

## THE GHETTO FIGHTERS ISRAEL AND SALO KANAŁ

We got the genealogy notice of the Kanał family from our grandfather Mordechai Kanał, a Kutner resident, born in 1864<sup>1</sup>. His wife Malka was from the Warszawczik family. They had three sons: Israel-Mendel, Moshe (married to Lyuba Smuzik) and Yeshayahu.

Israel Kanał, one of the participants in the heroic uprising of the Warsaw ghetto, is the son of Moshe and Lyuba. He was born in the residence of his grandmother Malka in Kutno. The second son, Yosele<sup>2</sup>, was born in Bydgoszcz, after his parents moved there.

The activities of Israel and Salo in the Warsaw ghetto are described in Melech Neustadt's<sup>3</sup> book *"The Destruction and Rebellion of the Jews of Warsaw"*, published in Tel Aviv in 1948.

... Born in Bydgoszcz<sup>4</sup>, in the western part of Poland, which was under German rule until after the First World War, to wealthy pious parents, maybe relatives of Rabbi Y. M. Kanał<sup>5</sup>, one of the most prominent Warsaw rabbis. The father, a manufacture merchant, was a Zionist and raised the children in a national spirit and taught them to speak Hebrew from an early age. Israel graduated from a local gymnasium. He was active in the "Akiva" movement and still participated in the last summer colony in the Zakopane region, right before the war. After the outbreak of the war, together with his family, he went to Warsaw and soon after that his mother died (in early 1942 the father died of typhus, Israel also fell ill with the same

disease but he recovered). The "Akiva" movement also included his brother Salo, and in Warsaw they were both members of the city "Akiva" kibbutz on Nalewki St 10, which had 25 members. Israel was an intelligent, energetic boy, full of initiative. In his movement – and out of it – he was one of the first to demand active, armed resistance. At the request of the movement, he served in the Jewish Ghetto Police, but left on the eve of the Great Deportation. On August 18, 1942, following the outbreak of the Great Deportation, the Jewish Fighting Organization<sup>6</sup> issued a death sentence on Ghetto Police Commander Józef Szeryński, and Israel Kanał was the one who fired the first shot of the combat organization, wounding the traitor.

Before the fight began, he taught combatants how to use a weapon. During the exercises, he was injured in the leg, but he continued his activity. During the ghetto fighting, he participated in the fighting divisions of *HaShomer HaZair*. He was the commander of a group that fought bravely in the first armed resistance, on January 18, 1943, on Nowolipie St. He was later appointed Commander of the Central Ghetto. Among his colleagues, he was also known as Mietek. In battle reports he is often mentioned as one of the bravest and most courageous fighters.

After the suppression of the ghetto uprising, he and the last remaining fighters escaped by the sewer pipes to the Aryan side. For a time, he was in the Wyszaków<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> TN: Kutno Book of Residents indicates Mordechai Ber Kanał was born on 6 February 1855 in Kutno. His wife was Tema Malka Warszawczyk. They had three sons, Israel Mendel born on 1 October 1879, Moshe Wolf born on 27 September 1888 and Shiya born on 7 January 1895. Mordechai Ber was the son of Israel Mendel born 10 June 1817, and Sara Itta Kibel born 2 May 1825, daughter of Baruch and Tauba.

<sup>2</sup> TN: aka "Salo".

<sup>3</sup> TN: aka Melech Noy, in Israel.

<sup>4</sup> TN: contradicts previous paragraph saying he was born in Kutno.

<sup>5</sup> TN: Yitzhak Meir Kanał, a Chief Rabbi of Warsaw. No proof of a relation could be found in the Kutno Book of Residents, but it is probable.

<sup>6</sup> TN: in Polish, *"Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa"*, (ŻOB).

<sup>7</sup> TN: town 40km northeast of Warsaw.

forests. Due to his illness, he had to return to Warsaw. His pronounced Jewish appearance did not allow him to engage in any activities on the Aryan side, and hiding him created difficulties. He therefore agreed to be made a foreign citizen with documents. In August 1943, he moved to the Bergen-Belsen camp. On October 21, 1943, *Simchat Torah* 5704, he was deported, along with 1,800 other Jews, ostensibly to Bergau near Dresden. He was 22 years old when he was assassinated (his brother Salo was sent from the Cracow "*HeChalutz HaLocham*"<sup>8</sup> in the woods, with a small partisan group of six young Jewish fighters. Due to a denunciation, the Germans surrounded their hideout and five people fell in the battle, among them Salo) (pp. 515-516).



