Memento

from the wedding of

Schneur Zalman and Rivka

Marozow





Pinson family picture taken before the arrest.

Left to right bottom row: Yehoshua, Nochum Yitzchok, Chera Top row left to right: Tanchum, Nissim, Sonia and Yechezkel

≈ Introduction **≤**

2 Teves, Zois Chanukah, 5780

Dear Family and Friends,

It is with great gratitude and thanks to Hashem that we are celebrating the wedding of our children Shneur and Rivka.

Words can't adequately express our appreciation for your participation in our Simcha. Following the precedent set at the wedding of our Rebbe, we are presenting you this Teshura-momento, which contains letters from the Rebbe as well as other documents that are being presented here for the first time.

The letters to Rivka's grandfather Yehudah Leib Posner reflect the challenges that were faced in the early years of Shlichus and indeed living a life of a chosid in America, things which we take for granted today. The excerpts from Rivka's great-grandfather Nochum Yitzchok Pinson's KGB file demonstrate the existential dangers of being associated with Judaism, Chassidus and indeed any connection whatsoever to The Rebbe, which are incomprehensible to us today. Indeed the family history of both the Posners and Marosovs are rich with literal Mesiras Nefesh to observe Torah and Mitzvos and for their work in influencing others to do the same.

The contents of this Teshura will serve as an inspiration to Shneur and Rivka as they embark on their own journey building a home committed to living a life as true Chassidim and Shluchim of the Rebbe.

We thank you for joining us and it is our sincere and heartfelt wish to celebrate with you in your Simchas and, most importantly, the Simcha of the coming and revelation of Moshiach immediately NOW!

Note: The translation of the file was done by Aron a relative of the extended Pinson family. Though the translation is not of the full and complete file, it does accurately convey what took place. It is a story of great heroism by all those arrested that night and provides deep insight to intensity of the challenges of those times. I felt that it is of vital importance that this tale be told. With his permission we touched up the grammar and English.



The title page of the case.

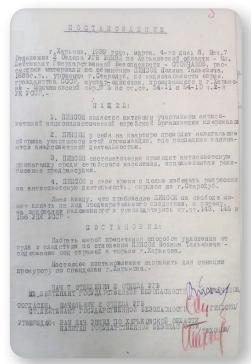
Case #173224 of Avrom Boruch Pevzner, Tzemach Gurevich, Meir Gurkov and **Nochum Pinson**

Started: March 5, 1939

Finished: November 17, 1939

Later note on the title: All accused in this case were rehabilitated (exonerated, verdicts and charges completely removed) in 1989.

March 4th. Where it all starts...



The Order. Charkov. March 4,1939. I, Jr. Leutenant of KGB Stoychanov, looked into materials Pinson accusing Nochum Talievich (son of Talie), born in 1885 in town of Starodub, (Bryansk Region, Byelorussia), Jewish, USSR citizen, a solo craftsman by occupation, residing in the city of Charkov, Molchanovski Dr. #5.

I found that:

- 1. Pinson is an active participant of anti-Soviet Jewish nationalistic organization of religious activists
- 2. Pinson conducts illegal gathering of members of this organization in his own apartment
- 3. Pinson systematically conducts anti-Soviet propaganda among Jewish population, using religious prejudices
- 4. Earlier, to avoid persecution for his anti- Soviet activities, Pinson had run away from the town of Starodub.

I rule that to prevent Pinson from escaping investigation and the court, he should be arrested and kept in Charkov prison. Requesting the Special Prosecutor's approval.

Translator's note: similar Orders are issued for Pevzner, Gurevich, and Gurkov. Most

serious accusations are against Pevzner. He is "one of the leaders of anti-Soviet religious organization. He systematically corresponds with Schneersohn and gets his directives for anti-Soviet activity, he organized a yeshiva in Charkov where he systemically conducts anti-Soviet propaganda using religion as a tool."

So the above document is the beginning of the case. NKVD decides to start a case and to arrest R.



Pinson and the other four Jews. They ask a formal approval of the "Special Prosecutor," who is supposed to supervise the law. The very next day this approval is given. This document on the left is the approval by Prosecutor Panasyuk of the request to arrest R. Pinson. March 5,1939.



This document is the Prosecutor's warrant to conduct search and arrest of "citizen Pinson Nochum Talievech," living in Charkov, Molchanovski Dr.

Building# 5, Apt 9.

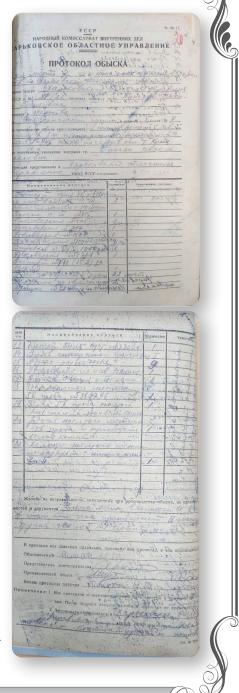
The warrant is dated March 10, 1939. R. Pinson was arrested on March 7. The warrant is issued three days after the search and arrest took place. But they do not care about such details!

