

Discovering a Cousin's Family Murdered During the Holocaust in the Pinsk Ghetto

By Alexander Kott and Lorraine Frazier

March 2023

This article is a product of collaboration by Lorraine Frazier and Alexander Kott. We are two cousins sharing common ancestors who in early 19th century lived in the shtetl of Lubeshiv, then in the Pinsk uezd (county) and today in Ukraine.

In February of 2023, Lorraine mentioned to Alexander that she had three photographs and a few bits of information about the family of her grand-uncle David Kot, a son of Yankel Yossel Kot (Kott). David had two known children, Aaron and Rose. The GENI tree shows that David's wife was named Zlata (this information was entered into GENI by Eric Tiplitz whom we are unable to contact). Lorraine's relatives believed that the entire family perished in Holocaust, in Poland where they lived.

One of the photos Lorraine has in her possession (which we name the "Photo 1928 Pinsk") has an inscription on the back "Pinsk 1928" and shows David with his two children. Judging only by the appearances, David was in his 40's, Aaron about 16-18 years old, and Rose in her early 20's. Another photo (which we name "Photo 1922") seems to have been taken in very early 1920s, judging by the younger faces of the children. Lorraine recalled her family's lore that one or both of the children became physicians.



Figure 1: Photo of 1928, Pinsk. Aron, David and Rose Kot.



Figure 2: Aron, David and Rose several years earlier, judging by the younger faces of the children. Estimated 1922.

Armed with this information, Alexander went to search the Yad VaShem database of Holocaust victims: <https://yvng.yadvashem.org/index.html?language=en> After a brief search, he discovered several documents that clearly referred to our cousins David and Aron Kot.

A particularly instructive document we call “Dwellers of 68 Dominikanska”. It is a list of Jewish families who resided in Pinsk in the house at 68 Dominikanska Street, made probably soon after July 1941 when Germans occupied Pinsk. Such lists were produced periodically by the Judenrat, the compulsory Jewish “Council” created by the Nazi German occupiers of Pinsk. The Judenrat was required (under the threat of execution) to enforce German demands, such as registering the Jewish population and collecting financial payments to Germans.

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S P I S
Dominikanska

mieszkańców domu № 68 przy ulicy Dominikanska m. Pińska

Nazwisko i imię właściciela domu Goldman Ajzik jego adres Pinsk ul. Dominikanska 68

Nazwisko i imię osoby odpowiedzialnej za sporządzenie spisu i jej adres Goldman Ajzik Pinsk ul. Dominikanska 68
(właściciel domu, w razie jego nieobecności głogowy lokator domu)

Numer porządkowy	Nazwisko i imię	Imiona rodziców	Rok urodzenia	Wyznanie	Zawód (specjalność)	Miejsce urodzenia	UWAGI
1	Goldman Ajzik	Meer	1893	Zydowski	Stolarz	Pinsk	1 Kuch. 5 osob. dom
2	Goldman Mirka	Leizer Feiga	1898	"	gospodini	"	1 Kuch. 3 osob. dom
3	Goldman Sara	Ajzik	1925	"	uczeń	"	1/5 ✓
4	Goldman Chana	"	1922	"	"	"	- 1/1 ✓
5	Goldman Leizer	"	1929	"	"	"	- 1/1 ✓
6	Rudnierz Zlensia	Leizer	1890	"	uczenn.	"	1/3 ✓
7	Kot Ruwin-Dawid	Jankiel	1881	"	Buchhalter	"	1 Kuch. 3 osob. dom
8	Kot Rachil	Osher	1897	"	gospodini	"	1/3 ✓
9	Kot Brajna	Dawid	1932	"	uczeń	"	1/3 ✓
10	Kot Fajga	"	1936	"	"	"	1/3 ✓
11	Kot Aron	"	1911	"	lekarz	"	2/13
12	Kot Fajga	Kadın	1920	"	Pianistka	gradno	

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Figure 3: Dwellers of 68 Dominikanska street. The family list is made probably in late summer or spring of 1941.

Such family lists were typically written in a particular order. The list would start with the male head of the family, followed by his wife, then their unmarried children, then married children with their spouses, etc. This is exactly the structure of the tabular list of the document “Dwellers of 68 Dominikanska”. The Kot family starts at number 7 with Ruwin-Dawid Kot, whose father name (the third column of the document) is Jankiel (Yankel). He was born in 1881 (the fourth column), of Zydowska (Jewish) faith (the fifth column), his occupation was Buchhalter (accountant, bookkeeper), born in Pinsk (the seventh column). One of his children (at number 11) was Aron Kot, born 1911, a “lekarz” (Polish for physician). This is clearly the family of our cousins.

At number 8 in the list is the wife of David, Rachil daughter of Osher (Osher), born in 1897. She was too young to be the mother of Aron born in 1911 or of Rose born even earlier, perhaps 1907. We can conjecture that Rachil was the second wife of David. The first wife, Zlata, the mother of Aron and Rose, probably died prior to early 1920s. Parenthetically, the influenza epidemics was a common cause of death in 1918-1920. This would explain why on both the 1922 photo and the 1928 photo, David and his children pose without the children’s mother.

