If I Forget Thee...

The destruction of the shtetl Butrimantz



Testimony by Riva Lozansky and other witnesses

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If I Forget Thee...

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Photo of a pin found in November 1982 at the site of the mass grave where the last Jews of Butrimantz were killed on October 1, 1941.

Engraved in the pin are the Hebrew words: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem..."

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget her cunning.
If I do not remember thee,
Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth.

Psalm cxxxvii, 5-6

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translation by Eva Tverskoy
edited by Olga Zabludoff and Lily Poritz Miller
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Foreword

Lithuania had the worst record of all countries occupied by the Nazis. Almost 94 percent of the Lithuanian Jewry was annihilated during the German occupation. The majority of the killings were executed by the Lithuanians. The slaughter of innocent people was carried out with unbelievable speed and brutality.

Lithuania was among the few places where the local Jews were killed on the spot and generally not sent elsewhere to be killed. The local population voluntarily carried out the mass murder. So it was in Butrimantz and so it was in most of the other places in Lithuania.

The testimonies of the survivors of Butrimantz recount the fate of the Lithuanian Jewry. *If I Forget Thee...* is of great importance to the Jewish nation. The English edition contributes enormously.

Joseph A. Melamed, Chairman
Association of Lithuanian Jews

Tel Aviv, Israel
October 1998

The English Edition

This book has journeyed through three languages and three continents. It started in 1941 in the forests of Lithuania - a diary written in Yiddish on scraps of paper. The writer, Riva Lozansky, was then a woman in her twenties hiding from the Nazis with her mother. The Lozanskys were from Butrimantz, a *shtetl* in southern Lithuania.

Four decades later, as Vladimir Rais and Yaakov Shechter of Vilna were about to emigrate to Israel, they felt compelled to take a final look at their native Lithuania, a country soaked in Jewish blood. They set out to collect and record the memories of those who had survived and witnessed the destruction of a typical Eastern European *shtetl.* They selected Butrimantz.

Riva Lozansky's Yiddish manuscript became the substance of a book of testimonies published in 1985 in Israel. Entitled *If I Forget Thee...* the book was issued in Russian by SHAMIR Publishing House of Jerusalem.

Nine years later Lisa Beth Kaplan of Carmel Valley, California, visited Lithuania, met Riva Lozansky, and brought back a copy of *If I Forget Thee...* When the book came to our attention, three of us with roots in Butrimantz decided to have the Russian book translated into English. Subsequently, we requested and obtained permission from SHAMIR to publish an English edition.

Our original intention was to issue an English-language replica of the Russian text. As the project evolved, however, the book took on a life of its own. Additional material was provided by Riva Lozansky: a family-by-family list of those who perished in Butrimantz. We researched the escape of the major executioner in Butrimantz and traced his new life in Canada until his death in 1974, this with the kind assistance of Eli Rosenbaum, director of the Office of Special

Investigations of the US Department of Justice. We further expanded the book by adding a glossary and a list of towns.

Finally, we agreed that since this is a book in memory of typical Jews who had lived in a typical *shtetl*, it should ring of those voices and those times. Those voices spoke of "Kovno," not "Kaunas," "Vilna," not "Vilnius." Accordingly we changed the Lithuanian names of all the towns mentioned in this book to their Yiddish equivalents. Most important, we know that the Jews who had lived in this *shtetl* called their home "Butrimantz" and not "Butrimonys." It is only in instances where no Yiddish names could be identified that we retained the Lithuanian form.

Most of the old photographs in the photo section of this book were salvaged by Riva Lozansky after the war. She bought or traded them from the local Lithuanians who had become the occupants of the former Jewish homes. Some of the photographs still hung on the walls. Others were found in attics.

Nekome is a Yiddish word which means "revenge." It is a word which appeared often in the songs of the partisans of Vilna. It is a word which was often on the lips of the dying.

Their deaths were never avenged. The murderers were rarely brought to justice. But we hope that this book fulfills the traditional Hebrew blessing for the dead:

ת'נ'צ'ב'ה'

May their souls be bound into the bond of eternal life.

It means that they must never be forgotten.

Stephen W. Grafman
Potomac, Maryland

Carl Horvitz
Palo Alto, California

Olga Zabludoff
Washington, DC

September 1998

Acknowledgments

Few jobs get done without the help of others. This book is no exception, although we managed to keep the cast to a minimum.

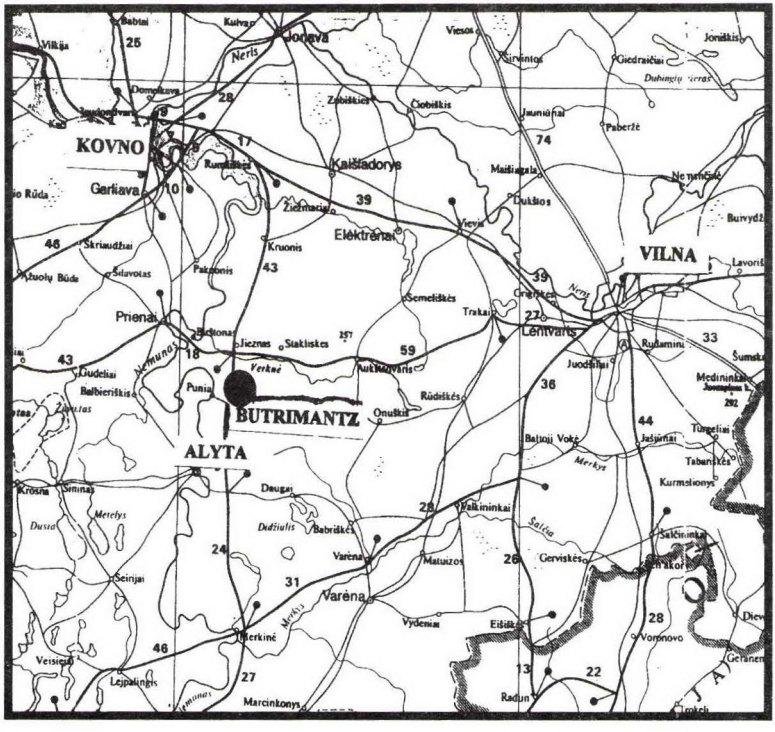
We are grateful to Lisa Beth Kaplan of Carmel Valley, California, for bringing the predecessor of this book - its Russian parent - to the United States. We owe special thanks to Professor Herman Branover, editor-in-chief of SHAMIR Publishing House, Jerusalem, for giving us permission - and his blessings - to translate the Russian book into English and to publish our own edition. Eva Tverskoy of Palo Alto, California, did a wonderful job of translating the book into English. We appreciate the many hours given freely by Caroline Slavin of Washington, DC, whose fluency in both Russian and English enabled us to resolve the endless questions that arose during the editing process. Our thanks to Professor Max Ticktin who teaches Jewish studies at George Washington University, Washington, DC, for his review of the manuscript and his sage comments.

It is said that the person who finishes a task is the one who performs the *mitzvah.* This credit belongs to Lily Poritz Miller of Toronto, Canada, who steered this book to completion.

...How many unwritten books died with them?
How many uncomposed symphonies suffocated in their throats?
How many scientific discoveries did not mature in their intellects?
Every one of them was killed twice:
once as a child led by the Nazis to their death,
and again as the adult he or she might have been.
The Nazis stole them not only from their families and their people,
but from the whole of humankind.
I, as President of the State of Israel,
can grieve for them and commemorate them,
but I cannot forgive in their name....

From the address by Israeli President Ezer Weizman
to the Bundestag and Bundesrat of the
Federal Republic of Germany
January 16, 1996


Lithuania
Baltic Sea
Latvia
Mazeikiai
Birzai
Telsiai
Kursenai
Joniskelis
Pandelys
Palanga
Siauliai
Kretinga
Plunge
Klaipeda
Rietavas
Radviliskis
Panevezys
Gargzdai
Kelme
Utena
Dukstas
Silute
Kedainiai
Ukmerge
Taurage
Svencionneliai
Jurbarkas
Joniava
Pabrade
Kaunas
Kaisiadorys
Kazlu Ruda
Kapsukas
BUTRIMANTZ
Alytus
Varena
Poland
Belarus


KOVNO
Garliava
Kaisiadorys
Elektrenai
VILNA
Lentvaris
Prienai
BUTRIMANTZ
ALYTA
Varena
Merkine
Druskininkai
Grevenos
Juodsiliai
Rudamina
Medininkai
Tabariskes
Kurmelionys
Salcininkai
Gervieskes
Vilnius
Voronovo
Radun
Marcinkonys
Lazdijai
Veisiejai
Seirijai
Daugai
Simnas
Krosna
Dusia
Merkys
Nemunas
Neris
Verkne
Punia
Alytus
Onuskis
Rudiskes
Matuizos
Vydenai
Eisiskes
Balsiai
Kalvarija
Jonava
Domeikava
Ziemaiciai
Kruonis
Pakuonis
Semeliskes
Traku
Jaunuonai
Paberze
Maisiagala
Dukstos
Giedraiciai
Joniskis
Nemencine
Burvydz
Lavoris
Tabariskes
Tungeliai
Jasunai
Salcininkai
Sumskas
Ziezmariai
Staliskes
Kalviskes
Zapsiskes
Ciobiskis
Viesos
Sirvintos
Dubingiu Ares
Skriaudziai
Zuoly Buda
Gelvonai
Dudeliai
Belbieriskis
Zarenai
Ziezmas
Lynezeris
Dubingiu Ares
Merkys
Salcia
Didiulis
Bebrdkes
Varena
Seirijai
Merkine
Veisiejai
Lazdijai
Marcinkonys
Druskininkai
Belarus
Poland
Latvia

Butrimantz, the Shtetl

by Olga Zabludoff

There are about 2,000 Jews who need to be taken care of in the near future, stated the 1941 report of K. Pelyonis, chief of police in Butrimantz.

