

## *The Order to Close the Volozhin Yeshivah and Expel Its Roshei Yeshivah*

By: OLEG FRIEDMAN and JACOB SASSON

### Introduction

The famed and prestigious Volozhin yeshivah was shuttered by the Russian authorities on January 22, 1892. The circumstances surrounding the closing of the yeshivah have been thoroughly documented by Dr. Shaul Stampfer in his *Lithuanian Yeshivas of the Nineteenth Century*.<sup>1</sup> The document that appears below is the government order (the “Order”) to close the yeshivah and to expel the Roshei Yeshivah (the Netziv, Rav Chaim Berlin, and Rav Chaim Soloveitchik) from Volozhin and the Vilna district.<sup>2</sup> This document, in its Russian original, is found in the YIVO Institute’s Vilna Collection, in the archive of the Vaad HaYeshivos, Folder 722.<sup>3</sup> It closes a lacuna in the history of the Volozhin yeshivah; it appears that until now, the order to close the yeshivah has not been published. The first page (in the Russian original) is the order to close the yeshivah and expel the Roshei Yeshivah; the subsequent pages are substantially equivalent to Appendix Document D published in Dr. Stampfer’s volume (from the Tsarist archive), which describe the government’s reasons for ordering the closure of the yeshivah.<sup>4</sup> (The page numbers shown here appear on the original, but may have been added later; they are shown here to aid the reader who wishes to consult the original.) Following the English translation of the document, we provide additional commentary regarding the

---

<sup>1</sup> I [JS] have noted elsewhere that Shimon Yosef Meller, in his biography of Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, *Rabban shel Kol Bnei Hagolah* (volume 1), makes extensive use of Dr. Stampfer’s research on the closing of Volozhin, without attribution. See *Rabban*, pp. 396-400, as well as <https://seforimblog.com/2021/02/rav-gorelick-the-rav-and-revision-by-omission>.

<sup>2</sup> Stampfer does note that contemporaneous memoir literature mentions the order of expulsion. See *Lithuanian Yeshivas*, p. 231.

<sup>3</sup> [https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/7/archival\\_objects/1176263](https://archives.cjh.org/repositories/7/archival_objects/1176263).

<sup>4</sup> We have noted the one instance in which the translation here diverges materially from Stampfer’s; other differences are a matter of style and are immaterial.

---

Oleg Friedman is chair of the Math department at Lander College for Men, and deputy chair of the Math department at Touro University. Jacob Sasson is a *musmach* of RIETS.

document's contents and any additional light it sheds on the closure of the yeshivah.

## **Translation of the Order**

(1)

Copy<sup>5</sup>

The Governor-General of Vilna, who raised the question of closing the Volozhin yeshivah, among other things, considered it necessary to send the persons at its head to other localities to put an end to the existence of this harmful institution once and for all.

His Excellency, Mr. Minister, in his response to the Minister of Public Education dated December 18, 1890, No. 5522, among other things, explained that persons who did not obey the demand of the legitimate authority should be subjected to a deserved punishment. Count Delyanov, notifying that he had proposed to the authorities of the Vilna educational district to immediately close the Volozhin yeshivah, asked for the expulsion of Naftali-Hirsch Berlin, Chaim Berlin, and Chaim Soloveitchik from Volozhin, who were at the head of this institution.<sup>6</sup> General Kochanov, for his part, in his recall of January 11 of this year under No. 168, also agreed with the need to expel the named persons from the mentioned town.

According to a report on this to Mr. Minister, His High Excellency deigned to order: to prevent the named three persons from staying in the Vilna province for a period of three years, as a result of which the Department of Religious Affairs of Foreign Confessions has the honor to send to the Police Department the above-mentioned Messages of the Minister of Public Education No. 887 and the Vilna Governor-General for No. 168 with the applications for the order mentioned in them, I humbly ask you to notify on return of the documents.

---

<sup>5</sup> The word "Copy" ("Konir") appears on the first page of the Order.

<sup>6</sup> It is worthwhile to note the document's contemptuous tone with regard to the Roshei Yeshivah; at no point are any of them referred to as Rabbi, and in many instances referred to by only their last names.