March 7: The Arrest

March 7. Protocol of the search in Pinson's apartment and arrest.

This protocol thoroughly lists everything confiscated: Passport, various including documents. Pinson's ID card of OZET (Society of settling Jews as Farmers in Soviet Union, which existed from 1925 to 1938), a watch made of vellow metal. List of various addresses, a few pieces of jewelry. Family members complained that the watch belonged to other Pinsons, "no further complaints were made".

(Translator's note: I looked at other such documents in this case. In one house they confiscated a small Sefer Torah, Tefilin, candle holders, books of Talmud and Torah; in another, they took 16 US dollars, letters and notes in "Jewish language," and photos. In Pinson's house they didn't find or didn't take any money, just a few pieces of jewelry and documents.)



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This first the is questionnaire that he had to answer, on the same day of search and arrest. It lists the basic facts of his life. He is born Starodub, Bryansk Before Region. revolution his occupation was "religious," after the revolution works as an individual craftsman producing small items for tailors. Did not serve in any armies, did not belong to parties. "As a salesperson was stripped of his voting rights."

It lists the family member's names and occupation

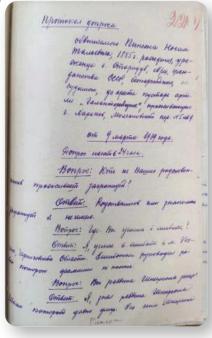
- 1. Wife, Tshera daughter of Chaikel, housewife
- 2. Sons: Tana, Evsey (Yehoshua?), Chatzkel, Nison all individual craftsmen, locksmiths
- 3. Daughter: Sonya (Sarah?), 10th grade student
- (R. Pinson's signature is highlighted in yellow)

Memento from the wedding of Schneur Zalman and Rivka Marozow



Prison photo of R. Nochum Pinson, probably taken right after his arrest. Every prisoner had to be cleanly shaven for hygienic purposes, to control lice, but it also had a dehumanizing effect on people.

2 Teves, Zois Chanukah, 5780



March 9: Protocol of Interrogation of Nochum Pinson.

Translator's note: First interrogation, two days after arrest. They woke him up in the middle of the night to interrogate him. In almost two hours (we can only guess their methods of intimidation and threats), they got nothing. They only wrote down a few questions and answers of defiance and denial.

March 9: Interrogations started at **midnight**.

Interrogation concluded at 1:45 a.m. March 10.

Q: who of your relatives lives abroad?

A: I have no relatives or acquaintances abroad.

Q: where did you study in yeshiva?

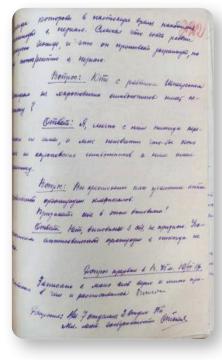
A: I went to yeshiva in Pochep (in Belorussia, 40 miles away from Starodub, R. Nochum's hometown). I do not remember the name of the rabbi who was in charge of that yeshiva.

Q: do you know rabbi Schneersohn?

A: I knew Rabbi Schneersohn by name of Sholom. He passed away long time ago. I do not know his son

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Iosif Schneersohn who lives abroad. I heard there is such a rabbi, Iosif Schneersohn who lives abroad, but I do not know any specifics.

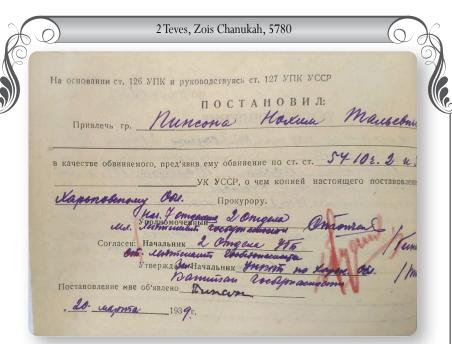


Q: Who from the yeshiva guys in Charkov is having correspondence with Rabbi Iosif Schneersohn?

A: Ι personally had never had any correspondence with him and I do not know if from the anyone Charkov yeshiva men are in correspondence with him.

Q: You are arrested as a participant of anti-Soviet religious organization. Do you acknowledge yourself guilty of that?

A: No, I am not guilty of that. I have never been a member of any anti-Soviet organization.



March 20: The formal indictment notice. Nochum Pinson is accused of being a member of an anti- Soviet organization and of conducting propaganda with the use of religious prejudices. His signature, acknowledging the fact of indictment, appears in black ink at the bottom.

