

THE FALC FAMILY

Alexander [Sender] Falc

Alexander Falc was a descendant of a family established for many generations in Kutno. He was born in 1889 to his father Samuel and his mother Yocheved born Szlajfer. His parents, like most of the town's Jews, were religious and kept the family's traditional chain going. As was customary with such families, Alexander studied in a *cheder* and later in the *Beit Midrash* of the town, from which he first drew from the cultural sources of our people.

At the end of the last century, echoes of Western European education began to reach our town as well, and the young Sender's parents realized that the time had come for a good Jew to receive a general education in order to survive the war of existence as a person, and especially as a Jew. So, Sender was sent to study secular studies at one of the gymnasiums in the city. But Sender Falc was destined for lofty roles in his life. Sender did not abandon the sources of our Jewish people; he had a strong desire to expand and deepen them. To this end, he acquired for himself the language of his ancestors – Hebrew, with the help of which he hoped to penetrate the sources of Judaism. From them, he also drew encouragement and courage to stand at the gate in time of need.

In 1911, he married Dvora née Berkowicz. He was an accountant by profession. But this work did not satisfy his spirit and soul. From a young age, he devoted himself to public activism in all fields. His house was a kind of labor bureau for all who needed it. He took care of bread and work and supported the needy secretly, from his own pocket.

Alexander was one of the founders of the Zionist Organization in his city and influenced relatives near and far to follow in his footsteps and work for the Zionist idea. He helped establish kindergartens, the *Am HaSefer* Hebrew school, of which he was chairman for many years, and the *Ahad Ha'am* library. During the years of the First World War, when the famine in the Polish state spread, he extended his help to children who were in great distress, set up kitchens and took care of their education.

Thanks to his good name, he won a government franchise for the sale of liquor, which a Jew almost inevitably won in Poland in those days. But despite the policy of expropriation pursued by the Polish government against the Jewish population, Alexander Falc was elected, after the establishment of independent Poland, to the Kutno City Council on behalf of the Zionist Organization along with Mendelewicz, Wolf Asz, Dr. Finkelsztajn and others. He served in this position until the outbreak of the war, in 1939. By virtue of this position, he had influence in many institutions and worked extensively for the community, the synagogue and the Hebrew school in Kutno. He was able to obtain certain allowances for these

institutions, but he did not spare money from his own pocket to help the various institutions.

With the Nazi occupation, he was appointed by the German occupiers together with Bernard Holcman and others to the *Judenrat*. Today we know very well what roles the Nazis assigned to the *Judenrat* and why they were established. But to the credit of Sender Falc, it must be said that he immediately stood up to the plot of the hawkish murderers and vehemently opposed accepting this post.

One day, the Nazis demanded that the *Judenrat* hand over fifty Jewish girls, but refused to return the Jewish girls who had been given to them earlier. Sender, who was imbued with the love of Israel and the pain of his people, withstood the test that fate had given him. In his boldness and over-firmness, he objected to handing over more Jewish girls, if the girls taken by them were not returned. And with heroic decisiveness, refused to sign the degrading order of the Nazis and would erase their name on the handing over of the required women. Holcman also agreed with him, and he also refused to sign the low German order.

Sender Falc and his friend Holcman were taken to the Jewish cemetery and shot dead by the Nazi murderers in light of their alleged refusal. Thus, they gave their souls for the purity of our people and the holiness of G-d.

May their memory be exemplary for the whole house of Israel for generations to come.

Sender Falc had two sons and a daughter. His daughter Nacha died in 1938 and Shmuel perished in the Holocaust along with the entire Kutno Jewish community. Only his son Abraham immigrated to Israel and lives there, with us.

Yaakov Falc

Yaakov Falc was born in 1892 and married Paula born Berkowicz in 1916. He was a well-to-do and kind-hearted man, active in a charity fund. He was a wealthy merchant and had two sons, Shraga (Felek) and Shmuel (Samek). These two boys were active in youth movements and sports organizations in the city. Shmuel survived the Holocaust and his surname in Israel today is Laron.

Yehoshua Falc

Yehoshua Falc was born in 1895, married Rosa née Fuks. He was a wealthy merchant, a partner in a flour mill in Kutno, and a member of the "Guild" in Warsaw. From an early age, he was active in the Zionist movement and was one of its founders and already at this age served as chairman of the community committee in Kutno until 1939, when World War II broke out. During his tenure he made various changes in community life. The burial society, which until those days was a kind of "sovereign kingdom", independent of any authority and having its own bookkeeping, was placed under the supervision of the community committee. He was one of the founders of the Jewish Commercial Bank in Kutno.

During the Nazi occupation, all his property was confiscated and he was taken hostage along with all the

heads of the community and only after payment of a large sum for the "redemption of the captives", they were released from the hands of the murderers, beaten, tortured and wounded in all parts of their bodies, until it was difficult to recognize them, for indeed these were people who were uninjured when they were taken from their homes.

His relatives decided that he should flee to Warsaw with his family but Shiya did not find a place for himself in Warsaw as he was cut off from his city and relatives. Nevertheless, he devoted himself wholeheartedly to the public action that was so necessary in those days and under the conditions in which the Jewish people in the whole of Poland were. He worked at the JDC¹, assisting in the construction of public kitchens for the needy and in any act that might have eased even a little bit the bitterest fate of the masses of Jews under the Nazi boot. When he was offered to flee Poland and save his life, he vehemently rejected the offer because a man like him should not run away, and he said he would not save his life and leave his brother to their bitter fate.

Indeed, one day the Germans abducted Jews in the streets, and among them his most precious children were abducted. He appealed to the Germans, as a JDC employee, to release his sons. The Germans did not even want to hear his words and threatened that he too might join them. Shiya Falc, the father and husband did not hesitate much and immediately joined his wife and children. Only his son Yechiel, who immigrated to Israel in 1935, is alive today in Israel. His son Nachman, who was known as "Pnuel,"² fell in the War of Independence during the Battle of Yehudiya.

(Written by: Y. Elbaum)

¹ TN: US Joint Distribution Committee AKA "*Joint*".

² TN: see on page 315 of the original book. According to the data on the matzeva of Yechiel, his father was Shmuel, Yehoshua being his brother and the uncle of Nachman. So,

there may be a confusion here. Nachman was killed in action during a battle around Ramle, in 1948. His remains weren't found until 1952.