

The experiences I went through during the Hitlerian occupation

June 1941 will for ever remain engraved in the memory of those who lived through the second world war, especially in the people who suffered the Hitlerian inferno.

when the German military attacked the USSR many people presumed that it was only an army's maneuver in order to prepare the citizens in case of an aerial enemy attack. When we were all awoken at dawn by the thundering noise of the anti-aircraft batteries, we all ran to the street to see what's happening.

People assembled from all directions, worrying about the sight that was revealing to their eyes, that is to say, the whole sky covered with aircraft approaching from afar like a dark cloud. Every moment the surroundings were shuddered by the explosive noise of the anti air-craft defenses.

The question arose from every place, with great fear and uneasiness: What is the meaning of all this? we tried to calm each other convincing ourselves that it was only an army experiment. The morning hours finally delivered the worrying news; the German army has attacked the USSR.

The Jewish community knew all too well from the radio and newspapers what the Germans of Hitler pose to the Jews.

A number of Russian citizens resided in our building, they were lecturers in elite schools. They tried to reassure us with perfect calm that the fears of everyone were baseless and that Russia, and Russia alone, will strike the Germans and will protect everyone from the Hitlerian savages.

Unfortunately the following days revealed the direction of the war's course. I witnessed how the tenants of our building packed their belongings haphazardly, how a car stopped before our building, how the soviet citizens ran out to the yard while departing from us by heartily saying: we advise you Jews to leave this area and to escape into the depths of Russia, for the Germans are advancing quickly and a great danger is awaiting you. There's not much time left!

We were asking ourselves, what should be done? how were we to behave? We saw people that wanted to survive by escaping from the threatened area returning, accepting their fate, informing us that the ways and streets were overcrowded with people and there's no way out.

The time passed with a lot of dread and anxiety. We heard from our Ukrainian neighbors somber news, the Germans were about to reach us any moment.

Some days after, when I went out to look for some diary products and a bit of food I went to the small market that was close to the street where we lived (Sovietsky St.) . The next scene was revealed before my eyes : The streets were full of German militarymen decorated with flowers and with smiles on their faces. In the next street I saw many Ukrainian girls welcoming the Germans with flower wreaths . The blood in my veins froze while witnessing this scene.

Sullen and overwhelmed by what I saw I went back home and told the family of the bitter news. I hadn't finished sharing my experience when a tenant, Ms. Mikhlikova , slammed like a bomb into our house while shouting at us : "People! save yourselves quickly, outside there's a slaughter , our neighbors the Haberman family are being beaten to death and a lot of blood has been spilt. We went on to ask who had done this pogrom, and with short and confused sentences she told us that the local peasants are perpetrating this pogrom against the Jews. She also told us that there's an urgent need to find us a hideout as quickly as possible. That same Ms. Mikhlikova had the quick resourcefulness of hiding us , we needed to be saved from savages and murderers.

We quickly ran up to the upper floor where a couple with a one year old baby lived. The kitchen of the apartment had a side door that led to a pantry with a shape of an attic. The Ms. Mikhlikova ordered us all to enter the pantry quickly in order so that she could afterwards move the kitchen cupboard over the pantry door so that no one could find us. Ms. Maorer , the young mother with her baby, had to remain in the kitchen because a crying baby could have uncovered our hiding place where Mr. Maorer was also hiding.

When we found ourselves in the pantry, tightly crowded, my young daughter Stela that was 4 raised my attention in these words : "Mummy, you're panting too loudly . we must be more quiet so that the savages wont hear us . We hadn't waited long until a gang of wild peasants showed up, and while they were entering we heard loud shouting in Ukrainian; " tu zida, smart zedom" (you're Jews, death to Jews).

All the way from the kitchen we heard the crying and lamenting voice of Ms. Maorer imploring the savages not to kill here due to the fact that she was lonely and without care while her husband was at war. We heard the voices of the savages that ordered Ms. Maorer to walk outside with them. The anxiety silenced all of us .

We heard loud thumping from the steps and the wailing voice Ms. Maorer. Not a word was said , we couldn't find the words to express the dread that consumed us. We didn't even hear the steps of Ms. Maorer returning and only when she moved the kitchen cupboard that concealed the pantry door did we fearfully look to the door to see who's coming in.

There were no words to describe our happiness when we saw Ms. Maorer coming with the child , as if they were returning from the dead.

Timid and overwhelmed she described what she saw in town. The Jews were routed across the streets, monstrously beaten to death and murdered. She ran into many bodies on the way, a scene of unlawfulness and terror. We had been living with the Ukrainians for generations and we never assumed that they were thirsty for our blood and our sworn enemies. After a number of days, when we stepped out of our hiding place and re-entered our apartment we found an open and shattered door, objects lying on the floor and everything was thrown out of the cupboards. They picked the best, looted and robbed whatever was possible.

Some days past and the storm abated. The Hitlerian Germans prohibited the civilian population to murder and loot upon one's wish. .

Apparently, after the first pogrom, life seemed to return to normal , especially after it looked like as if the German authority would not allow any further theft and murder. In many places in town notices that were hung by the German administration announced that anyone, without exception, that will dare to murder or rob will be severely punished. The Germans wanted to suppress the vigilance of the Jewish community in order so that they would not get the impression that responsible authorities are taking care of their protection.

Upon the creation of the "Yudenraat" under which all the Jews were subordinated , it was ordered to provide the Fascist Germans with free manpower in form of Jews. The Jews were sent onto difficult slave labor, and quite often some of the men did not return home due to a German Fascist that concluded that the tasks hadn't been carried out properly, the price was paid in blood.

When my first husband Philip would return home in the evening from the cruel labor I observed that he could hardly stand on his feet. At times, when he would return much later than usual I would find myself stuck to the window urging for his return. When I saw his shadow appearing from the darkness at last I would go to ask him for the reason of the delay, and would tell me in a tired weak voice how the Germans seized upon a group of people returning from work. They would take the Jews to the train station where they were ordered to load train-wagons with all kinds of things, like furniture stolen from Jewish homes , probably ours also. Another time, when I returned home after going out to look for some food I found my apartment empty and hollow.

My deceased mother in law told me in deep sorrow that the Germans came with a big vehicle near our house and without asking, took for themselves whatever they saw as right , and that's how I found the apartment completely empty . My mother in law encouraged and comforted us by pointing out that she also suffered great misfortunes

during the first world war and advised us to keep steady, so that in the tomorrow we may live better.

On the arrival of autumn in 1941, unexpectedly, amid apparent quietness, without warning, the German savages organized a second pogrom against the Jewish community. This time They used the “Yudenraat”, in order not to arouse suspicion amongst the Jews.

The “Yudenraat”, with the assistance of the Jewish police , immediately sent summoning warrants for gathering in pre-designated assembling places.

The Jewish police were instructed to hand out the summoning warrants and make sure that all of those summoned will turn up at the right place. By the time we lived in the house together with all my husband’s family, including his brother Herman, we noticed while looking out the window how the Jewish police were running between the houses and handing out the warrants. We were living in a big house that we owned at Sovietsky St. at Drohovitch. Most of the tenants on this street were Jewish.

The process was carried on quickly . The Jewish police escorted the terrified and miserable Jews , taking with them bags and packages. They took with them all that they could and were led astray by being told that they were taken for labor. Many tragedies occurred in the background like in the cases where parents of small children were taken away while their little ones were left abandoned, unattained and without the possibility of further existence.

I myself witnessed such a tragedy : not far from our neighborhood there lived a Tenenbaum family . They had two girls , one was 4 and the other was 6. Both their parents were taken away and they were left, at least until the next pogrom , alone, miserable and without the necessities of life. A lone man took upon himself the task of providing for the abandoned girls. He took care of them with devotion , but the girls changed completely . From the day after there was nothing left of those happy and cheerful girls that always smiled cordially. It was as if they had suddenly grown up many years.

In another neighborhood close to ours there lived a lang family. They also received summoning warrants , for the whole family. When the Jewish police came to take them the whole household escaped for their lives through the windows of their one floor house. In the evening the father of the family came to our home and told us about his great anxiety, crying. He deliberated whether his family managed to escape and save itself from the “delivery” and the rest of the unknown.

He was in his house and he found open doors and windows, the emptiness looked at him from every corner . He sensed the feeling of disaster and ran away from the house .

The apartments of the people who did get kidnapped were sealed, and of course, not before the arrival of transports on which all that was left in the houses were loaded on. Valuable objects that the German were fond of were sent to Germany.

The survivors, those who went through the Hitlerian hell, named this crime – the second pogrom.

The winter of 1941 arrived, and it was one that was to be engraved in our memory. The frost annoyed us severely and the snows came down abundantly. But the more intense the frost the more we were hopeful for there were rumors that the Nazis, our enemies, were falling like flies in the different Russian fronts. Pious Jews believed that a miracle would occur and save the rest of the Jewish community.

My mother in law prayed day after day for a miraculous salvation of the Jewish people. She was very committed to her faith and she desired with her whole heart that this nightmare of war would end and that the Jews would be relieved of their suffering.

I recall that at that wintertime we were one evening visited by some people who were sent by the “Yudenraat” and told us in sadness and despair that they were collecting valuables and jewelry from the homes of the wealthy in order to satisfy and shut the mouths of the blood thirsty carnivores who demand again and again a sacrifice titled with blood. They talked persuasively and presented a document, and according to the document they were collecting booty for the devourers and the suppressors.

They pressed us to the wall and we had to hand them a diamond ring. afterwards we were told that we were buying our lives and those of our relatives.

Not much was left of our valuables, we were selling them all the time. For a poor living you needed to be rich. The Jewish residence got nothing apart for some crumbs of bread.

Everyday it became worse and much harder. All our acquaintances gave out their last belongings for pieces of bread. Jewish children that resembled skeletons roamed the streets and houses begging, all the time there came news of new deaths. The fate of the Jews was sealed.

My poor mother in law turned her prayers to the sky expecting divine help and believed that god will listen to her by bring down the Hitlerian predator.

That is how everyone passed the winter of 1941.

The spring of 1942 was approaching and with it, the Passover of that year. Despite being religious Jews we starved ourselves, for where were we to obtain *Matzas* for the festival? potatoes were also scarce.

We passed the holidays depressed. Once in a while I told my family that I wasn't capable of going out to the street to search and scour for food

because of the sight that anyone sees out there, a sight that can make you want to give up. It was visible how the Jews were pushing wagons full of bodies of relatives and non-relatives to the Jewish cemetery.

The people who stayed alive buried their loved ones who perished from disease or hunger. And the Jewish children that I saw! even if I would have lived for hundreds of years more they wouldn't have been erased from my tragic memory.

They walked around with big swollen heads. the horrific scenes and the Hitlerian barbarism that had befallen this innocent and defenseless population ! it will never escape from my memory .

At our home , like in every Jewish house, everything was sullen and bleak. The men had to go off to manual labor without pay. When my husband and his brother would return home, tired and exhausted to death, his mother and I checked out to see if they were beaten, beating happened quite often . Of course, there were many that didn't even return .

Many men were seized and taken to labor camps, treated inhumanly, starved and beaten. the short residence at the camp ended with death from exhaustion – the murderers looked upon their victims with extreme sadism .

The tragedy and disaster reached every Jewish home, and at our place, like everybody's; only silence and quiet. A grave concern dwelt in our hearts – what will be next? we had already sold all that we had and in the horizon there was no end to the disaster .

During that same tragic epoch I suddenly saw my mother coming while looking out the window. She came by foot from Borislav (where she lived) to Drohovitch in order to see us . She had the courage to walk from one town to the other while at the same time the Jews were prohibited from traveling between residences.

The Jews weren't allowed to move between places , to travel and walk anywhere because Jews were made illegal . My mother took off the star of David from her left hand so that no one would see that she was Jewish. she said that she was urged to come because of her concern for us and she just felt that she had to see us. During our conversation she found out that our property was about to run out and that the dreadful thought of not being able to obtain food haunted us. She listened to our story and showed concern . She reckoned that during these horrible days we mustn't live far from each other.

She suggested that we gather courage and walk to Borislav, where we would all live together. She promised that my brother Shmuel would be happy to accommodate us, because in case of a pogrom he and everyone would be very anxious of our fate. That was the last time she came to my place. When I saw her there , showing us how she missed us , I never knew that her foot would never step in my house again.

But now, concerning the events, we decided that in the begging we wanted to send our daughter Stela to Borislav. To our luck we had our kind tenant Ms. Mikhlikova .

We were going to ask her to take our daughter to Borislav on train, and there was no fear that anyone would recognize her as Jewish.

She was pale, blond and she spoke Polish. These facts were known to Ms. Mikhlikova and so we hoped that she would accept to carry out our favor . We quickly went to talk with her and she willingly agreed and we were grateful.

On the morrow we started to pack her belongings so that she could go to Borislav with no further delay. She departed from all that knew her and that would never see her again , including her grandparents.

She would still see her father but today she hardly remembers him because he died when she was still very young , more on that later.

I resided in Drohovitch for another two weeks and my soul was split.

On one hand the missing of my daughter started to show, but on the other hand the phantom of horror hovered before me , our stock of possessions was about to finish and our spring of existence was about to dry up without hope for change.

The sadness and depression engulfed me day and night and I had nightmares that I remember until this day. I once dreamt about my father who died in 1937 from a heart attack. In the dream I saw him lying on the floor. I remembered that he wasn't amongst the living, but still, I went up to him without fear and with tears and agony , begging for help.

He came up and asked – who are you?

It hurt that he didn't recognize me, I told him my name. then I saw my father reaching out his hand and he said the unforgettable words: “go away from here!” .

I always attributed some spiritual meaning to this dream. when I left Drohovitch and moved to my family in Borislav , I fully understood that I wouldn't have been able to be saved from the Hitlerian hell if it wasn't for our persistent hiding during the pogroms. Our other hiding place were the bushes that were near our house , near Purshka road, where we were invisible to the Hitlearian criminals. More on that later.

When I departed from my husband and his family I expressed my hope that it was all just temporary, I'm only going for a short period.

What else that was left of what we had I wanted to leave for them.

I started to travel by foot after I had taken off my left hand the hand wrist that designated me as a Jew, despite the serious illegality of doing so.

The punishment for taking off the hand wrist or traveling was death.

The distance wasn't too long, 13-14 Km's which I passed after a number of hours.

I arrived at Borislav safely, and went to Penska St. where there were houses that belonged to my parents.

The members of my family together with my daughter rejoiced with me. This was in the summer of 1942. the summer was shining with full splendor, but for us Jews it was a sad and evil one.

Information that came from other places filled us again with anxiety , the cruel brutality in which the defenseless Jews were mistreated.

At that bleak period I would go to my friends, Ms. Bagner and Ms. Overlander.

One of them , the older one, told me that she received a letter from her brother in law that wrote to her in code, his whole family had fallen into a disaster. The same disaster had clutched many other neighbors and acquaintances.

From all these stories I understood that in these places Jews were being murdered in pogroms. The fear penetrated our hearts and heads, who knows what evil destiny that Hitlerian Germans are preparing for us? Meanwhile we were appalled by the terrible incident that at Penska St. , in mere daylight, my cousin Lola Dihasler was kidnapped among the pedestrians. Many other Jews all over borislav met the same fate. In vain did all the families hope for their return .

During the hot summer days of 1942, in a day I will never forget, my brother Shmuel came into our apartment and told us in a worried manner to prepare for another big pogrom that's going to be aimed at the Jews, three days and three nights.

We immediately grasped that nothing would save us from the Nazi savages but a good hiding place.

At first I suggested that we go and stay at my friend's house (Ms. bogner) because here house was located inconspicuously in the meadow across the river, and it might deceive the savages that wont reach the place.

Afterwards I rejected the idea because the place was surrounded by four solid walls, and in case the savages would come we would be besieged.

Finally I offered that maybe we would do well in an open space, in an isolated location which was seldom visited.

Behind Tzila Bogner's house there was a slope covered with bushes .

I knew the place from my childhood days, I would often run to the place to pick blackberries.

We carried warm blankets with us because the nights were cold, despite it being summertime.

We sat and lent on each other all night. The girl slept, covered with the blanket.

When the dawn came we stood up in our places interested in seeing what was happening downhill . All of us together saw the awful sight: armed

Gestapo thugs arresting the Valdman family after hiding in Tzila Bogner's house.

The criminals spotted us. It was because we came out of the bushes to observe what was happening. We immediately threw ourselves back into the bushes in case they would start to pursue us.

The savages opened fire on us with machine guns and many bullets flew into the bushes in our direction. To our infinite luck, they missed. From then on we were too afraid to raise our heads from the bushes and we spent the whole day in the bushes enduring great hunger.

When evening approached clouds started to cover the sky and shortly afterwards heavy rain started to fall accompanied by thunder and lightning.

We all got wet and my young daughter Stela trembled with fear.

When the night darkness descended on us My brother proposed that we return home by walking through bypasses.

With feet that were heavy from rain and mud we emerged from the vegetation towards the field, and henceforth the distance to our house was short.

We found a complete house, it wasn't destroyed. I remember as if it were today: My brother Shmuel climbed in through the window because the door was blocked from the inside by a metal rod. When he opened the door he said - we're never going to move from here again if there's such terrible weather.

My mother turned on the gas in the kitchen so we could warm up, gave us hot tea, we took off our wet clothes and we lay quietly in our beds.

The street we lived in was in the center of Borislav. When we lay down we heard loud and terrifying shouts of Germans taking Jews, their victims.

A moment came when our blood froze in our veins. We heard very some very loud thumps on the door.

We were in the house with the door that was made out of strong wood and that was also blocked with the metal rod - it seemed that the door withstood the pressure and it wasn't burst. The savages hurried onwards in order to supply the authorities with as many victims as possible - and that was our luck - that they rushed from our door.

We couldn't sleep all night, we were terrified and taken out of balance.

We waited until dawn when afterwards we planned to return to the forest bushes which protected us from the criminals.

The weather was terrible, we left the warm house with sorrow. My brother Shmuel again, blocked the door with the metal rod and he himself jumped through the side window into the yard.

We reached our destination running and the ground was saturated with water, but standing all day was unthinkable. We sat on the cold-wet ground and I held my daughter on my knees. My brother wanted to

relieve me and take Stela to his own knees. In order not place Stela in the risk of getting sick.

We waited for complete darkness. The hours passed slowly and worse - the rain could not stop falling.

We spent three long and hard days in our natural hiding place.

Frozen and wet from the rain we waited for the Hitlerian Germans to end the pogrom.

When we returned home on the third night we went past my grandma's house that stood next to our house. At the time two families that were related to us lived in the house. On the bottom floor there lived my aunt Frida Teper with her husband, their daughter and another two small children. Upstairs there lived another aunt, Tauva Igra – with her family.

When we went past that building we peeked inside so that we could see everyone and talk with the family but what we ran into was terror: broken doors, shattered windows and black voids that caused us to tremble to death. We were terribly scared and overwhelmed and we ran back to our home.

On the day after we wanted to know more and get information on my aunts and their families and we asked our gentile neighbors if they know anything about them.

With great pain we found out that they were all taken away by the Hitlerian savages. No one knew exactly what the Hitlerian criminals intended to do with us.