(2)<sup>7</sup>

At the end of November of the past year, Shteinberg, an inspector at the Vilna Jewish Teachers' Institute, presented me with a letter he had received from Volozhin, signed by eighteen yeshivah students. This letter is attached herewith in the original and translation. The signatories of the letter report that the owner of the yeshivah renounces his position and transfers it to his son Chaim Berlin, and that the new head of the yeshivah considers them as educated people, since they know Hebrew and partly other languages; he ordered the landlords to evict them from the apartment and give them neither food nor shelter. And here we are, say the signatories of the letter, abandoned at the crossroads, now soaked in rain and snow, and shivering from the cold. And now we are tormented by hunger, and if the rest of the yeshivah students did not invite us in turn to eat something once a day, then we would already die of hunger.

Having familiarized myself with the contents of this letter, I instructed the director of the People's School of the Vilna Province to collect accurate information on this subject. The director provided such information, delivered by the assistant to the head of the Vilna Gendarmerie Directorate, Captain Dubelt, and the senior teacher at the Vilna Folk Jewish School, Yanovich. From the information provided, it turned out: 1) The owner of the yeshivah, Naftali-Hirsh Berlin, is indeed no longer a head in the full sense of the word, he continues to influence the yeshivah, he holds the economic part of the yeshivah in his hands; the power in other respects of the yeshivah was transferred by him to his son Chaim Berlin. 2) Arbitrarily [without permission] entering the management of the yeshivah, Chaim Berlin also arbitrarily decided to take on teaching duties, but the students of the yeshivah did not like his lessons.

---

<sup>7</sup> From this point forward, the document is virtually equivalent to Stampfer's Document D from the Tsarist archives.

(3)

According to the assistant to the initial chief of the gendarme department of the Vilna Province, Captain Dubelt, Chaim Berlin demanded to start lecturing three times, but unsuccessfully. The students shouted, whistled, and left the yeshivah. Old Berlin himself personally persuaded the students and, under pain of punishment, ordered them to obey and respect his son Chaim. The exhortations of Naftali-Hirsch Berlin had an effect on the yeshivah students only temporarily, and during the Feast of Tabernacles, the riots resumed with even greater force. Not wanting to obey Chaim Berlin, a crowd of *yeshivotniks*<sup>8</sup> went to his apartment and stole his “apple of paradise”<sup>9</sup> and “palm tree” prepared for the holiday. Then the old Berlin and the teacher Chaim Soloveitchik announced to the students that if they did not give the apple and palm tree to Chaim Berlin, then after the holidays they would be subjected to a strict examination, and whoever did not pass, would be expelled from the yeshivah.

As a result of this threat, the disciples returned the stolen apple and palm tree. A teacher at the Jewish public school in Volozhin, Mr. Yunovich, reports that after the Feast of Tabernacles there were new disturbances. Chaim Berlin, not meeting with sympathy from the students, according to Mr. Yunovich, decided to clear the yeshivah from obstinate students and stop issuing subsidies to such students. The students, having learned about this, responded to the tricks by disturbing order during classes, breaking lamps, and so on. Once, stones were thrown from the yard at the windows of the yeshivah, anonymous letters began to appear on the walls of the yeshivah, in which the leaders of the yeshivah were unceremoniously branded. In order to stop these disorders, it was decided to conduct tests for all students on the parts of the Talmud they had studied on their own.

---

<sup>8</sup> A colloquial Russian reference to yeshivah students.

<sup>9</sup> I.e., his *esrog*.

(4)

The exam was to be conducted by Soloveitchik. Then the students of the yeshivah made trouble for Soloveitchik, who until recently enjoyed the greatest respect and reverence from the students of the yeshivah. Windows of his apartment were broken, once he found an enclosed note in which the words were written: “the snake was the most cunning among the animals of the field.” Such extremely unseemly acts of students finally prompted the yeshivah administration to take decisive action against the instigators of the riots: the landlords of the apartments were forbidden to keep the delinquent pupils in the apartments. They were deprived of any shelter and could not find any other shelter than the apartment of Chaim Berlin, where they went to spend the night and where they demanded food.