Our goal, solving the Jewish problem in Lithuania, has been reached, reported SS Colonel Karl Jager in his December 1, 1941, cable to Berlin.

In a few months in 1941 - from summer to winter - 80 percent of Lithuania's Jewish community was extinguished. They had numbered 235,000 when Germany invaded the country. At the end of the war, only 18,000 were left.

The goal, "solving the Jewish problem," had been accomplished for the Nazis by their willing assistants - the Lithuanians, the neighbors of the Jews who had coexisted in the *shtetlach* for centuries. They became Hitler's executioners, playing out the final solution to the Jewish problem in a scenario often described but never comprehended.

In Butrimantz the "activists" herded Jewish men, women and children to their slaughter. Even in death families were separated as they were sorted according to their executioners' whims. Fathers and sons to the mass graves in nearby Alyta; children and grandparents to the mass graves in Butrimantz. "To the left, to the right"... as though it would make a difference in their final destination.

Of the 2,000 Jews in Butrimantz and its surrounding Jewish settlements, only ten survived. Today five of them are still alive.

The *shtetl* Butrimantz was not unique. Its origin, lifestyle and people were much the same as in hundreds of *shtetlach* across Eastern Europe. The destruction of

Butrimantz was not unique either. It was a fate shared by every other *shtetl:* the plots were identical, the cries of the massacres in the forests, the Jewish blood that soaked the earth.

Sometimes called a village, sometimes a town, Butrimantz is in southern Lithuania, nestled in picturesque green hills. It is 35 miles southeast of Kovno, 48 miles southwest of Vilna, and 12 miles northeast of Alyta, the district capital. About 200 Jewish families were living in Butrimantz in the summer of 1941, a majority population that soon became the hunted.

There were three synagogues in the *shtetl.* Every Friday, just as the sun would start to set, the same call would echo through the town: *"In shul arain!"* ("To the synagogue!"), which signaled the coming of the Sabbath. The stores would close. The men would hurry to the synagogue and the women would set the table. There was always *challah* on the Sabbath table. It was not often that a Jew had the luxury of white bread!

The spiritual nucleus of Butrimantz was the synagogue committee, whose leadership in the pre-war years was assigned to Itsik Pertzikowitz. In reality, however, Rivka Gordon was the head. This committee would resolve conflicts in the community, functioning as arbitrator, peacemaker, judge. It also established a shelter for homeless Jews. They named it *Hachnasat Orchim* ("Welcome" in Hebrew). The synagogue committee, which was also responsible for funerals in the *shtetl,* governed the *Chevra Kadisha* ("Holy Society"), the Jewish burial society.

The last rabbi in Butrimantz was Avraham-Moshe Vitkind, who was forced to wear a shoemaker's hat as he was marched to his death in Alyta. The shoemaker in this surrealistic play was wearing the rabbi's hat.

Dr. Gabay was the local physician. He was one of the ten survivors of the *shtetl.* Before he escaped he left poison for his 90-year-old mother and his blind brother:

"Drink this if they find you. It won't hurt when you die this way." When the executioners came to round them up, there was silence in response to their hollers.... It's a story that is still repeated by aging Lithuanians who are willing to remember the savage autumn of 1941.

The Jewish People's Bank, which had 230 members before the war, was the center of economic life in Butrimantz. The bank was established in the mid-1920s by Joseph Poritz, who came to the *shtetl* to serve as the first manager. He remained as head of the bank until the end of the decade, when he and Sarah Shapiro of Butrimantz were married and emigrated to South Africa.

The first public vehicle, a bus, appeared in Butrimantz in the late 1930s. The owner, Hona Boyarsky, started a bus route to Kovno. But his fare was too high for most of the locals, and the new venture had little success.

The Shevahs, a family of musicians, played at all the weddings, whether they were Jewish, Lithuanian or Polish. Rudnik and Keidansky were the *shochets* in the *shtetl,* Keidansky doubling as a cantor. Yoshe-Leizer Berezovsky was the clockmaster of Butrimantz. He also performed on his violin. Podlinsky, the gifted pottery maker, earned his living as a butcher, of which there were about twenty in Butrimantz.

Binyamin Mikleshansky and Dov Slobodsky were librarians in the public library. They were among the intellectuals of Butrimantz. Moshe Badash was the town's cinematographer. Twice a week he would set up his film projector and show movies while Berezovsky played the violin.

Berl Vinetsky was the principal of the local school. He and the teachers Hillel Millstein, Litvin and Arpahsander taught Jewish history, the history of Lithuania, math and geography to about 200 children. Educational leaders in the community were Binyamin Boyarsky, Dov-Berl Lozansky, Naividl, Binder and Tartakovsky.

"The youth," said Dvora Reznik, one of the ten

survivors of Butrimantz, "were divided into two groups, the idealists and the crazy. The idealists left for Palestine. The crazy ones remained to search for happiness in Lithuania ... but that was never meant to be ..."

Zalman Ratsin, who fought for the Red Army in World War II, recollected the following about the political life of Butrimantz:

"We had three Zionist groups, a Communist party and the Komsomol. I worked in the Komsomol. There were only about nine of us. I remember the secretary of our unit, Leiba Alfowitz - he later died in the war; Noah Boyarsky - Hona's second son; and front-line soldiers Chaim Lerman and Dovid Shoufer. We also had Lithuanian members - Alishauskas, Raugsha and Bronislauskas.

"We said: 'Our native land is Lithuania. We won't go to Palestine. We'll stay here and we'll build socialism in Butrimantz.' And we did build it.... We raised the red flag every 1st of May and 7th of November, collected money for our cause, and distributed propaganda leaflets. The Lithuanian authorities gave long jail sentences for that! Our older friends, Communists Peker, Sharlis and Alter Boyarsky, Hona's eldest son, were always involved in conspiracies; our younger friends worked mainly for the Zionist organizations, Gordon and Beitar."

Riva Lozansky speaks:

"Only after forty years did I fully realize how our lives were ridden with poverty and obstacles. But we knew no other way of life, and we were contented and involved. Each evening we would go to our various clubs and would dance and have fun, sometimes till dawn.

"Our lives moved slowly, like a calm sea, unruffled by the gathering storm. Then came the summer of 1941, transforming our *shtetl* Butrimantz into a flaming cemetery."

Some of the information in this section was extracted from the Introduction by Vladimir Rais and Yaakov Shechter in the Russian edition of this book.

by Riva Lozansky

I was born in Butrimantz. My sisters - Basya, Tsila and Nehama - were born in Butrimantz. Our mother, Dora Itskowitz, was also born in Butrimantz.

If you take the road from Butrimantz to Klidzenys, you will find two large mass graves. You should know that almost everyone who participated in these murders was also born in Butrimantz....

Our parents were married in 1911. My father, Dov Lozansky, was born in the Ukraine in a town near Kiev called Chipovich, but after the marriage, he moved to Lithuania.

My youngest sister was named Nehama after our father's brother Nehemye. Nehemye lived in Kiev. He came to visit us once after a pogrom in Kiev. To his great misfortune, he had seen six of his cousins die. When he returned home, he died too. He was not even thirty.

Nehama had a very strong will and she was really striving for education. We were all educated. Basya even completed high school; I went through seven years; and Tsila, six. Only the first four years of schooling were free. The rest cost quite a large sum of money.

Our father said, "All the boxes in our store are empty. They stand there simply for appearance. It's shameful. Without money we cannot help with your education. I want Nehama to learn to sew."

Nehama did not listen.

"I won't live if I cannot go to school."

She even tried to poison herself. But still there was not enough money for her tuition.

Only the Lithuanian high school was free. In order to attend, however, it was necessary for the student to have a good knowledge of Lithuanian, so Nehama decided to enroll in the fourth grade of the free Lithuanian elementary school.

The Jewish kids would follow her, yelling, "*Goye!* Why do you write on Saturday?"

The rabbi of the *shtetl* found out about Nehama and called to see her. The girl cried a lot and brought a note from the principal of the school saying that Nehama didn't write on Saturdays, but only listened. The rabbi accepted the note and let Nehama find secret ways to get to school.

A year passed and our family became even poorer. If Nehama had lived at home and gone to school in our own town, we would have had enough money, but the Lithuanian school was in Visokidvor. Our father could not afford this.

That was when Nehama decided to employ her cunning. The new school year had just begun, and the ten-year-old girl was getting restless. Father was preparing to go to his friend, a Polish woman named Rasohatski, to buy some apples for the winter. Rasohatski lived not too far from the school in Visokidvor. Nehama successfully convinced Father to allow her to go with him. No one noticed that she took along a bag containing her school uniform.

When they reached their destination, Father went to negotiate a price for the apples. Nehama remained in the wagon. When Father returned, she was gone.

Next to Rasohatski's house there was a lake in which carp were bred. Father, who started to panic in a while, called Rasohatski and told her that he thought Nehama had drowned. Rasohatski called her laborers, and everyone was frantically trying to figure out where Nehama could be.

People were dragging nets through the lake when one of the workers said, "I saw a red-headed girl change into a school uniform in the garden. I think she was heading toward Visokidvor."

Father untied the horse from the wagon, jumped onto it and made it race as fast as it could. As soon as he reached the town, he discovered that some people had seen the red-headed girl. They also told him she had gone to see the principal of their high school.

Father couldn't speak Lithuanian. He couldn't speak Yiddish very well either. His native tongue was Russian. In order to communicate with the principal in Lithuanian, he was fortunate to locate a Butrimantz friend, Badash.

