

## **The Fighting Pioneer**

The unveiling ceremony of a square name in Netanya, August 31, 2015

OR:

### **The struggle of the Jewish underground as a source of inspiration for our struggle for the establishment of the state of Israel**

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My father, the late Aryeh Drenger was the first cousin of the late Shimon Dranger  
(the spelling of Drenger/Dranger preserves the original difference in spelling)

What is the Fighting Pioneer? Who are the fighting pioneers? The "He-Haluz ha-Lohem" is a pioneering Jewish youth organization in Krakow, founded in 1942 by many youth movements, such as Akiva, Hashomer Hatzair, Religious Hashomer, Pioneering Youth Federation, Zionist Youth, the Scout, and more. Most of the original nucleus was from "Akiva" whose heads were Dolek Libeskind, Shimon Dranger, and their colleagues formulated the concept and ways of struggle of the entire fighting underground. Shimon Dranger was the Editor-in-Chief of the movement's underground newsletter, The Fighting Pioneer. The last ten surviving issues of the newsletter, and Gusta Davidson Dranger's book, Shimon's wife, written on toilet paper and his 16 chapters survived, are the only written documents that open the hatch to the troubled days of the Holocaust of European Jews in general and the personal holocaust of members of the Jewish fighting movement in Krakow in particular.

Shimon Dranger was born in Krakow in 1917, and was one of the activist leaders of the Jewish underground in Krakow. He argued that the Jews had no chance of surviving the Nazi inferno, but their stubborn struggle gives cause and purpose to their deaths and perpetuates the legacy of the uncompromising battle with the enemy and instilling this tradition for the future to come. An example for the struggling Jews in the Land of Israel that must embrace their way to realize the establishment of a state for the Jewish people.

The need of Shimon to write his words and retain testimonies after his colleagues, was a strong need as a contribution to their successors' struggle for the building of the State of Israel. The struggle to keep writing was even fiercer than keeping themselves alive, see the struggle of Gusta Davidson Dranger who wrote her diary, and made extreme effort that her story will never be forgotten, even if she killed. Today we know the book as "Justina's Diary."

In 1991, Eliezer Schwed wrote in the journal "Nativ" for Social Political Thought and Culture a long article of two chapters on the thoughts of Shimon Dranger. Most of the citations are taken from this article. The Article title: "The Existential and Moral Dilemma of Armed Resistance in the Ghetto: The Realistic-Idealist Thought of Simon Dranger." My remarks here are also based on my daughter's research paper, Anat Drenger, "The History of the Jewish Fighting Pioneers Underground Organization in Krakow during the Holocaust" The Pioneer Fighter. "A work she wrote while studying at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The moral deliberations of these young leaders of the ghettos established in Polish towns, were from an early stage, the recognition that armed resistance was the only way to adhere to their moral and human values, and was the only way they could protect their image as human beings and Jews against the absolute evil.

What is the concept of "absolute evil"? It is an evil that forces them to cooperate in exterminating themselves, their brothers and families, an evil that does not content itself with causing physical and mental

extreme suffering, but causes its victims the subhuman feeling and inability to behave and embrace their values.

Eliezer Shavid wrote that it is worth preserving the writings of Abba Kobner, Mordechai Anilevich, Mordechai Tannenbaum, and others, but the most prominent man in the boldness of thought, thoroughness and depth of expression was Shimon Dranger, a member of the Bnei Akiva movement in Krakow.

The sober and realistic analysis of Shimon Dranger of the situation of the Jews under Nazi rule, the conclusions about the nature of the practical action required, the understanding of why the Nazis behaved so barbarically, and how small is the belief, that anyone willing to reach out for help from the non-Jewish environment, led them to believe that they must fight for themselves, to slightly slow down their own extermination. They had the fiery belief that Nazism would eventually dissipate and that Israel would be redeemed in its own land.