All sorts of rumors were roaming around, rumors about the Jews who were taken away - some rumors said that the young ones are taken to Germany and the older folk are taken some place else.

Others said that everyone were taken to camps for a horrible and bitter life. Back then we didn't know for sure that everyone were intended to be murdered.

The third pogrom occurred during the 15'th of august 1942. Before the third pogrom there were close to 20,000 residence with Jewish origins in Borislav.

After the pogrom there remained barely half. We were all very horrified and upset at what happened. there were Jewish homes where only one person was saved, by coincidence.

There were also the Jewish homes that were left completely empty, everyone at these places seemed to disappear from the horizon of life.

The Jewish houses were sealed and all the property was seized by the German authorities. Even if we live hundreds of years more the violation of basic law and the serious human grievances will never leave our memory.

After I was saved from the terrible third pogrom I expressed great fears for the fate of my husband who stayed in Drohovitch.

I shared my feelings with my mother and my brother Shmuel and expressed my desire to go back on foot to Drohovitch so I could find out if my husband and his family were safe. My loved ones tried to convince me that by traveling, I am seriously endangering myself – for traveling was completely prohibited for us Jews, and more to that – by taking off my bracelet I was literally risking my head, for Jews were expected to be recognized from a distance.

All the attempts of persuasion were in vain, I insisted. I just only asked that my mother would care for my daughter. I mentioned a short “goodbye” and was on my way. I hid the recognizable bracelet on my pocket.

I walked terribly fast, passing roads, and then farms, a forest – until I reached the outskirts of Drohovitch. I continued onwards to the center of the city reaching the sidelined Soviesky St. 36, where we built our house before the war.

I couldn't sense any fatigue, despite the fact that I had just passed 14 kilometers. I only felt a certain nervousness and I was tense, for I may have met an empty and sealed house.

I reached the door and knocked. My husband opened the door.

When he finally saw me his face filled with joy. We hugged each other warmly, we cried like young children that were unjustly punished.

We went in the other room, my mother in law was lying on the bed.

We embraced heartily and I already noticed that she was feeling quite ill, she couldn't move and she was very exhausted.

My brother in law Herman also survived this third “actzia”.

I was delighted that everyone was alive, saved, but nonetheless a great concern still loomed – what will be next?

I asked my loved ones where they hid during those blood stained days and nights. By creating an opening in the basement they went under, to the foundations of the building. They went in there lying, for it was completely impossible to stand up over there. They passed the horrid with great suffering.

I presented my Husband with questions, like if our neighbors managed to save themselves from the pogrom. All along Soviesky St. there were Jewish families.

In 1935 a wealthy Ukrainian woman named Jikova distributed large plots

over there and sold the land for a high price, it was because the area was near the center of town. We ourselves purchased a lot of land, for a 9 room house and a garden.

The rest of the buyers were also, mainly Jewish, so it turned out that many of our neighbors were Jewish.

To my question, he answered that only a few of our neighbors were saved. I was very depressed from the disaster that had befallen on our people. I found it hard and saddening that I was separated again from my family. The thought always roamed my mind- who knows if anyone will ever see each other again.

I irreversibly decided to convince my husband come with me on foot to Borislav, to my family, so everyone could be together in these tragic times. He agreed to my claim but wanted to postpone his transfer to Borislav to a later date due to his ill mother who needed his care.

Reluctantly I had to embark, back to Borislav. As before, the part of the family that was with me expressed concern of my endangerment by traveling.

While we departed we cried bitterly for our fate. I almost ran back to Borislav, in short time. I could, however, stay there only a couple of more days. Anxieties and bad feelings got the grip of me completely, I just wouldn't listen to my mother's and my brother's warnings running back **again** to Drohovitch only to fulfill again my desire to be with my husband.

During my discussion with my husband I tried to convince him with great efforts that he'd come with me to Borislav. Finally he let me convince him on leaving Drohovitch. I witnessed how he separated depressingly from his family, he thought that he may be leaving his habitat and all that he created for a very long time.

I even noticed that during his first days in Borislav he was sullen and bleak. From my long acquaintance with him I knew that he just loved his house and never wanted to constitute a liability. My brother Shmuel and the rest of the household tried to comfort and encourage him.

The thing that most hurt him was that he left his ill mother without proper care while also explaining that the presence of his brother Herman wasn't enough for his mother, for he himself needed care for his health and spirit.

After staying with us for a week my husband decided without any doubt that we was returning back to his mother, because he felt duty was ordering him to return, he was concerned for her, and this concern compelled him to go back and check on her.

Nothing would stop him, he insisted inexorably. he said goodbye to everyone nicely and was on his way.

It was the last time we ever saw each other, he was gone for ever, I never again saw him alive.

Much time after I managed to save myself from the Hitlerian occupation I found out in 1944, from the story of his cuisine that also saved herself, how and when my poor Philip died.

In the spring of 1943, at the time of the Drohovitch Geto liquidation, the last of the Geto Jews fell into the hands of the Hitlerian savages, Philip included. The may honor of their memory be for eternity.

Now I would like to continue and describe the events and stories that occurred after the great and terrible third Jewish-aimed pogrom.

It was impossible to discuss further traveling to Drohovitch, for it was only after a short period of days when the “Yudenraat” informed all the Jews that there existed an order from the German authorities to establish a Geto for the Jews.

Jews from all over the area were supposed to move into this Geto.

We immediately heard rumors (while moving) that the Hitlerian savages were committing “actzias” aimed at Jews at the settlements near Borislav. Many were murdered on the spot and the rest were taken to execution sites.

Among the exiled there was my old long friend “Mimi” , Pania Wolf and her family. She frequently sent her regards from Stodenitza.

We had to move to the Potok Gerny Geto- originally the name of the street.

Moving to the Geto was difficult, tiring and full of fears. The Jew, deprived of all basic human rights, prohibited from using a horse during the move, had to count on his own strength and move all his remaining property with exertion to the distant Geto.

We would wake up at dawn in order to carry out the transfer, a number of days consecutively.

We labored from morning till night to transfer what we had left. The Yudenraat allocated rooms, people were added to small families.

A small room with a miniscule kitchen was assigned to our family.

We didn't complain about the poor environmental conditions around us where it was extremely crowded. Sometimes one small flat was allocated for two families, but no one opened his mouth, it was clear that we were all placed in trap and our bloodthirsty enemy brought us all close together so it could exterminate us easily.

The situation of people's nutrition looked now even worse than before.

The “arians” were now afraid to set foot in the Geto, they of course still wanted to set hands on the remaining property (sometimes for a bit of bread or food) but the Geto was starting to deter them. The main population stayed away from it as if it were the plague.

From the first moment we entered the Ghetto we lived in nervousness. People were telling me how they went to sleep in their clothes so that in case of an alarm or danger they would be ready on their feet before escaping.

A lot was talked about a hiding place in the flat, a way to hide from the Hitlerian murderers. When the "Ritertzog" or the Gestapo appeared in the Ghetto everyone missed a heart bit from dread, anyone that found himself in their eyesight prayed that the earth would swallow him alive.

This was the atmosphere towards the autumn of 1942.

The days were becoming shorter and colder.

One day my brother Shmuel, after returning from slave labor, informed us with great fear, again, that another pogrom was being planned for the Jews.

We were overwhelmed, again, from these news and we lamented for our fate. The thought of trying to find a way to hide from the savage fascists depressed us deeply. At the time rumors were starting to reach us that at Straay, a place not too far from Borislav, the pogrom had already been carried out and therefore, I proposed the insane idea of fleeing to Straay in order to avoid the pogrom in Borislav.

There wasn't much time to think about it because we only had until tomorrow to decide on this dangerous voyage. Three of us planned to go to Straay: My mother, me and my daughter Stela. My brother Shmuel promised us that that we would hide at his labor camp in the many mines that were dug. We were calmed about his prospects.

A day before the pogrom we embarked on our horrid voyage to Straay. In order to reach the train station we had to go a long way on foot and I had to carry my girl by hand for she was sick and weak. We finally reached the train station that was full with gentiles that could travel wherever they wanted to.

I approached the counter and bought tickets for Straay. We were had no inconveniences in the train. We reached the town in the afternoon.

When we got off the train we saw another sight that froze the blood in our veins. There were two Gestapo operatives that were standing at the small exit of the station barking for the documents of everyone.

We immediately recognized the mortal danger due to the fact that we didn't possess a "kanckarta" (identification card) which every gentile possessed.

I whispered to my mother: "We have to escape and save ourselves or be done with! . We scrambled out like blind women to the other side of the track that was empty. We were lucky and the Germans on duty failed to notice us. There was of course great danger jumping on the other track, it was very wide and if some train would have arrived our venture would have had a sordid tragic end.

We rushed across the tracks like birds while panting anxiously because we didn't know the area and we didn't even know where we were.

We were walking for some time and we approached the outskirts of Straay, suddenly we noticed a man standing in one of the windows, watching us. I turned to my mother: Mum, lets knock on that door and ask the way to the Geto of Straay. My Mum caught my hand and said: "look into the eyes of that man and look at his paleness, all of it looks ominous, a person like that can cause our adversity.

We quickly walked away from that area towards the unknown. By mere chance we finally reached the Geto of Straay.

The Geto was dead, completely empty, not a soul was to be seen.

Broken glass and windows, glass and feathers in the streets, a scene of horror and desolation. We felt shivers all over our body, we understood that all this was done after a pogrom.

At last we saw a woman but she was inaccessible, her appearance was wild and she was lamenting loudly that she lost everyone and that she was left alone. Insanity came out of her eyes.

We continued walking fearfully while knocking on the doors of empty houses.

Finally one of the doors opened and we saw a man and a woman, they looked extremely scared. We asked them kindly for a place to stay but they interrupted us and refused to listen any more.

They told us quickly and nervously that they went into the house only for a brief moment to see if it was looted or ruined, and that we leave them alone because they are going to run back into their hiding place.

That's how our walk in the Geto ended.

Without any choice we resumed to our fast walk while haunted by fear and worry, until we noticed that the Geto was already behind us.

The darkness of October had already descended, it was cold and the painful wind froze us.

We walked around in an empty park, innocent and helpless. I held my young sick daughter in my arms all the time, she shivered from tiredness and the dreadful coldness. It was then that we saw an old woman crossing the park carrying dry firewood.

I carefully came close to her, asked her pardon and pleaded for accommodation. She realized that we were Jews seeking refuge and she marked a high price for the accommodation, on the spot. My mother agreed to the price immediately. The old woman gave us orders, that we follow her from a distance so that no one would notice that she was escorting Jews.

We followed her and walked a long distance until we arrived at her small apartment. A big white cat came towards us, whom she treated as her own child. The old woman cooked some soup and also offered some of it

to us, we accepted it gladly due to the fact that nothing went through our moths all day, we didn't even think about it.

My child fell asleep immediately after some mouthfuls. It seemed that she also, within her nascent soul, experienced the "Jewish tragedy".

The old woman that gave us shelter for a high price was lonely. She told stories all the time and prayed near the picture of her daughter that was exiled by the Germans for slave labor, she always lamented and complained that her daughter was taken away.

My mother pointed out her question – what would *she* do if she were in our shoes? with a death sentence is hovering over our heads?

We stayed at the old woman's place for one night only. The day after the woman told us before leaving the house that she would be back by the evening. We behaved quietly, the little one talked only by whispering. When the old woman returned she hardly passed the doorframe she started to complain to herself that by harboring Jews a certain death was waiting for her just as well.

She unwittingly would not let us stay any further, we had to leave her apartment at that very moment. My mother and I advised each other on what to do, and without choice we decided to return to Borislav because we had no place to stay in Straay.

It was evening time, between 7 to 8, during the tragic evening which I'll never forget. We thanked the old woman and walked towards the train station to buy tickets for Borislav. I bought rickets and we sat in the train.

None of the passengers noticed us except for a young Polish woman that approached me and said: "your going to Borislav, did you know that a pogrom is occurring, against the Jews?" We froze from the dread when we found out that we were entering into the mouth of the bloodthirsty animals.

We reached Borislav and got off. As I had mentioned earlier, the train station was far from the town. We walked fast while I carried my ill and weak daughter. We went through people in crowds, the gentiles were participating in trade with goods that were brought in from the west.

We did not raise any attention, we even passed some Gestapo officers and some Germans with black uniforms with the skull symbol which belonged to the airborne death brigade – responsible for the extinction of the Jews.

We were already close to Penska St. , where we lived before we moved to the Geto. We wanted to hide over there from the Hitlerian bullies, we still had the keys to the apartment.

We reckoned that it would be a safe hiding place due to the fact that all the Jews were in the Geto.

To our misfortune we both forgot in our rush that we must at all costs avoid the “Ritertzog” , because death waited for us there.

When we arrived at the “Ritertzog” two Germans jumped from the gate and shouted horribly “YOU’RE JEWS!” . We were halted immediately. We thought that we were done for. Amid the great tension I put my sick daughter down and whispered to my mother: “Mum save yourself, because death is waiting for you here” – and then I suddenly scrambled blindly to the neighboring street.

While running I heard to shots. At first I thought that they were aiming at me and missing luckily, after all I was still running. A thought crossed my head like lightning : maybe the savages were running after me and trying to catch me alive.

I ran even faster when despair was what was hunting me down. I ran that way for a long time, never looking back, until I reached a small river with a bridge.

I rushed over the bridge which was close to a mountain, the lane led to a mountainous area with bushes. They were almost identical, they sheltered us during the pogrom. I forgot to notice that it was pouring rain and that I was all wet.

I sat between the bushes on the bare ground, pretending to be death and unconscious after the trauma. I didn’t notice how much time I sat there until I was shivering from frost bite and dampness.

At some moment I recalled that somewhere near there lived a Polish widow who had children, I always came to her with my daughter Stela to exchange bread for clothes. I got off the ground set forth to the lone house where this Polish woman lived.

The time was late, passed midnight. When I got near I was surprised to see that the lights were still on. I walked hesitantly towards the window and I knocked quietly. I met the familiar Polish woman at the door and she told me without delay that my daughter Stela was with her.

I thought I was dreaming, I couldn’t believe my eyes when I saw my sweet girl Stela. I said out loudly, “what luck!! , my little girl is alive!” . The Germans did not execute her. But where was her grandma? where was my mother?

Despite her young age she told us everything lucidly and sensibly, our tragic state caused her to mature early. She saved herself the best way she could.

She told her story like an adult in words that will stay with me for ever: “Mummy, I saw that you ran away and I was so afraid of those Germans who attacked grandma, I also started to run as fast as I could, one of those Germans started to chase me, for a long time” .

Many people in the street stopped their activities to stare how a decorated “Ritertzog” German ran after a small girl. She said decisively that the German could not have caught her.

Today, when my daughter Stela recalls that terrible incident she went through as a child, she speaks of it with tears in her eyes, she also adds that the lord himself took her into his own care because she fled like a bird, as if wings suddenly grew on her arms, off the ground.. until the scoundrel left her alone.

She found herself near our old house before the Geto. Knowing that she won't find anyone in the house she remembered a way to reach a Polish woman that we used to bargain with for food, and it wasn't too far.

That's how my child was saved from the fangs of the savages. The lord inspired her with courage of a ripe human that is familiar with his tragedy and that can save himself in a fateful moment.

I listened to the story of my girl with tears pouring from my eyes and the hope that my mother was maybe also saved nested in my heart.

In the night, lying down next to my sick daughter, I listened diligently, maybe a miracle will happen and my mother would show up – but all was in vain – I never saw my mother again – those same shots that I heard during the tragic night were aimed at my mother, and killed her.

She still looked young and pretty , not one shred of her black hair went white. may she rest honorably in peace.

Our human and emphatic Polish host took care of me and my daughter excellently and only asked to be compensated for hiding Stela during the three days of the pogrom.

We reached an agreement that I was forbidden to stay in the house during daytime because I would be placing both of us in great danger. Only when it was late in the night was I to enter. I agreed to all her demands and thanked her .

My daughter Stela remembers till this very day how her hideout looked during those terrible days. Early in the morning the woman put her into a bed covered with sheets and pillows, and over that another bed cover. No one could have suggested that a poor Jewish girl was lying there, suffering terrible injustices caused by Hitlerian criminals.

I would return late at night to the apartment of the woman from my hiding place amongst the bushes whom never refused to giving me refuge, although it was hard.

When dawn had hardly broken out I would have to leave the appartment and go towards the bushes with no regards to the whether.

It was late autumn, October, I was hungry and freezing, I was standing and sitting on and off the damp cold ground. When I would get up from my place late at night my feet would be heavy and stiff , and I would hardly manage to drag myself to the house.

After three days, when we heard at last from the Polish woman that the Jewish-aimed pogrom had ended, me and my daughter set forth to our apartment, in the Geto.

When we neared the Geto I looked sadly at the emptiness and the death that peeked at us from broken doors and shattered windows. The death looked upon us like a ghost that was oppressing the hearts of the living. We decided on a tenuous and exhausting struggle that would maybe lead us to victory over this bloodthirsty animal.

We entered our apartment and we saw our brother Shmuel and his fiancé Blinka, they also managed later on to survive the terrible and horrific Hitlerian occupation. more on that later on.

My brother and Blinka were delighted to see us alive after the blood infested pogrom. They observed me sadly and depressingly and asked together – where is mother? horrified , I told them the tragic story we experienced during our miserable voyage to Straay, a thing I blamed on myself and suffered bitterly for.

While we discussed our tragic episodes during the last days Mr. Green knocked on our door, he was Shmuel's friend.

Green informed us that German notices that were put up ordered us to burry our relatives with no further delay, or that we would endure severe punishment. Green said that we should obtain a simple cart in order to bring the body of our beloved mother to the Jewish graveyard from the court of the "Ritertzog" .

All the hopes that maybe our mother managed to save herself from the criminals broke down.

My brother and I immediately walked to Penska St. to the "Ritertzog". In the court we saw our mother's body, it lay there immersed in blood, nothing remained of the silver purse she wore around her neck.

We always shared our remaining valuables during the German occupation.

Our poor loved mother was murdered and then robbed by the criminals. We lay our mother down on a small cart and pushed it forward.

My brother made sure to replace me whenever he could.

The distance between the town center and the cemetery was very long, but eventually we reached the cemetery. In the cemetery there were many Jews who came to burry there loved ones who were murdered in the pogrom.

My bother and I embarked on the task of digging the grave on our own, there was no one to help us. The labor was terribly difficult and with great exertion we hadn't managed to dig even half the needed depth by the time we had pushed the limits of our strength.

The darkness started to descend on the land. We started to look around helplessly, seeking help. Suddenly the gravedigger of the cemetery appeared and my brother offered him a fair price for finishing the grave. The gravedigger carried out his task swiftly and we buried her with her clothes and coat, just as she was dressed when the Hitlerian criminals murdered her.

My brother found a wooden board on which we wrote the name, family name and the date of death of our mother. He then stuck the board into the ground in a way that inscription was visible.

We both vowed that if we ever survived this horrible era of holocaust we would erect a grand and marvelous gravestone for her and never forget her tragic death.

After the Hitlerian occupation had ended after 1944 my brother was at the cemetery many times and looked for our mother's grave.

Unfortunately the Jewish cemetery perished in the holocaust together with the rest of our battered people.