The next day, recognizing their situation as hopeless, the young men began to beg for mercy; they promised to give up their errors and be diligent and hardworking students. Of those ostracized, only one student left Volozhin: Iosel-Morduk Leibovich-Gladshtein. As reported by Captain Dubelt, he was subjected to “*cherem*” and died at the end of October.<sup>10</sup>

3) There is some reason to think that all these unrests are due to the unfulfilled dream of Soloveitchik, the former assistant of Berlin-father, to become the head of the yeshivah by removing Naftali-Hirsch Berlin from it.<sup>11</sup> Soloveitchik did not want to openly oppose Berlin the father and Berlin the son, but he did not want to admit that Chaim Berlin would become

---

<sup>10</sup> The death of Gladshtein may be the initial kernel of the improbable account recently publicized in the Israeli press, that Volozhin was closed because one of its students was stabbed and killed. However, there is no indication here that Gladshtein was murdered, and if that were indeed the case, it is unlikely that the authorities would neglect to mention it. Additionally, it appears that the death of Gladshtein was at most a minor factor in the authorities’ interest to close the yeshivah. See <https://www.kikar.co.il/yeshiva-world/394102>. Thanks to Rabbi Michael Zylberman for bringing this source to our attention.

<sup>11</sup> Rav Nosson Kamenetsky has noted (*Making of a Gadol*, Improved Edition, p. 1291, note j) that “Because not a single memoirist mentions R. Solovietchik as partaking in the succession imbroglio,” he believed that the students who sided with Rav Chaim Berlin, unable to deny R. Chaim Soloveitchik’s open acts of *aiding* R. Berlin, fed the Russian authorities unproven allegations against him (“incite,” “double-mindedness”), in order to ensure that he not be appointed as Rosh Yeshivah. Rav Kamenetsky believed that Rav Chaim had no interest in becoming Rosh Yeshivah at that point, given his general lack of ambition, the fact that Rav Chaim Berlin was twenty years his senior, and that Rav Chaim Soloveitchik would have been especially unwilling to push aside a full heir to the post. In addition to Rav Kamenetsky’s observation that these accusations were

the head of the yeshivah; he chose to incite the students of the yeshivah against his rival to achieve this goal.

(5)

Students soon realized what role Soloveitchik played. A note placed in his hands with the words “the serpent was the most cunning of all the animals of the field” strongly hints at this. And, of course, that Soloveitchik’s double-mindedness could not but engender in the students a feeling of deep disgust to the recent “idol.” 4) As for the question of whether the letter addressed to Mr. Shteinberg was really written by yeshivah students, this question has not been fully clarified. Only one thing is known: among the students of the yeshivah whose passports were presented to the local police of the city of Volozhin, there are no persons who signed the letter. Therefore, it must be concluded that either the signatories of the letter did not dare to give their proper names and surnames, or the named Jews studied illegally and are not recorded anywhere.

In view of the importance of the information received, the acting Inspector of Public Schools, Ilyin, in whose district the city of Volozhin is located, was instructed to inspect the yeshivah; Mr. Ilyin submitted a report on December 29 to the Director of Public Schools, to whom the current state of this institution is presented in the most unattractive form. From the report it can be seen that 1) at present, the members of the yeshivah administration have almost all dispersed in different directions. The self-appointed head of the yeshivah, Chaim Berlin, left for Vilna in early December on household matters; Chaim Soloveitchik, about a month ago, went, according to some, to Warsaw to improve his health, according to others, to various places to collect donations for the yeshivah. Samuilov, from the beginning of the semester, left Volozhin completely and moved to Jacobstein, where he took the post of “spiritual rabbi.”

---

“unprovable,” it is noteworthy that such accusations are also unfalsifiable, as well as entirely inconsistent with all we know about Rav Chaim’s gentle and kind nature. See also Meller’s *Rabban*, pp. 390-391 (in the name of Rav Meir Soloveitchik, ז”ל), for additional actions taken by Rav Chaim Soloveitchik to quell the *machlokes*.

**(6)**

Fried<sup>12</sup>, due to old age and poor health, takes no part in teaching; Hirsch Berlin rarely appears in the yeshivah, he completely stopped teaching. Thus, all management of the yeshivah is entirely concentrated in the hands of the Jew Dynkin, who is not even a teacher, but has the duties of an observer-tutor. 2) In Volozhin, it is known that after the death of Gladshstein, who was expelled from the yeshivah by Chaim Berlin, Naftali-Hirsch Berlin, in his speech on this occasion, pointed to the “Punishment of the Lord” which Aaron’s descendants were subjected to for incomplete obedience to the highest authorities, and applied to the deceased person. This speech made an extremely difficult and unpleasant impression on all the students of the yeshivah since the deceased student enjoyed love and respect.