HOCTAHOBIEH ME

г. Харьков, 1939 года, Мая 27-го дня. Я, от. спотователь Сладственной чести УГВ УНКВД по Харьковской области ЛИВШИЦ, рассмотрев следственное дело № 173224 по обвенению ПИНСОН ПОХАМИ Тельевича, гуревича Цемаха Исвановича, кацымай Шмуля Залмановича, гуркова Меера Самуиловича в преступления, предусмотренных ст. ст. 54-11 и 54-10 ч. 2-я УК УССР

HAMEM:

1. ПИНСОН Н.Т., ГУРЕВИЧ П.И., КАЦМАН М.Э.И ГУРИОВ М.С
ИВЛЯЮТСЯ ЯКИМНИМИ УЧЕСТНИКАМИ АНТИСОВЕТСКОЕ ОРГАНИЗАЦИИ КАРрикалов, которые проведили среди евредсного населения г.Дарькова
антисоветскую националистическую препаганду с использованием
режигеозных предрассуднов. Имени связь с заграницей, в частности
с польшей где имеетон в эмиграции один из активных руководитедей антисоветской организации клериналов шнесерон.

2. Что по настоящему делу необходимо пронести ряд сдедственных действий, как допрос овидетелей для изобличения обвиняемых в антисоветской деятельности по г.Харькову.

имея в виду, что по делу срок ведения следствия и содержания обвиняемых под стражей истенает 7-голоня 1930г. и что для окончания следствия дела, необходимо продление срока ведения следствия и од оржания под стражей.

А. посему, руководствуясь от. 113 УПК УССР

HOGTAHOBMA:

Возбудить ходатанство перед пронурором по Харьновск области о продлении срока ведения следствия и содержания под страней обвинаемых пинссна ножима Тальевача, ГУРЕВИЧА Пемаха повиче, Капмана шмуля Завменовиче и ГУРКОВА жеера Семунловиче на один месяц т.с. до 7-го имля 1039 года.

Ходаталство возбущается вторично.

СТ СЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬ СЛЕДЧАСТИ УНИВД Сержант Госо ез она сности

COLUMCEH:

начальник следчасти унквд лектонант Гообевопасности

УТВЕРЖДАВ: ЗАМ НАЧ УНКВД ПО ХАРЬКОВ, ОВЛ Капитан Госсевопасности

May 8: The case is Widening.

Despite all the "hard work" of the KGB, there is not enough evidence of "anti-Soviet" activity by the suspects. So NKVD is desperately trying to find more witnesses, hoping to break someone to give them the information they need.

Another process of arresting and interrogating chasidim is simultaneously going on in Kiev (translator's note: I found among the accused in Kiev the name of Reb Motl Lifshiz, who worked as a shochet in Moscow in the 70-80s and lived his final years in Crown Heights). The interrogators are trying to link all the cases together, to question more people, they are asking the Prosecutors to extend the arrest of Pinson and others for another month, and then another month... Needless to say, the Prosecution has no problems granting these requests. On this page is one of such requests, asking to extend arrest of R. Nochum Pinson for yet another month "to complete the broad investigation." There are quite a few such extension requests in the case.

Another document is from a higher level, from the central KGB office in Kiev, Ukraine. They are saying that the case is widening. NKVD is investigating activity in Leningrad, Vinnitsa, Dnepropetrovsk, and Charkov. Also they mentioned that one of the key members of the organization is arrested, "Schneerson Levik son of Zalman."

June 16: Second Interrogation of Nochum Pinson.

We cannot know whether there were interrogations between March and June. Maybe there were, but R. Nochum didn't give any information whatsoever, or the investigators wanted to wait and collect more "evidence." Again R. Nochum says absolutely nothing in 2.5 hours.

Q: Name all the yeshiva people known to you who live in Charkov

A: I do not know if there are any former or current yeshiva people in Charkov. I was never interested in that is I

live in Charkov only since 1934, I'm only interested in my own family.

Q: It is known to us that in 1937 in your apartment there was an illegal gathering of yeshiva people. Name who was present at this gathering.

A: I never had any illegal gatherings of yeshiva men in my apartment. And in year 1937 I didn't have any gatherings. If some people ever came over, they were visiting on private business.

Q: During this gathering at the end of 1937, the following people were present in your apartment (gives list of 10 names). Can you confirm that?

A: No, I can't confirm that. I do not recall these people gathering in my apartment. There were no illegal gatherings in my apartment.

Q: You are being accused of participation in anti-Soviet religious organizations. Are you guilty of that?

A: No, I'm not guilty. I did not participate in any anti-Soviet religious organization, and I don't know any such organization.

Q: in December 1937, the religious folks from Charkov sent a counter-revolutionary letter to Iosef Ginzburg living in Gadets. Tell us about this letter.

A: I do not recall a case that anybody would send a counter-revolutionary letter to Gadets.

Q: Do you know where in Charkov the underground yeshiva is located?

A: No, I know nothing about existence of an underground yeshiva in Charkov.

Q: Do you know any yeshiva people in Moscow or other cities?