Not much time passed between the fourth and fifth pogroms. The fifth pogrom, scarred in our memory like all the other bloody pogroms, was the longest – a whole month the seemed like eternity.

The fifth pogrom left horrific marks on the Jewish community. Night and day the Jews were followed, the Ghetto was under a constant siege of Hitlerian looters and the Jewish police. The latter were engaged in uncovering all the hiding places in order to supply the blood-thirsty vampire with new victims.

It seemed that all the heavens and lands were conspiring against us.

Once, at the beginning of four week-long pogrom, I escaped the Ghetto with my daughter. When we fled we passed next some oil diggings not far from the Ghetto. Christians were working there, manual laborers. Some "Folksdoitche", Shtroub, also worked at the place. He used to be a tenant of my parents. He lived at our owned house with his family. During the first world war a nourished and furnished house was made available for him and his family, by us.

He took advantage of everything for free while we dwelled in Vienna.

After we returned to Borislav following a long period of absence we demanded that the apartment be returned to us together with the furniture and all else that was given. Unfortunately everything that we left in the apartment was ruined.

My parents did not complain to them and they continued to be tenants of ours in a different apartment.

That same Shtraub arrested me at the beginning of the fifth pogrom, a pogrom of four weeks.

He shouted noisily for people to help him arrest me and the girl on the spot, he screamed – People! arrest her, she's Jewish, escaped from the Geto, took off her arm band so that no one will know that she's Jewish!

I was struck with a great fear, I was afraid that I would be arrested with my daughter, but thanks to divine providence we managed to escape. At times of danger such as those it was as if wings suddenly grew on our arms.

Breathless we fell on the surrounding bushes which did not refuse to give us refuge.

The shouting of Shtraub still ringed in my ears. I found it hard to believe that he was so ungrateful to our parents after living in their house free of charge for years.

My brother Shmuel was in despair. The thought that he might lose us filled him with anxiety. He looked everywhere to hide us. He knew quite well that at one time, during the fifth "Aktsia", we were miraculously saved at the last moment when a gang of bandits were escorting a group of poor Jews to their last hour.

My daughter and I were so close that she remembers the incident till this very day.

My brother Shmuel, while looking everywhere for a place to hide us, accidentally ran into an old acquaintance of ours, a Polish woman, Ms. Tranbeska, who used to live not far from us at Penska St.

Through our discussion with her we found out that she now lives in Potok Gorny, not far from the Geto.

With short sentences he presented her our tragic situation, of people that are persecuted to death, and he offered her a fair price in order that she take care of our daughter Stela.

He promised Ms. Tranbeska that she could harbor Stela without fear thanks to the fact that she did not resemble a Jewish girl in any way. She had bright hair and eyes.

Ms. Tranbeska agreed to take care of our little one, on the spot. This made us quite delighted, the possibility that we had found a safe place for our girl.

It was during the cold days of November, my brother wanted to satisfy Ms.

Tranbeska by bringing her firewood, he did almost all he could for the little one.

To our great sorrow she returned Stela after a number of days with the explanation that she feared for her life due to the fact that the neighbors mentioned that Stela had tragic Jewish eyes.

The freezing cold of November and the abundant snows and rains prevented us from seeking a hideout amongst the forest bushes. My brother Shmuel, as my sole protector, made his best effort in order to help us in our tragic state.

He knew a certain Polish family names Reчек that lived at Keshij St. also not far from the Geto.

Bicycle spare parts and other valuables were to be transferred to them from our hideout in return for refuge.

During day time we were to reside in the basement of the house and at night in a dark cold room, until dawn.

At the beginning we were three in the basement, that is, me, my sister in law Blinka and my daughter. Shmuel had to engage in endless manual labor day after day.

After work he would return to us and share his fate with us.

By then Stela's health was ailing, she was coughing relentlessly. The cruel environment and the endless struggle to survive took their toll.

When the owners heard the coughing coming from the basement they refused to give us shelter any longer. We were only allowed to come to their empty cold room at night.

The years of occupation were a continuing nightmare: The daily wandering starting with dawn, waking up our ill and exhausted girl, dressing her up quickly and our joint venture into the woods for a whole day of suffering of cold and hunger.

The frost wrapped our bones, it was impossible to survive standing up so I used to sit on the freezing ground for long periods with Stela sitting on me while warming on my body.

The hours went by slowly, and every day seemed like an epoch.

At dusk the girl pleaded: "Mummy! I'm so freezing, I can't move my leg, let's please go!" I always calmed her – patience loved one, we can't go yet, not until complete darkness, a darkness that would shield us from death.

I used to share my thoughts with my daughter, I did not conceal our tragic condition.

Our wanderings that started from dawn till dusk continued for four whole weeks.

There were days that were so cold that it seemed we wouldn't make it until the night, which by then we would be in human shelter.

When we would be returning from the forest, half dead and frozen – we would pass near fenced farms and the dogs would meet us with barks. My girl, quite mature for her age due to her suffering, mentioned with unforgotten words: "I'm jealous of the dogs, they at least have kennels and we aren't even allowed to go into houses.

After the terrible four-week pogrom that had consumed us totally, physically and mentally, we returned to the Geto and witnessed a nightmare: destroyed walls and floors, smashed for search of victims.

With great agony we found out that only a few Jews were still alive in the Geto – every pogrom, every "Aktsia" lowered the population of the Geto.

When I managed to connect with Shmuel, my only protector and benefactor, I told him my opinion of the pointlessness of our situation and that we, the last of the Jews in Geto, await the same fate of the Jews that lived here before us.

Shmuel later on confessed his thoughts regarding our safety problem. He knew this Ukrainian person from the village Bistashitse. That same Ukrainian farmer would often come to Penska St. before the existence of the Geto, where my brothers managed a big bicycle and parts shop. More else, there was workshop that passed on to my brothers after the death of our father.

All this was located in a story building that we owned and that was built by my parents before the Second World War.

The name of this rural person was named Haman. My brother affiliated him with a special meaning the moment he heard the name : In Jewish history Haman wanted exterminate the Jews; but this Haman talked of saving some Jews from oblivion by hiding them in the village, after a fair bargain of course.

This same farmer even came to the Geto to purchase something of what was left of the bicycle parts and promised that he would soon return in order to negotiate the issue of our refuge.

My daughter Stela and I were supposed to be the first to receive shelter. My brother concluded that the last chance had come and we were endangering ourselves severely by staying in the Geto for so much time. He decided to act to save us from death. It wasn't long at all until Haman appeared in the Geto. Shmuel negotiated with him while Blinka and I stayed at the side.

To my delight Shmuel informed us that the result had been positive and that the Ukrainian would take Shmuel's last bicycles on the spot , and then afterwards he would turn up to take me, and Stela afterwards. I agreed to everything, only to flee the hell of the Geto.

It was the January of 1943, the winter was in its midst, the ground was hardened and frozen by the cold. That was the time when together with Haman the farmer we reached the village Bistashitse by foot and bicycle, a place that was quite distant from Borislav.

The farmer's wife, Stefa, welcomed us warmly and served us a late supper.

Through discussions with other farmers I got the impression that they could also help to save single Jews, for a fare price.

During the first days of my stay at Bishtashitse I witnessed the transfer of our belongings from Borislav that were on the wagon the farmer brought with him from Borislav.

I remember painfully how I looked at those objects that once belonged to my parents. There were beautiful sets of bed linen, men's and women's clothes, sweaters and much more.

I remember the faces of my parents looking at me from framed pictures, pictures of our family that Shmuel kept with devotion. I was completely depressed from the whole story, I got the feeling that I was being separated from it all for ever, till the day I die.

After my brother and I passed the Hitlerian holocaust, after all the horrific events, it was as if we were deaf and blind when we did not demand anything back, despite the fact that they kept me away from them in such a cruel way and placed us in mortal danger before the death-bearing Hitlerian thugs.

We left the Haman family everything that the farmer managed to bring with him and we were left with nothing. When we got our freedom back we were extremely poor and destitute, as if we were church mice – and back to our story.

I shared my shock and anxiety with the farmer due to the fact that he should have also brought my daughter Stela that meanwhile still dwelled in the Geto.

The farmer calmed me by promising that he would pick up Stela from the Geto after a couple of days and that meanwhile, she was properly being taken care of by my sister in law Blinka.

I urged him and pleaded him to hurry and bring over my little one, knowing that my brother and Blinka strived to leave the dangerous Geto as soon as possible in order to move to the labor camp that was erected after the fifth "Aktsia" at Merjnitse at the site of Limnoby.

Knowing that this was Shmuel's plan, it was plain that my brother was interested first of all in insuring our safety, because it was our girl that was in forefront of danger. He and Blinka were thinking of a short stay at the labor camp so that when the time comes, they could somehow leave the camp and find shelter in the village, and this was due to the farmer Haman with whom they kept contact albeit coming to Borislav. Delightfully it turned out that the farmer had carried out my request by bringing over my daughter in a wagon while covered in hay.

I was so happy at getting her it was as if I had won her alive again.

Since that very moment we were together always, day and night. Our hiding place in the day was a barn near the stable. There was a lot of hay in the barn, there was a lot of hay under us, and we covered ourselves with a blanket we brought with us from Borislav.

A harsh winter roamed outside, snow and frost hardened the ground and we, while hiding in barn, peeked through the small cracks observing a small and dull view which included some trees covered with snow and a portion of land that was all snow and frost.

Days and weeks past just like that. It sometimes occurred that that Ms. Stefa Haman would take us to the house late at night so that we could wash and comb our hair, and afterwards we would go back our hiding place.

Ms. Stefa would bring food to the barn twice or three times a day. At first we ate with a big appetite, we were starving, it was impossible to obtain food in the Ghetto even for a lot of money. The gentiles kept away from the Ghetto, afraid of entering a place that was off limits to them.

Our days in the barn passed slowly, each day resembling the next like twins, identical.

That is how we spent the January of 1943. When February came a sixth pogrom had hit the Ghetto.

When Ms. Stefa told us about it, I suddenly felt a great sadness in my heart. In my thoughts I could imagine horrifying scenes from the Ghetto. In my mind I could see the last of the people who were taken and meant to die.

While talking with Ms. Stefa she let us understand how in her opinion, she and her husband were kind with us by hiding us and saving our lives.

She would often mention the memorable events of the pogrom and asked us if we would ever be able to find shelter in the open, in the forests, or between the bushes – in the blizzard of February ... she added that it was out of the question.

During my constant conversations with my hosts I understood painfully that they weren't taking account of all the goods that they had received from us, but they only talked of dollars and gold that unfortunately, my noble and kind hearted brother did not have.

After listening to different versions of these talks I realized how fragile and precarious our situation was, and that one day our hosts would say – enough! back to the Ghetto.

Whenever the Ghetto was mentioned I felt the cold claws of death, I asked the lord for a natural death without delay, anything but falling into the hands of the Hitlerian murderers.

Looking at the innocent girl playing with the hay reeds, placing them in order, bringing everything down and over again, I convinced myself that I must fight. Maybe god would help, until victory.

Three months passed amid this sullen atmosphere and feeling of daily insecurity. I always asked Ms. Stefa for the time and date.

Suddenly, at the end of march, during the afternoon, Ms. Stefa stepped into the barn startled and frightened. She told us that Germans were in Bistashitse, that they were conducting searches in the houses and farm houses and that we had to leave our hiding place immediately and run to the near forest.

She pointed at where they were, threw us a fur coat, ordered me to dress the girl quickly and urged us to run away as fast as possible despite the fact that I hadn't tied Stela's laces.

Frightened and anxious we exited the barn and ran towards the direction to which Ms. Stefa pointed at.

destiny had its course and we ran into another farmer, holding his axe.

I froze to the sight of near death. The farmer stopped us and demanded to know (in Ukrainian) "where are you from and what are you doing here? are you Jewish?"

Desiring to save myself I told him quickly anything I could think of, that we ran away from the Ghetto and that I wanted to go back – with the girl.

He demanded to know (with a threatening tone) where I got the fur coat which he recognized as Ms. Haman's .

I told him that the old woman felt sorry for us while seeing us shiver in the cold and gave us the coat.

I wanted to get rid of that person and I came up with the idea of asking him for a piece of bread, for nothing had entered my mouth since the day before.

I was delighted when he answered me saying that he was going into the house to bring some bread.

When he disappeared from my eyes I urged Stela to run away as fast as possible.

While running she lost a shoe that I hadn't managed to tie at the barn due to the great rush and Ms. Stefa.

At the time she rushed us really quickly. With one foot bare footed and the other with a shoe, she ran quickly to the forest.

We reached the first tree shivering from the fear and cold.

I decided to wait for the dark, and then return to Haman's farm.

When the night had finally descended I went out of the forest carrying my girl, and to my great anxiety I realized that I couldn't find the house in any way, despite the fact that I had tried to remember its shape (during the few times I went out of the hiding place) in case the moment would come and I could find it with less difficulty.

While looking for the house I wondered with the girl between all kinds of farm houses and buildings only to find out the bitter truth that I hadn't found the right one. When I approached the unfamiliar farms dogs would pound at us with ear soaring barks, and the owners would come out.

We would run away promptly so that nobody would notice us. I had the feeling that our searches were in vain, as if the earth had swallowed the house.

The lights started to go out in the village's houses, I understood that the time was late.

While we were searching for the lost house all around the village, I noticed a large pile of hay that lay at a distance from the village. I suddenly recalled memories from the far happy past: when we were still all children we would go with our parents to the village as a holiday. There they explained to me that the village dwellers would hide their potatoes there in the winter so that they wouldn't freeze.

All the hay stacks looked identical, I realized that if I were to go under one of the piles with Stela and continue searching for the house at dawn, I would not remember under which pile I had left the girl, and the consequences could be fateful.

Looking for a suitable pile, we reached the church, and I chose the closest pile to the church for the orientation – and we went under.

There was a lot of hay, I lay the little Stela on it, and she fell asleep immediately due to her exhaustion from all the running.

For myself, I staid awake and I crawled under once in a while to see if it was daytime yet.

When I finally saw that the sky had started to go gray, I crawled out of the haystack while leaving the girl to sleep. With a desperate run I once again started to search for the house all around.

However, I noticed that the day had started to shine, and I had to decide quickly how to act less because there was no point in further searching. Therefore I decided to knock on the door of the closest house and ask the whereabouts of the Haman's.

I knocked on the nearest door while leaving my fate in the hands of god's care.

A woman appeared on threshold of the door, and she asked me if I was that same oil peddler that came here on a permanent basis.

Within a fraction of a second I understood that I must really introduce myself as an oil peddler.

I spoke to her in Ukrainian while trying as hard as I can to conceal my Jewishness.

Fortunately she did not know who I was and she pointed at a house that wasn't far, it was just in a valley and thus I couldn't find it.

I ran as fast as I could towards the house, and when I reached the window I knocked on it quietly.

Ms. Stefa appeared near the window all drowsy and with such a countenance that it appeared that she was surprised to see me, and then she asked me with a calm tone where I was all night.

I answered her that in addition to all our suffering and traumas, another one had added up yesterday, and I told her about all our hardships and sufferings that had occurred to us since she ordered us to flee our hiding place in the face of the German threat.

I informed her on the place where Stela was hiding, and I asked her to bring her immediately. At that same unforgettable and critical moment, like at the many times when we touched the subject of the Jewish Genocide, Stefa suddenly claimed that all that had happened was a revenge from the heavens aimed at the Jews who "crucified Jesus".

When I saw Stela in the company of Ms. Stefa, always controlling her behavior, looking as if ready for battle, I cherished the virtues of her personality as early as the days of her childhood.

while escorting us to the barn, Ms. Stefa mentioned the issue of our hiding, and she claimed that for the hiding, saving and harboring of Jews you're supposed to receive a generous reward. I listened to every one of her words quietly, without answering. It was along time now that I felt that our days hiding in the village were numbered. At the end of her speech she added that we better prepare ourselves mentally for a long trip to Borislav, by foot.

A brother of the Stefa's husband, a young youth who knew the way, was supposed to walk us to Borislav. Ms. Stefa probably knew that she was causing a great injustice by sending us back to the Ghetto, to oblivion. She knew very well where my brother, his wife and his mother in law used to hide – The farmer Haman also knew my brother Marc whom he helped to hide his daughter Anita – thus Haman also knew where my brother and his family used to hide.

Before we left, Ms. Stefa gave us the address of the hiding place of my brother, she said that it might be useful.

At a late hour, when the whole village was asleep, we set forth.

It was the end of march 1943, it was terribly cold and the wind was biting.

Immersed in bleak thoughts, I couldn't notice the bad weather, It seemed as if we were being brought to our death. Holding my daughter's hand, we walked fast silently.

The little one courageously kept up with me, but there were moments when she slowed down asking – Mummy, not so fast! . So, that's how we walked all night without resting.

The time was 8:00 in the morning when we came out of the forest lanes towards Marjanitse, a suburb in the outskirts of Borislav.

It was then when our guide told us in Ukrainian – Goodbye - and went on his way. We passed the Limnov sight where there was a slave labor camp for the Jews of Borislav and its surroundings.

When we passed the place without the arm band that designates our identity, we slipped by fearfully while hurrying to the Ghetto Potok Gorny.

With a grave heart I passed the Ghetto borders, looking around. Empty, destroyed houses, without people. Where it was once crowded was now hollow, lifeless.

Under my feet there was broken glass from shattered windows.

death and desolation peeked from every nook I walked with my girl towards the house where I once lived in with my family when the Ghetto was only being brought up.

I found many more items there – but the people I ran into ! there were no families left, but only a collection of survivors who were left after the “Aktsia”s , each one saved individually.

From my discussions with them I heard about there fortuitous and remarkable survival, and I, full of dread, thought that I was dreaming. I rubbed my eyes considering that all this is not of our world.

Amongst the survivors I met a former tenant of ours at Penska St. , Mr. Ams.

I did not want to ask him about his wife and two sons, but he himself despairingly told me that his family shared the fate of the rest of the Jewish community.

There were some young ladies surviving, and one of them came up to me and confessed that she was a bad mother, running away from the pogrom while leaving a baby at home.

She blamed herself for cowardness, for being afraid from death. She blamed the whole world for being insensitive and apathetic for the wronging.

I couldn't listen to any more of it, I fled the apartment finding another hoping in vain not to hear terrible stories anymore, stories that had an influence on me in a fatal way.

It is at this point where my mental situation deteriorated.

I met another young woman, a mother of two, who hid with her children during all the “Aktsia”s (pogroms) struggling with fate, in dire conditions, waiting for a miracle that wasn't going to happen.

She was devastated and in despair. Seeing that the end was approaching, she just only wanted that one of her sons would be saved so that he could tell the whole tragic story of his family and his people to his father, who was drafted to the red army. Tragically, they all perished due to the Hitlerian murderer's extermination of the Ghetto in the spring of 1943.

I myself, after I had survived the Hitlerian occupation, while in dept towards the murdered Ms. Kamerman, filled her last request after I met her husband after he returned from Russia.

Without delay I told Shmuel that Stela was with me in the Ghetto. Immediately after his slave labor duties he came to the Ghetto to see me and the girl.

He was sorry to see us in the horrible Ghetto. He always told everyone he knew to leave the Ghetto the moment they can, to look for sanctuary in the woods, the bunkers, if possible.