Nehama was sitting behind a desk, filling out an application. As soon as she saw her father, she ran toward him and started begging him to let her stay.

At the same time, the principal was saying to Badash, "I have never in my life seen a child who wants so much to learn that she's willing to work to compensate for housing and food."

The principal was so deeply touched by this girl that he allowed her to stay in his own house. Nehama, in turn, studied hard, helped the principal's two small children with their homework, and even made time to sew some pretty doilies and pillowcases for the owners of the house.

Within a year and a half Nehama started to rent an apartment from her new friend, Farber.

The tuition was waived for students who received very high grades. Father didn't have to pay for Nehama even once, and he never sent her any money to help with her living expenses. I still can't figure out how she managed, but every holiday she would walk almost sixteen miles to our house, laden with gifts.

After Nehama completed four years of study, she moved to Kushidar in order to develop her education further. Here the fourteen-year-old Nehama organized an association that helped young Jews from poor families. She was funding it with some of her own money which she earned by doing various things, including tutoring and sewing clothes for these same children.

In 1940, under Soviet rule, Nehama was elected into Komsomol, the Communist youth organization. When our eldest sister, Basya (whom our parents forced into marrying BenZion Dantsig, a well-established man who sold lubricants and kerosene), was to be sent with her husband to Siberia,

Nehama petitioned for them. She went to the district committee.

"My sister is from a very low-income family," she said. "She was forced to marry mostly because of financial problems. She feels it's her responsibility to help her parents."

As a result, Basya and her family remained in Kushidar. It would have been better if they had been sent away....

* * *

From the age of sixteen I was a member of Gordon, a Zionist organization that provided work for the youth. In our chapter they gave many lectures about Palestine and taught us Hebrew language and Jewish history. Gordonists learned traditional dances and frequently played ping-pong. There were special literary evenings as well as many concerts. We had about seventy members in our group, some twenty of whom emigrated to Palestine. I too had the opportunity to go, but I decided not to leave my family. Our instructor, Peisach Rudnik, emigrated right before the war.

Most of the youth who went left the soggy swamps of Lithuania to turn the Palestinian desert into a blossoming garden. Hillel Sheinker, one of our Gordonists, died of sunstroke shortly after moving to Palestine.

We were all born in Lithuania, but we knew that our true homeland was Palestine. We were not wanted here. The primary focus of Gordon was to prepare us to make *aliyah.* Another youth organization that worked in conjunction with us was Beitar, which included mainly older kids. There were about sixty members of Beitar. The leader was Moshe-Dov Kabachnik. He died in Kovno during the early days of the war.

Just before the war a small group named Hashara was formed in Butrimantz. The leader was Binyamin Boyarsky. Hashara's goal was to train Jews to work the land. Usually the

training lasted only until they received the documents permitting them to emigrate from the country.

The Jews were not the only residents of Butrimantz. There were also large numbers of Lithuanians and Tatars. In nearby villages there were many Poles. We were all generally friendly and neighborly toward one another. Many Jews had friends who were of different nationalities. I remember, for instance, all sorts of people attending weddings. Among my father's close friends I recall Vaitkavichius and Ruskauskas, who later turned out to be willing assistants to our destruction.

Many of the Lithuanians who lived in our town were able to speak Yiddish well. In the beginning of the 1930s, when hooligans from surrounding towns tried to create a pogrom, every person in Butrimantz stood up to stop it, whether they were Jews or not. The men got sticks, some even axes. To everybody's surprise, even Vinetsky, a director of a local Jewish school, went running down the street with a shovel in one hand, holding up his eyeglasses with the other. The villains were defeated that time. They ran away as far as they could, until the summer of 1941....

* * *

In June 1941 I was offered a job in a military retail store in Oran. They offered me an apartment too. I accepted. On June 18, a Wednesday, I returned to Butrimantz to pack my things, and the following Monday I was to start my job. But on Saturday, June 21, an officer came to our house.

"Pack your things immediately," he directed. "You're coming with us to Oran to help empty out a store."

My father was against it.

"I cannot allow her to go alone with those soldiers."

I was permitted to remain at home.

On Sunday morning my father left for Kushidar to find Nehama, but in an hour he came back, extremely distressed.

"The Germans are bombing Alyta!"

That day, not far from our town, a Russian plane was shot down. The injured pilot was able to escape by parachute.

At nine o'clock in the morning the Russian army started to crawl up to Vilna. Yankel Tsafnas' son, who was still going to school at the time, jumped into a car and drove off without saying farewell to anyone, escaping the claws of death.

My father was a lumberjack. He knew the forests around our *shtetl*, as well as some of the people who lived there. We would have been able to reach Russia before the retreating army. Some of our friends - Shimelewitz, our neighbor, and Gordonist Dov Shtukarewitz - came to our house, trying to convince my father.

"We'll gather our families and take the shortcut through the forests to Russia. Will you be our guide?"

Father refused. "Have you ever seen a Jew who would disregard his own children and think only of himself?" he replied. "Three of my daughters are not with me at this time. I'm not going anywhere without them."

We went to seek advice from the relatives of Tevie Sheinker, my sister Tsila's husband. The Sheinkers were wealthy and highly educated.

"We are not much interested in politics," they told us. "We farm our own land and always will. No one will interfere with us."

Many people decided to hide in the forests for three or four days in the hope that the Russian tanks would come and expel the Germans. We too started to get our things together and stack them on a wagon.

* * *

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when, as if parading, without a single bullet shot, a column of German troops marched through Butrimantz.

Everyone was frozen with terror.

We took our valuables, including a cow, and left with our neighbors, Shilar and her five children. Shilar's husband had been sentenced to prison under Smeton's rule, and eventually died there. Also in our group was the family of Komsomol member Ratsin and a young Lithuanian woman named Kaminsken who had moved to Butrimantz with her Communist husband after the establishment of Soviet power in Lithuania.

We traveled a short distance into the forest but did not hide. After leaving our wagon by the side of the road, we lit a fire, fed the children and waited.

At nine o'clock that night many motorcyclists with white patches on their sleeves appeared in Butrimantz. On entering each Lithuanian and Polish home, they warned everyone not to allow Jews to hide on their property.

One of the Germans noticed us, rode by fairly close, and shouted loudly for us to go home.

We weren't afraid of our own neighbors. In time of peace we didn't feel any antisemitism. Fish, as we all know, rots from the head, and Smeton was a friend to the Jews. There were, however, individual antisemites.

Lebanauskas came running by not far from where we were stationed.

"Stay away from Jews, Kaminsken," he warned the Lithuanian woman among us. "You'll get yourself killed! Come to our house."

Kaminsken left. All of a sudden we heard gunshots and voices hollering, "You should have known better than to marry your Communist husband!"

Kaminsken dropped all her things and ran to hide in the woods. She didn't stay with us from then on. She returned to her native village in the Daug region.

Once again we gathered all our possessions and went farther away, moving in the direction of Ratsin's residence and our Polish friend Botkewicz. We had other friends in the

same vicinity, including Rasohatski, whose grandparents had been friends of our grandparents.

Botkewicz led the eleven of us into the small shack outside his house. That night the local Jews and Poles met beside this hut. They sat there and talked.

At about midnight Rasohatski's sons returned from Butrimantz.

"They are forbidding us to allow Jews in our houses and have threatened to burn them down if we don't obey," they warned.

"You understand yourself, of course." Botkewicz sounded very depressed. "I'm sorry but I can't let you stay here."

In the morning he fed us and took any valuables Father wanted him to save for us. They said farewell to each other, hugged and cried.

We then had no place to go but home. On the way we encountered numerous tanks and soldiers.

As we were heading toward our neighborhood, we met Nehama. Her last day in her final grade in high school was June 20, and the war had caught her on her way home. The Russians had invited her to go with them, but she wanted to be with her parents.

On the evening of June 22 everything was closed in Butrimantz. The Lithuanians started breaking into stores and stealing anything they could get their hands on.

Nehama took a place in line because she wanted to find out if people still remembered her. Now she spoke Lithuanian very well, and in addition to that, she had light hair. They didn't recognize her, and they gave her a pair of shoes. That was when she decided to go find us.

Father stopped the wagon before entering town and went to see if any of the Jews had returned. That day most Jews were hiding in the homes of their Lithuanian or Polish friends. But it soon became clear that all of them would have to leave, many without their belongings. They weren't just

told to go home, but were relieved of their possessions. This was the first organized crime against the Jews.

We rode down empty streets. Windows, doors and any other entrances to the houses were locked. Most of the Jews decided not to go into their houses but instead to hide in their yards.

There weren't any Germans around. Lithuanian "activists" were governing the place. These activists were members of the "Front of the Lithuanian Activists," an organization whose goal was to free Lithuania from Communists and Russians. During Soviet rule in Lithuania in 1940-1941 the "Front" was an underground organization. At the beginning of the war the activists took care of organizing things for the Germans, and later the Germans mobilized many of them into police. Special military units were formed from the activists - groups who destroyed Jews. The distinguishing mark of the activists was the white patches they wore on their sleeves.

Among the activists were Savitscas, the teacher; Pelyonis, who under Smeton's power had been the chief of police; Proshkus, Joseliunas and Potinskas from Gerulay; Asakavichius from Plasauninkay; Urbanavichius; Stoshkus; the Cosco brothers and Strumskis from Butrimantz; Sinauskas, former Communist from Klidzenys.... But who can list them all?

Their first victim was a local simpleton, Shimon Nagin. Joseliunas and a policeman dragged him into the yard of the butter factory and killed him.

For two whole days we sat in the fields and didn't appear in the streets at all. Tsila joined us. She and her husband, Tevie, had just returned home from helping some Russians evacuate.

