We value the great sacrifice that you bring, and therefore you are, indeed, a beloved topic of our discussions.

We are separated from the rest of the Jewish world, we do not hear any Jewish news, except when we stumble upon a Jewish newspaper that is months old. But mention to a group of Jewish boys the Legionnaires and it will enliven their hearts. And when someone talks about them, saying that he has read about them going “over the top” and giving the Turk gunpowder to smell, we all feel even more proud to have our own heroes there on the great western field.

But we are not just talk, one fine day we decided to demonstrate our feelings toward the Jewish fighters through a letter which we sent by way of a newspaper and a little money for cigarettes and tobacco to be shared among our Legionnaires wherever they might be found.

Certainly, the sum is small, and possibly only a tiny amount will come to each of you individually, but we believe that as a brotherly gift it will be accepted with joy, and that our sentiments that accompany it will be understood not only by our Legionnaires, but by the whole Jewish world and outside world.

Truly, it was very difficult to do the collections under the unrelenting waves of a thousand dangers. It was very hard to find all the Jewish boys spread out over every corner of the service. However, Jews are stubborn, the champions of stubborn who carried out the collections and did not want to rest until the sum reached a thousand francs were: Corporal Harry August from Philadelphia, Sergeant Sam Rubin from Cleveland, Corporal B. Rosenfeld from Philadelphia and Sergeant B. Hyman from New York. And as very good helpers we should also mention: Y. Ash from Brooklyn, Musician Morris Schnitzer from Brooklyn, S. Rome, Carl Kaiser and Sergeant Orlov, and A. Gordon who belong to one of the field artillery organizations.

It is, however, impossible to describe the massive enthusiasm and love that the boys have shown for the Legionnaires. And we remain surprised at how popular and with such inner pride the Jewish soldiers speak and think about our great national fighters.

The following men send, along with their signatures on this letter, to the Legionnaires the indicated amounts in francs:

1 st Lt. Sam Adler	50	Cpl. B. Rosenfeld	50
1 st Lt. William Engel	40	Cpl. Philip Schvom	10
1 st Lt. Irving Engel	5	Cpl. Gos. Fuld	10
2 nd Lt. Sol. Abelov	10	Cpl. Max Rosenfeld	10
2 nd Lt. S. S. Weisman	10	Cpl. A. Salk	10
2 nd Lt. Harry Legon	10	Cpl. A. Schenberg	5
Sgt. A. Orlov	10	Cpl. B. Forman	5
Cpl. Harry August	30	Cpl. A. Aronson	2
Sgt. Sam Rubin	30	Cpl. S. Brunoff	2
Sgt. A. Gordon	10	Dentist J. Weis	10
Sgt. B. Hyman	10	2 nd Musician Mor. Schnitzer	100
Sgt. Sam Marder	5	2 nd Musician H. Lishinski	10
Sgt. Zelig Markum	10	1 st Bugler S. Cohen	100
1 st Bugler Al. Ellis	1		
2 nd Bugler L. Friedman	15		
2 nd Bugler Carl Kaiser	10		
Chef J. Ash	50		
Chef Mor. Milentar	10		
First Class Privates:			
Sam Rome	50	Myer Rome	25
S. Ketzenoff	25	L. Gorbarski	20
J. Leizer	15	Abe Richmonds	15
S. Blender	15	Max Rosenblat	15

Abe Golub	5	S. Goldstein	2
Privates:			
Harry Geldsher	10	Carl Weber	10
Sol. Kolbak	10	A. Rosens	10
Y. Bernstein	10	Sam Levin	10
S. Skabverski	10	Sam Markovitz	5
H. Klein	5	J. Trianski	5
S. Livenstein	5	S. Gleitzer	5
E. Oshti	5	M. Derson	5
M. Braun	5	Harry Kaufman	5
Thomas Sigmund	5	Av. Verbinski	5
A. Yudleson	5	N. Kanevski	5
S. Shofer	5	M. Simon	5
H. Kohan	5	D. Ashkeits	2

All together we are sending you 994 francs, in two money orders – 100 dollars and 66.10 dollars. A few more francs which will soon be collected will also be sent immediately.

We ask of you, dear friend Edlin, to place this money in the proper hands so that it will arrive all the sooner to our Legionnaires to the purposes described in this letter to you.

We send this letter along with our best wishes to the whole Jewish people in this hour of our national resurgence.

We wish blessings on the hands that want to help in the building of our land, following the victories of our Legionnaires, with peaceful works when the fought-for world peace will finally come after the fall of the brutal emperors.

With heart-felt greetings from all the boys,

September 28, 1918

The Letter to the Legionnaires

Dear Brother Legionnaires!

Engaged in battle against the enemies of the world, ready to fall in battle side-by-side with our comrades from the American host of freedom-fighters, who have thrown themselves into this huge war in order to prevent the conquest of so many generations with the noblest sense of world history, we have never, our dear brother Legionnaires, never forgotten you.

In our discussions somewhere in a castaway, blood-soaked corner of a defeated Belgium or France. In our writings to friends at one or another battlefield, and above all, deep in our hearts and minds, you occupy the brightest and most sacred corner.

It is difficult to be a fighter, even for the most holy cause – But when we give or receive death on the tip of a bayonet, when we fall under the gigantic burden of this incomparable conflict, when the light of the world is extinguished in our eyes, a world that we want to see happy and free – In the most difficult moments you stand before us like a relief and a reward for the worst we endure, because you stand before our eyes as a guarantee that our people, that we love so much, will live the rest of their lives no longer in exile.

The consciences and consciousness of our awakening people have been stirred by the words of Great Britain proclaiming our right to self-determination in that land that we have wept for and longed-for for so many generations – Eretz Israel, the cradle of our people's birth, the driving force of our prophets, the land for which our longings have remained unfulfilled for countless generations during a difficult exile. You have not been satisfied with just the words of the proclamation.

You have not been satisfied with the cries of 'bravo' and heart-felt sympathies, with which the liveliest part of the forum greeted the English Parliament's declaration, you were not satisfied with the fact that pleased hundreds of thousands of Jews. Of all that have fought and are fighting in all of the armies of the great, humanistic Allies, only you are deployed as Jews, in the name of Judaism and are fighting for Jews. Your motto, besides being cried out, will be lifted high in your own name as you battle in Eretz Israel for our people. This is understood and treasured by the whole world.

The world has done its just duty to the Jewish people. But you have done even more – You have lifted up the ancient Israeli honor and dignity. The Jewish soldiers from every army and battlefield, doubly understand you with their heads and hearts.

Our hearts are with you, dear brothers, and every step you take across our holy land, every battle you bring, strengthens and hoists higher our new blue-and-white flag, and fills our hearts with joy, peace and endless love for you – a love that we can express with the cry: “Oh, G-d, protect and help them!”

Dear brothers, when you are victorious on the liberated hills and valleys of Judea, when you pick a flower in a quiet moment from our freed fields, when your exile floats about over our land in a beautiful heaven lauded by our people, remember us and take us with you.

And when you meet with the pioneer colonists who remained there, tell them that many of us who remain whole, will come there to work side-by-side with them and put into motion the work for an eternal happiness throughout the whole world, just like our prophets began it, and the Allies, and that

noble giant, Uncle Sam, presented it, and will bring it to fruition.

Together with this letter we are sending you a small present – Only half of us had the good fortune and time to take part in this heart-felt deed – But everyone's blessings go with it.

All of the soldiers send to you a soldierly present: A little change to buy tobacco and cigarettes that you can use to lighten the moments of sorrow which are unavoidable in such long and massive fight which we have to win.

From this small sum we ask you to hold back a little, and when and where you can, plant a cedar tree in our hallowed ground, if possible in the Hertzl Forrest. It should stand as a symbol of the new direction that Jewish life will now take.

Up until now we have heard about and dreamed about the old cedar trees that told about our people's ancient pride and courage. However, this young cedar, planted by your hands should be unconquerable and defended by your ranks. It shall serve as an eternal symbol that you, and us and all young Jews from the coming generations will know the difference between exile and freedom.

Greet on our behalf your English comrades in arms and tell them that as long as the Jewish people will live, we will, with a blessing on our lips, remember the word "Britannia." That in our joy we will remember who we have to thank for the greater part of it.

Remain in good health, and with the same courage and faith that you and we have thrown ourselves into this struggle, behind you stands the certain and human knowledge of an awakening world – the Allies, America, our enduring people, and us, your brother soldiers who can not join you in that place of conflict.

From: A group of Jewish boys in France

In the Argonne Woods



In the Argonne Woods

On the Sabbath, the 5th October, 1918 for the last time he broke camp folded our tents and moved to a new camp area. A higher commander warned us that for the first time we would see what a real battle was like with all its horrors. We would soon find out that he was not kidding.

The move forward was slow and difficult. We had to go to the frightful Argonne Woods, where the hardest fighting of the war had been taking place for years.

“Be sure that you have with you your emergency rations” – They warned us several times that we should carry with us a couple of hard-case boxes of biscuits and a can of conserved corned beef. But the warning was not necessary because everyone already felt that the greatest concern that he had, is for himself, for remaining whole, and for any possible comforts.

A mysterious fright emanated from the Woods from the first moment we entered it. It was new for us and unknown, but a world-famous front. It seemed that out of all the woods in the world this one was different. No other looked as murderous, so evil. One would think that this woods was the home of Death itself. The deeper we penetrated the woods the more vivid that impression became. What's more, the farther we went the more signs we saw of the horrible struggle. There were countless new and old trenches and dug-out colonies. There were endless barbed wire entanglements that ran in all directions along the way and into the dark, mysterious depths of the woods.

There lay a broken rifle, parts of broken wheels, a German and an American helmet... A little farther in the ditches along the way we saw piles of rags which were once part of the soldier's housekeeping: underwear, a belt with a bayonet, a ripped blouse and another broken rifle. More helmets from American, French and German manufacture. We continued to march on. More helmets, but this time in pairs and arranged in even rows. When I got closer to them I saw that they were not for nothing. They covered the head-marker for a pair of American soldiers. I read the names and the dates. It was only a week ago that they fell in battle. Just beyond them on the same side of the road was a fenced cemetery. I ran to it, jumped the fence and saw that there lay Hans's and Fritz's, who had been hastily buried not long before. You could hardly read the names written there in pencil. Most of them were obliterated. Their mothers had sent from home artificial wreaths to lay on the graves that carried patriotic and motherly inscriptions:

“Do you have a small knife? I want to snip a flower as a remembrance,” one of our guys said to me as he bent over a pretty wreath.

“No, brother,” I answered him, “You are not going to take a souvenir from here. What belongs to their last resting place, will remain with them.” He did not take anything.

We continued on with our unending train of wagons, riders and cannons. More and more often we came across groups of mounds with helmets as head-markers and inscribed with: “Here Lies...”

For the umpteenth time my friend asked me if I wanted my horse back that I have given to the tired infantry man. But, no, I didn't want to ride, I wanted to walk every foot of this famous battlefield that we had to go across before we reached our designated position. And the farther we went the more we saw the frightfulness of the battle that raged there for years.

There were masses of downed trees. At first just shot-off tree top and branches, then some shot clean in half. Just as if they had been broken in the middle or at the roots. Some in various places and in various poses like murdered giants. Going a little farther it was not only corpses of trees, but crippled branches, of gigantic girth. Just a short distance farther it was as though they had been ripped out. Some of the roots spurted from the ground like desperate, outstretched hands. Farther on was an empty, chopped up field, which for a long time had been called, "No Man's Land." – It stretched out like a long, long pale wound through the woods for as far as the eye could see.

Trench after trench, a dug-out, mines, trips were once there, but they had battled so long and plowed the field with cannon shells that the result was a shapeless mass of earth and clay. Wherever a little wire was exposed and rods of barbed wire entanglements, even they were shot-up and buried in the clay. It seemed that in the woods and in the surrounding area the earth was a black, fruitful loam. But there in the unending extent of No Man's Land there was just yellow sand and mud with random craters, wire and more and more busted and whole equipment. We would not have been able to push through the four miles if it weren't for the wood planks, stones and packed clay that they had used to pave the path.

After marching over the old No Man's Land, we started to see trees again just like we saw on the approach. There were more and more until we were once again in a forest. A couple of hours more and we were again in a field. In the distance we could see high and low mountains. We had to continue on some miles, and we had to stop to catch our breath before going on to our positions. In the distance we could clearly hear the cannon fire. We were closer to them now and we could understand their language. What a mass of military, wagons, ammunition and various camps were spread out in all directions!

We had gotten as close to the front as we could. We stopped and made camp.

When digging out shelters, you want to make them as secure and safe as possible. The best thing to do is to dig into the hillside that is opposite the German lines. You dig them deep enough so that you can lay out three covers, the raincoat and greatcoat in such a manner that a part of it is under one side and with the rest you cover yourself. The earth that you removed is used, especially if you can find some unused boxes, as a barrier on the open side of the dug-out. Over it you spread the rest of the tent canvas that everyone carries with them. Friends get together in two's or three's to dig a deep hole, deep enough for all. They also get better use out of their blankets and other things.

These were the types of camps men made in the middle of the field. When the whiz-bangs (shells) began to fly over our heads, and when one got up in the morning it looked like the field was full of mouse nests.

Was sleeping good in such nests? Take into consideration the Autumn rains, wind, and raw earth and you can figure it out for yourself. Meantime, my friend and I dug out our camp, and took our mess kits and went to the kitchen. Sometimes it happened that they would come to us and as soon as we were settled our food would be ready, because they cooked it on the way. All that was left to do was to lay out the long, deep trays and immediately long lines of our boys with the same jokes and laughs about the cooks and 'corn willy' that the cooks tried to camouflage using various tricks from the culinary arts, and name-changing. Like, for example, 'monkey meat,' 'dog meat.' If that didn't work the cooks would tell us when they were serving up the big portions of steamed beef that it came from the mules that died yesterday.

After eating our meal, we hunkered down in our blankets and nestled deeper in our dug-out, because often those messengers of a better world would go screaming over our heads.

In the New Hell

In the late afternoon we were on the move again. As we climbed up to the newest position opposite the enemy, we could, after only a couple of thousand yards march, see the camouflaged heavy cannons. From all sides and every nook and cranny we could see the bright flashes from the muzzles and hear the blasts from their firing. We soon left them far behind us, but our march was still not done.

We continued to climb upwards and were happy to see even more cannons lighting up every moment, but now there were more shells coming from the other side. This time we were not able to move very fast because the night was completely dark and the whole way was crowded with wagons and soldiers moving in both directions. Every so often columns would cross our path and we would have to stop before we could again take a few more steps. Oh, how we wanted to move fast, and then we would have to stop while they removed a couple of dead horses, or often men wounded or killed by Fritz's 'jar cans' (shells).

Because of the slow-going, I decided to dismount and lead my horse along with the rest of my comrades who did the same thing. A shell fell right ahead of us. Again there was a tumult with yelling. We halted. In my heart stole an unsettling feeling. You wanted to know what was happening farther on. However, curiosity did not win out over the instinct to search out a safer place. Everybody asked: "What happened?" But no one ventured forward to find out, unless it was his duty. And it seemed like the safest place was there, where you stood, with your own horse, with soldiers from your own Company. When you can you sit yourself down on the side of the path where there was a deep ditch.

Sergeant "Joey" said to me that the grass was good for horses: It was good grass! I accepted his excuses, agreed that the grass was extraordinary, and I sat down next to him, but deeper down in the ditch, – improving my chances of staying alive.

Our column was halted for quite a while until the path was cleared again. However, the infantry soldiers who were moving in a long, endless column had to continue without pausing. They were going in single-file. The orders were to maintain some distance from one another, but in their movement there was a desire to be closer to each other, as though somehow it was safer. And when a shell swished by over the path and fell before them or beyond the target, they ducked down, halted for a moment, raised their elbows up to their heads below the helmets as though they were waiting for a monumental clap – there, there it came – the shell exploded with a crash. Pieces of the shell and mud flew by with a sharp whistle. Nothing happened. But those who came after ran through the spot as though they were certain that a second and a third were coming.

When they ran by with their heavy packs on their backs, loaded down with rifles and ammunition and with their helmets cocked down over their faces, in their bent-over bodies and fast pace in the mud, one could feel a longing, to be smaller, insignificant; like they wanted to feel unnecessary and redundant in the whole wide world. In about one hour or maybe less, many of them wouldn't be remaining.

Our column was once again on the move. Between the confused noise of the cannons and the shells exploding, we could now hear the crackling of machine gun fire. The ones to the right of us seemed the closest. The rockets and explosions lit up the heavens moment by moment, and in that light we could see a long low mountain. When we got to that hill, we halted.

That would be the position for our battery. A small group of our men were forward of our column

because as headquarters detail we had orders to find the best placements for our batteries. We centered around a dilapidated, bullet hole ridden barn. Everyone dismounted. For a while we did not know what to do next. In the darkness through the noise from the tumult, called out the names of the officers, sergeants and corporals. Not all, apparently, responded. Then, I heard someone call my name. What could they want with me? I was nothing more than a private, and just a bugler at that. But I was here and I reported immediately. In that instant a shell landed and killed two horses and a driver. But we did not lose any time in that situation at this time. The same officer that called my name, called out four other names that we should come to him immediately. He said that we should come with him to locate the positions and that we should carry loaded pistols. With those last words, I went hot all over my body: Did that mean that we were so close to the Boches that we could possibly meet up with them? As it turned out, that was a distinct possibility because the Germans had only just left that area, driven out by our infantry. We couldn't be sure of every point that our infantry had covered, or where there might be an open gap or a spot that had not been cleared of the enemy.

Two of the group that had been called and I made a quick inspection of our weapons and made sure that we could get to them in a moment's notice. The other two of the group that was called had disappeared or were lost already.

“Come!” And we were away following the officer in the dark. He was the only one who had the instructions and the landmarks for finding the needed positions for our whole battalion. One of the landmarks was another artillery unit next to ours. We had hardly gone a thousand yards when shrapnel exploded in the air somewhat to the right of us, then a second and a third dancing over our heads. The officer told us to jump into the closest crater and headed for one himself. As for running, you have never seen running! In an instant I was beside the officer, and jumped in with him. A second later the others arrived. One of them fell on top of the officer and me, causing us to roll deeper into the crater. The officer was the first to get clear of him, but he fell on me with his full weight and in such a way that he could not get himself upright. I felt around with my outstretched hand and felt running water, and he pushed me deeper into it.

“Hey, you! Get off!” – I screamed at him. But he had fallen on his back groaning terribly, but could not help himself. With all my might pushing on the bank of the stream of water, I managed to slip out from under him. “Splash!” we heard as he fell in, and we all laughed at the comical scene that was seldom seen and that we all were a part of.

“Did you find a good position?” – The officer asked after we all stopped laughing, and he finally got up and shook the water off. “Yes, Sir! It is a fine position, but a little damp!”

The shrapnel shelling had moved off to a side and we began running again to carry out our mission. For hours we went around like this in the dark, for the most part circling a spot, calling out the number of the designated artillery unit. More than once we fell into shell craters, sometime one guy, then another guy and often all together one on top of the other until we had identified the desired locations.

By now it was becoming lighter. We could not lose any more time. The time would soon come when we would open up a barrage on a specific point, and if we lost even a little time, the Germans would see us in the coming dawn's light.

Exhausted by the long wandering around and the ever-present danger, we still managed a quick pace back to our batteries who were waiting for us to show them their positions. Absentmindedly and looking out toward where they were camped, I walked along side of the officer when I stumbled on

something and fell down. Every time someone fell down, everyone would laugh, not out of fun, but more out of camaraderie. Everyone laughed, but not me. My hand felt a man's face. I snapped back up to my feet and took another look. Yes, he lay there with his arms spread out. His pack was not lying flat on his back, his feet bent together, the knees up, the face to the heavens, his half-open eyes looked at me, colorless and unseeing.

A frightening shock ran through me. I had seen many in their last pose, but the thought that I had disturbed him with my hand caused my hair to stand up on my neck and my whole body broke out in a cold sweat. I felt the full shudder of death. There lay one, and another and so on wherever you looked, as far as the eye could see in the dawning light. It was only a couple of days ago that the Germans were driven from this spot, but also many of our guys had fallen, too. They would not be driving anyone else out, they would not be fighting with anyone any more. For them everything is over and everything is lost. They waited motionless where they lay for the burial detail...

But we did not have much time to stand over them. We had fulfilled our mission.

“Lieutenant, where should we go now?” – We asked him after the batteries had been put in their assigned locations, and began firing with all speed.

He disappeared somewhere, and we went back to the ruined barn.

With the Wounded during a Battle

Tired and exhausted from the night's activities, I did not pay much attention to the shells that flew over every few seconds and exploded here and there. The experiences of the past three or four hours had quickly made me a veteran. I could hardly move my feet and slowly, step by step, I walked hoping to find a spot where I could get a little rest, – when a shell flew by screaming, as though it was not at all happy about its mission. I felt a chill and ducked down, but – it was foolish! It was not meant for me! I just wanted to lay down for an hour, a half-hour.

But I did not stay long in that state. Not far from the barn I saw another building, somewhat smaller and not as high. It was built with thick stones. Because of that it was for the most part not as shot-up as our barn. Next to the entrance which was hung with thick black cloth, pushed and shoved a good number of men and wagons, ambulances were coming and going. Those who were attending them moved with great speed about their work: removing stretchers and then returning them.

It was a dressing station for the wounded – That was immediately clear to me.

One person was standing a little apart from the crowd. He gestured to me with his hand and called something out to me. He wanted me to hurry up. I ran over to him and he yelled to me: “Get out of sight! Don't you know that the Germans have over a dozen observation platforms on that mountain?”

“Here or there!” – The man commanded me, and I quickly decided upon 'here' in the dressing station.

Hard by the wall near the entrance were laying several bandaged or those who had died of severe wounds. Covered with the same blankets, that we used to cover ourselves, they lay motionless on stretchers. Only some feet, heavy boots and dirty leggings stuck out. The noises outside didn't bother them.

When I forced myself to go inside, I was nearly suffocated by the great mass of people in the small crowded rooms. The wounded, the confused, the Red Cross workers, doctors and others who were seeking shelter until the big battle, the big storm would be over, were all pressed together in a couple of tiny rooms. The stumbled over blankets, stretchers, clothes, shoes and mud which was scattered all over the floors.

And the wounded continue to pour in, wrapped in the first field bandages, blood soaking through them, staining their clothes, hands, faces in nauseating streams. Tired, contorted faces from the pain and tension, filthy from head to foot. The pain mirrored in their faces, but also in their eyes a spark of patient anticipation, because this marked an end to their troubles. It would take them far from this Hell. Somewhere where they could heal. There they would be able to rest and be away from this danger. In just a little time, in just a half-hour their turn would come. The doctor would look at them, and start by asking, "What's wrong with you, buddy?" He would give an order to the medical sergeant and your help and rescue would come.

The lightly-wounded showed the most patience, and held themselves back as much as possible so as to not to bother the always busy doctor, because earlier had come in those who were quietly groaning, or those who had stopped groaning altogether. When the lightly-wounded saw how busy the doctors were with the 'badly cut up boys,' they felt guilty that instead of a shot through the gut, chest or smashed skull, they only had a hand or foot shot through. Those who had a little gas in the lungs and scratched from the mustard gas on their bodies, seemed to be more unsettled and unsure if they would finally be put in the wagons. With anxious eyes they looked at every wagon, which were quickly filled with more critically wounded men, and were useless for their concerns. But soon, soon also their turn came, and the medical sergeant called out to one after another: "Get in the wagon!"

Somebody yelled out that all wounded who wanted cocoa should come to the third and last room. I went with them, not wounded, but – ach, a little cocoa! A few others like me pressed into the blessed room.

In the kitchen it was as dirty and disheveled and the first two rooms, but here there was a fairly large place with large cartons with cigarettes, chocolate, good cookies and two large pots of cocoa, around which sweated two busy, steamy young and hardy Y.M.C.A. Workers, jostled and pressed upon on all sides. And it seemed like rather than working they were fighting with their hands, voices and whole bodies.

"What do you want, cocoa? A glass, you have a can? Are you wounded?" He asked one, "No? You don't get cocoa. We only have enough for the wounded. Take a few cigarettes and leave!"

A few took some cigarettes and left without any cocoa, but others were more meddlesome. They said that they were hungry and had not had anything to eat since such and such. Whether the servers believed those stories or not, they didn't want to help them. I could see that I did not have much of a chance, but I decided to give it a try anyway. As part of my tactic to get a little cocoa, I told them that I was from the first outfit to arrive.

"So, your are from the first outfit here? That means that you have seen some rough times? In that case give me your cup and take a couple of cigarettes also."

I said my thanks, took what they offered me, and headed for the door when I saw one of my officers with a cup in his hand. He was looking for a little pick-me-up also. To my question as to where I could find my battalion headquarters detail, he explained, that the commander with the telephone and

wireless sections was two miles back in a dugout in such-and-such area. As for the others, he did not know where they were, and suggested that I look for them around the dressing station.