He faced me and said that we did not have financial and material means to pay for a future sanctuary, because everything we had was given to the farmer from Bistashitse that behaved disgracefully, robbing us of all our property and throwing us out as prey to the cold and what ever else the peril may be. I shared my only hope with my brother. I still had the address of my other brother Mark, the address of his hiding place.

I expressed my hope that maybe I could leave Stela there while I would join Shmuel and his wife at the labor camp.

Meanwhile the residence at the Ghetto was a hell on earth. The people I met with were very nervous, attentive to any small noise, many times raising alarm falsely, living every moment with uncertainty and fearing what might happen in the next moment.

I felt that during that time in the Ghetto and with that atmosphere, my moral was braking down. I decided to go to Horodishets, where my brother Mark was under the protection of Ms. Shishelk.

It was a most unpleasant task, for it meant that I was burdening my brother with another person to take care of. I was ready to put aside any inconvenience or scruple to save my daughter.

So we set forth to Horodishets. It was still the end of march 1943. It was still cold outside, but during that same particular morning, the sun shined and warmed us, as if encouraging me, and it added hope. The journey from Potok Gorney (the Ghetto) to Horodishets went through a mountainous slope, a high mountain that took hours to pass. I held Stela's little hand, closely to me.

The snow started to melt due to the sunshine, a fact that made the mountains visible. Holding each other, we fell time after time, but we continued onwards inexorably. It was an area where only a few people lived, so we only came across a few people. To be sure that we were walking in the right direction I asked a passer-by if I was on the way to Horodishets.

After I was assured we continued, and Stela kept up with me sturdily and did not complain. After a walk of hours we reached Horodishets. We stopped at a place that seemed like a small grove, the trees were covered in snow, there were snowy lanes that led to unfamiliar places. It was in my opinion that it would be dangerous for me to ask about the Shishelk family because of my so-called Jewish appearance. I stood with my girl for a long time, deliberating, and I couldn't reach any decision. Therefore, we were compelled to go back to the Ghetto at night, exhausted from the long walk.

We went to bed with our clothes on, like everyone, ready for a possible escape. I only managed to sleep for a couple of hours. When I woke up in the middle of the night I felt all the dread and fear because of my lack of progress, I sensed that any further delay would mean disastrous consequences.

On the morrow I woke up the little one informing her that I had decided, after all, to go onwards with the plan. When I put her coat on she sensed what was going on and she asked if we were going on a long journey like yesterday.

I patted the poor girl's head and I talked to her as a mature person, I explained that we must try and save ourselves as much as we can.

She was not saying anything anymore, she understood the degree of our distress, she just followed me peacefully.

The weather was like yesterday, sunny and shiny, the mountains were recovering from the snow and again, we fell down time after time and went on.

there was only one thought in mind – reaching the target. During the walk to Horodishets I hoped deep in my heart that the person I would encounter would be a man, that wouldn't recognize my Jewishness, for the women in our areas always recognized the Jews even when just passing by.

When we reached Horodishets I kept still noticing a passer-by, a man.

I made an effort not to make any impression of a worried person and I asked where Ms. Shishelk lived. The same person pointed at a one-story house that stood near by. We approached the door and knocked quietly. When no one answered I went to the window and knocked.

My oldest brother Mark came to the window and said these words : what do you want of me? your endangering all of us!. I answered him that I wouldn't move until he opened the door . The door opened quickly and we went in.

Mark complained that I was placing him and his family in great danger and that I was also endangering Ms. Shishelk who was hiding them . He added that my aggressiveness would have lead to my downfall if the Ms. were at home.

I apologized to my brother and his wife as much as I could. I explained to them that my suffering had reached all its limits, I described my dire situation, that continuing

to reside in the Ghetto in the nervous atmosphere was impossible. The Ghetto was about to be exterminated, and its last Jews were to be sentenced to death.

I described the hopelessness of my situation and that they would be helping me generously if they could just only take my girl and provide for her.

If that would have been the case, I could have left the Ghetto and walk to the labor camp that wasn't, for now, designated for extermination.

Observing them, I noticed that I was causing them a great inconvenience, for they were also poor Jews hiding away from the Hitlerian predator that was hunting them. My brother Mark and his wife Yatika described their difficult life in the sanctuary – they were three, and his mother in law was the only survivor of a big family and she was hiding with them.

My brother dug a flat basement under a crate so that they can hide in it, crowded, stuck to each other in the dark place from dawn till late at night. They are always fearing whether they can ever expect liberty in their conditions.

As for food, from the moment they set foot there they suffer from hunger constantly, they are given a piece of bread once a day and a little soup. Their way from Horodishets to the city is a long one and in order that Ms. Shishelk give them some food in a small basket she demands exorbitant prices.

While they were describing their stifling life in the sanctuary, what stood before my eyes was the hell of the Ghetto, where death lurked in every corner. That's why I could not let go of my demand that Stela stay with them in the hideout, despite their impoverishment.

In the end, they acceded to my request of taking care of the little one, but they demanded that I take off as soon as possible before Ms. Shishelk returns, for her reaction to my request would be very negative, in the least. I threw a quick "goodbye" and ran out of the apartment.

During my journey back to the Ghetto, different thoughts pass my mind. All of them confirmed the correctness of my decision of saving my girl from oblivion while I was on the brink of an abyss.

At that same moment I was very grateful to my brother and his wife for the help they gave me, for they were in the most uncomfortable situation of being dependant on the mercies of Ms. Shishelk, and they had to listen to all her unpleasant comments while staying obedient and subject to the "generous and providing" woman.

All of these thoughts found a fateful whisper in my heart.

Walking, shrouded in bleak thoughts, I reached the Ghetto and decided to pack the little property that I had and spend my last night at the Ghetto.

When I returned and entered the occupied apartment – occupied by a many strange people – they immediately noticed the absence of my daughter Stela. They all asked at once what I did with the child. I expressed my hope that I had left her in a safe place.

I tried to convince my counterparts to leave the Ghetto, for they were to face murder in matter of days. If they reside in the labor camp amongst the other workers, they

may be able to postpone their fate, and meanwhile a miracle may occur and they might save themselves from the Hitlerian murderers. But all my efforts were in vain. Everyone had the same opinion that at the labor camp, just as at the Ghetto, they would be exterminated sooner or later and there was no point in moving.

I left the Ghetto while catching the stares of people who lost all hope, people who said that we are destined to die.

The labor camp for Jews was located at Marjanitse at the Limnov site. I reached the camp and stood before a small sign in German at the entrance – “Yedishes arbeitslager” (Jewish labor camp). When I entered I noticed two Gestapo men standing on guard. At the time there was a migration of Jews to the camp, lone survivors who went to place hoping that as a working element they wouldn’t be gotten rid of so fast.

At the registration office there were a number of people. everyone registered for work and residence at the camp. We were informed on the spot that there were very few “dorms”, and one room would have to suffice for 8 or 9 people.

I realized that just like at the Ghetto, everything was just a passing episode. When the Ghetto was erected the streets were crowded with people, shortly after it was the emptiness that ruled.

I had to share my room with great number of young women and youths whom I knew (some) for a long time, like the three Mendelson sisters – Lorka, Adla and Rojka.

There was Tsila Overlander, My sister’s (may she rest in piece) friend. There were other women I recognized from memory. We asked each other questions that usually revolved around members of the family that were alive or not.

Many of them told the stories of how they were left alone in the world, whereas their families used to be big. All the women took part in the labor, labor of many kinds.

I was sent off on difficult physical labor – covering ditches after the removal of pipes from oil openings. The commander of the squadron was a Zilberberg from Borislav. A number of young women were assigned to this work.

The early rising was at five in the morning. We were given some watery soup and sent off to work in marching lines, marching in the middle of the street.

Jews were forbidden to walk on the sidewalk. I worked quite fast, making an effort to forget everything. Therefore I managed to cover a long length and the commander Zilberberg wrote down every time how much each worker had managed to work out.

After a number of weeks a rumor was passed around that essential workers for the oil workings would receive the letter “R” . It was a mark that gave the holder confidence and a better sense of security.

The first to get the marks were young men that were essential to the oil workings.

My brother Shmuel got one. I didn’t even consider getting one, for I had no belief that the German fascists would want to save a woman from death.

Still, after one of the days, the commander Zilberberg convened a number of young women me included, led us to the head manager of the oil facility (Keller was his

name) and the same manager ordered our commander to look at the hands of the candidates for the security mark “R”.

My hands were all ruined and scathed due to the excoriating labor. Keler looked at my hands and subsequently recommended offering me the letter “R”, only one from the women’s group. Not much time had passed, a couple of weeks, when we witnessed a horrific scene on the way back from the slave labor. The camp was entirely surrounded by the army, armed.

On the Kastraktin square there were Gestapo operatives walking around with rubber clubs, ordering all the slave-captives to stand in lines. Any slight movement lead to a beating of the club.

In great anxiety and fear I saw my brother Shmuel slipping away from the mayhem and I heard the Germans shouting. They didn’t notice him and when we came past me he signaled with his hand that I come after him. While the ruffians weren’t noticing I ran towards the stairs that led to the roof. When we reached the attic we stopped. Shmuel took out a round lid from the roof and helped me to climb up. We both lay down on the steep holding the tin tightly.

Any small unwarranted movement or mistake could have ended up in us falling from the roof on to the pavement. My brother did not stop encouraging me and imbuing me with courage and resilience. Only the sense of great fear and the great desire to survive could enable us to stay on that roof.

Every minute that passed seemed like eternity. There came a moment when I saw some people on the other side of the street pointing at us with their fingers, an occurrence that worsened our feeling of stress, for the people could have notified the German’s of our presence, and consequently would shoot us down.

We followed with concentration what was happening at the camp’s gate, anticipating a relief and release from the torture of the painful attachment to the tin of the roof, a linkage that almost made us part of the tin if you want a proper illustration.

A long time passed until we saw a large group of people walking out the gate, women and men, surrounded by armed savages that were leading innocent and defenseless people to their last moments.

My brother Shmuel helped me to get down from the roof.

When we went to the court-square we encountered people who had stayed alive and who told us about the last “Aktsia”. People with the letter “R” weren’t taken, this time the barbarians had some sort of regard to this “rank”.

The experience I acquired during the German occupation gave me the instinct to know that at the next “Aktsia” the mark “R” will be devoid of any meaning.

We told our suffering comrades how we, wearing the letters “R”, had no trust in those fascist symbols. We told them how hardly survived the “Aktsia” by hiding on the towering steep roof.

After the “Aktsia”, the room that I shared with the other young women was left half empty of its users.

Some of them toyed with the hope that as “working women” they had a certain chance to save their lives, but all those hopes turned out to be false, we were all intended to extermination.

The spring was in its midst, April 1943. The group of young women that I belonged to were given an alternative labor of gardening. Many of us concluded that slave labor such as that would maybe improve our feelings. The scenery of trees and grass might calm our tense manner. This time the commander of our squadron was Mr. Baower, from Penska street.

Sometimes, while we were walking in line to work, someone would slip away in order to take care of personal matters. The commander would not thwart any of these truancies, he pretended not to notice. Once, when we were working in the garden that was closest to the Ghetto, I slipped away from line after a thought had struck me – to visit the Ghetto.

An ominous feeling shrouded me when I thought about the Ghetto. I had the impression that the Ghetto wasn't going to continue to exist for long, a violent and barbarous force was going to exterminate even the last of the people there.

I gave myself an introspection, because some quiet internal voice whispered to me that it would be the last time I would ever see the Ghetto and its dwellers.

I entered the Ghetto. It was a nice day of spring, the sun was shining over abandoned houses, there was the gloom of a cemetery. All the windows had wooden planks instead of glass, they looked empty and lifeless and the only passer-bys were shadows of human beings with the mark of tragedy on their faces.

Shaken to the bottom of my heart, I continued to walk. At one moment I saw a group of Jewish children playing cheerfully, the poor children did not know that their days were numbered.

The barbaric, monstrous, unforgettable world had always staid in my memory.

It really was the last time I saw the Ghetto and its miserable residents. Only a few weeks past after my unforgettable passage through the Ghetto when the Hitlerian criminals destroyed it together with the remaining of its population.

Not much time past quietly. In June 1943 another “Aktsia” (initiated action) occurred in the camp.

We hardly managed to get back from work when we witnessed a scene that froze the blood in our veins. The camp was surrounded closely by the army with its weapons, as if the camp consisted of the worst criminals that were likely to resist to them.

We took a quick look at the Ksarkin court-yard, it was infested by Gestapo and S.S men.

They barked at us deafeningly and ordered us to stand in lines, they scrambled like mad between all the rooms in order to usher anything that was alive to the court-yard. Frightened and worrisome Jews stood in line.

All of this made a deep impression on us, and we our imminent death before our eyes.

The Germans started to check the identification cards and the working places of each prisoner.

The selection was carried out in front of my eyes: Jews in essential and important working places in the oil production facilities were placed in distinct lines, and the rest of the men and women, unessential, were placed in different lines.

I even noticed that no one was paying any regard to the letter “R” , the mark that so many aspired.

There were already some women with the letter “R” in the line where the majority of women stood. I understood immediately that they were intended for murder.

When they came up to me it was clear to me how this “Aktsia” was being carried out, and they placed me in the line that was getting bigger all the time.

In a fraction of a second I felt that all my blood was being drained from my heart albeit seeing death staring me in the face. With a confused state of mind I continued to look at the selection.

{ } We were marched. When we were at curvature between Marjnitsa and Penska I decided to act upon my instinct and plan, and to run away.

The whole gang saw how I let myself scramble in escape. One of the Hitlerians stopped me, took off his rifle and spanked me with it so hard on my face near my eyes, that all my sight went blank. With my last resources I struggled to stand on my feet knowing that if I fall down, the savages will execute me on the spot.

With his rifle in his hand he threatened me (in German) : “If you run away once more I will shoot you on the spot!” .

That threat made no impression on me, for I knew exactly what we were intended for. We were led silently until we reached the center of Penska St. , where my family’s newest building stood, built before the war.

While I was escorted to my demise by the Hitlerian ruffians I looked upon the house, remembering my deceased parents.

If they would have known in what a miserable state I was - and I was seeing all this for the last time – the words “last time” wringed and thundered in my head, rages of protest wanted to burst out of a strangled throat.

The eyes of my conscience already saw my last march of death. It was an execution location where thousands of other Jewish victims perished in the hands of the Hitlaerian monster.

A sole moment of despair crossed my mind while recalling in my memory the rumors of the process of the executions – pits that were made in advance by the fascists with wooden planks across the pits, the throwing of all the clothes to the side before the shooting so that bandits would be able to loot the last remaining property of the murdered victims.

It was as if the world was collapsing on its foundations, I thought struck my mind like lightning: Stela, my girl! What will happen to my girl? Will she live to be free? Will she live remember our ordeals, sufferings, struggles?

Afterwards I turned my thoughts the almighty: Oh lord! help me! don’t let me perish! When we were approaching Rinsler’s court I just let myself escape unscrupulously without wanting to know the consequences. I did not want to be executed, I chose to

be shot in the back - so till the last minute I would have the feeling that I was managing to run away and save myself.

But what a miracle! While I was running I was thinking – they shoot me – but I heard no shots fired. I reached the house ruins that was wrecked during the pogroms.

I could not believe the miracle that had happened: I was alive! no one shot me, no one chased me, I was saved from death by miracle!

Many years have past since those times of ordeal, and many times I hear from my family and friends that these horrific events should be put aside, but unfortunately – I always recall them – and they've left an inerascable scare for the rest of my life.

I stood in that same ruined building for many hours until nighttime, and I didn't know what to do with myself, where to go, where to look for refuge? I reached the conclusion that I had no alternative but to return to the labor camp and walk carefully through side lanes, so that I wouldn't bump into any unpleasant surprises and enter the camp through the wired fence.

When I returned to the camp my relatives were delighted and said that if it were the end of my calamity, A miraculous saving from the fangs of the Hitlerian criminals such as this could be written in the pages of history.

From that same critical time onwards, when I was snatched together with a group of unfortunates towards my end, I was living the whole time under the shadow of those last experiences .

While working in the gardens in free air my dire mood was almost mitigated, but from the moment I came into the area of the camp I had the impression the we were in a trap. At the time I was living, as before, with some young women and youths, amongst them was Andjia , the fiancé of Glukenburg that was in charge of distributing the bred in the camp.

By selling bred at high prices to the prisoners he filled his pockets with money.

His fiancé, knowing that I still possessed the letter “R” (and she still attributed a significance to it), and despite the last experiences with the poor Jews, When she came in contact with me she mentioned the subject of my letter and offered a hundred Zlotys for it.

I knew from my own bitter experience that the ownership of the letter “R” by now had the same importance of a “metal letter” that was issued by important working places aiming for the security of an essential worker – both were annulled by the responsible for the “Aktsia”s who would lead their chosens to oblivion.

Thus, I reached the conclusion that I should sell her the venerable “R” together with the attached documents.

I had felt the shortage of money in the past, since I was thinking all the time of hiding in some sanctuary I knew that I needed money (to pay for it).

I set aside the money in order to save us later. During my conversations with my brother and his wife I reminded and warned them that it was time to run from the camp and look for a hiding spot somewhere in the open, to limit the consumption of food to a minimum and to keep a distance from the criminals while keeping the hope of liberation.

Details came in that said that only a few had managed to survive in the open, whoever had financial means and friends amongst the gentiles made the best effort to disappear from the eyes of the criminals.

We heard somber stories of Jews and their hiders. A family named Bronenberger that lived not far from us, gave away all its property to some Polish woman in return for sanctuary in the basement, and eventually they were discovered by a neighbor who informed the German authorities. Everyone, including the hiders were seized and murdered, and they all constituted a deterrent for anyone who was thinking of giving Jews any help.

He heard of many failed attempts of people to who tried to save their lives, attempts that ended tragically. I knew three sisters who's family name was Pink – one more beautiful than thee other. They left Borislav, a threatening place where everyone knew of their Jewish identity. Upon their departure to the gentile world their acquaintances supposed that they had fair chance of surviving at a foreign and strange place where no one knew them.

But even at those places there were the informants who gave in their identity, so the last phase was unfortunately dramatic and solved the riddle of their survival.

We knew of other different similar cases that ended in death, therefore, we hardly had the courage to move from our place because we felt that there would be an abyss under our feet wherever we went, not mentioning our “Jewish” appearance.

At the same time my brother Shmuel was confessing his plan to me and to Blinka (which he planned with his friend Merkel). My brother described at great length how the building he wanting to turn into a hideout looked like.

The narrower side of the building was full with big machines that were once used at oil workings, together with metal parts.

At the hidden part of the building he and Merkel secretly moved some bricks in order that one person would be able to pass in. Shmuel was full of hopes thinking of the new sanctuary, that it would save us and we would eventually regain our freedom. His friend Merkel already wanted to place his parents there, they were saved from the pogroms earlier.

His sole wish was for the fate of his brother to endure, for he was in the hands of the savages. I also urged for our quick removal fro the horrid camp, I wanted to leave this horrible place with all its Aktsia's as soon as possible.

I preferred hiding even in the worst conditions, anything than living under the threat of the murderous Aktsias. I shared my thoughts with Shmuel and Blinka and they recognized the vitality of my claim.

