

Early Research: May 1979 – July 1983

*****Prologue*****

Ever since I was a child, I have been aware that the Mokotoff name is an unusual one. With few exceptions, any person I met who knew a Mokotoff, knew a descendant of my great-grandfather, Hyman Mokotoff who migrated from Warsaw to the United States in the early part of this century with his four sons and two daughters. In a few instances where Mokotoffs were mentioned who were not part of my immediate family, there was evidence that persons with the same name lived at one time in Germany and currently live in Israel, Argentina and Australia.

Since May 1979, I have been doing research into the origin of the Mokotoff name. The results of this effort are documented below in the form of a diary. In this way the reader can share in the events which led to the discovery that all Mokotoffs in the world are related; that we share a common ancestor who was born about 1774 and died in 1843.

*****May 1979*****

How do you research your family tree? Where do you start? Do you go to a library? Do you send letters to people? Do you ask members of the family about the past? The initial impetus for the project started quite innocently when I received an unsolicited letter from Israel in May 1979 from a person who was not even a member of the family. The letter stated:

“Noticed your unusual name in the 1978–79 Mensa Register. Also noticed that there were very few families here with the same name.” The letter continued by listing the 11 persons named Mokotoff in the Tel Aviv telephone book. The letter was signed by an Israel Cohen of Bat-Yam.

Here was a starting point. All one had to do was send letters to these people and ask, “Are we related?” To give them as much information as possible, I contacted my father to find out how much he knew about the family. His knowledge was minimal. He knew his grandfather came to the United States early in the century from Warsaw, Poland and while in that city the family lived on Krochmalna street “near the jail.” He told me the names of his aunts and uncles. To this information was added everything I knew about the Mokotoff family, namely:

1. Numerous persons had told me there were Mokotoffs living in Israel.
2. About 8 years ago, a business associate from Argentina told me his parents had friends named Mokotoff who lived in Buenos Aires.
3. About 30 years ago a door to door salesman told my mother he had a piano teacher named Mokotoff when he was a child in Berlin before the war.
4. I got a phone call about 20 years ago from a person looking for someone named Mokotoff who had lived in Australia but now was in the United States.

With this minimal amount of information, 11 letters were sent to Israel asking the question “Are we related?”

What to do while awaiting the replies from Israel. Two thoughts came to mind: (1) speak to members of the family about the past and (2) go to a library to look for information...maybe there were famous Mokotoffs?

My father had already exhausted his entire knowledge of the family other than to add there was a rumor his grandfather Hyman and grandmother Geetel were first cousins. My sister Suzanne told me that cousins of

my father had done some research on the family and claimed there was a Mokotoff Park in Warsaw in the center of which was a Mokotoff mansion. Furthermore, there was even a street in Warsaw named Mokotoff street.

My sister Mona knew nothing about the family's past but provided the first piece of evidence about a Mokotoff family previously unknown to me. In 1973, my father received a letter from a Moshe Mokotow of Tel Aviv that stated he had met a friend of Mona's who was visiting Israel. Moshe was asking the same question: Are we related? In the letter he said his father, Isaac, came from Warsaw and his grandfather Tuvia came from a village near Warsaw called Warka. The letter mentioned a cousin of his father named Fishel who lived in Israel after coming from Frankfurt, Germany. The letter concluded, "I have a feeling there is some relationship between us. I never met a Mokotoff who wasn't related to me in some way."

In the course of the conversation with Mona, another potential source of family history came to mind. Our great-grandparents are buried in a cemetery in Brooklyn. Jewish tombstones contain the name of the deceased's father. After considerable cajoling, Mona volunteered to travel to Brooklyn to read the inscriptions on the tombstones to get the birth and death dates of our great-grandparents.

She called back a few days later with the information. My great-grandfather Hyman Mokotoff died in 1921 aged 69. The tombstone inscription said his father's name was Menachem Mendel. My great-grandmother Gussie (Geetel) died in 1933 aged 79. Her father's name was Godol. This information confirmed something I already knew; when I was born, I was named after my great-grandmother's father.

In just a few short weeks, I had a second branch of the tree, the family of a Moshe Mokotow from Tel Aviv and was able to go back one additional generation in my own family.

*****June 1979*****

The most obvious place to look for information about the past is a library. Fortunately I live in a suburb of New York City. The Fifth Avenue branch of the New York Public Library is one of the largest in the world (12,000,000 volumes). The next opportunity I had to go into the City included a trip to the Fifth Avenue Library. In addition to a card catalogue, the library maintains a 57 volume directory of all the books and documents it has available. An examination of the directory showed only two entries that seemed to be close to the name Mokotoff. The first was a book named *Mokotow, 1944* by a Lesław Bartelski. It was impossible to tell what the book was about because the directory listing was written in Polish. The second entry was "Abraham Elyahu Mokotowski—see Elyahu Kitov." Looking under "Kitov" was no help because the description of the works of the author was in Hebrew. I left the library empty handed, or perhaps with one valuable piece of information—as far as the Fifth Avenue Library was concerned, no one famous was named Mokotoff.

Were there Mokotoffs living in other countries? How could I find out? It came to mind that foreign consulates might have telephone books for their countries. A quick call to the Canadian consulate in New York confirmed my belief. The next few trips into the City for business included trips to the Canadian, German, Polish, Irish, and Australian consulates. All had complete sets of telephone books for their countries. None of the books had Mokotoffs listed in them. My trip to the German consulate had an amusing twist. The guard informed me the offices were closed and I would have to return some other day. I looked at the sign and saw the consulate closed at 12:30. I looked at my watch. It was 12:32. Those punctual Germans! Only one place refused to allow me to look at telephone books; the Polish consulate. The woman behind the bullet proof window rudely informed me she had no telephone books.

Going from consulate to consulate was time consuming. Furthermore it would appear I would have to be more punctual to get into the German consulate and there was the question of whether there were any

Mokotoffs still living in Warsaw.

While mentioning my project to a business associate, he made me aware of a very useful piece of information—the Fifth Avenue library has almost every telephone book in the world! On my next trip into New York, I planned to visit the Library to test his claim.

*****July 1979*****

It was now almost 75 days since the letters were sent to Israel. Not one response. The telephone books had uncovered no new Mokotoffs, the Fifth Avenue library catalog indicated there were no famous Mokotoffs. I was running out of things to do. It appeared the project would have to be abandoned for lack of new ideas.

One morning in mid-July, the telephone rang at my office. The receptionist answered and informed me the caller was a man named Gus Shaw. I knew no one with that name and was convinced the person was just another salesman trying to sell me something. I was about to tell the receptionist to have this Gus Shaw call back some other time but decided a conversation with a salesman might be a pleasant interruption from my work routine.

“Hello, Gary. This is Gustav Shaw. I am calling from Miami. I have a copy of the letter you sent my brother Yehuda Mokotow of Tel Aviv.”

My first live contact with another branch of the family!

Gus informed me that he was born Gustav Mokotoff in Frankfurt, Germany. He and his sister immigrated to the United States in the 1920s. He eventually changed his name to his wife’s maiden name, Shaw. His father and two brothers, Yehuda and Max (both names appearing in the original letter received from Israel Cohen), left Frankfurt before the war and immigrated to Israel. His father’s name was Fishel and his grandfather’s name was Tuvia. The family originally came from a small town near Warsaw called Warka. He had an aged aunt named Bella Schwitzka who was born a Mokotoff living in Strassborg, France. An uncle named Jacobo Mokotoff was living in Buenos Aires. Gus promised to send me additional information to assist in my research including a complete family tree.

At last, a response from other persons named Mokotoff. There were now three branches of the family; my branch was the first, Moshe Mokotow from Tel Aviv second, and the Frankfurt Mokotoffs the third branch.

Gus and Moshe’s family history had many parallels. Both mentioned the town of Warka. Both had grandfathers named Tuvia (which could not have been the same man). The relatives in Argentina supported my original report that persons named Mokotoff lived in that country.

Gus mentioned another interesting fact. The name Mokotoff appears in books by Isaac Bashevis Singer as a place name. He said *The Family Moskat* was one book in which it appeared.

A trip to a bookstore and a few evenings of reading uncovered the mention. On page 267 of the Fawcett Publishing Company version it says:

“The tramcars had stopped on Marshalkovska Street. Columns of soldiers marched by toward the Mokotov.”

Toward the end of July, I received a letter from Gus’s brother Yehuda confirming much of the information Gus had given me. Yehuda added that his father Fishel claimed that Singer in his books stated the founder of the Hasidic movement, Israel Baal Shem Tov, married a Mokotoff and that we came from very famous

rabbis in Poland. (Maybe we were famous after all!)

Gus sent me his family tree. His family and mine have many similar names. The names Chiel, Gotel and Gutel appear in both cases. Since Jews name their children after deceased relatives, it added weight to the probability that our two families were related. While analyzing the commonality of names, a thought occurred to me...Gus...Gary. Perhaps the two of us had the same religious name. A call to Miami confirmed the theory. Gus's Hebrew name was also Godol. Perhaps our two families were related through my great-great-grandfather.

In his letter, Gus noted that his nephew, Michael Mokotow, a professor at Hebrew University, was killed in the Yom Kippur war. He was the son of Max Mokotow.

*****August 1979*****

Having uncovered that the name Mokotow had something to do with the city of Warsaw and being very curious about the location of Krochmalna Street, it seemed appropriate to get a map of the city. Where to get it? The Polish consulate had already demonstrated their disinterest in assisting me. An alternate source; the Polish airline, Lot, might have one. The New York telephone book indicated their offices were in a very convenient place; across the street from the Fifth Avenue Library.

On my next trip to the Library, I stopped at the Lot offices. The travel agent happily gave me a map of Warsaw and on the way down the elevator, I opened the map to look for Krochmalna street. What I saw made me leap for joy!

The entire lower portion of the map was called "Mokotow!"

Within the district was a Mokotow park, a Mokotow mansion, a Mokotowski street and even a Mokotow airport. (Note: Mokotow is pronounced Mu-KU-tuf.) Maybe we were famous after all! Either that was the case, or we were named after this section of Warsaw. While leaving the library I pondered the choice and concluded that the latter was more likely. It seemed unreasonable that, given the attitude of Christian Poland toward the Jews, they would name a section of their beloved capital after a Jew.

What was the origin of the name Mokotow? The Polish consulate was not receptive to inquiries. Perhaps the Polish Mission to the United Nations would be more amiable. A letter was sent to them asking about the origin of the name Mokotow. A reply was never received.

Gus Shaw had mentioned Argentinean relatives. A Jewish business associate once told me of Mokotoffs living in Buenos Aires. A trip to the Argentinean consulate in New York was in order. I asked the man at the reception desk whether they had a Buenos Aires phone book. He reached back, grasped a thick book and handed it to me. Opening the telephone book about half way, I scanned for the M's and found for the first time the name of a Mokotoff who wasn't a direct descendant of my great-grandfather. Included was Gus's uncle Jacobo plus four other names; Enrique, Felix and Erich Mokotoff. There was also a Rene de Mokotow. Perhaps this person was not a member of the family given the difference in spelling. Perhaps he was not even Jewish.

It was time to send letters to other countries. To the Schwitzka family in France and the Mokotoffs of Argentina. After dictating letters in English, friends translated them into native tongue.

"I am doing research on the origin of my family name and have discovered there are Mokotoffs living in Argentina." "Estoy llevando a cabo una investigacion sobre el origen de mi apellido. A traves de la misma he descubierto que en Argentina viven Mokotoffs..."

"I am doing research on the origin of my family name, Mokotoff, and understand that your mother Bella Schwitzka's maiden name is Mokotoff..." "Je fais des recherches sur l'origine de mon nom de famille, Mokotoff, et si j'ai bien compris, le nom de jeune fille de votre mere, Bella Schwitzka, est Mokotoff..."

Additional trips to the Fifth Avenue Library uncovered no more information about the family. The library has an entire room devoted to Judaica, yet none of the books had references to the Mokotoff name. This included three different encyclopedias and various history books on Polish Jewry.

One interesting piece of information gotten from the history books was that prior to about 1800, few Jews in Poland had last names. It was the source of my first theory as to the origin of the family name, that in the early part of the 19th century, a man named Tuvia migrated from Warsaw to Warka. Since he only had a first name, he became known in the town as "Tuvia from Mokotow" and his descendants just assumed the Mokotow name.

Each time I went to the library, I looked through additional telephone books for persons named Mokotoff. By now I had determined there were no Mokotoffs living in London, Berlin, Warsaw, plus the major cities of Canada, Ireland, Brazil, Mexico and Australia. There was, however, an M. Mokotowich listed in the Paris telephone book.

*****September 1979*****

Paulette Sommers, the daughter of Bella Schwitzka, answered my letter. She had little to add to the information already gotten from Gus Shaw.

"Mr. Mokotoff," my secretary said. "There is a woman on the telephone who says she is Rina Mokotov from Israel." Another branch of the family heard from! Rina said that she and her husband Moshe were touring the United States and rather than respond to my original letter they waited until they reached New York so they could telephone me. (Note: There are two Moshe Mokotoffs living in Tel Aviv. Rina is the wife of Moshe Mokotov 'from Jabotinsky Street'; the other is the one who sent the letter to my father. He is Moshe Mokotow 'from Rembrandt Street'.)

I met them in Brooklyn and we drove to my sister Mona's apartment. Moshe does not speak English and my sister speaks Hebrew so Rina served as Moshe's interpreter and my sister aided me in the translation of Moshe's comments.

Moshe indicated that he was the son of Tuvia (a third Tuvia in the same generation!) Mokotov who migrated from Poland to Portsmouth, England around the turn of the century. In the 1930s, after the death of his wife, he immigrated to Palestine. He was in his 60s when he met and married a younger woman. This woman was Moshe's mother. Two weeks after Moshe was born his father was killed. As a consequence, he knew very little about the Mokotoff family.

He knew that his grandfather's name was Dov and that his father's first son, whom he left in England, had changed his name to Barnett. His half brother was no longer alive, but a son, Terry Barnett, lived in Brighton, England.

I added a fourth branch to the family tree. Three of them had Tuvias who were born in the 1870s. Almost certainly the three branches were related. It seemed strange that my family did not have a Tuvia.

I decided to contact my branch of the family. My sister Sue had told me that my father's cousin, Milton Mokotoff had done research into the family so I called him.

Milton indicated he had never done such research.

“Did you ever hear of Krochmalna Street?” I asked him.

“Of course. The family lived on that street. In fact, the opening lines of Bashevis Singer’s book, *In My Father’s Court* says that he came from Krochmalna Street,” Milton volunteered.

“Did you ever hear of a town called Warka?”

“Yes, my mother talked of it. She said that was where the family came from.”

I mentioned to Milton that I had the Yiddish names of all of his aunts and uncles but one, Joe. Did he know what Joe’s name was? Was it Yosef? Yossel?

“Let me see. Oh yes, I remember. We always used to call him Uncle Tuvia. That’s right. His name was Tuvia.”

The link between my family and the other branches had been made. We too came from Warka. We too had a Tuvia in the family.

Gus Shaw sent me an English language translation of his father’s birth certificate from Warka, Poland. It said that:

“It occurred in the town of Warka on the 22nd of October 1886 at two o’clock pm, there called personally Tobiasz Berek Mokotow, merchant, 26 years old...showed us a child of male sex, declaring that the same has been born on the 26th September ...from his legal wife Pesa nee Mokotow...the name Fiszel has been given to the child.”

It appeared there was another cousin marriage in the family. Gus’s grandmother was a Mokotow.

I had not heard from Moshe Mokotow from Rembrandt Street and was interested in getting more information about his branch. A second letter was sent which included everything I had known about the family to date.

*****October 1979*****

A letter sent to Gus Shaw on October 5 said “I think I will continue the research for about another three months.”

Contacted another cousin of my father’s, Reuben Mokotoff. He knew little about the family’s origins but volunteered additional information about his own family.

There are no Mokotoffs in the telephone books of Caracas, Glasgow, Cape Town or Johannesburg.

Another branch heard from! Received a letter from Leah Mokotov of Tel Aviv. She is the widow of Leib Yehuda Mokotov. Her knowledge of the Mokotoff family was limited but she knew that her husband’s parents were named Moshe and Zlatke, his grandfather’s name was Ychiel Tuvia and they came from a town in Poland called Garwolin. A check of a map showed that Garwolin was a town about 30 miles (50 km) west of Warka.

Sources of information come from the strangest places. On October 29, the magazine *New York* published an

article about the Jewish mayor of New York City, Edward Koch. As a secondary article, the magazine explored the mayor's roots. It mentioned the source of its information was a place in the City called YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. Originally founded in 1925 in Vilna, Poland, the Germans seized YIVO's library and archives documenting Jewish life in Eastern Europe, but some of the collection was recovered and shipped or smuggled to New York. The library and archives are considered the finest of their kind in the world.

I called the YIVO library and asked if they had any information about Warka. The librarian checked and informed me that there was nothing.

"Maybe we have the *yizkor* book for the town. Let me check," she stated.

In a few moments she returned and said, "Yes, we do. You might be interested in looking at it."

"What is a *yizkor* book?," I asked.

"It's a memorial book for the town, in remembrance of those persons from Warka who lost their lives in the Holocaust."

Another letter from Israel! This time from Moshe Mokotow with additional information about his family. He said that he had a cousin living in Australia, a woman, who knew more about the family and he was sending her copies of all the material I had sent him. He included the fact that his father was killed in Warsaw at the time of the Warsaw Ghetto rebellion.

It might come as a strange statement to some readers of this document, but this was the first time I came to realize that persons named Mokotoff died in the Holocaust.

A letter to Gus Shaw noted that "my file folder on the project is now about one inch thick!"

I had yet heard from the Argentinean Mokotoffs. Rummaging through old company records I found the United States address of the business associate who had informed me years earlier that his parents knew Mokotoffs living in Argentina. After getting his telephone number I called his office and fortunately he was in the country. He offered to assist me by calling the Mokotoffs the next time he was in Buenos Aires.

