

Remembering the Jewish Community of

Kosov, Poland

Remembered by Ethan Schaff

Kosov, a small shtetl originally in Poland, was famous for nothing. Nothing of importance ever happened there. No special people grew up there. It was a plain town, with hard working, albeit common, residents, who went about their daily lives and routines with no sense of anything special, no excitement, and nothing newsworthy. Kosov was a pinprick of a town, lost in the geography of the world, nestled between the larger cities of Kolomai and Lvov. There are no major landmarks in Kosov, except for the centrally located Moskalovka Bridge.

It was always a blue-collar working town, peopled by farmers, carpenters, tailors, locksmiths, and carpet weavers. At its height, the Jewish population of Kosov, whose origin is mostly unknown, reached about 4,000 souls, which was 50% of the total population. Rumor had it that the Ba'al Shem Tov and his family once stayed overnight in Kosov at one of its many inns. In 1928, 40 Jewish carpet weavers formed a cooperative. In 1929, Jacob Gertner, a Jew, was elected mayor of Kosov, and shortly thereafter, a Jewish cooperative bank was formed. In the early 30's, the Safah Berurah Hebrew School was established, and from 1934 to 1936, a Jewish newspaper, the Kosover Shtime, was published.

The Nazis arrived in Kosov in September, 1941, and immediately took over the town administration. In October, 1941, the Nazis proclaimed an Aktzion, a so-called "legal" mass killing, during which half the Jewish population was rounded up, brought to the Moskalovka Bridge, and shot to death. In early May, 1942, the Nazis established a ghetto, and soon thereafter, the deportations started. Most of the Jews who were not killed in the Aktzion at the Moskalovka Bridge were eventually deported to the Belzec

death camp. On November 4, 1942, Kosov was officially declared judenrein, free of Jews. Today, Kosov is in the Ukraine; it is still free of Jews.

My mother, the youngest and sole survivor, often cannot forget the sight of the Moskalovka Bridge in the s murder. To this day, she recalls every loose plank that jarred beneath her feet on the way back from her father's unofficial and simultaneous funeral and burial. To this day, she longs to return to take one last walk over that bridge, to bear witness to the atrocities committed against her family. To this day, she longs to find her home, to find her birth records, to find the silver candlesticks that her mother buried as the Nazi juggernaut bore down on her family. To this day, she stays away, watching and waiting for the world to become a better place. And now, she's going to have to wait even longer.