When I got outside I could tell clearly that the thrust of the battle was over, but it was still plenty hot enough.

The same man who had called to me earlier was still at his post and warned me to stay down as much as possible, because the place was under a hundred German eyes. In order to follow his suggestion, I stayed in the cover of some camouflaged wagons. Opposite, over the path that led back to our infantry lines, which by the way were close enough to shake hands with, were even larger groups of wounded coming, barely able to move their feet through the mud. The stronger were supporting the weaker, holding them under their arms, leading them by the hand like a big brother leads his little brother who is just learning how to walk. It looked like as far as they were concerned, there weren't any shells flying by. Their pained eyes were searching for a higher happiness, the words and sign – “Red Cross Dressing Station.”

“What's the news from there, brother?” – I decided to ask a lightly-wounded soldier who was walking past me.

“It is Hell, but we are pushing them back without stop.”

When I got to the barn, I saw one of our men watching from a hole in the wall that used to be a window.

“Crawl in, Cohen, because on the side where the entrance is the Boche are watching us.”

I followed his warning and made my way to the window. But hard up against the wall there was someone stretched out to his full length lying face up. The driver gloves were tossed aside. A peaceful face with closed eyes as though he were laying there in a pleasant, deep sleep.

“How did he get killed? Where did he get hit?” – the expression in my eyes asked. A glance at his helmet and everything became clear. High, just above his forehead shown a hateful hole. The straps on the steel helmet held it on his head, and even when he fell it did not budge. Through the hole in the helmet you could see the deep wound in his skull and brain. A little blood had pooled under his head, but the rest of the blood was gone due to the countless footsteps of men passing by, and climbing in the window. And it had mixed with the mud in such a way that you could not tell one from the other. He was right next to the wall, and I, too, had to trod in his blood...

“Is the rest of our battalion detail there?” I asked Johnson.

“Yes, they are there,” And I was very happy to see my comrades again.

Cut off from the whole world

“The Lost Crew” – That was my first impression when I saw the few dozen soldiers from my outfit that I found in the ruin, which had sections for hay, feed, horses and the like. – A good target for the Germans. But the walls did not give in easily and were ready to take another good fifty shells before they would collapse. However, the hits had already made enough holes in the roof and sides that you could come and go through them without problem. And you could not escape the rain, which had not wanted to stop and continued to pour down from above.

Where can one find a place for himself? My things, that one of my friends took from my horse and brought here, were soaked through. I took the half-dry blankets and looked for a corner where I could lay down. The greater part of this ruin was taken up by horses. Next to their feet were the fallen stones from the wall, and everywhere, sitting or laying on damp blankets were the remaining infantry boys. They were ones who got lost in the darkness and separated from their company. I tried looking in the middle of the building where my guys were.

“Well, boys! There's nothing for it; You will just have to scooch over and make a place for me.”

The guys began to press closer and move the rags they had spread out on the ground to lay on. But if they had a dry spot, they didn't move. I ended up with a fine spot, but just above me I could see a piece of the gray sky, and deep mud below the place where the water was coming in. Beneath me where I was laying were stones, bricks and boards. Shivering in all my limbs from the wet and the cold, I drifted off into the world of dreams. It will be what it will be. I was tired and exhausted.

When I woke up a few hours later with my entire body still trembling, I took another look at where we were in the world, I could come to no better conclusion, than that it was the most miserable place there could be.

The infantry had halted for a while, but the artillery fire had started up with vigor, and the same groups of wounded were lined up.

When I got back to my little spot, I looked at the group I was among. This reinforced my first impression, that they were the “Lost Crew.”

There is the Sergeant Major from our battalion – A typical, hearty Slav with small, crafty eyes whose only merit was that he had served in the navy. Also there was the Sergeant with his vulgar manner, and his inability to find a spot for his hat on his head. So his hat set far over to the right, supported by his right ear. To another side were the two congenial cooks; the Heart-Sick Lover who insisted on showing me his whole correspondence; A couple of Corporals – but not a single officer. They were elsewhere busy with their work.

Meantime, for several days we have felt forgotten, listening to the din outside, and every minute waiting for the shell that would break through the little bit of roof we had and kill us all. But the worst was the fear of hunger which stared us in the face. The emergency rations were gone that every man carried with him. Also some got caught pilfering a few loaves of bread from the French soldiers of the Anti-Aircraft Observers, and everyone was busy with the question: What is going to happen next? It could be a long time until there would be another push against the Germans. For our provisioning under these circumstances they brought in a Supply Sergeant – Meis. A big Yankee, a Princeton

College student and a tennis player with a lot of championship cups, but here he did not need to be a puffed-up big shot in order to feed us.

“I joined the National Guard. I am a good patriot and everything, if you will, but I will bring back home to my wife this souvenir” – he pointed to himself – “and I am going to protect it as best I can.”

We found nothing wrong with his comment, mainly because we had just seen how horses and men had been torn to pieces. But it didn't help our hunger any and it started a quiet dispute between the privates and the sergeants. The privates argued that in our current situation the sergeants should do something, and the sergeants said the opposite.

“Come here, I want to tell you something,” the “Heart-Sick Lover” called to me and shared with me that in the dressing station, one could get something to eat, and that we should go there together. And with that he trembled like a leaf at the sound of each new shell that whistled by. But due to my past experience I remained skeptical about his plan and I declined.

He talked to some of the other boys including the Supply Sergeant, and one after another they crawled out of the window and headed to the dressing station. They hadn't gone a hundred feet when a heavy shell with a fast scream flew in and exploded with a deafening blast right in front of them. But just before it exploded they had all fallen to the muddy ground as though they had been cut down with a scythe. They didn't think for a second where their hands and faces were when they dove for the mud. In a blink of an eye they were back – helter skelter into the barn again.

“So, there's your food and cigarettes!” Said the Heart-Sick Lover through his heavy panting once he tumbled inside, patting his stomach with mud-smearred hands and clothing. Deathly pale with fright, they could hardly say a word.

“Where is Mike?” they all looked around when they noticed that one of the members of the food expedition was missing.

“He ran to the French dugout,” someone said, calming the rest of us.

Once we looked around and saw that everyone gotten away safely, we had a hearty laugh about the comical poses everyone had when they were laying face-down in the mud, and we laughed about the whole affair.

Right at that moment the desire came over me to show off how tough I was, and I was off to try my luck to find something to eat. Right away I had some success. The distributor gave me a piece of bread on which he had placed a spoonful of beans, and with it a few crackers and cigarettes. Happy with my success and even more so with my goods, I returned triumphantly to my buddies; and when they saw me with these rare items in my hands, they one after another went out to try their luck and came back with the same.

“Ah, beans!” the once-lost Mike called out with great enthusiasm; and even he, the most timid of the group, slipped out of the barn, stepping quickly such that no one would see him, and headed to the only relief for hunger, the dressing station. And his action, also, was crowned with success.

A little strengthened and encouraged by these poor snacks, we gathered around a long hole in the wall opposite the path than ran by us. We watched the wild dance of shells and death that unfolded before

our eyes.

On a hill off to our right and opposite us spread out the village of Cornay. It seemed to be of a fairly good size. Ever higher climbed the various-shaped houses, obscuring and overreaching each other with their height. On the top of the hill, higher and more proud than all the others stood, like exposed bones, protruding walls and parts of the left-over cornices of a great building. Apparently, an old chateau. The cornices looked like the fantastic columns of a ruined temple.

The skies began to clear a little over the ruined town. If the skies would have cleared completely we would have seen a beautiful sunset framed in a wonderful panorama, but the sun did not show itself between the not yet fully separated clouds. There, where it should have shown beautifully with its “good-bye” look, had formed a blood-red knot and all around, in its embarrassment, it had spread out and hidden its rich but obscured colors. They were, however, strong enough to give a blood-red glow to the ruins which reached like hands to the heavens with a silent, desperate question: Why and for how much longer must murder and ruin triumph over the world. A world that should and could be full of peace and happiness? – But in answer came only artillery shells exploding over the houses, over the ruins and the gunpowder smoke that lifted high and ringed around the rays of the setting sun and hung like a red mass, a new bloody stain... Below – death, annihilation and blood, and above – blood.

“Have you seen the German lying by the road?” someone asked me.

I gave a look to where he pointed and saw an indistinct form of a man who was laying close by the path. As the wheels on the nearby road and trucks rolled by he became more and more embedded in the mud. Meanwhile, he lay there uncollected because his turn had not come yet. There were still so many Americans and Germans that had to be picked up first, who were waiting motionless for their gravediggers.

Together with a large group of German prisoners, he had been traveling in a small convoy when a shell wounded one of his comrades. He and a couple other of his comrades were ordered to carry the wounded man to the dressing station. At the place where he lay now he was hit by a shell fragment. The wounded man and the others didn't move him. – Such is blind fate with its puzzling outcomes! In the German's eyes and on his weary face, apparently, there played a certain peacefulness, because he had been captured and for him the war was over. It was just like the looks on all of the prisoners. But his happiness did not last long. – It was over before he knew it.

The last lingering colors from the sunset were becoming less distinct, and little by little they died out. In their place now was the momentary flashes from gunpowder that belched out of the mouths of the cannons after every shot. This evening our infantry would again go on the attack to take the high hill where the Germans were now able to observe us so well.

It was going to be a difficult, bitter night, – Ach, how long they have endured under the concert of that hell outside.

Under a Hail of Cannon Shells

A long night of fear and cold with a morning full of the same dangers with the added element of hunger – With a clear perspective, every one in our little military unit found his small corner in the ruin and in the darkness such as it was, hunkered down in their rags, and for the hundredth time asked themselves and one another: Why have we been left here under direct fire of the German guns? One of the boys, Nesh the mechanic, had for the umpteenth time loudly claimed that he was going to go to the infantry soldiers, who were only a short distance from us, and fight side-by-side with them. That way at least he would know that he would fall as a soldier, and not be blown up for no reason. After being silent for a while he made the hard-and-fast decision that early the next morning, if he lived that long, he would go to one of the battery commanders and ask to work with them around the cannons. Even if he only carried ammunition, at least he would be doing something.

Huddled under my rags I thought about our wounded boys in our batteries who came into the dressing station. They talked about the tough times that they had experienced during the time when they opened fire. Also, back on the first front they had endured a lot. But that was nothing compared to what they faced now. There were such fearful moments that some of the weaker ones had cried and sobbed the whole time.

At a critical moment the commander of the battery gave an order that the men should spread out and seek cover for themselves, until he could decide what to do next and give the next orders. But Americans don't run for very long. In just a few moments came the Captain's order: "To the guns!" From the surrounding bushes, from under a hill and under trees, and from the shell holes all came as one and took their positions around the guns. Under continuous fire they moved the gun to a slightly different position and began firing once again. They did so with such skill and purpose that they hardly noticed that also their new position had come under the same murderous fire as the first one. They didn't even wait for the sergeant's order pull the lanyard. As soon as the cannon returned to firing position after the recoil, it was quickly reloaded, and the lanyard pulled. But even the best steel has limits to what it can bear, and on one cannon the whole neck of it exploded. Another cannon from a different battery also exploded from too much stress and killed some of its crew.

"The Sergeant-Major thinks they will be tossing steel tonight," Lover-Boy, who was laying close-by, whispered the secret to me.

I heard him express the same thing to others, but it was not clear to me why we should be more afraid tonight than the whole rest of the time we had been here. Because so far they had been trying to break this hovel, where we were holed-up, apart brick by brick, and it all turned not on their will, but on their best marksmanship. The last arguments I gave over to Lover Boy, but for my part, I began to feel unsettled and worried.

Tsssssss. Bang! One shell with a quick woosh, without warning, fell next to the foundation of our bit of a wall next to the big hole in the wall facing the road. Together with the blast a mass of stones and mud flew in the air and covered us. With a quick, monumental crash fragments of the shell and a couple of stones were flung upon us and part of the roof fell in.

"I'm hurt!" Someone cried out.

"Me too!" Another yelled.

We were in a tumult: Where? Who? How bad? – The questions came in quick succession.

“Turn on a light!” “Break out the first-aid kit!” Said voices.

But we couldn't turn on any lights. The wounded who were, indeed, hit pretty bad were quickly run out to the dressing station.

Yet another shell followed and smacked the farthest wall of the barn where there were horses and some infantry men. There was the sound of falling stones and wood. Voices could be heard, but they were quickly drowned out by the sounds of more shells falling all around us.

Instinctively, I curled up into a tight ball. My head and face, which was sheltered by the corner of two walls, was more protected than my body which extended to the open breach in the wall. Lover Boy tucked in closer to me the whole length of my body. Through his halting, heavy breathing I could hear his teeth chattering even harder when he managed to say something. But finally he managed to screech a word out, which was followed with succession of even harder teeth chattering. He finally got out:

“Cohen, do you think we will remain in one piece? Will we...? Will we live through the night? Oh, G-d, listen, listen another one is coming in...”

As bad as things were going for me, I still had to have pity on the trembling, deathly-afraid buddy, and at the same time I could not stop myself from laughing, and started laughing out loud. As frightened as I was, I could see the uselessness of being as nervous as my friend, and felt a desire to joke and laugh.

“Sauers, you still haven't told us how you met your girlfriend,” and I jabbed him with my elbow in the side.

“What, now, in the middle of all this? You're only thinking about girlfriends?” he asked in amazement, through his chattering teeth.

But I stuck with it. It didn't help him to assure me that he had already told me the story, and after a short while he started to recount what was for me a well known tale:

He is a carpenter and works with his brother somewhere in Pennsylvania. Once, when he and the other workers were invited to celebrate the building of a bungalow for a rich farmer, he saw “her” standing by the table. And once he saw her, he forgot about the beer, whiskey, fried chicken and pork that were standing before him on the richly laid-out table. “I looked at her, she looked at me...”

But here Sauers halted his story and pricked up his ears to listen. I was also attentive. We heard how some of our bunch were putting on their helmets and slipping outside.

“Where are you going, Sergeant?” someone asked.

“I'm going to the dugout, to hell with this damned barn!” answered the Sergeant-Major with his churlish, unpolished voice. And he along several silent silhouettes slipped out and disappeared.

Right after, several shells fell on all sides of the barn. It all became very scary again, and my neighbor pressed in closer to me, trembling, and tried to convince me to leave the hovel we were in. “Let's get out of here before it is too late.” – he whispered in my ear.

“What makes you think it will be too late? And, incidentally, who can say where a man will be when he gets hit?” I tried to calm him and went back to my first solution, which was to get him to tell me his love story. But in answer, all I heard was, “Let's go, Cohen, let's go.” At that point we hear hasty steps on the side where the dugout was located.

Someone ran into the barn and screamed with an upset voice: “Is somebody sleeping here? Is anyone in this barn?”

For a while there was silence. No one answered.

“Is anyone sleeping here?” He yelled even louder in greater desperation.

“Yes,” someone answered, “What's going on? What do you want?”

“Quick, come help with the wounded in the American dugout.”

“All right, we're coming.”

“Boys, whose going?”

“I'll go, I'll go!” answered several frightened voices. When we got out into the darkness outside, we realized that the hovel where we were staying was the safest place in the world. With quick steps we ran to the dugout.

“Help, help!” – We heard them screeching. – “My foot, he's suffocating me, he's dead, get him off me!” – screamed one of the wounded – “Brothers, save me!”

In the darkness, I myself, shocked and frightened to death, felt around with my hand in the tangle of men. Wherever you turned you stepped on someone, and heard a frightening noise.

I grabbed one by the arm and called Corporal Wills to take the other arm. Corporal Wills searched and felt around in the darkness. “Where, where, who?” – he breathed heavily. I caught his hand and put in onto the wounded man that I was holding on to. But the injured man was too heavy for us. Sergeant Meis and mechanic Nesh came to help us. Together the four of us carried him to the dressing station.

Tsssssss.... Bang!.... One fell so close to us that the smell of the gunpowder smacked us in the face. In that instant we hit the ground, letting go of the wounded man for a moment, who had not stopped moaning and asking for his Mama to put him to bed... He lost consciousness.

“Oh, G-d, help us!” Corporal Wills prayed without stop. “Boys, don't lose any time, pick him up and get him in there. It isn't far now.”

We picked him up and, exhausted, with sweat pouring off of us like we were carrying a thousand pound weight, we carried him through the door flap of the dressing station. Another came in behind us, then another two with the Sergeant-Major, holding him by his bloody limbs.

Having done our duty, we headed back to our places which now were looking much more likable than before.

“Sauers, I'm back,” I let my neighbor know when I got back to my little corner, “and if you want, you can go on with the love story.”

Sauers pressed closer to me. You can judge for yourself why he did not go to help carry the wounded. Who would have blamed him? Everyone deals with such failings according to their own impulses.

When we had finally survived until the long-awaited morning, one of our officers came to us and ordered us to move to higher quarters. He directed me and three others to saddle our horses. We would be agents to carry orders to the place where the new positions would be set up, because our batteries would be moving a considerable distance. “We took the most important hill last night,” he said with an expression of triumph on his face.

I didn't look at him. From my little experience I thought that this was only going to lead to suffering. However, I did not fail to give a thought to the great dangers that an agent had to traverse. Thinking about the danger serves no purpose, one has to do the best one can. Together with the other boys I set off in the indicated direction.

With the First Message

When I, along with the other messengers, rode to the Commander they pointed out to us the location where we were to make ourselves, so to speak, comfortable.

“Look, there it is,” the Sergeant-Major said to us indicating the border around the Colonel's dugout. “You can spread your stuff out just beyond there, or dig yourself a foxhole. Do what you want but singly, and no farther than 25-yards from the dugout, so that I can call you quickly.” That's how he ended the welcoming speech that he greeted us with.

The rest of the stay we were under clear skies. This was after being soaked to the bone for several days and shivering from the penetrating cold. The cold did not go to my heart. But what can one do to help oneself? I, along with the others, started looking for digging tools and picks, and we started digging holes for shelter.

Long and efficiently I labored on the first room of my earthen dwelling. Right from the beginning I was pleased that the ground was wet and gave easily under the impact of my shovel, but once I had just finished, reaching a depth just over the knees, and laying out my shelter-gear, blankets and extra clothing, I saw that I was in for trouble. Not only was the ground moist, but it collected water and was now running into the hole I dug, slow but steady... If it kept up, I would soon be submerged. Add to that the sure promise of the heavens above to continue on with the unending October rains.

But, never give up! Until late in the evening I searched for boards or a box, a broken rifle, and I-don't-know-what, in order to build a barrier for my new home.

“Wait a moment, I will bring you a German,” one of the other messengers said sarcastically as he pointed to the body of a dead German laying nearby. He didn't actually do it and satisfied himself using the same materials as I...

Once we had finished with that work, we had to feed the horses who had to stand at the ready and remain saddled and tied up nearby under the open sky. Then we were able to crawl into our holes with the hope that we could rest there for a while.

Cold, wet and cold! How simple it is to say the words or to write them, but heck, how miserable, how bad they are in reality...!

The open sky?... I have never seen such a cold, colorless sky. And instead of looking up, you try to hide from what is above...

Heavy thoughts come to you and press on you without mercy – Remarkable! I did not get sick, just a little tightness in the chest and nothing more...

Oh, how you prayed for a sickness or a light wound in order to get out of there. And for a moment I descended into the same thought: If only to get out of here.

“Second Battalion!” – The Sergeant yelled out. That meant men from our second battalion scouts needed to be sent out. But none of my trench-mates answered – me neither.

“Second Battalion!” He yelled with more urgency and with more anger. We all stayed silent.

“What's with you, did you all fall out, are you all road-kill?” Furious, he came over to our 'colony.'

“Did you mean me?” one of us offered.

“No, your turn will come next!” He overlooked me and called out, “Kendler” and “Williams.”

At first I had such sad thoughts that it led me to pray for death, but when I saw others leaving with messages, I felt much better... In that particular moment I figured out that the trench I was laying in was very comfortable and sure, except if a direct greeting came from the Germans like we used to joke: “A shell with your name and address written on it.”

I changed my outlook, and what entered my head was a deep desire and hope that this evening no more messages would be sent out, and that the next one would not be until the morning after dawn. That desire grew even stronger when I heard the galloping hooves of the horse carrying the first messages.

With deep self-pity about my own bitter fate and misery, I began little by little to stop shivering from the cold, and to doze a little, distancing myself from dismal reality.

But soon I was wide awake again because of the heavy cannonade on the part of the Germans. I raised myself somewhat and listened to see if I could tell in what direction the firing was coming from and I saw: How the pitch-black night was ripped asunder by flames coming one after another. They were coming nearer and it was getting uncomfortable and incredible.

Why was our artillery silent? – Were our batteries hit? – Possible.

When our artillery spoke, it was as though they were answering an injustice... But when they were silent it was like defeat.

Today the Germans were more active. In the distance secretive, when nearer, they seem sharper – Buru-boom!, Buru-boom! – It was coming more and more often...!

Hush, what is that, someone calling: “Chaudron** Farm, Chaudron Farm!” – “We're here!” I answered and got to my feet. After more calls in the darkness, I realized that the cries came from Kendler and Williams.

“We couldn't get through,” they said with trembling voices and went on to the Colonel's dugout.

The officers and sergeants poured out of the dugout surprised and fired off questions and yelled. Among all the yelling you could hear: “We will have you shot like dogs, you are damned cowards.” The Sergeant-Major fell on them with a flood of cursing, driving them back and warning them not to come back without delivering their messages. Williams wanted to go, but Kendler murmured something unintelligible then said: “Some of the times their shells fell over our heads, gas shells, I was gassed, it was dark and we could not see the way.” The Sergeant turned on him with tightly clenched fists and even more harsh yelling. Kendler began to cry and let out a wild screech like someone being strangled: “I will not go! I am afraid!”

** *Translator's note: The author writes “Sheldon Farm.”*

A shock to the point of madness ran through my whole body at his outcry. With threats and curses the Sergeant ripped the papers from his hand and, oh, he called to me: “Hey, you there, get your horse!”

As soon as I was up on the saddle, the Sergeant gave me the papers and promised me and Williams: That it would be bad for us if we came back without fulfilling our task.

Without saying a word we galloped off into the darkness. Williamson hard behind me.

The horse did not want to go. The poor creature had been just as comfortable in his place as I had been in my trench, and only then, when I hit him with all my might did he get up from his place. He made a few quick steps backward, but the spurs and the reins forced him in the right direction.

When we had ridden several kilometers and looked toward the main road that went to Sommerance, we were in the region where the Germans were often shelling. There, by the highway, it often showed itself – That there, that there – a bluish flame together with a deafening blast. Instinctively, we pressed our knees tighter around the horses. A strange, sharp smell hung in the air. “Perhaps that is gas?” Yes, it is gas, but ach, we will not put on the masks. Better to hold our breath until we get to cleaner air, in order to not lose the little we can see with our already weary eyes. It seems that this will be better, more sure...

When we reached the wide road, the horses did not want to cross the ditch that separated the road from the field. We had to hit them over the head, push them, overpower them, and poke their soft male parts. When we finally got onto the main road we realized that all that effort was for naught. After a few steps we saw that we could not go any farther due to the chaos on that road. Heavy trucks, ambulances with badly wounded men, ammunition wagons were in such a thick mass tangled together that after trying for several minutes we couldn't go another step farther. They had unharnessed their horses and were laying under the wagons and were waiting for the tangle to unravel.

Let's go back and the damned Sergeant can go himself instead, Williams began cursing. At first, in desperation I agreed, but soon another thought came to me: “Let's show that I can deliver this message.” I gave my horse over to Williams so that he could take him back and tell the Sergeant that I would carry the message on foot. Williams gladly took my suggestion and headed back, and for me began a series of crawling over things, squeezing between the jammed up transports, until I got to the last of them. There I found a group of soldiers busy trying to clear the way. As I went by them one voice called out, “Hey, Buddy! Be careful when you get to the bridge.” I thanked them, and soon saw that I was going to have to cross over a long, single lane.

No sign of life, no other sound than the regular whistle and crash of artillery shells. You would think that I was used to seeing the bodies of the fallen who lay motionless and strewn over the whole battlefield, but this time I felt so unsettled – some of the bodies were laying very close by. It seemed like the majority were clumped together... Crawling on all fours, staring with their eyes and clenching their teeth.

Some still lay right where I had seen them during the day. Their legs were spread like around the girth of a horse, their knees bowed out in the air as though they lay there to get a little rest. Others looked like they had slid down a hill and grabbed the ground with their hands and sunk their faces in the deep mud on the road. Others were in various poses which, it seemed, were taken from life... It seemed like they were gesturing to me, moving their limbs, but it was foolishness – “Is this bravery?” Inwardly, I tried to laugh at myself. “A nice Jewish hero!” And as I continued on I had the feeling that my feet

were not moving fast enough because they were hurting from the effort...