Jews were driven out of the better homes in the center of our town. My father's former so-called friends Ruskauskas and Vaitkavichius posted big signs on all the other Jewish houses, indicating in both Lithuanian and German that Jews

lived there. Activists went to these houses, telling the Jews that they were not allowed to walk on sidewalks or leave the town, that they must wear yellow stars, and that they could only walk the streets between eight o'clock in the morning and six o'clock at night.

Potinskas announced to everyone, "I can kill anyone without being punished for it."

The one store open to Jews was operating only during certain hours. We knew that unwarranted punishment and beatings were on the way. Many people in our town were already going hungry. My family was saved only by our cow and garden.

Zlata Reznik was the first one to convince me to go to the store that was open to Jews. I agreed. It's not as frightening when you go with someone. We went barefoot. During this time Jews were forbidden to wear shoes in Butrimantz.

When we arrived, there was already a waiting line for the rotten fish that was being sold. The clerk, Koskenija, was scandalous.

"My oh my, so many kikes at once! Where did Joseliunas go? I'm sure he'd love to have some fun with you girls!"

We became frightened and ran away.

Jews were trading their scarce food with one another. Their supplies were very low. We shared our cow's milk, which was badly needed by our neighbor's children, and some cucumbers from our garden.

My father spoke sorrowfully, "It's very sad to see my former friends behave like this. I've spent my whole life with them, and now they rob my house and laugh, if not spit, in my face."

"Don't make me stay here," Nehama said. "I want to go where people don't know me. I don't look like a Jew. I'll teach children or something. I managed on my own when I was small. I can surely take care of myself now."

I convinced her not to leave.

"What about us? You know Lithuanian so well and you're so pretty. Even when enemies look at you, they start speaking kinder words. What would happen to Father? You know he doesn't speak any Lithuanian."

By persuading my sister Nehama not to leave, I myself put her to death. I still cannot forgive myself for that....

* * *

On the seventh day of occupation all the remaining Communists, teachers and educated and respected men were arrested, and most of them were put in prison. Some were released. The rumor was that only those cooperating with the Russians were held and sent to work in Alyta.

It was true. They were really sent to Alyta, but not to work. They were sent there to be shot. A few were released on the way there. However, they were taken back in a week. No one ever saw them again.

Through these temporarily released people we heard about the death of the teacher Arpahsander. His legs were aching. His friends Berl Vinetsky and Litvin were supporting him by his arms. Finally, the guards grew tired of this. They pulled the teacher out of the crowd and shot him.

A few days later a large convoy of Russian POWs was taken through Alyta. They were barefoot and naked. They were severely beaten. All the guards were Lithuanian activists; none of them were German.

Among the prisoners were some of our friends, Jewish Communists from Anushishok. The prisoners were stopped to rest near the butter factory.

"If you wish, you may bring them water and bread," said one of the guards.

A twelve-year-old Lithuanian boy, Borisas, brought a bucket of water and a few loaves of bread. An old Jewish woman, Baile Shoufer, also brought them bread. Her husband and children had been killed several days earlier; they were

Communists. The guards knocked out the old woman's teeth and drove her together with the others.... They put a bullet in her head before they left town.

The sight of prisoners being driven through the town was quite common. They looked dreadful.

The activists once caught a Russian fugitive dressed in peasants' clothing. They cut out his tongue and set him free in the town. They wanted to see who would dare to feed him.

Nehama took a bucket, put a piece of bread in it and left it by the well. The poor man saw her, understood everything, and picked up the food. Toward evening Joseliunas and his assistants took their prisoner outside of town and ordered him to dig a big hole. They buried him alive.

Jews from Poon were brought to the Butrimantz ghetto. Among them was Mother's sister Mazovsky and her husband, daughter Shoshana, and her twin grandchildren.

The Mazovskys had five children in all. Two of them - their son Monyas and daughter Rachel - left for Palestine prior to the war. The Mazovskys also had twins, Mendel and Eliahu, who were over six feet tall. Eliahu was recruited into the Lithuanian army. He served in Oran. Most of the soldiers deserted after hearing about the war. Together with a group of fleeing Lithuanian soldiers, Eliahu headed for home. He was killed by them near his house. Eliahu was twenty years old.

In June 1941 Mendel married Roza, an orphan who had been brought up by a church pastor named Radziavichius. The clergyman took a substantial portion of Mazovsky's property and helped hide Mendel and his wife. Radziavichius was an active Shaulist member. In fact, it was he who had organized the Shaulist group, whose members willingly shot Jews on command. However, Radziavichius hid Mendel, Roza and their two children born to them while in hiding until the end of the occupation. He fed them with whatever he had. At night Mendel would go to his Lithuanian friend Baranauskas to ask for food.

Baranauskas was killed by hooligans after the war. Mendel and his wife and children were killed by the clergyman himself, either because he was afraid that the Jews would expose his alliance with the Shaulist coalition or because he didn't want to part with everything he had acquired from these people. Along with Bolis Narkevichius and Jonas Kasparavichius, the clergyman Radziavichius hacked the poor family to death. The three murderers split their heads open with axes while they were sleeping. It happened three days before the city was liberated. Pastor Radziavichius' kitchen maid had witnessed the massacre. She told me about it three years later.

Shoshana married Itzhak Kushelewitz from Eznasa. They loved each other very dearly. On June 22 Eznasa's activists dragged away Communist Kushelewitz to be shot. Shoshana, carrying her six-month-old twins, ran after them. Itzhak was brought to the Jewish cemetery, set beside a grave and shot in front of his wife and babies. Shortly afterward, they returned Itzhak's jacket and boots to his widow.

Shoshana put on the clothing. She ran to a nearby lake and jumped into the water with her children. She was rescued by a policeman who happened to be passing by. After that, Shoshana went to live with her parents in Poon. The poor woman went insane. She acted ecstatic to have her husband's clothing. She kept on wearing his jacket and boots, and she kept on laughing....

Mazovsky's sister, taken to compensate for one of the fallen German soldiers, was shot in Allots during the first days of the war. Mazovsky begged the rabbi to allow him to kill himself. "What is there for me to live for?"

By this time Leonardas Kaspariunas had been appointed chief of police. He was not known in Butrimantz. People said that under Soviet power he had been the accountant for the Alyta food service as well as a member of the Communist Party. In independent Lithuania he had been a commander in the army.

Butrimantz literally died out. The Jews were in hiding. The farmers from surrounding villages remained at home. The *smaugiks* confiscated anything of value they could find. (*Smaugiks* were members of special troops, much like storm troopers, formed from the activists. The Jews and many Lithuanians called them *smaugiks*, which in Russian means "to take one by the throat and strangle him.")

The town became a resting site for the German troops. For their amusement they cut off old men's beards. They forced the rabbi to burn his Torah and to break windows in the synagogue. Balchunas, a Lithuanian Communist, hid one of the scrolls and gave it to me after the war. It is still in my possession.

One day all the Jews were instructed to gather in the town square at eight o'clock the following morning. We all appeared in front of Dvogovsky's building, the only two-story structure in Butrimantz. Kaspariunas had turned it into the city hall.

I still cannot comprehend how such an educated man could command a bunch of bandits and could steal and kill....

Surrounded by policemen, the oppressed, misled Jews lamented, "The people with whom we have lived as neighbors for decades now run into our homes, strip us naked and shoot us...."

In the evening there appeared the commandant of the German forces, his next-in-command, and a few soldiers with dogs. They read their announcement in two languages, German and Lithuanian:

> "Lazy Jews never worked a day. They don't even know how to work. They must learn from the hard-working people of Lithuania. Beginning tomorrow the Jewish youth shall start working for free for their Lithuanian masters. They should act thankful that they will not have to pay for such an opportunity to educate themselves."

I knew the German language. I had studied it in school and had read many books in German. Besides, it is very similar to Yiddish. I understood every word before they translated it into Lithuanian.

"What can the Lithuanians teach us?" I asked a nearby officer in German. "I've worked since I was a little girl. Look at my hands."

The commandant smiled. "Very good then. Since you already know how to work, you'll be my translator."

Many farmers from the various neighboring villages arrived. Activists divided up the youth evenly into work units and assigned them to the farmers.

"Leave right now. Tomorrow you'll start working."

I regretted having opened my mouth and tried to sneak away with the others who were going home, but the officer saw me.

"Are you deaf? I told you to be my translator."

I was brought into the yard of the Sheinkers' house, where the commandant was staying. My frightened mother remained nearby. I refused to enter the house.

"Mr. Commandant, a young lady cannot stay in the same room with the soldiers. Please appoint me to another job."

An aide brought a chair for the commandant. The officer sat down.

"Do you like German rituals and customs?"

"We Jews don't have any rights, sir. I can't tell the truth, and I don't want to lie. I would rather not answer your question."

"I give you my word that nothing bad will happen to you. I want to know what you think."

"You sorted people out. Before your troops invaded Butrimantz, the only thing sorted here was the flour. People were judged by their level of achievement in life, by their level of education. The blood is all the same whether it's mine or yours."

The commandant asked other questions. I replied to them. And then very quietly, as if to himself, he said, "At home in Germany I have a daughter your age. I would be happy if she turned out like you."

Then he added, "Tomorrow at ten we have a meeting with the Lithuanians. Those fools can't understand German. I want you to translate for me, both orally and in writing."

On our way home my mother and I saw German soldiers with dogs ferret out Jews hiding in yards. They forced people to open doors to their homes. They were checking everywhere for Jews.

When I arrived home, my sister and I started to wash up. As I was changing my clothes, the front door opened and one of the commandant's aides entered. I grabbed a robe and wrapped it around myself.

"Please don't be afraid," the German said quietly. "I'm ashamed of our behavior."