In his article in *The Fighting Pioneer* on August 13, 1943, exactly 72 years ago, in an article called "In the Aspaclaria of the Future" Shimon Dranger wrote that, in the light of his present experience, he anticipates the difficult struggle that will continue even after the war, until the people of Israel will acquire proper means of defense. How true this sentence is today.

He added: "When the existence of the single depends on mere chance, and the existence of the general public has reached its lowest, it is worth reviewing at a glance, that the personal point of view is not real; personally we are all lost, but we must show the historical significance, and boldly and courageously say that our death will not be the end of the world, and the history of humanity, like the history of the Jews, will continue to move in their orbits, even though our mass grave is already gone".

"The history of the Jews will continue to move in its path. Individuals have no hope of life, but there is still hope for our people. Even if we cannot be saved, we can give a national significance for our struggle, this is a kind of immortality of the soul.

He added: "We have never known such total annihilation and we have never been so deadlocked, that in the end, among those remaining alive, the entire European Jewish community would be absent, which was until now, until the war, the healthiest part of our people."

The latest push for action followed the deportation of the Jews to the Krakow extermination camps, which began in June 1942. Our members know that the Jews are being transported to the gas chambers of death, while the public believe they are being sent to labor camps as published by the Germans. Members of the youth movements are now rising in order to put an end to submission, to the lack of response, and the proposal is no longer to keep silent. Shimek's remarks can be felt by members of the movement, which eventually led to the armed struggle: "How painful it is to see the thousands of women, children, the elderly, and even men with whom they are still fighting, being led to the slaughter - and not responding.

Enough, do not be silent any longer! We will not go as slaughtered cattle, our neighbors are silent, the world is silent, even we are silent. Enough, we won't shut up anymore! We will not go as slaughtered cattle, we shall not submit our throats to the slaughterer, we escape from deportation, defend ourselves and it will be an active resistance ... Our desire to be saved to be a generation of Avengers, so if we survive, we will survive with weapons in our hands! History calls us to embark on a new path. Let's go.."

Shimon Dranger added: "The truth of our loneliness has been confirmed, we can only count on ourselves, we pay the price for allowing European comfort to put us to sleep, we have dissipated our power in foreign fields, rather than build our own independence. Only this germ of the Jewish state is the guarantee for the resurrection of our people. We believe that the Jews will be independent again.

The Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel is the only hope. It guarantees that the Jews can defend themselves in their own country. Even in the face of inevitable death, our hearts are with the people of the Land of Israel. Our every act paves the way of our people to freedom, promoting the independent homeland building. We

want to die with the knowledge that, in the future, the disgrace of slave's death of Jews, will not be a burden on the Jews, and they will not be ashamed to mention the Jews of Europe who went as sheep to the slaughter and could not transcend the courage to die defensively. We will not go as sheep to the slaughter !! " They managed to fulfill their dream - to preserve the memory of their struggle for three lines in history, and to die with dignity while resisting the enemy. Looking back on their experience, there is nothing left but to be proud of them and their actions and to hold their legacy in our hearts.

Shimon and Gusta Dranger have done us a favor by giving us "Justina's Diary" and "Fighting Pioneer" issues. These vibes are a testament to the magnitude of the courage of the Jewish pioneering youth in Krakow who faced German killers in their struggle for the life and dignity of the Jewish people.

But Shimon Dranger describes the future from his implication for the present: "It is easier to die knowing that there is a pulse of Jewish life in Eretz Israel, and when we are not be alive, they are the only ones who will remember us with excitement."

What I am doing today with intense excitement in this composition is to remind us of their memory. It is appropriate that these testaments in the fighting pioneer's newsletters, in the underground pioneer fighters, be remembered forever and there will be a street and a square named after them in Israel.

This article I write in memory of my parents, Miriam and Aryeh Drenger, my father is the cousin of Shimek Dranger. May their memory be blessed.

Thank you.

Professor Benni Drenger

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