Another letter! This time from Australia! Not from Moshe's cousin, but from a woman named Brenda Tyler who was born Bruha Mokotow. She is her family's sole survivor of the Holocaust which included her father, mother, brother and four sisters. They had lived in Warsaw before the war. She had been searching since after the war for other surviving members of the Mokotoff family and was happy to hear of me.

Second letters were sent to the Mokotoffs listed in the Buenos Aires telephone book. A letter was sent to M. Mokotowich who is listed in the Paris phone book. ("Are we related?")

One Wednesday evening my wife and I returned from dinner to be informed by my excited daughter that I had received a telephone call...from Australia.

"Was the woman's name Brenda Tyler?," I asked Alexis.

"Yes," she said. "She gave me her telephone number and said you should call her."

I called her back immediately. Brenda said she was anxious to know if I had the addresses of any other persons named Mokotoff. She wanted to contact them to find out if they knew of her family. She also indicated there were women living in Warsaw to this day who were descendants of Mokotoffs. Brenda suggested that I come down to Australia to visit her. I suggested telephone calls were cheaper.

In mid-November, I visited the YIVO Institute for the first time. Its library contains a wealth of general information about Eastern European Jewry. Unfortunately for me, it is mostly in native tongue. There are books and documents in Hebrew, Yiddish, Polish, German, Russian as well as English. They have a large collection of encyclopedias including Polish and Russian secular encyclopedias as well as numerous Jewish encyclopedias in German, Hebrew and English. There are many histories of East European Jewry. The amount of material at that location is considerably greater than the Jewish section of the Fifth Avenue Library.

At this point it is important for the reader to gain an understanding of my knowledge of foreign tongues: German - one year's study in college with poor grades; Polish—none; Russian—knowledge that the alphabet had its origins in Roman, Greek and Hebrew, ability to pronounce phonetically; Yiddish—my parent's spoke Yiddish when I was a child because they knew I did not know the language (*Sha! Der kinder!*), probably know more about the language through my knowledge of German; Hebrew—six years of *cheder* and two years in secular school places me at the very fringes of the language.

My challenge at YIVO as well as other sources was to be able to locate documents in all of these languages so I could eventually get them translated by friends.

The Polish encyclopedia had information about the towns of Mokotow and Warka. As of this writing neither article has been translated. Since it is a modern day encyclopedia, it has been assumed there is little information about the past Jewish population. The Hebrew and German books merely confirmed that no one named Mokotoff rated mention.

The *yizkor* books, sadly, had much to say.

For those readers not familiar with these publications, *yizkor* books were written by the survivors of Holocaust as a memorial to the town in which they lived and the friends and relatives who died. There are over 450¹ of them, mostly commemorating towns in Poland. Although each was written independently, there is a typical style to them. The first articles are usually a history of the town from its earliest days to the Holocaust, followed by a detail account of what happened during the Holocaust period and then, in some cases, what the town is like today.

These lead articles are then followed by personal remembrances of the survivors telling of family life before and during the Holocaust. Each article is usually accompanied by pictures of those who died. These pictures are often the everyday snapshots of people who once lived; a couple playing chess, a husband and wife on a motorcycle with their young child, grandparents posing with grandchildren, etc. The articles are headed by titles such as "In My Father's House," "The Town I Once Knew," or "My Family—Rest in Peace."

The next section contains brief (three or four sentence) memorials to those families who had no survivors. Where no one could remember the exact names of the individuals killed, they are merely listed as "his wife" or "two children."

Finally, in many books, there is a necrology—roster of the dead—in alphabetic order.

¹ As of 2007, more than 1000 have been published

The *yizkor* books are written in Hebrew and Yiddish. Being able only to read phonetically either language presented an initial obstacle, but reading through the alphabetical roster of the dead in the Garwolin *yizkor* book did not present much of a problem. Under the Mem's, I read:

Mandeleel, Leiba and family
Margolis, Avish and his wife
Mokotow, Yechiel Tuvia, Rachel, Dan, Moshe and family, Leiba, Asher

There were the names of Leah Mokotov's in-laws. It was the first time I ever saw the Mokotoff name associated with the Holocaust.

Finding additional information in the *yizkor* books was not that difficult despite my inability to translate Hebrew or Yiddish. If you think of how a book is organized, you rapidly pick up other means of finding information. Read the captions under the pictures for the name Mokotoff. You may not completely understand what it says but the picture of three men on page 6 of the Garwolin *yizkor* book has a rather self-explanatory caption: "*Von recht: Shmuel-Hirsch Mokotow, Josef Blat, David Berman.*"

Look in the table of contents. Perhaps there is an article written by a Mokotoff or about a Mokotoff. From the table of contents, I was able to find an article about Leah Mokotov's husband. On the facing page is a picture of the funeral of a Moshe Mokotow. It seems unlikely that this man was Leah's father-in-law since he is listed as one of those lost in the Holocaust. Leah's letter indicated her husband's grandfather was named Ychiel-Tuvia (also lost in the Holocaust), the most likely explanation is that the funeral was for the great-grandfather. The picture shows a horse drawn hearse as well as persons dressed in attire more common to the turn of the century.

When I got the article about Leib Yehuda Mokotow translated, I found additional information including that he had a sister Dovtza, and brothers Shmuel-Hirsch and Dan. It also said that he was descended from the Aleksandrov Hasidim.

Using the identical technique in the Warka *yizkor* book, I could not find the Mokotoff name. The name Schwitzka, however, does appear. The book mentioned a piece of Americana. Kasimir Pułaski, the Polish general who fought and died in the American Revolution, was born in Warka.

In late November, I received a letter from Moshe Mokotow's cousin in Melbourne, Rachel Kabak. She provided me with the names of all her aunts and uncles and the number of children they had. She also indicated that Brenda Tyler's father and her grandmother Galilah were brother and sister. This would create yet another intra-Mokotow marriage.

*****December 1979*****

Received another letter from Moshe Mokotow. He had traveled to Jerusalem to meet the widow of Elyahu Kitov. Before immigrating to Israel, the Kitov (Mokotowski) family came from a small town near Lublin, Poland named Opole. Elyahu Kitov father's name was Michael and grandfather Tuvia (another Tuvia!). She indicated that her son, who was not in Israel at that time, knew more about the family.

Moshe enclosed a tree of the Hasidic dynasties on which he circled the name of the brother-in-law of Israel Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Hasidism. The man's name was Gershon from Kutov, which in Hebrew is Gershon Mikutov. Perhaps we are descended from famous rabbis after all!

The nicest part of the letter was an indication that my project had awakened an interest in the Mokotoff ancestry among the Israeli branches of the family. Rina Mokotov planned to invite all members of the family one of the nights of Chanukah for latkes.

*****January 1980*****

The family tree project occasionally required a bit on ingenuity in locating persons. Rina Mokotov had indicated there was an English branch of the family named Barnett. On one of the trips to New York, I stopped by the British consulate to look at the telephone books of Portsmouth and Brighton. There were close to 50 Barnetts listed in the Portsmouth book. It occurred to me that there was also a chance that the Terry Barnett I was looking for did not live in Brighton proper but in a suburb. I left the consulate with the problem of how to contact Terry Barnett unsolved. I gave serious thought to sending letters to each of the 50 persons in the telephone book, asking "Are we related? Was your name once Mokotoff?"

An alternate plan occurred to me while at the Fifth Avenue Library looking through an encyclopedia for information about the Jews of Portsmouth. Why not send letters to the synagogues of Portsmouth and Brighton asking for help.

"I am currently doing research on the origins of my family and it is my understanding that in the early part of this century a man named Tuvia Mokotow immigrated from Warsaw Poland to Portsmouth. His descendants changed their name to Barnett, some of whom live in the Brighton area. I am interested in contacting these persons and if any of them are members of your congregation, I would appreciate if you gave them this letter so that they may communicate with me."

About two weeks later, while in my office, my secretary came in and excitedly told me there was a man on the telephone who said he was calling long distance from England.

It was Terry Barnett.

Terry said he had a wealth of material about the history of his family including photographs from Poland and Russia. His grandfather Tuvia had migrated from Warsaw to Ciferopol in the Russian Crimea where he became a successful cap maker. His first wife died during the birth of her second child and as was customary during those days, her unmarried sister became Tuvia's second wife. In 1912, he left Russia for England settling in Portsmouth. Here too he became a successful business man and after the death of his second wife, immigrated to Palestine in 1934. Terry then related the story as previously told to me by Rina and Moshe Mokotov.

Terry indicated he was happy to hear about the research project. He too had thought of investigating his own family's history but never found the time. Now that someone else was doing work, he would be glad to help. He knew, for example, that before the Holocaust there were Mokotoffs living in Berlin who were cousins of his father. They were the victims of a tragic story which he would relate to me in a letter to follow.

By now I was becoming more experienced in playing detective and on my next trip to the Fifth Avenue Library I decided to try my had at a little Polish. There was that book called *Mokotow: 1944* which might give some clues as to the origin of the family name so I requested the book from the stacks at the library. A quick glance through the book made it obvious why it was titled *Mokotow, 1944*. Pictures of men in civilian dress with rifles, German and Polish documents demonstrated that it commemorated the battle between the Germans and Polish partisans for the retaking of this Warsaw suburb.

Was there any information of interest to me? I went to the beginning of the book hoping there would be a forward which included a history of the town. Despite my total lack of knowledge of the Polish language, it was obvious to me that there was. When the initial page includes the numbers "1367" and "1565" and subsequent pages have other dates in ascending order, it indicates that the author is describing the history of the town. Fortunately, the library is so huge that the book was in the Slavonic room. The librarian there

spoke Polish.

I walked over to him and as a blind guess pointed to the first page where the earliest date appeared and asked “Can you tell me what is says here?”

He happily volunteered that it said that the name Mokotow is of unknown origin and appears in documents as early as 1367. One theory was that it was named after the landlord who owned the property in the area whose name might have been Mokota. To me it was ample evidence that the name Mokotow was not of Jewish origin and confirmed the theory that we were named after the town, not the town was named after us.

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In the middle of the month, one of the letters sent to Argentina in August was returned—moved left no forwarding address. It was to Rene de Mokotow.

Terry Barnett called again to say that as an initial attempt to assist in the family tree project he went to a list of persons who made contributions to Jewish charities in England and uncovered a Shmuel Mokotow living at a hotel in London. Terry said at the next opportunity he would visit the man and find out how he is related to the rest of the family.

In mid-December I received the most important letter of the project. It was from Zvi Kitov, the eldest son of the late Elyahu Kitov. It said:

“Dear kinsman:

“It is a week now since I returned from a journey to the United States. At my mother’s home in Jerusalem, I found photocopies of your letter to Mr. Moshe Mokotov of 18 Rembrandt Street, Tel Aviv, dated November 6th. I instantly became very interested.

“I am the eldest son of the late Abraham Eliyahu Kitov (originally Mokotovsky) who was the son of Michael Mokotov of Warsaw. You have come across my father’s name in the libraries as the author of some books.

..I would like to tell you what he told me on his death bed (nearly four years ago) about the origin of the family.

“In the town of Warka there lived in the early 19th century a man named Tuvia. It was the time when the famous Hasidic leader, Rabbi Isaac of Warka, lived in that town and Tuvia was one of his closest disciples. This Tuvia was a remarkable man of ability in business matters and in carrying out relatively complex projects. He was the one who built the great *shul* (synagogue) of Rabbi Isaac. This particular shul was outstanding in that its wooden boards were not laid one on top of the other horizontally, as was the custom in all wooden synagogues, but rather they were erected vertically as columns. It was the idea of Tuvia to have an association to the tabernacle that the Israelites had erected in the Desert as it is said in the book of Exodus (26:15): ‘And thou shalt make the boards for the tabernacle of acacia wood standing up.’

“People used to call this Tuvia (in Yiddish) *der groiser reb Tuvia* meaning ‘the great Mr. Tuvia’ because of the central role he played in the life of the community and also because of the big family that he raised; around twenty sons and daughters, a hundred or so grandchildren and some great grand children all living in the vicinity as one ‘tribe’ under his patronage.

“When the Polish government decreed that all people should have a family name, Tuvia chose the name of Mokotow because of the phonetic association to *ki-tov* (meaning in Hebrew ‘for He is good’) saying that ‘good’ (*tov*) was also the root of his first name Tuvia (which means ‘the good of God’).

At last the pieces of the puzzle were fitting together. This explained why every family had a Tuvia. Glancing at my growing family tree, I noticed that most of the Tuvias were born in the 1870s. It seemed reasonable that reb Tuvia died in the late 1860s or early 1870s. If he lived to nearly 100 as a later part of Zvi Kitov's letter implied, I had managed in just seven short months to trace the Mokotoff family back into the 18th century!

I showed the letter to the Rabbi who is the director of my children's Hebrew school. He recognized the name Kitov immediately. He told me Elyahu Kitov was a well-known author/scholar who had written numerous books, the most famous of which was *The Book of Our Heritage*. This book describes in detail all of the Jewish holidays. The Rabbi was rather impressed that such an illustrious person was a member of the Mokotoff family. (To this day, when the *chasan* (cantor) of my synagogue greets me he says "Hello, Mr. Kitov.")

Since there was evidence that our family was at least marginally associated with the Hasidic movement, I decided to explore that path. I have a cousin on my mother's side who is a Hasidic rabbi so I gave him a call. Could he think of persons who might assist me? He gave me the name of a Rabbi Samuel Dresner living in the Chicago area who might help.

I called the Jewish Theological Seminary to get his address. In the letter to Rabbi Dresner I explained the possibility that we were related to Gershon Kutower, that the Garwolin *yizkor* book said we were descended from the Aleksandrov Hasidim and finally the significance of Rabbi Isaac of Warka to the family.

Gus Shaw sent me a copy of the letter Brenda Tyler has sent to various members of the Mokotoff family. It described what I was beginning to appreciate was all too typical a story of the Holocaust. The letter was addressed to Paulette Sommer, the daughter of Bella Mokotow Schwitzka.

"Dear Paulette:

"I am the daughter of Mendel and Miriam Mokotow. My father came from Warka and my mother from Grojec. There was six children in the family, they were Esther, Joseph, Sara, Helr, Leah and myself Bruha.

"We lived in Warsaw on Graniczna St, No. 4, and I am the only one living who escaped from the Germans during the war.

"My father and my brother and two sisters were killed when the home was bombed. My mother was taken from a house in the Ghetto and shot by the Germans, and as far as I know the other members of the family were taken to concentration camps and lost their lives.

..You say your mother is still alive thank God, but doesn't remember much about her relations, maybe she will remember about our side of the family. If so, please Paulette maybe you could let me know as this would mean a lot to me. Maybe your mother has some old photos of the family. As there was nothing left from our bombed home."

Contacted Harold Mokotoff, another cousin of my father to see if he knew anything else about the family. He knew little I did not know already but was able to give the names of all of his uncles and aunts from oldest to youngest. It assisted me in determining the approximate birth years of each of them.

Contacted Jack Mokotoff, the eldest living cousin of my father. He could not add any information about the family's past in Poland. He did give me information about his own branch of the family.

Received a response from Rabbi Dresner which added little information. He indicated there are living relatives of Gershon Kutower.

*****February 1980*****

In early February, my family traveled to Florida to visit my parents who reside there. For the first time I met Gus Shaw, with whom I had corresponded on numerous occasions.

Zvi Kitov in a second letter sent me his family tree. Zvi and I are in the same business, data processing, and he suggested that I computerize the family tree. I now had well over 200 names and concluded it would be a worthwhile project. I had been drawing the family tree manually and the addition of new facts often required that I completely redraw the tree to fit in additional persons or because an earlier version was erroneous.

In a conversation with Terry Barnett, I mentioned to him the many tragic stories I was discovering involving the Mokotoff family and the Holocaust. He commented that he had one to add to the list. In his subsequent letter he related:

“In 1937, my father received a cable from Berlin, a desperate plea. It was from his cousins the German Mokotovs. Please would you look after our 15 year old son Leonard (Hardy). So Hardy Mokotov came to live with us in September 1937. When the war began in 1939, the Government decided that ‘enemy aliens’ had to live at least 20 miles from the coast. (Portsmouth is the largest Naval port in the country.) Seventeen year old Hardy was, they decided, an enemy alien. My father arranged Jewish lodging and work in a large Jewish factory. The owners promised to look after him. The location was of the outskirts of London.

“On the 11th of September 1940, a German bomber miles off target discharged its bombs. They exploded on a shelter where my 18 year old cousin was sheltering.

“He was buried in the West Ham cemetery in London. My parents were distraught. Hardy was an only child. His parents had entrusted him to their care.

“We survived the war. In 1945, my father had a letter from Hardy’s parents. They had escaped to Vichy France. They had been hidden by friends and they too had survived, but they were both very sick. They wanted their son. All through the terrible war years, they at least felt happy that their son was safe.

“My poor father had to tell them the truth. I believe they died shortly afterwards. My father had a stroke three years later, I am sure partly from this. The rest of his life was spent as an invalid until his death in 1969, just 6 weeks before my son was born.”

The story shocked me, but there were more stories to come.

In late February I received another letter from Moshe Mokotow. He was sending me a copy of the *yizkor* book from his town. He also gave me the name of the father of Heinrich Mokotov of Tel Aviv, Nathan Marks, who lived in a section of New York City.

I called Mr. Marks. He said he was born Nathan Mokotow in Warsaw. His father’s name was Joshua and his grandfather’s name was David. He had an uncle named Shlomo who lived in England and two aunts named Geetel and Eta who lived in Argentina. He gave me the address of Eta, whose Spanish name is Elvira de Cohen. Another branch of the family was added to the family tree. Of the original 11 names in the Tel Aviv telephone book, only two were unaccounted for; Yitzchak and Shlomo Mokotow.

***** Intermission *****

At this point, I would like to pause and make some comments about how this project has affected me personally. Primarily, it has been a labor of love. There has been the intellectual challenge of how to solve the many problems which confronted me; the excitement of corresponding with distant relatives throughout the world; the joy gained from the renewed interest many persons have felt about the history of the family.