Shmuel Wajchselfisz  
(Tzaha'li)



Zakszewski (Red Army)

Y. Tabenkin<sup>14</sup>, M. Ya'ari<sup>15</sup> and Y. Baratz<sup>16</sup>, dated: Warsaw, 24 May 1944).

... That night (April 29), another delegation was sent out: Tuvia Borzykowski (see his diary), Israel Kanał, Mordechai Growas<sup>17</sup>, Menachem Bigelman<sup>18</sup> and six other fighters. On the way, they clashed with Germans. A fight broke out in which several Germans were killed. Seven of the fighters, and among them four wounded, managed to fall back to the positions of the fighters; three of them who did not succeed, endured an all-night struggle with much larger German forces – and the Germans did not bow to them (p. 278).

... Lilka Żimak was... during the uprising, she was a member of an action group of "*Dror*". She fought in the



Frizler z"l



Herman Celemenski

... That same day (from August 20 to 21, 1942) the first shot was fired by the Jewish Fighting Organization: Israel Kanał seriously wounded Józef Szeryński with two bullets.

... Israel Kanał came to Szeryński's apartment in Nowolipki<sup>9</sup> as a policeman, otherwise he would not have been allowed in. Szeryński did not die from his wounds (p. 141).

... In the workshops area, Israel Kanał fought valiantly at the head of a small group of fighters. (p. 150).

... Israel Kanał was appointed as the Commander of the "Central Ghetto Area" (p. 152).

... Last year, Eliezer Geller and Israel Kanał, along with a group of colleagues, traveled abroad on the basis of foreign documents in the Bergen near Hanover (Bergen-Belsen) camp. We have no information about them. We are very worried about their fate. Intervene for them... (p. 220 – from a letter from Zivia [Lubetkin]<sup>10</sup>, Yitzhak [Cuckierman]<sup>11</sup>, Tuvia Borzykowski<sup>12</sup>, to E. Dobkin<sup>13</sup>,

"Central Ghetto", was the liaison of the Commander of the Central Ghetto, Israel Kanał (p. 464).

... Some of the fallen who are mentioned in the documents, occupied a central and main position in the Jewish Fighting Organization, such as Hirsh Berlinski, Eliezer Geller, Mordechai (Merdeck) Growas, Israel Kanał, Michael Rosenfeld and others (p. 323).

... Among the list of 50 names of ghetto fighters who, on the second anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, were awarded the Order of Merit by the Polish Army General Staff for their heroic fight against the Nazi occupiers, there is the name of Israel Kanał (p. 328).

Our townsman Eliezer Asz<sup>19</sup>, is also mentioned in the book of M. Neustadt:

... Asz Eliezer – Member of the combat group of "*HaNoar HaZioni*". His name appears on the list of those killed in the Warsaw ghetto fighting, which was sent to London in November 1943. We have not been able to find out details about him (p. 354).

<sup>8</sup> TN: Hebrew, The Pioneer Fighter".

<sup>9</sup> TN: Warsaw neighborhood.

<sup>10</sup> TN: a leader of the Jewish Fighting Organization.

<sup>11</sup> TN: deputy commander of the Jewish Fighting Organization.

<sup>12</sup> TN: one of the surviving ghetto fighters, fighting in Polish underground, a member of Kibbutz *Lohamei HaGhetaot*.

<sup>13</sup> TN: Elyahu Dobkin, a Labor Zionism leader.

<sup>14</sup> TN: Yitzhak Tabenkin, a founder of the Kibbutz movement.

<sup>15</sup> TN: Meir Ya'ari, a founder of *Histadrut* union, Labor politician, a founder of Kibbutzim Artzi and Merhaviah.

<sup>16</sup> TN: Yosef Baratz, politician, member of kibbutz Degania A.

<sup>17</sup> TN: aka "Merdek", member of *HaShomer HaZair*, fighter in ghetto fighters.

<sup>18</sup> TN: member of the Dror movement, fighter in the Jewish Fighting Organization, died during escape through the sewers.

<sup>19</sup> TN: born in Warsaw, fighter in Jewish Fighting Organization.