My mother invited him to our table and treated him to whatever we had - bread and milk.

The German sat down but said, "I want you to eat some of it yourself first."

"Are you afraid that we'll poison you?"

"I'm not afraid of anything, but I must do this during times of war."

After he ate he started to tell me about himself. His name was Hans Yohaim Pliushka. He was twenty-nine years old and married.

"The commandant asked you to come to the meeting at ten o'clock tomorrow," he said. "Don't go without me. If he tries to touch you, I'll shoot him. We are moving out of here fairly soon. I'll finish him off anyway - he's a wicked person."

In the morning, looking through my window, I saw someone in a German uniform hop over the fence into our yard. We jumped up from our beds, frightened. Our lives were full of fear, and it was very hard to get used to it. The man was Pliushka, carrying a bag under his arm.

"You can go now. I'll be nearby. If anything happens, scream."

He gave my mother the bag containing some food.

"I'll try to find more food for you," Pliushka said. "Just keep quiet. Otherwise, there'll be a lot of trouble for you and me."

In about ten minutes I saw him near the city hall building where the meeting was scheduled to take place. The square was full of horses that were brought from surrounding areas.

I was told to write notes in both German and Lithuanian, addressed to the owners of the horses. The commandant distributed these notes personally. The farmers, most of whom I knew very well, refrained from looking into my eyes.

The commandant told me to come and work for him every day. There were notes and conversations of Germans and Lithuanians that needed daily attention.

The following day Pliushka came again.

"Don't go to the commandant," he said to me. "If you'll be needed, I'll come and get you. Also, none of you should even go outside. The Lithuanians have the right to kill you. If you need to buy anything from the store, tell me and I'll bring it."

"There's a rumor that the Jews are getting slaughtered," I said. "Is that true?"

Pliushka didn't say anything except, "You should hide and be very careful. I was in Poland, and I saw many Jews suffering. Hide as well as you can. Our army is planning to take Moscow in only two weeks. I don't really believe that. It's very likely that all of us here are going to be forced to fight. It would be really bad for you then...."

Soon he came again for the last time, bringing six pounds of butter and a piece of soap.

"We just received an order," he told us. "Tonight we have to go and join the battle. If I ride by your house singing,

you'll know that Moscow was not taken. Go and hide now because the Lithuanians are going to do everything they can to destroy you."

When he said goodbye to us, he started to cry.

We didn't sleep that night. At three o'clock in the morning we heard the roar of engines and looked out of our windows. Pliushka, sitting atop one of the vehicles, was singing loudly.

In the morning it all became clear: the Germans were forced out.

"All Jews must stay at home," we were told. "No one is allowed to leave. On August 20 everyone from fifteen to sixty years of age must go to the square. If you don't, you'll get shot."

There were very few people who dared to ignore the order. Nehama was afraid someone would remember that she had been in the Komsomol.

Miliunsky, a shoemaker, who was the leader of the ghetto, said, "The *smaugiks* know everyone who fed any of the Russian prisoners and everyone who spoke at Russian gatherings."

Early in the morning he came to our house.

"Everyone must go. If Nehama doesn't show up, we'll shoot the rabbi. We know she's here with you."

By using the word "we," he was referring to the executioners.

Nehama came down from the attic.

"No one needs to get shot because of me. Here I am. Shoot if you wish...."

* * *

From the balcony of the two-story building, Leonardas Kaspariunas, chief of police, divided the large crowd that had gathered since early morning. It was one o'clock in the afternoon. Police surrounded the square. Kaspariunas yelled out names of the youth, and they stepped aside.

Our surname was called.

"Is Nehama here?"

My sister took a step forward. They led her away. She blew us a kiss and yelled, "Riva! They are going to kill me today. Please save my high school graduation certificate and my uniform. I gave my life away for them."

The rest I remember only vaguely. About a hundred young people were selected. Among them was Binyamin Boyarsky, the organizer of Hashara. The others were set free.

The youth were taken into the inner yard of the city hall. Pavka Sobolevsky inspected everyone, took away rings the girls wore and removed their earrings as well. The youngsters thought they were going to work in Alyta.

Again, a few of the Jews were set free. Nehama asked one of them to tell her boyfriend, Meir-Nohem Kabachnik (nephew of Dov Slobodsky), the following: "I saved your ring. With it I shall die...."

After the war, an Alyta Jew, Itzhak Lifshitz, who later moved to Israel, remembered:

> "I, along with a few other Alyta Jews, was sent to a forest to dig holes. We were told to step aside when we were done. A crowd of naked, beaten-up and tortured people were forced to stand in front of the holes. These were Jews from Butrimantz, and I knew every single one of them. They were all shot down at the same time. Among them there stood Nehama...."

Back in Butrimantz no one knew what had happened. In the morning everyone was sent to work. Neighbors and friends tried to calm people down, following the executioners' instructions.

"Don't panic. They are all alive. We saw them ourselves."

Gitsavichius came to me and said, "Your sister is working on a road with the other POWs. They're all alive and well and have plenty of food."

That night my mother and I went to the Parankava village to see Volkovichiene, Nehama's high school teacher. It was thirty miles there and back. We could smell that something was wrong. We offered the teacher a lot of money and begged her to get Nehama out of Alyta. She promised to help but didn't take any money from us. We didn't believe her, and we were right: there was nothing she could do.

My sister Tsila went to Kaspariunas. This was very dangerous. If he would have liked her, he wouldn't have let her go. He already had six girls in his house.

Kaspariunas refused. "Your sister was one of the Komsomol organizers in her school and spoke at many meetings. She deserves this."

The next night we decided to go to Liutsius Konstantinowicz, a Pole who was also a teacher at the same high school. Our mothers were good friends. We hoped that he, an educated and respected man, would help us.

Konstantinowicz did not hesitate to tell us that Nehama had been killed.

"Don't look for her any further," he said. "The youth of this town were finished off. Nehama was shot by Proshkus from Gerulay."

For some reason we believed him right away.

The Jews of Butrimantz suspected that a tragedy had occurred. They wandered around dirty and neglected.

"We can't live like this!" they often yelled to each other. "We must hope for the best!"

Men with white patches on their sleeves circulated rumors that everything was well.

When everyone's hopes were down, there was always someone, like an old lady, running around and telling people, "Don't believe anything you hear! I just spoke to my Lithuanian friend and he said everyone is alive and healthy."

And once again the people would start wondering.

My father did not want to live without Nehama. His face was bloated, his eyes bloodshot. His youngest daughter was the pride of the family.

Back in June our friends Nachum Kassel, his daughter Batya and son Meyer had moved in with us. They were chased out of their house in the center of town. We spent those August nights together. None of us could sleep, and we talked until sunrise. To us every clap of thunder was a bomb exploding. Whenever we heard the sound of an engine, we prayed that it was the Russian army coming to save us.

On the night of August 21 our town lit up with projector lights. Someone came knocking at our door. I jumped out of bed and, wearing only my pajamas, ran to the window to see who it was.

"Who is it?" I called.

"Open the door immediately," someone growled. "Police!"

"Hold on. I'm getting dressed."

"Open the door! We've seen it all tonight."

Kaspariunas, Erushavichius, Joneika and Stoshkus ran into our house. With them was Miliunsky, the ghetto leader.

Kaspariunas took a seat. The rest of them ordered the men in our house to face the wall.

"Put anything of value on the table!"

A rifle was pressed against my chest.

"Open the dresser!"

I gave them the keys.

The policemen emptied the dresser and stuffed anything they desired into their bags. Then they searched everyone individually. They found Batya's money sewn into her jacket. They placed her next to the wall along with the men. Then they were all led out of the house. They were in their nightclothes and were not even allowed to get dressed.

My mother and I started to pack food for them, but Kaspariunas laughed.

"A piece of bread will be enough for them."

"They're not leaving Butrimantz," Miliunsky added. "You'll be able to visit them tomorrow."

From our porch we could see the Badash family being taken out of their house.

When the policemen left, I went to look for my mother. She was lying on the floor in the bedroom, unconscious. I revived her, then went out to check on what was happening in our neighborhood.

I met Dvora Volpiansky. She was crying loudly. She had been left alone. Her three brothers had been taken away. The same was true for the rest of the town. All the men were gone.

I heard a frightening cry and turned around. Joseliunas was dragging Shimelewitz down the road by his feet. Bleeding profusely, Shimelewitz was yelling, *"Nekome!"* ("Vengeance!")

Joseliunas hauled him to the yard next to the prison. He threw him into a previously dug hole and buried him alive.

The arrested people, a hundred men and fifteen women, were brought to the prison yard. Rabbi Vitkind had his beard torn out. All were stripped naked, their hands were tied with wires, and they were walked to Alyta. My mother and I followed.

On the wagon at the rear of the crowd sat the injured people and the elderly. My mother and our neighbor Pitelewitz ran up to the wagon to give them some bread. My mother was struck with a horse whip on her head. I helped her get up and tried to calm her, but she didn't hear me. She had gone deaf in one ear.

Our rabbi had a tall cylinder-shaped hat on his head. The police had made him and a shoemaker exchange hats. This gave them great joy and delight as they laughed heartily.

We returned home. Later we learned about the fate of our dear ones. Alyta already had holes in the ground for these people.

Before they were shot, they were forced to write letters back home claiming they needed more bread and clothes. We received such a letter, delivered by the policeman Vaitkavichius, who was an old friend of Father. It requested cigarettes, clothing and food.

"You can send a package to your father if you like," Vaitkavichius said. "I'll take it to him."

A group of neighbors gathered from nowhere and asked if they could send something with him as well. Vaitkavichius did not refuse. He accepted everything people gave him - money, food and many other things - and he took the offerings directly to his house. On his next visit to Butrimantz, Vaitkavichius brought us all thank-you notes.