We planned among ourselves when were we to escape the camp, together with our collections of cloth. My brother Shmuel was supposed to stay in the camp for the time being according to assumption that women were in greater danger than men who work in important places in the oil industry.

He volunteered his opinion that the German Fascists wouldn't exterminate the camp so fast due to the fact that they could continue to exploit skilled Jewish workers, free of charge.

Later at night three of us sneaked out of the camp, it was August of 1943. The Carpathians gate and the Pento building was a huge working house for automobile frames, it was where Shmuel and Merkel worked and it was also far from the camp. At good time, walking through unused passages, we reached the new hiding place. My brother helped us to get in while illuminating the entrance with a torch he managed to obtain.

When we were inside he explained to us that walking was not possible, there was a low roof, we were on the foundations of the building and we were supposed to crawl on the mats that were made for us and Merkel's parents.

We crawled on four until we reached the wooden planks, on the wooden floor there were some items and even blankets, that were supposed to cover us from the cold. My brother asked us (whispering) what we thought of the sanctuary and if we were satisfied. We shook his hand gratefully showing our satisfaction that we had a place that we can hide from the Hitlerian murderers.

My brother Shmuel continued and explained that in the foundations of the building there were small square openings that were now invisible at night, but during the day visible by sunshine. That way we could crawl to them, like the middle one for instance, where we would have a communication depot and a passage for getting food and drink.

In return we were also supposed to write on paper (and deliver through the opening) how we felt and what we did, even our thoughts. He promised us that it would be much easier for him to reside in the camp knowing that he had placed us in a safe hideout, although very uncomfortable, but hopeful of maybe giving us our freedom back, our victory.

He would have the good feeling that we weren't facing the danger of losing our lives. He himself would be careful and vigilant and hoped that the last minute he would be able to save himself by escaping to the hideout so that he could survive with us, so that our offspring and all the world would hear of our struggle for survival.

The Merkel family, father and mother, shared our fate and cover in that sanctuary. In order to make the time pass, and the time passed like eternity – We told each other the stories of our past, before the second world war while contemplating that happy memories from distant years were now very painful, for we were now feeling our bitter fate so strongly.

The notes that Shmuel wrote to us encouraged us and lifted our spirit. Everyday he threw something to eat through the small opening, he even tried to bring us cooked food. Our loved one was managing as best as he can to get the necessary money for our necessities, and doing so with mortal risk. If the Gestapo operatives were to conduct a search they would have found hidden weaponry, weaponry that he smuggled for paying buyers.

Young and old, as one, knew very well that the German fascists would not let anybody live or survive, even the last small group at the camp. Therefore everyone started to look for salvation in the forest, and for that they obtained a weapon. Shmuel, as a mechanic, fixed and supplied the weaponry to the people who were planning to flee to the forest with protection.

The days passed by in the same aura of slow darkness, everyday seemed the same as the other, like twins. In this difficult hiding place you could only be lying down. When we would sit up to change position we would lean our heads towards the ceiling, a fact that made the sitting difficult, It was only in the afternoon that we knew that my brother and his friend remembered us.

We would all crawl to the openings craving letters, food and connection to the outer world. Above us there was a big working house where many people were employed, including my brother and his friend Merkel. In this working house things were fixed and manufactured for the oil workings, during work time there were thumps and noises – the moving of heavy machines made sensed vibrations.

We were all attracted to the small openings, to the miniature windows as I called them. When we were close to such an opening, we would see faint rays of light illuminating a small area of this dreary cave, the time past idly for weeks and months.

Blinka often hinted that we were buried alive. We agreed upon ourselves that there isn't a jail in the world that is as bad as this, in more worse conditions than ours – and one that we chose with our own free will seeking to disappear from the eyes of the Hitlerian animal that wished to murder us.

My brother Shmuel and the Merkel's son visited us once a week in the sanctuary. We all held the opinion that holding contact with letters alone was not enough for us. We would wait every week longing for the late evening of their visit, desiring to cast away our apathy for a couple of hours in the presence of people from the outside world.

My brother would bring us anything he would possibly have: some cooked potatoes, a piece of bread. We would talk for many hours. Shmuel wanted to encourage our spirit, so he talked about the state of the camp.

At the moment it was quiet there but nobody knew would happen the day after. When it was quiet he was upset and disconcerted that we couldn't see the light of day, nor straighten up and that we were suffering in the dark cave. Those mere hours of his visit would give us strength to continue the struggle.

Towards dawn he and Merkel would leave the hiding-place. In order not to arouse suspicion they would wait outside for a group of people who were employed there before starting work.

Shmuel would always inform us when he was intending to come, and we knew that he was endangering himself by exiting the camp at night. When he would appear after waiting for him anxiously, we would sigh in relief.

At one of the visits, my sister in law asked him to take her to the camp for a couple of days, she wanted to wash herself and her clothes, and then return to the hiding place after residing there for a couple of days.

We designated the night of their return, and they went onwards henceforth.

While waiting for their return impatiently I listened to every single noise that came from the outside and the Merkel family was also disturbed that it was midnight and there was no sign of return.

All of a sudden that night silence was broken by the sound of fierce shooting. We all shook from fear guessing that something terrible should have happened. We waited anxiously and finally, after an hour of tiring anticipation my brother appeared, alone -without Blinka.

He was agitated and his face was different as a result of the last terrible experiences, and with an agitated voice he started to tell us of the tragic incidents of the last night. They both sneaked out of the camp, they walked through hidden lanes and did not expect to encounter the Hitlerian savages. Hiding SS operatives suddenly blocked their path screaming in German "Stop! or we'll shoot you!" .

Horried and helpless they found themselves in a trap, fell into it and were taken by the SS people to the "Riterzog" that wasn't far. At the gate there was a guard that let them in.

Once inside they started to make deride their tragic fate while laughing loudly of the Jewish tragedy, laughing that we fell into their trap, what will bring their quick death.

While disdaining they gave them what they called was a death document to sign on. The shooting execution will be carried out at dawn. Until that time they were to stay at the Riterzog and the guard was to keep an eye on them.

When they were left alone, locked, my brother fell into despair: such a long struggle, in vain, so much pain and suffering, and the final result was a certain death that was already reaching its claws towards them.

Blinka tried to get him back in balance by encouraging him that as long as they were alive they should be thinking of saving themselves, as long as there was still time – they had to look for a way to escape into the open. They noticed that at the place where they were confined there was one window, blocked with wood.

They started to remove the wood quietly in order to be saved by escaping through the window. When they both jumped out of the window one after another, the guard, hearing the noises from the window's direction alerted the SS operatives – and they started a pursuit after the fugitives while at the same time shooting towards them.

My brother flew like a bird, leaped over the fences, always hearing the shots that he heard at first closely – but now missing him from afar. The almighty was giving him providence.

While listening to that tragic story we all experienced in our mind those same moments of dread. Shmuel expressed his deep concern for his wife, who knows if a bullet had hit her or not? or maybe she was caught alive by those criminals that may be torturing her?... He could not return back to mental balance. He reminded us again and again of those night events while failing to believe in his miraculous survival.

We asked him to go to sleep quietly, for he was supposed to report for work at dawn without any of the workers noticing him. I pleaded my brother that on the morrow he would give me a letter notifying that Blinka had also managed to save herself. Anticipating the news from my brother I crept to the mail opening in the afternoon – as arranged with him – while waiting for the delightful detail that Blinka had managed to save her precious life.

Using the light of day I managed to read that delightful news that while my brother was returning from work to the camp, he met Blinka who was waiting for him to return.

Apart from that he mentioned that he wouldn't bring Blinka to the hiding place during late-hours, a time that now seemed more dangerous. He thought of taking her much earlier, hoping that everything will be for the best.

We welcomed the returning couple with enthusiasm, and I was gratefully delighted to see them untouched and sound. Blinka spoke a lot about their magnificent survival, attributing it to the almighty while quoting an ancient Jewish proverb: human, do all you can and the lord will help you. That happened to be their case.

The days passed again in the same one colored mediocrity. As before, We filled the time as best as we could while dreaming of the long awaited freedom, at the same time sitting and lying on the mattresses.

The summer had already passed, We knew the autumn had arrived, October 1943.

We had already been spending three months in the cave with sub-human conditions. Once, when the Merkel family received news from their son, they shared the details with us. The son wrote that meanwhile everything was calm at work, many people who hid had returned to the camp, mainly due to the fact that most of the hiding places turned out to be impossible to live in over time.

He also wrote that he hoped that in a couple of weeks his parents could come out and see the light of day and breath the fresh air, straighten their back and to try and walk again.

Merkel's parents were happy with the offer of getting out from the sufferable cave where they were buried alive. The Merckels waited for their son before going out of the hell hole. We separated from the Merckels warmly wishing each other that we would meet again at a time of liberty.

When I was left alone with Blinka I started to hear her also complaining of the somber life in the hiding place. When she shared her feelings with Shmuel, he wrote to us that if we thought that our residence in the hole was so terrible he would come to our aid and release us from the gloomy black hole.

Blinka always tried to convince me to leave the hiding place with the explanation that as long as there were still Jews in the camp it is a shame that we would continue to suffer. She was waiting anxiously to see the clear light, to move around like a human being. she protested vehemently against remaining in the foundations of the building.

She and my brother did not convince me from my conviction of remaining there, I did not want to leave that torturous place on any circumstances explaining to them that if we reside in the camp we would be exposed to mortal danger, to ruin.

I always saw before my eyes the army troopers seizing people for murder, therefore I preferred to remain in this dark hole so that I would not see more infernal scenes.

Blinka was happy to leave the gloomy place. While separating from me she expressed her hope that I would follow her and leave the uncomfortable hiding place.

Due to my obstinateness I was left all alone. When day and night became the same to the naked eye, I crept on my hand and feet to the openings on a permanent basis to look at the world on a small scale, through those small openings I could see a small part, a piece of the factory sidewalk and a piece of ground that was near a tree and that was covered in yellow leaves, it was late autumn.

Days past, weeks, even months, I lost all sense of time, I did not know the date, and all the time I was Half lying half kneeling.

Wanting to know what season it was I looked out, I saw snow on a piece of ground that was the sole view from where I lay.

When I was alone in the sanctuary I got an anxiety, anxiety about the fate of my young daughter Stela. My thoughts penetrated through the foundations and the walls and drifted all the way to the distant Horodishets, where I left my poor child attempting to save her from the Hitlerian ruin.

While unsure about the time of day I always tortured myself by thinking about her, if she was still there and alive, or that maybe Ms. Shishelk had gotten rid of the liability that was “forced upon her” .

While completely immersed in missing and uneasiness for the fate of my daughter, I tried to count the long months of the painful separation, deprived of any information about her health or feelings. Apart from that another terrible thought came to my tortured mind: knowing the stories from my brother Mark of their difficult life in the narrow basement, in the mercy of their “host”, I knew there was hunger and impoverishment, and I was worried that all this would compromise the weak stature of my daughter.

These thoughts urged me to walk away in the dark through the mountains all the way to Ms. Shishelk’s house, only so I could see her situation with my own eyes.

Controlled by these thoughts, and knowing the direction of the hidden exit, I crawled over there attempting to find it. I crept for hours trying to find it, but in vain, it was almost impossible. All the walls looked the same, my brother Shmuel probably put the bricks back in a way that only a pundit would find them.

Being exhausted from the search I fell on my mattress and fell into a deep sleep.

Then I had a dream which I will remember for the rest of my life, for it brought me solace during that tragic period, I believed in dreams.

This was the dream: My sister Andjia was sitting in a coach. I forgot that my only sister who I bonded with closely, was no longer alive. When we were girls at school age (our ages were close) we went to learn together, in the same class, on the same bench, always together. We always shared with each other our most secret thoughts, the deeper ones.

That is how we grew up, devoted to each other with fraternity and with a pure connection, until a cruel death took us apart and left an eternal emptiness after it.

When I saw her in my dream I came towards her, ran to her, and asked her worryingly: Andjia! Tell me where is my girl? and she answered me clearly with the unforgettable answer: Your girl is where you left her .

I woke up with a feeling of faith and hope. The calming words of my sister were like medicine for my ailing soul. I nurtured my that faith, that things were like how they were described in the dream, and it calmed me.

And then again, days passed, weeks, and more months. Once, crawling from one opening to the other, I got an acute throat ache – a thing that disturbed me greatly reminding me of the distant past, when I caused much trouble to my family because of my sever Angina, and only the most intensive treatment relieved me.

And now, hiding in sanctuary, deprived of any medical care or pharmaceuticals or even some hot water with salt to clean the throat, I feared it would come back – in the usual form of a painful morse, which was hard to get rid of even in normal times.

Fearing for my health I wrote about it to my brother and asked him if he could obtain some pills in any way he could think of.

He replied that he was deeply sorry and that he felt dreadfully about it, but it was impossible to get them in the camp. Then I remembered that I once read a novel in

which a soldier was in a trench and also got a throat infection, and due to the fact that he could not connect to a doctor in any way he cured himself by “cleaning” his throat with urine.

I took this treatment upon myself and after a number of days I felt much better, I let my brother and Blinka know about it.

The days continued to pass uniformly, hardly telling the difference between day and night, looking all the time through the small opening, looking at the lord’s world with sad eyes (still snowy). By looking at the snow I could tell that it wasn’t as frozen as before – it was darker and ready to melt.

I presented to myself the question: what season was it? was spring approaching? I had a great desire to know the current date, day and month, and I asked my brother to inform me.

He gave me a comprehending answer. Later on in time I decided to go out of the hiding place and go back to the camp.

Despite the fact that it was still cold outside, the snows were just starting to melt – march 1944.

I went to work with a small group of women and the squadron commander. Staying in the camp before the afternoon was dangerous because we knew that the Gestapo was searching everywhere for victims, they filled every space.

By now my feet had become swollen but I still forced myself to continue as normal. One day I noticed that the sign on the entrance to the camp had been changed from “Jewish labor camp” to “Jewish collection center”. I understood the significance of the name change – we were being gathered here as the last Jews to be sent to the extermination camps.

For a time I worked at a difficult place: “Hokh-Liff Boagzelshpat”, and afterwards when the springtime was in its midst, a group of women and I were transferred to gardening. Being in the fresh air, far from the camp, we were all in a better mood and hopeful, hopeful for freedom and liberty.

Unfortunately only a small handful got to see the long desired freedom, the Evil Hitlerian hand had brushed them from the land of the living. When we returned from work in the free air and free space, and then walked into the camp we, the last survivors, suddenly fell into a gloomy mood, feeling insecure at every moment. Now we met people who were never before in the camp, people who hid amongst the gentiles but were forced to leave for lack of money and other means – and went to the camp.

Their spirits always fell when they noticed that only death awaited them. After the destruction of the Drohovitch camp, the last Jews of the two cities Drohovitch and Borislav (and surroundings) also came to the camp.

In a dark mood and insecurity the days and nights passed unquietly. There were nights when everyone was fast asleep, and then one of the prisoners would suddenly open the light waking up everybody expressing his fear that maybe another “Aktsia” was starting, because Gestapo operatives were roaming the camp.

My comrades were ready to escape. I ran with all the others to the posts which were surrounded with barb wire. Only at the back there was room where you could lift the barb wire and crawl under it. Not far from there stood the oil workings and a group of trees and bushes.

We would run into the bushes and then follow the proceedings in the camp – we would check if an Aktsia had occurred. We lived in constant tension and anticipated the Aktsia at all times, but when it did happen in the spring of 1944 in April, it fell on our heads like thunder on a quiet day. A short time after we returned to the Ksarktin (the gate area) we were shocked by the following scene: The Ksarktin was densely surrounded by the army.

A lorry arrived at the square and many soldiers jumped from them with awful dogs. The inhuman yelling of the Gestapo soldiers filled all of us with fear, They shouted and ordered us to gather together and stand in line, a line that must be ready to march out the camp when an order was given. The evil villains ran everywhere in the camp and searched every nook, banishing frightened Jews to the square.

In the middle of all the mayhem I spotted my brother Shmuel. For a moment we just both stood speechless and helpless due to our imminent disaster. The criminals did not let anyone move, all the lanes were blocked and we were forced to remain in our place.

Incidentally my brother whispered to me – I can't see Blinka anywhere, she has managed to hide somewhere. We stood right next to the door that led to the shower room. The door was wide open and we ran in. Standing inside I could look upon the whole scene in the courtyard, we were only a number of steps away from the criminals.

We saw how the prisoners were beaten with rubber clubs and how the dogs were set loose on the chosen victims. My brother and I were like statues. I looked at the floor wishing that the earth would open its mouth and swallow me so that I wouldn't fall into the hands of the criminals.

Shmuel whispered to me tensely: "if those criminals only just turn their eyes towards this place they will notice us, we miserable ones have nowhere to hide".

Out of despair and helplessness he lay down next to a low stove. At the same moment I pulled him and said that even a child would be able to spot him. Unconsciously, I started to follow the banister of the stove and Shmuel followed me like a shadow.

When I reached the end of the banister I saw some bricks that seemed as if they were moving! hands were cast out of the newly discovered hiding place and some hesitating voice urged us: "quickly, get in quickly". In it were two men, and all in all it was a small hole that hardly contained us.

We heard vaguely the sounds of axe blows, I concluded that the criminals were wrecking all kind of places suspecting that Jews were hiding in them. The fear gripped us when we heard steps approaching, afraid that our hiding place might be discovered. Thanks to the lord's providence the hiding place wasn't discovered, and we stayed in the crowded hole until the following day. When it was afternoon we tried to listen to what was going on in the camp.

We did not hear one word, not the slightest sound. When we came out of the hiding place, alert and attentive, we noticed that there was a complete silence and that there was no sign of any living person. The camp stood as if it was dead, without the people that were taken to their death.

All four of us went to the camp's kitchen to check if life had ceased there also, because there were many Aktsias in which the kitchen was left open – it was proof of the camp's continuing existence. Now it looked like the camp was finished completely.

We had no where to go to, no one to address, no one to deal with our critical situation. One of the hiders suggested leading us to the forest, to a bunker, where that same person had prepared a suitable place at the time when many Jews were banding together creating sanctuaries in the forest.

At the time there was a strong movement towards the forest, where many people were trying to save themselves from oblivion. Jews that still possessed any financial means provided the hiding places with essential foodstuffs, many others took upon themselves the labor of digging tunnels – deep and wide bunkers that could contain dozens of people.

We exited the lifeless camp with fast steps, me, Shmuel and the same person who led us. We avoided populated areas, we passed mine archipelagoes, walking all the time with great haste – until we reached the edge of Orovsky forest. The forests of these areas were famous, beautiful and magnificent trees growing closely to each other. At those same moments I did not spend time appreciating nature's beauties so that I would not straggle behind the men.

We went through a labyrinth of trees where it was easy to get lost. Near evening we reached the longed place. The bunker was so camouflaged that you could walk passed it many times and still not notice that it was harboring people.

At the bottom of a wide-branched tree our guide halted, moved a small piece of ground covered with grass, and we climbed down the narrow ladder one after the other.

A small oil lamp burned inside, thanks to it we could see that there were dozens of people, men and women. The bunker was big from the inside, mats were placed close to each other so that there would be room for all the people.

