

September 1, 1939, Hitler's army invaded Poland. This was the beginning of World War II.

I took advantage of the last day of my vacation before starting school and I went to play tennis. Then suddenly my father approached me to tell me the sad news.

I, while in gymnasium (school) took up military training. I felt now was the time to make use of my training by defending my country. I went home, put on my uniform and reported for assignment. I was given a rifle with a few bullets. My friend Izzio Igra and I got the assignment on the bridge leading from our town Stryj toward Drohobicz.

On the third day of the war the German planes bombed Stryj, mostly bridges of strategic importance like railroad and the bridge over the River Stryj by the same name as the city. Both of us were shooting at these five planes. On the fifth day one of the planes was shot down. We all took credit for shooting down the plane.

Both of us examined the plane. We did not see any bullet holes, but we were given credit for shooting it down. The Colonel pinned a medal on each of us. The same evening, we were approached by a drunken officer and he made outrageous remarks, like: "This war was started by the Jews" using many derogatory adjectives like "dirty Jews, Christkillers," etc. We took his gun away and pushed him down (into a [illegible]). It did not take more than ten minutes. He came back to us, and we took him to the headquarters. The headquarters was in terrible condition and the rumor was that the

Germans were about 200 km from Stryj and the bulk of the Polish army was hoping to reorganize themselves near the Hungarian and Russian border.

We went home and discussed that with my parents and we all were very disappointed that our tanks and planes did not resist despite our marshals pronouncement, “We will not give up our territory – Nie oodamy nawet guzika.”

The following day we heard over the radio that Hitler and Stalin made a pact and our town would be, after a few days of German occupation, taken over by Soviet Russia.

We noticed the difference between the highly motorized German army and ill-equipped Russian soldiers, with very few tanks and most of the equipment pulled by horses.

The Russian soldiers, especially officers with their wives, came to Stryj with a lot of rubbles. They started to buy everything they saw in stores, but the storekeepers realized that they could not buy anything for the rubbles, so they started to hide their merchandise in order to sustain themselves – to exchange merchandise for food – the foreigners would not accept rubbles. On the streets one could see Russian women walking in nightgowns – they thought the nightgowns were fancy dresses.

A few days later they reopened the schools. This time I realized my priority was to get an education, not to depend on miracles, like my mother’s corrections would get me a passing grade while I wasted my time on playing

soccer, tennis, volley ball, basketball, etc. Most of the teachers were pleasantly surprised and I became one of the top students in my class.

On the 15th of June, 1941, the MKVD with the help of our local Communist nationalized our flour mills, which my father built with his ten fingers starting with one stone into an automatic (highly mechanized) empire.

We were given one hour to leave our premises. I remember my younger brother had high fever and our workers intervened on behalf of us. Nothing helped. My parents were told, “Enough exploitation of workers – you have to pay a price.” We were scattered all over town. I went to stay with a friend of mine in the city. My father approached the head of the city administration and explained to him how he struggled to build up the mill, which took about twenty years of hard work. He explained to him that he enlisted in the Austrian army during World War I and learned the trade while in the army. After the war he started with two stones powered by a water turbine into an automatic flour mill while his friends went to school, refusing to improve their status with hard work, dreaming of taking over possessions of others in the name of Marx- Engels type of justice.

The administrator was very impressed with my father’s presentation, especially the support my father got from his own workers. He gave my father a suggestion – he should build up a neglected flour mill of one of our competitors. My father accepted that offer and started to work very hard and hired some workers from our mill to help him.

My father got two rooms in a building on the premises. This way the family of six could stay together.

A few months later an inspection team came to visit the mill and among them were so-called politruks (Communist protectors). They asked my father about the workers and my father was informed by our previous workers (now employed in that mill) that some workers complained that my father was too demanding and they told the inspectors about my father's past and our workers were afraid to defend my father's behavior because they could be called conspirators.

Then suddenly during the High Holidays in 1941 N.K.V.D. came to the synagogue and arrested my uncle, accusing him of trying to burn the mill. My father was afraid of being deported to Siberia and went into hiding in the basement of my mother's old aunt's house. Besides my mother nobody in our family knew about it.

If I think about being deported to deep Russia at that time it would have been better than to stay with the Nazis. Maybe some of my brothers would have survived. In Stryj the total population before the war was 35,000 people and about 15,000 Jews. Only 27 Jews survived in Stryj, and about 250 survived in Russia.

Meantime we went to school; we were all excellent students. We were constantly reminded that our father deserted us and we should consider ourselves lucky. "This abandonment could only happen under the Capitalist rule. Under Communist rule we will grow physically and spiritually."

Meantime we saw how our mother had to struggle to get enough bread on the table. We had to stay in line for hours to get something to eat. Usually the store managers sold half of the supplies on the black market. Very little was left for the people in the line to buy. Adults and children were actually sleeping on the food lines to be able to get to work and school on time. Hard life convinced students how important education was, because for professionals and military people access to most consumer goods was easier.

In 1940 I finished gymnasium (so-called decetolatka) with excellent marks and was admitted to medical university without an entrance examination. I was the only one to be admitted to medical school. I was studying for two semesters. I developed a friendship with the daughter of the Director of the University. She used to say that my eyes showed sadness. “When you are sad, your eyes are dark green; when you relax and are happy they become bluish.” This interpretation of my status is unexplainable to me. I came to the conclusion that people see you the way they want to see you.

Three months after I started medical school, letters from my town’s Komsomol Youth started to come to Director Makarchenko, complaining about me being admitted to medical school – pointing out my economic background and stating that my father became rich on the back of poor workers, etc. Each time (it happened about four times in two semesters) the director called me in and in the presence of a politruk “we in Soviet Union are judging people by qualifications and in your case, your father abandoned you and your family and disappeared into oblivion” and then Director Makarchenko used to destroy the letters not to have anything bad in my files. My relation with his daughter was based on our mutual respect.

In June, 1941, one morning we heard the city Lwow was bombed continuously. A few hours later we were told that the Germans encircled the city and the Russian tanks could not get out of there. Next morning the Germans entered the city and the Ukrainians started a pogrom against the Jews, robbing Jewish houses and beating Jews mercilessly. The Ukrainians' spiritual leader appealed to his people to stop the pogrom, but the thirst for Jewish blood was so big that nothing could stop them. Finally after one week of killing, the Germans gave an order to stop the pogrom.

At the same time in my native Stryj, it was quiet. My father came out from hiding and sent a truck to pick me up and bring me back to Stryj. In Stryj the Jews were walking freely and we were told that the first soldiers who occupied the city when the war between U.S.S.R. and Germany started in June, 1941, we were surprised. We could not believe that Hitler would break the nonaggression pact with Stalin and we thought it was only maneuvers, exercises by U.S.S.R. air force. But soon we saw real bombs demolishing buildings and bridges, and we realized that Hitler's "Draug nach osten" was proceeding according to his perverted plans. I was then a medical student on University Piekarska Street near Lycraleovoska vl not far from the cemetery, from where the dead bodies were supplied to prosectorium of our University. There were rumors that the Russian tanks could not get out of the City of Lwow (Leimberg). The Ukrainians expected that Germany would declare Lwow as capital of their homeland and they started the celebration by making a pogrom on the Jewish population -- robbing, stealing from, and molesting the Jews was their aim. They started to take over the Jewish properties, housing and businesses. They were

emptied of merchandise and food. The head priest of Lwow [illegible] appealed to his followers to behave, to stop the pogrom, saying, “Until the war you worked for Jewish enterprises, you raised your families, gave them an education, and now you are destroying the hand that fed you. The Jewish people were invited by Polish kings to build up the economy of Poland and Ukraine for centuries, similar to Asiatic people who were invited by rulers of Africa to build up their economy. We have to learn from those ancient people of the oldest civilizations with rich ideas not to be destroyed.”

The chief Rabbi of Lwow – metropolist/ illegible] of the Greco Catholic church with their guards opened the gates of his estate for Jews to enter into safety but they could not stop that unusual instinct [illegible] from destroying themselves.