A: No, I do not know any yeshiva people. Neither in Moscow nor in other cities of USSR.

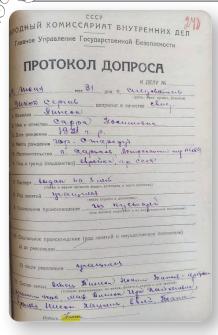
Q: Do you know Michael Kalmanovich Kuznetsov? A: No, never heard of him

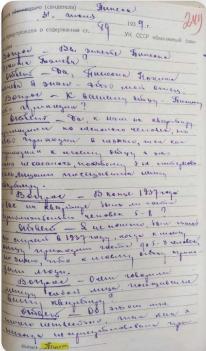
Q: Where and when have you studied in yeshiva?

A: I was in yeshiva in my childhood, in the town of Pochep, don't remember the years.

Started 11:10 a.m., ended 1:40 p.m.

Memento from the wedding of Schneur Zalman and Rivka Marozow





June 31: Questioning of Sarah Pinson

(Her signature is highlighted in yellow)

Sarah, daughter of Nochum. birth year 1921, student, born in Starodub, living in Charkov. Q: Do you know Nochum Pinson?

A: Yes, I know Nochum Pinson. He is my father

Q: Did anyone come visit your father, Pinson?

A: Yes, some people were coming to our apartment to my father, but I do not know who they were, as I was not interested in these people

Q: At the end of 1937, were there about 5-8 guests in your apartment?

A: I do not remember such a case of 5-8 people visiting, but I know that some people were visiting.

Q: People who were visiting your apartment, what they were talking about?

A: I have no idea as I was never present at their conversations

Materials of Interrogation of Other People

Translator's note. I really do not want to translate in full the protocols of questioning of other suspects and witnesses gathered throughout a few months. Some of them are giving to NKVD the names or the information about the Torah study or "anti-Soviet conversations" or communications with the Rebbe. Some people, it seems, signed those protocols without reading them, whatever lies or plots the investigators are attributing to them. I will quote some of them to give an idea, but will leave out the specific names and details. Who can judge them except for G-d, and also for those who passed through these tests without caving in and without naming their brethren. There were not too many of those, but R. Nochum Pinson was one of them. He didn't give any information that helped arrest someone or add anything to the accusations of the already arrested people.

Here is one example. One person is summoned to Charkov NKVD in November 1938, four months before the beginning of this case and the arrests. He signed the protocol claiming there was an "anti-Soviet organization" in Charkov and names several people as participants, including Nochum Pinson. I don't know what NKVD did to him to make him sign this. Threatened his family? Told him he would not be ever allowed to leave the building if he does not sign? Or simply made him sign something without reading what he is signing.

Here is another example: A person is summoned to NKVD in July as a witness. He knows about all the arrests, he is warned that covering up or withholding information equals to the crime itself and is punishable by law. To exit the NKVD building he needs a signed slip of paper which is held by the interrogation office. So he starts telling that there is a group of Talmud and Tanya study in Charkov led by Pevzner, and names people attending. That people gathered daily except for Fridays for these studies in a separate room of the shul. When the officer asks "whether Talmud was taught and interpreted in the "anti-Soviet spirit," the witness says "I don't know, I haven't been there." He goes on telling who was collecting money for poor Jews, who was not letting their children to go to Soviet school despite the "mandatory education law," who was inspiring the yeshiva students in Charkov in the twenties, who was in touch with R. Schneersohn etc. Name of R. Pinson is not mentioned.

Another witness is from Minsk. He reports that Pevzner was teaching Mishnayos in a Lubavicher shul in Minsk up until his departure from Minsk.

A witness is recorded as giving many names to NKVD. Among them the name of R. Mendel Futerfas from Moscow. R. Mendel would be arrested only six years later, but the seeds are planted here already, and his name is made known to NKVD.

Someone is stating that "underground yeshivas are the last bet of the Jewish nationalistic camp to most deep disguise of their anti-Soviet front, in case all the other organizations fail. The facts show that most of Jewish counter-revolutionary organizations were crushed, but underground yeshivas continue to exist up until this day, at least in Charkov." Another piece of evidence, in which the reader can tell how much of this is truth and how much is dictated by the interrogators to beef up the case: "In 1927, the leader of counter-revolutionary organization Rabbi

Schneersohn was offered by Soviet organs to leave the USSR. On his way to Riga, Rabbi Schneersohn stopped in Leningrad, where he made a counter-revolutionary speech among the members of his organization. He was saying, like do not give up, stay strong in spirit, I'll see you again soon and the cause we started we will continue to the victorious finish, since Soviet Regime will perish and a monarchy will be restored in its place. Before going into the train wagon, he wished all his followers to fight stronger against the Soviets. We know he sent a letter from Riga to all the branches of his organization saying to celebrate the 12th of Tammuz as the day of his liberation, as he survived the Soviet "bandits."

