

Our Great Disaster

by Sore Oksman

(From Chapter 14 of the Felshtin Yizkor Book, New York, 1937. Sore Oksman came to America with four of her children right after the pogrom. After her death, her children found among her possessions her handwritten description of the pogrom.)

We lived two miles from Proskurov in the town of Felshtin, Podolia Gubernia. When we heard about the terrible disaster in Proskurov (Sabbath, the 16th day in the Month of Adar I), we went to the Rabbi for advice and counsel because we knew the pogromists were heading in our direction.

The Rabbi instructed us to fast that day, and we did. We also collected a few hundred rubles so we could bribe the hooligans when they would come into town, hoping that this payoff would spare our lives.

Monday evening after the fast, soldiers rode into town ... The townsfolk fell into a panic and, leaving everything behind, ran for their lives. They did not know where to run and followed wherever their eyes took them. The soldiers had already blocked the roads and let no one escape from town. The gentiles of the town and of the surrounding villages were forewarned that if they harbored any Jews, they too would be killed along with the Jews. They followed orders accordingly and let no one into their homes., As a result, we were forced to hide in attics and cellars.

When I fled my home, my three sons were with me. Somehow, along the way, the two older ones got separated from me, and I had no idea where they were or what happened to them. Only my youngest son was still with me ...

I, who write these words, am a driven woman. The mother of two murdered sons. The oldest, Isaiah son of Khayim, was 28 years old and the youngest, Tsvi, was only 15 years old. They were torn from their mother's side and killed in the worst way. It is six years now that I am here with my children and my middle son and his family. May they be well.