The German occupation forces had to interfere to quiet it down and they changed the attitude toward the Independent Country and they promised them only autonomy under German supervision.

At the same time I got a letter by messenger from my family in Stryj saying that Stryj was very quiet and the Jews were walking on streets without fear. My father came out and sent a truck driver to pick me up and bring me back to Stryj, a city located to the South of Lwow (about 10 km away).

When I arrived in Stryj I did not see too many German soldiers on the street; people were walking and conducting a fairly normal life. Then I found out that the German occupational force was supervised by Germans who originally came from Stryj and in September, 1939, were resettled to

Germany, where they were trained and retrained in S.S. uniforms as occupational army. Among the leaders of that S.S. group was Johann Meck, a young man trained by my father as “obermuhler.” I remember that whenever Johann Meck had to take an exam, my father (Hilel) used to go over all the questions and answers with him many times when he did not concentrate on his work. My father treated him like his own kids by disciplining him physically (slap over the hand).

The next day Johann’s father, who was a farmer and owned a fruit orchard, used to bring a few baskets of fruit. When Johann Meck arrived in Stryj as head of the occupation force, the first thing he asked Hupawlowski where the Landaus were. We were afraid to face him in the beginning but we were told by Hupawlowski that he ordered him to employ us and treat us well. My brothers and I met him. I got an assignment in the mill, my brother got a job from a man in charge of a flour mill near A.S.A. factory on Kosywa relicca (the mill previously belonged to the Schuster family), my brother-in-law got a position in Steierman’s mill.

A few weeks later Johann Meck met with my father and told him the bad news that he was leaving his position in Stryj for another assignment and Gestapo was moving into his place and he advised us to try to go to Hungary or Rumania, because he expected that Jews would be mistreated by the Ukrainian militia and Gestapo. He stated that after visiting areas already occupied by Gestapo people. My father asked him to help us to get to Hungary. He said he could do it for one or two people as his helpers. This was rejected by my father, who did not want to be separated from the whole family.

A few weeks after Johann Meck left and Gestapo took over the Jewish question the situation in Stryj completely changed. According to the order of the German Gouverneur Frank, all the 15,000 Jews had to wear armbands with a Jewish star and all the Jews had to live in the Jewish quarter. The Gentiles living in the Jewish victel (section) could stay there but the Jewish could not enter the Gentile section without passes. Jewish living in beautiful sections like 3 Muza, Jagictouska, Grandvaldrka had to leave their homes and move near the Jewish prayer houses, most of them in poor sections. The 15,000 were squired into one-third of the territory as disseway [illegible] would require. Jewish people were squeezed five or six people into a room, with double beds and in some cases triple beds on top of each other. The furniture of value was confiscated and shipped by “Deutsche Revohsboher” [illegible] to Germany.

The Gestapo called in eleven Jews and ordered them to organize a Judement and one of them was my brother who refused with the majority to be the organizers of the Judement on the basis of Gestapo soudition[illegible]. The only one who took over this job was Huterer, chief Rabbi’s son-in-law. The rest were beaten by Ukrainian militia for the next ten days laying in front of the city prison on the ground. They were released almost dead. All of them died in the next few weeks. My father’s kidneys stopped functioning, his stomach could not absorb food, he could not walk or talk – a terrible picture. He was operated on several times until he died after a beating in January, 1942. In October, 1941, the Germans ordered all the Jews from the villages to move to the Jewish quarter and their land and savings were confiscated. The Jewish quarters were outlawed by Gestapo and presented to the Judement to be enforced.

The Jews could live on Baleshorstra relicca, Fouchave, Ryusk Batoegr, Lowowska, Beulca Jositorace up to Torgovia. [illegible]

In order to get to work the Jews wore special passes for outside the Judenvictel [illegible]. They were not allowed to walk on the sidewalk – only on the street.

In November, 1941, the Germans with Ukrainian police militia entered the Jewish quarter and arrested about 1,000 young men. About 300 of them were killed in the Jewish cemetery. About 700 were detained in the prison under jurisdiction of the Ukrainian bastards, who beat them to death and after three days the remainder were taken to the woods near Holobytoo where they were shot to death. We were told by peasants who passed by those areas from the villages with fruits and other items to sell in the market in the city. Then the Gestapo submitted a [illegible] for the bullets used to kill those innocent human beings. When we realized what was to be expected, we started to build bunkers (hiding places) for the next action.

For the last four months (August, September, October, November, 1941), I was working on the railroad where I was sent with others (about 50 Jewish boys) by the employment department of the Judement [illegible]. We were told that we would be working under the supervision of the Wehrawacht, [illegible] elderly German soldiers. We were loading coal for the front (Russia), carrying rails, and cleaning the cafeteria where the

Germans used to eat. Under the circumstances it was considered a good job, because we used to extricate from the garbage potato peels, apple peels, parts of vegetables, pieces of bread, etc. We washed those things thoroughly and we made soups (thick and nourishing). The Welkrunsedt/ *illegible* / picked us up near the Judement as a group and we all walked to the railroad and back. Later it became hard to work even there. The Gestapo used to come for inspection and in order to scare us off, they used to shoot and kill one or two of us under the pretense that they did not want to work.

My brother Jacob had a job in Schuster's flour mill, where Linke Walksdeutashe was friendly with August Schmidt, the owner of A.S.A. Glossfalorck. Those people were entertaining the Fuhurpolitic and Gestapo all the time. The man in charge of carpenters in A.S.A. was Mr. Schroeder. He was in charge of all the housing of workers (slave labor). Schroeder used to get money for grain from peasants who worked for him. He got acquainted with my brother Jacob and he and a few German Jews decided to employ me, my mother and also allowed my brother Jacob, my sister and brother-in-law to be placed in an A.S.A. building which were under jurisdiction of August Schmidt, the owner of A.S.A. Glasslulorak and then it became A.S.A. oobertsloger. We used to get passes to visit our brothers in H.K.P. and Hoosesberadenweke and visit relatives in the ghetto.

December of 1941 was a cruel winter and the Germans gave an order that all the fur coats and blankets must be delivered to them. Whoever violated the rules would be killed. We delivered those things as ordered. Lack of heating facilities, clothing and food brought death to a big chunk of our population. On the 15th of January my father died as a result of additional

beating. The Chevra Kadish with carriages was constantly collecting dead bodies. Twenty-five percent of the population died from hunger. Those who were in Orbertscamps were fed a little better.

In February, 1942, the Germans and Ukrainian militia made an action and took about 500 Jews loaded on trains toward the Carpatien Mountains. They were experimenting how to get rid of Jews by putting them in the wilderness. Some of them survived and came back to the Judenvictel, which was getting smaller.

In June, 1942, around Shevaath Holidays Festival the Germans (Gestapo) Helukspolitico and Ukrainian militia conducted another action. About 1,000 Jews were taken out and killed in the cemetery and a wooden area outside the city Stryj. During the High Holidays a few hundred of well-equipped S.S. men, Gestapo, and lehutepolitici with dynamite and heavy equipment entered the Jewish quarter and conducted an action and about 7,000 Jews were transported to death camps (most of the bunkers were detonated). Most of the people during the Holidays tried to be together with family and all of us had passes. But this time with passes or without we were placed in the market place. My brother Swabse, [illegible] my brother Jehuda and I were placed on Market Place. We did not know about each other's place, hoping some of us found a place to hide. The Germans entered all apartments. Whoever was in bed was killed instantly; little babies were put in sacks, tied up and thrown down through the windows. Horrible experience. You could see blood all over.