In 1932 Rebbe Schneersohn, living in Warsaw, made an alliance between religious circles and Zionists. Under the guidance of Rebbe Schneersohn, they lobbied in London to open British office in Kiev to help the poorest part of Jewish population in the USSR. They did as a provocation to libel the Soviet regime. They arranged mass sending of letters from the USSR to England, telling how bad their life is and asking for parcels with material help."

Interrogator Sergeev from NKVD provides more documents to the case. He digs out older cases of Chabad chasidim, dated 1935 and 1937, finds some mentions of Pevzner (one of the accused together with Pinson) and wants to use them in this case. In 1935 one of the people interrogated in Rostov tells about the "TMIMIM" group and their communications with SCHNEERSOHN.

He told to KGB interrogators: "Pevzner from Charkov came to Rostov with the message from SCHNEERSOHN, which was read in shul to all the members of TMIMIM. Also Pevzner told us that there are about 20 active members of TMIMIM on Charkov, who gather illegally to study Chasidism and Schneersohn's messages."

Another older interrogation informs that Schneersohn, Berman and Milkovski are coordinating from abroad the "anti-Soviet work of underground yeshivas in Charkov and other towns. These yeshivas are the cornerstones of anti-Soviet activity among Jews. According to my information the yeshiva in Charkov continued to exist up until the latest time and continues its anti-Soviet activity."

Reading this document it is obvious that the Chassidim are active in many cities: Rostov, Moscow, Charkov, Minsk, Kursk, etc.

This report claims that "religious activists, Zionist organizations, Bundists, etc., used money from the Joint and Agro-Joint to fund their illegal activities."

Someone is saying that Pevzner and other yeshiva people from Charkov were gathering in a separate room in Charkov synagogue and were learning Torah there, sometimes also with drinks and snacks. They were interpreting religion preaching there will be Moshiach, and all the people would have one faith, there will only be Jewish nation and all the people in the world will speak Jewish language and all over the place there will be only Jews. So all the religious people must believe in that. Also Pevzner was teaching Talmud with groups of 15-20 people.



Started 12:10 pm, ended 4:00 pm (almost four hours!)

Q: Which Schneersohn do you know?

A: I know Sholom Schneersohn who was a leader of the yeshiva in Lubavichi, I know him as a Tzaddik.

Q: Where did you meet him and in which year?

A: I first met Schneersohn in approximately 1900, when I met him in Lubavichi. I went to visit Sholom Schneersohn in 1900 on business (commercial affairs).

Q: How old were you in 1900?

A: I was 15 in 1900.

Q: When you were 15, could you have any "commercial affairs" or not?

A: No, when I was 15 I was not involved in commerce.

Q: Why are you saying that in 1900 you were going to Schneersohn on business?

A: I do not recall when exactly I visited Schneersohn. I went to him to see him.

Q: So, why did you really go to Schneersohn?

A: I lived closer to Lubavichi than my parents, and I got a letter in which my parents were asking me to go to Schneersohn and to ask his advice on family matters, and I did so.

Q: Where did you live at this time and what kind of family matters did you have at that time?

A: I lived in Gorodische back then, and my parents lived in the Western region in the village of Madeeyevka. I went to Sholom Schneersohn to find out whether the grandfather should stay working for the landowner or not.

Q: You are confusing the facts and telling lies to the investigation. Tell me, which Schneersohn do you know?

A: I know Sholom Schneersohn, who passed away approximately in 1917-1918. I saw Iosef Schneersohn also when I came visit his father, Sholom Schneersohn.

Q: Where did Charkov's yeshiva people gather?

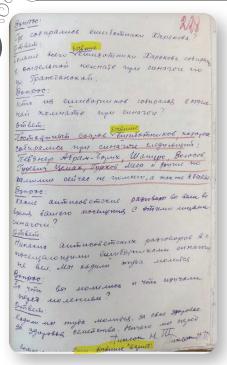
A: Mostly <u>former</u> yeshiva people were gathering in Charkov's synagogue on Grazhdanskaya St., in a separate room.

Q: Who of the yeshiva people were meeting in the separate room at the synagogue?

A: The permanent group of the <u>former</u> yeshiva people was: Pevzner Abram-Boruch; Schapiro; Volosov; Gurevich, Tzemach; Gurkov, Meir; and some others, whose names I do not recall. I would also attend.

Q: What anti-Soviet conversations did you have with these people during your visits to synagogue?

A: I did not have any anti-Soviet conversations with the visiting yeshiva people. We go there to pray.



Q: What were you praying for and what were you studying before the prayer?

A: We go there to pray for our health, for health of the family. We did not study anything before the prayer.

Q: What did Abram-Boruch Pevzner study with the yeshiva men who were coming to the synagogue? A: I know nothing about it. I am not aware that Pevzner was studying anything with the yeshiva people.