But there is no doubt that the most significant impact this project has had on me has been my change in outlook toward what was probably the biggest blot on the record of Western civilization—the Holocaust.

Prior to this project, the Holocaust was a distant event to me. It was something that happened to fellow Jews, but other Jews. This attitude was the consequence of the fact that my family left Poland many years and many generations ago. The descendants of Hyman and Gussie Mokotoff are, for the most part, intact. None were killed in either World War. To me there was never a match between “Mokotoff” and “Holocaust.”

With this project, the personalization of this event grew. First there was the letter from Moshe Mokotow that his father died in the Warsaw ghetto. Then the realization that all the Mokotoffs of Garwolin were lost to the Holocaust. Then the conversation and correspondence with Brenda Tyler and Rachel Kabak that they were sole survivors of their families.

The event that shook me completely was the arrival of the *yizkor* book of Moshe Mokotow’s home town, Przedecz. In all of the correspondence with Moshe, he never mentioned that he once had two sisters; Bluma and Bronka. In the *yizkor* book were pictures of his late family. Bluma, a woman in her 20s holding her baby daughter Galika when they visited Tel Aviv in 1936 (both subsequently died in Poland), Bluma posing on a motorcycle with her daughter and husband, Heniek Zuckerman (he died too). A portrait of Bronka Mokotow and her father Isaac in what I consider one of the most endearing father/daughter pictures I have ever seen (they both died in the Warsaw ghetto). There was also a picture of Bronka, her maternal grandmother and niece Galika. The expressions on their faces were those of a happy pigtailed teenager, a woman proudly posing with one of her grandchildren and her great-grandchild and the innocence of a baby. All died in Poland. As a piece of irony, Moshe included in the book a German Red Cross telegram from Isaac to his wife Rachel who with Moshe was safe at that time in Palestine. It read, “Everything is fine. We are all together.”

In the story about his late father and sisters, Moshe described his teenaged sister, Bronka.

“The Purim meal always brings me to sentimental thoughts for my sister Bronka was born at that time. Who wasn’t able to recognize her, with the two pigtailed on her head? When we came to Israel in 1935, she turned into a *sabra* like all girls of her age. She was charming and noble as well as quiet and serious. She was always choosy about her friends... People who knew this girl told me that when she grew up she turned into a very nice and high lady.

“It was after my family returned to Przedecz in order to sell all their property they tell me that Rabbi Zemelman who gave Biblical lessons in the school in Przedecz used her as an example to the people there.

“I have a relative who lives in Melbourne, Australia, from whom I learned that Bronka, when she was with the rest of the family in the Warsaw ghetto, had the possibility of saving her life because she befriended a Christian boy. He begged her again and again to leave the Ghetto and move to the other side. Her answer was, ‘What am I to do, forsake my father?’ This is the way she died and I have much to regret.”

*****March-June 1980*****

A letter was sent to Nathan Mark’s aunt, Elvira de Cohen in Argentina.

On another trip to the YIVO Institute I looked through the *yizkor* books of towns near Warka. There were no Mokotoffs listed in the books for Grojec, Lukow, Pinkas Warsha, Minsk-Mazowiecki, Parysow and Gora Kalwaria.

*****July 1980*****

Terry Barnett wrote that he had visited Shmuel Mokotoff. He was the uncle of Leonhard Mokotoff, was rather aged and at times incoherent in their conversation. Information Terry gleaned from the man was that he was in Dachau from 1936–39, finally being brought out by his brother and that he had a handbag shop when he lived in Berlin.

Terry also stated that he planned to holiday in Florida in September but would first spend a few nights in New York City. He would call me when he arrived.

July 1980 was the month of the most remarkable event in the entire project.

It was impossible to go back much earlier than the mid-1800's because all of my information was from the recollections of persons I had contacted. There were times I seriously contemplated writing a letter to some Polish government agency to determine if there were any birth or death records available. Perhaps a trip to Poland might be worthwhile.

In mid July, my wife and I decided to vacation for a few days without the children. We decided to go on a "gambling" holiday planning to spend one day in the state of Connecticut where they have a form of gambling based on *Jai-a-lai*, a Basque/Spanish game. Then we planned to spend one day in New York City and go to the horse races and finally spend two days in Atlantic City, New Jersey, where they have gambling casinos.

When we arrived in New York, our mid-week stop, we changed our minds about going to the races and decided to go to the theatre instead. It was a beautiful July day so after checking into our hotel, we walked to the theatre district and purchased tickets. It was about 2 o'clock in the afternoon and our plans called for dining about five which would give us enough time to make the 7:30 curtain. Since we had no other plans, I suggested we walk along Fifth Avenue which is known for its beautiful shops.

While walking along Fifth Avenue, we passed a bookstore and decided to go in to browse. After spending some time in the store, I became impatient to leave, but my wife still wanted to shop. While waiting for her to finish, I noticed near the exit of the store a book on sale called *Finding Our Fathers*, a book about researching your Jewish roots. I had seen this book before at the YIVO Institute and didn't plan to buy it. However, since my wife was still detained, I glanced through the book yet another time.

There was a chapter on "Sources of Information" so I started to read it. In addition to the Jewish Theological Seminary, YIVO and other Jewish sources it stated that "painful though it may be to admit," one of the best sources of Jewish records is the Mormon Church. The section on the Mormons indicated it was part of their religion to know who their ancestors were and as a consequence, they had one of the world's largest collections of genealogical records located at their headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah. The book mentioned there were branch libraries throughout the United States which had access to the records in Salt Lake City.

By this time my wife had finished her browsing. As we left the store I mentioned my discovery. We located a telephone book to see if there was a branch library in New York and found there was one within fifteen minutes walking distance. There were still a few hours before we planned to eat so I suggested we go to the library to determine exactly what type of information they had.

When we arrived there, the entire facility was in a small room about 10 feet by 20 feet (3.5 meters by 7 meters). The woman told us that all the information in Salt Lake City was on microfilm and what was kept in New York was just the library index cards of what was available. This index was also on microfilm. For a small fee, any microfilm reel could be sent to New York to be viewed on the equipment at the branch.

The woman was not very familiar with what information was available but showed us the seven reels they had for Poland. It did not look very encouraging. Two of the reels were marked "Warszawa," one said "Bialystok," another "Lublin." My initial impression was that there was not much to be offered because they only had information about the major cities of Poland. However, one reel did catch my eye. It said "Opele," the town from which the Kitov family originated. It seemed strange that in addition to information about the major cities of Poland, there was data about this small town near Lublin. Out of curiosity I decided to examine the microfilm. Maybe I would find the name Mokotowski.

The microfilm showed that the information on file was not only about the town of Opele but also about the neighboring towns. Maybe the microfilms of Warsaw had information about its nearby towns...perhaps Warka.

I removed the reel about Opele, inserted the one marked "Warszawa, N-Z" and scanned the information which was in alphabetic order by town. As I reached the W's my heart leaped. There on one of the microfilmed library cards it said:

"Poland, Warszawa, Warka, Vital records, Jewish Population, births, marriages and deaths"

Microfilm No. 723,677 (1826-41)

Microfilm No. 723,678 (1842-54)

Microfilm No. 723,679 (1855-59)

Also on file were two other microfilms of Warka, one from 1808-1816, the other from 1817-25 which implied they were the records for all of the town. Considering that a single microfilm reel can contain thousands of records it seemed probable that I had discovered the birth, marriage and death records of the Mokotoff family from 1808 to 1859.

I ordered the five reels immediately.

(Note: The discovery of the Mormon Church records that July was due to a remarkable set of coincidences. We might have gone to the track that day; we might never had gone into the bookstore; when I wanted to leave the store my wife might have consented; when I suggested we go to the Mormon Church library, my wife might have said 'No'—the thought of going through a library was not high on her list of fun ways to spend a vacation. Probably the most remarkable consideration is that the only reason I looked through the microfilm index cards was the mention of the town of Opele. I subsequently learned that it wasn't the same town as the one the Kitov family came from!! There is another city in southern Poland called Opele! What the "librarian" did not know was that the reels were marked with the names of the provinces of Poland. Warsaw referred to the province, not the city, and therefore contained the records of all the towns in that province.)

*****August 1980*****

Finally bought a copy of *The Book of Our Heritage*, which is authored by Elyahu Kitov. It is a fascinating book well worth reading. It could have been titled "Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About the Jewish Holidays But Were Afraid to Ask." The first chapter is "Tishri," the first month of the Jewish calendar and starts, of course, with Rosh Hashanah. The last chapter is Elul, the last month. It not only tells you about the traditions of every holiday, but also includes in many cases the origin of these traditions. While intended as a scholarly work, it is not written with the stiffness all too common in works by academicians. It reads easily.

Unfortunately, reading is not one of my favorite pastimes and I got busy with other activities shortly after I began the book, therefore my current in depth knowledge of the Jewish holidays only extends from Rosh

Hashanah to Succot!

*****September 1980*****

Terry Barnett arrived in New York with his wife Cynthia and son Harry. We spent a pleasant weekend touring the city and discussing the project. He brought along pictures of his family from Poland as well as Russia. Also included was a photo of Leonhard Mokotov. Terry was unsure of whom many of the persons were in the pictures but some of them had captions in Russian and he hoped to have them translated shortly.

He mentioned that Shmuel Mokotow said he had relatives living in Manchester, England, but they had changed their name from Mokotow. Terry said he did not know their new name.

We also spent time talking about the differences in how Judaism is practiced in the United States and England. Terry was surprised to see how open it was in America and attributed it to the larger Jewish population. At one point I took him to the Lower East Side area of New York which was the old Jewish immigrant living area (it still is to this day to some extent), and he was amazed to see a man standing in front of a synagogue wearing a *tallis*. He implied that wearing a prayer shawl in public was unheard of in England. I got the distinct impression that Judaism was something that was practiced indoors and that socially there was a separate but equal attitude between religious groups.

In mid-September I received a notice from the Mormon Church that some of the microfilm reels were in the New York branch. I went immediately into the City to look at the vital statistic records of Warka.

I placed the 1826-41 microfilm reel in the viewer and rolled the film forward to look at the first records. It was my hope that they would be on a preprinted form with just the names filled in. I wasn't that lucky. Everything was in Polish script. Fortunately the registrars were probably picked for their neat handwriting so most of the documents were very legible.

The problem of course was how to "read" the Polish. The first thing I observed was that the records were in three different sections for each year. One section had a half page per document and was always signed by the same two persons. Another section also was a half page per document but invariably signed by different persons. The third section, which had far fewer entries each year occupied a full page and was signed by six persons always including women.

From these patterns I concluded the first group was death records signed by the leaders of the town, the second were birth records signed by the father and a witness and the last group were marriage records signed by the bride, groom, mothers of the couple and two witnesses. The birth record Gus Shaw had sent me a year earlier was an important assistance in the deciphering of the records because the pattern of that document seemed to hold true for these records.

Having determined the pattern, I restarted at the beginning of the reel and rolled the film forward slowly looking for the name Mokotoff as a signer of a document. In 1827, I found my first signature, a Jakob Mokotow, recording the birth of his son Michel.

The process was a long and tedious one. The death records were not signed by a family member therefore it was necessary to read the body of the text to look for the name of the deceased. It was difficult to tell whether a Mokotow signature on a birth record was that of the witness or the father. In the first four hours of research, I had managed to look through only half of one of the reels. There were still four more reels to go.

I did note one interesting feature of the records. At the end of each year there was a compilation of names with three columns. The first column was a number that seemed to be unique for every line of the

compilation. The second column contained a name listed in alphabetic order. The third column was another number often duplicated. Each column was headed by a description which was unintelligible to me because it was in Polish.

After numerous discussions with my wife and friends as to what the tabulation could mean, I came to realize that it was a table of contents where the first column was the document number, the second column the name of the child/deceased/couple and the third was the page on which the record appeared.

I returned to the Mormon library armed with this theory...and a camera. The theory was correct. Within three hours I was able to go through all three of the microfilms then in New York by skipping immediately to the end of the year looking for the Mokotow name. If it wasn't there I bypassed the year. If it was, I rapidly rolled the film back to the page and took a picture of the document.

Two years were of particular interest to me, 1852 and 1854, the years my great-grandparents were born. In 1852 I could not find the birth record of Hyman Mokotoff but in 1854, there in the table of contents was Gitla Mokotow, Document 39, Page 10. I rolled back the microfilm to view the birth record of my great-grandmother. It was signed by Gotel Mokotow, the man for whom I am named.

Other records were of immediate interest. In 1859 was the birth record of Tobiasz Berek Mokotow, the grandfather of Gus Shaw. It was signed by his father, Fissel. It meant that Gus's father was named after his grandfather. In 1833 there was a strange entry in the birth records until I realized it was a recording that twin girls were born; Ruchla and Laia (Rachel and Leah) Mokotow. The encyclopedias stated that Rabbi Isaac of Warka died in 1848. The records supported that fact.

The most important job of all was to find the signature of Reb Tuvia. When the last two reels came to New York, which represented the period from 1808-25, I returned to the mode of looking through every document because I wanted Tuvia's signature even if it wasn't on a Mokotow-related document.

I found it in the 1810 portion, on page 63. It was a marriage document witnessed by Tuvia. The signature was firm, that of a man used to writing his name many times. The name "Tuvia" was not very obvious though because the initial letters were unquestionably *tet*, *vav*, *vet* but the last letters were unreadable. I glanced through the Polish writing and located on the seventh from last line of the document the name "Davida Mokotowa." It seemed strange. I was looking for the name Tobiasz. I concluded that the registrar might have spelled the name phonetically; Tuvia sounds somewhat like Davida. After all, my great-grandmother was listed as Gitla even though her actual name was Geetel. I realized her father must have told the registrar the child's name was "Geetelah" (the affectionate form of Geetel) and that is the way it got recorded. (Note: a very common name in the family records is the woman's name Ruchla or Ruchli. Here too these women were actually named Ruchel, Ruchelah being the affectionate form of Rachel.)

All together I photographed close to 50 birth, death and marriage records of the Mokotow family from the years 1810 to 1859.

The family's history showed a pattern of leadership through the signatures. In the early part of the century (1811-33) documents were signed by a David Mokotow. From 1827-41, Jakob Mokotow was a signer. Gotel Mokotow's name first appears in 1843. There were also documents signed by Abraham, Fissel and Berek Mokotow.

*****October 1980*****

There were many articles in the Warka *yizkor* book still untranslated and I decided I would like my own personal copy of the book. I called the YIVO Institute library to find out if they knew where I could obtain a

copy. They told me to call a book distributor in New York called CYCO that dealt with many of the Israeli publishers. The distributor told me they did not have access to *yizkor* books so I decided to go down to YIVO to get the name of the publisher and write to them directly.

The Mormon Church records were still untranslated. I considered hiring a professional translator but the cost would have been excessive; the going rate was \$150 per half day. While waiting at the YIVO library for their copy of the Warka *yizkor* book, I realized someone at YIVO might speak Polish so I queried the librarian.

"Have you spoken to Dr. Dobroszycki?," she asked. "No, who is he?," I responded.

"He is one of the historians at YIVO. Ask the receptionist to telephone his office. Maybe he is in."

After copying the name of the publisher of the Warka *yizkor* book, I went to the receptionist who confirmed that he was in his office and would see me. I took the elevator to the third floor of YIVO, walked through a maze of narrow corridors until I reached his office. As I looked inside there was a man sitting at a desk that was cluttered with papers. Next to the desk there was a table with stacks of more papers. Behind the man there were bookshelves, floor to ceiling, stacked with books of all sizes and crammed with more papers. On two of the walls were huge maps of Poland.

I could tell I was in the office of a scholar.

"Yes, can I help you?," the man asked.

"Are you Dr. Dobroszycki?"

"Yes."

"I am Gary Mokotoff. I was wondering if you could be of assistance to me on a project of mine?"

Dr. Dobroszycki looked at me and said, "not MO-KO-toff...It is Mu-KU-tuf." He reached for a pencil and wrote M-O-K-O-T-O-W, with an accent over the last 'O'. "Do you know the origin of your name?"

Now I was sure I was in the presence of a scholar!

I told Dr. Dobroszycki I was well aware of the origin of the family name. I described to him the results of my year-and-a-half of research and the problem of translating the Polish records. He offered to help by asking some of his students whether they were interested. I had with me a record from 1857 which included the name Tobiasz Mokotow. I hoped it was Reb Tuvia's death record. He said that he would try to translate it for me. Since it was a small photograph of the record and the script was not that legible, Dr. Dobroszycki said it might take a while.

At one point in the conversation, he asked me whether there were any Mokotows living in Warsaw before the war. I said there were, whereupon he started rummaging through a pile of papers near his desk. After removing a few layers of documents, he declared, "Here it is," and produced a small box. Inside the box in loose sheets was a copy of the 1937/38 Warsaw telephone book. Leafing through the pages, he came to the M's and there were the names of two persons; Kielman Mokotow, a butcher, and an M. Mokotow. I recognized the second entry from the Graniczna street address as being the father of Brenda Tyler. Dr. Dobroszycki agreed commenting that with the name Moshe Mendel Mokotow, the man wanted to disguise that he was Jewish and therefore listed his name with only the initial of his first name. He commented that

both men must have been wealthy. It was unusual for Jews to have telephones in pre-war Warsaw.

A letter I had sent to an aunt of Nathan Marks, Elvira de Cohen, who lives in Buenos Aires, was returned, "addressee unknown."

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Received a thank you letter from the Barnetts indicating they enjoyed their stay in New York. The letter added that while they were relaxing on the beach of their luxury hotel in Florida, a fishing boat beached itself and off came 34 refugees from Haiti. Terry, a camera bug, had filmed the landing. During their Florida stay, their ever inquisitive eleven-year-old son, Harry, had managed to earn \$25 by participating in an advertisement for Pan American Airways.

I contacted Dr. Dobroszycki to find out if he had translated the document I gave him. He said he had. It was not a death record but a birth record of a Tobiasz Mokotow. He had shown the document to some of his students to determine if they would be successful in translating other records and concluded they would not because of the difficulty in understanding the Polish script.

