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Lapidos-Wolff 5784), both by Rabbi Zushe Wolff.*

P I N P O I N T S

STORIES OF THE RABBEIM'S
REACH AND IMPACT AROUND THE GLOBE

MUNICH, GERMANY



“GUARDED” SHMURAH MATZAH

The Rebbe Rashab traveled frequently outside his home in Lubavitch for *askanus* and health-related reasons. For most of 5661, from Kislev to Elul, the Rebbe Rashab spent much of his time in Worishofen, Germany, a health resort not far from Munich. While the trip was primarily for medical treatments available in Worishofen, the Frierdiker Rebbe records in his diary¹ that the Rebbe Rashab also engaged in communal affairs. He met with prominent leaders in various cities, including Berlin, Vienna, and Paris, to discuss issues affecting Russian Jewry, especially those relating to the “Pale of Settlement.”

As a larger, more established city, nearby Munich served as a resource for the Rebbe Rashab during his stay. One visit is documented in a letter the Rebbe Rashab sent to the Frierdiker Rebbe, describing a trip to Munich to procure matzah for Pesach:

“Yesterday, I traveled to Munich to receive the *shmurah* [matzah]. Before leaving, I was informed by the person to whom the matzah had been addressed that the package had already arrived and was no longer in customs. I understood this to mean that the box had been opened outside my presence, which caused me great distress [for I was not there to make sure it remained free of *chametz*].

Upon arriving in Munich, the individual [who received the package] told me that he, too, had not

been present when the box was opened, meaning that it had been unsealed by the customs officials with no Jew present. Understandably, this caused me even deeper pain.

However, upon inspecting the contents, I found that one of the tin containers had not been opened, and its seal remained intact. I thanked Hashem from the depths of my heart that I had *shmurah matzah* with which to fulfill the mitzvah [on the Seder nights], and to eat throughout Pesach. I am deeply grateful to Hashem for this kindness... and I pray that going forward as well, I will be spared even from the slightest trace (*mashehu*) of *chametz*... and that I no longer remain in this foreign land, but return home in peace...”²

FROM NEW YORK TO MUNICH

The Rebbe Rashab would later voice pointed criticism of Germany and its Kaiser in the lead-up to World War I and throughout the war itself. Germany’s descent into darkness deepened with the onset of World War II, during the *nesius* of the Frierdiker Rebbe. Yet, with the conclusion of both wars, the country was again ready for the light of Torah and Chassidus to shine, piercing through the darkness. Munich, too, received the Rabbeim’s focused attention.

Safely in America shortly after the war’s end, the Fri-



MUNICH AROUND THE TIME OF THE REBBE RASHAB'S VISIT.

erdiker Rebbe received a letter in 5708 from a Yisroel Meir Munitz, who had recently traveled to Munich. He described the absence of a proper school there, and his desire to help change that reality.

The Frierdiker Rebbe responded with warm words:

“I was very pleased to read your letter... about your dedication to establishing a *cheder* where children will learn Chumash and Nach with Rashi, and some will also study Gemara. It is of utmost importance to also teach them the meaning of the words in *davening*, *Birchas Hamazon*, and selected practical *halachos*, and to instruct them about good conduct in honoring their parents and loving their peers. Be mindful of the education of girls as well. Stay in touch by mail with the *hanhala* of Merkos L’Inyonei Chinuch [here in New York].

“May Hashem bless you with success in raising upright *talmidim* and *talmidos*...”⁴

The Frierdiker Rebbe addressed another letter around that time to a chossid who had recently lived in the city, inquiring as to what had been accomplished in terms of “strengthening *shiurei Torah*, the laws of *taharas hamishpacha*, *kashrus*, and Shabbos, especially among the youth.” The Frierdiker Rebbe also asked whether he had traveled to other areas to encourage adherence to Torah and *mitzvos*, and requested that he remain in contact with Merkos on the matter.⁵

Two years later, in 5710, the Frierdiker Rebbe again

inquired about the state of Jewish education in Munich for boys and girls in a letter to Reb Dovid Henich Zaklikowsky, then serving as a shochet in the city. The Rebbe encouraged him to remain there and continue his sacred work “in the place to which Divine Providence has led you to fulfill your soul’s purpose.”⁶

KEHOS IN EUROPE

With the high cost of printing in the United States during the 5700s, the Rebbe, in charge of Kehos, sought to