When a shell flew over fast and low, I jumped into the ditch to my right which was somewhat lower than the surface. My hasty move caused me to land on all fours until after I heard the explosion. I found that I was looking right into another face – Who is that? – As though possessed by an unnatural strength, I was up and running. Another fast whistle and explosion forced me to throw myself to the ground again. Smoke and hot air hit me in the face and my ears rang as though my head would explode into a thousand pieces. I remained unhurt, but did not run anymore. I walked crouched down with my ears pricked up trying to distinguish among all the flying shells the ones that were going to land close to me. – What's this, I'm already afraid again? – This time I couldn't control myself, and a prayer to G-d started to rise up in my breast...

Instead of one large bridge, here they built two smaller bridges. Of the two, one was half destroyed. Perhaps I should go around them and cross the stream in the water? But no, I will go, go!... Ideas flashed by one after the other, disjointed, fragmented, interrupted every second by the ever thicker explosions.

Thank G-d I am over the bridge! Just a little farther on and I was in a quieter location. I felt lighter, such that I could finally form the opinion that the Germans knew exactly where they were shooting and were excellent marksmen.

When I got near my destination, I began to climb the hill to the observation point where Captain Rinehart [C.C. Rinehart] was. Once again before my eyes swam the face that had bent over me when I fell. I remembered that I had also seen him the day before. He had the body of a ruddy German with a long beard and open mouth from which protruded clenched teeth.

“Nu, how are things going with you?” The Captain asked while taking the papers from me. He looked sleepy and tired.

I looked at the mud that I was covered in. My heart was still beating... But what could I answer him, what could I tell him?...

Jeep-de-Blod

Whenever I came back to Chaudron Farm after delivering a message whether it was by day or by night the well-known and much loved voice of Milentol was the first thing I heard, and also this time after I arrived back with the first glimmer of dawn from my first message. No sooner had I undone the straps of the saddle than I heard his footstep: “Nu, how are you doing? Still in one piece. Are you hungry? I have for you a little tomato soup, without pork,” he said to me with his good-natured laugh.

Milentol is his family name, but hardly any of us or the officers of the Company knew it, because all of the men and officers called him by his nickname: Jeep de Blod. But rarely when a real name had to be used would it be with so much love as the nickname of this completely Americanized Jew.

Taller than average, thin, long hands and feet that seemed to be unscrewed and dangled in the air. His face was proportionally much thinner than his body, with black Japanese eyes under thick brows. And then, what a nose! The pointed, hooked 'diubke' reached to his upper lip.

He had a nickname: “Dog Face.” – It was due to his ears which were unusually large and stuck out like two wings. Jokingly men would say: “Hey, Dog Face! Chase that fly off your nose with your left ear!”

In spite of the jokes and name-calling, he was everyone's darling.

Even back in America in our barracks at Camp Gordon he would make us laugh until we cried. When we had a free hour everyone would want him to perform. He would get up on a table and with over-exaggerated dramatic gestures imitate Salome's Dance, singing along with a monotone Jewish song. To finish he would take a bow like a young coquette, or suddenly step forward like an opera star puffing his chest out and with both hands to his heart, and with bulging, staring eyes he would in dead earnest launch into song with his comic, grating voice singing dramatic pearls from the soldier's repertoire like “Spelling Mississippi,” and “When Mary Starts to Drink Water.”

He had strong relationships with soldiers and officers who above all appreciated anyone who could provide them with amusement like “Jeep.” He used his privileged position with great success to get things he needed or wanted. Also, we Jewish soldiers often benefited from his help.

On the battlefield, earlier on the first fronts we were on, Saint-Mihiel, Marbache, Pont-à-Mousson, and now in the Argonne whenever the occasion allowed, he kept his sense of humor and often when the opportunity arose, used it with great success.

His job was the same as in camp, the cook. Everyone wondered at how he carried out his duties with such unusual energy.

More than with us, he gave himself over to the wounded and gassed who were cared for in the First Aid Station dugout where they were brought in great numbers.

The most badly wounded were taken out first to the rear lines, but it did not go so quickly with the lightly-wounded and gassed. They sat tightly pressed together in the bombed out barn up against the last whole-standing wall. Those who died from their wounds were laid out by the entrance. They were laid out in long rows and covered with whatever came to hand in such a way that only their feet stuck

out. From the side it looked like a long line of army boots. But the blood stains and streams of blood did not stop and with each new corpse they soaked through the coverings betraying the reality within. And how it frightened the wounded to watch the collection of corpses grow and grow!...

The obedient subjects looked out from their little corners with longing eyes that begged: "Get us out of here!" – but they were afraid to say it out loud. And who would they say it to anyhow? They were jealous of those who were whole. They had sad, green faces with harsh, bitter curses for the Hell that played out around them, and had burned them with its hellish fires. Among the lightly-wounded, who we regarded as luckier than us, Milentol was always hovering.

Once while going among them and asking if anybody wanted something to eat, he noted one man who seemed to be dozing, leaning on his neighbor's shoulder. "He must be really exhausted," "Jeep" said and began waking the dozing man. But "Jeep" soon jumped back with a heated cry and whine: "He is dead!"

"Jeep" called me again and when I had gotten my horse fed, I went to Milentol in his corner of the barn that he called the kitchen, and he gave me the best that he had available.

"I have for you a fine steak, Cohen!"

He handed me an opened can half-full of corned beef and a couple of pieces of hard bread.

As I was eating the rations I noted that this time he was up for doing things, he checked my gas mask and with his foot he scrapped away some of the mud that was sticking to me all the way above the knee. Meanwhile I recounted to him all of my hardships delivering the last message.

When I asked him why he was so ready to do things today, Milentol clicked his tongue and with a pretend secrecy explained that he had found a sweetheart – namely, in the barn he had discovered a living dove: Last evening it flew in. "And imagine," he said with joy, "She stayed there. By Moses! I am going to keep her. Listen, do you hear?" He pointed to the tarp covering the entrance.

I listened. It was true, I could hear the cooing of a dove.

"Poor creature. How did she come here? What a bitter irony it is, the embodiment of love in this wild Hell? After a while when I thought back on it, I remembered that on the opposite and more damaged side of the barn there was an old pigeon coop that had fallen down and was busted up along with the part of the wall that it was attached to.

When I left Milentol's spot and went back to my ditch, I heard once again the cooing of the dove. Milentol was standing in his spot with tears streaming down his cheeks and saying half to me and half to himself: "Dear, dear sweetheart!"

The Last Dove

The following day was to everyone's satisfaction. It was somewhat quieter on the front and sunny, and our hearts were thankful for it.

It had been a long time since we saw the sun. And the thought crept in that possibly, in the sun's rays which caressed us with so much love and told us so much about the beauty of life, that it would bring men to their senses. But one can't dwell on such thoughts for very long. The devil of war, once he is harnessed and in full gallop tramples much more substantial things than the thoughts of a soldier...

“There they come!” Someone yelled out pointing at a spot in the clear sky. Like white bits of fluff one could see little dots in groups of five and ten. It was a German squadron of airships. They were taking advantage of the clear day and sunshine to make their foray. Their bombing would more accurate this way.

The German airplanes began to circle over our heads. A shrill whistle, then another and another split the air then a moment later an explosion followed each whistle. It was like huge buildings wanted to come crashing down and the walls shatter all in one instant: Like mountains were the clods of earth, rocks and dust lifted up to hang in the air a moment, then like it was planned, they it all fell down at the same time. Who knows how many bones and flesh were ripped to atoms. Go be a hero! – It will laugh that the word “hero” in such a moment... Against the devil's power.

Like mice we were sitting in our holes and cracks and peeked out, trembling, helpless, to see if they were right over us or a little to one side.

Brrrrrum, Brrrrrum – Two explosions sent us all like a spasm down in the dirt, to the bottom of our holes in the hope of being protected at least for the moment. A hail of stones fell upon us and the explosions continued one after another. Between the explosions we could hear the crack of our own guns which were aiming at the little points in the sky in the hopes of bringing them down. Then the cannons fell quiet. From the side more little points in the sky were getting closer. These were our airships and we all hoped they would get here fast and destroy the enemy.

“Bravo! There they are!” The aircraft got all mixed up above our heads. One on one, another somewhat higher seemed to be equipped with sharp, but invisible clenched talons was firing his machine guns with smoke streaming from them. Look, one is falling, look, and he is on the ground, but he leveled out and climbed again. There, one and then a second are turning like a spindle, will they also level out? No, they fell like stones. Whose were they that fell? Aha! Our victors, chased them back to the German lines. Still a few more fell on the way, but soon our guys turned back. To go farther meant things would have gotten too hot for them.

We crawled out of our places and we talked about surviving the first air raid. Even those who could not stir from their places wondered about the attack and asked the others to come and tell them about it.

In one corner they busied themselves with the new victims.

“Where were you hit?” Someone asked him, and they carried him to the aid station. From another corner they carried out a man who had been hit by a heavy stone, but we were used to it. We were a little more lively. We were not too bothered by the dangers here below. Since the sky was now empty

and clear, little by little we turned our attention back to our welcome guest, the dove.

Everyone tried tossing her bits of food, most of all “Jeep.” He had already given her nicknames like “Demoiselle,” and “Frenchie.” It amused us greatly to see him throw her food while making deep, respectful bows and talking to her in a distinctly English-flavored French. However, during a moment when “Jeep” was away in his 'kitchen,' one of the lightly-wounded soldiers from the 28th Division wanted to show us what a good shot he was, took a rifle from someone that he had been bragging to, took aim, and before the people yelling at him could stop him, the well-aimed bullet took down our so welcomed friend – the last dove.

“Come here, “Jeep” see what has become of your dove!”

When he heard that, he came running, with curses and tears of chagrin. He ran first to the little dove in the hope that she was still alive, but it was no good. Holding the dove in his hand, he flung himself at the self-satisfied shooter with a roar and screamed: “Wait, wait you stupid dog, you damned murderer, G-d will give you nothing: You gorilla, you will feel what she did when you shot her. I will pray to God that a German bullet will find you *today*.”

It happened just as Milenton prayed for: – The doctor who had classified the wounded, declared the lightly-wounded man fit to return to the front line where his Company was to remain for several more days until our infantry relieved them. On that same day he was with a group of eight of his comrades sheltering behind a wall not far from us. They had not gone a hundred yards when they found themselves under an unexpected German barrage. A shell fell among the group. They all took wounds, some serious some light. The good shot was brought back on a blood-soaked stretcher, or rather pieces of him and his light blonde head ripped open. He was laid along with the other corpses in the row of bodies by the barn entrance.

When “Jeep” saw the torn body, he became still, withdrawn and in his eyes there was a wild flash of fear. It looked like he felt guilty about the man's end. He was stunned, and went back to his work with even more energy.

When evening began to fall I went to comfort my burdened friend and found him all alone. He sat motionless on a crate and stared into the distance. When he saw me, he asked me to sit by him. He started talking about various things, then suddenly switched over to Jewish questions.

“Is it true that we are fighting for Palestine? What kind of a land is it, who lives there now?” After thinking for a while, he continued questioning. He asked me if I believed the Allies would honor their word, because he heard from Sergeant Colley, who is an Irish patriot, that you can not rely on an English promise.

To my question as to why he was suddenly so interested in all this, he became embarrassed – Earlier when I tried to get him interested in these questions, he had no patience with it. He put me off with the good-natured, joking observation that he was a Jew-comedian, nothing more.

“Well, little brother!” he answered, “You see where we are and what sort of end awaits us: It is something I am feeling now, that my end is coming and who knows how soon. I would feel lighter if I could be sure that the Jewish People were helped through my blood. Do you remember what the Jewish chaplain said to us?” He sort of answered it for himself when he saw my surprise over his last words. Then he switched moods and said: “Moses was born in Jerusalem, if so, then it is a wonderful

and beautiful land, just from that fact alone.”

How comical that he had so little knowledge of Eretz Israel and our people. However, I was deeply moved by his sentiment. I thought about it and painted for him fantastic, beautiful pictures of our land and our historic heroes.

I wanted to leave, but he held me back and, a little ashamed, asked if Jesus was a divine man. He knew that we did not believe in him, but he was also born in Jerusalem, and all of the gentiles believe in him and believed that he is a god.

In order to make more imposing the history of our heroes, I half gave in that Jesus was also a divine man, but we believed in those who were much greater than him.

“Jesus is a divine man!!!” he said very agitated and confused, more to himself than to me. A hidden shudder passed over his face. His usual pale face filled with color which betrayed dead wonderment.

“What's with you “Jeep”?” I stood there in surprise. He made an effort to control himself, and after a moment he took something from his breast pocket wrapped in a cloth. When he undid the cloth I saw a small bible like the ones the Christian soldiers carry with them on the battlefield. The pages were stuck together with dried blood, and he was holding it like it was white-hot piece of steel, hardly touching it with his trembling fingers, he nodded toward the outside: “Here is the Jesus bible that belonged to “him.” – in the pocket of his shirt – the blond sharpshooter. I snatched it from him!” “Jeep” said, almost whining.

“Why did I have to make Jesus a holy person?” I thought to myself after I had left him. I decided that tomorrow I would try with all my might to calm his nerves.

Outside it was still dark and the devil would resume his dance with a faster tempo. The half-circle of the heavens toward the German side which would often light up like hundreds of hellish fires, would once again ignite. From our movements and their ever heavier bombardments it was clear that something frightful would happen this night. The outside looked even more gruesome. Once again rain, rain with hail mixed in that smacked you in the face without mercy. It was so dark: Oh, if only one could find shelter! It could be under a wagon, by the side of a horse, just to be a little warmer than in my trench.

Before a Great Storm

Like blind dogs, men curled up together in every corner where they could find a little shelter from the cold and wet. As miserable as I was, a deeper pity took over my heart when I tried to pat around in the darkness for soldiers lying together in three's: In groups of two or more they lay together in order to warm one another. Those who were in the middle of the group still got a little wet, but those on the outside of the group tossed and turned trying to protect their soaked limbs. For those on the sides it was useless to try to move to the middle.

In among some of the groups, the ones who were in the part of the farmhouse that was still intact, I tried to save myself. To begin with in the darkness I would give a little kick with my feet or a shove with the butt of my rifle. "Where the devil are you going!" bellowed an angry voice and curses arose up from the tangled mass of men, who began to move like an unsettled cluster of worms. But when they saw that I didn't want to take anybody's place, that I just wanted to get a spot on the edge, they groaned and calmed back down. The one I laid down against was really pleased because I partially covered him with my body. For me on the other hand, there was little protection, and after a few tries I went back to my colony of messengers, to my own little hole, which was outside of the dugout. That began for me a night of trembling, tossing and turning from side to side. With every new stream of water that reached me it caused my teeth to chatter violently and without stopping.

My friends in the neighboring holes were having the same luck as I. First one then a second one got up uttering bitter curses through which you could detect a barely held-back wail. They threw their raincoats to the ground and the shelter-gear like capricious children. Apparently they were thinking back to when they had somewhere a warm home with a good mother with her warm, light breath that watched over him when he was sleeping or awake...

Williams came over to me. "Damn it! If this isn't worse than death itself!" He just started talking, knowing that I wasn't sleeping either. With a stream of unprintable words he started going on about how the officers had taken over the dugout and the few rooms in the farmhouse. They could have heard him and done something to him.

He got his things and crawled into the hole with me, and that made us a little warmer. We curled up together like brothers and felt a nearness that can only arise between men who have fallen into a deep pit, that they can not climb out of.

A bit warmed and settled in, a little sleep was possible. In bits and pieces sleep came to us. Instead of peacefulness it was a nightmare of being half-awake and wild images that penetrated our minds with the weight of lead bars.

Rolling through our dreams were bloody, torn-off limbs, stumble on a stone and rip your foot, rip it in silence and go on in sorrow. But you can not run: A powerful hand has clamped down on you and flung you into high, dry grass; Gigantic machines crawl over the field like formless shadows reaching up to the pitch-black night sky. Sparks and flashes of light arise out of their chimneys every moment and illuminate the woods opposite. The tree branches are moving slow and heavy. Through them you can glimpse the hills and valleys of the field. Something is running there in all sides with bulging eyes and screaming: "Second Battalion! Second Battalion!"

"Get up! Its your turn!" Williams shook me awake.

“Second Battalion!” The Sergeant's voice called out angry and insistent.

This time I heard it clearly and knew full well that it was meant for me. For a while I just turned in place, trying to gather a little more heat from Williams' body trying to collect just a little more of the most valuable commodity in the world, but the Sergeant's voice reached out to me like a steel hand around my throat – Go!

The officer-in-charge was Captain Chandler [Lewis S. Chandler], who I liked due to his humane manner. Noting that my hands were still shivering and my gas mask was loose, he pointed them out to me, and gave me the pouch with the messages and maps, asking me if I knew where the new observation point was located. “He knows,” the Sergeant answered for me. The Captain accompanied me to the exit. Putting his hand on my shoulder he whispered: “Don't be afraid, my boy! All you need is 'guts' and everything will be all right!”

Yes, I thought to myself: “All one needs is guts!” – And before my eyes passed images of several men I had seen with bellies ripped open and sticking out like slaughtered horses that a pack of dogs had strewn about.

When I went to get my horse, he recognized me several paces away, he came toward me then stood still.

“No, brother, this time you have guessed wrong. I am not coming to you with food...” In the darkness I patted him and pushed away his head and lips that were searching my shoulders and arms. I tightened the straps on his saddle, mounted him and we were ready to go.

“Where are you?” the Captain was searching for me, and patting my horse he said to me that I should avoid the crossroads and on the way to Fléville, Sommerance and St. Juvin before the attack begins, I should hurry because part of way is under observation by the Germans and there were patrols.

I promised to follow his instructions and set off, alone in the dark night.

The obstinate rain lashed my face making it impossible to see more than few steps ahead. The horse stumbled continuously, snorted with his nostrils to underline his disquiet and fear. His head was bent to the ground. He was walking very carefully and from time to time he veered to the side when he came across a corpse or a deep hole, which he sensed more with his instinct than sight. As though pleading with me he would nod his head back, at first furtive and silent, then quicker. But no, brother, we have to keep going...

It was about two o'clock in the morning. All around me it was unusually quiet. Only a few cannon shots broke the silence, and the shells flew with a strange, annoying whine, as though from somewhere there came and went a prolonged howl of a miserable stray dog. After a few moments another cannon would sound-off and you could hear the brassy sound of a spent shell that the men ejected from the cannon that just fired. Then once again another shell was launched with its heart-rending howl, flying over me in the black sky and disappearing somewhere in the German lines.

Everything became still. But in the stillness there was hidden the frightful power that was about to be unleashed. In about an hour our Division would attack. They would take over the full weight of the battle in this sector, taking the places and most of the duties of the First and the Twenty-eighth Divisions, whose ranks were bloodied and depleted from the first days of the battle.

How easy it is to give an order! How cold and business-like! But, oh, G-d! But what horrors play out for the the unlucky ones have to carry it out... When will an end come to this gruesome crime?... The fields were already more than enough filled up with slaughtered men. One did not even have enough time to bury them all, and over there the devil was sharpening his bloody fingernails. He would be the ultimate victor, regardless of who won or lost... Soon untold thousands of fresh troops from our Division would fall into his hands. The men of the Division were hunkered down all over the field, huddling helpless and miserable next to the earth. Him, the Almighty, is the only thing remaining to them that they believed might be their hope to remain whole.

“Go faster!” I pressed my knees tighter around the horse, there is the path. It looks like it is clear for us. The valley is wider there, and if our infantry is there somewhere, then they would be far from the path. They have to take the high ground on both side of the valley and who knows who I might run into along my route.

I turned onto the path. Once I got over the ditch, I heard the rapid steps of another courier who was riding in my direction.

In Difficult Moments

With all my strength I began riding after the messenger ahead of me. I rode in the direction of the sound of the horse's hoofs, and with a lot of effort I was able to get close to him. Only a minute more and I would catch up with him. The sky was starting to brighten and along with it came growing, fiery flashes and the thunder of German shells. The whole area shuddered from the bomb blasts. In that moment I felt a feverish desire to ride along side the other rider until our paths would diverge. My horse felt and shared my desire, and with unusual physical effort he leapt ahead in a wild gallop such that the wind and light rain lashed my face and deafened me.

The flashes in the sky that were coming from the German side were so close I thought I could touch them with my hand and were so continuous that the fields and the mountains were lit up. – Oh, this was bad, the shells fell with a swoosh and a crash on both sides of the road in the form of a barrage. One blast had effectively split the road in two, through the mound of earth and stones it kicked up. The rider in front of me jumped his horse over the new pit, and I also made the jump right after him. – Well done, I felt thankful, but every nerve was resonating with the other blasts that fell like hail. Only one more jump and I would catch the rider – Tshhhhh – Boom! Another shot landed. I crouched down in my saddle and shut my eyes for a moment, my heart stopped – This is the end – the thought shot through my brain along with the roar of the blast. In the next moment the rider ahead of me was ripped apart before my very eyes. His horse was cut off at the knees and on his back, leaving his rider far behind him. – No, I will not stop – There, there is my goal, and I did not think there was anything I could do to help, since he was instantly killed.

In the next moment it was as though everything disappeared, except for the feeling that my whole being had been transformed: Faster, faster fly to the telephone poles and the barbed wire. With my whole being I knew that I had been in the middle of a thick barrage. I could not distinguish the individual blasts that exploded around me. My eyes, limbs and nerves were concentrated on what was ahead, waiting for what was to come. Waiting for the impact that would take me down...

There were the telephone poles. I'm not sure if I realized it first or if my horse did, but we turned to the right and jumped the ditch and headed toward a narrow depression. He made a quick right turn.

“I've been hit!” Something like a red-hot poker struck me in the neck, flew up by my face and struck my helmet, knocking me to the ground. The horse circled around me restrained by the reins that I had wrapped around my arms. For a moment I twisted and turned in the water and mud that streamed in the deep ditch. The horse reared wildly but his feet sinking in the mud and his efforts to get free, allowed me to get control of him.

When I came to my senses, I was feeling strangely warm and there was a sticky wetness under my chin. I figured out what had happened. A low-hanging telegraph wire had caught me and thrown me to the ground.

I quickly rode to the hill where our observation point was stationed. Half way up the hill I tied my horse to a cross in one of a group of old German graves, and clamored up the hill the rest of the way, taking care to avoid a deep hole that used to be a blown up dugout filled with German corpses.

“Who's there?” – A voice demanded.

“It is I!” – I answered, recognizing Corporal Turner's voice, who was standing outside on gas watch. I went inside to Major Mehard. [Churchill B. Mehard]

Turner accompanied me as far as my horse and showed me another way that would take me to a little bridge to Fléville. That path offered more cover. With a few words we exchanged information about members of the Company who were injured or dead.

“It is hell!” he sighed and asked if I could try to find for him a few cigarettes. He was dying for a drag.

I promised that I would, but I knew that it was useless. No one had brought us such luxury items for many a day, and those who had a few cigarettes or tobacco were holding on to them, like they were holding on to the little boxes of hardtack that they got from the backpacks of dead soldiers. With hungry wolf-like eyes they searched each other's faces and packages to see if there was something there to eat...

An Attack

A Letter to a Friend

You asked me to write to you and tell you what an attack was like. I will do so in this letter. Incidentally, I noted your apology saying that you were not a bloodthirsty person, and it was not simple curiosity, but rather that you wanted to know the worst so that it would be baked into your heart, and bring you to hate even more that horrible monster – War.

I will write to you the pure truth. No rewrites will be necessary, no muse, certainly not. The words will be dictated by the horrors around me, from the slaughter of my friends, who still lay on the field unrecovered. One lies near me, not more than three feet away. Half of his face is ripped away and it nauseates me to see part of his jawbone sticking out with some of his remaining teeth and tongue showing through his drooping cheek. The smell from him suffocates me. The repulsion I feel overwhelms my feelings of pity...

It is five days already that he lay there. I would like to move away from him, but I have reckoned that this spot is better protected, and that consideration trumps my feelings of disgust... Except for one feeling... And that is my desire to write to you from here... It seems to me that his eyes that look out from his eye sockets through small slits say to me: – Write! Write until there is not a shred of paper left! Write as long as your hand does not get so cold that it feels like mine. The more lines I write, it seems to me, the more it feels like I am doing holy work.

It is interesting to note that when my friends see me sitting in my hole writing letters under these horrible conditions and with frozen hands they think something is wrong with me...

Now I will tell you about the attack at Cornay. During the night they assembled our fighters at the starting point from which they would attack.

The masses of men assembled in the darkness sinking up to their knees in mud on both sides of the road. They slogged in long lines with their rifles hanging in all directions from kit bags on their shoulders and extra ammunition belts. They marched in silence, breathing heavily from the effort, worrying about themselves, for their own lives. When they stumbled over a corpse they went around it with a dull feeling of fear and hostility, they did not want to lay by him anytime soon. They did not want to be part of the motionless who did not care if they were laying half or fully covered in mud, waiting for the gravedigger's shovel that would carry out the last act of their bitter fate...