*****November 1980*****

In earlier visits to the Mormon library I glanced through their listings of records for the city of Warsaw. The information was voluminous and mostly in Polish. There were none that obviously were Jewish records, so I abandoned for the time the thought of pursuing records of Mokotoffs living in Warsaw. I had not yet discovered the birth record of my great-grandfather Hyman Mokotoff, and the thought occurred to me that he might have been born in that city. On my next trip into New York, I stopped at the Mormon library once again and this time very carefully went through the large number of microfilmed index cards for Warsaw looking for a clue about Jewish records.

My patience was rewarded. About 50 records past the beginning, written in English, were the records of the Jewish population from 1829 to 1859. They were organized by district of the city and were contained on over 70 reels of microfilm! It seemed like an insurmountable task to look through all the reels so I ordered only those films for the years surrounding the birth year of my great-grandfather.

Received another letter from Zvi Kitov. I had sent him a letter about a month earlier disclosing my findings at the Mormon Church and he was excited to hear of the results. He disclosed that the story of Reb Tuvia was related to his father by Fishel Mokotow. In the letter he noted his great-grandfather was named Moshe Tuvia and that prior to living in Opele his family had lived in a town called Josefow (a map of Poland shows it is a small distance south of Opele). Also included was a computerized version of his family tree. In response to questions I had asked him about Jewish names, he commented that Gutel was the female version of Gotel, both of which stemmed from the biblical name Gad. Also, Berek was the Polish form of Dov.

The last comment was very significant. I had not yet been able to place the English Mokotoffs in the family tree. Now two pieces of the puzzle seemed to fit together. Their family is descended from a Dov Mokotow and the Mormon Church documents included a Berek Mokotow. Perhaps they were the same person.

A letter was sent to the publisher of the Warka *yizkor* book.

On one of my trips to YIVO, a librarian indicated there was a Journal of Jewish Genealogy published in New York. A letter was sent asking for back issues.

In a letter, Moshe Mokotow indicated a Chaim Feldman from Israel was visiting relatives in San Francisco. He knew about Warka and might have information about the family.

It occurred to me that there might be magazines on genealogy published in the United States. My marketing experience in the computer field had made me aware there is a book called "The Standard Periodical Directory" which lists every publication printed in the United States. I got a current copy of the directory. There were a number of magazines published on the subject. Only one, *The Genealogical Helper* had a large circulation. It was published in Utah, the home of the Mormons, so I sent away for a back copy of the magazine.

*****December 1980*****

I received notice from the Mormon library that the microfilms of Warsaw I had requested arrived in New York. The results were disappointing. I could not locate the birth record of my great-grandfather. The only Mokotow in the records was a Boruch Mokotow born in 1854. The documents themselves were inferior to the Warka records. Either due to damage or sloppy record keeping, the tables of contents at the end of each year was often missing or incomplete.

To make matters worse, the Warsaw Jews seemed to be illiterate compared to the Warka Jews. Few birth records were signed by the father. Those that were had scrawls which indicated the signer was not used to writing his name. It would be an impossible task to look through every document to read the name of the person born. (There were over 1000 Jewish births in Warsaw each year.) I spent about two hours looking through every document in the year my great-grandfather was born but could find no Mokotows. The Boruch Mokotow reference appeared in a table of contents. The actual birth record, which would have had the name of the mother and father was never found.

Received a copy of *The Genealogical Helper*. It is a fascinating magazine which is primarily a compilation of persons requesting assistance in finding information about their ancestors. Almost all are looking for American records and the evidence was that there were few persons looking for information about Jewish ancestors. There were a number of advertisements from companies that said they had gathered "millions" of records and would trace an ancestor for a small fee with a money back guarantee if they could find no information. I sent away to six or seven of them with the challenge. Find me any Mokotoff, Mokotow, Mokotov, Mokotowski in the world that I had not heard of. Over the next few months came the answers. "We are returning your money. We can find no such persons."

An advertisement arrived in the mail one day from an organization in Pennsylvania. It said, "Send us \$19 and, among other things, we will send you a list of every Mokotoff living in the United States who is in our files. Their response came back about a month later. It contained about 15 names, all cousins of my father or their children.

There is no doubt that we have an exclusive name. I have yet to uncover a Mokotoff from any source other than the family. For a \$30 investment, I had the publishers of *The Genealogical Helper* do a search of various books that all told contained tens of millions of names. They were unable to come up with a single person. I have looked through 50-100 telephone books in virtually every major city in the world—no new Mokotoffs. HIAS, the Jewish immigration service has never heard of us. I have placed an advertisement in *The Genealogical Helper* requesting information about persons named Mokotoff. To date there has not been a single response. As I tell people, if you know a Mokotoff, you know a relative of mine.

"Hello Gary, this is Rina Mokotov calling. How are you?"

Rina and Moshe Mokotov were in New York again, this time with their daughter Dorit. Rina works for Kopel Tours and one of her fringe benefits is that she has seen more of the United States than I have! The previous year's meeting was brief. This time I planned to give them a grand tour of the City. Unfortunately they picked one of the worst cold spells in a number of years and my family-sized car, which operates on

diesel fuel, decided not to start. What little touring we did was accomplished with four persons crammed in my backup vehicle, a Renault 5 (Le Car).

*****January 1981*****

One Sunday morning the telephone rang at home and the caller asked,

“Is this Gary Mokotoff?”

“Yes.”

“This is Zvi Kitov calling.”

“Zvi!,” I exclaimed. “I assume you are not calling from Jerusalem but are calling from New York.”

Yes, Zvi acknowledged, he was in New York on personal business and was anxious to meet me and my wife, Ruth. Could we meet for lunch? Ruth and I dashed into the City and met the ninth member of the Mokotoff family who until 18 months earlier I had not known existed.

Zvi and I exchanged information about the Mokotoff family, mostly reinforcing my ideas about its origins. He also volunteered that there were Mokotows who lived in the towns of Otwock, Stoczek and Lvov before the war. All had perished in the Holocaust. The source of the information was the archives at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. The names had been placed there by Fishel Mokotow. The persons who died in Lvov, according to Zvi, were not residents of the town but were fleeing the Germans at that time.

*****February 1981*****

Gus Shaw had indicated in one of our earliest conversations in the summer of 1979 that his grandparents had died in the influenza epidemic of 1918 and they were buried in a cemetery in Frankfurt, Germany. It suddenly became important to read the inscriptions on their tombstones. (1) I had the birth record of the grandfather, which was signed by Fissel Mokotow. I wanted to confirm the record through the tombstone. (2) The presence of a large number of Gutel/Gotels in Gus’s family plus the fact his grandmother Pesa was a Mokotow made me suspect her father was the Gotel Mokotow who was my great-great-grandfather. Gus gave me the address of the cemetery and a letter was sent to them.

A letter was sent to Chaim Feldman at the address in San Francisco given to me by Moshe Mokotow the previous November.

By now my files were bulging. I had accumulated over 150 letters or documents on the project. It was time to report my findings to the family. After some thought, I decided to publish the information in two parts. First, a family tree and some time thereafter the history of the family. My research to date had concentrated mainly on the past, I knew little about the present. Therefore a massive letter-writing campaign was started to contact all the Mokotoffs in the world to gather information about their present families. I included all the known information which was picked up piecemeal from their close relatives and requested they add or correct the data. By now I had over 300 names on file.

Having had the photographs of the Mormon Church microfilms for nearly six months I became anxious to get them translated. One of the obstacles was that the copies were so small that they had to be viewed through a magnifying glass. I recalled that one of the services provided by the Mormons was preparation of copies of the documents (they will not sell you copies of the microfilms themselves). I was equally anxious to get an understanding of what facilities were available in Salt Lake City. The branch library in New York was very cramped and I was giving serious thoughts to taking a trip to Utah.

I called the main library in Salt Lake City, They informed me for the token price of 25 cents each they would make copies of the documents. They also said their facilities were substantial, occupying four floors, with numerous microfilm viewers and copying machines. Furthermore, the microfilms were displayed on racks and you just helped yourself to the ones of interest to you! Now I really had the urge to travel out West! It was the practical solution to looking through the 70 microfilms of Warsaw plus those of Opele, Josefow, Aleksandrow and any other cities where Mokotows were once located.

I sent away for copies of selected records; specifically, the one which contained the signature of Tuvia Mokotow, my great-grandmother's birth record, the 1844 death record of a Tobiasz Mokotow, the birth record of Tobiasz Berek Mokotow, the 1848 death record of Rabbi Isaac and the one document signed by Berek Mokotow.

The daughter of Chaim Feldman called from San Francisco. Her father had returned to Israel about a month earlier. As it turned out, Mr. Feldman did not speak English so the likelihood he would have been of assistance to me about the history of Warka was minimal.

*****March 1981*****

Went back to YIVO to look at the *yizkor* books of Otwock, Stoczek and Lvov. Could not find any Mokotows.

Letters have started coming in completing various branches of the family tree.

One larger branch of my family is not yet filled in; the four Greenbaum sisters. My mother informed me that fortunately Anne Greenbaum Sonde was going to visit her in Florida within a few days and I could get the information from her. When I called back, Anne filled in the particulars of her part of the family. She was extremely excited about the project and indicated that her son Ted, who was a childhood friend of mine (we lived on adjacent streets), was with the United States Government and might be of assistance to me in the project.

I gave Ted a call, the first time I had spoken to him in nearly 30 years, and he asked me to send him material. Perhaps he could find out about Mokotoffs through the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

Good news! The semi-annual convention of my trade association will be held in Las Vegas this coming November. What a wonderful excuse to stop off in Salt Lake City for a few days.

A letter was sent yet again to Erich Mokotoff in Buenos Aires requesting information.

Received a response from Nathan Marks. His family was much larger than I originally thought. He was one of the youngest of 13 children, 10 of whom were lost in the Holocaust along with their families. One brother lives in Buenos Aires. The names were of interest. They included a Gedale and a Kalman. I called him to ask if his brother Kalman was a butcher in Warsaw before the war. He said yes. This then was the Kielman Mokotow listed in the Warsaw telephone book. Mr. Marks also added additional names of aunts and uncles.

Received a response from the cemetery in Frankfurt. Tobiasz Berek's father was named Ephraim Fissel and Pesa's father was named Gad! Furthermore, Tobiasz Berek's Hebrew name was Tuvia Dov. I looked through my Mormon records for the birth of an Ephraim about 30 years before Tobiasz Berek was born. The name that came close was a "Fvrin" born in 1822. If I only could get Tobiasz Berek's birth record translated from Polish, it would almost certainly have the age of his father and I would be able to confirm that Fvrin was indeed Ephraim Fissel Mokotow. It would mean that I could trace Gus Shaw's ancestry back to the original Reb Tuvia.

That Pesa's father was named Gad confirmed that she must have been the sister of my great-grandmother Geetel. The Berek/Dov relationship described by Zvi Kitov was confirmed which gave strong evidence that the Berek Mokotow who signed the birth record in 1859 was Terry Barnett's great-grandfather. There was only one problem. My records showed that the document was the birth of a Tobiasz Mokotow. This would mean that Berek had two sons named Tobiasz. A closer examination of the document revealed that the child's name was Israel Tobiasz Mokotow.

*****April 1981*****

In early April, there was a Jewish holiday that occurs only once every 28 years called the "Blessing for the Sun." It is a scientific fact that the exact point where the sun rises in the east is slightly different every day and operates on a 28 year cycle. According to Jewish tradition this cycle started at the Creation and therefore this holiday celebrates the anniversary of the Creation. When I heard this story in synagogue, my scientific mind realized something was amiss. The year 1981 was equivalent to the Jewish year 5741 and the number 5741 is not exactly divisible by 28, therefore the story had to be untrue. I was going to ask my rabbi why this discrepancy existed but decided to test the merits of Elyahu Kitov's work *Book of Our Heritage*. Would he have information about a holiday that occurred only once in 28 years? Not only is three pages devoted to an explanation of the holiday, but specific mention is made to the fact that the anniversary year is not exactly divisible by 28. The error is one year. The reason for the difference? As the book explains, in the year of the Flood all natural order of the world was suspended.

More return mail from Mokotoffs. The number of members of the family had now reached 375.

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In the course of a conversation with a man about my project, I showed him the signature of Tuvia Mokotow. I commented that the signature was partially illegible; you could plainly see the first three letters of his name but the last two were scrawled. He explained that this was the proper way for Tuvia to sign his name. The last two letters were *yud* and *heh*, which is God's name. A religious Jew would never write God's name and therefore Tuvia disguised it with a scrawl.

*****May 1981*****

Received a letter from Terry Barnett. He finally got translated from Russian the photographs which he had. The pictures were not taken in Russia but in Garwolin, Poland! It stated it was to 'my nephew Boris (Terry's father), from Samuel and Isaac Mokotow.' It was taken in 1912 "three hours before Samuel went to his Army unit." Terry had visited Israel earlier in the year and met Moshe Mokotow who said that his father Isaac was in the army about that time. Terry sent Moshe the picture to see if he would be able to determine if it was his father. Another piece of information was that his elderly cousin Shmuel was born in Warka.

I called Terry immediately and informed him there was an entire family of Mokotows from Garwolin and I would mail him all the information from the town's *yizkor* book. It included a picture of a Shmuel-Hirsh Mokotow. If the picture was not of Moshe's father, it might be this man.

Rachel Kabak returned my inquiry and supplied me with many of the names of her aunts, uncles and cousins who were lost in the Holocaust.

I was getting increasingly anxious about my inability to get the Mormon documents translated. The woman who had translated the German Red Cross document in the Przedecz *yizkor* book lived about 50 miles from my office. I sent her one document, the one which might be the death certificate of Reb Tuvia. Some days later she called back to say the writing was not that easy to read but she confirmed it was a death certificate. There were various numbers in the record; 44, 55, 4 1/2 months. Something about living with parents.

By now I was a seasoned veteran of record-searching. From the English language translation of Fishel Mokotow's birth certificate, I knew these documents contained the ages of the signers. A quick check of my Mormon records showed that there was a child born the previous year to Gotel Mokotow named Tobiasz. My experience in getting things translated from Hebrew demonstrated people had difficulty doing translations out of context. (One Israeli document has been translated three different ways by three different persons).

I called the woman back immediately and assisted her in the translation. Could it be the death certificate of a 4 1/2 month old baby who was "living with his parents." Yes. Did the 44 and 55 represent the ages of the two persons who signed the documents. Yes.

I came to realize that the 50 Mormon documents contained valuable information which was still missing; the ages of the father's, the names of the mother's. I would be able to fill in the complete picture of the Mokotow family from 1800 to 1850. Although I was missing the birth certificate of my great-great-grandfather Gotel, I would be able to determine his birth year from the birth record of my great grandmother.

It seemed unreasonable to ask this woman to translate all of the documents. She had spent a considerable amount of time on the one document. If only I could translate them. I realized that I already had a clue from the death record of the baby Tobiasz. Immediately after the name of the first witness was his age; after the second witness was his age. I stared at the document to see if there was possible to determine which of the Polish words were these numbers and noticed that both names were almost immediately followed by the same word; *lat*. I suspected that it meant "old," that is the signer was 44 years old, the other signer was 55 years old. A quick call to the woman confirmed my theory. Looking at other documents demonstrated that the first, second or third word after every name of a witness was the word *lat*."

I now had a method of translating the documents myself.

That afternoon, after leaving my office, I went to a local library and copied from a Polish/English dictionary the words for one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight and nine. They were *jeden, dwa, trzy, cztery, piec, szesc, siedem, osiem* and *dziewiec*. I also copied twenty, thirty, forty, etc.

On the way out the door of the library I noticed there were a large number of telephone directories. I confirmed there were no Mokotoffs living in the cities of Chicago, Atlanta, Detroit, Dallas, Houston, Kansas City, Minneapolis, Salt Lake City, Denver, Phoenix, Las Vegas, San Francisco, Seattle, Oahu, San Diego, Anchorage, Albuquerque, Hartford, Philadelphia, Birmingham, Toronto, Quebec, Montreal and Indianapolis.

That evening I spent hours looking at all of the Mokotow records for the magic word "*lat*." The one of greatest interest to me was the one with the signature of Reb Tuvia. There, just two words after the mention of his name, was "*lat trzydziesty cztery*." I looked at my translation table; Tuvia was 34 in the year 1810. That meant he was born in 1776! What a fascinating finding to tell my friends and business associates. The founder of my family was born in 1776, the year of the American Revolution!

As other birth years were recorded, pieces of the Mokotow puzzle began to fit together. The birth record of Tobiasz Berek said his father Fissel was born in 1822. His tombstone said his father was Ephraim Fissel. I had a birth record in 1822 of "Fvrim." He was undoubtedly the same man.

My great-grandmother's birth record showed that her father Gotel was born in 1819. Berek (Dov) Mokotow was born in 1833.

The one fear I have always had throughout my research would be the discovery that we in fact did not have a common ancestor. Why should Reb Tuvia have been the only Jew in Poland to have taken the name of the section of Warsaw called Mokotow? Why is it that the Mokotowski families have no persons named Tuvia—to this day they have not been traced back to Warka—the death-bed story by Elyahu Kitov was actually related to him by Fishel Mokotow. [Since this writing, records have been found to link the Mokotowskis back to Tuvia.]

The translation of dates added another disturbing fact. David Mokotow was born around 1780 according to the birth records of his children. The exact year was not determinable because his age changed on various documents. This would mean that he could not be a descendant of Tuvia. He may just have been a man who like Tuvia took the name Mokotow, or perhaps he was his brother.

I do not think this was the case. My current theory is that David Mokotow and Tuvia Mokotow were the same man; that his name was Tuvia David Mokotow. This is supported by many facts.

1. Documents in 1810 and 1818 containing the signature “Tuvia Mokotow” show as the Polish translation “Davida Mokotowa.”

2. In 1811, documents signed in Yiddish by “David Mokotow” also are shown in Polish as “Davida Mokotowa.” A comparison of the two Yiddish signatures, Tuvia and David, would lead one to believe they were written by the same man.