A number of the hiders were lying quietly on the mats, as if they were sleeping. Others were sitting and making conversations that looked interesting. The moment we were seen everyone jumped from their place startled, for they didn't know the meaning of our approach. We calmed their fears and wished them that they would also live to see the day of liberty.

With great sorrow we told them that the last of Borislav's Jews were taken away, and according to rumors sent afterwards to Plashov – their death bed. All who listened were deeply upset about the transfer of the last of our people, others were convinced that everyone should have noticed what was going on, that the camp should have been abandoned because it was a ticking bomb – and hide in the woods.

My brother did not have time to enjoy the hospitality of the other refugees, his duty was to find his wife Blinka. He was satisfied that he did not see here at the camp courtyard amongst the other people who were taken away, and he assumed that he would find here hiding in the foundations of the building we used to hide in (I myself was there for eight months).

Without delay my brother separated from everyone and set forth on his journey with guide that was supposed to lead him out of the forest, and from there Shmuel would walk to Borislav. I remained in the bunker, I was shown my place – near some women from Volenka. I was Exhausted from traveling and from disease, I was sick due to the fact that after I came out of the hiding place I drank freezing water that caused me sever harm, I was infected with Dysentery and a sever cough.

There was no doubt, fasting for two days and then drinking freezing water made me ill.

I fell asleep, but I was woken up by my own coughing, and it didn't give me a rest.

That's how I spent my first sufferable night in the bunker. On the day after some kind of flat bread was distributed, baked in an oven that was built in the bunker.

I also received such a piece, but due to my illness I couldn't eat it.

Despite the fact that I felt bad I agreed to take upon myself the function of a housemaid, making food and baking bread (no that there was much of it).

Some of the hidiers mentioned that a lot of the women here were so broken mentally that they did not show any desire to occupy themselves with anything. I did not refuse to their pleading (to be a housewife) despite the fact that I hardly stood on my legs.

Twice a day I carried out my duty as a housewife: before the afternoon I baked the bread and towards evening I cooked some soup. During daytime no one was allowed to exit the bunker to breathe fresh air. Only during the night, when darkness prevailed everywhere, would they open the bunker and let all the hidiers climb up the ladder, apart from some young women who suffered from deep depression and lied apathetically on their mats.

Not far from the bunker there was a small stream, and we came out of the bunker at night we would approach the stream in order to bathe and to freshen ourselves a little.

After residing a week in the bunker, the leaders suddenly started to discuss the issue of renewing the supply of food. They touched the problem of the new arrivals (including me) and even demanded that I pay a certain sum of money.

My answer was that in order to obtain those means I had to come in contact with my brother Shmuel (that left a week before to search for Blinka). I reached an agreement with some of the leaders of the bunker that I would meet Shmuel and discuss the issue of the payment with him.

One of the young women who knew the way from the forest to the camp and that also had matters to sort out there, joined and led me.

I was partly satisfied that I left the bunker due to my illness, my coughing and dysentery did not go away. I lived with the hope that my brother would find some rice as a medicine, one that was vital.

At the camp I found my brother with Blinka and other people that I did not expect to meet, I assumed that they were also well hidden in the forest, in the bunkers.

To our great misfortune the information that the Jews were hiding in masses in the forest reached the commanders of the camp.

The Gestapo, using the corporation of the head of the Jewish police Valek Aizenshtein participated actively in the search and revilement of the bunkers, and afterwards supplying more victims to the concentration area, which was the camp. When I mentioned to my brother the subject of hiding in the forest, he told me that he, together with another young person were making an effort to create a better and safer hiding place.

The place in his mind was the area of the old mines. Under an empty big wooden container they were digging a deep tunnel. My brother toyed with the idea that no one would ever come to think of looking for a hiding place under a container, now that the bunkers in the forest were in the danger of being discovered by the Hitlerian authorities and their excommunicated collaborator, Valek Aizenshtein.

At the camp, attendance sessions were started in the morning before going out to labor, and in the late afternoon after returning.

The Gestapo operatives read out the names of the camp's prisoners. We had to be witnesses of one of those sessions, to look at the last group of Jews who gathered in the courtyard.

The Gestapo people carried out two executions of two poor young men that had just recently escaped the camp, and caught again in one of the streets when they were recognized by the operatives.

Both of the young men, Burg and Hofman, were devoid of any human figure when they were brought to the scaffold. They were beaten egregiously and looked like two lumps of blood. The Hitlerian savages ordered all the Jews to watch the execution and to remember that the same fate awaited anyone who would also flee the camp.

New hiding places were discovered every day. The Jewish criminal Aizenshtein, while collaborating the savages, organized many sorties to all the forests surrounding Borislav on the mission of uncovering the bunkers. Jews were brought over all the time after these sorties. Amongst those who were discovered and banished to the camp were all the miserable hidiers of the bunker in which I myself stayed in for a short while. They had also fell victims of the hunts carried out by the obsessive murderers.

The time passed away in more and more hiding places being discovered, a hostile element conspired against the last of the hidiers so that they would not evade the savages. At the time the Gestapo commanders brought Dr. Kpelner from Plashov (who was snatched from the last transfer) in order that he would air propaganda, to

us, the last handful of Jews left – so that we wouldn't resist being transferred to Plashov.

All of us gathered in the courtyard at the time of the session, the Hitlerian savages showed us the Dr. Kpelner as true proof of the Gestapo's words the state of Jews in Plashov wasn't so tragic as to make run to the forest for salvation.

We all looked at the direction of where Dr. Kpelner was standing, it was hard to tell if it was after all him, for he looked like a skeleton and not a living person.

We understood perfectly well the hell of the Jew's lives who were persecuted inexorably at Plashov.

One day, in may 1944, we were working in gardening in the open air. When we returned from work, standing near the camp's gate, we saw the damned Jewish criminal Aizenshtein standing right at the gate in the company of some Gestapo operatives.

A cold shiver passed through me when I heard the question coming from the monster in a mans clothing, Aizenshtein – who amongst you is Ms. Kopel ?

With a shivering voice I answered that it was me. Then he barked with a thundering voice that I would have to hand over to him the exact address of my daughter's hiding place so that they could check whether there were more Jews also hiding there.

It turned out that he had already asked my daughter (that had arrived at the camp this very day) where she hid, but the little one could not give them a satisfactory answer of where she was until this day because to all questions she answered that she didn't know.

Hearing all this I almost fainted. Half dazed out I crossed the courtyard and walked to the steps of the women's quarters, and then I saw a little girl sitting on the steps, and when she saw me she jumped from her place calling: "Mummy, I came to you, I haven't see you for so long!" - "Stela, my little Stela, is it you? is it possible?" – I hugged were and concentrated on her, was this a dream or was it real?

And in what situation was she! a skeleton of a girl that was taken out the grave.

Her legs and arms were so thin that her veins bulged outwards. Her face, erstwhile so kind and sweet, changed beyond recognition, as if she was after a lingering disease.

Her whole figure seemed smaller, instead of growing she had shrunk.

I could not believe what my eyes were seeing. I could not shed one tear because I was like a living stone that had run out of tears because of all the experiences in the past.

Only a weak wailing came out of my mouth, miserable are be the woman that see the shadow of their daughter.

Slowly, I took her by hand and led her to the room I stayed in, by that time Blinka's room also. There were vacant spaces everywhere after all the people had been taken, we could settle wherever we wanted.

When Shmuel and Blinka saw my child they were shocked at her appearance, they both said that she was a shadow of herself wondering how far she had deteriorated.

Afterwards we noticed something about her coat, that the bottom part of the pocket was stiff as a rock. Why – we asked – did a part of your coat freeze?

My child explained: in the middle of the night she went to the dog's bowl in which the dog left left-overs of potatoes. She collected them, and when she felt hunger during the day in the basement, she could relive the hunger a little with the left-overs. She continued the practice every night. When everyone was fast asleep, she would sneak all the way to the dog's bowl so she could supply herself with the extra food. Describe everything! – we were astonished – “tell us what you got from the woman who was taking care of you”.

She elaborated on daytime: in the morning she would get a piece of dry black bread with a bit of stale coffee. In the afternoon Ms. Shishelk would give her a bit of soup made out of peelings, she would cook for herself all kinds of beans while putting aside the peels, and then giving them to Stela.

That was all she got during the day. My older brother Mark paid Ms. Shishelk a lot of money, only so that she would treat Stela ‘humanly’.

At night, when the little one slept next to me on the mat, I could sense that she had a high fever – a fever that was due to her hunger. She was very ill. We asked her how she got to the camp, and with whom? We asked about the fate of Mark and his family. She answered cleverly and intelligently.

It was not long ago when his wife Yetka left the hiding place. At the time she was very ill. The same farmer Haman (whom I also had experiences with) took her to the village on a cart wagon hoping that she would recover. Shortly afterwards he came to pick up Mark and take him as well. Only Stela and Ms. Mendelson (Yetka's mother) were left in the basement.

The little Stela told us that when they were left alone, Ms. Shishelk told them that she had held the Jews enough, that there was still a labor camp for Jews and that they should go there. Therefore they were forced to leave Ms. Shishelk's house.

On the way Ms. Mendelson asked the pedestrians about the whereabouts of the place where “the Jews were kept”.

When they reached the camp the Jewish police commander, the evil criminal Valek Aizenshtein bombarded the aging woman with questions and tried to extort a confession about where she hid, who hid her and with whom did she hid.

He concluded that threats and attempts to frighten her weren't bringing results, she absolutely refused to confide, so he ordered that Ms. Mendelson be thrown in the dungeon unless she would agree to cooperate.

The dungeon was near the courtyard of the camp. I went with my brother to visit Ms. Mendelson, when we approached the small window (with bars) she also came close to it.

We could hardly recognize her, she had gotten so old and so thin, with a big hump on her back – much different from the golden age respectable woman who we knew only a number of years ago. The terrible environment conditions, the constant anxiety about having to worry if she would be thrown out – all those contributed to her ordeal.

Apart from all those troubles, she worried terribly about the health of her only daughter left alive, Yetka, who became very sick.

On the request of Mark Haman came all the way from his village in order to take care of Yetka and give her better conditions so that she could recover.

Ms. Mendelson did not know that her daughter was no longer alive, Yetka died a short time after arriving at Bistashitse (Haman's village) .

When I came up with the subject of their banishment from the house, she claimed that had they stayed there a while longer – they would not have been able to cope any longer.

She pointed out that now she was in a permanent state of anxiety, she was terrified that they might torture her in order to force the information out of her, she said that she's rather die on the spot.

The poor Ms. Mendelson , broken mentally and physically, was kept in the jail until one of transports left. On the transport she was sent to one of extermination camps.

The days passed again, more and more people arrived at the camp – Jews who were discovered in their hiding places and brought to the common concentration center.

They were all of course obliged to engage in stressing manual labor.

I had to leave the poor little girl on her own in the camp. While I was absent she lay down hiding in some corner. The poor girl was afraid to move, she feared the Gestapo operatives like the devil.

When I thought about my discussions with Stela about the hiding and then the banishment, I could not stop being amazed that a girl that was so devastated physically (yet infinitely courageous) could stand up to the threats and shouting of the criminal Aizenshtein and conceal any information about her hiding place.

She was a little hero, by all standards.

During that last period of residing in the camp there were other miserable Jewish youngsters like her in the camp, expelled from their hiding places (like Stela) or just happening to be in a bunker discovered by the Gestapo.

Once, when we were passing the street as a company of women with our commander, I saw the farmer Haman on the pavement and he also saw me. He approached me and told me how astonished he was to see me alive, he asked who else among my relatives was still alive. I counted quickly my brother, my sister in law and my daughter.

Haman 'reckoned' that he should help us again. He promised that in a couple of days he would show up and contact me. He would then take my daughter Stela through the barb wire and bring her to the village.

He did not keep his promise. He came to the Ghetto on his own affairs, he brought a big wagon – the same wagon he used to plunder my family of what ever it had, and only that so we could survive. During the next couple of days after I waited for him again, vainly. I never saw him before my eyes again.

Every day at the camp was a great torment and torture, we were terrified that at any moment they might choose to place us on the next transport and end our morbid lives.

We weren't mistaken and the thing we feared most happened, it didn't matter how much we expected it, the disaster still fell on us like lightning on a clear day.

The next transport was to be sent on July 1944. The announcement of the transport cut the air with such intensity and horror, it so frightened my ill and emaciated daughter that she cried hysterically, and all this was while the siren was ringing (a signal that all prisoners had to gather at the courtyard).

When I found myself with the girl at the courtyard still seeking salvation, I looked around all the fences : there were armed soldiers everywhere, stationed densely.

We were in an inescapable trap. The bitter cry and the terrible fear of my girl brought me to the verge of madness, I couldn't calm my girl in any way.

She kept repeating: " Oh Mummy, the Germans will kill us now".

I tried to look for Shmuel and Blinka amongst the last people to gather in the courtyard, but I couldn't see them anywhere. It was a small relief compared to my incinerating stress. I presumed that they hid somewhere in the camp.

I was totally despaired, there wasn't hope for being saved anywhere, I felt that my daughter and I might have to share the fate of the rest of the Jewish people.

Together with the shouting of the Gestapo operatives and the barking of their carnivorous dogs we were sorted out in a line, ready to embark.

I stood with Stela near the beginning of the line amongst many people who were faceless, as if ready for their last short journey. Amongst all this vast crowd, between captives and Hitlerian savages roaming around screaming and beating at will, I stood with my terrified girl. I worked with my mind intensively, on all sides I saw Hitlerian soldiers walking around making sure that there will be a maximum of victims, that no one will be able to escape their planned murder.

With great stress and anxiety I started to confide my secret with her, the secret plan of escaping from them. I demanded complete obedience from her, and no difficulties.

In order for it to work Stela'le – I whispered to her – we need to move slowly to avoid the attention of the Hitlerians, for they reacted to any small movement of the miserable prisoners.

Pulling Stela after me gently while holding her hand, we reached a group of Jews that stood a number of steps away from the camp's laundry house.

I knew that under the steps of the entrance there was a niche, a shallow hole that was dug by someone who toyed with the thought of using it to save his life if in case of tragic circumstances.

I moved with my girl slowly to the edge of the group, that way nothing would block when we would escape. My girl seemed to oppose my plan to run away from the concentration point, she groaned with grief and talked loud enough so that the people around us could hear everything: "Mummy, you see, all these people standing next to us are going to Plashov, why should we not also go?"

Next to me there were women who protested and expressed their disapproval, "why now, on our last way, are you harassing the girl?" She was complaining and crying unceasingly.

I didn't even mutter a word to those women, if I were to reveal my seemingly unrealistic plan to someone we could've risked the Gestapo knowing about it and getting beaten to death.

Next to me there was another woman with a small girl, a rare sight in this place because Jewish children just weren't seen at this tragic stage, disappearing completely from the horizon of life due to the criminal acts of the Hitlerians.

The woman next to me was agitated. She couldn't expect in any way that she was going to be taken with her daughter to Plashov. Knowing that she would find a certain death there she wanted to tear herself and her daughter from the claws of coerced death.

Due to the fact that she stood quite close to us she heard some of the words I exchanged with my daughter and she understood that I was going to avoid the transport to Plashov with my greatest efforts. That same young woman who I wasn't familiar with pleaded to me with desperation that maybe I could offer a sanctuary for herself and her daughter in the camp. She said that she would be grateful to me until the day she would enter the grave.

Her words were moving, I wanted to help both of us dearly hoping that luckily, the hiding place would save both of us. I offered the woman the only practical place I knew of: a not so deep pit under the stairs that were directed towards the door of the laundry house. The woman, who agreed gleefully, needed to wait until the moment when Stela and I would start running towards the door – and then her daughter and herself would follow suit.

The moment came and we ran, followed by the run of the other couple.

The savages didn't notice us, we reckoned, and we all cramped into the hole closely to each other.

Immediately afterwards we heard a loud and terrible voice and we saw a savage that directed his torch at us, he shouted at us in German: "if you don't come out of that hole I'll throw a grenade on you!!". At that very same moment we left our unsuccessful hiding place and rejoined all the other Jews in the courtyard.

I still could not accept the fact that I would be transported to Plashov. I again started whispering to her the same conviction that I would protect ourselves from transport until my last breath, only death awaited us there and we should try again to slip away and hide in that same hole from which we were moved a couple of moments ago.

My little Stela reacted to my plan of a second escape by almost shouting in protest. "How Mummy, Do you want the Germans to throw a grenade on us? no, I don't want to, I'm scared" – she complained, crying.

And again the close environment heard that I was dealing with Stela, and they were astonished that during our "last moments" I was "disturbing her well being", and there's as well.

Afterwards, slowly and carefully, being completely vigilant of the enemy so that it wouldn't spot us and beat us, we started to move to the back of the line in order to be close to the laundry house. We kept hearing all the time the dreadful shouting of the

Hitlerian hooligans and the threatening barks of the dogs, both groups who were involved in abusing the Jews horrifically.

I stood near Stela looking towards all directions, and preparing her – “when I saw run! you know you have to run straight to the door, and you’ll know that I will follow you. “If we manage to succeed without the Germans noticing us, we will hide again under the steps because unfortunately we don’t have any other place.

Our plan started to work and at a certain moment I said – Run Stela! and I immediately ran off with her.

Luck showed us its face because none of the savages noticed us, no one made a shot, nor a pursuit. We reached the place. My girl went in first, and then myself – sticking to the ground. My only wish was to actually get down under the ground so that no savage could ever find us. I remember The anxious moments of high tension we endured while we were in the hole when we saw the Hitlerian roaming around searching for Jews. They set their torch in the direction of our hole, and our blood froze, I wanted us to turn into a lump of earth – anything but to fall into the hands of the murderers.

Today, when I write about these horrific memories after many years, I can sense the miracle that had occurred, that we were saved from the murderers by a shallow hole. That is how I survived with the girl after that recent transport.

I aspire that these horror scenes will be remembered as a warning for peace loving people, that tragedies such as these won't ever occur again. And to my family – I urge that my descendents will never forget the hell and suffering my daughter and myself.

We were cramped for a long time in that hole. We observed from the hiding place how the darkness of night faded and how dawn broke forth. Not a sound reached our ears, everywhere a silence of a graveyard prevailed. We were still afraid to move from our places. It was only in the afternoon amid complete silence when I gathered enough courage to come out of the hole with Stela.

In all its dreadfulness a scene of an empty camp unraveled before my eyes, it was as if the camp endured a big battle, there was no sign of life anywhere. On the first moment I thought that after the transport the camp had ceased to exist. In order to clarify this notion I walked to the camp's kitchen, and by seeing the kitchen's manager Felix together with Zosha I understood that this place had still not been exterminated and that our persecutors would still use this place to concentrate the remaining surviving Jews scattered around the area.

I turned my attention to the building where the women once lived hoping to find relatives of survivors. I knew that immediately after coming out of their shelter they would come to the dormitories in order to see if people like me had the luck not to be sent to the place of destruction.

There was no limit to our joy when we got there. My brother was there and he stressed how unbelievable and joyful it was to see us saved from all the savageness. He told us of the fears that haunted him while thinking of us, fearing that we would not be able to hide in a safe place. My sister in law Blinka tried to strengthen him by describing me as a fighter that doesn't give up so fast on survival.

