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Conversation on Eastern Parkway

CIRCA TISHREI 5740

The little time the Rebbe spent walking in or out of public spaces, was a prime opportunity for many who sought the Rebbe's *brocha* on important matters in their lives, and who were for one reason or another unable to write a letter, go in for *yechidus*, or enlist the help of *mazkirus*.¹

Children often gathered in the foyer to receive nickels for *tzedaka*; Chassidim as well as visitors approached

the Rebbe on his walk to or from davening; and the list goes on.

A less frequent occurrence was for the Rebbe to initiate a conversation with someone in the open, outside of *farbrengens* or dollars distribution.

The scene captured in these pictures is one such exception.

We see the Rebbe in an animated discussion with Rabbi Chaim Yitzchak

Poupko, on the front steps of 770, sometime at the end of Tishrei 5740.

“BEHIND” BEHIND THE PICTURE

Before we can relate what the exchange dwelled upon, let us shed some light on the persona of Rabbi Poupko:

Rabbi Chaim Yitzchok Poupko was a prominent rov in the East New York section of Brooklyn, and a scion of a distinguished family. He is both the offspring and patriarch of rabbonim, many leading *kehillos* around the world to this day. His family traces its roots back to Russia, where Rabbi Poupko’s father was the rov of Veliz, a small town, and from where he fled at a mere 13 years of age, to escape forceful *chillul Shabbos* in Russian schools. In 5698 he married the daughter of the Tomashpol-Koidnover Rebbe, Rabbi Moshe Schneersohn-Twersky, who was a distant relative of the Rebbe.²

His father-in-law enjoyed a very warm relationship first with the Frierdiker Rebbe and eventually with the Rebbe, and thus began Rabbi Poupko’s own connection with Lubavitch.

But Rabbi Poupko, a man of stature in his own right, had one strong passion that inevitably lead him to the Rebbe’s doorstep; he was a fierce activist on behalf of *shleimus ha’aretz*, and a tireless opponent to any territorial concession or appeasement gimmicks to the Arabs.

He sat on the “International Board of Rabbis for Eretz Yisroel”³ and led an unrelenting campaign rallying rabbis to



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pasken on the forbidden nature of territorial concessions, exposing *halacha’s* view on contemporary matters of national security.

Knowing this, we can now understand Rabbi Poupko’s own description of the scene presented here:

“I had just exited the main shul downstairs after *shacharis*, and was standing in front of the steps that led to the path to the front door of 770, when suddenly the Rebbe arrived from his house.

The Rebbe, noticing me, asked me if I had time to speak; I responded that to talk to the Rebbe I have all the time in the world!

The Rebbe then proceeded to list the numerous faults and dangers that the recently-signed peace agreement with Egypt posed to the Jewish people, as did the talk of giving up land to our enemies.

“Over the course of the conversation the Rebbe gave practical advice regarding things we should do, and others which we ought to avoid.



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One particularly fond memory I have of that episode was when the Rebbe told me (in Yiddish): ‘I am certain that you will succeed, and it will be not only your (personal) success, but that of *kedushas ha’aretz* and of *Klal Yisroel*.’”

Throughout the many years of his long career, he received warm words of encouragement from the Rebbe on many occasions, something he sought and appreciated with great satisfaction.

Rabbi Poupko passed away in the summer of 5760. **T**

1. See A Chassidisher Derher 36 (113) “Behind the Picture”
2. It is worthy to mention that when Rabbi Moshe Schneersohn-Twersky passed away, the Rebbe was intimately involved in all matters pertaining to his *tahara* and subsequent burial, even carrying the *aron* at the *levaya*. He was interred in the Chabad *chelka* at Montefiore cemetery, near the Rebbe’s Ohel.
3. ועד הרבנים העולמי למען ארץ ישראל.