

## Chona Mikoczynski

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He emigrated from Poland in 1933 to study medicine and graduated in November 1939, when his home country was already engulfed by war. He was interned at the Ferramonti camp as a foreign Jew and, after the arrival of the Allies, enlisted in the British Army as a Medical Officer. He probably did not come back to Italy during his life.

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### Student in Italy

Chona was born in Janów, near Białystok (Russian Empire, later Poland), on 14 January 1915. His parents were Mordehaj and Malka Susielska, both Jewish<sup>1</sup>. After getting his diploma at the Jewish gymnasium in Białystok, he chose to enrol in Perugia, at the faculty of medicine, for the academic year 1933-34. Then, he transferred to Florence the following year<sup>2</sup>. He clearly found his place in the student body, as he took part in 1938 in the Fascist *Littorali della cultura*<sup>3</sup>.

He graduated on 11 November 1939, discussing a thesis titled: «La carie dentale nei bambini (con annessa casistica personale)» [Dental cavities in children (with a case-study)]. He got a mark of 100/110<sup>4</sup>. His supervisor was Vincenzo Campatelli, director of the dental clinic. The thesis was appreciated, as it contained original insights and the results of a study «conducted on 100 pupils of the private elementary school of Kacnelenson, in my hometown: Białystok»<sup>5</sup>. Chona managed to graduate in the autumn of 1939, the last

<sup>1</sup> ASUFI, AC, SS, f. «Mikoczynski Chona», university enrolment form, 21 January 1935.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., notarised translation of baccalaureate examination, 13 October 1933; *ibid.*, list of examinations taken.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., application for participation in the extraordinary examination session, 17 January 1939.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., application to the rector for admission to the degree examination, 27 September 1939; *ibid.*, minutes of the graduation examination, 11 November 1939.

<sup>5</sup> Biblioteca biomedica, Università di Firenze, *Tesi storiche*, T.L.70.7, Chona Mikoczynski, «La carie dentale nei bambini (con annessa casistica personale)», Clinica Odontoiatrica della R.

possible window to avoid going outside the prescribed time to graduate and thus being expelled from the faculty, as the antisemite laws required. In his file, there is the declaration of belonging «to the Jewish race», concerning him and his parents, as required by the University, and dated 29 March 1939<sup>6</sup>.

### Interned in Italy

Chona graduated after the invasion and partition of Poland; Białystok, which was near the Polish eastern border, was now under (temporary) Soviet control. He wanted to emigrate to the United States, where his aunt, Julia Sushel, owned a «*delicatessen* store» in Salem. However, he received the affidavit only on 7 May 1940, when his chance of emigrating had become slim<sup>7</sup>.

He was therefore forced to stay in Italy. As the country entered the Second World War, foreign Jews were subjected to internment. On 8 July 1940, Chona was in the Campagna (SA) camp, and on 18 August in Ferramonti, a large camp near Cosenza, where he remained until 10 September 1943<sup>8</sup>. Meanwhile, in August, the Germans liquidated the Białystok ghetto. Another Chona of the same name, probably one of his relatives, died in 1944, fighting against the Germans; he belonged to a partisan band of some 80 fighters formed by the survivors of the Białystok ghetto<sup>9</sup>.

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Università di Firenze diretta dal Prof. V. Campatelli, a.y. 1938-39.

<sup>6</sup> ASUFI, AC, SS, f. «Mikoczynski Chona», form headed «Facoltà di Medicina e chirurgia», 29 March 1939.

<sup>7</sup> Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center at New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston, *Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society Boston Port Records, Series I, Individual Case Files*, f. «Mikoczynski, Chone, 1941», affidavit of Julia Suschel, 7 May 1940, and letter by Helen Alpert to the Comitato italiano di assistenza agli emigranti ebrei (DELASEM), 7 May 1940; a second affidavit is dated 22 March 1941.

<sup>8</sup> Anna Pizzuti (ed.), *Ebrei stranieri internati in Italia durante il periodo bellico*, «Mikoezynski Chana», born on the same day but erroneously believed to be a woman: <<http://www.annapizzuti.it>> (accessed 27 April 2022). On the Ferramonti camp: cf. Francesco Folino, *Ferramonti, un lager di Mussolini. Gli internati durante la guerra*, Cosenza, Brenner, 1985; Carlo Spartaco Capogreco, *Ferramonti. La vita e gli uomini del più grande campo d'internamento fascista, 1940-1945*, Florence, Giuntina, 1987; Id., *I campi del duce. L'internamento civile nell'Italia fascista, 1940-1943*, Turin, Einaudi, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *List of Names Extracted from «Biographical Dictionary of Jewish Resistance»*, ad nomen <<https://www.jewishgen.org>> (access on registration 27 May 2022); on the Jewish community

In November 1944, Chona was in Taranto and was reported on the lists of the American Joint Distribution Committee, as he was probably among those helped by the American relief organisation<sup>10</sup>. He then chose to enlist in the British Army, and his name appears on the Nord Africa Section of the Royal Army Medical Corps list in December 1944<sup>11</sup>.

After the war, his trail disappears. It is possible he emigrated to Mandatory Palestine.

### Archival sources

- Archives of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, *Records of the New York Office, 1945-1954, Countries and Regions, Italy, Refugees: List of Survivors, 1945*, f. 669.
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of Bialystok and the occupation, see: Sara Bender, *The Jews of Bialystok During World War II and the Holocaust*, Waltham (MA), Brandeis University Press, 2008; on the partisans: *ibid.*, p. 296.

<sup>10</sup> Archives of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, *Records of the New York Office, 1945-1954, Countries and Regions, Italy, Refugees: List of Survivors, 1945*, f. 669, letter by the Rome JDC to the New York JDC, with enclosed refugees lists, 1 January 1945 <<http://search.archives.jdc.org>> (accessed 27 April 2022).

<sup>11</sup> British Army, «Quarterly Army Lists», 1946, Second quarter, Part 1, vol. 2, col. 1776p, available online on: <<https://digital.nls.uk>> (accessed 27 May 2022).

**Bibliography**

- Anna Pizzuti (ed.), *Ebrei stranieri internati in Italia durante il periodo bellico*, «Mikoezynski Chana» [sic] <<http://www.annapizzuti.it>>.

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