The only two people who came to claim their workers were August Schmidt, the owner of A.S.A. and our Lagerfuher and S.S. Simon Lagerfuher. M.K.P. with a big dog, they took out their workers. August Schmidt took me out and a few others. Obesturmfuhrer Simon took out about ten Jewish people. In about three days, he took them to Shipp. Those people to Belzec (liquidation camps). The cattle wagons were packed, there was no place to sit, only standing like herring. But they used any means to break up the doors. When they reached the bridge Mikoloj/ illegible / my brother Jehuda jumped off, my Szabse, his six-year-old son Jancio and his wife jumped off the train. Only my brother Jehuda, and Hela, my brother's wife, came back. She told us that my brother with my nephew jumped off together, then she looked for them and she could not find them. She thought that they went back to Stryj. Those who came back told us of the horrible conditions in those wagons. Each wagon had soldiers armed with rifles on the stoops to shoot those who jumped off.

After cleaning up all those areas, an order came that the remaining Jews who survived the reinigung of the Judenment were pushed into a ghetto consisting of two streets – Lwowska and Berka Josecehca (one big block). About 2,500 Jews were left.

My brother Jehuda went back to work in Mowesbarraokenverke/ illegible /. My sister-in-law, Hela, my mother and sister and I were employed in A.S.A., mainly in packaging and carpentry departments, wherever they needed us, volunteering to work there. A German industrialist acquired a factory (glass) in a few cities (Madmoria) using Jewish slave labor and decided to build a factory and convert a flour mill into a glass factory. My

mother, my brother (Jacob), and I registered as carpenters, gardeners and bricklayers. My brother Jacob was employed as a miller in Linke's flour mill on Kosyva Street next door to the buildings occupied by workers of the A.S.A. glass factory. The German's name was August Schmidt. He was very friendly with all the Gestapo, shutzpolitic, [illegible] Klahrmlan, Ebuhard, and they constantly had parties in his home. My brother arranged with Mr. Schroeder (a German Jew close to August Schmidt) that my mother, my brother Jacob and I should stay in that Arbertslager. My mother worked as gardener in August Schmidt's place; I worked carrying bricks. They were building an annex to the main factory and my brother worked in Linke's flour mill. He got permission to stay in that orbertslager. It was much better than in the ghetto at that point.

While in the ghetto people were dying from typhoid, and were swollen from hunger, in the A.S.A. we worked and got a piece of bread for breakfast and supper. Lunchtime we used to get soup, which looked and tasted like hot, dirty water. My brother Jacob, who worked in the flour mill used to buy flour from Mr. Linke and that helped us to survive. As long as we had 25 people in that open door camp, life was passable.

One Sunday in March, 1943, I got a pass to visit the ghetto. I joined two girls. One of them was Salka Selinger from nearby Merviesbaenakau camp. We were supposed to meet near the gate of the camp. Suddenly an S.S. man got out of the car, we identified ourselves, showed him our passes, and for no other reason he started to hit me without stopping and called me dirty names. I was stepped on, bleeding, and he told the girls to push me into the creek where the dirty water was flowing. The dog who was helping him to

destroy me stopped attacking me. Then the S.S. man took the dog into the car and ordered the girls to send the people with wagons who collected the dead bodies in the ghetto for me. When they (Judea Hemos, Kidisha) came they realized I was still alive. In order to hide me from being discovered they covered me with the same white sheet as other dead bodies and they dropped me off on the cemetery. From there I went to A.S.A. that evening. If they had been caught by the Gestapo they would be killed together with me. My mother and sister were told about me by Silka Salinger, the girl who I was supposed to visit, and go into the ghetto. My skin on the face and the parts of my body was hanging down. Those two ladies worked on me doing a cosmetic work on my skin using a dog cream (fats) for healing my skin, feeding me with a straw because my left jawbone was dislocated and gums and teeth were out of place. It took me three days to realize that I had to help myself.

I could not eat on the left jaw -- even mashed potatoes. Each time I tried to fix the dislocated jaw by being forceful with food consumption; by opening my mouth half the bone jumped off the socket. My fractured right hand was in very bad shape, one finger broken, skin on my face and body hanging over and bleeding. After three weeks laying on the bed under the care of the best women to exist in the world (my dear mother and most dedicated sister), I started to look more like a mensch, talking and eating. Then suddenly we were told that August Schmidt was coming to inspect on a good will basis how his workers liked the new place.

The Jews, no matter where we went, we built bunkers, for friends who came to stay with inhabitants of A.S.A., which was officially illegal. That evening

I had to stay with them in the bunker, because officially I was discharged by the Schuerleze and sent back to the ghetto. During the day I had to stay in the bunker. At night when workers came back to camp, I came out and joined others in the room – a kitchen. We were 8-10 people, Mr. Schroeder, Eisenberg, Kavaker, my brother-in-law Jonah Friedler, my brother Jacob, my mother and sister and me.

Around September, 1942, A.S.A. camp was forced to accommodate other workers/Jews from other [illegible] camps and A.S.A. took over buildings on both sides of Krzywasa Street and there were rumors that the Judement would send two Jewish militia men to guard the place.

Mr. Schroeder with the cooperation and consultation with August Schmidt (the owner of A.S.A. Glass Factory and the official “Lagerfrhrer” objected that Jewish militia in uniform should be placed at the gates of that Orbertslager. Two people were assigned to watch the gates. This decision was made, according to Mr. Schroeder, by three people who came with August Schmidt from “Madvarna” and they were instrumental in helping to build the factory for Mr. August Schmidt. All three spoke fluent German. Their names were over Schmerler, Mr. Kosaler, and Mr. Eisenberg.

My brother Jacob and my brother-in-law, Jonah Frielee worked in flour mills and they were very friendly with Schierlce’s cousin, whose father was the “Mohel” in Stryj. Thanks to their acquaintance, Schnecke’s cousin and I were appointed to that job by the above people.

We were wearing hats with the Mogen David insignia. Our job was to keep out all outsiders who were not working for A.S.A. At the same time, we

had bunkers to accommodate families and friends of people working for A.S.A.

When I met Mr. Schroeder after the war he gave me a statement he wrote in his book about my brother Jacob, stating that my brother was a very good human being and helped him to acquire flour for bread and cooking. He wrote that in German and I am enclosing the copy to my book. Now I know that my family had to pay for me, my mother, and my sister to be employed by A.S.A.

I had contact with Polish underground, Mr. Schultz, and he supplied me with guns. Younger people were preparing to leave and go into the woods. Those who had money were looking for human guides to go to Walden (the forest area) and to Hungary, where the Jews were still free. Some of the guides rescinded [illegible] and killed robbers. It was important to have a gun.

A few people who survived the war who acquired revolvers from me wrote and some in person thanked me for helping and selling them arms. One man wrote me a letter calling me Angel for selling him a revolver, which helped him to survive.

The Jewish police (two brothers – Asia and Shasky Laufer, and Robb, Heller, and others) cooperated with the Gestapo because they wanted to be in charge of A.S.A., which I found out from Schroeder who was told by August Schmidt and they squealed on us.

In July, 1943, the Nazis, with the help of the Ukrainian militia surrounded the Ghetto and took out all the Jews, children, according to the Polish population and those who jumped off the train. [illegible] They were putting a few babies in a sack and throwing them down from the second and third floor. [illegible] sentence above this. Blood was flowing all over the ghetto; all the basements were demolished with hand grenades and explosives. All the Jews who could walk were taken and packed into cattle wagons and they were shipped to Auschwitz. This was the only time that Jews from Stryj were shipped to Auschwitz.

The Jewish militia was left to clean up the ghetto. After that they were assigned to guard all the labor camps.

In June 1943, two S.S. men – Passio Pape Stark and Laufer - came to see my brother in the flour mill and asked him where Jacob Landau was. My brother told them “upstairs” but he became like a stone who could not even run away. When they came down, he was beaten and taken away. We did not hear from him at all since then. My sister [illegible] and Mr. Schroeder went to his boss Mr. Linke, asking that he intervene with the Gestapo and that they should release him. Mr. Linke said that he was told that the Judament people (Mr. Laufer) squealed on him, that he was a troublemaker in the A.S.A. camp, according to rumors.