3) As a local gendarmerie officer informed Mr. Ilyin, it is customary in the yeshivah to call students only by their first name and place of residence, for example, “Yankel Minsky,”<sup>13</sup> and not by their real surnames. As a result, it is extremely difficult for the local police authorities to establish the identity of persons who are called in the lists of the yeshivah by one surname, and in the lists of police officers by other surnames. 4) The county police officer testified to Mr. Ilyin that yeshivah students are quite capable of expressing their protest in the form of violent actions and, in confirmation, pointed to their recent use of violence against butchers to fix meat prices. 5) Inspection of the Russian literacy class and class journals led Mr. Ilyin to the conviction that the literacy class is attended extremely inconsistently. According to the journal, there are 35 people in class 1, 15 people in class 2, and, according to the teacher, there are no more than 15-20 people attending the lessons.

---

<sup>12</sup> Meller is mistaken when he identifies this as the Netziv’s brother-in-law. The Netziv’s brother-in-law, Rav Eliezer Yitzchak Fried, died decades before 1892. This is a reference to Rav Eliezer Yitzchak’s son, Rav Chaim Hillel Fried. See also Stampfer’s Appendix Document E, p. 246 and 248.

<sup>13</sup> I.e., Yankel from Minsk.



(7)

From November 1 to December 18, there were only 33 school days. The progress of the students was extremely weak; many were not able to write their rank, name, and surname more or less correctly; this inconsistent attendance by yeshivah students of Russian literacy classes and their attitude to study general subjects, according to Mr. Ilyin, is explained by the actual mood that always prevails in the Volozhin yeshivah, which is supported by its leaders. During the revision of yeshivah, Mr. Ilyin received a letter through a private messenger, signed: "The voice of the entire yeshivah." This letter characterizes Chaim Berlin as an anti-educator and a bad Talmudist<sup>14</sup> and asks not to entrust him with the management of the yeshivah.<sup>15</sup> I bring to Your Excellency's attention that the administration and the yeshivah have recently completely ceased to fulfill the requirements of the educational authorities and have almost ceased communication with its directorate.

According to the law of 1859, the curriculum of the yeshivah must necessarily include the teaching of certain general subjects. The administration decided to still pay little attention to the existence of this law. The educational authorities many times insistently pointed out to the yeshivah administration the need to teach general education subjects to all students, but these efforts only led to the fact that out of the total number of students in the yeshivah, the administration allowed only fifty people to study general education subjects, that is, about 1/6 of the students.

---

<sup>14</sup> Stampfer in *Lithuanian Yeshivas* (p. 221 footnote 131) notes that a few years later, when Rav Chaim Berlin resided in Jerusalem, he was regarded as one of the leading rabbis in that city of scholars. The contemptuous attitude expressed by students regarding his talmudic acumen should be regarded with caution.

<sup>15</sup> This letter was written in poor Russian, and the authors claimed that they wanted to learn Russian, but this was impossible in the yeshivah in its current state. *Lithuanian Yeshivas* (p. 226) cites R. Reuven Pyatigorsky who analyzed this letter and concluded that the author knew Russian well, yet deliberately included mistakes in the letter. He concluded that it was not written by a yeshivah student at all.

**(8)**

How much the administration pays attention to the fact that classes are taken seriously—this has already been discussed above. Recently, the Director of Public Schools in the Vilna Governorate has demanded that the number of students studying general subject be increased to at least 100, but this modest demand remains unfulfilled, and the administration of the yeshivah prefers to waste time in useless correspondence. I do not deny at all that Naftali-Hirsch Berlin acknowledges requirement of the importance of teaching general subjects in the yeshivah, especially in the Russian language: “[I consider it as my duty, to the best of my ability and ability to contribute to the development of this work in the yeshivah. But I also have another responsibility: to uphold the value of the yeshivah as such, an institution where young people study religious subjects in detail and completeness. This duty is entrusted to me by yeshivah benefactors and ‘all devout Jews.’]”<sup>16</sup>

Thus, Berlin’s obligation to comply with state law opposes the obligation imposed on him by benefactors, and since it is impossible to equally fulfill both duties, according to Berlin, Berlin leaves the director’s demands unfulfilled. Berlin, however, apparently does not want to interrupt the correspondence with a decisive refusal, and therefore he turns to the director with a request to give him practical instructions on how to fulfill the above requirements without prejudice to the main special purpose of the yeshivah.