In the gray light of the coming day, the forms of the things around us became more distinct. Shaking off the mantel of night, field after field, mountain after mountain began to appear. Hanging over all was a heavy mist, as gray and heavy as the sky that it blended in with in an endless, depressing melancholy.

One can not see the peaks of the mountains which rose up like a gigantic wall behind the tiny village we had to storm. It seemed like the half-village, half-town was still sunk in blissful sleep. You could imagine that soon they would be awakened by the sound of the whistle of the tiny factory, and the playing of the shepherds, gathering their flocks to take them out into the pastures.

There, the mountain that overlooks Cornay is becoming more distinct and looking more powerful. The more distinct it becomes, the harder becomes the breathing, harder beats the hearts of the soldiers who

remain as though dead in their places. In ones and twos in their holes scattered all over the hills they look out with fixed, blank eyes, eyes in which all sorts of thoughts are mixed. Fear and worry has seized them, together with a huge, painful question mark regarding the unavoidable, which is surely coming closer with each passing minute.

The dull, vague feeling of fear which is always with us, becomes more evident in the last moments of waiting before the signal comes. All of our limbs become heavy. All movements become mechanical, checking the rifle, ammunition belts and clothing. The moment comes. A simultaneous roar of all our cannons overwhelms the usual monotonous background firing. The Germans quickly answer with all their might. The individual trees in the fields and orchards collapsed into tree stumps in a feverish shudder to the death-music that played through the tree tops, – a shrill whistle – all your limbs and organs are clenched. Get up from there! Go! Figures rise up from their places. The long stretch of field is suddenly alive with movement. A long line of soldiers are running forward, crouched down, turning, some farther out, some a little behind. You can move faster running and crawling by staying closer toward the middle of the line of attackers. You don't feel the movement of our own limbs, not the feet, just a different force that carries you forward, forward.

A signal, and everyone falls to the ground. They fling themselves down in a group behind a slight rise in the ground. Automatically, they bring their rifles to the ready, slide the bolts and cock the hammer. All around us was the rattle of random rifle fire. Ours and their machine guns chewing like thousands of hungry teeth, crackled with their full force. Again the men got up and ran farther. Some fell, the lines were thinner than before – even more fall, as though suddenly they stepped on something in their path. One man's hands flutter, his whole body, the rifle falls from his hands, and both lie motionless. After him, one here, one there. The whole area the line passed over is speckled with the fallen. Those who are still moving, are curled up in balls and crying for help with glazed bulging eyes. They crawl toward those in the back rows. The medics carry them off to the side to a ditch.

We reached the first houses. From the windows and from behind the corners the Germans had, singly and in groups fallen back to the last ones, running from one corner to the next. Their quick moving, crouched forms threw themselves toward the rear. At the sight of them came only one desire that ran through every man's being. That was to shoot faster and destroy those gray shapes.

Some of the Germans did not want to leave their positions, they stood fast, melding as one with their rifles shooting down on our men, cutting them down like a gigantic knife. In a moment our guys melted together, wounded and non-wounded lay like dead men in their places. Then they began to run toward the rear, but those who were crawling along in the rear lines stood up at the critical moment. Several minutes of murderous fire. The dug-in Germans fell one by one. The others were shot down trying to run away. With a wild cry our men poured into the streets and took cover in the small buildings. House by house, street by street. At the dugouts at each point there was an individual, intense battle. Some of them were shot, others threw away their rifles, held up their hands and cried "Kamerad!" like helpless, penned animals, trembling from the tension and fear, they let us do with them what we will. They immediately followed every order in order to stay alive.

At the same time other Companies attacked the higher positions that the Germans were still holding. The Germans were trying to send other units to win back the village. But we were coming in greater numbers and attacking without resting, without stop, past and over the fallen came new troops crawling and dying. And when one of our attackers tried to turn away, to take shelter in a clear area, one of the officers or sergeants who were nearby would make him go on or, if not, shoot him on the spot. So, many men fell from our own hands.

The hardest part was clearing out the German machine gunners, who were dug in behind bushes. When such machine guns were discovered, we would creep up from the side and clean them out. And another part of the way would be clear until you ran into the next machine gun nest.

At the far rear of the battlefield speed ambulances packed with butchered soldiers. They looked like butcher shop wagons, with blood running from the floorboards.

A Bloody Joke

When the Germans had been pushed back far behind St. Juvin and Sommerance, Chaudron Farm became a much quieter place. They could still reach us with their medium and heavy artillery. From time to time would also come squadrons of airships. But the fear of pitched battle had disappeared, the sort of things that happened now seemed more like chance accidents.

One of the newest things to come to the Farm was the so-called "Intelligence Station." The German prisoners were brought here. They were questioned on every detail in order to determine the state of their morale and physical condition as well as other information of military value.

I encountered one group of prisoners following their interrogation. They were allowed the freedom to walk around the farm. From the expression on their faces and their demeanor, you could tell that they tried to relate to the Americans in a friendly way. They were a remarkable mix of ages and types. There were near children with smooth faces that sprung from their young, scrawny bodies. Others were in the age group from 40 to 50-years, but they looked older. Only the younger, bigger and stronger were more clean shaven. For the older men, in addition to their big mustaches, they had unruly beards with hair sticking out in all directions like porcupines. The Americans looked at them curiously, with their low-sided helmets, their blue-gray greatcoats, boots and brass belt buckles with the inscription: "God on Our Side."

In this group there was also an officer. It was apparent that they followed his example. When he took notice of something and turned cautious the others followed suit. If he appeared calm, friendly and happy, they also became more lively. And they all watched greedily when the field kitchen was up and running. This time there was more than enough corned beef, hash and coffee: When finally the cook called out – "Come and get it!" – and when we all lined up with our tin mess-kits in our hands, it was sad to see how their feverish, glowing eyes begged: "Give us something, toss us a little bite."

My old friend, "Jeep," could not stand it. He went to an officer and asked if he could give some to the prisoners, and jumped back as though from a fire when the officer said that he could give them whatever was left over after our boys were finished. You could depend upon "Jeep." He would make sure that there were leftovers.

A few idiots who were sitting near the prisoners started teasing them. Eating with their mouths full, they laughed and made faces at the hungry Germans. Others, however, took part of their food to them and shared it like friends. Out of thankfulness, the Germans tore off their buttons, epaulets, belts or other things that still remained to them – and used it to pay our boys back.

When the prisoner's turn came to eat, they took out their little bowls. Some of them were lacking eating utensils, and they stood there worried, but our Jewish cook, "Jeep," took care of them. From each of us, whether we liked it or not, he took our forks and spoons and gave them to the Germans who needed them. They began to eat hastily, grinding the food with their teeth, chasing each bite with the next.

Afterwards, it noticed one who was off to the side with both hands on the wall of the barn as though he were trying not to fall over. Only now did we take a good look at him: A small fellow, maybe 15-years old, thin as a skeleton, with a little red beard and mustache on his scrunched, parchment face and big boots and a huge greatcoat that could wrap around him twice. He looked more like a caricature than a proud German soldier.

He was the very picture of a German schlimazel, our guys joked.

Seeing that people were noticing him, his gray eyes looked around even more frightened at our faces, it was as though he was afraid of everybody and at the same time despised and hated every one of us.

“Jeep” went to him with a bright smile and called out in a friendly voice: “Hey, landsman, do you want something to eat?” He took the boy by the arm, like a plucked rooster the boy folded in place and jerked his arm away from “Jeep” with a pitiful whine.

“What's with you, you foolish German?” Jeep laughed and tried to force him to come with him. But the German began making a loud fuss and begged for people to leave him alone.

“Jeep” opened the boy's greatcoat and we immediately saw what was up with him. His pants were soaked in blood that was still wet and coming from a very uncomfortable place, such that he could not sit or move from his spot... Some of our idiots began laughing.

After we finished eating, a man from the convoy that had brought the prisoners, he was fat and dirty but with a broad smile on his face. In the confusion of collecting the wounded they rushed to tell him about the German boy, as though to suggest that we thought him a hero: “Ha, ha ha! I fixed him good. We caught him behind Sommerance, and near Fléville the Germans were very active. They spoke to the Jew in our convoy in his lingo and the phony little German danced for joy that he was captured by us and alive. He told the Jew that he was lucky that the war, for him, was over and that he would be able to go back to his children and wife. “G-d damn it!” The idiot soldier went on with a murderous expression on his fat face. “I couldn't stand him. Him, that damned Boche was going home and I had to stay here on the front. When he chattered at me with his damned words, I drove my bayonet up under him. Ha-ha-ha, it's a shame I didn't kill him altogether,” he bragged showing us the bayonet still covered in dried blood. “But I got him in the right place” he said with delight.

He did not get any sympathy for his brutal action. Most of us turned away from him... It was not the only time that I heard from my Jewish friends that many of the Germans who gave themselves up, were stabbed in the same place...

“So, my friend, how do you feel now?” My friend Tom Hoff turned to me. “In the bible it says that we are created in G-d's image.” His sad, noble face was twisted in sorrow.

My Christian Friend, Tom Hoff

Tall, slim with nicely formed features and bright eyes, gray, like limpid water. He radiated gentleness and goodness.

When he first joined the Company, we all loved him right from the beginning. He was a contrast to the other Southerners who came from the villages and small towns around Atlanta. They responded to us Northerners, and especially the Jews with a certain meanness and alienation. But he was a heart-felt friend, and we called him "The Minister's Son." First of all because he actually was the son of a minister, and also because he liked to talk about the bible and dedicate everything to G-d.

"G-d's hand is in it..."

"G-d's day will come..."

The one thing that he did not like were the officers and the older sergeants, and it is no wonder, because Tom didn't go well in soldier's clothes, he was not good material for wielding a rifle and bayonet...

There on the battlefield, under the most difficult and bitter conditions, he never lost his good disposition. One of the first, and most difficult times we had, was when we crossed the Hindenburg Line. Tom managed to show his bright side.

Fighting there had gone on for four years. The whole area around the woods was crisscrossed with trenches and dugouts which were grouped one next to the other, and one under the other. Where the front line of trenches were located on both sides of no-man's-land, there was a stretch of a couple of kilometers where everything had been blasted level with the ground. Wherever there was a trace of a smashed trench, over it was sticks with barbed wire. Like stinging snakes the wire balled up and ran all over the ruin, everywhere it was spread out and sunken in the yellow sand and mounds of earth.

That was the field we had to cross. Each step was difficult. Every few minutes we had to pull another cannon wagon out of the mud and push it until the exhausted horses could pull it again: That made for a cluster of men around the wagons. The horses stomped their feet in place, but could not pull it out. Their muscles were bulging almost to bursting, but it wouldn't budge. Above the tumult of curses and shouting you could hear a cry: "Hey, children! Go already! Try harder, children!"

I looked around: It was Tom Hoff. Those were his horses. He cried, begging us to help and what's more he was begging the horses even more for help in pulling themselves out. Those who were working to help were beating the horses to death, and with every strike, Tom's face winced. An officer arrived and mixed in and wanted to change the plan for getting the wagon out. As everyone stood around the officer explained what he wanted them to do. Tom called to him and with a heartbreaking, pitiful smile said: "Well, Sir, it's G-d's punishment that we can't go on with the war." He said it with such a heart-felt manner that for a moment we all stood frozen in our tracks, then we laughed along with him.

That's just how sharp and point-on his comments were. Not so much in relation to the horses as to us, but how could we answer him except with silly laughter, which irrupted as though it had been stuck in our throats...

Through all of the painful days and nights that we went through, in the later, bloody fighting in Apremont and Cornay, Tom Hoff's main occupation was to bring food to the unit in the Company that was located at the observation points. More than once I ran into him on the same paths I took to bring messages to the same destinations.

Bent over in the wagon seat he would try to drive the horses a little faster when they crossed the shot-up stretches of the road. Sometimes he had to get down from his seat and lead the horses, running along side of them and falling to the ground when a shell exploded nearby.

The most dangerous path was the road that went to St. Juvin, because right after the bridge beyond Fléville the Germans could observe a large portion of the road and unleashed murderous artillery fire on him. With my messages I would cross that open area with my horse galloping as fast as I could get him to go. At night they would not bother me. But once, carrying a message during the day, the military police stopped me right near the bridge and asked me to produce a leave-slip in order to continue on my way. He said he had orders not to allow anyone to pass during daylight hours. When I told him I was a messenger and showed him the papers I was to deliver, he let me through. In order to assure him that I was telling him the truth, I promised to be back in thirty minutes. From then on I was not required to show him a 'pass.' Instead, as I approached, I would yell out, "thirty minutes," and that was our agreed signal.

It was quite a different story with Tom Hoff. In these really tough days they had him traveling only by night, but once he wanted to go during the day, because the men that he carried food to had gone several days without supply, and Tom had found some food supplies for them. He harnessed the horses and set out earlier to *help* the hungry soldiers. When he came to the bridge, the soldier stuck his head out from under the bridge and stopped him. Tom's begging and arguments did not help. Tom turned back, but not for long. He searched for a way to get the food to his hungry comrades. Soon chance came to his aid. By the side of the road he discovered a dead 'wire man.' Tom took the dead man's bundle of wire and returned to the bridge. When the soldier on watch stopped him again, Tom showed him the wire and said that he had special orders to take it to the 2nd Battalion of our Company where the telephone lines were cut.

It is possible that the soldier on watch understood the trick, because the dead telephone soldier had been laying by the side of the road for several days, and the soldier on watch had undoubtedly seen him. Nevertheless, he let Tom go through. Tom drove the horses quickly to get the help to our guys. – And that is what started the game between Tom Hoff and the Angel of Death. – The normal firing on this stretch of the road became more intense and murderous. Tom jumped down from the wagon, ran along side, threw himself to the ground when the rapid sounds of nearby shells whistled as they fell and exploded with a horrifying crash. With his voice stammering from fright and tension he yelled at the horses: "So, dear brothers! So, children! Faster, faster! This is no place for us! So, children! So, dear brothers!" And again he threw himself to the ground as a new explosion covered him. And he managed to get the food to "Poor G-d's Creatures" as he always called us.

The Silent Victims

In the night of the 11th and 12th October my Battalion unit moved out to Fléville, which had just been taken.

Our supplies were much greatly reduced. For several days we ate heads of cabbage from the gardens the Germans had planted around the town. But soon it was forbidden because the whole Company got sick with diarrhea. They thought it was because of the cabbage, that it had been exposed to poison gases. Anyway, for a number of soldiers, their wish to get sick had been fulfilled. Large numbers had been sent to the rear hospitals, because they could not stay up on their feet.

One early morning I nearly fell off my horse from sleepiness. Coming back from delivering a message I ran into Corporal August from Brigade Headquarters. With a bitter demeanor he said to me that it was possible that I would be falling out of my saddle again soon, since we were about to make a big move.

Oh, curses!

On leaving Captain Rinehart after reporting to him, I ran into Dr. Captain Little [Young A. Little**]. He looked at me for a moment then said: "Cohen, I think you should be sent away to rest for a couple of days."

For a short moment I was confused. But then it hit me: "Me, me," and saluting him I said: "No, Captain, I will do my duty to the last." He looked at me strangely, as though thinking: "He is out of his mind."

When I went down the mountain to care for my horse, I saw that the horse standing next to mine had an injured foot from a bomb that exploded nearby. He was standing on three legs, trying to put the forth leg down, but each time lifted it again with a strange moan.

"Shoot him!" – Sergeant B__k said as he turned to me.

"You shoot him!" – I said, handing him my revolver.

He took my revolver: "Crack!" and the animal's torment was over.

My horse got a small cut on his neck from the same shot. His eyes looked around anxiously, and every few minutes he pulled away wildly.

"I want to get done with you. It is enough for me to take care of myself," grumbled Sergeant B__k, and with murder in his eyes, he busied himself with his own horse.

I quickly understood what he was doing. He was scratching the horse's foot with a sharp piece of iron. When the horse bucked, the Sergeant dug deeper. I shuddered at the look of him. His face red, and the eyes of a murderer... With each jab he yelled: "Oh, you beast! An end to it, an end to it!..."

** [Translator's note: The author writes "Litler," but 82nd Division records suggest, "Little."]

Sergeant J__n had done the same thing, except instead of stabbing the horse, he put a scraping comb, that we use to groom the horses, under the horse's saddle. He then rode the horse like that for a half hour. The horse wasn't good for anything after that...

“Quick, quick take this to Major Mehard,” Middlebrooks said as he ran up to me with a message. “But, fast, fast!” – He firmly rushed me.

“Fast, fast!” I repeated back to him angrily. I tightened the saddle straps again, and mounted up.

The feet were weak, if I let up on the reins the horse would move in a crazy way. Every jump lifted me off the saddle and nearly threw me off the horse. Going through Fléville there were two columns of soldiers. One moving to the rear, the other forward toward the fighting. I tried to control the horse which was acting wild, but his neck was like iron. He stuck his head forward and pulled hard. The soldiers ahead of me ran away scared, yelling that I should be careful – a moment – the horse carried me into a side street in the village. I was thrown hard against the wall of the first house.

“You made a crack in the wall!” Joked angrily the first frightened soldiers who ran out of the way. But others ran toward me and helped catch the horse and hold him until I could remount.

Riding on, in my mixed up head the words of Dr. Little pounded like a hammer: “I am thinking of sending you away for some rest.”

“Oh, curses! I am out of my mind!” But then I remembered “Adams” – A soldier from out West who was in my Company. When wounded, he said to us: “Boys, I don't want to leave you. I can't just leave you behind in Hell.”

We carried him to the hospital only after he began to lose consciousness.

Ahead of me I saw another column of soldiers. As I rode by them I saw a familiar face. It was Thomashevski, from the 325th but I had to keep moving on. They were going on the attack just a kilometer farther ahead.

The Crazy Captain

About four days later I ran into Thomashevski among the wounded. His eyes were sunken, his face green, his clothes stained and dirty.

He was hit while attacking “The Sunken Road.”

They had attacked the hill beyond Fléville. Their Colonel, Whitman [Walter Whitman, 325th Infantry], led them forward. He took them to the end of the roadway next to a deep ravine. For a half a week already they had not had enough food to eat.

The 3rd Battalion was the first to attack. Soon the Colonel sent Company A and Company B to strengthen them. Company C remained behind the left flank. But later a Lieutenant came and told them that Company M was nearly wiped out and the few remaining were falling back.

Then the Colonel assumed an heroic pose. He even refused to duck when the shells were exploding all around him.

“Soldiers!” he yelled out, “Company C will attack. Remember! The 325th will never retreat! The hill must be taken at any price. I want honorable American comrades here in France. Company C, advance!”

The Company crawled forward. All were surprised when they saw that the Captain who was leading them, instead of crawling, moved forward at his full height.

They were all terrified just looking at him. The first one in the fight, when his Company was cut off on the mountain – A big, blond, about 45-years old, one legging down, the uniform ripped, without a helmet, his hair disheveled, his eyes staring forward as though ready to spring, and with his “pipe” in his mouth he went straight forward. When all the others were on their bellies, he would, with every pull on his pipe, through his teeth, he would growl like a groan: “Hu – We will not retreat!” Another pull on the empty pipe: “Hu – We will not retreat!”

The shooting got heavier. One after another lay groaning. The Captain seemed even more disheveled, and continued to draw on his empty pipe. Suddenly, he spun around, his eyes opened wide. He lost his pipe and waving his arms wildly, he cried out:

“Company, stop, hit the dirt!”

He himself fell to the ground, strangely flat to the earth with his face turned toward his soldiers. The attacking column lay there as though dead. After waiting for about twenty minutes, Lieutenant Lengel, from the right flank, yelled to Thomashevski that he should ask the Captain why we were laying here. Thomashevski crawled over to the Captain and saw that the pipe was back in the Captain's mouth which was streaming blood.

“He is dead!”

The Lieutenant took command of the Company and they began to crawl away. Reaching the heights we saw that the mountain was sharply cleft. Far below us was the “Sunken Road.” It would be

dangerous to stay in this spot. It would be hard to jump, and there was a danger of smashing onto the road below, or get hit by the German fire from the other side.

“Jump!” – The officer ordered, and was the first one to fall like a stone. After him were the Sergeant, Corporal, Shiltis and Thomashevski. After Thomashevski, his best friend, Bill Moore, crumpled into a ball and fell to the road with a bullet through his head. Thomashevski ran to him and could barely hear him as he asked: “Take this, Harry, and send it home.” Thomashevski understood.

The Company lay there until late in the night. Around midnight the men sensed that the Germans were preparing an attack, and the officer ran to everyone crying out: “Give them a shower of lead. Take revenge for our brothers who are laying in their own blood!”

Our men fired for a half hour. During that whole time our boys heard in front of them cries of: “Ach, mein Gott! Hilfe! Oh, rette uns!” Many of them worked their way over to us, and begged us to let them live.

At the beginning “Kaplan” was the only one to volunteer to go and ask for further orders. He was Thomashevski's Corporal, and before leaving he said to him: “You think I want to show heroism? It's not about that! I'm volunteering because I am hoping to find something to eat there!”

Kaplan was a remarkable soldier. Under all circumstances he was cheerful, clean, brave and never lost his good-naturedness. He could find a joke in anything. Once, when he was cleaning a German machine-rifle, it fired by accident and the bullet went right past Thomashevski. Kaplan laughed and observed: “If you are going to die in the course of things, let it be by a Jewish hand!” On another occasion he said to Thomashevski: “You think that the Jews sell their souls for money. If so, let's make a bundle. We'll collect all the rifles and sell them for junk.”

Kaplan had a hard path to follow. But he made it though all right and brought back the order to withdraw until an attack could be mounted in greater strength.

As they fell back a shell fell on the place where Thomashevski's squad was laying. Right away he went deaf, felt nothing until he heard Kaplan's voice: “Officer, my squad is shot to pieces. Bill Moore is blown-up, Eddie Moore cut in half, Thomashevski is wounded. Another one of the lightly-wounded was Weisner, a German-American. When Thomashevski bid him: “Leave me to my fate,” Weisner answered, “No, Tom, we are brothers. I'm not going to leave you here bleeding. You Jews have more humanity than all the rest of us. That's what I think...”

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I intentionally went down in the direction to where the Captain was still laying. He was still in the same position that Thomashevski described. Since Tom had been there a heavy cannon had been brought through and in the dark had pressed the Captain deeper into the soft ground. He pipe was nowhere to be seen. Someone had taken it for themselves.

Looking into his face, I recalled that I had seen him before on the side of a road near the Fléville bridge, where we had both stopped in a deep ditch waiting for the enemy firing to stop.

Bang, bang, bang! – He imitated the sound of the shells and blinked his eyes oddly. He took out a piece of melted chocolate and ate it along with the foil wrapper. He gave me a piece saying: “Take it my son, before the devil takes us.”

The Song of Death

Soon I realized that for three weeks we had been in battle in the Argonne Woods and far beyond the Woods – Three weeks? No, an eternity has passed. The minutes and hours had passed with a frightening slowness.

When the gray day pressed upon us, with a silent prayer we would look to the West watching for night to come. In the anxious fright of the night it seemed as though the coming daylight would be brighter, would dry out our wet foxholes, would possibly improve our situation, maybe a stone, a deeper hole to hide in, or perhaps the order would finally come to fall back to a village.

But those hopes came to nothing. All orders, all movements were forward, and forward. And that meant sinking deeper in suffering. That meant a sure march toward death, and with this thought, if it did come to an end, it grew darker before our eyes, and heavier on our hearts – an end? Is there such an end to it all? No, it seems that this is forever goes on and as far as possible, and so it must be until the farthest reaches of time...

The Germans are falling back on all fronts, but they are putting their best and strongest units on the most important positions in order to halt our march until they can reorganize. Their retreats no longer make much of an impression on us, because we have already seen this happen several times. When they fall back their fighting becomes more desperate and bitter.

The times when they pull back they are chased by our hordes as though by wild wolves, with bared fangs, and filled with hate beyond measure. From everyone, from each throat of the attackers streams a storm of gall and curses: “You G-d damned Boches, more than once you have fooled us with your retreats. But we are not going to let you fortify yourselves in newer, better, hidden positions. We will destroy you, destroy you, destroy you...” And when we have chased them down, and defeated them in a bitter fight, which looks more like a contest between animals rather than an army against an army, they still try to destroy one another even then, when the enemy gives up the struggle and with a cry begs for mercy, begs for their life, with a half-scream, half-groan calling out to their adversaries: Brother! Brother, and when the hunted, turns to them with blood running from their eyes one is run through, cut in half in mid-cry: “Brother, brother!”

The stench of blood and fear and suffering brings more blood, and in chasing more blood men forget themselves.