A few weeks later the heads of the Jewish militia, Laufe and Pejsio Stark [illegible] Captain Kiashanza of the Schubpolitzen and his brigade surrounded the camp under the pretext that they needed 40 young people to clean up the ghetto. Among others Laufer, who took away my hat and

Shitzer's hat and replaced us with his people, called my name and they put us on three trucks, surrounded by Ukrainian and German police and took us not to clean the ghetto but straight to the cemetery in Stryj.

In the cemetery we were told to take off our clothes and put them in one place. After that we were pushed naked by the Ukrainian police toward two large graves [illegible] prepared for us by the Jewish militia. Germans were shooting from automatic rifles. Each of us was fighting, trying to get the bullets, to be shot in the head, not to suffer, because we saw a few people were pushed into the grave alive. I was shot in my right leg and jumped into the grave to avoid molestation by the Ukrainians who used the rifles and stocks to crush the brains of those still alive because they could not shoot. The Germans did not trust them with bullets to begin with and each of them had one bullet in his rifle.

I was slow to approach the grave and a Ukrainian hit me over the left side of my head with the rifle or bat. I could not hear and I became disoriented and I ran toward the edge of the grave, bending, hoping to get the bullet in my head in order to avoid long suffering. I was laying in the grave covered by other bodies, some still breathing. I closed my eyes tightly, hoping to cross an imaginary trench and expire. While in the grave I did not feel my pain. Then the shooting stopped and silence prevailed for awhile and the Jewish militia before covering the graves looked for people still alive; some of them looked for gold teeth. Then suddenly a man by the name Pellech (one of the militia men) exclaimed my name and started to pull me out from the grave against my own will. Pellech used to go to the same school as I and played soccer most of the time with my group. Pellech had two [illegible] who

were in the hat-making business and they supported their brother (as far as I remember) in school. Basrcolly/ illegible / Pellech was very poor and before every first of the month, he and others used to hide in the haystack on the premises of our flour mill and I used to supply them with rolls and apples to survive at least two days before every first of the month because most of the poor students were jailed in order to prevent them from staging riots, burning Polish flags, exploding/ illegible / with the red flags.

To be honest I did not understand the meaning and the value of doing that. When I met those people after the war those people admitted that it was stupid to do those things in the name of Socialism or Communism.

This individual took me out from the grave, gave me a pair of slacks and a shirt and a pair of shoes, different sizes, and I immediately changed from dying to being alive. It was a hot day, my head was without hair (we tried to keep clean from lice, which were carriers of typhoid), being for hours without food or water, the sun was pounding on my head and I felt a discomfort from walking. A peasant woman with a basket of apples on her head exclaimed Paniozu/ illegible /..., / illegible / six/ illegible /. She asked me what I was doing there. I told her that I was from the Polish underground. She gave me a few apples and went down the road and under the / illegible / There was a creek with dirty water from all the little factories. Near the water big green lettuces/ illegible / were growing that people used to stop bleeding. I discovered a bullet in my right leg that required special treatment and by taking the bullet out the bleeding would finish my life. In the evening when it got darker I decided to go to the Jewish hospital which was over one mile away.

With fear in my heart and pain in my leg I reached the hospital. When I came there, the hospital was clear and one lady was in charge. I asked her what happened to all the patients, and she took me to the back door and said all the patients were killed by the Nazis, one on top of the others. She begged me to leave. I asked for a bandage and iodine. She gave me a sheet, iodine, black shoes with meter[illegible], and a jacket, and some pieces of bread. This hospital was ¼ of a mile away from the river to safety into the bushes. I had two choices: to walk very slowly with pain and be unable to react fast enough in the face of danger, or take that bullet out and see if I could function at all. I decided on the second idea. I took the bullet out, then put iodine in that hole and I fell asleep. When I woke up I was up to my neck in water. It was probably raining very hard and that river had a tendency to overflow. About 100 meters farther I met a woman shepherdess with many cows. She was very nice, and gave me some milk to drink, but still I could not trust everyone. I decided to rest a little away from that lady with cows.

When it got darker I heard Jewish voices. I looked around, and when they came closer I exclaimed “Sxus[illegible] Israel” and they responded the same way. Both of them escaped from the ghetto ([illegible] Bazz Shutz and Deunticketspan) right before liquidation of the ghetto. Shutz still had two revolvers that I sold to him and Ouis had a Russian automatic with 60 bullets (beubensk), which hardly worked. We were staying near the road leading to small villages belong to the poorest Shezjoki (district).

On the road we had a chance to get food from the peasants who were transporting their produce to our town. We were lucky that Shutz had some money. At night we were looking for more escapees from the ghetto and labor camps. A few weeks later both of them decided to go back to Stryj; each of them had something valuable (gold and dollars) hidden in the basement where they lived. I was not in a position physically to join them. They left me with the Russian automatic and they were supposed to return the same night.

A few hours later I saw a few people (about seven) approaching the river and in the back of them (about 100 meters) I saw two Germans in uniform on the brigade following them. I started to scream to them to cross the river as fast as possible. When they were in the middle of the river the two Germans (Schutz politzen) started to shoot at them. I reacted by shooting back at Schutzpolitzen, but no matter how hard I tried I could not kill them, but they got scared and left and seven new escapees joined me in the bushes. Under those circumstances we could not stay in that area anymore because in the daytime they would send soldiers to get us.

We started to walk slowly farther away to the South and to "Morseyn," a thick forest, where we stayed until the next evening. It would be easier to reach our destination during daylight. At night it was difficult to walk toward the Capathin Mountains (Dohsa Lysa Goira) without a compass. Shutz was very nice to me; he gave me one revolver for self-protection and for some reason he stuck with me. The next morning, when we woke up, Shutz and I realized we were abandoned by the other five, probably because I could not walk as fast as they did. Both of us were very upset because they

took away bread and Shutz's revolver and the automatic with 60 bullets. We were left with two rucksacks and one revolver.

We decided to stay near Morsyn[illegible] For a couple of days and explore the situation. After a few days I felt much better and we started to walk toward the Southern mountains Dolema. We knew that in those woods we would meet the underground group under the leadership of "Babij." We walked toward the South hill up and down straight to the South. In the evening we stopped to rest; then suddenly Schutz woke me up, saying he heard suspicious voices. We looked around and we saw farmers walking with their tools to field work. We decided to continue walking. Suddenly we reached a steep hill and not realizing the danger we fell into the water (river)...not too deep but thanks to the rucksacks we survived the impact of our fall, which could have been a deadly one.

It was daytime, and the peasants were walking and some were already working in their fields. We kept on walking and asking if any one of the peasants living in the wooded areas knew where Babij's group was operating. It was very important to keep out of areas under control of Benderor – the Ukrainian nationalist group who also fought against the German policy, because the Germans refused to grant them independence. At the same time, the Benderor group hated the Jews.

We were very carefully inquiring and staying in the area of the woods near Dolina controlled by Two[illegible] Brothers "Babij." The village nearby was called Babijouler. The peasants were very friendly to us; each of them told us they saw the [illegible] group passing by. The weather

cooperated with us and after walking for a few hours we heard voices which sounded like our people and after carefully examining, we approached one of that group and we recognized our people and they accepted us with open arms.

There were a few groups. One group was under so-called protection of older Babij. They gave him their money and gold pieces and he in return supplied them with food and supposedly security. Lindenbaun (an international thief) was hiding in the woods from before the war for international criminal activities and others loosely spread under the leadership of Stad Borling and Rathaus, whose sister was living with Stach Babij. I met a girl by the name of Pomeruqdoria and her boyfriend, Holler, from Stryj. She used to work as a secretary for Muldauer, my father's lawyer. They were very friendly to me. She as a poor girl appreciated how nice my father was to her before the war. Whenever my father came to see his lawyer he brought her a few kg. of flour (before the war started).

Schutz gave me \$10 and the rest he had kept for himself. He joined Lindenbaum's group. Lindenbaum and the older Babij were the only ones that were buying their food supply. Those who did not have money were loosely organized and had to organize their food supply by attacking the trains and other supply vehicles belonging to the Germans or Ukrainian militia.