---

<sup>16</sup> Stampfer has these last sentences as a quotation from the Netziv. It would appear that this is correct, and that the text after the colon is a quotation from the Netziv. However, only the last words appear in quotation marks in the original. The colon does appear in the original.

(9)

Until recently, it was easy for the administration to more or less accurately fulfill the rules of November 13, 1844, which lay on it, the obligation to submit lists of students to the educational authorities. Now he still does not fulfill this duty, despite repeated reminders from the director, the lists of students are not delivered to the Directorate. As a result, the Directorate is unable to verify the actual number of students in yeshivah, and it is not possible to verify the actual number of students, and it is not possible for it to verify whether all students have really submitted their passports or there could be students without a passport or hiding from military service.

At present, very significant changes are taking place in the teachers' body and the administration of the yeshivah. But the educational authorities do not know about all these changes from the administration of the yeshivah. The most important of these changes is the replacement of Naftali-Hirsh Berlin by his son, Chaim Berlin. This is a big change, no doubt about it. But this fact is negatively concealed from the administration by the owner of yeshivah, Naftali-Hirsch Berlin, who in the relations of the administration continues to be called the head of the Volozhin yeshivah. This deliberate concealment from the educational authorities of the fact that has undoubtedly taken place, best of all shows how untrustworthy the yeshivah's administration is. The unrest is not reported to the Directorate.

**(10)**

The above data lead to the conclusion that the Volozhin yeshivah is in a state of decay, and nothing gives the right to hope that the current administration of the yeshivah, if it exists, would be able to restore the normal life of this institution. The former head of the yeshivah, Naftali-Hirsh Berlin, who so many times gave promises and signatures to obey the requirements of the educational authorities, at the end of his activity, ceased to fulfill these rules, which he had previously recognized as obligatory for himself. Soloveitchik, this recent pillar of the yeshivah, with his intrigues turned the students against him, and instead of being the guardian of order and law, he turned into an agitator of the lowest sort.

Finally, as the report of the acting inspector Ilyin shows, now apparently there is no yeshivah administration at all: its main members have dispersed in different directions. In view of the foregoing and in accordance with Your Excellency's Appendix of March 1, 1888, No. 3430, I have the honor to most respectfully request Your Excellency's order. At the same time, to avoid various unsatisfactory demands in Volozhin that could follow after the closing of the yeshivah—simultaneously with the closing of the yeshivah, to implement proposals by Vilna-Kovno-Grodno Governor-General to expel Berlin and Soloveitchik from Volozhin.

(11)

In the *Vilensky Vestnik*, on my order, new rules approved by Your Excellency related to the Volozhin Yeshivah, were published. Let the Jews of the Northwestern Territory of Russia see from these rules what requirements the government places on the yeshivah. And if there are people among them who wish to take the duties of the owners of the yeshivah—which people like Berlin and Soloveitchik cannot fulfill—then the governor's authorities will not encounter any obstacles to the opening of the Volozhin yeshivah based on the new rules.

### Rav Chaim Berlin's Letter

There has been much written regarding the reasons for the closure of the Volozhin yeshivah. Shortly before his death, Rav Chaim Berlin deposited a letter with Rav Aryeh Levin stating the following:

לזכרון  
מה שהזהירני וצוה עלי מר אבא הגאון זצלה"ה הכ"מ קודם פטירתו. על דבר שמסר נפשו על ענין הישיבה דוולאזין, שלא להכניס לתוכה שום למודי חול. ולסבה זו נסגרה הישיבה ומזה נחלה בחליו אשר לא עמד ממנה. וצוה לי באזהרה שלא להסכים לענין זה בשום אופן בלא שום הוראת היתר בעולם, ואמר שהקב"ה רמז כל זה בתורה שאמר "להבדיל בין הקדש ובין החול" היינו שכל עניני חול המתערבים בקודש בלי הבדל, לא די שאין עניני למודי חול מקבלים קדושה אלא אף זו שעניני למודי קודש מתקלקלים מהם. ע"כ לא ירע לך בני מה שהענין הזה גרם לי לצאת מן העולם ולהסגיר את הישיבה כי כדאי הוא הענין הגדול הזה למסור נפשו עליו. כ"ז דיבר אלי ביום ג' כ"ו מנחם אב שנת תרנ"ג בווארשא.<sup>17</sup>