Wet, cold ditches? – Yeah, so what? Dead bodies gas alert – Yeah, so what? – Myself slaughtered? So, slaughter me. What do I need hands and feet for, eyes, rifles and bullets if not to crawl toward the dug-in enemy and shoot, and stab him before he stabs me?...

At one position that we had taken where the only-just-cold bodies of the Germans and Americans were laying about, a soldier came to a body of a young German. He saw something in his hand. It was a small clock. The clock was still keeping time with a mechanical tic-toc in the frozen hand. The American soldier pried the clock from the lifeless hand and put it in his pocket. Afterwards, with an ugly look on his face, he brought his foot back and with all his might he kicked the dead soldier in the face. A passing officer saw what happened, went over to him and gave him a bitter chewing-out: “You beast, it's not enough that you have taken his clock, you have to break his face. He is dead, already, don't you have any respect for the dead?”

“Step away from there!” The wild soldier bared his teeth at him, and menaced him with his bayonet. The officer went on his way.

Later, if both of them lived, there would be a reckoning, but meantime – who believed, who thought that they would survive? The officer had to back off, because other soldiers with angry eyes and contorted, laughing, grimaces were looking at him, waiting for what was going to happen next... And he also knew very well that the soldiers had no regard for him, rather they all hated him – Oh, but when he gets that guy eyeball to eyeball...

At a different position we had overtaken, there were only a third of the attackers left. It was an important position far separated from the other German positions. The Germans that defended the position were so completely destroyed, that it took a long time before the other German troops were aware of it. Meantime, for us who took the position, things were lighter. They were not shooting at us, and we were able to pat-down and search the bodies of the dead Germans. We called it: Hunting Souvenirs.

The Rules of War did not allow it. You could be shot for doing it. But who would get upset about it? – Unless someone wanted to take revenge on one of the searchers, then they could blab about it.

Among the souvenir hunters was a Jewish soldier, a friend of mine, a nice guy, pleasant and, I think, a very sensitive person.

He had inspected a few bodies. On the majority of them there were still signs of remaining life and movement. They had just fallen in battle. The blood from their wounds was red, fresh, almost translucent. He did not go to them... But nearby there were also corpses who were long dead, with swollen faces and limbs turned dark blue from injuries and the constant rain. One was laying face down, the feet askew, one hand under his chest the other stretched out over his head. On his middle finger there was a ring. It was one of those rings with a cross and the words: “G-d on our side” on the cross. It was a highly prized object, and he wanted one.

He bent over and took the cold, swollen hand and tried to pull the ring off, but it wouldn't come. It was too swollen around the ring. Without even a moment's thought he took out his knife, cut off the finger at the second joint and removed the ring. His hands got a little smeared from the bloodless veins and flesh of the dead man. My friend simply wiped them on the edge of his coat and resumed his search of the other bodies...

“No, I did not go through their pockets,” he assured me. And I believed him because he is a decent, good, sensitive person...

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Heavy, slow and oppressive the time passed and our hearts grew gray and decidedly uneasy. The leaden clouds above and the filthy ground and men below had blended together in a single, miserable mass. Gray throughout, dirty and evil. And above them all could be heard the Song of Death from the shells flying through the air.

One night, riding back from delivering a message, I stopped for a while to have a good listen to the Song of Death. It was in the little valley just before Sommerance. I forced the horse to jump the muddy stream around which were grouped a few young trees and bushes. The whole field around me

was torn up from the bombs. In the air there was still the strong smell of old spent poison gas and of dead horses.

Almost like a joke, here and there, the heavy clouds parted and for a while one could see a little bit of blue sky and a few stars that quickly, quickly flickered as though hurrying to say: "We are still alive, we still shine, we are still here!" – But soon the clouds closed in again. The illusion disappeared and all that remained hanging in the air and shaking the heavens was the Song of Death. There where I had been standing in the middle of the road the shells from ours and the German guns were meeting high above.

High, high in the clouds they flew and spun their songs, z-z-z-um, z-z-z-um, zum whispered the heavy shells flying over so you could hardly hear them. A-i-i-i, a-i-i-i, masses of light shells screamed by endlessly. They had a point selected and calculated where each would land, and that is just where they hit. They would explode and rip apart everything in their way. But there, up in the air they sang like a strong Autumn wind in a hollow chimney... All and everything around was captured by the Song of Death...

Where is My Brother?

After my daily message run, I saw a body that I recognized as someone I called, “The Wanderer.” I had seen him going by ten days ago. He was laying right next to a little stream. His eyes were half-open as though looking at the few branches of a small torn-apart bush and asking: “What's wrong with you?” But his open, bloody mouth, split lips, shattered teeth, bloody wounds were silent. His last outcry was long over. His arms in a effort to lift himself up were bent out and frozen in the position of his final movement.

When I came to him, I had to bend low to get a look at him. In the darkness his body looked like a heap of loose, black earth. After a short hesitation, with trembling hands I started to pat him down. Perhaps I would find some clue to his odd appearance that I had noted when I saw him pass by several days ago.

“Where is my brother?” Those words rang in my ears. They were his only words. – I kept searching him. I found a couple of cuttings from a newspaper – He doesn't need them now. There were some torn strips of paper – “Loving greetings, we are, thank G-d, all healthy. Business is not bad, but Mama cries her eyes out over you. We received your letter from the third of September, but from Joseph we have not had a letter for four months. Dear son, try to look for him. My heart weeps within me, and Mama tears her hair out and cries: “He is already dead, he's been slaughtered.” – And more and more heart-rending screams. – Look for Joseph if you can, and tell us right away when you learn something.”

I finished the last line and wept from sorrow and helplessness. What can I do? Could I look for his brother? In the letter there was no indication of which Division or Regiment Joseph served in. Where would I even look?

Once again the image of the “Wanderer” passed before my eyes just the way I first saw him. It was at the crossroads next to Apremont, during the first days of the October attacks. I was there with a group of twelve soldiers from my Company. We were hanging around the ruins of the first aid station, huddled in our places not knowing where the rest of our Company was. It was towards night of the third day. We were laying there hungry and under murderous fire. We tried moving from place to place thinking that behind that rock, that overturned, blown-up truck, we might be better protected from the deafening explosions, gases, stones and shrapnel from the exploding shells that screamed in slashing apart every corner, every inch of the ground. Continually the men cried from anger and cursed the officers who brought us here, left us and apparently forgot us. This terrifying evening we saw from the crossroads coming toward us a bent-over soldier of medium height. He stopped and looked at the few bodies laying there. Hunching down again he made his way over to us. With staring eyes he examined each of our faces. His eyes and mine soon met.

“I!” Between us, like a trembling, silent greeting flew back and forth.

Yes, he is a Jew. I crawled over to him, then ashamed to see him standing up, I also got to my feet, but held myself back from questioning him. On his sunken, green face was such sorrow, such hopeless sense of loss. When I looked into his eyes from close-up, a cold shiver ran through my whole body.

A madman – The thought immediately went through my mind. He turned his head away from me and returned to scrutinizing with his eyes the dead bodies and the field around us. It was as though he was trying to decide which direction to take next. After a while of looking around, still silent, as though he

did not want to acknowledge me, he started out in the direction of Sommerance.

“Where are you coming from?” I finally found a question to ask him.

He stopped for a moment, stared right past me, and muttered:

“Where is my brother?”

He hunched down again and was back on his way, tattered and dirty. He walked slowly, step by step, until he disappeared from view, as though sinking into the low road that led to Sommerance. The noise from the murderous, flying shells followed him with their howling. From that time on when I listened to their noisy song in the sky, I would hear the sound of the Wanderer's quiet, barely spoken words:

“Where is my brother?” That is the question that will be asked to the end of all generations.

In the Valley of Death

Afterwards we found out that we were going to move out of the area we called “Death Valley,” where we were, and I would again have to cross the “Valley of Death” which went along side of the Aire river. It was as though a magnet drew me again and sucked me into that picture of death and devastation which screamed at you from every inch of that ripped up ground.

No, not everything there was dead. Among the plowed-up earth which was pock-marked with deep craters, one could still find a tuft or two of grass. On a few uplifted bits of earth a few young flowers held on tight with their roots. A few had sent their tendrils up through the barbed wire as though in a dubious battle for their life.

On the tenth day of our fighting in the Argonne Sector we came to the Valley of Death. From that moment it had that ominous name, and every day we remained there it earned the name.

The valley was wide and went on for miles, no trenches had been dug there, just an open field for battle. Every man dug a hole for himself, or he crouched down in a crater ripped out by a heavy shell. So we lay there spread out far and wide as far as the eye could see. You couldn't see anyone as far as you looked because they were all hunkered-down deep in their holes. At many of the holes you could see a bit of yellow or gray cloth flapping in the wind next to a hole. Often it was an arm with a ripped-apart hand, or a leg from the man who had inhabited the shell crater.

For every dead German there were two or three Americans. People said that was because the Germans carried most of their dead away and buried them. But that was not entirely true. During their retreat they would have only had time to take their most severely wounded. The rest were left there and abandoned.

There, the Germans and Americans were the same. And when they lay there one next to the other their blood mixed together, and they both sank in the wet earth... Often they gestured with their hands as though they had something to say to one another, something brotherly, sad...

Oh, how many lay there and how different were the appearances and colors of the dead faces, or what used to be faces, and what was left of them. How different the flesh, blood and marrow from their wounds. It depended upon the time that they received the wounds, and from the instrument of death that had slaughtered them.

I want to go from one to the other. They are, after all, my brothers. I knew many of them when they were still alive, and even in the darkest moments they still held in their hearts a hidden hope that they would come through this and return to their homes, to their mothers. It is difficult for me to let them go. I want to look into their faces, absorb their last cry of pain, which remains on their faces like a frozen shadow, in the last convulsive movements of their bodies. – I will go from one to the other...

The “Blond” lies like a monarch. The hands and feet are spread out. The helmet held fast by the straps is tilted a little on his forehead, but it does not hinder his eyes from staring into the heavens. From a distance you might think that he was pampering himself with a relaxed laziness, yet with such expansiveness that both the heaven and earth belonged to him...

Aha, what is that! How did he get here? I never counted on a dog. What do dogs have to do with war?

It is a thing for men... A little, white poodle. One of its front feet ripped off. Something so small couldn't make it through...

Those who were laying with their faces downward reminded me of the "Thirsty One" that I had seen eight days before near Apremont. Each body is never out of my memory. It was in the first days of our campaign in the Argonne when I was on the way to the Colonel of my Regiment.

A stream ran through this narrow valley. Even it had been wounded by heavy shells in several places, but it filled in the craters and their soft bottoms, then wandered on. The farther it flowed the dirtier its water got. The bushes and high grass on both sides of the stream were ripped-apart and strewn in all directions.

To the stream had come, so it appeared to me, a thirsty soldier. I saw him from a distance and began riding in his direction calling out: "Hey! Get away from the water! There is mustard gas in the area!" But I soon saw the bitter truth. It was a dead man. The others had already been buried. He had been hit by a piece of shrapnel that had shattered his combat-pack and his back. Through his torn clothes shown a horrible, red-black wound. All around him lay strewn his safety razor, soap, socks and handkerchief. The mess-kit broken apart. The deep side of the mess-kit was over-filled with hash. He had apparently gotten an extra portion from somewhere that he was hoarding. The red, gooey meat looked just as horrible as his wound... Right next to him lay a packet of letters and two pictures, one of his mother and one of his girlfriend. In that last picture, she held a fresh rose in her mouth, which added more longing and worry to her wide open eyes. It seemed to me as though his right hand was reaching for the picture, but the other hand and his face were sunk deep in the stream.

The dirty water ran quickly by, bathing his face and arm. Everywhere the water touched him his flesh was blue and bloated. The fingernails on his splayed hands, which were covered by the lower depths of the stream, were yellow and looked like bone. When I let my eyes follow the stream a little farther, to my horror, I saw that it was the same stream that ran past our position. It was where we got our water. At this discovery I began to shake to the point of it making me insane, as though my brain was being forced out in every direction. When I got back, I did not tell anyone in my Company about my discovery, but for the next several days, until we left that position, I did not drink a single drop of water. When my thirst drove me to it, I would take my field canteen and go to the stream to fill it. The image of the Thirsty One would float before my eyes and I would step back with clenched teeth. Even from the other streams I couldn't drink. It seemed to me that their water was mixed with thick, black blood which ran for miles over foul corpses...

The Valley of Death – We tried not to call it by that name... In truth sometimes we tried to keep it secret, out of pride and respect for the fact that we were now in Death Valley. One which made an impression on me with that sentiment was Goldstein. A cannoneer from Battery "I." He said to me: "Well, little brother, it feels like we are in Death Valley." He too had been enveloped by the valley and its victims. Together with a couple of his buddies from his battery he went off collecting "souvenirs." Goldstein had gotten a belt from a dead German. Another of Goldstein's companions took the boots. One boot was filled with blood and bits of flesh from the torn-up foot. But the soldier was ready to apply himself, and shook the contents of the boot out, rinsed it out in the little stream, set it on the ground and tried it on.

Laughing and happy with their work, they headed back to their battery. At that moment they became subject to unexpected shelling by the Germans. They started running, hunched down, but it didn't help. Right before our eyes we saw them covered with a mountain of earth and smoke.

Among the survivors was Goldstein, with a popped out eye and ribs. He was still holding the German belt in his outstretched hand, and the Christian soldier who was right by his side, had his helmet cut off from his head, taking his brain and skull with it. The German boots on his feet laughed satanically through their holes...

Even before I can see their face, I can from a distance get a feeling as to whether a group of people, or someone far out in a field, or slapping their sides from the cold by the edge of a lake is Jewish.

Here is a case like that: I didn't know his name, but I recognized him. A quiet one with a characteristically Jewish face and gestures. At Camp Gordon he would regularly come to our Friday night services meeting. I ran into him a few times in Atlanta. Though shy, he would gladly accept the invitations that the people from the Jewish Institute would give us to go to an open house on the Sabbath or Sunday. Returning to camp he would remain quiet, not saying anything, but with a happy look on his face. He actually was quite happy due to the good meals and the heart-felt reception that our Atlanta brothers gave us and so often repeated. He was remarkably quiet and reserved there, but on the bloody fields he did not remain silent.

Above his left ear a piece of shrapnel bored through his helmet. The left side of his face and his filthy blouse were colored in red from the blood. The same trail of blood could be seen for a good distance behind him. It seemed like he was mortally wounded, and barely conscious as he crawled on all fours. Even then his body was high up on his hands and knees. One foot stretched out in an effort to drag himself farther. His eyes, after all this, open with a frozen look of pain and fear. One would think that you could still hear from his wide-open mouth his last cry for help which was drowned by the blood that was running from his forehead over his lips and onto the ground. He crawled over to another soldier that, in the last glimmer light, he could see in front of him. He crawled and called out "Help – help!" But that man who was laying near him was also mortally wounded – what is the difference where – exhausted, the hands hidden under his chest, the other man's head was also split, his mouth wide open. They had yelled one to the other, called to one another until merciful Death came to them and silenced them. The contortions on their faces, the eyes and the frozen screams from their mouths still call, cry, look with frozen fear: Help! Help!

I bent low over my acquaintance and the second man, who was almost looking into the face of the other. I burnt every detail into my memory. Why be afraid, why turn away? No, it is better to look at them until it drives you mad, and soak up the fruit of this great *atrocit*y that man calls war.

Who could have done anything to help in those horrible days and nights when they fell in battle? Except one who still read all of his letters – Yes, he still reads them. A little farther away from him, beneath the hill by the mountain valley. He lays by the side, his head upon his left hand, he held in his right hand the letters. His open eyes looked upon the lines written there. The hand is already a little stiff, but still high enough to hold the letters before his eyes. I look around him. There is no sign of a wound on his body. Our Doctor and all of the men who manned the nearby positions looked at him. From one to the other the question went around: "Have you seen the Jewish soldier with the letters?" And when they saw him, each one asked: "What did he die from?" Because he was not mangled and had a peaceful look on his face. But all remained silent, and held in their horror before his remarkable appearance.

Also the Mother Mary remained silent, who looked out from the exposed neck of the Christian laying nearby. A strapping, big German. She looked on with her round heart and her eyes uplifted to heaven, to the clouds which collected themselves in groups, scuttled by, and became darker. They scuttled here and there where the Christian Germans had taken aim, there, where we were aiming with our cannons, and would grasp one another by the throat, with the fullest love from Christian teeth and nails...

And this is when men began to say that soon there would be peace.

Night had already fallen. In the sky you could see the signal lights. Like strings of pearls they flew up one after the other. That one winks out, and here comes another. One string after another, red, phosphor-blue, and again a red starlet. Men spoke with one another in that silent language until the beginning of the battle and later in the fighting.

Men Speak of an Armistice

A letter to a friend

We don't know where the word came from about a possible agreement on an armistice, but it has begun to circulate: Like half-hidden beams of light they have begun to penetrate the minds of the mud-caked soldiers. With thirsty, feverish, inflamed eyes they listened and talked among themselves. But many quickly shrank away from the thought, because of the great fear they had of another disappointment. Meantime, everyone's visage remained dark. Bent over and angry from hardship and exhaustion which knocked even the strongest from their feet.

We talk about armistice, but again today we witnessed a battle in the air.

Like little pieces of fluff that float in the Autumn air, they showed themselves high in the sky, high under the sun. Our batteries opened fire, but the exploding shrapnel shells left their puffs of smoke about half-way to them. They remained in their formations like bits of transparent clouds. Soon our aircraft arrived at the same altitude. From there came the muffled, crackle of machine gun fire. It turned into a mishmash of airplanes circling and leveling out. One falling airplane came very close over our heads, we quickly began to run and cry out in fear, but with a roar it lifted back up into the sky and flew to one, then a second, then a third of our observation balloons. And the giants, which were hanging in the air like swollen elephants, were immediately transformed into great balls of flame and smoke which hung in the sky for a couple of minutes, then it was over – drifting away from each other they blended into the clouds above and slowly blew away with them. That is when we understood that it was a German who, with his little trick and daring had pulled this off, and it was why they came here. Most of us reacted with a surprised, “Ah!”

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Meanwhile our countless cannons were quiet, but we knew already, that they were preparing to speak: From our Brigade Headquarters was sent out the latest orders, and the orders would arrive at all the batteries saying that on the 1st of November at 2:30 in the morning they all would speak in their murderous language. It was our largest assembly of cannons and their play would be the most terrifying up to now.

The evening before the appointed early morning hour was unusually still. All of the troops and their equipment were in their places. The wagoners who brought ammunition and grenades to the cannons were unusually busy. From a distance it look like the ammunition wagons were moving very smoothly, this time not bothered by the German grenades. However, when I caught up with them on the road, I shuddered right down to the deepest depths of my heart over the misery and pains of those poor creatures, the horses who had to pull the heavily loaded wagons.

For long weeks and months without rest, always harnessed, they looked like skeletons. The drooping skin was caked with mud an inch deep. Around their feet and on their bellies hung heavy sheets of filth. From the wind and cold the mud had dried and stayed there like a sort of big sheet of armor on their coats. From constantly being in motion the caked-mud armor was cracked at their ankles and folds of skin until the skin itself was broken... From the open wounds blood ran down and you could see raw flesh and veins, many of them torn. With heads hung low, with wide open, staring eyes they pulled the wagons with all their strength. Pulling and choking themselves. Their breath was expelled with a quick, heavy groan. Barely, barely they place their foot for the next step. But the drivers, also

covered in their mud armor, did not want to hear of it. Due to the workings of their fear about what was about to come they rushed faster than they should... The hit the horses with a thick, wet whip. The whippings helped a little, but not much. Then they began with bared teeth to take sticks and they jabbed them into the open wounds on the horses' skin. The horses surged ahead, pounded the ground with their feet and turned their heads as though they wanted to cry out with tears in their eyes. There one has fallen. Now the nervous driver begins to jab the horse's wounds even more savagely, and lucky is the horse that has no strength left to stand...

It is possible that the armistice will come, but meanwhile clouds are gathering over the German side. Gray, cloudy, layer after layer and descending lower, ominously. The sun has long been obscured, and that is good, we don't need it. Its sunny brightness and beauty is here an ugly joke. And if it were to show itself I would fling at it the same mud that cakes on the horses, the drivers, on the dead and the dismembered... Only clouds and the night have a place here. They are ugly and full of fear, but they do not tell lies, rather they scream out with a thousand mouths about the murders that come to pass under their cover.

The designated hour has struck on the 1st of November. At 2:40 AM our batteries opened fire and the whole area is in a moment enveloped in a sea of phosphor-fire that springs from behind every hillock. It carries away with it all of the air we breathe. The thousands of shells fly away with tumult and noise to the German lines. The explosions and the shooting cause the very earth to shake as in a severe fever. The barrage kept up for over two hours, and when it stopped, the German side was as though dead. They were smashed. Those who were left retreated to Sedan. Only then did we feel that the war was really over.

From the Second to the Eleventh of November

In the morning at dawn we moved out and quickly saw the tumultuous change. The roads were thick with countless trucks, cannons and columns of soldiers who were headed to Buzancy. There were no more pauses, only driving and marching forward.

Riding past the cloister at Sommerance I remembered a tragicomic incident involving one of our Jewish soldiers who had rejected his Jewishness.

The day that Somerance was liberated from the Germans, he went to the cloister together with another Jewish friend and several Christian soldiers who all were looking for shelter. But toward night, when they thought that, perhaps, they would stay there to rest, a heavy shell broke through the roof and exploded killing and wounding several. Running from there, the assimilated Jew caught the other Jew under the arm and panting, begged him: "Oh, please, tell me how to say Shema Israel."

Going through Saint Georges we saw the results of the previous barrage: The ground was plowed and churned up. On the whole length of a ridge were the remains of the German barbed wire, on which were still hanging the bodies of American soldiers. Behind them were several shallow, quickly-dug trenches. Around them were flung dismembered Germans. Now that we knew that they were defeated, we looked on them with the same pity as on our own fallen.

Near the woods that were so difficult to go through, I met up with our Jacob Ash. Laughing, he said to us: "Keep going, keep going, you aren't going to find anything to eat here." The reason was that the kitchen and provisions wagon were stuck there. Later on Ash told me how while waiting for his wagon to be pulled out he saw the "pioneers" (soldiers who buried the dead) drag several dead Germans to a deep shell crater and quickly cover them up without erecting any marker indicating that they lay there. He pointed that out to them, but they answered: "We are tired of the Germans, already, t' th' devil with them!" Later, when the pioneers left, Ash put up a wooden board on the mound of dirt and wrote on it in Yiddish: (The only language he knew.): "Here lie Germans."

The coming days consisted of continually marching forward. The Germans were retreating with all speed to Sedan. Around the 7th November we came to the village of Vaux [translator's note: probably Vaux-en-Dieulet]. There the Germans tried once again to fire on us with their artillery and machine guns. At certain points they left behind rear guards, simply sacrificing units of their military to halt our advance.

In Vaux we found there were still a few German soldiers who had surrendered. Three Germans were caught in the tower of the cloister with machine guns.

Finally, it came! It is impossible! – So much happiness all at once – Home, Mother, Free to live – but the Major came to the mess line, – where we waited with our mess-kits in hand for supper and debating as to whether it was true or not – then he came up and with a clear, loud voice called out: "Boys! I am happy to tell you that the armistice has been agreed upon!... Austria and Turkey..."

There was no "Hurrah," just a wild, joyful cry rang out from each man's heart.

“Don't get excited, boys!” – the Major yelled out – I assure you that peace, a victorious peace, even better than we expected is on the horizon. And believe me, boys, that I am even more anxious than you are to get back to my wife and children, and my business which makes me a lot more money than this uniform. However, boys, we have to have a little more patience until all the details are worked out and totally completed.”

More cries of joy. Some threw their arms around one another and danced for a whole half-minute. It was surely the happiest dance of their life. There were handshakes all around, and everyone's heart jumped for joy. Calling out: “So, what did I tell you?”... “So, what do you think about our good luck? Can you imagine me with a cigar in my mouth and in civilian clothes on Broadway?”... “Brownsville for me!” a Jewish boy yelled out, – Such shouts were heard from all sides.

But the most common and the most pressing question asked was: “How fast will we be sent back?” – Several opinions were proffered, but they could all be combined in the words: “It doesn't matter how fast it happens, it can't be too fast for me.”

All at once the sick were made healthy. Their faces beamed. Everyone became intimate friends and comrades. Men spoke and laughed freely, without reservation, like carefree children.

“How are you going to get home?”

“What do you mean, “how,” it could be on the top of the mast, or with a rope tied to me and dragged behind the ship.”

“You know what?” – yelled one joker – “They can just let me out, and I will find my own way to pay the fare!”

In my Regiment the joy was doubled. Along with the good news, we got our 'relief' – After forty-two days of hard fighting and advances in the Argonne.