3. It was common for men to be called by their middle name. Witness Ephraim Fissel Mokotow who signed his name Fissel. A Zvi Hirsch Mokotow appears in documents as Hirsik Mokotow. Brenda Tyler’s father was Moshe Mendel Mokotow. She refers to him as Mendel.

4. If you analyze the birth years of the children of David Mokotow, they represent a child every two years from 1813 to 1837, thirteen in all. Add to the list Jakob Mokotow who was born around 1804 (Tuvia would have been around 28 years old then). Fill in the gap between 1804 and 1813 with four or five additional children including my ancestor Menachem Mendel Mokotow (my great-grandparents were supposedly first cousins, that is, Menachem and Gotel were brothers). This creates a situation which supports the legend that Tuvia had close to 20 children.

On the negative side are the following:

1. The only two Warka documents located containing the signature of Reb Tuvia are not family documents. He was merely acting as a witness. Therefore no children can be directly attributed to him. If one could be found, it would contain the name of his wife. The name of David’s wife was Sarah Israelowna.

2. There is a tremendous usage of naming male children Tuvia in the late 1850s through the 1870s implying it was the most likely time when Reb Tuvia died. This is reinforced by part of the Tuvia legend which states he lived to nearly 100 years old. It is known that David Mokotow died sometime in the early 1840s. Marriage documents of his children in the late 1840s refer to his wife Sarah as a widow.

*****May 1981*****

My original concept of the family tree was going to be one that was very formal looking with person’s names residing in rectangles and lines drawn from box to box to show the relationships between the individuals. I decided to be a bit more artistic and draw something that looked more like a tree.

In early May, my eldest daughter, Alexis, was bat mitzvahed. The day before the event I received a

telephone call from England. It was Terry wishing my family a hearty *mazel tov* from the Barnett family.

Shortly after the occasion I received a call from Kopel Tours in New York. They said there was a package there from Rina Mokotov. They were presents for Alexis. Included were a pictorial book of Israel from Rina and her family and a beautiful Bible from Moshe Mokotow.

One source of information that had yet to be explored in New York City was the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary. It is the repository of many *pinkasim* (meeting books) of towns in Eastern Europe.

A call to the library determined that they did not have any *pinkasim* for Warka.

“Do you have any information at all about the town?”

A check of all of their records showed only one item. A book titled *Wooden Synagogues* had pictures of the building Tuvia was reputed to have built.

I went to the Seminary the next day.

The pictures, which were taken in 1931, confirmed the final unanswered piece of the legend. While most of the synagogues in the book had the exterior boards running horizontally the way most buildings are built, the Warka synagogue had them running vertically. The book said the building was built from 1811–17 which lent even greater weight to the legend that Reb Tuvia built the synagogue.

The evidence is to the contrary, however, that he invented the idea of placing the boards vertically. Approximately 20 percent of the buildings had the same design, some of them predating the Warka synagogue. Among the pictures were interior photos which showed it must have been a beautiful sanctuary before the Germans burned it to the ground during the Holocaust.

In his letter which completed the Kitov family tree, Zvi reiterated that he saw in the Otwock *yizkor* book the name Mokotowski.

*****June 1981*****

In a trip to the Fifth Avenue Library I determined there were no Mokotoffs listed in the German telephone books for Mannheim, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Essen, Hamburg and Berlin. Also the English cities of Manchester, Birmingham and Liverpool. Nor are there Mokotoffs listed in the *Great Britain Medical Register*, *American Dental Register*, *Book of American Judges*, *Who's Who in the United States*, Canada, Switzerland, Brazil or Argentina.

Once more I looked through the index of the library and this time came across a book about Warka. A group of Polish-Americans decided to erect a monument for Kasimir Pułaski, the Polish general who died in the American Revolution, in the town of his birth, Warka. Included in a booklet that commemorated the occasion was a map of Warka as it appeared in 1863.

In Jerusalem, there is a complex of buildings which memorialize the six million Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust. It is called Yad Vashem. Included at its archives are documents called “Pages of Testimony” which are an attempt to list individually the names of those who died. A letter was sent to Yad Vashem asking for copies of the Pages of Testimony for all persons named Mokotoff, Mokotow, Mokotov or Mokotowski.

There are no Mokotoffs living in the cities of Houston or Boston.

While at the library I glanced through a newer telephone book for Buenos Aires and noted that Jacobo Mokotoff was no longer listed (he has probably died), Rene de Mokotow was missing and Felix Mokotoff had changed his address.

I finally received my back issue of the Journal of Jewish Genealogy which had since been renamed *Toledot* ('generations' in Hebrew). It served to consolidate what I had already found randomly as sources of information on Jewish genealogy. In addition, it mentioned that many American immigration records are stored in the Federal Archives Records Center in Bayonne, New Jersey which is within a half hour driving distance of my office.

Yet another trip to YIVO for another look at the Otwock *yizkor* book. My inadequacy in reading Hebrew caused me to miss the picture that Zvi Kitov said included a Joshua Mokotowski, but a second careful look at the roster of the dead listed close to 20 more family members who were killed. With the inclusion of these names to my list, two milestones were reached: (1) I now had more than 400 descendants of Tuvia David Mokotow, (2) over 100 members of the family had died in the Holocaust.

According to the *Black Book of Localities Whose Jewish Population was Exterminated by the Nazis*, there were over 2000 Jews living in Warka before the war.

Another letter was sent to Argentina, to Felix Mokotoff. I theorized that the reason my previous letters were going unanswered was that I continually claimed the Argentinean Mokotoffs were the sons of Jacobo Mokotoff. I now knew there were other families who were related to Nathan Marks. At the suggestion of my "advisor" on Latin American attitudes, I wrote the letter on my company president stationery and made the letter sound a bit more official. My advisor told me that if the letter remained unanswered, she would send a note to friends in Buenos Aires to contact the Mokotoffs there directly.

About a month earlier, I had sent a letter to the Mormon Church in Utah noting my planned visit there and asked for literature about their facilities. I also queried why they had no records after 1859. In their reply they said that records after that date were available directly from the Warsaw archives. They suggested how to prepare a letter which might be successful in getting more records. A letter was sent to Poland the same day.

Received a letter from Leo Wassercug of Sydney, Australia. He is a distant relative of Moshe Mokotow on Moshe's mother's side. Leo, too, is a genealogy buff who became aware of Moshe through his research. He was writing from Israel and indicated he planned to tour Europe shortly. His itinerary called for visiting Poland to do research on his own family's history. Was there anything useful he could do for me regarding my project? I made him aware of the Polish archives in Warsaw and the Jewish cemetery there.

Copies of all the records from Salt Lake City arrived. Numerous hours were spent confirming and correcting the information originally gotten from staring through a magnifying glass at the photographs. I bought a Polish-English dictionary to assist in translation. By starting out with a basic set of words, additional information was gleaned from the documents.

Trips to Europe some years ago demonstrated to me how little knowledge of a language you need to get by. I "read" the documents with a list of the Polish words for wife, mother, father, daughter, son, boy, girl, widow, year, one-ten, eleven-nineteen, twenty-ninety, hundred, thousand, January-December, village, town. Where words were illegible on one document the identical word appeared legibly on another.

From all the documents I was able to conclude:

1. The Mokotows were not very interested in recording all of the births in the family. There were many missing birth records and the ages of many persons were derived by me either from their marriage records or the births of their children. Also missing, but to a lesser extent, were marriage and death records.
2. The people lied about their age to the registrar. David Mokotow was born somewhere between 1771–84 depending on which child's birth record you are willing to accept. Jakob Mokotow was born between 1802–05. This was equally true of the women.
3. As would be expected, early death was commonplace. Numerous children died in infancy. Women died in their 20s and 30s; men in their late 30s and 40s.
4. The occupations of the various men listed included: David Mokotow—merchant; Jakob Mokotow—peddler, shopkeeper; Gotel Mokotow— baker; Fissel Mokotow—shopkeeper
5. Reb Tuvia must have had business dealings with non-Jews as well as Jews. The later documents which he signed were in Polish in an accomplished handwriting. This meant he was used to writing his name in Polish, something that was very unusual for the Warka documents.

*****July 1981*****

Another letter was sent to Shmuel Mokotow, the cousin of Terry Barnett, in the hope he would disclose information about his family background.

An American who recently visited Israel told me the Museum of the Diaspora in Tel Aviv has a computer which contains information about family names and their association with specific towns. A letter was sent to the museum asking for information about the names Mokotoff, Mokotow, Mokotov or Mokotowski associated with the towns of Warsaw, Warka, Garwolin, Lublin or Opele.

Additional responses were received from family members filling in much missing information about the current status of the Mokotoff family.

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The Jewish Genealogy Society held a three day seminar in New York City. About 100 persons from all over the United States came to pool ideas on how to trace the history of Jewish families. The most useful aspect of the meeting was visits to the Fifth Avenue Library, YIVO and the Vital Statistics offices of the City of New York. Despite my numerous trips to these places, additional information was gathered about the resources available at these locations.

For example, I was unaware that YIVO Institute had an archives that was completely independent of the library. A check with the archives, however, demonstrated they had no information about Warka. YIVO also has much information about the Holocaust other than the *yizkor* books. In one roster of 75,000 Polish Jews that survived the war there was the name of a Chaim Mokotowski who registered in Chelm, Poland, as a survivor. On the negative side, a memorial book to Jews who were deported from France to the concentration camps included the name of a Godol Mokotow from Warka who was born in 1896 and the names of two teenagers named Rebecca and Jean Mokotowich from Paris.

Talking to the seminar members proved fruitful. Some had traveled to Eastern Europe seeking out their family's history. One man gave me the name of the person who is in charge of the Jewish cemetery in Warsaw. He suggested I write to him asking for the names of persons named Mokotow now buried in the cemetery.

One source of genealogical information is books which contain lists of names. My inability to read Yiddish or Hebrew meant I was unable to recognize the worth of certain books written in these languages which were available at the Fifth Avenue Library and YIVO. By attending the seminar, I was made aware of these publications and was able to subsequently scan through them. As a consequence I can state there are no Mokotoffs listed in the *Lexicon of Yiddish Literature*, the *Lexicon of Yiddish Theatre* and a book of early settlers in Israel. There are Hasidic dynasty books which list the generations of the rabbis. I attempted to read about the Aleksandrov Hasidim but my lack of knowledge of Hebrew made it impossible.

A letter was sent to the Jewish Immigration Aid Society of Canada asking if they ever assisted any persons named Mokotoff.

A letter was sent to the International Tracing Service in Arolsen, Germany requesting information about a Chaim Mokotowski who registered in Chelm, Poland, after the war.

The rough draft of the family tree was completed. It was accomplished by drawing small sections of the tree on separate pieces of paper and then pasting them together. This allowed the rearranging of "branches" by cutting and repasting until they fit properly. The final copy was then executed by tracing the rough copy on to a clean sheet of paper.

I contacted my company's printer and explained to him my plans. He was very excited about the project for personal reasons. He was of Czechoslovakian Jewish heritage and also wanted to trace his family's history but was discouraged because family members implied there were no records available. He wanted to know how I was able to get information about the Jews of Eastern Europe.

He came to my office and offered suggestions which would assist in making the publishing of the tree a "least cost" venture. Coincidentally, the office receptionist buzzed me to say there was a long distance telephone call for me from England. I turned to the printer and told him it was probably my cousin, Terry Barnett, with some important information about the family. The printer was amazed I received trans-Atlantic telephone calls regarding my family tree project.

Terry informed me he had some good news and some bad news. He had received a telephone call from his cousin Shmuel Mokotoff who said his sister Rivka died recently in Paris (Terry was unaware Shmuel had a sister). Due to this unfortunate event, Shmuel was more receptive to meeting Terry because he realized the importance of family relations.

In the course of my conversation with Terry I mentioned to him that I looked through the telephone books of Berlin from 1933-36 (they are on microfilm at the Fifth Avenue Library) for the name Mokotow in the hopes of finding the name of Hardy's father, but there were no Mokotows listed. Since Shmuel had a shop in Berlin before the war, it also seemed plausible that I might find his name.

Received a letter from Gus Shaw stating he had a new nephew, Johnathan Schmady, born to Jael Mokotoff Schmady on July 3.

The family tree was nearly complete. Only one major family was missing. Moshe Mokotow had never given me the names of his wife or children and grandchildren. A brief letter was sent to him requesting the information.

A letter was sent to the man in charge of the Jewish cemetery in Warsaw asking for the names of Mokotows buried there.

A letter was received from Yoav Kanfi, the son-in-law of Leah Mokotov (Garwolin Mokotovs) indicating he would be in the United States for business purposes in August. He would contact me when he arrived in New York. I had accumulated a host of questions about his branch of the family and sent him a letter asking for additional details.

It occurred to me that one possible way of finding out information about Warka was from other persons who were doing research on their own families who came from that town. A letter was sent to the Mormon Genealogical library asking whether they kept records of other persons who requested microfilms about the Jewish population of Warka. They subsequently responded that they kept no such information.

Yet another letter was sent to M. Mokotowich of Paris.

*****Intermission*****

There is a maxim in genealogy that if pieces of information do not fit together, don't force them. There is a tremendous temptation to come to conclusions given facts that seem to come close to correlating with each other but do not agree perfectly. Such a situation occurred when I originally examined the records received from the Mormon Church.

The name Berek Mokotow appeared on four documents. (1) his birth record in 1833, (2) as the witness of the marriage of Chaia Etta Mokotow, a daughter of Jakob Mokotow, (3) the birth of his son Israel Jakob and (4) the birth record of his son Israel Tobiasz. The birth records of his sons confirmed his own birth year as being 1833.

There were, however, strange facts. First, on two of the documents, Berek had signed his name "OOO," the mark of a Jewish illiterate; on the other two he signed his name 'Berek'. Secondly, each child's birth record had a different mother. Finally, it seemed strange that he had witnessed the marriage record of his niece Chaia Etta. I dismissed all these considerations by concluding that he occasionally signed his name as an illiterate because he did not want the authorities to know his true status (the reader may recall that Gus Shaw related that his grandfather Tuvia had signed his son's birth record with the mark of an illiterate despite his fluency in Polish, Yiddish and German.) The two wives were easily dismissed as the first having died at an early age. Finally, I concluded Berek signed the marriage document of his niece because Chaia's parents were both dead (which was stated in the marriage record).

The jolt came when, in the course of rereading the marriage record, it stated that Berek was Chaia's brother. A quick glance at the family tree, which was now complete and ready for the printer, demonstrated it was unlikely that she had a brother because all the years from the age her father was 22 years old until shortly before his death were accounted for with other children. This brother Berek was either 15 years old when he witnessed his sister's marriage record, or he was the eldest child of Jakob. The latter conclusion would have required Jakob to have been married in his late teens to have had a son so old. (Teenage marriages were unusual in the early 1800's. Men were typically married at age 22 and women at 19 or 20). The pieces did not fit but I violated the rule and forced the pieces together by rationalizing that since Chaia had no brothers, her uncle Berek signed the document and told the authorities he was her brother.

My false assumptions were destroyed shortly before I sent the family tree to the printer. Since it was important to be sure the tree was as accurate as possible, as a final check, my wife and I went through the more than 500 names on the tree to confirm the spellings and dates. While examining the Jakob Mokotow portion of the tree, I discovered an impossibility. I had a daughter of Jakob named Ruchla born in 1833. This was not possible because Jakob's wife was named Ruchla.

Almost immediately, I realized the twins were missing. In the early 1800s there were Mokotow twins born,

Ruchla and Laia (Rachel and Leah), but they were not shown pictorially on the tree. A quick check of my birth records showed that in the process of computerizing my information, I had erroneously shown Ruchla Mokotow, the twin daughter born in 1833 to be the child of Jakob. In fact, she was the child of Moshe Mokotow.

Suddenly a slot opened up in the family of Jakob Mokotow for a child to be born in 1833. All of my forced assumptions were wrong.

The truth was that there were *two* Berek Mokotows, both coincidentally born in 1833!! One was the child of Reb Tuvia, the one who signed his name, the other the son of Jakob, who signed his name as an illiterate. The two wives now made sense; there were two Berek Mokotows.

To reiterate, a cardinal rule of genealogy is that is the pieces do not fit, don't force them.

*****August 1981*****

Received a response from the Museum of the Diaspora. They said they do not store any information about individual families. They sent me a computer printout about Warsaw and Lublin. It contained the kind of information you would find in any Jewish encyclopedia. Apparently they had no information about Warka.

Rachel Kabak sent me more detailed information about her family including the names of many of her cousins.

Is there a Mokotow coat of arms? Some Jewish families have such a heritage. Their names are usually Rothchild, Montefiore, etc., but that did not deter me. A company in Vermont, The Ship's Chandler, offered to do the research on a money back guarantee. I sent away for information and got back an alleged coat of arms. The company gave a reference source and the statement that Mokotow was a variant of the name Mocki. On my next trip to the Fifth Avenue library I looked up the reference source and found the coat of arms was indeed for the non-Jewish family, Mocki, but there was no connection between Mokotow and Mocki. I got my money back.

A letter was sent to Terry Barnett explaining the discovery of the two Berek Mokotows. Terry's great-grandfather was a Dov Mokotow, Dov being the Yiddish equivalent of Berek. It seems probable the Barnett's are descended from the Berek Mokotow who was the son of Jakob. Much of the hopes are leaning on the fact that this Berek's wife was named Rayzele. Terry has a sister name Rosalinde. If she was named after her great-grandmother, it would cement into place that branch of the family.

In the letter to Terry, I stated that the project with its 425 descendants of Tuvia David Mokotow was probably at the "95% point."

Received a response from the Polish Archives in Warsaw. They have additional records from Warka, specifically from the period 1860-99. For a fee of \$30, plus \$10 an hour and \$20 a document they will perform the research. The reports from persons I met at the Jewish genealogy seminar seemed to indicate that this route would probably be expensive and unfruitful. Those who tried to use the Archives sent money but had never received a response (the checks were never cashed either—it wasn't that the Polish government was acting fraudulently.)