In that loose group the domineering personalities were not Babij's Ruthas,/[*illegible*] / But Stephan Kujos and Juc. Most of the time they used young boys ages 14-18 to do the job for them. Whenever they brought supplies of

meat or butter, they exchanged that for bread, potatoes, vegetables, and fruit they were stealing from villagers. They were also hunting deer. Usually after each trip we lost one or two young boys. The leadership used to take away valuable food for themselves and the rest was thrown into so-called soup. Thanks to the butter supply we got enough bread from peasants in exchange.

Meanwhile, I was recuperating from the gunshot in my right leg and planning to go back to Strj to find/ illegible / out if my mother and two brothers were still alive. I had heard about them from a few loyal friends who knew me, who bought guns from me, which I used to buy from my Polish pre-war neighbors and friends working for the Polish underground.

I also realized that without money it would be hard for me to survive and realize my plans, eventually to escape to cross the border to Hungary, where our camp cohabitants Mr. Eisenberg, Schroeder, and some workers of their family secretly escaped.

I organized a group of people armed with handguns. With rifles it was impossible to avoid detection. After walking for two days – about 20 km., we arrived at midnight in August, 1943, in A.S.A. labor camp. The Jewish militia was ordered not to make any noise. Many people escaped, among them my mother who trusted my judgment and I put her in a bunker for which I paid and gave a friend of ours a lot of nice pieces of my clothing and I made him vow [illegible] not to harm my mother. My sister and brother-in-law despite our urging decided to wait. Among the escapees from camp were a few from the Jewish militia (two of them were Heller and Rohl

– very cruel people). I warned Heller and Rohl that if they harmed my mother, his Hausak family would be destroyed. He knew that I was in a nearby woods. They walked with us toward the river. My mother gave me 5-10 bills and a jacket with 5 buttons made of \$10 gold pieces which helped me to survive. Others who came with me went to their respective places and dug out their belongings.

My sister and brother-in-law were left in the camp and my sister started knocking herself on the head saying she wanted to die with others. My brother-in-law begged her to go with me, but he could not persuade her. My two younger brothers could not be reached; they were in the other end of the city in HKP camp. My mother told me that they had their own plans.

We were under the impression that the Germans were afraid to go out at night. About 15 young people were approaching the river, and some noticed a shadow of two bicycles and Germans in uniform hiding in the bushes. We disregarded them until we reached the middle of the river; then suddenly they started to shoot at us with rifles. When we reached the other side we responded with fire. There were no casualties on either side.

We had no time to waste. We realized the Germans would pursue us going back to our camp in the woods. We were very careful, dividing ourselves into two groups, not far from each other so in case of an attack, the other group with crossfire could neutralize the Germans' attack on us.

Whenever we saw a light of passing vehicles or train we were suspicious. On the way near Morgan[illegible] we decided to enter a Ukrainian

militia station booth. Three of them, scared/ illegible], told us that they did not get any order to be vigilant of guerilla groups.

We took away their five rifles, each with one bullet (the Germans did not trust them with bullets). They were under suspicion that they cooperated with the Bandera group, and were disappointed that the Germans did not give them an independent state. Out of that disappointment the group turned against the German occupation. We took away anything we could carry, mainly bread and slovia/ illegible], pig fat. We cut the wires, locked up the booth and we told them to stay inside until the last of us would pass through, that groups consisted of about 100 people. Then we left. The militia should stay there until the next shift about 6 a.m. in the morning.

We continued walking along the rails, as close as possible to the bushes. We carried lots of baggage; we had enough to eat and slowly in three days, we came back to our original destination. The tough guys expected us to bring some gold pieces, which we did not have. They were too lazy to clean their own revolvers and rifles. They became partners to our loot – like rifles and Ukrainian militia uniforms and one S.S. Gestapo hat. We returned their pistols to them.

They accused us that by going to Stryj we jeopardized the camp's existence, that in case we were caught we would disclose to the Germans the location of our camp. Usually the Germans killed anyone whenever they caught them as an escapee of the Arbetslager (labor camp) or ghetto. Their accusation was baseless, because without moving around and organizing food we could not survive. Each time we moved or stayed in camp we were

exposed and in danger of being attacked. For about two months our life in the woods was normal. But the brother-in-law (Rathaus) realized that we were losing young people by sending them on missions putting obstacles like wood and dead animals (horses) on the roads causing derailment of trains carrying supplies to the front. This helped us to get some livestock, which escaped deep into the woods. The tough guys used to take away the best meat and other supplies and the rest had to eat the leftovers.

Rathaus, realizing that if the way they conducted themselves continued, we would not have enough young people left to do the job, approached me, knowing my background. He heard about my family and gave me an order to organize groups consisting of people up to the age of 50 years. I asked him if Stach Babij gave the approval and he assured me, “Yes.”

I organized groups of five not excluding myself, consisting of three young people up to the age of 25 – one elderly strong enough to carry a load and one from the tough guys. In the beginning it worked out O.K., but when we lost two of those, the toughest, they objected to participating in the hit groups. Suddenly they started to use more tactics by shooting into my place, and marauding my place with a pretext that I was hiding food. When I asked them who authorized them to do those things they stated Stach Babij himself.

I told Rathaus about it, and asked if I should stay on or not to show that I was scared and he told me I should sleep in his bunker. I felt very insecure with the whole situation, especially when my friend Holler, [illegible], Boucratz with whom I shared my bunker, advised me to resign and also my

friend who always walked with a rifle. He was a plutomary in the Polish army before the war and he stated “Kurva-Kouric glory mie urvie. / illegible / They are a bunch of underworld characters; they will back each other.”

Meantime the rainy season and frosty weather started to hurt our existence in the woods. The Germans started to attack us more often following the footsteps left in the mud and snow. This was the beginning of the fall season. Each time the Germans entered our area a few people got killed, but never those tough guys. We realized that Babij and his friends had a hiding bunker out of reach for us because as international outlaws they used to hide in the woods long before the war. It was to their benefit to have loosely organized guerilla members as sacrificial lambs, constantly attacked by escapees from the Russian army in German uniforms. They were audacious and the most vicious element of S.S. expedition.

One day in September, 1943, the German air force bombed and set fires for two consecutive days. We survived that attack in our bunkers because rain mixed with snow prevented the fire from spreading. After the two days of constant bombarding, the German special Commando was established and they started a sweeping liquidation of the guerillas in the woods from Babijorca up to Lysa Giora (a bare mountain) not touching the other west side of that mountain over where the Ukrainian underground was supposedly camped. The Ukrainians promised to Stach Babij and our group representatives to start shooting from their camp as soon as we started to shoot. It was surely a double-cross from their side; by letting us above to shoot, we actually exposed our location and the Germans could concentrate

on us to be liquidated. In that skirmish we lost about 80 people, none of the so-called Babij Friends.

Even Schutz, who together with us came to the woods and incidentally joined that group was ignored and left on his own. At this point he joined me in looking for a place to hide. It was impossible to find a place and suddenly we heard German voices and both of us decided to climb pine trees clean of snow to avoid footprints. He and I were supposed to climb a different tree, but he became so nervous that he came up on the same tree where I was, saying “You brought luck to me until now and I will not abandon you anymore.” But he was much bigger than I and clumsy; his rifle fell down and exploded. He wanted to go down and pick up the rifle. I asked him to stay put and I went down and threw the rifle as far away as I could in a forward direction disregarding the constant shooting in my direction. I climbed back on my tree. It did not take ten minutes before the Germans moved forward concentrating on the found rifle that I threw away and saying the ([illegible]) My companion was very happy and repeated a few times, “You and I were lucky and will survive together.” He realized that he was too big and clumsy to go down the tree and climb back.