We all told each other about the recent difficult experiences we all went through. To my question of how my brother and Blinka survived and where they hid during the tragic transportation I got the following story: - when they found themselves surrounded by the Hitlerian criminals in the courtyard of the camp, they noticed that they were standing near the door leading to the carpentry workshop. There was the added fact that the door was a little open.

In this they saw a positive heavenly sign, a sign that the entrance through the door would save them from oblivion. They swiftly put their idea into practice and went in without any of the villains watching them. Once inside they looked for a place to hide.

After a short time they saw a big hole in the wall and near to where they stood there was a pile of bricks. They immediately planned to close themselves into the wall. They worked quite intensively on carrying out this audacious plan. They experienced difficult moments of fear and tension when the villains stormed in with axes

shattering anything that looked suspicious to them, but the almighty had mercy for them for they weren't discovered.

Our dreadful experiences had the tinge of a horror story with the background of emotional concussions.

Some time after, like thunder on a bright day, another unexpected disaster fell on our heads. Quite suddenly a group of Gestapo men made their way into the camp while demanding young healthy men for hard labor. Amongst those who were chosen was my brother Shmuel. Blinka and I were deeply horrified from this incident, we were witnesses when our only guardian was taken away.

The moment they took my brother away it was as if we were already berried.

We were left lonely and miserable. We found out that he was taken to the "Lufshutzwafe" (Anti-aircraft) at the airport of Straay.

Great concern for his life and health burdened our conscience. Infernal scenes haunted me, I saw in them barbarians harming their victims, my brother.

I couldn't relieve myself from this suffering, the harsh regime of the camp demanded everyone to labor intensively on a daily basis with no respite.

I was forced to leave my ill and frightened child alone in the camp, as a consequence of the recent horrific events she became more fearful and she usually attempted to hide in the corners. After returning from work I would always see that she was hiding.

At some other time, while I was walking with a group of women to labor at gardening I unexpectedly encountered a former tenant of ours, Mr. Okhalsky. Noticing me he came forth and stopped me while uttering: You're alive? this is a real miracle ! He blessed me with all grace.

He was interested to know who amongst my family was still alive. I tried to speak briefly and I told him how my brother was taken away by the Germans for slave-labor and that my daughter and I were residing in the camp.

Mr. Ochalsky explained to me briefly that he had a dept of honor to my parents and that he would never forget that, for when he lived with his family in the house that used to belong to my parents he was at a certain period unemployed, he was in great economic distress, and my parents turned out to be benevolent – they didn't demand the rent from him.

Many years after, when my daughter and I have been inflicted by disaster he seemed inclined to help us. He assumed that the greatest help he could offer to me was to take my daughter and care for her. As a bright blond girl she could mingle with his children in the open without fear. I thanked Ochelsky heartily for all the help he offered, help that I was going to use effectively in the next couple of days.

I was under the impression of Mr. Ochelsky's unforgettable words all the time, he offered human support.

Amongst the group of women who were employed at gardening there was a former neighbor who used to live many years in Penska St. Her family name after marriage was Segel. While walking and working we always discussed our problems and

irritations. We knew that a disaster could befall us any day, a transport to a place from which there is no return.

We heard rumors that whoever reached Plashov with a child who was saved from the pogroms and Aktsias would be sent immediately to the furnaces. Sabina Segel tried to encourage us and coaxed me to run away from the camp as long as there was time because afterwards, when we would be surrounded by the army, it would be impossible to escape.

We decided amongst ourselves that next Sunday, weather not mattering, we (including Stela) would escape the camp and hide wherever it was possible. When Sunday approached, it was already July 1944, we managed with good luck to slip away from the camp without anyone noticing us. It was a rainy day, but we didn't give the heavy rain any notice, we just carried out plan just as we decided.

When we were at a reasonable distance from the camp in Wilf's field, the place where I used to play as a child, only a small river with a bridge lay between Borislav's main street and the fields. Under some of the trees we found shelter from the rain.

Not far away there was a Jewish house half destroyed, and it "didn't refuse" to accommodate us. We waited there until dusk with the intension of finding the residence of the Ochalsky family who moved from our house, but stayed in the same area.

A small lane coming out of the main street revealed a wide sight of a field where goats grazed. On the field itself there were some scattered houses. The Ochalsky family lived in one of these houses (which were ground level) with their three children. Stela looked forward to meeting the children, she hoped to find in them playing mates and she urged us to leave the ruined squalor and go to the Ochalsky family.

We entered their house hesitantly. We saw in relief that we were accepted hospitably and they also identified with our grief. The wife served us hot soup and encouraged us to continue the struggle because with how things looked now there was a chance for liberation, for the Soviets were approaching the city of Levov. There was hope that our predicament would end in such a short time as even a couple of weeks.

With that perspective they said, they should offer a helping hand.

We thanked them for their kindness and their understanding towards us at a time of deprivation.

The Ochalsky's then came to stress out that we mustn't show ourselves near their home during the day so that no neighbor would see us, and that only during the night we could use the goat barn. There on the floor there was hay, and the goats "wouldn't object" that we stay with them.

We had to leave the barn as early as possible so that no one would spot us. The Ochalskys aired all these warnings and also instructed us to tell any unexpected visitor who saw us that we intruded into their property without asking them.

They told us this so that they would be confronted with mortal danger.

We expressed our consent and thanked them with all our heart. For a whole week we wondered between Ochalsky's place and the familiar bushes who "hosted" us without rejection.

I was at least happy that my child had found shelter amongst some kind (relatively) people and that she didn't have to wonder like Sabina and I. Then one day the Ochalsky family informed us that my daughter Stela had aroused the suspicion of the neighbors who were interested to know who the girl that was playing with the children was.

The occurrence raised their fear, they said that they didn't want harbor Stela anymore and that I would have to take her with me from now on. And so I did, I woke her up at dawn, even during storms and I took her, returning only at night, occasionally wet and shivering from pouring rain.

There was also a case that could have ended tragically. During the hours before the afternoon I came out of the bushes with my girl so I could buy some bread from Polish woman. I planned that during the meantime Stela would stay in the high story building that used to belong to my parents.

The shop and workhouse on the lowest floor were empty, the shutters were closed, and the backdoor was closed but unlocked. I entered the workshop with Stela, there were wall wardrobes. I opened one of them and explained to the child that I want her to stay in the wardrobe during my short absence, I reasoned that I was afraid to walk with her in mere daylight through the busy streets. Stela didn't protest and she agreed to wait until I returned.

After returning from buying bread half an hour later, coming to release my daughter from the place in which I hid her, I discovered in great dismay that she wasn't there. I was attacked by a sudden horrific fear that maybe someone had seized my child. All sorts of thoughts passed through my mind like lightning. I was certain she did not go to the Ochalsky family knowing that she was forbidden to show herself there in the light of day.

Then I came up with the terrible idea that maybe the lone child got scared while being left alone, and knowing the way to the camp, maybe she walked to the place knowing that her aunt Blinka was still there. I just stood there helplessly, not knowing what to do next, full of fear and anxiety for the fate of my child.

If she walked to the camp, I thought, the Hitlerian savages would catch her and execute her in front of all the other Jews in order to deter them in case they thought of also escaping the camp. They will perform their act when everybody would be watching in lines, just like when we witnessed an execution of two young men in the past, also in the morbid cloak of a ceremony.

The dread of these memories compelled me to walk to the camp immediately and search for Stela. I did not hesitate much, I did not even ponder for a moment that I was risking my whole life on one card, and I entered the camp from a path in the rear. I reached the courtyard by lifting the barb wire, and ran quickly up the steps to the quarters where Blinka was staying.

When she saw me she was seized by great fear, for she couldn't understand why I took this despairing move of returning to the camp. Even concern for Stela shouldn't have brought me here because I knew that the Gestapo was noting my absence everyday.

She asked me complainingly if I wanted to force her to witness the terrible scene of an execution, one that would be waiting for me if I fall into the hands of the Gestapo. She told me quickly and nervously that right at this time the Gestapos were returning from lunch and that they always came from the back side, so in order to insure my safety it was vital that I leave the camp and do it through the front gate.

I separated from Blinka quickly, I found myself scrambling to the camp's courtyard. And then, contrary to my will, guided by an internal conviction, I turned and ran to the back entrance.

It saved me from death – right at the same time the Gestapo soldiers came through the front gate. My sister in law Blinka told me about it during later times, after she had also survived the last transports of the Hitlerian criminals.

When I had finally left the camp's compound, I felt relieved from the moments of harsh tension, but I still couldn't relieve myself completely from the other fears that still disturbed me, what could have happened to my daughter Stela?

I walked to my house making an effort not to be seen, I opened all the wardrobes and cupboard countless times acknowledging in anguish that Stela was still not there.

I took no account of the fact that it was a shiny and clear day, and my worries brought me to the Ochalsky's house. I had the slightest hope that despite their prohibition Stela had ran to their house.

To my great sorrow I found out that she wasn't there either! The evening came and I stood next to the door depressed and upset, but all of a sudden I saw Stela approaching me from the direction of the Ochalskys house through the unclosed door, and I was delighted and excited with all my heart. I ran up to her asking where had she been all day, why she left the wardrobe/cupboard and if she knew that she had caused me so much distress and worrying.

Stela told me calmly that not long after I had went she felt the need to be with someone, she remembered that not long ago I told her that two Christian families were living in one of the floors of my parent's story house, one of them wasn't familiar to me, but the other family had Anna, the former housewife of our past neighbors: the Lentner family, she worked for them many years.

My daughter knew Anna well. Knowing that now Anna was lonely Stela decided to shorten her waiting time by entertaining herself at Anna's place. Unfortunately the visit at Anna's lasted for a long time because Anna, without even asking Stela, left the house and locked her in all day. She finally came back only towards evening, and then she released my daughter from the imposed detention.

The days passed dully, they were difficult and lasting, from the break of dawn until the gloom of night we resided in the bushes, we did so even during the pouring rain, shivering from frost.

We always looked forward dearly for the hour of dusk so we could stretch our muddy feet and find some barn, lie in it exhausted and catch some hours of long needed sleep while trying to put aside our tragic fate.

Once we couldn't even leave our barn-shelter, Stela was feeling very ill. The previous day, due to heavy rain, we were flooded by water from the hills as though the powers of nature conspired to drown us. Due to the fact that we were in the bushes at the bottom of the hill we felt that the end to our misery (and life) was imminent.

Later that night I hardly dragged myself to the farm of the Ochalsky family, Stela in my arms. The day after I had to remain with her because it was impossible to move her from place to place. I wanted determinately to buy something for the sick child, to do so I decided to leave her alone for a short time in order so that I could run to the nearest shop without of course, the arm band that marked me as a Jew.

When I approached Penska St. with a fast pace, my attention was caught by a car that drove by swiftly, in it I recognized the Gestapo officer Hilderbrand, the supreme commander of the camp I used to be in. He sat in the company of a giant dog-wolf, and the car was rolling at full speed in the direction of Marjanitse, the residence of the last grouping of Jews.

A very bad feeling took over me, I had a feeling that the life or death of the last survivors was going to be decided on during the next moments. Agitated to the depth of my soul I ran back to Ochalsky's farm. Exactly when I was sharing my somber feelings with Ms. Ochalsky, her husband stormed into the house shouting passionately that while I was standing in his house there were horrific crimes going on at Marjenitse camp. The whole camp was surrounded by the army, and sounds of shooting reached the mines where Mr. Ochalsky worked.

Ochalsky and his wife, caught in great terror, ordered us to leave their house and the surrounding buildings immediately. I alerted Stela, got her on her feet and I got into a panic, not knowing where to place myself and my child.

Not far from the house there was a big field covered with ripe wheat spikes. Ochalsky pointed to the field, so we would go and hide there. I threw myself together with Stela on the prosperous field which concealed us completely, only children from nearby who roamed the area with goats made us stay vigilant and ready to move to another area in the field.

We hid in the field until the late hours of the night because of our great fear of moving from there. Afterwards we came out and went to lodge in the goat's barn. When we passed near Ochalsky's house, they watched us, came out to us and brought us in. Stela and I were greatly delighted.

The Ochalsky's expressed their identification with our tragic situation, and they also had thought of the fact that since yesterday we hadn't eaten any food. I told them that I had become accustomed to the lack of food during the years when Stela and I were caught in the claws of the Satanical criminals. We were swept in discussion that dealt with the disaster of the last days and the transport of the last Jews to their death.

Mr. Ochalsky couldn't forget the terrible and depressing impression that the shots (from the camp) and the transport made on him. Occasionally he witnessed the cruel atrocities that the Hitlerian monsters committed on defenseless people.

Due to the fact that he worked in an area near the camp he heard and saw a lot of what was going on in the camp at that tragic time.

While we were immersed in the discussion we suddenly heard a light knock on the door. The Ochalskys immediately turned to us – “hide under the beds quickly so that nobody will notice you” . In a matter of seconds we found ourselves under the beds. Then we heard the voice of Mr. Ochalsky informing us that my brother Shmuel was here.

We drew near him without believing my eyes amid this miracle – My brother Shmuel saved from the murderers! what great happiness! my beloved precious brother! – Uttering these cries I fell upon him, was I dreaming? I rubbed my eyes as if I were hypnotized again and again – was it a daydream? I gripped his hand as if fearing that this scene would disappear.

My brother also rubbed his tearful eyes while picking Stela up and down with great excitement, he spoke the unforgettable words: “there is no limit to my happiness that you were saved from those criminals, it is inferred that you live so that you could tell your descendants of our historical experiences. I started to gaze at my brother and I noticed painfully how he changed to the worst in the last few weeks since he was taken from the camp by the Gestapo. Only bones and skin was hardly left of him. Against my will my eyesight focused on his dressing that was torn, his torn shoes – my poor brother looked so helpless, how much he had to suffer until he reached this state.

We all calmed down slowly after the first joyful experience. The Ochalskys served us something warm, told us to sit down and asked him to tell them of the exploits of his extraordinary saving, they wanted to hear the story of a Jewish person and how he saved himself from the claws of death.

Shmuel told them the following: ever since the moment when he and other young men were taken by the Hitlerian gangsters to the airport of Stray, they were tortured and abused in the most inhuman way. This was the day's schedule: At dawn the murderers wakened their victims with wild screaming and cast them off to difficult and exerting labor, labor such as carrying heavy loads of rocks. Emaciated and exhausted they carried out the hardest work with which their persecutors wanted to destroy them.

In the evening they were made to run into a desolated building so that on the morrow the murderers could repeat the session of torture. A number of weeks passed that way. Once, during the hours of the morning, a lorry arrived and they were ordered to board it immediately, surrounded by guard the lorry started moving towards an unknown direction. My brother exchanged looks with his battered comrades and he saw in also their eyes the despair and fright.

He grasped that everyone was thinking that they were being taken to the place of execution, by shooting. Upset and depressed they noticed that the voyage was too

continuous in order to arrive just at the near forest. While traveling further Shmuel contemplated that they were maybe on the way to Drohovitch. Afterwards the lorry turned at a shortcut through the forest, one that all Borislav's residences knew led to the gates of Borislav, a detail that astonished everyone because no one could think of any meaning of returning there.

He continued telling us that when the lorry drove in the general direction of the labor camp, he enjoyed the thought that maybe soon he would be able to meet with us and join us. Oh, but the dread he felt when he arrived at the camp and saw that it was surrounded by the army. Right at that moment he understood that the Gestapo had brought them to a transport, to Plashov. When he reached the courtyard of the camp he saw the remaining Jews standing in a group, amongst them some familiar faces of friends.

The Gestapo soldiers ordered all those who arrived to get out of the transport and stand in a line. An acquaintance of my brother stood next to him and told him in bitterness – We, the young men are, sent to extermination, the women are more shrewd than us. As you can see, your wife Blinka isn't with us amongst the gathered in this courtyard, nor is your sister and her daughter, maybe they will get to attain liberation while we the poor ones travel to our oblivion.

Shmuel continued and told us that his soul was agitated, he could not in any way accept the idea of being sent off to his death, or maybe to return to the torture and agony which he experienced not too long ago. He decided determinately that in no way will he reach Plashov, he decided to gamble his while life on one card – he would try to escape and save his sole.

Over a small group of Jews there was a guard of a lot of Gestapo soldiers, therefore it was impractical to attempt to escape at that very moment but his mind was working in full motion, thinking of how to avoid the jaw of death. When the last of the Jews found themselves on the train wagon under the supervision of the Hitlerian guards, Shmuel made every effort on finding a place next to a window so that he could carry out his conceived plan of jumping out of the speeding train when the right moment came.

Staying close to the window he observed vigilantly the fields that passed his eyes, also the trees and poles that stood parallel to the track. Thus he noticed occurrences of other people attempting to save themselves by jumping out of the speeding train, but to his grief he saw that the people who had the misfortune of falling next to the poles never got back on their feet. There were also prisoners who jumped and were immediately pursued by a series of volleys, but the train sped onwards, deaf and emotionless – leading victims to their death.

Despite the unsuccessful jumps he witnessed Shmuel decided to act, he was only waiting for the moment when the train would have to decelerate at a bend, and then he would jump. I listened to his story breathlessly, and when he reached the climax, the moment of the jump from the train, my I held my breath from excitement.

He continued to describe what he went through: when he jumped from the train, fortunately he landed on a pile of sand, he was a little stricken but uninjured. He was

deeply moved by his marvelous success. He rose from the ground, estimated that he was far away from Borislav and that he would have to walk many kilometers by foot. He was perturbed by that estimation and he decided to make his way to Borislav through forest byways so that he wouldn't risk himself by walking exposed through the main streets and lanes.

He walked speedily and indefatigably for many hours, he wanted to reach the longed target at the greatest speed so that he could rejoin his beloved relatives. When he reached one of Borislav's suburbs, Novitche, to his dismay he saw a group of young Ukrainians standing and handling a lively conversation in Ukrainian. All their faces were quite familiar to him, he knew them as clandestine extreme nationalists and he immediately recognized that they posed a danger to him.

On the other hand the young Ukrainians also knew my brother well, quite often they would come to his shop with the business of renting or purchasing a bicycle. They stopped him immediately and asked him suspiciously in Ukrainian, how could it be? what was he doing there? for there weren't supposed to be any Jews left in Borislav. This made a strong impression on my brother, so he mustered a lot of courage and answered that the Germans ordered him to walk off, and so he did.

When at good time he finally drew away from them, he instinctively felt that the upper providence had cast its protective wings on him.

When he reached Borislav he walked through back bypasses to the Karpatian gate, knowing that not far, towards the field, there was the house of the Ochalsky family from which he intended to ask for shelter. When he unexpectedly saw us there, healthy and in good shape (relatively), he let his liberated happiness make him utter that what we were now experiencing was like the most unimaginable legend, unbelievable but nevertheless real. From this moment onwards I started to believe with all devotion in the great miracle of our deliverance from the hands of the Hitlerian savages.

At that same night which will be remembered for ever there happened another pleasant surprise.

While we were immersed in discussion with my brother we heard a slight and discreet knock on the door, a quiet voice said through the door: open please, its me, Blinka. We immediately opened the door and the lean face of Blinka was revealed to our eyes. It seemed that our delight passed every limit and we flooded her with full questions of how she managed to save herself from the horrid transport.