Yoav Kanfi arrived in New York and came to my home with a relative. They were the first members of the family to view the family tree which was now ready for the printer. He clarified portions of his wife's branch, and I showed him the material I had about the Garwolin Mokotovs. He took copies back to Israel to discuss it with his family.

The family tree went to the printer. It was my hope I would be able to mail it by Rosh Hashanah.

A letter was sent to the Mormon Church library in Salt Lake City requesting specific microfilms to be made available during my stay there. This is necessary because copies of the over one million microfilm reels are not kept at the library. It is especially true of Jewish records because the demand is too low.

*****September 1981*****

Received an invitation to the wedding of Zvi Kitov's eldest daughter, Irit. She was to be married in Jerusalem on September 14.

Received a response from the Warsaw Jewish cemetery. Included were two pictures of tombstones; one was a Berek (Dov Ber) Mokotow and the second of Israel Jacob (Yankiel) Mokotow. The quality of the photographs were not perfect but with the assistance of one of my Hebrew translators it was possible to determine that the Berek Mokotow grave was that of Tuvia's son. The tombstone specifically stated 'Dov Ber bar Tuvia' and also said the person died at a very old age in 1916; Berek was born in 1833. The second tombstone was equally fascinating for it gave the first indication of a Mokotow family not directly descended from Tuvia. The tombstone identified the deceased as 'Yisroel Yakov bar Moshe Ha-Levi'; died 1908. It meant the man was descended from the Levites, while our family are Israelites.

Yet another letter to the Argentinean Mokotoffs, this one to Felix Mokotoff, was returned stating that there was no such street address as the one shown in the Buenos Aires telephone book.

Z-----

The Chelm *yizkor* book shows no Mokotowskis. A Chaim Mokotowski had registered in Chelm in 1945 as a Holocaust survivor.

The town of Gora Kalwaria, which is located immediately north of Warka, is well known in Hasidic circles. Its Yiddish name is Ger.

A retranslation of the article about Leib Yehudah Mokotow in the Garwolin *yizkor* book indicates he was not descended from the Alexander Hasidim as originally stated but was a member of the group.

The completed family tree was returned in time to mail to the family before Rosh Hashanah. It came out far better than I had expected. The use of special parchment-like paper and printing the background of the tree in a second color (green) gave a third dimension to the tree. All told, over 100 copies were sent to family members throughout the world.

The town of Przedecz, the original home of Moshe Mokotow, is so small it is not located on contemporary Polish maps. With the assistance of a gazetteer and extremely detailed maps located in the Map Room of the Fifth Avenue library I found it. It is almost exactly at the intersection of a line drawn between Warsaw and Poznan and a second line drawn south of Gdansk. The closest major town is Klodawa which is about one mile due south of it.

There are no Mokotoffs in New Zealand telephone books. Specifically the towns of Christchurch, Dunedin, Auckland and Wellington.

A response was sent to the director of the Warsaw Jewish cemetery asking for additional information about other Mokotows buried there. It seems unreasonable there are only two gravesites of our family at the cemetery given the large number of family members who lived in the capital.

One of the fascinating aspects of gathering information from living members of the family is that the initial comment from persons is invariably 'I don't remember a thing'. Then in the course of the conversation, or sometimes many months later, vital information is made available. Such a situation occurred in a conversation with Anne Sonde, one of my father's cousins.

Anne casually mentioned to me in a telephone conversation that her grandmother Gussie had a sister named Esther Greenberg (subsequently it was determined her first name was actually Sarah). During the conversation the significance did not register because my interest was in tracing the male branch of the Mokotow family. After hanging up the telephone I suddenly realized that Sarah was a Mokotow because Gussie had married a first cousin and was also a Mokotow! I called Anne back to get additional information. Sarah's husband, Anne thought, was named Hyman and they lived on Attorney Street in New York City. She died in the early 1940s and left Anne and some of her cousins each a small amount of money. She though Sarah might have been in her early 80s when she died. Harold Mokotoff should have more information because he was executor of her will.

A call to my mother confirmed the existence of Sarah, who was known by her grandnieces and grandnephews as "Minna's Tante" (Minna's aunt) after a dog named Minna which she owned. My mother did not know her age but stated she attended my parent's wedding. My mother guessed she was about 75-77 at that time (1935).

Harold's records no longer included detailed information but he recalled that in addition to leaving money to his cousins, Sarah also left money to Fishel Mokotow, Gus Shaw's father. This important piece of information further cemented the relationship between Gus's family and mine. It showed that his grandmother Pesa, my great-grandmother Gussie and Sarah Mokotow Greenberg were sisters—all the children of Godol Mokotow, the baker from Warka.

It is interesting to note that despite prior conversations with my parents, Anne, Harold, Gus and other members of the family, no one had ever mentioned Sarah Greenberg.

*****October 1981*****

The response to the family tree was heartening. I received many telephone calls from my father's cousins and their children congratulating me on my effort. Some indicated they were planning to frame the tree and place it in their homes. Invariably part of the conversation included the statement, "When are we getting together; we really should have a family reunion." Many had not seen each other in nearly 30 years.

Burton Mokotoff, a second cousin of mine had many scraps of information about the family:

1. George Mokotoff once found a Mokotoff in a telephone book in the Western U.S. He called the person who said he was not Jewish and hung up the phone. (A subsequent conversation with George indicated he did not recall the incident.)

2. In 1961, a man from Israel called Burt. He could only speak Yiddish. Burt's father spoke to the man. (As of this writing whom this man was is unknown.)

3. His grandmother's name was Esther Forlehrer.

4. My great-grandfather, Hyman, was a peddler. He sold pretzels on the Lower East Side of New York. Burt's grandfather was a shoemaker in Poland but a house painter in the U.S. He came to America in 1907.

5. Our mutual fathers cousin Max had a son, name unknown who was the same age as Burt. (The New York City birth index for that year shows a child born in November whose recording at that time, unfortunately, was just 'Boy Mokotoff'.)

6. My stepuncle, Howard, was also born the same year as Burt.

7. One of my granduncles died while sitting *shiva* for the other.

But one piece of information Burt disclosed made the publishing of the family tree worth the effort. His son Mark attends Queens College in New York City. On his first day of classes, one of his professors commented "Your name is Mokotoff...my wife's maiden name is Mokotoff." The woman was Hella Mokotow Hakerem, the cousin of Gus Shaw that he had not seen in nearly 40 years! (She is shown on the family tree as Helena Mokotow).

I called Hella that evening and we agreed to get together. Ironically, she lived less than 5 miles (8 km) from my home. In the interim she informed me her family was originally from Frankfurt, Germany. Her parents and grandfather were killed in the Holocaust. Her grandfather's name was Jacob, not Morris, as shown on the tree.

Betty Brown indicated her cousin Betty Levine's Hebrew name was Bayla Ruchel. Undoubtedly, she was named for Gussie's mother. She was unsure if she too was named for the same woman.

A note from Yoav Kanfi indicated his family was rather sure the picture of the funeral of Moshe Mokotow in the Garwolin *yizkor* book was that of his wife's grandfather in the late 1930s not of some earlier ancestor as I had conjectured.

In a conversation with George Mokotoff, he did not recall the incident related to me by Burt. He did comment he once received a call from a man named Mokotoff who was in the linen business, was married but with no children.

Rose Hoffman, the oldest living cousin of my father could not volunteer any information about the past but did give me her husband's birth and death years.

One research technique I decided to use was to track down references in books about Warka. I used this technique at the Fifth Avenue library with the book *Wooden Synagogues* which had the pictures of the Warka synagogue. In the back of the book were the sources of the information. It did not bear much fruit other than the claim that the paintings in the edifice were probably done by a man named Friedlander who was responsible for paintings in many of the Polish synagogues including the one in Grojec.

Received copies of the names of Mokotows murdered in the Holocaust that are on record at Yad Vashem. Not all were accounted for. Missing were the families of Brenda Tyler, Hella Hakerem and Nathan Marks. Represented were those of Moshe Mokotow, the Mokotowskis of Otwock and Garwolin. Fishel Mokotow had included his uncle Godol who was deported from France to Auschwitz. There were also some names unknown to me including a Berish Mokotow from Kalisch and a Meir Mokotow from Warsaw. The Yad Vashem documents are extremely useful in genealogy because they include such vital information as the names of the person's mother, father, spouse and sometimes children. They also gave the name and address of the person submitting the document. Since there were no known survivors of the Otwock Mokotowskis, the documents were of enormous benefit in piecing together the family relationships between many of the people who had lived there. In addition, Leib Mokotow of the Garwolin branch had recorded his entire family shortly before he died in 1955. Included were names of nieces and nephews who were unknown to his living descendants.

*****November 1981*****

In November, 1981, I took advantage of a business convention in Las Vegas to stop in Salt Lake City where I used the facilities of the main library of the Mormon Genealogy Society. There is no comparison between the New York branch which devotes a single room to genealogy and the Salt Lake City location which consists of a four story building. There are over 500 microfilm readers and trained, amiable persons to assist you. The most valuable assistance was from one of the librarians who could translate Polish documents.

I spent over 40 hours looking through more than 25 microfilm reels of the vital statistics of Warka as well as many of the towns in the surrounding area. The most significant discoveries were:

1. The death record of Tuvia's father.
2. The name of Tuvia's first wife.
3. Another 15 names for the tree including three more children of Tuvia.

The most exciting discovery was the death record of Tuvia's father. Prior to going to Salt Lake City, I was reexamining photographs I had made of the Mormon records when I noticed one from 1810 which said in Polish 'Dawida Mokotowa Syna'. By now I was becoming more familiar with Polish words and immediately recognized that 'Syna' meant 'son'. In examining the photograph I looked for a second Mokotow name but found none. The words following 'Syna' were not found in my Polish dictionary so I concluded it meant 'son-in-law'. When I got to Salt Lake City, the Polish-speaking² librarian translated the document for me.

It was the death record of a Mosiek Aronowicz and it said David Mokotow was his son. The librarian and I looked at each other quizzically. How was it possible that David Mokotow was the son of Mosiek Aronowicz? I came to me in an instant. Because of the tremendous number of hours I had spent reading Polish documents and comparing the Hebrew signatures against the Polish equivalents, I realized that those men who signed their name without having a surname were given Polish names by the registrar (Shlomo ben Yakov became Szlama Jacobowicz). Tuvia's father had gone through life without a surname. His name was Moshe ben Aron. The Polish equivalent was Mosiek Aronowicz! The death record indicated he was 83 years old at the time of death. This meant he was born in 1727. It also meant I knew the first name of his father—Aron. If his father was at least 27 years old at the time Moshe ben Aron was born, it meant I had traced the Mokotow family back into the 1600's!

Another significant discovery in Salt Lake City was that Tuvia had a wife prior to Sarah Israelowny (which by the way translates to 'Sarah, daughter of Israel'). This seemed highly probable because Tuvia's eldest son Jacob was born when Sarah was less than ten years old. Tuvia's first wife was named Tauba Moskowicz. She was the mother of at least Jakob (from whom the English/French Mokotows are descended), Isaac (from whom the Mokotowskis are descended) and a girl named Trona. Tauba died somewhere between 1809 and 1812.

Many records were examined from towns surrounding Warka including Gora Kalwaria (1808-59), Grojec (1826-64), Karczew (1842-72), Piaseczno (1829-36), Tarczyn (1852-59) and Warsaw (1851-57, 1863-65). Note: The Mormon records do not include the town of Garwolin. There were few items involving the Mokotow family, which seemed to demonstrate that the migration from Warka did not occur until after the 1850s. The Warsaw records were in poor shape. The indexes were often missing and there were literally thousands of records, mostly unsigned, making it impractical to search for family records. The only item found was an index in 1854 of the marriage of Boruch Mokotow. The actual record could not be found.

The records of Opele and Josefow, the towns from which many of the Mokotowskis came, were scanned for the years 1846-62. No Mokotowskis were found but there were many Samburskis and it is likely that Rachel Samburski, who marriage Michael Mokotow of Warsaw, the founder of the Mokotowskis, came from that area and encouraged him to relocate there.

One of my ideas, early in the project, was to create a Mokotow coat of arms. To those who consider it unreasonable that a Jewish family should have a coat of arms, it should be noted that the Rothchilds and

² Daniel Schlyter.

Montefiores have one, so why not the equally-distinguished Mokotow family. The basic design came to me in synagogue while looking at the curtain behind which the Torah scrolls are kept. In most synagogues the curtain has in relief two lions holding the Ten Commandments with a crown above the tablets. I asked the rabbi what was the symbolism being represented and he informed me the lions were the lions of Judah and the crown represented the presence of God.

I concluded that the Mokotow coat of arms would be identical with a shield in place of the Ten Commandments. The shield would contain symbols of our family and its Polish origin, the lions representing our Jewish origin and the crown representing God watching over the family. The question was what to put in the shield. The answer came at the Mormon library where I discovered a book about towns in Poland. It showed that Warka had its own town symbol; a fortress with an archway entrance and three parapets. I decided the Mokotow shield would include this symbol to show that Warka was our origin and in the sky behind the parapets would be 17 six-pointed stars to represent the 17 children of Tuvia Mokotow from whom we are all descended.

Rachel Kabak sent a letter from Australia indicating her son Richard might visit the United States the following year.

A letter was received from the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People which said they had no material whatsoever on Warka or Garwolin and virtually no genealogical material on Eastern Europe at all.

Success! After nearly two years attempting to get information from Shmuel Mokotow about his family, I finally received a response. It was gotten through a ruse. I sent him a letter stating that if he knew nothing about his family's past, would he give me the names of his next of kin. It was my hope that the staff at the nursing home would read the letter and forward the information to me. I received my letter back. At the bottom was written: 'Mr. Mokotow is in his late 80's and hasn't a very good memory. He has a sister in Paris who died last year. Her daughter's name and address is Mrs. Rosette Gobitz...Another relative is Mr. Henry Marlow...' Rosette's address was a suburb of Paris and Henry lived in Manchester. No doubt Henry Marlow was the missing Manchester relative Terry Barnett had alluded to. The name Marlow was just a short name change from Mokotow. Letters were sent immediately to gather additional information about that branch of the family.

*****December 1981*****

Yet another attempt was made to contact the Argentinean Mokotoffs. I spoke to my Argentinean contact, Natalio Fridman, and asked him to call the various members of the family the next time he was in Buenos Aires. He promised to call his secretary and have her make the telephone call.

Received the death certificates of my great-grandparents Hyman and Gussie from the New York City Board of Health. It showed that Hyman's mother's name was Pesa (previously unknown to me). Gussie's death record was a disaster. It showed that her father's name was George (it was Godol) and her mother's name was Betty (it was Beyla). These are two perfect examples of the reliability or unreliability of information. Gussie was alive when her husband died and no doubt was the source of the death certificate information, consequently it was highly accurate. At Gussie's death, the information was given by children or grandchildren. What was recorded were the Anglicized names of her parents.

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Looking yet again at the Holocaust survivor lists at YIVO, I came across a new name; Bronislaw Mokotow, born 1916, last known location, Kempten, Germany.

There were no Mokotoffs listed in the New York Times obituaries from 1900-68 according to an published index located at the Fifth Avenue library.

The Jewish population prior to the Holocaust of Polish towns where the Mokotow family lived includes: Warka-2176, Garwolin-2424, Przedecz-840, Grojec-4922, Gora Kalwaria-2901.

A telegram was received from Zvi Kitov acknowledging receipt of the family trees for his family. It said in part "Congratulations for a wonderful job...a meticulous rewarding effort."

A letter was received from Yehuda Mokotow of Haifa commenting favorably about the tree.

A letter was sent to the Canadian Jewish Immigrant Aid Society asking if they have any records of persons named Mokotow or Mokotowski.

*****January 1982*****

Received a letter from Rosette Gobitz, the niece of Shmuel Mokotow. She lives in Vincennes, a suburb of Paris. Included was a complete tree of her part of the family containing close to 40 names. She must have called all of her cousins to get the vital statistics. The letter represented a milestone in my research of the Mokotow family because it completed the picture of a branch which had taken me nearly three years to do.

Received a response from Henry Marlow, the nephew of Shmuel, who lives in Manchester, England. He filled in the details of his family. In addition, he provided more data about the family of Leonard (Hardy) Mokotow, the teenage boy who was killed in a London bombing raid. The most significant piece of information was that Henry's mother was still alive at the age of 96! This made her the oldest living Mokotow. It was almost certain she would have remembered vital information about her husband's family history. Most significant would be the name of her husband's father. If it was Israel Jacob Mokotow, it would be positive confirmation that they all were descendants of Berek Mokotow, the son of Jakob Mokotow, who was the eldest son of Tuvia David Mokotow.

A letter was sent to Helene Hirschfeld, the sister of Henry Marlow requesting additional information about her family.

The Jewish Genealogical Society publication, *Toledot*, has a family finder column in which you can list your surname as well as the towns you are interested in researching. I placed an inquiry in the publication and got a response from a man who lives in the Staten Island section of New York City. He stated that his wife is descended from a man named Samuel Mucotov who changed his name to Minkendorf. Based on best information, this man lived from about 1835 to 1918. He is buried in the Warsaw cemetery. The town of Grojec appears in his family's history.³

It is difficult to tell if this person is related to the family. The name Samuel is not a common one in the family and the birth year of 1835 places him in an awkward place in the family tree. He could not have been a son of Tuvia. He would have to be a son of one of the older sons of Tuvia. It is quite possible he is totally unrelated and represents a family who also took the name Mokotow. Perhaps the uniqueness of the family name is actually based on the fact we are the only existing family who kept the name Mokotow. All others either died out or changed their name.

Went to the Fifth Avenue library to look up the addresses of some of Rosette Gobitz's relatives who lived in Paris. Looked through the Stockholm telephone book for the Isaac Szare that Rosette indicated lived in Sweden but could not find a listing.