Uhlyavichius, another policeman, was busy doing the same thing, promising to deliver articles to people long since buried in the mass grave.

We had believed Vaitkavichius when he told us that our family members were still alive, and we greatly appreciated his gestures. Many of us even hid much of our belongings at his place.

That night Juozas Asakavichius took Aron Kuts out of his house and shot him. Since Kuts's sister cooked for Kaspariunas, he allowed her to discreetly bury her brother in the Jewish cemetery at night.

The following morning, in the presence of everyone in the town, they arrested Asakavichius for trying to rule the town himself - a demonstration of their sense of justice. Within two hours, however, he was roving the streets again.

The only Jews left in Butrimantz were the helpless women, children and the aged. No one tried to resist the forces. All quietly awaited their time to die. We, of course, knew that something terrible was going on, but had trouble believing it.

A few Butrimantz Jews had been able to hide successfully. Among them were my sister Tsila and her husband, Tevie Sheinker. They had found safety in Tevie's parents' house, which was very large; it had eight rooms. The youth slept at the far end of the house, close to the rear exit. When the police came, they were able to escape into the yard and hide. But there were very few such people. Most went numb from constant terror.

There was no one left for the Germans to gather into the labor force. On August 29 about seventy Jews were brought from Poon to Butrimantz. They were given temporary shelter.

The following morning the Germans announced their orders. "Everyone must assemble in the town square. You will be given better homes on Klidzenys Street. Anyone not complying will be left without a place to live."

Tsila, Tevie and I went to hide in the potato fields.

Mother protested. "My friend Dobl Badash lived through a very dangerous operation on her skull just before the war," she said. "She and her little daughter are the only ones alive from their whole family. They might be left without a home. I must help her move."

Mother went to the square with Badash. Again the police surrounded the people and selected the ones destined for Alyta. All the youth from Poon were chosen, along with some people from our town - those who had been singled out by the Lithuanians.

Vaitkavichiene pointed her finger at my mother.

This crowd, like the ones before, was taken into the interior yard of the two-story building. The people remained there until it grew dark.

At midnight the officials received them in pairs. There were horrible screams and protests. Later my mother told me what she had seen.

"Jews were thrown to the ground and had their heads kicked. They were folded in half and tied up with wires."

Moshe-Egudu Mazovsky was injured so seriously that his own mother didn't recognize him.

As Moshe Goldberg was dragged outside the yard, he was screaming, "Bastards, what are you doing? I spent my whole life working together with you. We were friends. Why do I deserve to be tortured like this before my death?" He was shoved into the crowd with the rest of them.

The rabbi's two daughters, Mira and Golda Vitkind,

were brought out. The girls tried to cover themselves as best they could with a few kerchiefs. Joseliunas grabbed their kerchiefs and pushed them off the porch completely naked.

My mother was able to escape. She climbed over the fence when the guards weren't looking.

The people who couldn't walk were thrown onto wagons. The rest were organized into columns and walked out of Butrimantz.

When everyone had left, my mother crept out of the field where she had been hiding and headed toward home.

Tsila, Tevie and I had spent that whole day in the Sheinkers' yard and waited for our mothers to return.

Chaya Sheinker came home in the evening.

"They have already selected the people bound for Alyta. We should go to the ghetto."

She didn't say anything about my mother and I was afraid to ask. I could feel that something was wrong.

Tsila and Tevie went to hide with their relatives in another village. I headed for the ghetto to look for my mother.

Feiga Yanovitsky, a friend whom I met on the way, said, "Your mother was taken."

Which meant Alyta...certain death....

When I heard this, I vowed to find my mother and not to leave her, whatever happened. Feiga tried to stop me, but I was far too determined.

Near the synagogue, where the police stored the stolen goods, a pastor was loading furniture onto a long wagon.

"Do clergy steal as well?" I asked a Jewish woman standing next to me.

"Are you crazy!" she answered. "You think these people steal? He's just saving it for us. He'll return it. He does believe in God, you know!"

The pastor didn't use the stolen goods very long. Right after the war he was put in jail, and his home was given to an old couple. The furniture suited them well.

I tried to leave the ghetto, but the guards wouldn't let

me. I ran to Miliunsky's house, but no one was home. On a dresser in his house I saw a heap of packages, belongings and letters that were dated August 20. That was the day the youth of Butrimantz had been taken to Alyta.

Miliunsky had offered to deliver anything which the relatives wanted to send. People parted with their most valued possessions. Among the items was Batya's watch.

I wanted to run away from there but met the owner on my way out. I fell to my knees, begging him to tell me where my mother was. Miliunsky was so drunk that he had no idea what I was talking about.

I went over to Leah Pertzikowitz. Her husband Itzhak had been taken along with my mother. Her children - Koppel, Israel, Feivel, Sara, Malka, Sonya and Gita - had already been killed, except for one son, Zalman, who was brought to Germany by accident. He was freed by Americans and later moved to Israel.

"Yesterday in Yezna all the Jews were destroyed," Leah said. "Our fate is the same. You can't help your mother and you'll only get killed. Don't go to Miliunsky anymore."

From Leah's house I went over to the Shevahs, the musicians. Twenty families were gathered in there. Each one of them had only one or two members left: the result of several mass actions that had already occurred against the Jews. There wasn't any room for me, however, as the place was packed. The floor was crowded with pots, candleholders and pillows.

Mrs. Shevah, the only one left alive in the family except for the elders, came out to see who it was.

"We can't say no," she said. "Where will she go? I'll share the bed with her myself."

I climbed onto the bed and lay down. All I could see was an image of my mother, desperate, lonely and awaiting death.

Suddenly, a knock came at the door.

"Is there a young lady hiding in there?"

Miliunsky had sobered up and realized that he had seen me.

One of the older Shevahs got an idea and told me to lie down under his bed sheets, piled a lot of stuff on top and lay down on it all.

Miliunsky opened the door and marched into the room, which smelled of twenty perspiring bodies. He glanced around quickly and left the house.

I couldn't sleep and sat down on the window sill. Everything was quiet.

In the morning there was a light tap on the window. I opened the door to find Itsik Pertzikowitz.

"Don't cry, daughter. Your mother and I ran away. Go on, run now. You'll find her in one of the neighborhood yards."

The sun had risen and there weren't any policemen in sight. I made my way home through the fields. I found my mother in our backyard, her hair down, an insane look in her eyes. I started to cry and tried to shake her out of it. She didn't say anything. I took her hand in mine, like a child's, and walked her over to the ghetto.

We found safety in the house of Rashl, the servant of the rabbi. I decided we couldn't remain there for long and we ran to hide in the woods. The chances of being able to live through this, however, weren't much greater out there....

After the war I found out that eighty Jews had run away, but only ten had survived....

We had a shortage of food, but we traded our possessions for it. I gathered up anything of value we had left after the thefts and hid it in Rashl's attic.

My mother and I went around the town trying to find worthy Poles to whom to entrust our belongings. Some people came to our house to offer their services.

"Leave the things with me. I'll give them back to you after the war."

They knew what awaited us....

If you gave everything to one person, you'd be turned over to the authorities: everyone was aware of that. We decided to distribute things among various people. Maybe someone would be honorable enough to actually save some of our belongings.

The pastor from Poon came to Butrimantz with his lover, Zosei. They went to the Mazovskys' house and then to ours.

"Your Aunt Mazovsky trusted me and gave me all her possessions. You should do the same. I'll save it for you."

"We don't need anything. They'll kill us anyway. We would be grateful if you'd save my mother and me."

The pastor didn't answer. He packed his cart and left.

From August 29 until September 9 we did not spend a single night in the ghetto. We stayed with the Gitsavichius family. They treated us very well, fed us and calmed us down.

"Nothing will happen to you."

Later these people became willing executioners.

I did not know at the time that my sister Basya was dead. She died in Kushidar on August 28.

Rodlinski, Basya's former housekeeper, told me about that when we met after the war. She described how Basya had walked through the whole town to her death with her three-month-old son, Itzhak Yehuda, in her arms. Tugging at her skirt were her six-year-old daughter, Rivka, and four-year-old son, Aharon. Basya's husband, BenZion Dantsig, was shot on his way back home. His father, Avraham, was burned in the synagogue, along with other wealthy Jews and organizers of the local communities.

At the Gitsavichius' home I located a newspaper. In an article entitled "Lithuania - for Lithuanians" I read: "The Jewish problem must be dealt with." Next to it there was an article with a similar theme: "We must get rid of the Communists, Russians, Poles and Gypsies."

I did not want to think about the fear these messages were emitting. I was sure the Russians would come to save us.

We believed what we wanted to believe.

We saw the Leshinskasovs, whom we had known for a long time, place our tablecloth over their table. We saw them hang our curtains on their windows. They were even wearing our clothes. They had taken all these things to save for us. Can it be that even our good friends cannot wait until we die? I wondered.

"Aren't you afraid of the Germans?" I asked Juozas. "You've worked for the Russian militia in Vilna since the 1940s."

"I washed my guilt away with my own blood. In the first days of the invasion I killed two Communists with whom I lived in the same room."

He pulled out a record player, wound it up and we heard the sounds of "Clouds Over the City."

"If a militia worker becomes a policeman by his own will, he is forgiven. I'm going to enlist with the police."

My mother and I became frightened and left that house. We were starved and drenched in the rain. We went to the ghetto to see if anyone was still alive and perhaps to find another set of clothes.

On our way to Butrimantz we met Dr. Gabay. He was looking for a place to hide his wife, two children, his ninety-year-old mother, a blind brother, and his relatives, Yaakov Fink and his son.

