

## Hirsh Glik excerpt from Rikle Glezer testimony

Translated from Yiddish by Jay Saper

Yekhiel Sheyntukh: I'd like to ask: were you a part of the organized group of writers in the Vilna ghetto?

Rikle Glezer: No, I wasn't, but truthfully they wanted me to join. Hirsh Glik came to me with someone. Perhaps he also wrote, I'm not sure, but his name was Dimentshtayn, maybe the name's familiar?<sup>1</sup>

Yekhiel Sheyntukh: Seems so, yes.

Rikle Glezer: I then read the poem, "*Zog nit keynmol*."

Yekhiel Sheyntukh: Do you remember when that was?

Rikle Glezer: That was during a quiet period in the ghetto—1942.<sup>2</sup> He read me the poem and asked, "How do you like it? What kind of melody could it be set to?" We borrowed the melody from a Russian song—I think it was the "Cossack's Song." In that time we always used Russian melodies. That song went on to become world renown.

Yekhiel Sheyntukh: You really sang in that moment the same melody we still sing it to today?

Rikle Glezer: Yeah, same melody. It's a melody from a Russian song called "Cossack's Song."

Yekhiel Sheyntukh: Could it be that was the moment when Hirsh Glik's words were first set to that melody?

Rikle Glezer: It was a Russian melody.

Yekhiel Sheyntukh: Who selected the melody?

Rikle Glezer: I'm not sure. He read me the words and then sang. I don't remember precisely but I think that was only the melody because he wrote the words to fit the rhythm of that melody.

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<sup>1</sup> Likely the director of the cultural department Yisroel Dimentman.

<sup>2</sup> Typically credited as being written in 1943 in the wake of the Warsaw ghetto uprising.

Yekhiel Sheyntukh: But he wrote it before?

Rikle Glezer: He wrote it in his home. I think that he adjusted the words so they'd fit the melody because he wasn't a composer.

Yekhiel Sheyntukh: So what happened? They wanted you to join?

Rikle Glezer: They made plans with me. But then came quite an unquiet period. He was older than I was, but he had heard of me. I don't know, someone gave him my address and then he showed up. Just as you came today to me today, he came to me then. I remember that I was making kugel. My hands were dirty. He came with someone, we got to know each other, and they stayed for quite a while. They read my poems and he said, "They're remarkably beautiful. You should keep writing. There's a literature club on Rudniki Street that hosts readings." I think I had gone a few times just to listen. I was a bit shy and too afraid to go up to read. Perhaps I lacked the self-esteem to share. Oh maybe I don't write well enough for my words to be worth listening to. I was quite modest. Perhaps I was too young.