

hung over the bright Torah light of Eastern Europe.

The situation was radically improved when Rav Chaim Ozer succeeded to the important rabbinical position in Vilna. That fabled city's former pre-eminence in the Torah world was restored and a new era was begun in the history of the Vilna rabbin-ate and community. This 'golden age' was to extend until Rav Chaim Ozer had drawn his last breath - the days of the horrible war which utterly devastated East European Jewry.

The extraordinary position which Rav Chaim Ozer held in Vilna is more clearly understood when we remember that Vilna, at the time, was truly a model Jerusalem - crowded with learned scholars, scribes and prominent Rabbonim and Gedolim. Many large Yeshivas, botei midrashim and large groups of young lomdim, entirely dedicated to their Torah pursuits, were situated there. At the very pinnacle of them all stood Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzensky-Nasi b'Yisroel - leader of his people and Gaon HaDor.

The entire Torah world accepted his Halachic decisions as authoritative and binding. The mountains of problems, both communal and individual, which confronted him each day were reduced to molehills by his sagacity and clear-mindedness. Every worthwhile Torah organization found in him a willing worker, a wise adviser. A warm heart and patient ear awaited the troubled ones - those with heavy hearts and minds. Every action was well-considered. Every phase of conduct meticulously excellent; each word carefully weighed before it was uttered. He was a humble man who bore defeat and pain, even disaster, without complaint. The lines of anger never crossed his face nor was he ever put out with someone for his mistakes or shortcomings. Whenever tempers flared or patience grew short, a gentle word or a kind smile never