The day after the good news, we set out on the way back and after two days of marching we were seeing less and less of the ruination, until finally we were seeing undamaged villages and towns.

When we got to our second night bivouac near a large town, we saw a couple of women with woven baskets on their heads – the first civilians we had seen in the past five weeks.

“Listen, now, listen!” – From in the town we could hear the clacking of train wheels on tracks and the whistle of a locomotive that we answered with a hearty “Hurrah.” They were the first sounds of the free world.

We stopped in a field next to the town and set up our tents and the kitchen. All around you could see campfires: It was chilly and people wanted to warm themselves.

“Lights out! Lights out!” Yelled someone using the well-known warning against enemy aircraft that could see us and drop bombs on our position. But now it was just a successful joke, and men laughed heartily, and doubled up along the length and breadth of the camp:

“Lights out! Lights out!”

“Tsssss! Bang!” – In the first instant everyone looked around. – “What's that? A shell?” “Hey, boys! Look, look!” – They all looked up. In the clear sky floated a beautiful rocket. “Tsssss! Bang!” – another one, and a third.

The officers had had enough time to go into the town and purchase the fireworks. In the town there was a Young Men's Christian Association, a Salvation Army branch, a commissary, a bathhouse and newspapers.

We could hear the sounds of some musical instruments. A hearty 'hurrah' shook the sky. It was the Regiment orchestra that had gotten together again and was playing. The instruments scraped and panted, but they played “Homeward Bound, What a Wonderful Sound,” and a thousand voices from around the campfires, and far, far from this corner of the earth penetrated the night singing the song, “Homeward Bound.”

Jewish Heroes



“Bon Juif” and “Allez au Diable”

After spending a lot of time wandering over a lot of empty fields where we had stopped and set up camp before traveling farther, we finally arrived at our designated area near the city of Dijon.

Our Division had taken over an area of a hundred by seventy-five kilometers. Every town and village within was portioned out to one or another Company. My Company was finally brought to the village of Corchanu, where we were assigned a few houses and hay barns right above the cows and pigs.

Once everyone got settled, they headed to the village searching, and – they found it.

In a couple of hours Jones was drunk as Lot and was wandering the streets incapacitated. When he encountered a elderly, eighty-year-old French women, he took hold of her and kissed her, hugged her and called her: “My sweetheart.” His manhandling did not please her, and she begged the officers, to keep better order.

My friend, the deathly romantic Sauers, laid out a plan that first we would try to find something to eat, buy something from a dairyman, not just army food, and if possible, maybe, instead of the barn with its horrible smell, we could find a room in a French home. I took to his plan and we went off searching.

After a lot of walking around we came to the house of a blacksmith. The older Frenchman with intelligent, kindly eyes behind his eyeglasses, and with a little box of snuff tobacco next to him, did not understand us. Then his wife came out of the house. As soon as we got a look at her, we wanted to run away. A little woman, thin, with mottled red hair, huge blue eyes with even bigger eyesores, came over to us and began to scream at us. She was either asking us something or angry at us. We had no idea what she wanted. Every once in a while she grabbed me or Sauers, and the less we understood her the harder she yelled. Finally, she took us by the arms and led us to the attic of the house and with hand gestures made us understand that we could stay there if we wished. She would take down the beans and the onions that hung there in countless garlands and make us some bedding. It turned out that she did understand us.

As time when on it became clear that they were truly outstandingly good people. We tried to keep things simple so as to not inconvenience them, because they invited us to their poor meals. When we tried to give them money, the old man yelled like someone was trying to slaughter him.

When they realized that I was Jewish, they looked at each other in an odd fashion. But then the old man smiled and said, “Israelite bon.”

For that I gladly accepted the invitation from the old man to sit with him in the evenings before the fireplace. Since I had been a bugler, he called me “Monsieur Trompette,” and only by the light of the flickering fire in the hearth we conversed, so to speak, about many things. Sometimes his wife would come and little by little I came to understand the misfortune and loneliness that prevailed in the house.

Through her yelling and complaining, she made me to understand, with tears in her eyes that she had had two daughters and four sons. The daughters married and moved to neighboring towns, but all the sons were gone to serve France. Two were killed, one is a cripple in a hospital and the other has a heart condition and serves somewhere guarding German prisoners. And with venom they blamed the Boches.

They also explained to me that they would never allow an officer in their house, because their son had suffered at the hands of an officer.

My friend told me later that he and some other Jews were in a house where, for a few francs you could get a meal. They were very pleased with the new delicacies, but once someone let on that they were Jewish, and the head of the house heard it, he threw them out of the house and angrily refused their money. “Sale juif, allez au diable,” [Dirty Jew, go to the Devil] he shouted after them.

I knew that the “Allez au diable” played a big role in the little village in our area. The few Jews who had lived there for generations were so Frenchified that they did not show themselves to us even when we boldly introduced ourselves to them with all our Yiddishkeit. The Christians would point them out with a smile: “You ask about Jews? – There in the épicerie [grocery] is a Jew, and a second is also a Jew and a third.” But when we went in, they were very guarded, and it was difficult to see any trace of Jewishness in them.

After I arrived in Corchanu, I wrote to the Jewish Chaplain Tannenbaum, and asked him if he could get me permission to travel around the area where our Division was staying so that I could see my Jewish friends and other Jewish soldiers. I also wanted to continue making the collections for our art temple in Eretz Israel. I was not granted that freedom, and but I did get a couple days leave to go just to the neighboring villages where I would find my friends. I started out over the wonderfully beautiful roads lined with pine trees and poplar trees. They called to me with their magic, and with longing for my friends, and a desire to see them and find out who among them still lived and who had been killed.

Jewish Emotions and Heroic Deeds

It was my dream to collect and highlight as many heroic deeds of the Jews, and Jewish moments in the American Army in France as I could. In some cases I was aware of them, but a sort of shock and awe took over when I realized how inexhaustible the sources were. What a wonderful, monumental work it would be to collect everything.

But, gosh, how limited are my opportunities, how hard it is to work under the constraints on soldiers to move about and go where they will, even to collect a few unimportant diamonds from the huge, desolate battlefields. Just a few dozen of our many extraordinary names to highlight!

All I could do was collect bits and pieces traveling from one place to another. When you stopped in a village near where the infantry of our Division was located, you had to be careful to set aside a little time to run to the town which was often ten or fifteen kilometers distant. The heart pounded and frightened itself: Will they be in their billets now? Or, will my Jewish buddies be stuck with a work detail? But, thank G-d, I found some of them in a barn on top of a mountain of hay. And – what proud and self-confident men they have become!

“You're looking for Jewish heroes? You would be better to search for Jewish cowards.” – The remarkable-sounding observation is the pure truth. The unbelievable-sounding remark has an iron-fast basis, which I have seen in its full stature later when I met with my Jewish brother-soldiers before combat, in combat and after combat. And that is the feeling and thought of every one of the Jewish boys, even those with little Jewish-consciousness, that *“As a Jew, he must be a hero, as a Jew he must not be a coward”*...

— — —

Here is just a little incident from the First Battalion of my Company, when a Jew as a Jew is driven toward heroism.

They had just established themselves in a position forward of Châtel-Chéhéry on the Argonne front. The cannons of the First Battalion had begun to hammer the enemy. The Headquarters Detail of the Battalion with the Adjutant-Major, a couple of officers, telephone and telegraph operators, and also some privates had to make themselves “as safe and as comfortable as possible” on the side of the hill between the cannons of the Battalion and our infantry which was dug in about a kilometer behind the hill. The Jewish leader of the Wireless Corps, Schwam, quickly went to work setting up the wireless station. The others who were on duty went to their tasks. The reserve men were making themselves “as comfortable as possible” and that meant digging foxholes for themselves. Among them was the Jew, Joe Ash. His only duties were to press the officer's uniforms and bring them food.

Joe also went to his tasks: Digging a hole and installing over it his pup-tent. He needed a digging tool. Ash borrowed one from the boys. He had to take one that was sticking out of the pack of a dead soldier from the infantry unit that had first gone through there. The shells coming from the North side had dug a place for Ash behind a thick tree which would shelter him a little bit from either side. It was a foolish idea, because just such a spot can also indicate great danger since the shells can just as easily go through the tree trunk and branches. Not only do you have to worry about the explosions and shrapnel, you can also get killed by the shattered tree. But in such a time when the fever to search for shelter had possessed everybody, the otherwise sensible young men took every superficial shelter to be a good one.

The men worked all the faster because the German shells were tapping all around. They fall there, then over there. Someone yelled out: "Gas!" The men threw their tools down and grabbed their gas masks. There a shell fell at the foot of a hill in the midst of several soldiers. They fell immediately to the ground as though hacked down, then jumped up running in all directions. Only one is left, he struggles, tries to get up and can not. He lets out some cries for help, but everyone is too scared, lost and they don't want to move from their places, as though those places were somehow safer. After a while the officer in command comes out and says that someone should bring the wounded man to the medical dugout, which was nearby. Many make out as though they don't hear. Others are suddenly busy with unusually important tasks that have to be accomplished right away, immediately. And in every heart burned a single desire, a hope, that someone else would run over there during the time that the barrage continued.

Joe Ash doesn't want to go either. He, too, wished that someone else would go. He, too, 'fixed' his gas mask in order to look frightfully busy. But the officer saw them all. Ash, too. Then, as though someone had given him a mighty shove, Ash ran, the first and only to do so, to the wounded man. He grabbed him under the arms and drug him to the medical dugout, faster, faster, as though an artillery shell was chasing him.

When Ash and I got together face to face I asked the, un-heroic Ash, why he was the first to make the run. At first he said that he had no idea why he did it, something just gave him a push. But I made him keep talking until he came to his characteristic: "Understand me, the gentiles, right from when we were back in camp, have been jealous of me because I make a few cents tailoring for the officers. And once, one officer made a comment in front of other officers and the Major: "Ash, your business goes on even in the army and on the battlefield." And the Top-Sergeant, who couldn't give me any 'fatigues' because I was serving the officers, would reproach me all the time saying that a Jew always finds the softest job. All of that is what drove me to run and carry the wounded man back to the dugout."

Then I suggested to him that as a Jew he is still very, very guilt-ridden and must be the first one in an emergency, the first in danger in order to hide the sin that simply because he is a Jew, he gets a soft job in the army.

However, on the front he no longer had an easy job. Now, he had to bring food to the Battalion Detail which was often among our combat infantry, and sometimes far from them, because in the last couple of weeks of the Argonne Campaign, when the Germans were in full retreat, the boundary's were lost between the light artillery and the infantry. But the Germans never forgot to leave in their rear lines a few batteries to shell the roads in our lines to halt our traffic, our pursuit of them. But never did the boys of the First Battalion go without food. Under no circumstances did Ash let them down.

Before I go on to the rest of the Jewish soldiers, so many of whom demonstrated extraordinary heroism, I want to pause with a pure, Jewish moment that occurred on the battlefield.

It is interesting to note, that not through agitation, not through any sort of Jewish representative, with a word, not one thing happened in the whole surrounding area, that would drive the average young Jew to Jewish ideas, to Jewish emotions. Rather they spilled out from their own souls, from their own being, from their connection and dedication to the Jewish Folk.

This happened during the days when the powerful German resistance was not yet broken. As I was galloping with a message to the Commander of the Second Battalion, I saw by the side of the road near an 'advanced ammunition dump' for Battery "I" the soldier, Markovitch. The message was important. It contained instructions and maps for the Second Battalion with orders for them to open fire with a barrage on German positions behind Somers [?]. "Deliver it the fastest way, even if you run your horse to death" – With those words Sergeant-Major Middlebrook gave me the papers.

And flying by as fast as the horse could carry me, I yelled to Markovitch: "A Jewish newspaper!" He knew what that meant, because I would often give him a couple of Jewish newspapers from the ones I managed to obtain. Now, he would wait until I came back and could give some to him. When I returned to the same spot and gave him the promised newspapers, he offered me his usual heart-felt thanks. He was really excited. He shook my hand, gave a good look at the contents, and repeated for the umpteenth time: "Good health to you, you should live long! You have no idea what a treat they are for me!"

I found it remarkable, the youthful, idealistic enthusiasm under the far, far from good circumstances he endured. Because the roads were the most beloved targets for the German artillery. Every half hour they would select a different section of the road, and Markovitch's job to protect the ammunition was not a good bit. Day and night they hammered and a direct hit would ignite the ammunition and it would explode. However, Markovitch stayed true to his duty. He used some ammunition boxes to make a sort of nest for himself, and that is where he lay during the night and left everything else to G-d.

"If only I could move them just a little farther," he said to me a couple of times. He wanted to get done with that spot, because laying near by were the mangled bodies of four horses and riders, whose end he had witnessed the previous night. There were also bodies of Germans and some Americans which had been decaying for several days. No, he was not afraid of them, not even in the long, lonely hours of the night when often, due to the shelling or the deep mud, that mired the heavy wagons, there would not be a single living soul passing by for hour after hour. He was not afraid of the dead. First of all because, when you see so many around, you find that they are harmless. They are just as harmless as the shot-up trees lying by the side of the road. But strange, wild and ponderous thoughts and emotions press on one in the long solitary nighttime hours. And the smell of rotting human flesh can drive one crazy. It makes you want to run, escape from the horrible surroundings. Even in such a difficult moment, when you hear the incoming shells hit all around you, it doesn't bother you much – Let them come, let them explode, just as long as there is an end to it all.

Those were the heavy thoughts and emotions etched on his face.

My time was limited. It seemed to me that I had spent a couple of minutes with Markovitch. The limbers (ammunition wagons) from his battery were arriving. Soon an intensive shelling would start, a rolling barrage that would, step by step, move ahead of our attacking infantry. In such an instance every 'runner' needed to be in place ready for any unexpected orders that often came fast one after another.

"Goodbye, brother!" I put out my hand to him, already up on my horse, when I noticed a Star of David deeply incised in his helmet.

"A Star of David?" He repeated my question. "I don't want anybody to put up a cross over my grave, but I am not the only one." – He said before I asked. – "The boys from the 307th Ammunition Train agreed among themselves that the ones who survive, would take care to put up a Star of David over the

bodies of those who fall in battle.”

When I set out at a full gallop back to my post, on the route to and from Fléville there was heavy firing. It was a mix of our light and heavy artillery that hammered without letup. Their mean, murderous voices were far, far from Jewish voices. It was not through those voices that my Jewish people struggled for their happiness, for their long life, but, oh, how often among the murderous racket did the Jewish soul show itself. How often its voice was heard with a simple, “Put a Star of David on my grave,” as well as other cries of hope and pain...

With Saul Odess

J. Kovar; Bread with Meat; Fr. Nissenson; A. Steinberg

It was a long trip, but I loved going the ten kilometers that separated my village, Corchanu from the tiny village of Pretta [?], where a Battalion from one of our infantry regiments was located and where I went to see some of my friends.

So wonderfully beautiful, the paved road with its hundred-year-old trees lining both sides of the road. Their branches met over the road and formed a canopy over my head. An endless alley on which traveled a huge hay wagon far ahead of me, apparently purchased by the farmer in a nearby village. There a flock of crows takes off cackling, flying over a still-green field and off to the hills. It is not just corn for the coming year which is green, but also the meadows intersected with winding streams, over which bowed the branches of the willows. The curve of every branch and stem mirrored themselves so clearly all the way to the green and bright-gray horizon in the distance.

In such beloved surroundings you did not want to think of anything that was beyond this point, what lie beyond the veil of the horizon. It seemed foolish here, the eternal searching, striving, the restlessness of the soul. Everything that one needs is part of these beautiful surroundings. Even if it is just the road sign on the side of the road that says, "So-and-so many kilometers to here or there."

In the distance at the edge of the sky, where green is so sharply differentiated from small patches of dark, transparent blue, in the far, far distance thrusting up into the sky is the steeple of a cloister, and right away the illusion is diminished.

There, where the cloister steeple is, lies the little village of Pretta. There, I will find some of my friends in the infantry whom I have not seen since we crossed the Atlantic. And many fresh wounds will again be covered up, wounds from the battlegrounds they passed through.

More than once when I was traveling on my missions on the battlefields of the Argonne Front, I would call out to the long columns of infantry, who for the most part moved at night under the cover of darkness, preparing for a early morning operation. I would call out to them as loudly as I could, yelling their names: Odess! Makrenski! Rosen! Steinberg! But I never found any of them. Some of the columns would stop for a while then continue on. The unusual tone in my voice frightened me, causing my voice to tremble. I would quickly spur my horse on and ride farther, but when again I saw the glow of cigarettes, heard again muffled voices and a cough from among the long column of soldiers who were sitting by the side of the road to rest a bit, I would again call out for the same and other names. In the resulting stillness, without seeing the faces, that I could feel but not see, I sensed that every one of them wanted to be one of the names I called. Ach, how they wanted to be able to answer!...

Ach, how they wanted to, when they were on their way to battle, when the only task they had been given was to capture a village, or a hill, and on every section of ground danced thousands of dead men. Ach, how they wanted at that point to exchange even one word with someone from the outside, someone who is also a soldier, but had not yet had to be in an attack.

Now, however, after a fifteen-minute walk I will be with them. First I will look for Odess, the untiring

Litvak, who made himself beloved among all right from camp on, thought his industry, hard work and dedication to our National Club which he worked tirelessly to build.

His hustle was legendary among we Jews and often a subject of jokes. One recounted that he saw Odess in the wash room writing letters to members of the club, at one o'clock in the morning. Count three barracks on the right side of the street, and when you come to the fourth you will see a Jewish flag. Knock on the window next to the door. His bed is behind that window.

“Odess, did you get any Jewish newspapers?” someone asked him. “Ah, about Palestine, about the Jewish Congress?” he caught himself up as from a dream.

“Odess, have you gotten any letters from home lately?” “Oh, you mean an answer about the relief money for the Palestine Workers Fund?” – answered Odess. He reached under the bed sheets, and he searched in his breast pocket, and he hands you newspapers with good news about Eretz Israel, letters just arrived from the Workers Zion Committee from the editor of a newspaper and with beaming eyes he says: “Do you see what they have written! Just like I told you, do you see what they have written!”

By memory I made my way to the village. Thank G-d, the guards didn't see me. I asked where to find Company “G” of the 328th Regiment, and in which barn Odess was sleeping. The food-stained cook was pleased to be able to do something for his buddy, and took me to the place where Odess was staying. “Odess, Odess! One of your Jew friends is come to visit you!” he called out happily. And in the barn you could hear the rustle of hay, but I did not wait a single minute, and climbed right away up the narrow ladder.

“How are you doing? Brother! You look healthy, how beautiful you look! What is the news, what is everybody doing?” – And for quite a while we turned in circles throwing questions at one another after a brotherly hug.

I knew most of the Jewish soldiers in our Division. Many of them by name, but the majority by sight, through meeting together for the relief effort, for Eretz Israel, which was going so well. And now, after our first joy at meeting, by the dim glow of the single light that burned on a pile of Jewish newspapers, we talked about every one of them.

“Soon I will take you to a lot of Jewish boys, but a lot of them are still in the hospital. This one and that one fell in battle.” Here followed a painfully long list of names: Those who were sick, crippled, and dead.

“Heroes. They were truly wonderful fighters,” – he began to recount, – “Ah, friend! You can not imagine what a name the Jewish boys made for themselves, and how beautifully and heroically they lifted the Jewish image through their bravery and their blood.”

“Many of them I buried. Over many I said Kaddish, and carved a Star of David from wood to mark their grave. And that is only a small part of the reckoning, only a part of my Division. I haven't heard any news from the other Regiments.”

Odess recounted his stories and my heart beat strong. Tears of chagrin and sorrow, mixed with pride and love, welled painfully from me. Ach, what good, lovely kids we have sent out on the dark fields of death and sin, even if it was a fight for freedom.

Of one of them was, Private J. Kovar [Jack Kovar], from Company "J" 328th Regiment, whose heroic deeds without end Odess had witnessed. Odess recounted the following:

"It was on the Argonne Front on October 21st. Our infantry unit had halted in its advance behind Sommerance, where the Germans had maintained better positions that stretched from hard next to us all the way to St. Johns [? St. Juvin?], and they tried every way they could to stop our forward lines.

From behind every bush, from every shell hole they fired on us with machine guns. By that late date it seemed that they were no longer using simple infantry rifles. Only rapid-fire weapons firing up to 250 rounds per minute. Their artillery was for the most part, accurate and murderous.

On this day we only made a few difficult steps forward. It was a critical moment, because it seemed like we would be unable to hold out and have to fall back. Over ten times we got up from the ground, from the foxholes we had just dug, only to fall back down on our bellies, making only a couple of steps forward only to have to feverishly dig another foxhole in the earth, which, luckily, was still moist from the Autumn rain that had just stopped. But after each step forward, our 'waves' became thinner. The others were left in the graves they had just dug for themselves on the whole length of the front, or they fell running as if they had tripped on something and they landed on their faces with their arms stretched out in front of them.

The most critical moment came when we approached the hill. It was not very high and hard to climb, but it was covered with bushes and small trees, behind which the German machine gun nests were to be found. And it was there that all Hell broke out in full fury.

Our goal was still far away. Night was already falling when we made yet another push forward. Once again we got up off the ground and rushed to dig in again at the foot of the hill.

With the last bit of my strength I began to work hard with my shovel, and for the, perhaps, fifteenth time I excavated the muddy earth from out under me. But ach, the devil, a long stone lay the whole length of my spot and I had to quickly flip over to my right where our guys were already concentrated too thick. The Captain and Top-Sergeant were also there in a line with me. A little ways behind me lay an Italian, a Lieutenant and several nearby guys from the second wave.

Once I had dug in deep at my new spot, enough to conceal my combat-pack, I was suddenly seized with hunger pangs. It was a long time since I had put any food in my mouth and I was very distressed when I suddenly remembered a left-over piece of bread that I had stuck in my pocket. I began chewing on it with wild abandon, and I was so pleased with myself and my good fortune that I forgot about the German shelling and the sense of danger evaporated. And when the little piece of bread became even smaller, it bothered me more than the explosions which were coming one after the other and the jeb-jeb of the machine guns rounds which were hitting the ground all around with a dull thud.

Then a shell struck right behind me. The powerful impact shook the ground so hard that I thought it was going to toss me out of my foxhole. Pieces of earth began falling and covering me. I protected my face, and when the last bits of earth had fallen, I again looked up so I could finish eating. Then I saw it: A big piece of raw meat was laying on the little piece of bread that I was holding in my outstretched hand. And, remarkable! At first it seemed natural, and through my head flashed the thought: Aha, bread with meat! I touched it with the tip of my finger – It was warm! In that instant a shudder came over me, running through my whole body, under the hair of my head, and my hand froze. I let out a wild scream, threw away the piece of meat, and lifted up from my waist to see where it had come from.

I saw, ten feet behind me, laying by the side of a wrecked foxhole, half of the body of the Lieutenant. Everything above the waist was mangled to pieces which were strewn in bright red patches all around. When I got a look at the left-over parts of his body, I could clearly see how his heart and lungs were still moving.

Another shell fell where three were laying together, and all three were killed on the spot. The Italian by my side had not stop screaming from fear: "Let's get out of here, we are lost," but I didn't answer him."

"In the time that I lifted my head up, I saw crawling toward us on all fours, our bugler, who had now become our 'runner,' and I waited for him to deliver his message. However, he was hit by machine gun fire and fell so close to my foxhole that I could reach out my hand and drag him to me in order to get the message. He was no longer able to talk. With wide open, staring eyes he looked at me with distress, after a few last breaths he was gone. I pushed him out of my foxhole and wiped off my hands, which were smeared with his warm blood. "Let's get out of here!," the Italian continued to yell from his foxhole. The Sergeant yelled over to me to tell him what the runner gave me. "He is dead," – I yelled back to him and asked him right away what we should do next. "Come here and I will tell you," he answered angrily, and in the next instant he jumped up out of his foxhole and began running as fast as his feet would carry him. And like all men in such a situation, we jumped up and followed him, one after another along the whole line. We ran like an army of frightened rabbits the whole length of the field, over shell holes, over fallen corpses, on, on to the main road that led to Sommerance. There it was not as easy for the bullets to reach us.

Once we got there, we lay down in the darkness on the left side of the road. Everyone of us felt like we had been rescued, and had found our little corner, our foxhole. From the direction that we had run there was a non-stop crashing and smashing from the exploding steel shells and the rattle of machine guns.

I lay there and wondered if our officer was with us, then we saw in the growing darkness someone coming toward us. It was the young Jewish man, Jack Kovar, who was one of the few survivors on that terrifying spot next to the commanding officer.

Kovar looked for the Top-Sergeant, who was also the leader of my platoon, and gave him the officer's order that he should bring us back. But the Sergeant refused. "I am dead-tired, I have been gassed twice, I can't take another step," he answered. Seeing that he was not going to get anywhere with him, Kovar turned to us and said, "Boys, follow me! And the Sergeant can stay here if he's afraid!" And he did stay behind. But one after another our whole Company formed up in a long line behind Kovar, who quickly led us through all the barbed wire to where we needed to be in our former positions.

