

being placed through the Board.

The influence of Rav Chaim Ozer was never greater than during this period. Polish Jewry numbered three and a half million, more than 10% of the entire population. Their eyes and hearts were constantly turned towards their Manhig in Vilna, whose heart cradled the fire of his love for his people and who devoted his entire being in the cause of Torah and Yisroel.

The influence of Bnei Torah - yeshiva bochurim on Orthodox Jewry in Eastern Europe at this time cannot be overstated. They founded the 'Chorev' schools for boys and 'Beis Yaakov' schools for girls. In whatever community they resided they were in opposition to chillul Shabbos, 'reform' organizations, etc. Their persistent devotion to the furtherance of Torah chinuch against all opposition of the irreligious elements was one of the factors that saved Yiddishkeit.

In 1939 when the Soviet armies swept over the Polish borders and held sway over most of Eastern Poland, the German armies were victorious in Western Poland, and, to be sure, the Russians were the lesser of two terrible evils. At least one's life might remain intact. But the physical dangers as well as the threat to the spiritual life of the Yeshivas under the Russians made it imperative to remove the yeshivoth to a more secure position. The situation was particularly acute. The neighboring countries were divided between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia and the doors of the more distant countries were firmly sealed. However, there was one small avenue of escape - Vilna. That city was attached to Lithuania and hundreds of yeshiva students fled there from all parts of Eastern Europe.

Soon there had gathered in Vilna many of the greatest yeshivoth of Europe. Mir, Kletsk, Radun,