The sister of my great-grandmother Gussie was named Sarah Greenberg, not Esther Greenberg as I had

³ It has never been demonstrated this man is part of the Mokotow family.

previously thought.

Received a call from Anne Sonde. She informed me that her brother-in-law Irving Kaufman had died. It was a shock to me because I had seen him just six months earlier at the funeral of Anne's sister. I had been close to the Kaufman's. They lived only one street away from where I spent my boyhood days in the Queens section of New York City. Irving's eldest son Charles was just two months younger than I and we had gone to school together.

When I met Anne at the funeral she decried the fact that the Mokotoffs had become a family that got together only for funerals. She urged me to organize a family reunion. I made the commitment to her that I would plan one.

Another lead from my listing in *Toledot*. A member of the Society told me that he saw the name Mokotoff on an apartment registry located on 86th Street near Fifth Avenue. A check of the telephone book showed no such listing. Since it was on the same street as the YIVO Institute, I checked it out the next time I visited the library. The person was John Mokotoff, the son of Harold Mokotoff, a cousin of my father's.

*****February 1982*****

The Canadian HIAS organization responded to my inquiry stating they never assisted any person named Mokotoff or Mokotowski. They published my inquiry in their newspaper. I never received a response to the article.

A letter was sent to Paulette Sommer, the cousin of Gus Shaw, confirming that she received copies of the tree.

Received a letter from Dalia Pelli of Ithaca, New York. She is a friend of Rachel Kabak and had just returned from Australia with some presents from Rachel for my children.

Received a response from Helene Hirschfeld with additional information about her family's history.

Additional letters came from various parts of the world congratulating me on the family tree. Terry Barnett wrote from England, Moshe Mokotow from Tel Aviv, Helen Spingarn from Florida and Rachel Kabak from Melbourne. There was little doubt my work had been a hit. The letter from Moshe Mokotow was filled with emotion. It must have been very important to him because he had it written in English. In part it stated:

"I'm not ashamed to write that on account of my deeply felt emotion I had to wipe my eyes—I cried. I'm interested that you should read this letter without the help of a translator so that you may know my feelings towards you and your marvelous deed. I think that the Jewish people as such would have gained a better image...among the gentiles had there been many more like you...You have done a great deed for the Mokotows who are dispersed the world over and also a great service with respect to those who are not anymore, yet who had in common the name MOKOTOW...

His letter evoked an emotional response from me. In part my letter to him said:

"I want to tell you about my background. I am, in many ways, an American Jew who is typical of my generation. One thing about my generation of interest to you is our attitude toward the Holocaust. To me, prior to my genealogy project, the Holocaust was something that happened to fellow Jews, but other Jews. My family came to the United States in the early part of this century. Poland was something of the distant past to me. I may be Jewish, but I am also an American. No Mokotoffs were lost in the Holocaust. They were all safe in the United States in the early 1940s.

"Then came my genealogy project...I learned there were things called *yizkor* books. I had never heard of them before and when I looked through the Warka *yizkor* book, I found no Mokotows listed.

"I then received a big emotional jolt. Leah Mokotov mentioned her husband's family came from Garwolin, Poland. I decided to look through the Garwolin *yizkor* book to see if there were any Mokotows mentioned, expecting to find none. In the back of the book was a list of the townspeople killed in the Holocaust. I went to the *mems* to look for kinsmen. My knowledge of Hebrew is limited, so I slowly pronounced the names of the dead. On the third line, a chill went through me. It said, "Mokotow, Yechiel Tuvia, Rachel, Dan, Moshe v'mishpochto, Leiba, Asher..."

"This incident occurred only about a month before you mailed me the *yizkor* book from Przedecz. When I received that book, it devastated me. You had never written in your letter that you once had two sisters and when I saw the pictures of them, I cried.

"The picture of Bronka and your father is, to me, the most endearing father/daughter picture I have ever seen. I will tell you that to this day, when I look at the pictures of your sister Bronka, I get emotional.

"For me, she is the symbol of the Holocaust. I feel that most American Jews, who did not have close family members murdered in the Holocaust, have a misconception of what happened. This misconception is created by the news media who have graphically shown the atrocities. To these people, the Holocaust was barbed wire, gas chambers, ovens and old Jewish men being taunted.

"To me, the Holocaust is a lovely teenaged girl named Bronka Mokotow crying out, "Why me?"

What I have written above is part of the pain I have felt researching our Jewish family history. I am not unusual. Other Jewish American genealogists have related to me comparable stories. What follows though is part of the pleasure. Received another letter from Zvi Kitov. In part it stated:

"A new boy was born to my brother Oded. I am just back from the *brith* where I served as a *sandak*. The name of the new-born is Tuvia David, given, no doubt, by the influence of your work."

*****March 1982*****

It seemed best to hold the family reunion in late spring before families went away for their summer vacations. Since there was a chance that a large number of persons might show, I got my sister Suzanne to volunteer her home which in the past has accommodated parties of over 100 persons. In addition, my sister loves to give parties. I sent invitations throughout the world on the chance that a Mokotow might be planning a trip to the New York area and would coordinate the trip to come to the reunion.

Received a response from the International Tracing Service in Arolsen, West Germany regarding the fate of Bronka Mokotow. They indicated that they had no information. They also indicated it was not possible for them to send me any information about all persons with the surname Mokotow, Mokotov or Mokotowski because the name appears frequently in their Central Index of Names and that such information could only be forwarded to the persons concerned or their relatives.

Yet another letter was returned from Argentina addressed to Felix Mokotoff.

In another trip to the Fifth Avenue library, I located a book which is the index of indexes of all Who's Who's type publications produced in the United States. It is called the *Biography & Genealogy Master Index*. It lists only three Mokotoffs: Gary Mokotoff (*Who's Who in Consulting*), Harold Mokotoff (*Who's Who in Lawyers*) and Michael Mokotoff (*American Men and Women of Science*). In addition, there are no Mokotows listed in *Who's Who in International Medicine*, *Who's Who in American Law*, *Who's Who in Brazil*, *Argentina*, *the Theatre*, *Anthropology* and the *Academic Who's Who* (England).

The librarian at YIVO Institute was a bit snappish. "Haven't you looked through these books before?" she asked responding to my request for Holocaust survivor lists. Additional family names included a Berek Mokotow of Warsaw/Frankfurt listed in the *Martyred Jews of Dachau, Volume I* and a surviving Jew located in Lublin in 1946 by the World Jewish Congress named Judka Mikotowski, born 1889 from Chmielnik, the child of Mordka and Blima. It seems likely this latter person is not a member of the family.

All told 18 survivor/death lists were scanned including: *Surviving Jews of Lublin*, *Surviving Jews of Warsaw*, *List of the Jewish Agency for Palestine*, *France Ministere des Anciens* (List of the dead at Mauthausen), *Czechoslovakia Ministry—Theresen Ghetto*, *Service d'Evacuation et de Regroupment*, *Sharit Ha-Platah* (Bergen Belsen), *Jews Liberated from Germany in Sweden*, *Die Toten von Dachau*, *World Jewish Congress People found in Hamburg*, *World Jewish Congress Surviving Jews in Czestochowa* (Poland), *Jewish Agency for Palestine Register of Jewish Survivors*, *Czechoslovak Jewish Committee Bulletin #15*, *Central Registratiebureau Voor Joden* (Dutch—the name of Otto Frank appeared), *Le Memorial de la Deportation Des Juifs de France*, *Jewish Survivors in Poland Volumes I and II*.

Information found in these books included the deportation of Rebecca and Jean Mokotovitch of Paris (aged 21 and 18) on May 20, 1944 from France to Auschwitz; the deportation from France of Godol Molotow of Warka to Majdanek; the listing of a survivor, Bronislaw Mokotow,⁴ born 1916 of Warsaw; a survivor, Chaim Mokotowski registered in Chelm, Poland; the recording at Bergen Belsen of the death of Rebecca Mokotovicz on May 24, 1945. She is the same girl named on the deportation list. The May date is strange. Either the year is wrong and she was killed four days after she was deported from France, or she died one month after Bergen Belsen was liberated in 1945.⁵

*****April 1982*****

I am becoming an expert in reading Polish records. With a little bit of help from a Polish dictionary, I have completely translated the birth record of my great-grandmother...well, almost completely.

"No. 39. It occurred in Warka on the day of the twenty-ninth of August one thousand eight hundred fifty-four at the hour of seven in the evening presented himself the Jew, Gotel Mokotow, baker, residing in Warka, aged thirty-five, in the presence of witnesses the Jews Szysman Zylbesberg, dyer (?), aged thirty and Hirsik Zajtman, granary operator, aged fifty-three both residing in Warka and showed us a child of female sex born here in Warka on the twenty-second day of the current month and year at the hour of six in the morning and from his wife Bayli Ruchli nee Lynow aged twenty-five ...ceremony this day...the given name Gitla. This entry to the ones present and witnesses was read and signed."

Yet another letter from Zvi Kitov with joyful news. He has another child, a son, who was named Shimon Gavriel. Zvi was a bit apologetic in noting that 'much as I identify with the cause to revive the name David Tuvia...not only the Mokotoff side is involved.'

Responses are coming in to the invitation for the reunion. They show great interest. It appears that over 50 people will attend and four branches will be represented. Hella Hakerem and Nathan Marks have indicated they will attend and Terry Barnett called from England to say he would try to coordinate an already planned business trip to the United States with the reunion. The majority of persons attending would be from my branch.

*****May 1982*****

May 2. The family reunion. Over 80 persons attended on a beautiful Sunday in spring. Since many had not

⁴ This was later determined to be Brenda Mokotow Tyler.

⁵ She did, indeed, die in Bergen Belsen a month after it was liberated.

seen each other in 20 years or more, I had name tags made for all—babies, children, parents and grandparents. The tags not only showed the name of the person but the names of his/her parents. Some people traveled hundreds of miles to attend...and the Barnetts came from England.

There was a huge banner stating 'MOKOTOFF FAMILY REUNION'. I set up an exhibit of Mokotow artifacts which covered two tables and the walls behind the tables. Included were pictures of Rachel Kabak and Brenda Tyler from Australia, Mormon records and Holocaust records. Highlight of the exhibit was the latest computerized family tree which now had grown to over 500 members. Highlight of the attendees were the Barnetts who were the first non-American Mokotoffs most of the persons had ever met. In their brief New York stay they were invited to dinner by Anne Sonde and Steffi Mokotoff Berne invited them to her home.

Terry and Cynthia reminded Ruth and I that their son Harry was being bar mitzvahed in late October and it would be great if we both attended. Ruth and I replied in the affirmative. I had already decided that England was half way to Israel and concluded it would be the perfect time to visit the Mokotows living there with whom I had corresponded for three years but had never met.

In a letter to me from Rachel Kabak, she stated that one of her cousins, Benjamin, still lived in Warsaw. I had him listed as killed in the Holocaust. I wrote her back asking for his mailing address.

A letter was sent to Rina Mokotow informing her of the planned trip to Israel. Rina works for Kopel Tours, a leading tourist agency in Israel. Rina told Moshe Mokotow about my plans and I subsequently received an excited letter from him informing me that he would invite all the Mokotows living in Israel to his house.

*****June 1982*****

Received a telephone call from a young man named Akiba Miller who said he had a letter from Zvi Kitov whom he had seen recently in Jerusalem. He brought it over to my office the next day. The letter was in fact a letter introducing Akiba (American name Kenneth) as a computer science major who had studied with Zvi in Jerusalem. Ken also had a degree from Yeshiva University and was looking for a job.

I have a simple philosophy about hiring relatives and friends. I give them the courtesy of an interview; they have to make it on their own. I turned Ken over to the manager of my software division with the instructions to show no favoritism. If the answer was 'no', I would send a polite letter to Zvi.

Ken passed with flying colors and is a positive contributor to my company's efforts. I had an ulterior motive for wanting him to join my company. It now meant I had someone in my organization who could translate my Hebrew documents and correspondence.

There is a publication in the United States called the *Genealogical Helper* which is devoted to persons searching for information about their ancestral past. Some of their advertisements list rewards for finding information. I decided to place an advertisement listing a \$25 reward to anyone who could locate a Mokotow, Mokotoff, Mokotov or Mokotowski anywhere in the world of which I was not aware. I received over the next few months 8 responses. None mentioned Mokotoffs who were unknown to me.

Received a letter from the Jewish Agency Search Bureau for Missing Relatives in Jerusalem. Apparently the International Tracing Service in Arolsen forwarded my request for information about Bronka Mokotow to them and they responded by stating that Moshe Mokotow, brother of Bronka, lived at 18 Rembrandt Street in Tel Aviv.

*****July 1982*****

Received a letter from Henry Marlow. Terry Barnett was in the Manchester area and called him. Although they were from the same branch of the Mokotow family, it was the first time they had ever communicated with each other. Terry invited the Marlows to Harry's bar mitzvah. The letter concluded, "we are very much looking forward to meeting you."

The Jewish Genealogical Society held its second annual convention in Washington in early July. Washington is probably the second richest source of Jewish genealogical material in the United States; New York being number one. The Library of Congress is not only the largest in the country but it includes an excellent Jewish Section and Map Section. The National Archives has on microfilm the passenger lists of all ships that came to the ports of New York, Boston and Baltimore from the 1700's to the 1940s as well as citizenship and naturalization records.

Little additional information was gathered at the convention that could not have been found in New York, but the fact that I could devote three undisturbed days to the Mokotow family tree project was rewarding in itself.

Probably the most remarkable discovery consisted of a chain of small events that led to the linking of the Mokotowskis of Otwock, Poland to Tuvia David Mokotow. Zvi Kitov had told me in a letter there was a picture of a Joshua Mokotowski in the Otwock *yizkor* book. I requested the book at the Jewish Section of the Library of Congress and vowed that in this third reading of the book I would find the picture. I never located it, but instead found more significant material. I had assumed that all the Mokotowskis from this town had died in the Holocaust because the index of contributors showed no persons named Mokotowski. In slowly glancing thorough every page of the *yizkor* book, reading every caption under a picture, every section title to an article and every article title, I stumbled on "Mei Vater Eleazer Mokotowski" by Sarah Landau. I had completely forgotten that an index of authors might not include a Mokotowski because the author would be a married female descendant of a Mokotowski.

The Genealogical Society invited to the convention Rabbi Shmuel Gorr of Jerusalem, one of the world's leading Jewish genealogists, to lecture the group and assist members in translating Hebrew and Yiddish documents located at the Library of Congress. Rabbi Gorr translated the article from Yiddish to English for me. It said that Eleazar Mokotowski was born in Karczew in 1865 and died in Otwock on 7 Tishri 1936. The Encyclopedia Judaica has a list of every Jewish date for the past 50 years and their secular equivalent, so I was able to convert the date to September 23.

The town of Karczew was familiar to me. It is near Otwock and only about 30 km (25 miles) northeast of Warka. There is a book called the *Shtetl Finder* which lists many of the small villages (*shtetl* in Yiddish) in Eastern Europe many of which are not on contemporary maps. In addition to locating the town, there is usually a bit of local Jewish history such as the name of a famous rabbi or even names of townspeople.

If there were 10 million Jews living in Eastern Europe in the 1880's, the *Shtetl Finder* probably names less than 1000 of them. One was a Mokotow. The paragraph on Karczew notes that a subscriber to a book published in the late 1800's included the name of Yehoshie Efraim Monkitov!

It was the missing link to the past.

I started to recall little bits of information gathered from previous research. I had taken with me to Washington the Mormon Church records just on the possibility they would be useful. One was the only document I had from Karczew; a marriage record. When I returned to my hotel room, I read my notation on back of the document. It was the marriage of Fvrim (Efraim) Monkitow, son of Isaac. Why was the name Yehosie dropped from the record? I examined the document closely and found to my delight it was not.

Registrars had the nasty habit of hyphenating a word if they came to the end of a line. Closer examination showed the word prior to 'Fvrim' was 'Sh' on one line and 'ia' on the next or 'Shia', the Yiddish word for Joshua. I had linked the Otwock branch of the family to the past. They were the descendants of Eleazar Mokotowski, son of Joshua Efraim Monkitow, son of Isaac Mokotow, son of Tuvia David.

I was also able to link the branch to the present. Who was this Sarah Landau, daughter of Eleazar? I had Yad Vashem Pages of Testimony documents for the Mokotowskis. Locating the one for Eleazar Mokotowski, I discovered it was given to Yad Vashem by Abraham Dov Landau, relationship, son-in-law. Yet another example of how the information is there but you don't see it. Nine months prior to the convention I had made the assumption there were no survivors of the family from Otwock, yet I had a document that Eleazar Mokotowski had a living son-in-law.

The Otwock *yizkor* book, which I gave a careful reading at the Library of Congress, had another important piece of information to give to me. I have always had a fear that the Mokotowskis are not related to the Mokotows. The names they gave their children are significantly different than the Mokotows. It seems unreasonable that no Jew other than Tuvia David took the name Mokotow. The legend of Tuvia was related by Elyahu Kitov (Abraham Elyahu Mokotowski) but Zvi informed me that his father had heard the story from Fishel Mokotow. Most significantly, there are no Tuvia Mokotowskis except for an ancestor of the Kitovs named Moshe Tuvia Mokotow.

The Otwock book, however, cemented the two families together. On page 767 there is a reproduction of a poster the Germans placed in the town demanding 100,000 *zlotys* from the Jews. Fifteen Jews were appointed to collect the extortion money and their names are listed on the poster. One of them was named Tobiasz Mokotowski!

The convention unearthed other useful information. The Jewish section had more current telephone books of Israel than at the Fifth Avenue library, so I went through the books looking for Israeli Mokotows. In the Jerusalem directory, by a stroke of luck, my eye picked up the name 'Morris David Monkotovitz' while scanning the column for Mokotows. The similarity was too great. I noted the address and planned to write the person a letter to see if he was part of the family.