"Where are you going? Run! Kaspariunas told me that he's going to kill anyone still alive tomorrow. He let me go because I've been treating him for rheumatism. He said, 'Run, if you can. I'm not going to look for you,' he promised."

We went to the ghetto. Next to Rashka Pruss's house, on Smorgonsky's patio, sat my aunt Mazovsky with one of the twins in her arms, exhausted from crying. The second child was in Shoshana's arms. I asked them to give me one of the twins. The activists didn't yet harm women with children. They saved them for last because they realized it was difficult for them to escape with children.

"No," Mazovsky said, "I'll go to my grave with both of them."

"The child will be of no help to you," said Shoshana. "Everyone in Yezna is dead already. My husband had such nice nephews there. They're dead too. No one in Yezna was spared. Every single one of them was buried in the fields."

My mother stayed with her sister Mazovsky, and I went to Rashka Pruss's place to change. I removed my wet clothes, hung them up to dry and put on clean ones.

All at once through the window I saw activists chasing Shoshana and the other women.

The door to the house opened and several guards charged inside.

Until this day I cannot understand how I managed to be behind the door, hidden from them. The room was quite small.

Leaving the door open, the activists went straight to the next room.

"Get yourself ready!" they ordered Rashka and her very old mother.

"Leave me alone," begged Rashka. "Who will deliver food to my husband and children whom you took away?"

"Stop! They had enough to eat. In fact, so did you!"

The house became empty. The door was still open. There was a secret exit in the kitchen leading to the attic. I ran up as fast as I could. The whole attic was full of bags, both Rashka's and her neighbors'. I wanted to hide under them initially, but then realized that that was the first place the bandits would check. After all, these bags were what they came for.

I ran downstairs. The house had another exit. I fled outside into the yard. My mother, thank God, was standing right there. I grabbed her arm and we ran to Klidzenys Street.

That September turned out to be very cold. As we ran past someone's house, I raced inside and snatched the first warm thing I saw - a tablecloth. I threw it over my shoulders.

Both of the ghetto streets, Klidzenys and Tatarys, were surrounded. There was nowhere to go. We were swept along with the crowd. At the front were Kaspariunas and Germanavichius. Erushavichius and some others were on horses. We headed toward Klidzenys.

We walked about a mile and a quarter.

"They must want us to dig up potatoes in Pivashunai," said Pitelewitz. "I heard they already dug a place to store the vegetables somewhere nearby."

"Riva, get revenge for us!" our neighbor in line whispered to me. "You'll escape this, I know."

"Let's do it together."

"No. My Dvorele is with me. I can't leave her. I won't get far with the baby either."

People in the crowd were crying and groaning. For amusement, the guards beat them up along the way.

With my mother's hand in mine, I attempted to reach the edge of the group in order to run away.

Suddenly there appeared another squad of white-badged soldiers with rifles, moving in the opposite direction.

"Which way to Visokidvor?" I asked one of the men in Polish.

The drunk Lithuanian swung his hand in the direction.

I made my way into the ditch at the side of the road, and my mother followed. We later climbed into the nearby bushes and sat there, waiting for everyone to pass.

At midnight it became very cold. We huddled together for warmth. Then came the sound of gunshots and the barking of dogs....

* * *

Juozas Karpavichius filled me in on what happened that night. Just before the war he had drawn a poster: Smeton running to America. The Lithuanians remembered that and forced him to shovel dirt on top of dead bodies.

First the men were killed. They were placed at the edge of the hole, facing it, and shot in the back of their heads.

Germanavichius' wife stripped the women naked. Despite their pleas, she forced them to remove even their underwear. She didn't want anything to be wasted. The women were ordered to lie on top of the dead bodies in the big crater. That was how the executioners discovered there wasn't enough room for them all.

Joneika, a policeman, jumped into the hole to see if he could compress the bodies further. The women grabbed him by his throat and hair. The crater was about thirty-three feet deep. The Lithuanians had to throw a rope down for him.

The second hole was quite close to the first one. There the children and elders were buried. Among them were Chana Reznik and Itsik Sheinker's wife. These two women were on the verge of delivering babies. Itsik's wife gave birth beside the mass grave.

The shots were fired. Screaming from agony and terror, the people were pushed inside.

Astrauskas had a board with nails protruding from it. He would stick children onto it and shake them off into the crater.

Germanavichius' wife was busy handing out drinks and refreshments to the executioners. Barrels of beer stood under the trees beside the spectators of this bloody show. One of the observers fell unconscious.

They didn't shed many bullets on the children. Usually they buried them alive. In some places the ground was still moving two days later....

At the last moment someone saw one of the buried children climb out of the grave. The little boy was badly wounded. He struggled to get away from that place. The murderers waited until their target moved away, and then they opened fire.

After the massacre, the executioners divided up the stolen goods and went on their way.

The Jewish people who remained alive were Miliunsky and his wife; Kaspariunas' horsekeeper, Tsvi Mostowitz; Yoshe-Leizer Meirowitz and his wife; and the whole harem: two girls from Poon, fifteen-year-old Mina Goldberg, two sisters (I don't remember their names) and Asna Baver. They were all very beautiful women who had been hand-picked by Kaspariunas for his "harem," as it was called. Asna's father, Aron Baver, was not killed either.

Mina Goldberg was taken hostage by the policeman Lapinauskas. He lived with her until the beginning of September. Then someone in Alyta gave him away.

Lapinauskas told Mina to go for a walk, but he advised her not to put on her coat. Mina understood what he meant and begged him to spare her. Lapinauskas paraded the girl through the village to a reserved place in the cemetery. He pushed her into the hole and shot her.

Pavka Sobolevsky cut the girl's head off and bashed out her gold teeth.

The sisters were able to run away at the end of September.

The rest were finished off in the Butrimantz Jewish cemetery on October 1.

Aron Baver could have run away. Asna had warned him but he refused to go.

"I didn't die with the rest of them," he cried. "Then I would at least be lying among the respected people. But now - with Miliunsky..."

Asna had cautioned us as well. On September 8 she went to the ghetto.

"Run away! Tomorrow they're going to kill the remaining Jews."

Kaspariunas hid Asna until November. That month her fate turned to share the worst with the rest of them.

Hiding in the woods, we didn't know any of this....

* * *

In the morning we set off toward the Polish villages. There weren't any Poles among the *smaugiks*. However, the order to forbid Jews from entering one's home was heard all around Butrimantz. We were not even allowed to come close to the houses.

Nonetheless, a friend of our family, Rainis, welcomed us inside. We stayed at his place for a few days, but he became afraid he would get caught helping us.

Thereafter, we went to the home of Voveris. His wife was an old friend of my mother. When she used to visit her husband while he was serving a sentence at the Kaunaska prison, she would always stop at our house.

Voveris himself had invited us to his place during the first days of the war. We thought he wanted to relieve his guilt.

This wealthy Pole had been in prison for a brutal crime. His wife gave birth to twins when he already had a daughter and two sons. Voveris boiled the newborns in a pot and fed them to the pigs. A boy on the street had witnessed this. Voveris killed him as well and buried him in the nearby forest. He planted a tree over the grave, but it wouldn't grow. This helped the local people find the body.

"You once said we'd be welcome in your house," we reminded Voveris. "We're freezing and wet from the rain. We have no clothes, and we're starving to death."

"Well, all right. You can go into the shack in back and hide in the hay."

Voveris' wife took the wet tablecloth off my head.

"You're going to get killed anyway.... I'll be able to go to bed tonight feeling good."

Later Voveris came into the shack.

"Where's your horse and teapot?"

"The horse is at Yankowski's," I said and bit my tongue for telling him the truth, but it was too late.

Every night during the whole week Voveris and his son returned with wagons loaded with possessions confiscated

from the Jews. Usually they were accompanied by policemen who spent entire nights drinking with Voveris. We were terrified we'd be discovered.

On the sixth day, Voveris' wife came to us.

"My husband and son are getting drunk. I heard them planning something very bad. They think you have gold with you. You'd be better off if you left."

In the daytime one couldn't get very far. We knocked on Montfil's door in the same village. To go to Lithuanians for help was dangerous.

But Montfil fed us, gave us money and started to cry.

"You're going to die out there."

He didn't keep us for long. He had three children and his wife was against it. We spent the evening at his place, then went into the woods. We slept on the ground, warming one another with our body heat.

In the morning a young man wearing a military uniform found us. That's the end, we thought. He's going to shoot us right here.

Instead, the man said, "I know you and I'll help."

He was Ignatsi Shestakowski. His village, Parankava, was fifteen miles from Butrimantz. In 1939 he had been ill in a hospital in Kovno. When he was discharged, he didn't have any money for the trip back; neither did he have the strength to walk home. At the bus stop he met my father, who brought him home and let him spend the night. In the morning he put the Pole onto Boyarsky's bus, paid the owner five lit, and sent him on his way.

Ignatsi told us all this while we were still in the forest. He walked us over to his brother's house, but Mihal was at the market. His wife made us comfortable in their home.

"I can't promise you anything," she told us. "I don't know if I can convince my husband."

We hoped for the best. After all, we endangered their lives with our presence. Spending the day in the warmth of a house was wonderful.

In the evening Mihal returned. His wife knelt down and put her arms around his knees.

"Mihal! Please allow me to let two Jews I found stay with us. They're freezing and hungry."

"All right, but only for a short time."

Happy, she came to us.

"He said *yes!* The war will be over in a few days. The Russians are getting closer. We heard it on the radio. The American Jews will pay a lot of money to those who helped to hide Jews."

We soon understood that this woman protected us because she was a good person and not for a reward.

Mihal's wife gave us hot water to wash ourselves, served tea and invited us to share whatever food she had.