This would appear to indicate that the yeshivah was closed due to the Netziv's refusal to allow secular studies in the yeshivah. (Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter has dealt with how to reconcile this account with the documented fact that the Netziv did allow some minimal secular studies in the yeshivah.<sup>18</sup>) Other sources, however, indicate that the cause of the closing of the yeshivah was the *machlokes* over who would succeed the Netziv as Rosh Yeshivah.<sup>19</sup> Rav Meir Berlin (Bar-Ilan), another son of the Netziv, has written that there were multiple causes that led to the closing of the yeshivah.<sup>20</sup>

The document above seems to point to the last possibility, that the Russian authorities decided to close the yeshivah because of both the infighting, as well as the Netziv's unwillingness to accommodate their demands regarding secular studies. How is this to be reconciled with Rav Chaim Berlin's testimony that the yeshivah was shut over the issue of secular studies, with no mention at all of the infighting?

Dr. Stampfer has written about Rav Chaim Berlin's account that

---

<sup>17</sup> An image of the handwritten letter appears in Meller's *Rabban*, p. 396. See also Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter's "Haskalah, Secular Studies and the Close of the Yeshiva in Volozhin in 1892" in *The Torah U-Madda Journal*, volume 2, p. 78, and the sources cited therein.

<sup>18</sup> See "Haskalah, Secular Studies," p. 110, as well as the suggestions from Dr. Shnayer Leiman, footnote 145 there.

<sup>19</sup> *R' Moshe Shmuel v'Doro*, p. 161, see fn. 22. See also *Volozhin—Sifra shel Ha'ir v'shel Yeshivas Etz Chaim*, p. 217.

<sup>20</sup> *Mi-Volozhin ad Yerushalayim* (Heb.), vol. 1, p.123 and p.155; *Fun Volozhin biz Yerushalayim* (Yid.), vol. 1, pp. 67, 112-113.

It is difficult to explain these contradictions. In general, it is difficult to accept the words of a dying man, even when reported by a scholar as great as R. Hayim Berlin, as accurate historical evidence. When he was in the presence of his ailing father, he must have been upset, and this would doubtless have influenced his memory of the occasion. In addition, R. Hayim's will was written in Jerusalem, where he might have been influenced by the widespread opposition in certain circles to secular studies. Whatever the case, it is difficult to accept this single late piece of evidence as representing the entire truth and to entirely reject all the evidence presented above that R. Berlin regarded certain secular studies as acceptable.<sup>21</sup>

Rav Nosson Kamenetsky attempted to reconcile the discrepancy in the following manner:

If מ"ש ודורו<sup>22</sup> is right that the inner strife was indeed the cause of the closure, the *Netziv's* pronouncement to his son was seemingly incorrect. מ"ש ודורו's claim and the *Netziv's* pronouncement can be made compatible in one of two ways: (1) the inner strife was only an *indirect cause* of the closure, in that the two-year war with the students had sapped the *Netziv* of the strength he needed in order to marshal the available forces for defeating the government's plan to bring in secular studies—which was the *direct cause* of the yeshivah's closure; (2) the inner strife and the secular studies program were *coequal causes* (as indicated in the above-cited *From Volozhin* source in which the *Netziv* compared the closure of Volozhin to the destruction of Jerusalem), neither of which was powerful enough to close down Volozhin. Either the *Netziv* had no need to mention the inner strife as the alternative cause when all he was interested in doing was to assure that his son would “not... agree to combine לימודי חול with לימודי קודש under any circumstances”, or that saint did not mention the inner-strife cause in order to spare his son (over whom the war of succession was waged) any anguish or guilt for the yeshivah's collapse!<sup>23</sup>

There could be alternative possibilities to reconcile the aforementioned discrepancy. Stampfer has suggested that the Russian authorities used the issue of secular studies as the formal grounds for shutting the

---

<sup>21</sup> *Lithuanian Yeshivas*, p. 208.