Blinka gave the following story: at the critical moment, when the armed army besieged the camp tightly, the criminals wasted no time in appearing in the camp and they started to banish all the Jews towards one gathering point.

Blinka, with her usual steadfastness, did not succumb to the panic and she made an effort to think clearly and imperturbably on how to control the situation. She remembered that in the camp there were people – according to the rumor – who had safe hiding places. She tried as hard as she could to pinpoint those people and get close to them, knowing that they would run to their hiding places without delay.

All her assumptions turned out to be true, she was amongst the first who ran out to the courtyard and she searched for the suspected people, found them and ran after them.

She ran after them like a reindeer and after a short rout reached the properly made hiding place. She described the hiding place as well camouflaged. When the hiders reached the vacant space between the two walls they had the hope that the hand of the criminals wouldn't reach them. No human eye could have noticed that the wall that was used as the entrance to the hiding place could have been dismantled, a fact that has hidden hastily the moment everyone was at the other side of the wall.

As always the villains searched the whole place everywhere by smashing, many unfortunate people were spotted and sent off to extermination. Blinka's place wasn't discovered and therefore not her, nor anyone with her was sent off to Plashov.

Before I ran away from the camp I let Blinka know that help was promised to me by the Ochalsky family, a promise that added courage to my escape from the camp. Therefore my sister in law set forth directly to the Ochalsky family, hoping to find us there. How great was her joy when she entered, also finding her husband.

That same night no one managed to close his eyes for even a couple of minutes. We burned the midnight oil whispering to each other, at dawn we were ready to go to the hospitable bushes and trees that were near by.

We planned together with the house owners that later in the evening we would come to eat something, and my brother would of course pay something. The Ochalskys later on assumed that to continue to stay in the goat barn would be dangerous for us as well as them. They suggested that we spend the night in the bombardment shelters, knowing that the nights were cold and that it was inconceivable to sleep that way in the vegetation under the sky.

Our wonderings started from this point. At dawn we came out of the shelter and went to the day-hiding place. In the shelter we didn't even take a nap, we were always awake and attentive to any sound that came from the outside, fearing that a hostile person might disturb our peace. We would sit on the benches and I would lie Stela on my lap so she would fall asleep. The girl would always sleep but she was sensitive to any movement and ready to climb on her feet for escape.

There were various shelters, once we resided in the one that was closest to the bushes. In the middle of the night we heard someone come in and we saw a man that was unfamiliar to us, when he saw us he examined us in an inspecting way, not uttering a single word.

Maybe he did understand that we were miserable survivors just trying to hide. After he went out we left the shelter and never entered it again, concerned that maybe we would fall into a trap later on. We endured a difficult time without a normal house, there were storms and pouring rain, often we thought we would drown.

Wet and freezing it was hard to get around in the vegetation. As a result of the rain the earth turned into a swampy terrain from which it has hard to pull our solid feet. In one of these situations my brother Shmuel said in an embittered voice that Stela was all wet and freezing, and that at all costs we must find some place to warm up and sleep after many sleepless nights. "We'll go to our once occupied house at Penska street".

In one part of that house there lived Anna, the one who was the Lentner's housewife. She was lonely and we hoped that she wouldn't refuse to letting us stay there.

We willingly agreed to Shmuel's suggestion, happy to leave the swampy area. When we reached the house it was late in the evening. Before coming in we cleaned our shoes from the mud, we came to the first floor and knocked on the door quietly, when coming in we greeted Anna politely.

It didn't take her much time to see that we were completely wet and shivering from the frost. We told her that we were primarily worried about our freezing girl who could get sick again. My brother asked her to take consideration of Stela and give him his request of spending the night there. After hearing this she retorted that not

even in return for the biggest fortune would she be willing to hold us even for one night, because she didn't want to "risk her head for harboring a number of Jews". She continued by asking us if we knew what the German authorities did to people who took care of Jews? They were hanged in a public location so that everyone would know what a terrible punishment awaited those who helped the Jews. After he listening to Anna's conclusion I took Stela by the hand, stood near the entrance and said to my brother: don't ask anymore, we mustn't ask people who had refused once already – We'll return to where we came from, I said "good night" and closed the door. Blinka and Shmuel soon followed.

Outside the night was rainy and freezing. We didn't have the urge to walk to the distant shelters, also because it was late at night by that time. Shmuel led us to a shelter that was near our house. We entered the shelter, we saw a bench and we sat down. I hardly managed to put Stela on my lap in order to put her to sleep when trumpeted voices in German reached our ears. Then we saw a light. In the stair room there was a window and we could see these people from the shelter, they were everywhere and we also saw them appearing in other windows in the building. We were scared to death, with a whisper we decided that they were Germans who were carrying out a search in the house.

We found ourselves again on the verge of falling into a trap, our shelter was very close to the house, moving from it would be very dangerous. We could of ran into the criminal's faces, we stayed in our place like rocks looking upon what would happen next.

At last we heard the thumping of shoes coming down the stairs but we also heard loud voices that reached us from the stair hall. We were, as always, full of dread and anxiety that the villains would start to conduct a search in the yard, for if they would have they would have discovered us. With great relief we heard their steps drawing away and away, the lights in all the windows went out and complete silence prevailed.

We sat hugged all night waiting for the sunrise impatiently. When the day hardly started we came out of the shelter and went to the window the looked upon the yard, we did this because we wanted to get information from Anna about the "late visit" of the previous night.

We started to call Anna with muted voices, asking her to open her window. After a short time she appeared and with a timid voice she explained that her whole house was searched. The German police were searching for Jews that were hiding in that specific house, a detail that was given to them by an informant who claimed that Jews were hiding in it. The neighbors probably saw us coming in and immediately called the police.

"Run away from here as fast as you can and don't show yourselves here anymore, because you are a mortal danger to me!" When we heard from Anna that our suspicions concerning the German search were correct, we started to run away from the place so fast it was as if the Germans were pursuing us. We covered the distance between the shelter and bushes with double speed, and at a certain moment I noticed

that Shmuel and Blinka had disappeared from my eyesight. I was left alone with my girl that could run very fast. All of the area which included the bushes and the trees laid at the bottom of a huge mountain. All of the bushes and trees looked the same and I went around calling for Blinka with a quiet voice, but all was in vain, there was no sign of them.

I knew that I wouldn't be able to find them in this jungle, I had to accept that reality and also set in amongst the bushes. There, I started to think deeply, thinking of how the struggle against fate will continue, thinking of cruel people, neighbors who we had lived with on the same land for generations- desiring our loss.

My parents were always generous to everyone and they were kind to every person, they only had good words to tell of people without concerning their origin. My somber thoughts were interrupted by Stela who asked how long will we have to endure the homelessness and hunger, moreover her look was full of hope and it encouraged me to continue to struggle.

Again we were to encounter turbulence, suffering and bad weather, in my head I was all the time with my brother and sister in law, I had no idea where they disappeared to. I decided to come to the house of the Ochalskys with Stela hoping that maybe they knew something – Maybe my brother had left some message for me.

I wasn't let down because when we already close to the house I saw Shmuel, he walked towards us from Ochalsky's house where he also thought he might find us, or at least on the way.

We embraced warmly and we were joyful for meeting again. My brother took Stela in his arms and said: "your suffering is over, I'm taking you to a good place where there is gas and heat, we'll be together.

We walked towards the thinly populated streets of Potok Gorny aiming to reach the cherished hiding place. On the way Shmuel told me everything from the moment since we lost contact with each other in the midst of the panic and alarm due to the German search, when we were the target. And so, when he was suddenly alone with Blinka he felt all the despair of our difficult wonderings of moving between holes and shelters, he sensed that it was impossible to continue this way and he broke down physically and mentally and the pressure of our cruel fate.

And then all of a sudden he came up with the vision of Filk. This was a Polish man who he had not known so long, he also knew that Filk was helping to hide a Jewish woman who's son had left her with him and paid him a high price. Hitherto he hadn't thought of Filk due to the fact that he didn't trust him too much.

He knew that Filk's main motivator was money, the obtainment of money enabled him to get his hand on the drink. At the end of things, when he realized that we wouldn't be able to win in our struggle, he turned to Filk who's address he knew.

He was welcomed nicely by him and they reached an agreement on the issue of the money, which was paid immediately to the satisfaction of the house owner.

On the way to the new sanctuary my brother told me all of this, everything, while at the same time strengthening my spirit with hopeful and encouraging words.

I was extremely grateful to my dear brother, who risked himself for our sake by walking dangerously in the streets and searching with all the effort a human can muster for a way to save us from extermination.

We tried to walk to Potok Gorney through bypasses in order to get there as fast as possible. At the most further section of the street which bordered with empty fields there stood a lone one story house in which Filk lived with his family. Not far from that area there were oil fields.

We approached the lighted house, we noticed that at the end of one the house's walls there was another structure, shaped as a room with oil soaked wooden planks. My brother halted near this shack and said – We've reached our destination.

We took a key out of his pocket and opened the shack's door. I passed the threshold of our hiding place, a weak light illuminated the room and I saw a group of people sitting on the floor with their heads turned towards the entrance.

I tried to look for familiar faces of which I found my sister in law who I was delighted to see, and I greeted everyone graciously while entering with my brother and Stela. In this hiding place I saw three sitting men who I knew perfectly.

They were Viice, Putch and Horoshovsky. They were survivors of the Aktsias and the transports. They were all that was left of extended families, they resided in the labor camp and during the last phase ran away to hide at Filk's, who one of the survivors knew and told his friends about.

Despite it being only a temporary hiding place, the people who hid in it did not show any fear, they were quiet and placid but longing greatly for liberation. In the hiding place there wasn't only a gas hole but also a water connection. The gas came freely due to the fact that the house had a proximity to the oil wells, a fact that made our presence through the night possible, warming and lighting our small place.

At that same late evening, after we had arrived, Filk appeared right behind us and demanded from me the return which he deserved for the "help" he offered us.

With gratitude I paid him the price and expressed my satisfaction that we were under a rooftop, I expressed my hope that maybe soon we will gain the longed for liberty. I sensed a fresh surge of energy and courage together with being tight with my brother and Blinka.

Sitting down on the floor blanket we listened to the stories of our brethren who with immense pain recalled happy and distant days when they lived with their loved ones, who were now torn away from their lives for ever by the murderous criminals.

During the first days of our residence in the shack the owner of the house provided everyone with one piece of bread for every person. During the days after he apologized to us that bread was scarce everywhere, and therefore he brought us some barley and salt, he also recommended that we cook the barley in water in order to nurture ourselves with something. Once a day we ate barley that was cooked in water with salt and we accepted the situation with ease.

Once, during late evening time, we were overcome by an unexpected weakness.

Knowing that wide fields stretched behind the house, we thought of catching some

fresh air. Outside it was calm and serene, at first we weren't attentive, but afterwards at a certain distance we saw that all of the field was occupied by the German army. Seeing this we were startled and hid behind the trees. Fortunately they didn't spot us and we ran back to the hiding place with fright, we didn't understand what purpose or significance this military presence had in this wilderness.

Since that moment our calm sanctuary became very turbulent and clamorous, heavy explosions reached our ears day and night, ominous sounds of the roaring cannons. We didn't know what to think of it, more so when the owner Filk appeared at the entrance and informed us that his family together with himself, were leaving their house and were going to start looking for shelter that was safe from the bomber-planes, for the front was nearing this sector and there was a bloody battle being fought between the Russians and the Germans.

We weren't allowed to leave the place because we were Jews, even if we were to intrude upon the battle itself – fate will decide our future. With these words Filk left us.

During those days of anxiety and terror when the thunder of cannon ear-cracked us unceasingly, my brother Shmuel opened the shack's door slightly in order to see what was going on outside. He immediately retreated backwards hurriedly and turned to us excitedly after what he had seen outside. He saw falling mortars creating deep pits in the ground, they were falling everywhere including the surroundings of our hut. He was aware that we were located right in the middle of the heavy warfare that was being exchanged by the two enemies.

A great fear clutch him, what would happen if such a fatal shell would land on our precarious wooden shack? It would be the end of us, end of our lives which for so long we had fought hard for while in the claws of the cruel Nazi monsters.

I saw my brother fall into despair, he almost lost his mental balance.

He urged us to leave the hiding place as quickly as possible due to the danger that lurked. He advised that we leave immediately and find a shelter that was sustainable to aerial bombardments.

When I heard this I walked reluctantly to the door of the shack, I wanted to see the situation with my own eyes hoping to calm my brother and myself. I Opened the door and immediately retreated backwards slamming the door as if I've seen the most terrible calamity. What I saw scared and shook me to the depth of my heart: I saw what my brother had seen, the same carnage of falling bombs with the nerve cracking noise plowing deeply into the earth.

We were all scared, we were so agitated that we couldn't think what to do – to run, look for shelter, or just stay in this dangerous place and place ourselves in the mercy of god? I answered that I was too afraid of running with Stela to find a shelter in the midst of all the fighting, I muttered that god have mercy on us.

All of us remained in the room leaving ourselves to the decision of fate, a fate that did not let us down. The terrible thundering of the cannon continued for additional number of hours, until the following dawn everything became silent and we sighed in great relief. Not long afterwards the owner of the house Filk reappeared near the

door of the shack and said words that we, the survivors, will remember till the end of our lives: you are free, here in my room you have had the privilege of reaching the happy moment of being liberated from the Hitlerian criminals. The victorious Russian army has beaten and routed the enemy forces, and it has liberated you, the cruelly persecuted.

It was a historical date that we remembered clearly – the 8th of August 1944.

We all just stood in the room dumbfounded, we just couldn't believe that this reality had unfolded. When Filk saw our reaction he advised us to exit the room quietly so we could hear the song sung by the Russian army. Unconfidently and hesitantly we went outside.

The words of the song “bloomed the pear and the apple” reached our ears almost lucidly. They accepted us with this song, the last of the Jewish survivors. Only then we realized the fact of our liberation, and we welcomed them casually. We did not fall into each other's arms when expressing our joy of the liberation.

The joy was poisoned, we knew that our relatives and friends had been exterminated by the villainous hand of the murderers. We came out of the hiding place shocked, as if we were half unconscious. We were only a shadow of humans, all our lively happiness had been extinguished.

We thanked Filk and his family politely for taking care of us and we started walking in the direction of Potok Gorney with the intention of reaching Penska St. , our place of residence before we moved into the Ghetto. On the way we saw a great lot of the Russian army, many were leading horses, they were very hairy and many of them had long beards. They walked as if they were after difficult and exerting toil, walking slowly, tired and exhausted. It was easy to notice how hard it was for them to beat the enemy.

Our suffering brethren, the men who were with us in the hiding place, departed from us. We, meaning the four of us, Shmuel Blinka Stela and myself, took our time walking, slowly, for we had nowhere to go. No one was waiting for us, we were all that was left of a big family. My daughter Stela hardly kept herself on her feet, exhausted, emaciated, ill, while her feet were covered with two tight left-foot shoes which we found after the unforgettable transport from which we were spared.

After that transport, when we had already escaped the from camp, I put on her feet the two shoes which were meant only for the left feet, they weren't alike and they were each from a different pair. All this time my poor girl walked and fled when at the bottom of her feet there were two uncomfortable shoes.

Today, after many years, when I go back in my memory to those distant and tragic years of Nazi barbarism, specifically- the time when we had just been liberated, I can vividly remember that my girl became barefooted. In my memory there are left the two incompatible shoes which I put on her feet, shoes that eventually she could no longer bare physically.

Together with my daughter we reached Penska St. where our house stood. There was no point in going in because it was all ready occupied by other people. Not far from there we met Sabinka Segel, who we were in debt for running away from the camp.

During the last days of our residence there she always urged me to leave it as soon as possible, because staying there was like staying on top of a volcano that was threatening to erupt.

Sabinka was telling us that the affluent house of a wealthy (formerly) man, the known Herman Bloch, was empty, and it stood just across mine. In just a number of days it would have been seized by the Russian authorities. She advised us to reside in one of the house's rooms temporarily until an apartment would be found for us.

All four of us, and now Sabinka joined us, entered the big empty house that once belonged to Bloch, and there wasn't even one piece of furniture.

We established ourselves in one of the rooms and we settled on the bare floor, a fact that we were apathetic to.

Meanwhile my brother Shmuel became aware to the fact that he couldn't remember the last time something came in our mouths, we all forgot for a while that a living person had to nourish himself with something in order to keep on living.

As in all cases my brother came to our help and he went out to search for whatever he could. After a short time he returned satisfied, holding a piece of horse meat. We rejoiced and nurtured ourselves by eating the meat economically for a number of days.

Moreover, Shmuel started to take care of the issue of an apartment, he went to the local allocation office in order to ask for authorization to reside in one of our apartments. How great was his amazement when he came to the story building and found that one of the apartments was empty. After a short time he found out that the people who squat in the place abandoned it the moment the Soviets came, they feared of being identified with those who were responsible to the suffering of the Jews.

After we had achieved the cherished liberation, we felt the loneliness all the way to the bottom of our hearts. There was no one to rejoice with us, no one to accept us.

In all Borislav no more than a couple of hundreds of Jews survived, that out of a community population of 20,000 Jews before the second world war.

We settled in our apartment empty handed. The place was completely empty, stripped of everything. All that was left was water, electricity and gas. We sat on the bare floor, burnt, inert... no one took care of us, help came from nowhere. The cruel war continued onwards, bringing no relief to anyone's suffering.

The first days of liberation left their marks on us: we were stripped of all necessities, no bread. . . we were compelled to wonder off to stranger's gardens in order to dig some potatoes and flee quickly so that no one would see us.

Lying down hungrily on the empty floor with a feeling of emptiness, I foresaw the future in which I would have to stride lonely with Stela, who I sensed, had lost her father and I my husband. I never indulged with vain hopes of him being saved by some supernatural miracle, something that would sound like the most fabled fairytale.

I only wanted to know when my poor beleaguered tormented Philip had died.

I recalled the period when the last of Drohovitch's Jews were brought to the labor camp near Borislav after the selection and the extermination of the Jews there.

Amongst all the people coming in from Drohovitch I searched for my husband but he didn't appear. By that time he wasn't among the living.

In my heart I decided not to be a burden on Shmuel and Blinka anymore. My noble and chivalrous brother had enough problems and duties with me and Stela during the period of the Hitlerian Hell. Now, when we have regained our freedom and have been born anew, in the future my way led to Drohovitch and I knew that I would have to stand up to the challenge of seeing the emptiness and desolation that was left after my brethren.

At midnight, when we were lying on the exposed hard floor fast asleep, something that offered relaxation, my brother Shmuel woke us with these unforgettable words: "Arise and rejoice, look- I have turned on the electricity that illuminates every corner with great light, shining light is coming out of the windows and we can lay down with relax and without worry, we aren't afraid anymore by the Hitlerian hydra. The victorious Russian army had liberated us from certain suffering and death that awaited us. When at this moment I awaken you and talk to you I myself can not believe in the truths of my words that talk of freedom reclaimed and liberty."

Every night this awakening from our sleep repeated itself while at the same time we were dazzled by strong light that lit the whole apartment.

My brother, who wanted to verify the truths of his words asked us to confirm this remarkable and extraordinary miracle, the miracle in which we, the last of the surviving Jews – stayed alive.