This application, relating as indicated to a panic latch for refrigerator doors and the like, is particularly directed to a novel combination of a latch for a refrigerator door, freezer door, or the like, which door has a storage compartment in the door. With these refinements there is a need for a panic latch attachment; even with stored foods in the door, many of these doors having shelves, containers, or compartments, and some of these compartments having rods or supporting metal bands to hold the food in the compartment. This invention combines those rods in a novel form of panic latch that is independent of the outside latch at least from the inside, which latch may or may not be locked through accident or intention. This panic latch is independent of said means and opens the door latch even though the outside closure means may be locked tight.

Though there have been a great number of combinations of panic latches, particularly closures and locks for refrigerator and freezer doors, most of them are of complicated design and expensive to operate and have not found a ready use as yet, though the need has been brought out many times.

In a state of panic a child, or even adult, will not think to operate a complicated means or small handles, and this latch combination is designed to be operated even under those difficult conditions, because it consists of a bar extending entirely across the refrigerator door, which serves a dual purpose, said bar being capable of operating a latch and opening the door. Here it is assumed that in panic a person or child will kick or hit the door and sooner or later, even if they do not know of the panic latch attachment, they will hit the bar and open the door. This panic bar is not new in and of itself, but it is new in this combination serving this dual purpose shown herein.

An object of this invention is to produce a novel combination of a panic bar and retainer for foods and the like with a panic lock combination.

A further object of this invention is to combine in an approved and simplified manner a latch for a refrigerator door or the like having a panic latch lock attachment that is capable of being independently operated from the interior of an enclosed space of a refrigerator, freezer, or the like, even though the lock may be sealed, as with a pin, bolt, or the like, or possibly locked by intention or accident.

To the accomplishment of the foregoing and related ends said invention, then, consists of the means herein-after fully described and particularly pointed out in the claim; the following description set forth in detail one improved method of carrying out the invention, such disclosed method, however, constituting but one of the various ways in which the principles of this invention in a panic lock for refrigerator doors, or the like, may be used.

In the drawings:

Fig. 1 is a cutaway schematic view of a refrigerator showing the door in partially open position, with the lock and panic bar shown on the interior of the door serving as a retainer or rod for foods.

Fig. 2 is a schematic view of the operation of this panic bar.

Fig. 3 is a cross-sectional view through the operational elements of this panic bar and lock combination, and

Fig. 4 is a further view in cross section of said lock, showing the combination being operated by the panic bar.

In the drawing, 10 shows a refrigerator having a plurality of shelves 12. In the door of the refrigerator there is a lock casing shown generally at 13, a handle for said door shown at 14, and a latch for the door shown particularly at 15, together with the panic bar 16. Said panic bar surrounds and is spaced from a container or receptacle for food shown generally at 17. Said bar is shown in Fig. 2 at 16 and extends from the left side of the door, adjacent the door hinge, at 18 to the right side at 19, said bar being hinged at 20 to the door structure for simplicity in construction and being hinged or pivoted at 21 to the latch mechanism further to be described. Said panic bar surrounds and is spaced from, by the operational amount of the panic bar, around a food tray or container 17. The view of the latch mechanism shown in Fig. 2 at 22 is, of course, schematic and does not reveal all the details which are shown more particularly in Figs. 3 and 4.

In operation, it is expected that an individual when he becomes panic will touch the rod either by means of the foot or hand. This rod is intermediate the length of the door, forming a panic bar, which may be kicked or touched by the hand contact at any point along the bar. There will be some leverage action, however, if it is kicked at the extreme left near the hinged portion of the door. Other means could be provided for causing the bar to operate but these means would complicate the structure in a panic bar and it is believed that this combination is sufficient for most purposes. This panic bar provides a safety rod around the food in the door at the same time, so that it will not fall. The bar is substantially parallel to the tray, surrounds the same and is located adjacent the top of the tray.

In detail, portion 19, which projects into the door structure, is pivoted as at 21. The portion of the door through which it passes is shown at 22, and a rubber keeper or retainer member 24 surrounds the rod member as it passes in an opening through the door 23. A latch casing is shown at 38 having various operating components and a latch proper 25, which pivots around point 26 into a keeper or recess in the door jam 38 shown at 27. The casing has an arcuate slot shown at 38, through which a pin 29 moves under the action of the operating means. Said operating means briefly would consist of a pin 30, operated from the outside of the door by a latch or other means not herein disclosed. Said pin would move into the lock casting, shown more particularly in dotted lines at 31, to move part of the lock mechanism 32, which pivots around pin 33 having a coil spring mounted therein shown at 34. Said pin 30 operates against a member 32 to move pin 29 and latch 25 away from the keeper 26, as is shown in the position of Fig. 4. A spring 35 is mounted on a rod or bar 36 operating from a pivot point 37 in the latch 25. When the door handle moves pin 30 to position, as shown at 31, the latch moves inwardly to permit the door to open. In the alternative, when the panic bar 16 is contacted at any point along its length, one end 19 bends slightly as it moves perpendicularly relative to the door casing 23 around with pivot 21 to move the pivotal member 32 around its pivot point to open the door latch. Of course it will be seen that even if the outside closure is locked in some means, the panic bar and panic latch will open the door under almost any conditions, i. e., should a child or adult accidentally or
intentionally lock the door from the outside by the usual means which retain or keep the lock from being opened, said panic lock may be operated and the door may be opened.

This combination in a closure for doors is particularly important because it simplifies the construction greatly. It employs a panic bar which serves a dual purpose, namely that of a panic bar and a keeper or retainer for foods in the door, i.e., it serves a purpose at all times, even when the panic latch is not needed, and by having the tray or compartment in which the food is held of lesser depth, as is shown in Fig. 2, than the panic bar itself, it could not be jammed by an excessive quantity of food between the bar 16 and the door proper.

Although the present invention has been described in connection with a few preferred embodiments thereof, variations and modifications may be resorted to by those skilled in the art without departing from the principle of the invention, all of these variations and modifications being considered to be within the true spirit and scope of the present invention, as disclosed in the foregoing description and defined by the appendant claim.

I claim:

A panic lock for refrigerator doors and the like, comprising a panic bar secured to the inside of a refrigerator door, said bar being moveably secured at the hinge side of the door; the other end of said bar contacting a latch and latch mechanism, said latch and latch mechanism being mounted in the door and adapted to be operated from the exterior of said door by a pin member passing through the door; an elongated tray having side and end walls on the inside of said door, said panic bar surrounding and extending longitudinally of said elongated tray adjacent the top thereof and being parallel with the side wall of the tray, whereby the door may be opened from the interior by contacting the panic bar and the latch mechanism, said door may be opened independently of the mechanism on the exterior side of the door whether in a locked or unlocked position.