The following day our so-called leaders came out from their hiding place and started to shoot into the air as a sign of victory, not realizing that the German encampment was still about ½ kilometer away. We could see them from the tree. We recognized them; they were talking loudly in Polish. After we told them that the Germans were still around, they disappeared into their hiding places not offering us the same protection. Both of us had to move to another place, leaving the tree without visible footsteps on the

ground. Bread was the only food and the only water was the dirty water in the creek. The Germans polluted the streams; we had to rely on the fresh rain, drinking it like “manna”-- but for my companion when it came to food, he became wild and willing to risk his life. At night he wanted to go to the nearest village to get it despite the Germans’ control of that area. I could easily survive with the little piece of bread and water.

From my position on the tree I could see that the Germans were reducing their presence in that area abandoning the old food supply. I tried to convince Schutz that in another day or two all that food would be his. While I was sitting in the tree three days in a row and watching every move in the German camp, he was acting like a wild animal from hunger. At one point I told him if he wanted to risk his life he should go, but not to tell the Germans that anyone else was there. I told him that by telling them, he would not save his life. Luckily enough, that particular evening the Germans left, but before doing that two planes were constantly shooting sporadically on the wooden area without response from our side. This was a sign that the mission was accomplished. That night we entered the camp area. We met many surviving comrades; we found a lot of food, potatoes, peels, bread, which under normal conditions we would not touch, and meat still warm. The food abandoned by the Germans was enough to last a few days.

Like in the ghetto after an action, we were looking for those who survived. The biggest victims were those who considered themselves very safe under the protection of Babij’s brother, who took over their possessions and supplied them with food. They were dependent on him and they failed to

help themselves, by hiding or fighting – an individual’s duty. Among them was Eisenberg’s son. As I mentioned before, Eisenberg was one of the original top advisers of the owner of A.S.A. K.Z. camp. This is the man whose family shared the same room with us in the camp. When he met me after the war in Bucharest, he asked me how come I was still alive and his son was killed. My answer was, “For the same reason that you are alive and my four brothers and family were killed.” (It is also a mystery how Eisenberg and Schroeder escaped to Hungary[illegible]!!!)

Now I had an occasion to tell him off; he had enough influence on the owner of that factory (August Schmidt) to get freedom for my brother Jaushob. My brother while working in the flour mill supplied Mr. Schroeder and Eisenberg with enough flour to survive. The same two guys were paid off by my brother to give me a job to keep the place clean and watch so no strangers would come in. Every day we used the bunker in the camp to hide escapees from the ghetto like myself and Schroeder’s cousin. In order to get the assignment for us two, they had the approval of August Schmidt. After the ghetto was liquidated the Jewish militia was assigned to take care of the camp. According to Mr. Schroeder, Eisenberg gave the O.K. to the Jewish militia to remove all illegals. My family and I became automatically illegal without any position in the camp and the factory. The Jewish militia felt threatened by people like me because we were laying [illegible] and planning to escape into the woods. They considered us trouble-makers. It did not take more than a week after liquidation of the ghetto until the Gestapo came to the camp, removed us as illegals and took us for liquidation to the cemetery.

Mr. Eisenberg promised his own family when he left for Hungary with a guide, to send the guide to take us and his family to Hungary. He had the hutzpah to spread (after the war) rumors about me being a trouble-maker. He also knew if he had been with us in the woods he would be executed like others from the Jewish militia (like Heller and Roth), who cooperated with the Gestapo. After the war in 1946 in Stuttgart my brother-in-law and I tried to make a case against August Schmidt, the owner of A.S.A. glass factory in Stryj; he was using slave Jewish labor but Eisenberg and Schroeder stated that he was very nice to his Jewish workers; how nice – none survived!!! He cooperated with the Gestapo and vice versa. When he achieved a point that he could replace them, he let the Gestapo liquidate all of the Jewish workers. My brother-in-law and I filed a complaint in Stuttgart, Germany against August Schmidt for employing slave labor. After Eisenberg and Schroeder defended him we did not hear from the Intelligence service of the U.S. since then.

(Note: he says to separate the chapter about Schroeder and Eisenberg and their associates.)

After that action the Germans (Nazis) recruited Ukrainians from the villages to collect the dead bodies. That time we lost about 50 people. The whole area from Babijovka up to the road leading toward Lysa Goia smelled from dead bodies, which were burned. Those who survived realized that we could not depend of the so-called leaders. We all moved to deeper woods and every one of us started to make plans for the winter. Those strangers who were more acquainted with that area, those who originally lived in Dolina and suburbs made contact with their Gentile neighbors to be supplied with

food. They started to build better bunkers. Some of them survived the winter of 1944 and the war. A few of them are still alive. About 12 of us decided with the help of a brother-in-law of Majola, the original guide for many who escaped the ghettos to Hungary in 1943, to walk in deep snow toward the Hungarian border. It was a very difficult trip – very little food supply and no real shoes. In the villages in which we stopped off, the barking of dogs was very scary, a sign that some strangers were in the neighborhood. From the top of the mountains we could see Germans [illegible] tanks slats (sanka) moving toward the South. Even for people who used that road before the war for trading with horses and other merchandise on both sides of the border they could not move in the area covered by snow. Some of us were contemplating suicide by getting forever in snow. Each time we were encouraged by those who knew that area that we were almost there; we reached the Hungarian border. We moved very slowly; every few minutes another man was in front creating new step marks to make it easier to go forward. In the areas were [illegible] the shepherds used to hide the animals and themselves from severe winds and rain. In the summer we used to stop and dry on a fire our feet and socks (suates [illegible]) from our feet, and eat something and move forward – daytime only.

Then suddenly we reached an area where a mountain was on one side full of snow and the other side (Southern) was almost clear. You could see light from fires and hear dogs barking. At one point at night I could see two horses passing in front of us. It was so cloudy that they (probably border police) could not see us and my friend and I were the only ones who claimed to see those horses. We decided to stay put until the early morning. We

were told that Lenherhaus[*illegible*] and the fellow, Schutz, who survived on the same tree as I, got so hungry and excited they decided to reach the place where the light came from and they never came back. This was a sign that we had to change our destination, because if they caught them there was a possibility they would be tortured to disclose our whereabouts. From that moment that whole day was aimless movement, trying to find a place with dense trees. At the end of the day we could see a river with light coming from little houses. When it got dark we started to explore the situation. We came to a place where a lady was hanging up her wet laundry outside. The laundry got frozen. We were told by our guides that the peasants were hanging up wet laundry in expectation of a sunny day and that the sun got so strong the laundry melted and dried and the [*illegible*] were freezing to death and the laundry dried that way.

We went very slowly around that area to investigate what kind of people lived there to find out if that was the right place to expose oneself without becoming violent in pursuit of food and making future plans. Those people on the Hungarian side spoke the Ukrainian language, so one went near a house and spoke to a woman and he was told that one passage led toward Torun and the other to Bystoica. We decided to go to Bystoica. We were told by our so-called guide that Bystoica had some Jews living there. When we approached Bystoica we saw an isolated house with candles burning. When we got closer we realized it was very active and many people were around that house and we decided that all the signs pointed toward it must be Friday night candle lights and we decided to make a move before the candles burned out.

On the way to Hungary, we lost the self-proclaimed leader Lendeubaum and my hungry friend Schutz. Under those circumstances they turned to my friend Honisk and me. (Note: according to a letter from Paris Hoolougfer [*illegible*] his name was different and he was in touch after the war all the time with him and somehow they had trouble finding me until the early 90s when Laumper from Bothie[*illegible*] Shoes found somebody who knew my address. Since then he wrote to me frequently. (I will check the letters from him for details[*illegible*])

Whenever there was a dangerous situation they felt comfortable with us because we never delegated any responsibility to anyone. Both of us examined the situation and picked three other people and we knocked at the door and entered the house. There we found two elderly people and four children. While we entered one boy jumped through the window and we were told in Jewish it was very dangerous for us to stay there because the border police (gendarmes with feathers on their hats) were very strict and “they will arrest you and usually they send you back and deliver you to the Germans on the Polish side of the border.” We asked them how many policemen were stationed in that village and they told us two to three with rifles.