At the National Archives, passenger lists were very unrewarding. There is an index supposedly containing every passenger who arrived in the port of New York from 1904 to the mid-1940s. Because of the risk of misspelling, the index is not in exact alphabetic order. Instead it is kept in an ingenious but simple system called Soundex codes. Essentially each letter of the alphabet is given a numerical designation. Letters that sound similar in English are assigned the same number. The letters 'F' and 'V' have the same code, therefore Mokotoff and Mokotov appear together. The name Mokotow has a different code because the inventors of the system treated the letter 'W' as a vowel because in the English language, it tends to take on the sound of the vowel that precedes it.⁶

Since time was short and the index was long, I decided to look through the Mokotows first on the assumption that the original Polish spelling would be used by the first immigrants to the United States. After nearly four hours of searching I came up with only one name, Hella Mokotow, who came to the United States in April 1940. I knew something was wrong because Gus Shaw and his sister Helen should have been in the index as well as my great-grandfather and his family all of whom had arrived at different times.

My standing joke was that I had conclusive proof that a Mokotow had invented the airplane because none of them had arrived in the United States by passenger ship.

⁶ It was differences like this that caused me to eventually create a new soundex system known today as the "Daitch-Mokotoff Soundex System." It is the standard soundex system for Jewish genealogy.

Having been inspired by my success at the National Archives, I went to their New York area center in Bayonne, New Jersey, to look for additional documents but came out empty-handed. No Mokotow applied for citizenship to the United States before 1906 in the State of New York. No Mokotoff applied for citizenship at the Eastern District Court (Brooklyn) from 1907-25.

My father had been in declining health for some time. It had finally reached the point where an operation was mandatory because he was losing the circulation in both his legs. On July 16 he went into the hospital for a six-hour operation to bypass the defective arteries. My mother and sister Suzanne saw him after the surgery and informed me at about five o'clock that evening that it went well and he looked great. Seven hours later, shortly before midnight, I received a call from the hospital informing me that my father had died of a heart attack.

*****August 1982*****

A letter was sent to Morris David Monkotowitz. I mentioned that a branch of the family, the Kitovs, lived in Jerusalem. Included with the letter was a family tree.

An article in the Jewish Genealogical Society newsletter stated a man from a suburb of New York named Howard Blue was planning a trip to Poland to do research on his family history and would be willing to assist others. A letter was sent to him.

A frustrating aspect of genealogical research is that family members invariably claim they do not know anything about the past. Unfortunately, it sometimes takes their death to reveal to you how much information they actually knew. In going through my father's papers I found the application for citizenship my father's mother made in 1930. It included the date and the name of steamship on which she arrived, my grandfather's citizenship certificate number, her exact date of birth as well as my grandfather's. The last item added to the sadness of my father's death. My grandfather had died nearly 35 years earlier and my father had forgotten his birth date. It was identical to that of my daughter Alexis.

A letter was sent to the Search Bureau of Missing Relatives in Jerusalem stating I was trying to locate a Sarah Landau. Included with the request was a copy of the Yad Vashem document which gave her 1955 address.

Letters were sent to Moshe Mokotow, Rina Mokotov and Zvi Kitov in Israel as well as Terry Barnett in England informing them of Ruth and my plans for a trip to the two countries. I mentioned to Zvi that I had uncovered the name Morris David Monkotovitz in the Jerusalem telephone book. My letter concluded, "Looking forward to seeing you again."

The letter was postmarked Jerusalem and the envelope said Kitov, but the address was not familiar. It was from Esther Kitov, Zvi's sister-in-law. It started pleasantly enough:

"My dear Mr. Mokotoff:

"I had been intending to write to you to thank you for the family tree and to tell you how much I enjoyed reading all the details about the various branches of our family. We all appreciate the effort you have put into this whole project...

"We always depended on Zvi to take care of that project and to relay all messages and good news in the name of the entire family. And now this is NO LONGER and I must get to the main point of my letter.

"Zvi had a sudden heart attack on July 16, Erev Shabat, (25 Tammuz) and it seems to have been fatal on the spot

because the ambulance that arrived immediately found him already beyond their help. The shock to the whole family has been tremendous...

I was in shock. Zvi was my age, 45. He had eight children, the youngest only a few months old. His personal life was marked with similar tragedies. Shoshana was his second wife, his first died in her 20s of a brain tumor. Zvi was Shoshana's second husband. Her first husband and a son died in an automobile accident. I sent a letter back immediately.

"Dear Esther:

"Your letter has stunned me. My family shares in your grief at the tragic death of Zvi.

"By now you have probably received from Zvi's wife my last letter to him... Coincidentally, he died on the same July day as my father. (My father died on Shabat, 26 Tammuz).

"The coincidence forced me to compare these two events and I must say in some ways I grieve more the loss of Zvi than my father. I have a personal philosophy that if someone has accomplished all he can in life, then his death is less of a blow. This is the way it was with my father. He was 68 years old and retired. He had devoted his life to improving his family's lot and succeeded in his goal. He was spending his retirement years enjoying the results of his efforts.

"Zvi's circumstance was different. He seemed to be involved continually in some new venture. His letters to me were always apologetic about the fact that he did not write sooner. He would say that other matters required his immediate attention. Zvi still had much to offer us all and I will miss him for this reason..."

*****September 1982*****

I was drawn yet again to the Otwock *yizkor* book documentation because I realized there might be Landaus listed among those who died. I only had the page of Mokotowskis but since 'L' comes before 'M' (even in Hebrew) the names appeared on the same page. I observed that the 'L's were not in alphabetic order and came to realization the reason there seemed to be missing Mokotowskis on the list (including Tuvia Mokotowski) was that they might appear on the next page not in sequence with other members of the family. A trip back to the library confirmed this. On the next page were additional names including those found on the Yad Vashem documents. All told over 30 Mokotowskis from Otwock died in the Holocaust.

Received a letter from Rachel Kabak saying she visited Israel and saw her cousin Moshe Mokotow.

The Jewish Agency Search Bureau for Missing Relatives responded to my inquiry about the whereabouts of Bronislaw Mokotow and Chaim Mokotowski, the two unknown Holocaust survivors, by stating that these persons were not registered in Israel. They suggested I contact the International Tracing Service in Arolsen, Germany.

My letter to Paulette Schwitzka was returned from Strassbourg, France stamped addressee unknown. Apparently she moved. A letter was sent to Gus Shaw asking if he knew the new address of his cousin. He responded in the negative and suggested I check the French telephone books.

Received a response from Esther Kitov. Life has its tragic moments but happy ones occur too. Her son Shaul was to be bar mitzvahed the weekend we would be in Jerusalem and she invited Ruth and I to the joyous occasion as well as the party at her home that Saturday night. Because the distance from our hotel to the synagogue was too great to walk, we declined the invitation to attend the Bar mitzvah service but indicated we would be at her apartment that evening.

I started giving serious thought to publishing my findings to the family. In preparation, I sent questionnaires

to all branches asking them to fill in any missing information about each member of their family including birth, marriage and death dates, mailing addresses, Hebrew names, etc.

Received a letter from Henry Marlow suggesting that I spend a few days in Manchester, England before or after attending the Bar mitzvah of Harry Barnett.

At the Fifth Avenue library, I could find no Schwitzkas in the Strassbourg or Paris telephone directories. In addition, I started a time consuming but necessary project of looking through every birth, marriage and death index of the City of New York from 1905 to the present. New York was the principal port of entry for Eastern European Jews, therefore it is almost certain that valuable information could be obtained from these records. In addition, many dates are missing from my branch of the family. The books are in the Genealogy section of the library, each year having three separate volumes for the three sets of vital statistics. The project is not as staggering as it sounds. After 1940, the five boroughs of the City appear as a combined index so it takes no more than a minute to check one volume for the name Mokotoff. Prior to 1940 you must look through five lists per volume.

The entire project should take only five or six hours. Out of the approximately 150 volumes that must be researched, I went through nine of them looking for specific records and came up with some useful information. For example, Burton Mokotoff told me that my father's cousin, Max Mokotoff, had a son, name unknown, who was born about the same time he was born. The 1934 birth index showed a Lawrence Mokotoff born June 18. No doubt this is the missing individual.

Received a response from Morris Daniel Monkotowicz. He is part of the family! The letter was written in French. It said he was originally from Paris where he still had relatives. His family originally came from Zelechow (a town about 50 km due east of Warka!) and he was related to the Kitovs. He provided some basic information about his family and said additional information would follow. A trip to the Fifth Avenue library revealed six persons named Monkotowicz in the Paris telephone book.

*****Trip to Israel and England*****

October 1982 was the month Ruth took me to Israel and England to meet her in-laws.

Highlight of the Israel portion of the trip was a party at the home of Moshe Mokotow which was attended by Mokotows from all over Israel.

I told Moshe to invite everyone for 7:30 in the evening because our tour would not end until after 5. When we arrived at our hotel the night of the get-together there was a message to call Rina. She informed us that Moshe had invited everyone for 5:00 and many were there already. Ruth and I dressed hurriedly. Rina and her husband picked us up a half hour later.

When we arrived at Moshe's apartment, the place was crowded with Mokotows. I felt obligated to make some introductory comment to my genealogical cousins, many of whom had traveled a great distance to meet me. As I walked into the living room all eyes turned toward their cousin from the United States who was so interested in their family. I walked to the center of the room and said: "*Sh'mee Mokotow!*" (My name is Mokotoff!) The room erupted into laughter.

There were over 30 persons at the party. They came from all over Israel. The Kitovs drove from Jerusalem, Gus Shaw's brothers and their family came from Haifa, Leah Mokotov, her children and grandchildren from Herzlya and numerous persons from Tel Aviv itself including Heinrich Mokotov the son of Nathan Marks. Ruth took pictures of me with all my cousins. At one point someone suggested that Ruth get into the pictures. I jokingly said it was not necessary because she was not a Mokotow.

I met Shoshana Kitov for the first time at the party. I had come to Israel to meet Zvi, now I was meeting his widow. She was glassy-eyed. The pain of the tragedy which occurred only three months earlier was evident. She spoke only Hebrew so with the assistance of her sister-in-law Rachel Kitov Kitzis I told her I was proud to have met Zvi once when he was in New York, and now that I had met Zvi's mother and some of his brothers and sisters, I knew she was part of a great family.

The Kitovs are a magnificent family. They are the children and grandchildren of one of the most famous Jewish authors of this century. They are deeply religious yet live a life style which demonstrates that modern living is not in conflict with Jewish orthodoxy.

This was demonstrated at my visit to Oded and Esther Kitov's home the Saturday evening I was in Jerusalem. Ruth went there hesitatingly. Knowing they were religious people, she anticipated the women would be sitting in one room and the men in another. The thought of going to a social occasion where none of the people spoke English and she would not have me for company did not excite her. She was not disappointed. When we arrived, the women were in one room, the men in another. However, shortly after the old rabbi left, the grandmother of the bar mitzvah boy, Mrs. Kitov, sat down next to me to discuss the family tree project. She followed shortly thereafter by her daughter Rachel Kitov Kitzis who was also curious about how I accumulated all of my information about their family.

One of the sons, Zuri Kitov, could not make the party. At the last minute he was called back to work because the computer broke down where he worked and his job was to repair it.

A tradition among many religious Jews is that men and women do not shake hands when they greet each other. I maintained the protocol when I met the Kitovs. It is interesting to note that when Rachel Kitzis left the party in Tel Aviv, she offered her hand to say goodbye.

There were two aspects of the trip which were beneficial to the family tree project. At the family party, Yoav Kanfi, the son-in-law of Leah Mokotov asked me if my project was complete. I commented that it would never be done. "You mean that there are other Mokotoffs in the world that you do not know of?" I said there undoubtedly were. It could not have been more than 10 minutes after this conversation that his mother-in-law said something to him and Yoav said, "Gary, my mother-in-law says that her late husband has a cousin living in Tel Aviv who came from Garwolin. Would you be interested in meeting her?" The woman came to Moshe Mokotow's home and in the course of the interview gave me a much clearer picture of the Garwolin branch of the clan, including correcting some misinformation in the Garwolin *yizkor* book. She was also instrumental in positively linking this branch to the son of Tuvia Mokotow named Moshe. She said her mother's name was Sarah and that she was named after her father's mother. By matching this information against the Mormon records, the only possibility was the wife of Moshe Mokotow.⁷

The second incident occurred at Yad Vashem. This memorial to the six million Jews murdered during the Holocaust is primarily pictorial. Not more than 200 names are identified in the exhibit. One of these names, however, is a Mokotow. As I was walking through the exhibit, I spotted that very poster from Otwock, Poland on which the Germans demanded 100,000 *zlotys*. The name of Tobiasz Mokotowski appears as part of the permanent exhibit of Yad Vashem.

On to England.

One of the joys of being Jewish is that you are truly part of an international community. I always get chills when I see on television Jews from other parts of the world praying and hear that their prayers are my

⁷ It was Doba Hirshfeld Neuman.

prayers, that their chants are my chants.

A bar mitzvah in England is not very different than one in the United States. The ritual is the same, the prayers are the same, the party afterwards is the same. To me the major difference was that the rabbi spoke English like Peter Ustinov. In addition, at the party they sang "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow" to the bar mitzvah boy in addition to "L'Chaim."

Rina and Moshe Mokotov attended the bar mitzvah, too. Moshe is a half-uncle to Terry Barnett. I also met Terry's sisters and their families. This occasion, too, was tinged with sadness. The Marlows did not come from Manchester. Henry's mother was seriously ill. Subsequently I was to learn that she died the day of the bar mitzvah at age 97.

*****November 1982 - February 1983*****

November 1982 through February 1983 represented the first lull in my family tree project. I got busy at the office. Upon returning from the trip I landed a major account that increased our business by over 15%. In December, my company elected to replace the main computer with a more modern one. In January, a division of my company which was foundering (and losing money) suddenly got very busy (and profitable). The momentum of the project still led to additional information.

I had sent away for more Mormon microfilms prior to going to Israel. They were from Karczew and Kozenice. I had hoped there would be more information about Joshua Ephraim Monkitow in the Karczew film. The other roll was to trace the descendants of Trona Mokotow, the eldest daughter of Tuvia. She has married a man from Kozenice, a town south of Warka. Neither set of documents bore fruit.

My inquiry to the Search Bureau for Missing Relatives about Sarah Landau was answered. I was given the name of Eleazar Landau of Tel Aviv. Sarah's father was named Eleazar. This was undoubtedly her son. A letter was sent to him.

Received a letter from Leni Hirschfeld, Henry Marlow's sister. I had sent her the mailing list of all Mokotows throughout the world. She noticed I did not have the address of her cousin Isaac Szare in Sweden which she gave me. This was yet another example of how you gather information by telling enough people about the project.

I was elected to the board of directors of the Jewish Genealogical Society.

Received a sad note from my second cousin, Burton Mokotoff. His father, Jack Mokotoff, had died on December 26. He commented "how ironic that both Jack Mokotoffs passed away within a few months of each other.

Howard Blue, the man who had traveled to Poland and was willing to do research for genealogists sent a note to the Jewish Genealogical Society that he had set up permanent contacts in Warsaw with persons willing to do the research. A letter was sent to him telling of my interest in have someone look at the vital statistic records of Warka from 1860-99.

There is a family legend that we are descended from famous rabbis. Frankly, every Jewish family has a legend that they are descended from famous rabbis. I felt obligated to check it out and could find no evidence of a Rabbi Tuvia ben Moshe, or Rabbi Moshe ben Aron or Rabbi Aron ben ?. A letter was sent to Rabbi Shmuel Gorr in Jerusalem asking his assistance. He was the man who translated the article about Eleazar Mokotowski at the Jewish Genealogical Society seminar the previous summer.

In late February, Ruth suggested the family take a motor tour of Washington and the state of Virginia during the week the children had a recess from school. I had been working very hard for a number of months and looked forward to the rest. I had an ulterior motive; while Ruth and the children were touring the White House and museums, I went back to the National Archives to look at ship's passenger lists. I bribed Ruth by saying I would also look for the passenger list on which her father arrived in the United States when he was two years old.

This trip to the Archives was more successful than the previous summer's session. I found many names under the spelling 'Mokotoff'. Previously I had no success with the name 'Mokotow'. In addition to known persons such as Gus Shaw, his sister, cousins Max and Gustel, uncle Chiel, I found the record of my grandfather Morris Mokotoff's arrival in the United States. It revealed two useful pieces of information. He was coming to the United States to live with his brother 'D. Mokotow'. This showed we spelled our name with a 'W' too when we first came to the United States. The list showed that my grandfather's next of kin in Europe was an uncle 'Itze Schwartz' of Warsaw. Since his parents were first cousins, both born Mokotow, it meant one of them had a sister who married a man named Schwartz.

The biggest shock was the entry of a man named Leon Mokotoff of Paris who arrived in New York in 1905. This man is unknown to me.⁸ The biggest disappointment was that I found no entries for my great-grandparents or any of their children other than my grandfather.

Oh yes, I found the entry for Ruth's father; August 3, 1907, the passenger ship Nieuw Amsterdam, sailing from Rotterdam.

*****March 1983*****

With my busy business schedule behind me, I got down to the job of publishing the history of the Mokotow family. I had not maintained this diary for nearly a year and many hours were spent in front of a computer terminal updating this diary. When I was done, I found there were just over 4000 lines of information.

I added the names given to me by Daniel Monkotowich as well as the mysterious Leon Mokotoff who arrived in New York in 1905. In the four years of researching the family, I had uncovered over 600 descendants of Tuvia David Mokotow, the merchant from Warka who gave me my family name.

*****Epilogue*****

There were moments during the search for our family's origin that I thought I had gone as far as possible. I now realize that the search, like the family itself, will never end. There are still unsolved questions. The answers of some are just waiting at the next library, archive or interview.

And if the day comes when all the missing pieces of the puzzle are filled in, it's time to start all over again. As Zvi Kitov (may he rest in peace) had commented to me a number of times, our family is more than a set of names and dates. It is also a chronicle of how the Mokotow family found its birth in Warka, Poland, spread to other towns in Poland and finally migrated throughout the world.

That story is yet to be told.

Gary Mokotoff
July, 1983
Tammuz, 5743

⁸ To this day, it is unknown who was this person.