At dawn our artillery began a heavy barrage on the German positions where most of the machine guns were located. The Germans fell back even farther along a wide stretch of their front.

And Kovar, who was much beloved by us, became our pride and an ordinary, unknown hero. But not for long. On the afternoon of the 23rd when we let loose another "after them" already four or five kilometers distance behind Sommerance, Kovar fell in battle from machine gun fire that hit him right after the signal to advance, as he got up from his foxhole. I saw him fall, but we couldn't stop to run to him, we had to go on, on.

I am not a blood-thirsty person, but, ach, how I wanted at that moment to go face-to-face with the Germans... A few days later when we were pulled back from the front line, we learned that Kovar, for his heroism was recommended for a promotion to Lieutenant, but he did not live to hear of it.

Ask if he had a Jewish soul. In camp he showed little of it. I thought that the 'New Yorker' was one of the Americanized ones – and done. But there, on the battlefield, he asked me: “What are the Jewish newspapers writing?” “Is there really a Jewish government in Eretz Israel?” Once he said to me thoughtfully and sadly: “You know, Saul, I feel a lot better when the thought comes to me that we are fighting for the Jewish interests.””

Those last words Odess spoke with an odd smile, and his tears flowed down his cheeks.

But don't cry, Odess, don't cry. It won't do for a soldier, a big, healthy, young man like you.

“Do you know Nissenson from my Company?” he started again. – It was the 8th of October behind Châtel-Chéhéry, against the mountain we had gone to and would soon have to storm. But it was one of the hardest tasks, because the Germans had observed our every move, and every yard of the mountain was prickling with machine guns. We advanced in two waves. Nissenson was in the last one, which was in a better position because it was not totally visible in the valley and had attracted very little attention. The first wave, however, had taken a lot of casualties and minute by minute was getting thinner. And immediately across from Nissenson in the foremost line was the squad which was led by the Jewish Corporal, Rosenberg.

Seeing how the first rows were being decimated by the murderous fire, and how his unit was almost in the same place, Nissenson set out crawling over the stretch of ground which was blown up and got to the side of Rosenberg, who got mad at him and yelled: “Get away from here while it is still possible. You don't belong here. Why did you come here?” But Nissenson answered him emphatically: “I'm staying with you, and where you go, I'm going...” And he stayed there under the terrible cannonade and shooting until they were both wounded.

This remarkable incident can only begin to be understood, when you know about earlier events that Nissenson lived through in the army and on the battlefield.

A noble, warm Jew, an immigrant-type from somewhere in New York state, he did not stand out among many of the ordinary elements of the Christian soldiers. The word “Jew” was thrown in his face. And another truly curious incident caused men to call him coward. It was because, once, in the St. Mihiel sector, while standing watch on a dark night in an advanced post, and in the tense stillness of 'No Man's Land' he took the murmur and quiet rustling of leaves on a nearby tree for an army of dead Germans, and got everybody stirred up by shooting at the tree.

A lot of much more bizarre incidents occurred with others in the Company, but they were forgotten, and he got the name 'coward' along with the favorite 'Jew.' He carried that with him until the 8th of October, and the battle in the Argonne Woods when he was the only one to leave his more secure position and go over to the first, nearly wiped-out position. From a military standpoint, the heroic act was not necessary, but for the Jewish soldier, Nissenson, it had a greater meaning...

Private D. Waldman from Philadelphia, a stretcher bearer from Company “N” Medical Detachment, 328th Infantry Regiment, was recommended for a Distinguished Service Cross, and this is how he earned it:

It was the 13th October when his Company went to the starting point where they had to form-up for an attack on the coming morning. They took over a large number of shelters. There were a couple of deep sheltered dugouts that became occupied by the officers and the Medical Unit. The only thing they had to endure was the German artillery which was shelling the area without stop. Since the men were not sleeping under the open sky, but rather in individual trenches, things went pretty smoothly until around midnight when a heavy mustard-gas-shell fell on the position where three men were located together. Immediately after that, their desperate calls for help could be heard.

Ach, how comfortable it felt to be in the deep dugout where Waldman along with the rest of his Medical Unit were! Every shell that flew over with its angry wh-z-z-z-z-z made the dugout seem even more desirable, even with its filth and rats. It appeared to be well kept by the Germans who occupied it before they had to abandon the position. However, Waldman had heard the cry for help, and he immediately woke up his comrades. “Boys, something hit us! Do you hear the screaming? Let's go and help!” He awoke them, and called them to go with him. But not a one of them moved. Nevertheless, the desperate screams could still be heard from the victims, and he ran by himself into the terrors outside.

As soon as he was outside he noticed the sharp smell of the mustard gas and put on his gas mask. He got to the unlucky spot by following the sound of the screaming, and immediately began checking each man out. One was already lying there cold. At great risk to himself he took off his gas mask so that he could work more efficiently. Covering the wounded, he yelled out between the explosions of the incoming shells: “Come out and help the wounded!” Seeing that none were coming, he woke the Captain up and asked for a couple of men with stretchers to bring the victims to the First Aid Station. “Go and take whomever you want,” the Captain responded. The Captain's order worked.

Now, Waldman is the only man in his Company to be recommended for a DSC. – So said the clerk who was, just like the rest, jealous that the only one in the Company to receive this honor and distinction was a Jew. But, nevertheless, I heard one man, a drunk, say to one of his friends: “But the G-d damn Jews are good soldiers.”

You asked about Steinberg? – Odess finally got around to talking about our friend that we loved because of his fair-mindedness and love for each and everyone, who was good and honest. And also for his tireless work, in every possible way, for our people's future, as an enthusiastic advocate for Zionism.

He was wounded once, and after a short stay in the hospital, returned to his unit, Company “A” 326th Infantry. He arrived there just at the very moment when they had to move up to the front lines. But close to Fléville he was hit by a shell. His mangled body was not recognizable. If it weren't for his 'tags' that were found there and a Palestine Worker's Front medal that he wore on the same chain, they couldn't have identified him.

Not long after that, I had occasion to come to the place where he fell. I saw where they had collected him and laid him side-by-side with the other dead by the rim of the long trench where they would soon

bury them. There were two other Jewish soldiers with him. I said Kaddish over them, and wanted to quickly go into Fléville to find some boards that I could fashion into a Star of David. But then I saw, on the spot where he fell, part of a hand and some other pieces of flesh. Oh, how I trembled: How terribly my heart clinched for my poor friend! G-d is my witness, that I can not stand to touch blood, but those body parts I collected as if they were diamonds, and I insisted that they remove the earth that covered him and return to him what was left of Steinberg.

We don't know if he distinguished himself in any extraordinary manner on the battlefield, but in one thing we can be sure, and that is, that as a Jew, he was one of our best.

Once, by chance, I ran into him during our march from St. Mihiel to the Argonne Front – Odess continued, – Still thin, and with an ever-mischievous, but good-hearted smile on his face, he greeted me with a friendly cry and open arms. After he got over the initial surprise, he said to me mischievously: “Are you suffering misfortunes? Are you out of cigarettes? Here, take a pack.” “How did you know that I was out?” I asked him, surprised. “Here, take them and don't play the fool!” – he didn't let up – “Now let's go into town. I will take you to a French house, where we will eat a home-cooked meal.”

When we were seated at the table and were drinking wine, which was strictly forbidden, but Steinberg had obtained it anyway from somewhere, he said with an uneasy voice: “Friend, wouldn't it be a great tragedy and distress if one of us fell in battle? There will be a great need for us in Eretz Israel after the war, and at home also,” he added with a wistful laugh. “But, ech!” he said and suddenly stood up from his chair with a little of the remaining wine in his glass. “My heart tells me that we will all survive and come through this, that in our Eretz Israel we will drink better wine and more of it. L'chaim, brother! L'chaim to my future neighbor in Palestine!”

Later he yelled out: “Who will give two francs against my three for the Palestine Worker's Front?” – One called his challenge and handed him the money. Then Steinberg yelled out again with more enthusiasm: “Nu, and now, who gives five francs against my eight?” – “Friend,” I tried to stop him, “That is all you have left.” “You dear little fool,” he answered me with the same heart-felt laughter. “Don't you know that the Palestine Worker's Front needs the money more than I do?” – Odess ended the story and sat for a while as though frozen in place, defeated by the great misfortune, and motionless he stared into the dark corner of the barn, from which you could hear a quiet, dry scratching.

“Friend, the light is going out!” – I seized on the opportunity to distract him a little.

He lit another. And when he stuck it in place of the old one, he shouted, with a quick almost convulsive shudder:

“Ah, ah, ah, G-d in heaven! That is just one of many! Oh, G-d! What a price we have paid for it! What a price!”

And he quickly fell back into the hay with his head pressed between his hands.

The Truth about Sergeant Alvin York

When Odess accompanied me back to the road to Corchanu he continued on with his stories:

One of the most interesting experiences," he began, "happened to me on the 8th October far behind Châtel-Chéhéry when we made a general advance to storm the railroad tracks. My platoon had received instructions to go up the hill to an indicated point where a tree had fallen split in two, then turn to the right and keep going until we joined up again with the other platoons of the attacking armies. From there we would make the final attack on the railroad.

The way up the hill to the position was very quiet. From time to time a few scattered shells, but for the most part we were not observed by the Germans. After a half hour walking through tall bushes and trees, we made our turn to the right just as instructed. But the farther we went through the thorny mountain bushes, the more we wondered why it was so unusually quiet. We only heard some dull, distant cannon fire. We lost our direction, and after a short consultation, we decided to turn back to the same point where we started our advance and from there to pick up the correct direction.

Tired, disappointed about the unending fighting and getting lost, we headed back down the mountain. The Sergeant who was leading us (a group of 17) was so beaten-down and angry that he would not answer any questions or take suggestions. He just continued walking on the narrow path and we followed after him. I was the third in the column, but I was the first to hear the sound of men's voices, shshsh... I stopped everyone. To our great surprise we saw somewhat off to our left, a short distance away through some bare trees were a mass of German military, their rifles stacked together. The majority of them were sitting in a clearing and eating their well-known big-breakfast (10 o'clock in the morning). As though cut down by an invisible hand we instantly all fell to the ground, and opened up a rapid fire with our automatic rifles.

With a mix of shouting the Germans sprung from their places, and threw down their small arms, grenades, ammunition belts. They raised their hands and through the general confusion and yelling you could clearly hear the desperate: "Kamerad, Kamerad!" Some of us got up from the ground, and crouching low with our fixed bayonets went over to them and drove them back away from where the rifles were stacked. Some of them noticed that we were small in number and the most distant of them on the left flank started tossing hand grenades and firing on us with automatic rifles. Out of anger they also shot at their own men. We fell back to the ground and opened up with such accuracy and skill that the Germans who were resisting got cut down by our fire. Only a few of them managed to run off into the woods.

From the short shoot-out there were, in addition to the German dead and wounded, six dead on our side and three severely wounded. Without losing any time we got the prisoners to line up in a column of two's, and throw down the rest of their small arms, which some still held. Only then did we realize how big our prize was. Among the several officers was a Major who was gnashing his teeth from anger, and through the cursing he spit out "Unfair, unfair, coming from behind." But their anger did not help and at the point of our bayonets they had to do as we said. Corporal York took over command, because our brave Sergeant was among those killed. On me and another Jewish soldier fell the task of giving the Germans commands because we were the only ones who could communicate with the prisoners.

I gave them the command to march. The closer we got to our own lines, the more lively the prisoners

became. Most of them openly showed how happy they were to have been captured.

What a remarkable collection they were: Unshaven, dirty, hungry, ragged. They were aged from 17 to 40-years old. Only the officers and some of the Prussian soldiers had a military appearance. The rest of them had the demeanor of a collection of actors in helmets and long, faded, ripped, woolen overcoats.

“Mein Herr! Mein Herr!” A begging voice called to me. It was one who was helping carry one of our wounded. When I asked him what he wanted, he asked that someone else take over his burden. I did that right away and also took away the heavy pack that one of our guys had hung on him. Only then did I realize how pitiful he looked. Already way over 40-years old, small, thin, he could hardly carry himself on his own feet. Freed from his burden, he became much more lively. He did not walk like a prisoner, but rather like someone going to a dance. At my bewildered look and smile, he smiled back politely and trustingly then began babbling: “I have a wife and a lot of little children – they tore me away from them – the damned Kaiser, the Junker swine – four years, they belabored me, but now I am happy. You Americans will win.” He continued on talking, complaining and showing me how happy he was, as if I were the symbol and embodiment of the great and powerful America which held for him a lot of bread and freedom. Some of the others agreed with him, nodding with their heads, tossing in a good word, but many, particularly the Prussian soldiers who were mixed in with them, shot fiery, angry looks at them with their tired eyes, like trapped wolves. They marched with proud, uplifted faces and tightly pursed lips.

We finished up with them, got a bite to eat and I wrapped the mustard gas wound on my right foot. Then we headed back to the front lines. Night had begun to fall, but our path back to our destination was well marked with signs. The blue signal stars and the flares, the lit powder boxes illuminated the whole arc of the heavens. Quietly, without speaking a word, our group moved on.

As soon as we arrived, they said to us that Corporal Alvin York was already there and had reported everything to the Major. The Major asked each and every one of us if we were with Corporal York. He shook our hands with the remark: “Good boy,” and then went back to his dugout. Only then did we remember. Corporal York (a simple, but crafty gentile from Tennessee) had turned back mid-way as we were taking the prisoners to the rear. He did that deliberately in order to be the first to tell the Major and the junior officer, who is, apparently, from the same home town as York, about our great success that day.

Now we laugh at him for running all the way back in order to take the full credit. Here is a little song that one of our jokers, who was in our group, wrote about him. A second was not lazy about writing the song on the door of our barracks, but it seems that he will get the full credit. In doing that he was like the officer from Tennessee, who was a schoolmate. Also, I suspect that an even higher officer was interested in making of him a national hero. Odess showed me the little song, and it read something like this:

They have made York a Sergeant
A medal for him is on the way
But if he is the only one to be praised
Then our Major is a bandit without end
He said he alone had captured 150 Boches
Only the dead will believe him
But not our so-so platoon

In everything is York a clever guy
In boasting, in the front of the mess line
When it comes to a side of donkey meat
He is the first one with mess-kit in hand

As things played out later, the suspicions of our heroic group were fulfilled. In the time when Odess and the others had received only written citations, they gave York the Congressional Medal, DSC, Croix de Guerre, large money prizes and fame across the whole land.

— — —

I parted with my comrade Odess. It had gotten very dark. And when his footsteps and figure had disappeared among the trees, I stopped for a moment, and looked at the path that split in three directions. My path had led around the long back of the mountain which went to the old cloister and the graveyard of the village where my Regiment was stationed.

It was quiet all around. My footsteps sounded alone and strange on the wide path. From time to time something fidgeted in the trees as though exhaling in a deep sleep. To the right on the back of the mountain the old woods slept. Occasionally, it was interrupted by the cry of a night bird which sounded like two short, cut-off, muffled whistles. In the distance a hound bayed lazily. He bayed without conviction, without reason, trying somehow to make his voice more convincing, but kept falling back into the same lazy tone.

In the valley to the left is a tiny village where I will find some more of my friends. A little farther in the same direction is another village, where, they tell me, lives a French Jew and his wife and his wonderfully beautiful daughter. The daughter is engaged to our strapping Supply Sergeant. He is a broad-shouldered, Southern gentile, but besides the silhouettes of the simple houses, steeples of the cloisters which distinguish themselves from the dark blue around them, you can not see anything else. Not a point, not a sign of a fire, and what's more – the sound of my footsteps sound even more eerie – a heavy uneasiness pervades the stillness. But it will not disturb nor make lighter the melancholy of the mysterious silence.

Before my eyes swim images of the terrible Hell which has now been extinguished. But it does not completely let go the nerves of those who went through it. It creeps in like a nightmare, dancing before your eyes are the collapsed and worn-out corpses of people you knew and of strangers. Blood everywhere. Blood, red still with traces of it simmering in its brightness. And caked blood, brown-black, quickly melding together with the earth.

My eyes devoured everything in all directions, and even more difficult images and scenes distinguished themselves and floated about, more bloody than this place. They came nearer as though they wanted to embrace me. But I feel one with them. I also belong there in that ghost-dance. Let me close my eyes and I will again be one with them...

A Few More Jewish Moments and Heroes

Kaiser, Sgt. Kaplan, S. Rubin, Capt. Levi, Pvt. Teper

Karl Kaiser belonged to Battery "I" in our Regiment and was just a bugler in the battery. It was hard to imagine that he would climb any higher. In the first place, because, the bugler can not take any important post with the cannons, and secondly, because, he did not know the English language. He did not have the ideal figure, nor the ideal appearance of a soldier. And Karl had a lot of trouble because of that. Everybody who had stripes on his sleeve, and even those without stripes and just a big mouth, would yell at him and talk about him. But he didn't keep silent. He gave it back in the same coin, and with all his strength fought for his rights. And not only for himself, but also for the Jewish reputation, which they often mocked. Once, when a strapping goy, with whom he was carrying ammunition, started making fun of Karl's Jewishness and called him 'peddler,' puny Karl lifted up a shell and threw it with such force at the offender that he was knocked unconscious. And when Karl was brought before the Captain to answer the complaint, the Captain agreed that Karl was in the right, and furthermore he stated that everyone should take Karl as an example of how one should defend the reputation of their nationality.

From this and from other examples of boldness, he earned a good reputation and everyone's respect. In truth, people still made some jokes about him, but he did so more carefully and in good humor.

When his Battery took its position during one of the more determined drives, Karl was left with the horses and mules to watch after them. Because of that, a position was selected that was a little more sheltered and secure. In such a location he was only subject to occasional shells and shrapnel which fell around him at random, unlike the more difficult position where the battery itself was situated.

The Germans discovered the spot where the cannons of his battery were located and concentrated heavy fire on them. The Captain and another officer, which were near the cannons, had to leave the position in order to prepare a new one. Kaiser along with another Christian soldier were sent with two extra horses to give to the officers.

They only had to travel three-quarters of a mile. But every step of the way they encountered shell craters. In the darkness which was only illuminated for instants by the flash from the guns and shells, they slowly made their way trying to determine a safe path between the trees, to get to the dugout near the cannons. That is where the fire was the heaviest. In the moment when Kaiser had taken off his gas mask and yelled out, "Captain!," two shells fell, one just in front of Kaiser, which knocked him off his horse. The second fell behind him and blew up the second soldier and one of the horses. Soon after the blast a pair of heads stuck out of the dugout and called out to Karl that the Captain had already left and that he should get away as fast as he can. They did not have to tell him twice. Kaiser was off at a full gallop headed back. He had only gone a short distance when he heard a desperate scream: "Brother, help!" He halted his gallop, and put two wounded soldiers on the horses and took them back to a safer location. For over two hours they breathed through their blouses.

When Kaiser and the two soldiers reported what had happened, the Captain responded with a harsh, angry tone toward Kaiser, telling him that he should have been more careful on such a heavily shelled road. But the two rescued soldiers, weak and waiting for the ambulance, wincing with pain, both had a different opinion and blessed Kaiser: "Brother, what is your name? Brother, where can we find you again?" – They asked repeatedly.

It is possible the the Captain also valued Kaiser's boldness and saw how his willingness to sacrifice and his brave deed should not be lost in the officer's reports.

Kaplan was a Top-Sergeant in a company of infantry. A short, strongly-built young man with an energetic face and intelligent, dark eyes. At first the men in the outfit showed themselves to be very displeased to have a Jew, and on top of that a short guy, at least a head shorter than them, set up as their superior... But that didn't last long and they all submitted to his authority. With his intelligent leadership, with his fair distribution of the work among the men, he captured them. And when the Company was on the front lines they began, due to his bravery, to even idolize him.

It is impossible to put together all of the individual stories that were told about him. Most of them I heard from the Christian soldiers in his Company. However, in order to characterize all of them it will be sufficient to note that the men called him, "The Barbed Wire Tomcat," due to his artful way of sneaking to the wire and cutting a path through it and making a sudden attack with a small group of men. They used to say "When Kaplan goes with us on a silent job, or 'Over the Top' we feel stronger, bolder. It is a pleasure to see the young man in hot action, in danger."

Rubin was a Section-Chief for a Battery. His greatness, also, was not easy to come by. He had to break the bones of not one but several Christians before they made peace with his authority.

During the biggest battle in the St. Mihiel sector, his platoon had taken one of the most important and the hottest spots in the Battery's position. In the critical moment when the command came "rapid fire" he distinguished himself with his amazingly fast firing, such that he bested the other cannons by a hundred rounds. After the great success that they had in that sector, the Major thanked him and praised him before the entire section.

"Understand me," – he explained with a typical Jewish lilt to his voice, – "When things really got hot, I didn't just issue commands and drive the men until their hands were swollen. I also helped load, and carry ammunition, and with every shot of the cannons I yelled out that that one was for Democracy, and that one was for German anti-antisemitism, and that one for Palestine, and so forth right back to the Kaiser's great-great-grandfather."

"And what did you say to the shells that were falling all around you?" I asked him.

"Oh, little brother," he answered, "For them there was a real misfortune. Them I cursed them to their father's father."

Private Samuel Stronger from a machine gun battalion had a remarkably moving experience. In the very last days of the war the mostly Christian soldiers in his Company were confirmed anti-Semites, and did not miss any opportunity to toss out verbal jabs. In particular they let them fly on the evening of the fifth of November when the general mood was very bitter. Just out of the fighting, the men had on that rainy night, been called back to attack. The men had been expecting, they would soon be relieved and pulled out of the lines instead of being thrust back in.

As machine gunners it would often happen that they would come under the command of an infantry commander to help out using their rapid-fire weapons. This time they had done the same, and on the way to their new task the Christian soldiers began teasing him saying: "So, Moishe, you are headed to where people don't come back." First, the Captain said that he would shoot any one who tried to run away, and now the soldiers were saying the same thing to Stronger, except they knew, that he had already distinguished himself in his duties more than most of them.

When they arrived at the starting point for the attack, Stronger saw that his new Commander, the Captain of the infantry company, was a Jew. He later learned that the Captain's name was Levi. He was so beloved by soldiers that they used to call him, "Our Prince," because he was so good to his men. Always with a smile on his face, always with a good word. He ate and slept in the trenches together with his soldiers. Captain Levi (from the 323rd Infantry Regiment) had shown so much heroism, that his men were astonished that nothing bad had happened to him during the time they had been with him.

After a few days of heavy fighting, they had taken a large number of prisoners. While leading them back to the rear lines, Sam Stronger heard the German prisoners speaking among themselves. They said that the Jew, 'Heller,' had been badly wounded. He told the Captain, who quickly ordered that that good care should be given to the wounded man.

When they stopped to rest, Stronger wanted to see the wounded man, but the man had died and Stronger went to the Captain and told him.

A cloud passed over the Captain's face, and with a trembling tear in his eye, the Captain turned to Stronger: "There, my friend, that is the way it is with Jews, whichever way you shoot you hit one of us," and after a while he said, "Come, we will say Kaddish over him."

The entire Company, Christian soldiers and the German prisoners had, with surprise and respect, watched as Sam Stronger and Captain Levi said Kaddish over the dead German soldier.

A remarkable Jewish hero that I met following a major battle was Private Teper: His Company was on the defensive and he, along with the rest, received orders to hold their positions at all costs. For several hours the Germans kept up a murderous barrage on our trenches. But Teper and his men had to stay at their posts, which were somewhat forward so that they could give the warning when the German infantry launched their attack. Teper stood at his post, and even today he can not understand how he survived unscathed. Several times he was covered in dirt and mud, by the ruined wall where he looked out, moving from place to place in his narrow advanced trench. Two men were killed right next to him, one of his men disappeared – He doesn't know where or how. But when he gave the signal that the Germans had gone 'Over the Top,' he and his men slipped out the side of the trenches and the dugouts and awaited for the attacking Germans. When they got really close, our soldiers received the order to fire from behind the dirt mounds and sandbags on the outer side of the trenches. Teper also began firing in the indicated direction. However, when the oncoming Germans got so close that he could see their faces, he couldn't bring himself to fire on them.

He said to me:

"I felt, I knew, that if I did not fire and help push them back, that I would be bayoneted by them. But at

the same time a supernatural force held me back and cried out: "Don't kill! Don't Kill!" Several times I lifted my rifle. Aimed, put my finger on the trigger, but no! It was as though something stayed my hand.

Possibly, if the Germans got a little closer I wouldn't have held back and would have shot the first one to reach our outer firing position. But, fortunately, their line broke and they began to run away from us... I can't kill, I can't kill." – Teper repeated, trembling, several times. With these words, his whole body revealed the depth of the tragedy and the unease of his much-tested soul.