<sup>22</sup> A reference to the *sefer* שמואל ודורו (New York, 1964), a collection of essays and letters from the estate of Rabbi Moshe Shmuel Shapiro. See [https://www.nli.org.il/he/books/NNL\\_ALEPH990018633840205171/NLI](https://www.nli.org.il/he/books/NNL_ALEPH990018633840205171/NLI).

<sup>23</sup> *Making of a Gadol*, Improved Edition, p. 447.

yeshivah, while their main concern was the infighting and *machlokes* over succession.<sup>24</sup> Based on this suggestion, one could argue that the Roshei Yeshivah were unaware that the infighting played a major part in the government decision to shut the yeshivah, and this is why Rav Chaim Berlin's letter mentions only secular studies as the reason for the closing of the yeshivah.<sup>25</sup>

However, given that the document above is found in the archive of the Vaad HaYeshivos, it is reasonable to believe that this order was provided to the yeshivah upon its closing.<sup>26</sup> While not entirely conclusive, this would indicate that the yeshivah and its administration were indeed aware of the government's concerns regarding the infighting. This above suggestion to explain Rav Chaim Berlin's letter, that the Roshei Yeshivah were unaware that the infighting played a major role in the government's decision, therefore appears to be erroneous.

Another possibility to explain the discrepancy is that the initial catalyst for the government's concern with the yeshivah administration appears to be the letter mentioned above, signed by eighteen students. It seems from this letter that the students who sent it were, in a large part, concerned with the state of secular studies at the yeshivah, as well as Rav Chaim Berlin's predisposition against secular studies, and actions he took in that vein. "The new head of the yeshivah considers them as educated people, since they know Hebrew and partly other languages; he ordered the landlords to evict them from the apartment..." Since Rav Chaim Berlin's anti-secular studies stance was what initially caused the government's involvement in the goings-on at the yeshivah, it is possible that this was what the Netziv was referring to when he attributed the closing of the yeshivah to his refusal to allow secular studies. While the infighting and the secular studies issue were both causes of the government's decision to close the yeshivah, it was the issue of secular studies, and specifically Rav Chaim Berlin's opposition, that invited the government's scrutiny in the first place. ❧

---

<sup>24</sup> *Lithuanian Yeshivas*, p. 229

<sup>25</sup> Rav Kamenetsky alludes to this possibility in *Making of a Gadol*, Improved Edition, p. 447, in the unnumbered note \*.

<sup>26</sup> Vaad HaYeshivos was active from 1924 to 1939 and its central office was located in Vilna.



11

93

Ленин

Високий Государственный Губернатор, которому вверено  
о закрытии Велюфунского еврейского училища, между  
прочим, велено исследовать учение, состоявшее в глав-  
ном, вчинять в прачесть именованном, гаше стипендию  
навига поелюфунских кенасе существование этого еврейско-  
учреждения.

Его Высочество повелительно в Министру, в отъезде Ми-  
нистру Народного Просвещения от 18 Декабря 1890. г. № 3522.  
между прочим, вменяет, что учение, преподававшееся в  
доказательств захлебнувшись, гаше стипендию за-  
судженному влоханию. Имен Губернатору Давиду в, гаше  
иде, что учение преподавано Народному Високому Училищу  
Вокруга немедленно закрытии Велюфунского училища, про-  
сит в вчиняет отодвигать в главном основанном учреждении  
Народной Школа и Школа Терминов и Школа Соловецкого  
из Високого Губернатора Колчанов, в своей отъезде, в  
отъезде от Министра сего года за № 168, также приуро-  
чить исследовать вчинять наставитель учения и  
учителем именованном.

По докладу о сему Г. Министру Его Высочество  
повелительно изволил приказать: воспретить наставитель  
прежде учения преподавать в Високом Училище про-  
кеем на три года. Вчиняет в Директорство Директорства  
Директорства от иностранных именованном именованном  
упреждает при сему в Директорстве Польши вче-  
ствительных отъезде Министра Народного Просвеще-  
ния за № 387. и Високого Губернатора Губернатора  
вчиняет вчиняет вчиняет вчиняет, гаше вчиняет  
сводяет похорошеет и проч. о похорошеет  
мать от возвращение преподавателей учения.

The first page of the Order  
from the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research