We calmed those people down, went outside for a few minutes and we decided if two of the policemen came we should take them hostage. It was a big undertaking because we were not sure that our revolvers and one rifle were working. As soon as we approached them (10 of us), they gave up the rifles and we started to talk to them. We told them that we had in the wood about 10 armed people and we would like to be transferred by truck to Hust,

the nearest city with a Jewish population. We were also sure that the Jewish community in that town would be in a position to help us. There existed a friendly relation between Hungary and Poland, if you penetrated 35 km deep into each other's territory to report to the police and they would accept you as a refugee. We did not have anyone in the woods waiting for us, but to force them to act we told them that unless they helped us we would have to go back into the woods to consult our leaders, but we would have to take both policemen and one boy with us and the leader would decide their future.

At that point they started to talk Hungarian and we insisted they speak Ukrainian or Jewish. They told us to wait until after Sabbath/Szabos. They had a beer factory that delivered barrels of beer every day to Hust. That man was brought into that house and we planned to be shipped under the barrels to Hust.

On every bridge the trucks were checked for documents; the trucks were well-known to the soldiers on check points, and we had a smooth ride to Hust. In Hust all ten of us were well received. We got decent, used clothing, we stayed in the synagogue, went to bath houses (luxurious life in comparison to the past few months in the woods). We thought by taking baths we would be clean of lice but we were wrong.

We took a train (got tickets bought for us by the Jewish (Genocide) Committee. Suddenly we saw people moving out from our train compartment. We realized that the lice tried to leave their jail on our skin for something better; it looked like they realized that the others had more

nutrition in their bodies. Finally after a few hours we arrived in Budapest and we went straight to 11 Kivaly utca [illegible] near Doblinca where all escapees used to get together. There were people representing Jewish organizations. They gave us a few peugos; we went to Kival utca 6, where we found rooms. This was the height of the harsh winter. For us it was a salvation. This was the area [illegible] of the lowest element – thieves, prostitutes, even – but this was the only place that would accept our type of people. We could not tell them that we were in as good an economic position before the war as was the case [illegible] now. We had to deal with the reality of life and gradually lift ourselves out of those inferior conditions. Two [illegible] of us shared a room and one bed with dilapidated bedding and towels -- [illegible]

At night I could not adjust myself to sleeping in a bed. Being used to sleeping on the ground, it required an adjustment to a luxurious, better life. First we tried to sleep on the mattress and then I tried on the springs. This was somewhat inconvenient. Then we decided to cover the window and lie down on the floor. On the floor was the most convenient place to sleep.

I am trying to figure out what was wrong sleeping on the mattress; my theory is that our partners (lice and other insects, like roaches – called varteen/varzen) in the mattress, were competing in getting some blood out of our bodies for nourishment. That's why we could not sleep under any blankets or on mattresses and we felt more convenient on the wooden floor.

After a few days of constantly taking baths we felt we were almost deloused and we could look for better lodging facilities and we went to get a haircut in

the same area. The barber had experience with people like us. He took me to the back room. I asked him why he was taking me to the other room and he explained that the same thing happened to him when he came to Budapest. He thought that after a few days he was clean of lice not knowing that there are a few layers of skin and muscle and each of them have the lice hiding. He gave me a haircut and said not to worry, that next time I would be free of the lice. After two weeks I visited him again; he put some kind of dark-looking oil on me, which concluded my fight with small lice.

It took a few weeks for me to adjust to a new life. On Gazautch in Budapest was a Polish library, where I spent a lot of time. I got acquainted with the wife of a general of the Polish army before the war, known as Mershuk/*[illegible]*]. He was a short man. His wife was in charge of the bibliotcha (Polish library). She was so nice to me. She advised me to register on the Keogh police, and I got my order to settle in Baja. Baja was a small town in Southern Hungary with a nice Jewish population, and a Jewish hospital. Most of the Jewish population spoke German. I found there a Family Krieger (husband, wife, and child) on Polish papers. In general, I liked the environment in Baja with beautiful restaurants and inexpensive nightclubs, but I realized it was too good to be realistically a lasting condition, especially since the country was surrounded by Nazis.

I lived there as Pollack and moved away from the Jewish section and I volunteered on a job in the bakery (my parents told me from experience, if you deal with food or work even without money, you will not die from hunger). I got myself a job distributing bread and rolls in all the food stores, carrying a big basket on my back. I used to work from 6-10 in the morning

and then I took over a route to distribute milk to doctors and dentists in town. I was allowed by the director of the Jewish Hospital to conduct the distribution from the ice room in the hospital. For that I was paid and had to pay. I used to deliver the milk to all doctors connected with that hospital. With that job I was finished about 11:30 a.m., then I went to nap an hour and in the afternoon I socialized with others of similar background – Jewish and Polish refugees. We all had papers. I had a birth certificate from a Catholic priest and the people I lived with were pleasant, a very religious people. They liked me because I had my Bible and prayed every day. They called me Istan (on my birth certificate my name was Duda Stanislau).

The refugees like myself conducted a more [illegible] life. Most of us had a little job on the side. Besides, we got some minor support from the YMCA, which was partially subsidized by the Jeasket [illegible] Jewish Federations of U.S.A.). There were rumors that Milass [illegible] party (Facists in the government) were against Horthy's policy. Horthy's attitude was that all the citizens, Jewish and non-Jewish, must be protected. The opinion of the Jewish population was that Horthy was a sophisticated politician and Hitler would not interfere with [illegible] policy of Hungary.

The Polish refugees were respected by the Hungarian population; each time we had contact with Hungarians they stressed that Lengel-Madiasro bratslide [illegible] (friendship between Polish and Hungarian people).

The Polish refugees had to register every Sunday at the police station and report any change of address. Once one of the detectives recognized me

because he lived in the same neighborhood. On Sunday I saw him, his wife and daughter, walking to the church and his daughter recognized me and introduced me to her parents as her tennis partner. A few times a week I used to go on the bicycle and bring a tennis racket to play tennis. Both of us became friendly. Many times I took her on my bicycle to the tennis court. While in Budapest I bought a suit just for the purpose of going out. She got tired of seeing me wearing the same suit every Sunday. Her father insisted I should try on his suits. His jackets fit me O.K. but the pants did not fit me. From then on I had no problem changing jackets. I behaved like a proper gentleman. I tried my hardest not to destroy our friendship and limit our physical contact to the proper level. I never forgot my circumstances. Any little mistake on my part would be dangerous and could expose my Jewish background. I avoided any [illegible] while in her company with real Pollacks, because they could be very cruel.

My usual life was: to work almost every day until about 12 o'clock, twice a week play tennis, Sunday night my girl friend's church, always with her family, then both of us spent [illegible] in a nice gypsy music atmosphere. We spent our money wisely, never going to a bar, never got drunk. For the last 2-3 months my life was normal and I prayed to God it should stay that way until the war would be over. All of us among ourselves consider themselves pseudo-Pollacks. My brother-in-law's cousin, Mr. Torene[illegible] was in Baja also. He spent a lot of time in the Jewish Hospital in Baja. I got friendly with the director of the hospital, who was circumcised, and was raised as a Jew. Even to them I did not expose myself, never mentioning my Jewish heritage.

One Sunday morning in April, 1944, walking to the church with my girlfriend we saw all over town German soldiers, German tanks and motor vehicles. It sounded like a friendly visit by the Germans with their allies. A few hours later that day it was announced that Horthy would address the nation. All of us were anxious to hear his speech. Horthy started his speech by stating that he invited the Germans as friends and then he proceeded and instructed his government officials not to take orders from the German authority and did not mention the occupation army. At this point the station cut down the speech and replaced it with music.

At this point we realized the Germans were in Hungary as a forced occupation power. The Germans removed Horthy from power and he was unreachable. There were rumors that a day before, Horthy packed up his family and his daughter with her Jewish husband and their belongings and went to Rumania under the wing of young King Michael, whose government was very close to Hitler's regime. Horthy was considered more independent thinking. He extended his hand to the Serbian refugees while the Rumanian government acted more hostile toward them because of their connection with Tito's Liberation movement.