At numbers 9 and 10 we find young children of Rachil and David: Brajna born 1932 and Fajga born 1936. David’s mother was Feiga, so we can conjecture that little Fajga was named in honor of her dead

grandmother. Considering that the first child of Rachil was born in 1932, we may conjecture that David married Rachil perhaps in 1930 or 1931.

If David indeed married Rachil so many years after he lost Zlata, several thoughts come to mind. Perhaps David was deeply devoted to the memory of his late wife Zlata and did not wish to re-marry? Perhaps he did not want to traumatize his children by having them to deal with a step-mother, and decided to re-marry only after the children came of age?



Figure 4: Possibly a daughter of David Kot and Rachil, either Brajna or Fajga.

One more photograph in possession of Lorraine Frazier depicts a baby of about 12-15 months old. Relatives told Lorraine that the baby was related to David Kot's family, perhaps a grandchild of David. The stamps on the back of the photo indicate that the photo was taken in Pinsk and also include a

business-like stamp “R. D. Kot, Pinsk, Listowskiego 14.” The Listowski street was a major, prestigious street of Pinsk. Perhaps this was the address of David’s accounting business. All in all, we might conjecture that the child is a daughter of David and Rachil, either Brajna or Fajga.

Returning to the “Dwellers of 68 Dominikanska,” at number 11 we see the son of David, Aron, a physician born in 1911. The next person on the list has to be his wife, Fajga daughter of Kadisz (Kadish). She is a pianist by profession, born in Grodno (a town about 260 km north-west of Pinsk) in 1920. She is very young, only 21 years old, and she and Aron have no children listed. They probably have married very recently.

It is fascinating to imagine this young couple. She probably comes from a well-to-do family because a poor girl would unlikely choose or receive a professional musical education. He proudly carries his prestigious title and position of a doctor. In the entire Jewish community of Pinsk there are barely a dozen physicians, as we see in another document. His is a very distinguished role. They probably have a circle of friends, other young professionals with scientific and artistic interests. They attend parties, sing-alongs where Fajga plays piano, outings, etc. All this is destroyed by the war and Holocaust.

Other documents Alexander found in the Yad VaShem database add details to the story. One of them is prepared in August 1942 by the Judenrat on an order of the German authorities and lists (in Russian) Pinsk’s medical professionals (a total of 11) whose accounting books were surrendered to the City Financial Authority. Dr. Aron Kot is on the list. Apparently he maintained a private practice. Another document in German dated January 1, 1942, lists Aron as a staff member of the Jewish Hospital. There, his father’s name is listed as Dawid, and his birth date is August 1, 1911.

JUDEN-RAT
Stadt Pinsk

август 1942

№ 2013.2


Финансовому Отделу Городского Управления

в Пинске

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Донесем сдаем бухгалтерские книги лиц, занимавшихся медицинской практикой:-

- ✓ 1/ Фельдшер Лившиц Ш.
- ✓ 2/ Др. Лев
- ✓ 3/ Др. Иоз Бернарт
- ✓ 4/ Зуб. Врач. М. Фельдман
- ✓ 5/ Др. Эльштейн Двейра
- ✓ 6/ Др. Вильковиц Бенъямин
- ✓ 7/ Др. Лемис Х.
- ✓ 8/ Зуб. врач Каценальсон С.
- ✓ 9/ " техн. Шисман Нахман
- ✓ 10/ Др. Кот Арон
- ✓ 11/ Зуб. техн. Готлиб Давид


Председатель Иудейского Совета

Книги возвращены 21/III-42.

Давид Готлиб.

Figure 5: List of Pinsk Jewish medical professionals whose accounting books were surrendered to the City Financial Authority. August 1942.

In April 1942, all Jews living in Pinsk were herded into a small part of Pinsk which was surrounded by guards. This became the Pinsk Ghetto https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinsk_Ghetto . A list of Jews of that period (written in German) shows that David, Rachil and their two young children were moved to a dwelling (probably terribly overcrowded) at Nord Strasse 10 (by that time Polish street names were renamed in German). Nord Strasse, unlike the Kot's pre-war house on Dominikanska street, was within the confines of the ghetto. Aron (who is listed as "arzt", a German for physician) and his wife Fajga were moved to Nord Strasse 37.

In the last days of October 1942, Nazis and their local collaborators killed all Jews of the Pinsk Ghetto, about 26,000 persons. Sadly, there is no reason to believe that anyone of David and Aron families survived the killings.

And what about Rose Kot, the older sister of Aron? Unfortunately, Alexander was unable to find in the Yad VaShem database anyone who could be identified as that person. Very likely, by that time she was already married and had a different surname, which we don't know. Nobody heard from her after the war. It is unlikely that she survived.

Many other relatives of David and Aron Kot perished in Pinsk Ghetto. In particular, we know that Ester-Beili Ivri (born Kot) and Perel Motilets (born Kot), and their families, perished in the ghetto. They were daughters of David's second cousin Shlema Kot.