Translator's note: This is a very telling document. The questioning lasts 4 hours, but only a few questions are recorded on the paper. The rest of the time NKVD henchmen were "convincing" R. Nochum to "confess" and tell what they needed. This document shows how hard R. Nochum was fighting back to say nothing and not to incriminate any others. He only gives one fact already known to NKVD that people were gathering in a separate room, but insists it was no yeshiva and no Torah or Chasidus study take place there. When he re-reads the protocol, he notices that the interrogator wrote his words as "yeshiva people" instead of "former yeshiva people." This little "mistake" is meant to prove that R. Nochum acknowledges there was an active yeshiva in Charkov. So Reb Nochum fights back and insists that the word "former" be inserted by the interrogator to the document, and a note is

Memento from the wedding of Schneur Zalman and Rivka Marozow

made to that effect (highlighted in yellow). Also he does not give any names not known to NKVD, only is saying that a few people were davening in a room in the shul, no illegal activity taking place. It is admirable how much mesirus nefesh he shows during all these months of investigation, despite all the threats, intimidations, sleep deprivation, hunger.

August 5: The "key witness"

After months of search NKVD was able to find what they needed. They found a person in Vitebsk, brought him to Minsk (600 miles away from Charkov, so you can see how wide the nets of NKVD were) for questioning and broke his spirit enough so he was ready to totally betray his brothers. So he became the key witness in the case. We can only guess what they had to do with him go get the information from him. Threatened with arrest? With execution? With arrest of family members? Or maybe he was shown interrogation notes of other Chasidim, where his name of mentioned ("Look, they are telling on you, why are you protecting them?") We shall not include his name here. His depositions during the investigation gave enough data to give a guilty verdict to Pevzner, Pinson and others. His deposit is most damaging; He tells NKVD that there was a religious counter-revolutionary organization in Charkov, "from 1921 till the arrest of its leader, Abram Pevzner." This counter-revolutionary organization was founded by Iosef Schneersohn, but in later years was led by Pevzner. The witness reports "he had good relations with Pevzner." He claims he was a trusted person of Iosif Schneersohn, who told him in Rostov in 1923 about this organization and its counterrevolutionary activity. He claims that Pevzner is conducting large scale anti-Soviet activity. Gathering people and under the guise of Talmud study, he preaches against Soviets. "In conversation Pevzner claimed that Soviet Power is short-lived and will be replaced by another power, because it goes against religion. Pevzner is a follower of Schneersohn, he maintained contacts with him up to his arrest, and he showed me letters from Schneersohn which I did not read. When I was leaving Charkov in August 1938, Pevzner told me "Bad times came for the Jewish nation, but if we hold on to the Schneersohn line, we will survive everything, we need to influence the young generation, so it attaches to us, so we need to raise children in the religious and nationalistic spirit. Pevzner himself did not

send his children to Soviet schools; he was raising them in the religious and nationalistic spirit. He also claims that Pevzner, Gurkov and other were collecting money for Iosef Schneersohn, and in year 1938 they raised 10,000 rubles. But he had no idea of how they were able to send money to the Rebbe.

This witness goes on to report on Pinson. From the deposit of the witness on Pinson:

Pinson Nochum Talievich, a former yeshiva student. We studied in a Lubavicher yeshiva together in 1902-1909.

When I came to Charkov, I stayed in his apartment, this happened in August of 1938. From conversations with Pinson I found out that former yeshiva people gather in his apartment to conduct anti-Soviet nationalistic propaganda. Such gatherings were taking place in 1937 and 1938.

Talking to me, Pinson expressed regrets about arrests of religious activists by NKVD and was complaining on allegedly bad life in the USSR. Further in conversation with me Pinson said: "Happy are those people who went abroad."

The witness goes on and on informing on other suspects. He tells that Meir Gurkov is collecting money among the worshipers for the counter-revolutionary organization under the guise of help to poor Jews. He reports s that Tzemach Gurevich is maintaining a connection between the Charkov organization and Schneersohn's residence, and that Tzemach Gurevich had tried to cross the border illegally. "I know

Gurevich since 1920 and I have good relationship with him."

"Talking to Gurevich in August 1938 in Charkov Synagogue, he told me that the Soviet regime is trying to destroy religious activists by fabricating allegedly fake political cases. Also other people, Rabinovich, Axelrod, Pevzner, Gurkov and **Pinson**, were accusing the Soviet regime of political anti-Semitism. By political anti-Semitism the religious activists understand persecutions of Jewish nation by the Soviet regime, under the pretext of fighting their religion."

When the investigator asked "Do you know the goal and the tasks of the counter-revolutionary organization?", the witness replies "The final goal of the counter-revolutionary organization was overthrowing of the existing regime in the USSR and establishing a new capitalist state, by means of nationalistic religious propaganda".