THE FRIERDIKER REBBE’S VISIT

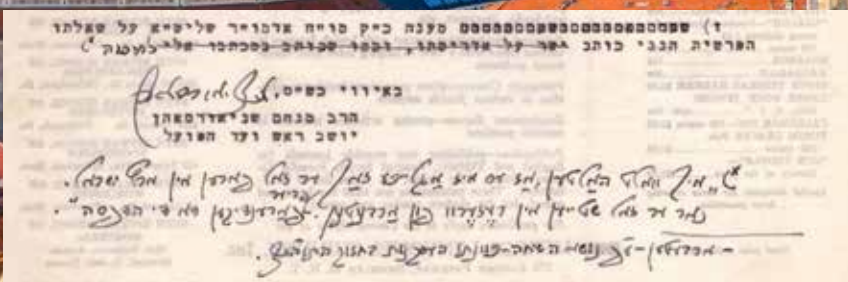
Returning from his historic visit to Eretz Yisroel, en route to the United States, the Frierdiker Rebbe notes in his diary³ that he passed through Munich on 22 Menachem Av 5689.



REB DOVID BRAWMAN.



THE 47TH EDITION OF THE TANYA, PRINTED IN MUNICH, GERMANY, 5707.



IN THIS HANDWRITTEN NOTE FROM THE REBBE, REB DOVID IS ENCOURAGED TO IMMIGRATE TO ERETZ YISROEL AFTER HE CONCLUDES THE PRINTING PROJECT.

establish additional centers for publishing *sifrei Chassidus*. During his visit to Paris in 5707 to bring Rebbetzin Chana to New York, the Rebbe appointed Reb Dovid Bravman to open a European branch of Kehos, where printing was significantly more affordable, especially in Germany.

Munich was chosen for the printing. Between the years 5707 and 5711, many *seforim* were printed there, including the first-ever *Tanya* printed under the Frieddiker Rebbe's direct instruction. This was followed by *Siddur Torah Or*, *Sefer Hamaamarim Yiddish*, *Torah Or*, *Likkutei Torah*, the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, the *Shu"t* of the Tzemach Tzedek, and several other *seforim*.

The operation continued until rising inflation in Germany made printing increasingly expensive. In 5711, the Rebbe allowed Reb Dovid to immigrate to Eretz Yisroel, having completed his *shlichus*.⁷

THE SLABODKA GRADUATE'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE REBBE

When postwar Germany was divided between the Soviets and the United States, Munich found itself in free West Germany, under the control of the US Army. By 5715, the West German civilian government had assumed full authority, and the U.S. military occupation officially ended, though American influence remained strong.

Against this backdrop, the Jewish community faced growing concern about potential changes to their religious

A BASE FOR ANASH IN POST-WAR EUROPE

Of particular note when discussing Munich is the nearby refugee camp in Pocking, home to forty thousand Jewish refugees who had escaped the Soviet Union at the end of World War II. Among them were some three hundred members of *anash* who spent a considerable amount of time there, establishing the full infrastructure needed to sustain a *chassidische* lifestyle, including a branch of Tomchei Temimim and schools for girls. It was during this same period that the branch of Kehos in Europe was established and run by the Pocking refugees.

freedoms, which until then had been strongly protected by U.S. authorities. The Chief Rabbi of Munich, Rabbi Shmuel Abba Snieg, turned to the Rebbe with a dilemma: Should he open a new school for the community, anticipating the changes that were to come?

In response, the Rebbe advised Rabbi Snieg to leverage the Americans' fear of Soviet influence:

"By forming the appropriate connections with representatives of the American occupation, it will be possible to maintain the [existing] education-



RABBI SHMUEL ABBA SNIEG, IN HIS YOUTH BEFORE THE WAR.

al [structure] without changing it, especially because [the Americans'] current policy is to strengthen all religious matters as much as possible, since they've come to realize that religion is the only true shield and defense against the Reds [i.e., the Communists], whose fear looms over them.”⁸

This was just one of many letters exchanged over several decades between the Rebbe and Rabbi Snieg, a Slabodka graduate who helped found Yeshivas Eitz Chaim in Lithuania before becoming Munich's Chief Rabbi.

The Rebbe's letters to Rabbi Snieg show a continued influence of the *ruach* of Chassidus in Munich, with the Lithuanian-educated Chief Rabbi serving as the Rebbe's emissary in many areas. Rabbi Snieg frequently reported to the Rebbe about the well-attended Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengens held in his city and informed the Rebbe of a communal *hachlata* to recite *Tehillim* on *Shabbos Mevarchim*, in accordance with the Frierdiker Rebbe's *takana*.

In one letter in response to his report on the Yud-Tes Kislev farbrengen, the Rebbe concludes with a *bracha*:

“May [the *zechus* of the farbrengen] assist you and your wife for improved health... and for success in all your activities as *mara dasra*. Certainly, you will continue with increased strength in all your work, and particularly in matters relating to the *chinuch* of the children, and no doubt, with proper effort in the school regarding which you wrote to me.”