Every Sunday from then on the refugees had to fill out different forms. Each of the forms had questions related to our connection with the Polish terrorists, Polish underground, about our background, and whether we had Jewish relations. They put more heat on us (all the Polish refugees). I felt it would be better to be in a big city like Budapest.

To my disappointment in Budapest the Hungarian detectives helping out the Gestapo arrested many of us and kept up on the Gestapo Foutca/ [illegible] /. I realized that we were in big trouble because the interrogation was done by experienced Gestapo men in [illegible] clothes. Some of them spoke Polish. In the beginning the Gestapo [illegible] were very hostile, cruel, physically brutalizing. A few days later Gestapo in business suits took us over. Their approach was entirely different – “We are friends and our aim is the same as yours – to defy the Jewish conspiracy and rule the world.” I wasn’t fooled by them, but I had no information to give them. They asked me if I was willing to work with them. I and probably others gave very little information, because we did not have any. But I told them the place they were getting together in Ersabth Keant and Andrassy utea. I figured it was a very busy street and maybe I would be able to escape. I never mentioned to them that I came from Baja. Three Hungarian detectives took four of us (we did not know each other from before) by bus. When we came to that corner I indicated two strangers, nicely dressed Hungarians, near a delicatessen store and I walked away. While they asked those people for their ID, I escaped, running straight to the railroad station back to Baja. The conductor asked me for the ticket. I looked for it in my pockets and I made believe that I lost it or I gave it to him at the entrance door. I wasn’t very well versed in the Hungarian language. Somehow he was lenient and indicated I should sit down. When in Baja I met my girlfriend and I asked her why she did not check on me, I told her I hurt my leg and I could not walk. It seems to me that her father fixed up the book, because nobody asked me anything in regard to me missing a few weeks and not reporting to the police on Sundays.

I resumed my job in the bakery, distributing bread to stores sometimes. Meanwhile, the situation in Baja changed. The Jewish hospital people received letters to report to the railroad station. They were told not to take more than 2 valises along. They were told that they would be assigned to jobs to help the Germans win the war. Most of the Jews in Baja (Southern part of Hungary) were reformed and very naïve and 90 percent of them were in interfaith marriages. The Polish refugees while reporting on Sunday (at the police station) were put in the big room by the Hungarian police. In the adjoining room there were long tables – on one side Hungarian doctors and on the other side detectives.

The doctors' job was to indicate to the detectives which of them was circumcised. Those were separated and turned over to the police. When my turn came the detective, my girlfriend's father, knocked at the doctor's shoulder and told me I should go back to work. Until now I suspect that he wasn't sure that I was a Gentile (Arian). Women with babies (nobody circumcised their children under the circumstances) were free to go, but women with circumcised children were declared Jewish and put into wagons to Aushwitz.

The director of the Jewish Hospital in Baja was Jewish, and married to a Gentile Hungarian and her two boys were circumcised. They had a big farm in Baja (over the [illegible] Baja). I used to ride on the bicycle to that place to play tennis. The court was not far from that place and sometimes I rode it to work, to pick up vegetables or to pick grapes. She supposedly remained Catholic and I used to see her in the church on Sundays. Once going out of the church, the Hungarian police notified all Jews to report

Monday morning to the railroad station. The notice read that everyone should take along no more than two valises and warm blankets and sandwiches, because the trip might last 2-3 hours. I approached that lady and explained to her what the consequences of that notice would be. I told her that the valises would immediately be confiscated and sent to Germany. All of the Jews on that transport would get cards to be mailed back that they arrived safely to their destination and that they were treated very well. Those cards would be required by each of them dated one day later and I told her that they would get the same treatments ([illegible] Gas chambers) like the Polish Jews and would never return back to Baja and I pleaded with her that she should build a bunker on her farm and hide her husband with her two boys. Her answer to me was that because she trusted me I should take those two boys on the farm in working clothes. We would build on that farm a Kozyba (a temporary house) where we could sleep.

I, on the other hand, felt more secure in the outskirts of Baja, registering every Sunday with the police using the name of Duda Staniclau. I was known as a boy Istan delivering bakery products (bread and milk) with big baskets on my back to stores.

When she received a card signed by her husband, she came to see her kids on the farm, which I visited very often, especially when it was a nice day in order to raise additional money to support myself and pay my rent. She showed the kids that letter against my advice. When I told her again what was to be expected, she insisted that her husband would write again. She never received any letter for the next few weeks. When I told her not to expose her kids to go back into town, she told me that her neighbors knew

that her kids were going to school and studying in Budapest and also realized that her husband was a bad man and a Christ killer.

Since that time I said to myself that I was dealing with a narrow-minded person and stopped any contact with her. During the late summer when the season of working came around I asked to be transferred to the little town Dunasent Benedect where grape picking was popular and boys like me (Polish refugees) melted into that society, working, eating and praying/*[illegible]* / The wine was made in a very simple way. Big bowls were filled with grapes, a big wooden board placed on the top and we stepped on it every day over and off and the pure wine came out through the crane/*[illegible]* / near the bottom. While working in the field, collecting grapes, we heard constant shooting on both sides of the Danube River, but we did not see soldiers on either side. As the exchange of bullets was louder, that meant that the front was getting closer. It looked to us like if the Russian soldiers came closer to our village, there would be no bunker to hide from bullets. A few of us decided to walk like other peasants with vegetables and grapes to the nearest town Kalocha. In Kalocha we saw German officers -- *[illegible]* / continually pulling back to the West side of the Danube River. This took place for a couple of days. At one point it looked like the German convoy was surrounded (encircled). We decided to go to the nearest church on the narrow street of Kalocha. There we were waiting until it got very quiet, no shooting. We asked the attendant of the church if he saw anyone down the street. A few hours later the Russian soldiers with tanks and other military vehicles approached the area. We, out of happiness, jumped out and started to welcome our liberators. But the liberators, most drunk, started to ask questions: "How come you are here, not fighting the Germans;" they

accused us of being the outerband working with the Germans. Then suddenly an officer approached us and asked us if anyone of us was Jewish and he spoke a few words in Judish and I exclaimed the “San [illegible]/Israel.” This officer took us away from the front line a few blocks away and set us up in an abandoned house, gave us food, gave us passes, and advised us to go away from the front line as soon as the trains started rolling. They indicated that in ARAD and Bucharest there were nice Jewish organizations handling survivors (joined with the U.S.A.). On the way to Arcad the train stopped in Sabotica and we waited a few days to get a train to Rumania. A trip which usually took a few hours took us about five days. We arrived in Arad, but the people there were too poor to help us; they relied themselves on help from the J/ illegible] in Bucharest. So a few of us decided to move on to Bucharest, where we were greeted with open arms by our Joint representative and we were given enough money to survive, and clean, second-hand clothing. This organization was located on Calia Mosher 38. Each of us was taken in by a Jewish family to stay with them. We ate in places – Y.M.C.A., Salvation Army type kitchens. After a few days, I got involved in reorganizing our Refugee Center.

The Jesuit [illegible] people knew about my father and they trusted me with money allotments for all the Nazi survivors in Bucharest, which I left to most of my surviving family. In that center I met people like me who were looking for any family survivors. I wrote letters to Stryj without any answer. I met a few younger boys who decided to go to Stryj and other places nearby. I asked them to deliver my letter to Hupasowski/ illegible] who was in charge of our unit during the Russian and German occupation. They delivered my letter to Hupasowski and he got in touch with my brother-in-

law and I received a note from my sister, that my brother-in-law and my mother were the only survivors of the Nazi camp and they indicated that we might meet in Boyton, a Schlesian[*illegible*] on a definite date in 1945. I made sure to be in Poland on that date, where I met the remainder of my family. That means my brother-in-law, my sister, and my dear mother, and a [*illegible*] girl from Jona's side of the family. Since then we started to think about our future. My mother constantly asked me to look harder, that maybe someone from my four brothers and families were alive. NO ONE was or is alive.