

PREFACE TO THE COMBINED VOLUME

It has taken some time (thirty years), but God gave me the strength to finally reprint these important volumes on the anti-Nazi resistance in the Soviet Union during World War II, or, as the Russians called it, the “Great War for the Fatherland.” They were long out of print.

Demand has increased for these books, and few copies existed. In fact, Volume II in hardcover is so scarce that it sells for \$208 on eBay or Amazon. In fact, I have only one of the few copies left of that volume. For some reason, Volume I is more common.

People have been asking for copies of these books for many years. I include an updated bibliography and filmography that follows this preface. I will deal with some of these issues in more detail in a follow-up book — *Like Sheep to Slaughter? Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust* — which will have many more essays and interviews that I could not put into this volume.

When I first compiled these stories, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, most of the writers were still alive. Many accounts and *yizkor* (remembrance) books had come out; the field was flourishing. Russia was still under Communist rule, yet material surprisingly was easy to get. I remember I had to pay for microfilms, books or films like *Sputniki: The Partisan Soldier's Guide* by sending the Lenin Library a similarly priced book in science or biology. Not money, but books were what the Soviets needed!

Today, most of the partisans have died, even Yehuda Merin, my cousin and the foremost organizer of the Volynian Jews in Israel, died two years ago (2010) at age 85. It was a great loss and proves my own vulnerability. I am now 68 years old, time is running out, and who will do this work except

I. Corrections have been made. I promised Yehuda I would make them. My pardon if some still exist. I did my best.

I dedicate this book to Yehuda's memory and to all the others, both in Israel and North America, who helped me:

Binyamin West, Moshe Kaganovitch, Abba Klurman, Moshe Kramer, Avrum Lerer, Moshe Flash, Avrum Bronstein and so many others. My condolences go to their spouses and children: Idkeh, Esti, and Arick Shuster; Lyuba Merin and her children Mina and Yossi, and their children and spouses and all the other wives and children of the partisans.

Today, the old Communist rule is over. The Soviet archives are open to the public; there is little to hide; historians will be busy for decades. Still questions and doubts continue. Some feel these stories are simply Communist propaganda, and to some degree they are, but propaganda can still be true! These tales happened despite the embellishment.

Second, there are people who feel, shockingly, that what the partisans did was wrong: they killed innocent people (at times, true, but most were Nazi collaborators or relatives of collaborators); or they caused more destruction upon Jews, causing more lives to be lost (possibly, but they were all going to die anyway — better to die with dignity); or that these accounts are not really “scholarship” (true, they are not; they are the basis for scholarship; they are the lifeblood of scholarship); or that these fighters saw or understood only a small aspect of the war (true, but then any soldier only sees that; only the generals see the big picture) or that “spiritual” resistance is on the same plane as physical (not really; all the praying in the world did not kill a single Nazi — only a gun and bullets did that, but maybe it helped the fighter survive; in short, it didn’t hurt; still, this has become a major debate today).

The political debates and scholarly conflicts continue.

I only want to set the record straight with these accounts. There is an old Jewish joke about fighting: Some Jews come to the rabbi and ask should we sit or stand when saying the Shema, a Jewish prayer — and the rabbi says that both sides are correct — you can either sit or stand — but what’s the tradition, rabbi — what do we do? And the rabbi replied: the tradition is in the “fighting,” in the arguing, that will continue *ad infinitum*. That’s the “tradition.”

May God bless all those who died and to all those who survived... and let the “fighting” continue.

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