(Translator's note: We see that the witness is so crushed and

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A page from the interrogation protocol of the betrayer where he talks about Pinson (I marked Pinson's last name in red). Each page is personally signed by the witness (Highlighted in yellow)

August 8: Protocol of Interrogation of Nochum Pinson.

Started 2:00 p.m., ended 4:00 p.m.

Q: Who was teaching Talmud in the synagogue on Grazhdanskaya St. 13?

A: I don't know about this.

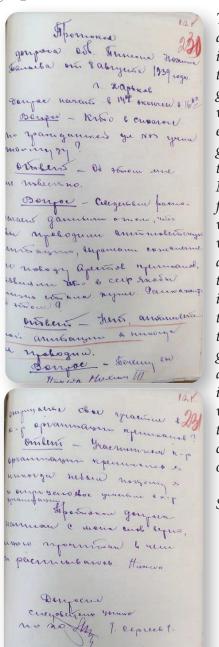
Q: The investigation has information that you were spreading anti-Soviet propaganda, that you were expressing regrets about arrests of religious leaders, you were stating that life in the USSR is getting worse. Tell about this.

A: No, I never spread any anti-Soviet propaganda.

Q: Why are you denying your participation in a counterrevolutionary religious organization?

A: I never participated in any a counter-revolutionary religious organization, that's why I'm denying it.

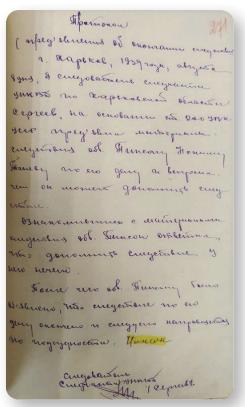




This is another amazing document. This interrogation happens just three days after NKVD got the deposit of the "key witness," but despite the evidence, this is all they got from R. Nochum in two hours of interrogation. NKVD got "confessions" from other suspects and witnesses that Pevzner was teaching Talmud and Chasidus in the shul, that Pinson was talking in shul about arrests and the Communist policies, that there were "illegal gatherings" at Pinson's apartment. One can only imagine how much NKVD worked on R. Nochum in these two hours to get any confessions, or new names or new details.

Still, that's all they got.

August 8: The End of Investigation



Three days they NKVD got the information the witness in Minsk. the investigation is over. NKVD has all the "proof" of anti-Soviet organization. Pinson and others are given these formal notices about end of investigation. The materials of the case are shown to Pinson (we cannot know if he got any time to actually look through or even see them, not to mention time for preparing defense). This document says that

"after looking at the materials of investigation, Pinson told that he has nothing to add to these materials. After that Pinson was informed that investigation of his case is over and the case is sent for judgement." Pinson has to sign this (Highlighted in yellow)

11 August: The final Accusation.

Charkov Division of NKVD uncovered and dismantled a counter revolutionary religious organization, whose participants were gathering intelligence on the USSR territory for the benefit of foreign intelligence services and were conducting anti-Soviet religious propaganda. The defendants in this case—Pevzner, Gurevich, Gurkov and Pinson—as established by the Investigation, were active members of this organization.

... here go accusations against others, followed by...

Pinson Nochum Talievich, is accused of

- a. Being a member of the counter revolutionary religious organization
- b. Using his apartment for gatherings of yeshiva people
- c. Conducted anti-Soviet nationalistic propaganda using religious prejudices Suggestion: to send the case for the review by the "Special Counsel of NKVD"

Signed by the whole chain of command of Charkov NKVD (including one with the family name of Livshitz).

August 15: Prosecutor's Approval of Sending the Case to the Special Counsel.

Charkov Prosecutors reviewed the above accusation and agrees to send the case to the "Special Counsel." Special counsel was reviewing cases without a judge, lawyers, witness examination, and even without the presence of the defendants

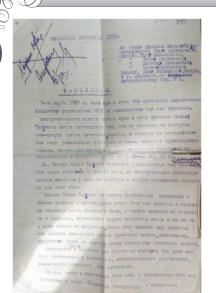
September 9: Kiev's KGB Conclusion

The case was sent for review to the Central Ukrainian office of KGB/NKVD in Kiev. It took them about a month to review. They agree with everything, but they don't mention "foreign intelligence" anymore but claim that "the members of the organization were conducting anti-Soviet propaganda, by preaching Chasidism (Chasidus) and maintaining connection with Schneersohn abroad."

September 6: The Family Plea.

This is one of the most heart-breaking documents in the whole case. An emotional appeal, a letter from the entire Pinson's family to the Chief Prosecutor of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic, who is supposed to supervise the rule of law and justice. The very fact that this letter ended up in the same file, shows how much "justice" there was. The Prosecutor simply sent it to NKVD and there it remained. At the end of the letter you can see signatures of wife and all five children of R. Pinson. Light blue at the bottom – Sarah and Yechezkel Pinson

2 Teves, Zois Chanukah, 5780



управления дляд в в прополните диму это верхности и ими может по стате и иму по должно должно по должно должно по должно до

4. Имея ввиду, что разрешение вопроса о возможности сделать пищевую передачу, в которой нам все время отказывают, имеет большое значения для поддержания его жизни, мы также убедительно просим Вас дать соответствующее указания ние о предоставлении нам этой возможности.