“Ultimately, you will certainly see success. Especially since, as a result of the Alter Rebbe's *mesirus nefesh* for Chassidus [which was commemorated on Yud Tes Kislev], the Heavenly *Beis Din* issued a *psak* that in all matters of Torah, *yiras Shamayim*, and good *middos*, all who are *mekushar* to and follow the Alter Rebbe's path will have the upper hand.”⁹

The Rebbe also guided him on the question of introducing *limudei chol* in the school, advising that the decision rested on his own discerning judgment, because, while the Rabbeim were generally strongly opposed to such a move, there were rare instances in which they nevertheless supported similar schools, albeit behind the scenes.¹⁰

A SHLIACH TO MUNICH

With¹¹ a vacancy in the position of Chief Rabbi of Munich in 5747, the community leadership turned to Rabbi Yaakov Biderman, the Rebbe's *shliach* to Austria since 5740, asking him to assume the role. Rabbi Biderman directed them to the Rebbe, explaining that as the Rebbe's *shliach*, he was not in a position to leave his post. The Vice President of the Munich Jewish community, along with other officials, sent a letter to the Rebbe formally requesting that Rabbi Biderman be sent.

The Rebbe's response in English, dated 15th of Kislev 5747, reads, “In reply, I regretfully have to advise that I am unable to accede to your request (and the person you write about cannot leave his current position).” Before affixing his holy signature, the Rebbe concluded his letter with a *bracha* in connection with the approach of Chanukah.

However, a permanent *shliach* for Munich was not long in coming. Through the Rebbe's “traveling *shliach*” to Europe, Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Glick, the community requested that Rabbi Yisrael Meir Diskin and his wife be sent to Munich as the Rebbe's *shluchim*. The previous *rav*, who had recently been dismissed from his position, was still living in the city. Seemingly in deference to him, the Rebbe gave his *haskama* only after the former *rav* joined the community leadership in formally signing off on the request. The Rebbe's blessing came in the winter of 5749, and the first *shluchim* ever sent to Germany were on their way.



“L’HATZLACHA B’AVODAS HAKODESH”

Shortly after the Diskins arrived in Munich, they sent a detailed report to the Rebbe outlining their initial activities. In response, they merited a letter from the Rebbe, addressed to both of them and dated 7 Nissan 5749.

After acknowledging receipt of their *duch*, the Rebbe wrote a *bracha* in honor of the upcoming Yom Tov of Pesach.

A beautiful testament to the Rebbe’s concern for their shlichus in Munich, which continues until today, appears at the bottom of the letter, where, in his holy handwriting, the Rebbe added the words:

“*L’hatzlacha ba’avodas hakodesh* – for success in your holy work.” **T**

1. Published in Sefer Hatoldos Admur HaRashab p. 247.

2. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRashab vol. 3, p. 233.

3. Published in Masa HaRabi B’eret Hakodesh p. 271.

4. Igros Kodesh Admur HaRayatz vol. 9, p. 363.

5. Ibid. vol. 13, p. 453-4.

6. Ibid. p. 511.

7. See at length in Hotzo’as Seforim - Kehos p. 137ff.

8. Igros Kodesh vol. 10, p. 297-8.

9. Ibid. vol. 12, p. 256.

10. Ibid. vol. 20, p. 120. For an in-depth discussion on the topic of studying *limudei chol*, see “Purity of the Mind” - Derher Iyar 5780.

11. The last two sections of this article are based on Shlichus Kedosha p. 84ff.

12. Toras Menachem vol. 70, p. 192-3.

13. Ibid. p. 298-9.

TRAGEDY IN MUNICH

A dark chapter in Munich’s postwar history occurred in Elul 5732, when, *Rachmana litzlan*, eleven young Jews, athletes on Israel’s Olympic team, were targeted and murdered during the Olympic Games.

Initially, the Rebbe did not speak about the tragedy publicly. “My *inyan* is, like any Jew, to make a *dirah b’tachtonim*, not to take a stand on current events!” the Rebbe explained when he eventually addressed the events at a *farbrengen* three months later.¹² He was now choosing to speak, he said, in order to confront the root cause of the massacre so that such a thing would never happen again.

Only a deep lack of Jewish pride and a sense of inferiority before the nations of the world could lead a group of young Jews to travel to Germany ‘to dance amongst non-Jews’—as if they had entirely forgotten what had happened to six million of their fellow Jews not long before. That mentality, the Rebbe emphasized, must be corrected going forward.

[The Rebbe also noted the German government’s responsibility in the massacre, something officials denied at the time but was later understood by all to be the case.]

Several weeks later, the Rebbe spoke again about the massacre and decried not only the trip to Germany despite its history but also the Olympics themselves, given their origins in *avoda zara*.¹³



RABBI YISRAEL MEIR DISKIN.