Teper is no coward, he can withstand the most intense fire and the greatest dangers. His comrades knew that well, and also that he hated the German Junkers, and believed in the issues behind the war. But he forgot all of that when he saw human beings before him...

Can Teper be honored with the title, "Hero?"

The Martyr Joseph Peff

(Jew Socialist)

In my further wanderings around our area near the large city of Dijon, I did not need to look at my maps so much. I just walked over the wide, wonderfully beautiful roads looking around at the fields. When in the distance I saw the steeple of a cloister and the roofs of houses, I would simply go in that direction. And I seldom went wrong, because in nearly every little village around there were American soldiers, and where there were Americans – there were also Jews.

This time I told the elderly Frenchwoman that I was going to go without an official pass.

“Oh, Monsieur Trompette, better not go, the officers will punish you,” she warned me, fearing for me. But I calmed her and set off on the way to 'places.' To the left of the village, I noticed another village sunk deep in the woods. When I reached it, the first soldier I met said that it was the location of the First Battalion of the 327th Infantry. That was good, because that is where I would find Markenski, Rosen, Rosenberg and many others. Also there was the unfortunate Joseph Peff.

This is what Markenski told me about him:

“Do you remember how we used to debate with him about Zionism? Do you remember how we used to tease him about being an uncompromising party member and conscientious objector? But before he fell in battle, he had completely changed. The horrible year bent him over three times...

We, the Jewish soldiers, even those who were pro-Allies, understood him and protected him. Also many of the Christian soldiers considered his arguments. The officers and above all a couple of Sergeants thought otherwise. The more often and the more vehemently he damned the war, the more they pressured him. They literally would not let him lift his head. Every evening at retreat when the Top-Sergeant would call out the names of the soldiers who had to report for various duties, he would begin calling out the list with a mean, triumphant: “Joseph Peff! – Latrine!”

Later, instead of Joseph Peff – Socialist. “Socialist, latrine, Socialist, KP!”

But the more they harassed him, the more confirmed in his beliefs he became. His open, ordinary face began to show signs of martyrdom, but his sharp eyes continued to look forward as though they wanted to say: “You poor deluded people, I pity you...”

When we were on the way over, on the ship, he was given more work. In our positions in battle, when every one of us complained and cursed our bitter fate, they harassed him even more, sent him on nighttime attacks and reconnaissance, placed him on watch in No Man's Land. There he had no more arguments. He kept silent. His gaze fell much lower. He became more obedient, and volunteered for the most dangerous missions so as not to have to hear them call to him: “Hey, Socialist, guard.”

“But they had already called him enough,” Markenski went on with a dark look on his face. “Once, when after four days of fighting we were pulled out of the front line and fell back to the support lines, in a well-protected deep valley, he was told to bring water for the field kitchen. The Sergeant went with him. At that time I was on guard duty next to the spring that they were driving to. I saw how Peff had to begin to fill buckets with water and pour them into a barrel. When he was nearly finished, the Sergeant began to yell at him saying that the water was muddy and that Peff should pour it all out and

fill it again with clear water. For a moment Peff stood there confused, beaten-down. He knew very well that it was simply malicious harassment.

“I am not going to refill it. All the water here is the same,” he unflinchingly answered the Sergeant, who looked at him with a satanic smile.

“What, you are not going to refill it? – like you have been ordered, then follow me, you G-d damned Jew Socialist!” The Sergeant ran over to him with wild-looking eyes and began to beat him mercilessly. Peff crouched, not moving from the spot. He just shuddered after each blow.

“My blood boiled,” Markenski said through clenched teeth. “I ran to the Sergeant and unseating my bayonet from my rifle, I screamed in his face: “Stop murderer!” The Sergeant was confused. Seeing my upset and determination he was scared to death.

“I will report you to the Captain,” he stuttered while backing away.

“Come, I will go with you!” I said as I went with him.

And Peff?

Peff stood there broken, trembling in all his limbs, and tears streamed from his eyes and down his cheeks one after another...

That evening I was with him in his foxhole, and like a helpless child he opened his heart to me. He told me how earnest he was about his ideals, but was it worth the sacrifice, the pain? “Incidentally,” he said in despair, “we have in our Company a German who says that after all, he can not fight against his cousins, the Germans, and we also have a Christian soldier, and American who damn the war like him, but people leave them alone, they pay no attention to them. Oh, Makrenski,” he sighed deeply, “how right you are. How strongly and deeply I have felt for the Jews... And now on me, the Socialist comrade, it has fallen the hardest... – – – – –”

In the days that followed, the Germans turned the heaviest weight of their fire in our direction. We were brought a little closer to the front lines. Meanwhile, we stayed overnight in the dugouts until the next morning when we had to go on the attack. Very few of us were able to catch any sleep in that dark German hole, because the cannonade was terrible. It was like all the storms and hells had gathered over our heads. No one stuck their nose outside, except two soldiers who had to go out.

As soon as they stepped out from our dugout, one ran right back in with a hole through his side, and the second remained outside blown apart. We bandaged the wounded, but our aid kit helped like a drop of water in the ocean, to stop the bleeding of the gaping wound.

“We must get him to the Aid Station!,” several men said, but they remained where they were and no one else moved either. The wounded man grimaced with the pain, and the blood flowed freely.

“You are all cowards!” – Peff said with an odd, and we thought, crazy, smile. He said to the wounded man:

“Come! I, the Jew Socialist, will take you where you need to be.”

“Peff, you're crazy! You are going to a sure death!” I said trying to hold him back. No, friend, I am clear-headed!” he answered. “Now they will see what a Jew can do!” He turned to me at the entrance, carrying the wounded soldier, and his eyes gave me a warm and melancholy look.

In the morning as we went out on the attack, we saw him laying motionless with the wounded man, not far from our dugout. His arm stiff around the neck of his Christian friend...

Our most beautiful dream on the battlefield

(Two Letters)

I can no longer hold myself back. I must once again recount the most wonderful dream of we Jewish soldiers on the battlefields of France, which are drunk with their blood during two months of fighting. A war which is now extinguished along with the lives of many of my dear friends.

Never did the Jewish soldier give up his Jewish dreams. Even then, when we were preparing for the great struggle, we always, in our gatherings, dreamed about our people's happiness. Even then we worked toward its realization. Because we went off to fight, also for them, and were always ready to give everything to reach that goal. The same precious dream we carried with us always, but it grew more glorious when in one place or another we were gathered in a narrow trench. When, after a "Shalom aleichem," and after a "What have people written to you from home?" the majority of our time was taken up worrying about: How can we help our people? – When collections were made for the victims of the war, we gave our share. In the time of the English Declaration, when the struggle against the Kaiser was in doubt, we encouraged and built up the morale of our brother-soldiers, by the example of the great sacrifices of our volunteer Legionaries. But we did not want to stop there. Ready to fall in battle, we still wanted in the remaining days and hours of our life to do more work, to carry another stone to our people's edifice, to our land's rebirth.

And the last, but the most intimate, happiest dream of ours, which unfortunately is soaked in blood, was born after the last Rosh Hashanah when we gathered in a small village in our sector to celebrate our New Year.

The great battle for St. Mihiel had just begun. But many of our comrades, whom we were awaiting, were not able to attend. They were on alert and at any moment could receive the order to move out. The only ones who could come were the ones assigned to the rear lines and then only for a short time.

Imagine the mood that was hanging over the world, and over our soldiers. But they were happy that we had to good fortune to be able to get together to honor the holiday, but before the big celebration would take place, we prayed and after prayers we recounted to one another what was in our hearts, and for the umpteenth time we rejoiced at the good Jewish news. After singing some traditional tunes and folk melodies, someone called out with enthusiasm: "Wouldn't it be nice if the Jewish soldiers could collect a sum of money to build a national conservatory of Jewish music in our Eretz Israel?"

Everyone agreed that it would be really nice, but were could we get that much money?

However, dreams do not shy away from numbers and calculations. If not a grandiose building, then we can lay a cornerstone. We immediately outlined the major points of a plan, and here they are:

Write an appeal in Yiddish and in the English language stating how splendid it would be to build a music temple in Eretz Israel, in the time our people's and our land's rebirth. Locate more of the Jewish boys among the many Regiments on the front and in the rear lines. Send them the appeal along with collection lists so that they can collect money and pledges. When the collections are finished, send the money along with a heart-felt letter that should begin with the words: "A gift to our dear people, from the Jewish soldiers in France."

"But one would have to have a million dollars in order to build such a magnificent temple, as we have

imagined it,” – Someone once again raised the frightening question. But the sons of a people that dreams, always find a shining pathway out. “Little fool,” someone came along with a lighthearted and sure answer, “and where are the million Jewish mothers, who sent us with such self-sacrifice and joy to the music teachers, so we could play a fiddle? And where are our Ellmans, Glucks, Zimbalists , Heifetz' and the many other of our geniuses who were raised by the same good mamas?”

Do you see now? The direction is a simple one. The million good mothers, the many geniuses, and the grumpy music teachers, who put aside their own health to make their students able to play a joyful tune, a Kol Nidre – all of them will help achieve the million. – The mamas and the music teachers will give their pennies and the geniuses will give a greater number of concerts, that will benefit our magnificent temple. Where are our wealthy individuals and millionaires today? Many of them are already true to our folk.

And when everyone doubts about the possibility of carrying through with our plan, when the time came that all were convinced by the iron-fast arguments, then, before the eyes of the group, who were about to go forth into the fire of war, floated the image of the finished, glorious temple whose towers thrust high, high over the hills of Judea and from which descended the heartwarming, sweet, unsettled songs of the Jewish past and the noble sounds of the happy present.

In that emotional moment when I looked into the faces of my happily dreaming friends, who would soon have to go back to the bloody struggle, I was seized by a terrible sorrow, and I had to turn away to hide my tears of love and care. But no one saw me. It seemed that they had forgotten where and in what place they were, there was only the dream which wove itself around the planned temple to Jewish music.

It was then agreed that all of the great Jewish geniuses of music and song would be the teachers at the temple of music, that it would become a gathering place for all of the artists in the world was obvious. Because of that it will be a direct and indirect help in rebuilding the land. We all agreed that would be the case. And soon several of us began to blend our personal dreams with those larger dreams of the whole Jewish community.

“Mine has a really fine voice,” one person remarked. And when everyone laughed good-naturedly, he also laughed with them, but he continued to insist that his girlfriend really did have a fine voice, and he would see to it that she would be one of the first students.

“Wouldn't it be splendid and lovely,” someone got a remarkable thought, “if one installed wires from the highest tower of the temple that would run far, far over the land, over everyone, to the edge of the sea, on which one of the best teachers or students would play the newest songs that were created in the temple. And also on holidays on quiet nights when all of the workers have laid down in their beds, and all and everyone yields to rest and happiness.”

Once again we heard everyone's good-natured laughter. But from everyone's eyes you could see that they all shared the same dream, a secret longing to see it become a reality, and as quickly as possible to find a plan that would make the impossible possible.

“Oh, friends!” he said. “One can easily figure out what our friend means, but on an easier more likely path. To stretch lines over our entire land is truly a beautiful fantasy, but there is no way to carry through. But the same thing can be done through the best students. And this is how: In Spring the whole land blooms, but in Autumn when everything is down in the fields and gardens, the students

could be sent out over the land and in every town and village all over the land they would sing with and play music with the people there, in festively decorated gardens, or community halls, the most blissful songs that were created in the temple.”

With this heart-felt dream, and with a painful yearning for a happy future for our people, and with determination to bring it to our other brothers who are with us on all the battlefields, we disbursed.

“For G-d's sake, do not forget to write the letter that will go along with the money! For G-d's sake, don't forget to bring the collection lists with the appeal to those whose address I have given you, and to the Jewish Chaplain Tannenbaum.” Those were the last words at the last hand-shake, and the last look in each others eyes, which contained the secret thought: “Who knows, brother, if we will ever see each other again?”

The lists along with the appeal to the people was prepared. The Chaplain promised to contribute twenty percent of what was collected. We only had to write a few copies of the appeal and send them to my friends who were impatiently waiting for them. So then, the work will be in full motion. The Angel of Death sharpened his teeth, but we laughed at him, we outran him and started the project before the slaughter began.

But, for naught. Once we were finished with the St. Mihiel front, we were sent to the even darker Argonne and beyond the Argonne Woods. Without rest, without stop we chased the Germans, and every footstep left a bloody mark, and every stretch of ground that we gained cost a mass of corpses. You want Democracy, Freedom, Ideals? – Paid! Paid! Paid! – The triumphant Devil bares his teeth. And one pays him a high price in pieces of dismembered corpses, lives, limbs, blood and there in Hell and in the sea of blood in which were mixed so much blood from our heroic, dreaming children, that is where our and their beautiful dream was drowned to build a temple of Jewish song in Eretz Israel, and to lay a cornerstone in the name of the Jewish soldiers in France, a cornerstone as a gift to our ancient folk.

— — —

The storm is past. From every corner of the awakening world, men sing and cling to the peace which has at last been achieved.

And once again one takes to the pen:

My dear friend, Odess, dear friend Goldafer, der friend Steinberg. Do you remember our plan, our dream about a great conservatory of Jewish music? Do you still have a copy of the letter, of the appeal, collection lists and so on?

But where should one send it? All of the remaining ones are spread out all over many tiny villages, so many are in hospitals healing from their wounds, and so many remain on the fields of battle, no more to return...

On my return paths from the battle lines I already knew were to find many of those left behind. There lies one of the dreamers. Only bits of flesh, the identification tag, and a medal awarded for collecting money for the Palestine Workers Fund, were found on that spot where he was blown up. And over there lies another, a more practical one. And farther on, beyond Fléville, another one. And so on along the width and breath of the battlefields.

Comrades! Comrades! Arise! A great time for our people has arrived. Comrades arise! There is now a place for your dreams! – Thus, my heart cries and speaks to them. But the mounds of earth remain silent, silent are the Stars of David over them. Only in parting from them, when they looked out from the misty distance of the side of the road, they seemed to beg of me: Do not forget to tell of our love for our people! Do not forget to tell of our yearning and dreams for their happiness, and of the last gift that we wanted to give, but were unable to...

Wandering around the Division encampment area, I continued to collect some money. Several friends helped me from the whole Division. Their names are on the list.

The Letter to the People Regarding the Temple Monument.

It is important to note that this letter was edited, besides by the author, by the following: Cpl. Harry August, Cpl. Aronson, Sam Rome, J. Ash and Sgt. Sam Rubin. Before being sent, it was read to a large group of Jewish soldiers gathered together for Passover 1919 in Langon, near Bordeaux France.

We bring forth the names of those who contributed because they deserve to be recognized as participants in this beautiful, heart-felt plan.

A large number of the participants are missing because some of the lists were lost in the course of time. We beg of them forgiveness. The collected monies are now to be found in the American National Fund Bureau.

We, the undersigned Jewish soldiers from the American Army in France, direct the following letter to our people with the full conviction that our intention and thoughts that are express herein will be viewed and received with the same sincerity, earnestness and heart-felt feeling with which we send it.

To Our People!

From the first day that we wore the uniform and weapons, and in the later days when we were brought to the places of battle in France, where we have with our service and struggle on the right side and for a better world distinguished ourselves as the bravest of the brave. – In all times and in all circumstances we have thought of you, our people, lived with your lives and breathed with your breath.

You are of us, torn apart and smothered, scattered here and there, your cries of pain from the places where you have been oppressed and mistreated have caused our hearts to bleed. Our own sorrows and pain in battle are overcome by your cries of pain. The voice of the thousands of dead that salute one another over the battlefields are overcome by your martyred voices and – G-d is our witness – how strongly our souls have been torn apart with the desire to help you, and how much more we have wanted to do for you, than this trifle, which is all we were able to do under these circumstances.

When and if the sun shines its beams, may the new waves of light brighten our somber corners and through various means tell one and another of us of the happy tidings about our people, beginning with the simple word of mouth saying: – “Brother, I have good news for you.” – Until it is shouted out, or exchanged in notes, or a Jewish newspaper in the trenches and foxholes, so that yet another Jew who might possibly be on a march or before an attack lying in a shell crater should receive the joyful report about the happy turn of events in the fate of our dear people.

And, oh, how many have found the news, and how many have stained it with their blood and covered it with their bodies!

And if your free children have seen any sense in the blood and atrocity of war, it is for the most part in your possible better future, in the happy continuation of your lasting life through our victory.

And what peace could be brighter, what news could be more joyful than that which is brought to us by the British Declaration about the emancipation and reuniting of the Jewish people with the land of

Israel?

Every additional confirmation of the news, every new height the sun reaches, which will happen in the coming months, by struggle and now by the peace conference makes us more aware of the goal, prouder and happier.

Brothers, we will soon be equals among equals! – We have shaken hands, one and another, with our close Christian friends.

Brothers, you will now be equals among equals! – Our close Christian friends have so promised.

And when, after the victory, we part from our comrades who remain behind on the field of battle, when we have cast our last tearful look on the mounds of earth and Stars of David under which they lie, and our clenched hearts have spoken to them: “Brothers, also you, the unfortunate, lie there as equals among equals.”

Moved by the thoughts and feelings we try, on those rare occasions when we can gather together, to do something for our people. And also now, after the victory and the arrival of peace, and before we part from our common life together as fighters and soldiers, – Also now, before our return to our homes and free life and striving, will we do something for you and for your happiness. After long consideration as to what sort of a gift we should bring to you, that should be as enduring as your life and as high as your spirit, we have come to the conclusion that it should be a “glorious temple to our song” – **A great national conservatory for Jewish music**, that should be built in our capital, in Jerusalem, in our land, in Eretz Israel.

And so shall our song, which has accompanied us faithfully throughout our lives, from the time of the Levites to “Kol Nidre,” “Mai Ku Mashma Lun,” and “Eli, Eli,” also accompany us from our exile to our homeland. The great hour of our resurgence, of our return to our land shall be in Jerusalem, side by side with our first university, and the height of our creative power, simultaneously powerful and unending, will begin to function as the language of our hearts, the song of our soul.

A national conservatory in Eretz Isral, where the songs of our wanderings, and our famous “Eli, Eli” will be like a heavy sigh from our difficult past, drowned out by the sounds of a new, joyful life with the return to our land, – that is the best, the most magnificent gift for our people that we could ever think of. And we bring it with joy and love in the name of the undersigned, and also – **In the name of our brothers, whom we leave behind on the battlefields to their eternal rest.**

And this is why we bring it also in their name:

The collector, who often had to walk miles and miles in order to see the remaining comrades, had, upon coming to a distant little village, discovered a yet another one of our brothers who had fallen in battle. From the general sorrow grew the desire that the planned temple for Jewish song should also serve as a monument for those, who had fallen by our sides.

Many of them had dreamed together with us when the idea to bring this gift was born.

To sign their names and give money – they can do no longer, but their hearts beat with exactly the same love for our people, and the thought to please them with this gift. We have decided to include their names on the list of participants.

When we experience the happy hour when our temple will be built, we will inscribe their names, along with the names of all the fallen Jewish soldiers in all of the armies, including our own Legionaries, on the tablets that will encircle, like a steel wall, the great monument. In this fashion they will be remembered for generation after generation. Not only our great love for you, our people, and our joy with your resurgence, but also for the huge direct offering that we have brought in the World War, as our price for our land, for our Freedom and for the better future for all mankind.

And may the monument also be an eternal symbol for our own future generations. How terrible and bitter is the fate of a people in exile, how strongly we have hated that fate, and how painfully we have struggled to free ourselves from the homeless life.

Names and Contributors to the Temple Monument

**The members who have contributed to the cornerstone of the Jewish Conservatory
in Eretz Israel:**

325th Infantry Regiment

Privates: A. E. Hesser, Rudolf Sinovich, Herman P. Fogel, A. Rolnik, H. Hibert, Ernst Homel, J. Zaleski, John Roth, V. Jacobson, George Fisher, Abe Balluais Greenbaum, Ch. Schlosser, Herman Wichholtz, Sam Lasov, J. S. Karbek. First Class Privates: S. Gross, B. Bereznitzki, N. Yelman, D. Mestetski, F. Meyer, Corporal Myer Cohen.

326th Infantry Regiment

First Class Privates: Charles Helman, A. Klein, 2nd Lieutenant H. Jacobi, Corporals: R. J. Bayer, Julius Engleson. Privates: Louis Berg, H. Ragozik, J. Kadish, H. Hershkof, H. Mosk, Irving Birnbaum, Top-Sergeant Price.

327th Infantry Regiment

First Sergeant H. Goldenberg. Sergeant A. Seiner, 1st Lieutenant V. Levi. Corporal S. Rabinovitch. Sergeant Charles Oltfleiks. Private: M. Resnick, D. Seltzer, J. Kolar, F. J. Brakovski, Privates First Class: L. Rosenberg, B. Schnider, H. Hinerschitz, M. Skuket, R. Cohen.

328th Infantry Regiment

Privates: V. L. Faks, R. Harris, T. S. Pik, Solomon R. Pik, G. F. Geskin, D. Kuperstein, F. Knop, H. Kaplan, M Levin, G. Levit, Edward Lehman. First Class Privates: Charles Englehart, L. F. Kovar, Elis Benet, Corporal: Jacob Kozins, G. Sigel.

307th Ammunition Train

Privates: Sam L. Glein, Charles Kuper.

319th Field Artillery

Private Joseph Kovalski. First Class Private Edward Ackerman. Corporal M. F. Aron.

320th Field Artillery

First Class Private D.B. Goldpeltz. Corporals: Louis Kranz, Sam Solomon. 2nd Lieutenant A. Goldshal.

321st Field Artillery

Privates: V. A. Wolf, Nathan Nisbaum. First Class Private Robert Bess.

328th Infantry

First Battalion

Assistant Chaplain L. D. Weinstein, M. Goldofer. 1st S. Chapman, M. Pizniski, H. Lifshitz, S. D. Weinstein, Av. Mitnik, J. Gresmen, H. Garfinkel, Ben Zimmerman, Moris Butinski, M. Weisman, Joseph Livinski, Sam Susman, H. Tusz, N. Sklut, B. Silverman, Frank Lifshitz, H. Cahan, Sam Yelman, N. Shpitz, H. Miuzen, M. Barnet, D. Levin, Y. Chazen, M. Futerban, Sam Goland, a Lieutenant from Atlanta J. Herman Whiteman, M. Famerwork, S. Reiskin, M. Litchkin, M. Liberman, H. Mantel, Charles Schlogmitz

Second Battalion

S. Odess, Y. Gnesin, H. Marks, Charles Heller, B. Rapoport, Y. Smolenski, J. Gelfar, N. Sendman, M. Bess, J. Leser, M. Schwartz, Philip Waldman, Elis Patinski, Charles V. Gor, R. M. Faks, Charles Gesper, Y. A. Rosenberg, Louis Padovitz, N. N. Kaplan, D. Knop, D. Forman, Harry Cohen, L. Meltzer, L. Friedlender, Alexander Cohen

Third Battalion

J. Lipowitz, Harry Sorkin, Sol. J. Levin, Sam Rosen, Philip Schwartz, Charles Stolarzsh, Harry Goldberg, Harry Personik, Moris Grenberg, M. Ekus, Charles Cohen, a friend, a French Jew, a friend (Lieutenant), Joseph Perlman, Hein. Glickman, Max Levin, M. Maidbrei, M. Grenberg, Jack Weitzman, L. Plat, L. Levin, M. Ravitski, M. Nassel, Y. Schenfein, Charles Meidelblat, Hyman Levinson, M. Rosenthal, Nefski, H. Ross, Charles Rubin

321st Field Artillery Regiment

First Battalion

Karl Kaiser, Karl Weber, J. Ash, Sam Ross, A. H. Aronson, Gos. H. Field, Philip Schom, L. Rozenberg, Z. Markus, A. T. Elias, Av. Zarin, Hyman Sher, S. Barham, Jacob Razaner, Alfred Bandi, M. Rozenfeld, Moris R. Kohze, Sem Skeverski, Sigmund Schpitz, Harry Klein.

Second Battalion

Harry August, A. Salk, Ashkenaz, M. Milental, K. Grenfeld, S. B. Cohen, Av. Galub, H. Ladinski, Sem Markovitz, Isadore Weitz, Irving Polak, L. Sigel, Sidney Hakman, Y. Fredshon, L. Goldstein, Sam Levin, H. Lazovitz, S. Ketzenof, William Kaplan, Brunof, Y. Ban, Sam Rubin, Moris Schlitzer, S. Cohen, Regimental Dentist Weis.

We hope that all Jewish soldiers will carry their part of the gift to our people and to the monument for our fallen brothers. And we bid all Jewish artists, musical geniuses, virtuosos and professionals, to help take from exile the Jewish song which has, since forever, accompanied us faithfully.

France, February 2, 1919