6/2 39. Серос. Х. Плисон. Тошко М. А. Кимом Сер. Винесом И.Н. Яников С.К. Бимеов Х.Н.

To the Supreme Prosecutor of the Ukraine.

From the Family of Pinson Nochum Talievich: Tshera, Tana, Yevsei, Chatzkel, Nosson and Sonya.

On March 7th, our husband and father was arrested by the regional office of NKVD for reasons unknown to us. It can be proven there is no cause for his arrest, as he had never preached against the Soviet Power, and he had never used his religious beliefs to fight the current regime. But from semi-official sources we know that this is what he is accused of.

Yes, Pinson Nochum Talievich is excessively religious, and as any religious person of 55, he limits his activity by individual prayers in his room and sometimes attends the synagogue for the purpose of praying.

Pinson Nochum was working in a small co-op, and before that for 5 years he was working in a Collective Farm (kolkhoz), until the farm resettled to Crimea. It is hard to assume and we in no way can assume that this person could fight or even say anything against the Soviet regime. Especially given the fact that the current regime gave him the right to live a good life. It is obvious that the cause of his arrest is the work of some provocateur. Someone was using his religious beliefs for libels and provocation.

For six months our entire family of six is waiting at the doorsteps of the regional prosecutor's office and the regional NKVD office, and during all this time we cannot get an answer for when the investigation will be over or where his case is located.

The regional prosecutor Alekseenko keeps telling us that the case is handled by NKVD, and NKVD is telling us it is in the Prosecutors Office.

This is a torture for the entire family, our sufferings caused

us to write you to get involved in this case of defending our innocent father and husband who is jailed.

We are afraid that his six months of incarceration will have tragic consequences, as he suffers from severe stomach illness. Moreover, because of his religious beliefs, he cannot eat any hot food. These circumstances may cause his death.

All this time we have been petitioning to send him a food package, but they refuse us every time, not willing to make an exception.

According to the Penal Code, any investigation should be finished in two months, and we can't understand why his case is investigated for six months. It is obvious the investigation is dragging on and on because there is no evidence to convict. This violation of the rules is totally unacceptable from the Revolutionary justice standpoint.

We are strongly asking you to:

- 1. To force the regional prosecutor to take this case under his personal control.
- 2. To force the regional prosecutor to invite as many witnesses as possible to establish the level of Pinson's guilt and also his personality.
- 3. To point to whoever it may concern the blatant violation of the law and to enforce the investigation to finish in the shortest time.
- 4. Considering that passing food packages to Nochum Pinson is of critical importance for supporting his life, and that we were always denied that, we are also strongly asking you to order giving us such an opportunity.

September 6th, 1939 Signatures of all the Pinsons.



November 1938: The Hearing by the "Special Counsel" and the Verdict.

It took them about two more months to arrange a hearing by the Special Counsel. So here it is, the only paper left from the "judicial process" of convicting and issuing the verdict (on that day the "special counsel" reviewed at least 60 cases without presence of a judge, defendants, lawyers, witness questioning, etc.):

Heard: The Case of Pinson Nochum Talievich. 1885 y/b, born in Starodub, Jewish, USSR citizen, not a party member

Ruled: To lock Pinson Nochum Talievich for participation in the anti-Soviet organization into the labor camp for five years, counting from March 7th 1939, case can be archived.

Translators note: The blue stamp on the left indicates that Pinson is sent to the camp of Ussollag near the town of

Solikamsk in Siberia. Ussollag had 10,000 to 30,000 prisoners at any time mostly working at wood harvesting, timber making, logging, etc. Average temperature in winter is 0 - 10 F, in summer 50- 70 F.

Abram-Boruch Pevzner, "the leader of the Charkov organization", and Meir Gurkov were sentenced to 5 years in exile to remote areas of Kazakhstan.

Tzemach Gurevich was sentenced to three years of Labor Camp in the mountains of northern Ural.

Pinson got the harshest verdict from the entire group, perhaps due to his uncompromising position and not giving any information whatsoever to the investigators.

Other Documents.

There are many other documents in the case, including many detailed interrogation protocols.

- Appeal of Gurkov from Kazakhstan to Stalin, and the resolution from the Prosecution to make no changes.
- Review of the case in 1989, when all the verdicts issued by "the Special Counsels" were declared null and void and all the hundreds of thousands of people were rehabilitated and exonerated.
- Requests from Yehoshua Pinson living on Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn to find the day of death of his father Nochum Pinson.
- Requests from the Ukrainian embassy in France on behalf of Chabad Rabbi in France to find information about his father Abram Pevzner, etc., etc.