I kept crying, remembering my sisters, but soon I realized: It's me I should cry over, not them. They've already experienced everything that could happen to them. Only God knows what's in store for us.

We hid in the haystacks. Every day Mihal's wife would bring us bad news from the market.

"Everyone in Butrimantz is dead."

"All the Jews in Anushishok and Visokidvor were destroyed."

Groups of "protectors" formed. Their job was to catch any Jews who hadn't been killed yet. At night these protectors eavesdropped on conversations inside the houses.

Interesting, I thought. Why do these murderers call themselves "protectors"? From whom are they protecting the people?

One day the owners of the house went to dig up potatoes and left me inside. To express my gratitude, I washed the windows, made the beds and cleaned up the rooms.

"What have you done!" the owners exclaimed when they returned. "Don't you realize they'll know there are Jews in our house? We never wash our windows. We never make the beds either. It's not our style of living. Don't do this again."

Very soon a neighbor came by and alarmed the Shestakowskis.

"They're searching every single house in the neighboring village. They're going to come here next."

The Shestakowskis discussed this among themselves and decided to make a safe place for us.

"We'll dig a hole, as though for storing potatoes," Mihal said. "If neighbors ask, we'll tell them just that, but if that happens, you won't be able to hide there anymore for they would understand that it's really a bunker."

Mihal started working on the hole. He made a lid for it and covered it with mud. Air entered the hole through pipes that extended out quite a distance. No outsiders questioned Shestakowski about it.

It was very hard to breathe in the hole. We perspired terribly. We even undressed but it didn't help much. The owners gave me a book they had, but for some reason it was in German. I read it all from cover to cover, using the tiny rays of light that filtered in through the pipes. Reading distracted me from the misery for a while.

The town slept quietly that night. We were let out of the hole to breathe and wash. We sat beside the fireplace to dry, watching the window to see if anyone was coming. If someone would have entered the house unnoticed, we wouldn't have been able to reach the hole in time.

Our saviors barely ate anything; we ate even less. In the morning we would have a boiled cabbage with a piece of bread; at night, a few potatoes.

We tried to think of a way to show our gratitude to these people. I wrote a note to Yankowski, the wealthy Pole who had our horse and some of our other belongings.

"Please give the horse to Mihal Shestakowski."

Mihal returned empty-handed.

"Voveris went to Yankowski's place with a note he claimed you gave him, Riva," Mihal said. "He probably wrote it himself. He wanted Yankowski to pay him for the horse.

Yankowski didn't believe him, but Voveris threatened. He got the money in the end."

A week later Yankowski arrived in person. He brought a large supply of potatoes and flour and begged Shestakowski to keep us hidden in his place for as long as possible.

"My daughter got to like your dress," Yankowski said. "That's what the potatoes are for. The flour is for the coat...."

We were so happy!

"All the Jews in Kushidar were shot," Yankowski told us. "Basya was among them. Jews are getting slaughtered throughout the whole continent. The Germans said they won't leave a single one alive."

After that, Yankowski returned about once every month. He always brought a lot of food and gave it to the owners. Our rations remained unchanged, however. We could barely wait until night to get out of the hole and go to the washroom.

During the half year that we spent in the bunker, my mother and I grew emaciated, like walking sticks.

For reassurance, the Shestakowskis decided to prove to the neighbors that there was no one hiding in their house. They left for three days to visit their friends in another village and asked a few neighbors to look after their children.

We were given a jug of water and a loaf of bread. The entrance to the hole was covered with more mud. For three days my mother and I remained quiet, not saying a word. Our stomachs ached. There was so little air that we almost suffocated. Three days in a grave was a terrible experience.

The Shestakowskis returned on time. The neighbors didn't suspect anything. Our lives went on.

At night we slept near the fireplace. One night, in a dream, my mother was visited by her father, my grandfather Itzhak.

"Get up, daughter. Go welcome your guest. Your daughter Tsila is coming."

Mother sprang up from the floor and ran to the window.

"Tsila! Tevie! Come this way! We are right here, alive!"

Had she gone crazy? I wondered. However, there were shadows of two people outside the window.

The owners woke up to see what was going on. They opened the door and there stood Tsila and Tevie.

"That's my daughter and her husband!" my mother cried loudly.

"All right," Mihal said, "bring them inside."

From that day on there were four of us in the bunker. Two sat on small chairs and two lay on the floor; then we switched. Every day we begged God to save us.

In Alyta the Germans captured thirty Russian soldiers and forced them to dig a hole, after which they were stripped and frozen to death. The Golombewski brothers, who helped many Jews hide, were caught and shot.

This last incident scared us all. The risk of getting caught was very great. Many Jews who were sheltered by other people were forced out. We prepared to leave, but Shestakowski stopped us.

"Where will you go? You'll get caught no matter what. You won't be able to stand the torture, and you'll give us away. We'll all die."

Jews who were captured were now interrogated before they were killed to find out in whose house they had hidden.

"If I were alone I wouldn't be so afraid," explained Shestakowski. "I have to watch out for my children. I don't know what to do. Letting you go is just as frightening as keeping you here."

That evening the Shestakowskis discussed our fate. We could hear everything they said, even the whispers. They decided that they had no choice but to drop the stove on the hole and bury us right there.

From then on we lived with even more fear each day....

I don't blame the Shestakowskis for anything. I understand how hard the situation had become for them. Sometimes we meet up with them even now. I've never reminded them about that evening. I have been grateful to the Shestakowskis my whole life. They saved us and kept us inside that first winter of the war - the coldest and most frightening one.

They didn't hurry with their plan. The Shestakowskis were just not capable of killing a human being.

Once, the owners left to celebrate Easter at their brother's house. Tevie opened the lid of the hole and we all escaped into the forest. The four of us, with barely any threads on, roamed through the snow-covered fields....

Tevie led the way to the Maldanis home. Alfonsas Maldanis had purchased land from the elder Sheinker and had served in the army with Tevie. He allowed us to hide in his part of the forest.

"People chop down trees all the time in the government-owned woods. You'd get caught there for sure."

During the day, when it wasn't as cold, we slept huddled together on the ground. At night we tried to keep ourselves in motion by walking.

Sometimes one of Maldanis' brothers would bring us some food, leaving it at a prearranged spot for us to pick up later. It was usually soup or boiled potatoes. Of course, we weren't receiving all this free.

Risking our lives even further, we sometimes wandered over to Raetsky's place. The first time we went there he gave us a loaf of bread and told us to come back for our things in a few weeks. He probably believed we wouldn't live that long, but explained that our things were in another village.

The second time, Raetsky's wife sent the dogs out on Tsila and Tevie. That was when we asked Maldanis to write a

note to Raetsky, asking that he return our belongings. After a while we actually recovered some of them.

Once, Maldanis invited relatives from Rudiskes to his house. They ate and drank, then started talking about Jews.

"There are some hiding in our forest too," Maldanis told them. "But can we be held responsible for the forest?"

They decided to reveal us to their guests. They brought out bread and liquor, and offered us friendly advice.

We were hungry all the time. We must have made a horrible impression on them. I, for instance, spent most of the war in a single dress.

Once, awakening from sleep, we saw bicycle tracks in the snow. As it later became clear, the German Gubert had seen us but didn't give us away. He didn't even tell Maldanis.

Then we were shocked by another horror. Tsila gave birth to a dead baby and became very ill. For about a year she couldn't walk, and Tevie carried her on his back.

We met Yankel Bernstein from Butrimantz. Lebovich from Parankava had helped him hide. But, like us, Yankel retreated into the forest after the Golombewski brothers were shot.

We talked with Yankel about our family members who were no longer with us. He told us about Dr. Gabay. His ninety-year-old mother and blind brother were still in the ghetto. They weren't able to run away. Gabay had left them poison before he went into hiding.

"Drink this if they find you," he told them. "It won't hurt when you die this way."

That's what they ended up doing. The Shaulists found the corpses.

Gabay and his wife, their four-year-old daughter, Renana, nine-month-old son, Binyamin, and Yaakov Fink and his three-year-old son, Shalom Zeev, went to Yankowski. The children were taken to Vilna by a young woman named Janina Zienowicz, a relative of Yankowski. Janina and her sister Helena cared for the children until the end of the war.

Gabay and his wife and Fink hid at Yankowski's friends' house until the end of 1943. The neighbors discovered this and reported them. The Germans came with dogs and searched the place but didn't find anyone. That day Gabay's wife went insane. She was moved to the Vilna ghetto along with her husband and Yaakov Fink. Later she died there.

The children were saved by the Zienowicz sisters. After the war Dr. Gabay and his children moved to Warsaw. Shortly thereafter, the Gabay family emigrated to Palestine.

After the war Yaakov Fink went to claim his son, Shalom Zeev, but the bewildered, weeping child was afraid of leaving the only family he knew – the Zienowiczes.

Eventually, Yaakov Fink abandoned his efforts to retrieve his son and emigrated to the United States, where he had several sisters. Within months after his arrival in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1948, Fink was diagnosed with cancer. He continued to write to his son, urging him to join him in America. But the boy, whose name had been changed to Wilhelm Zienowicz, could not be persuaded to leave his adopted family. Yaakov Fink died in 1953. Wilhelm relocated to Warsaw, where he later married and had three children.

Fink's wife, Zlata Riva Menkin, a doctor, had died in a typhus epidemic in 1941, shortly before the Germans invaded Lithuania. The fate of their daughter, Tanya, five years old at the time, is not known. It is speculated that she may have been sent to her mother's family in northeast Lithuania after her mother's death; others claim she died with the children of Butrimantz and lies in their mass grave. A third story is that she too had been a hidden child and disappeared into a new identity.

* * *

The spring passed. In June Maldanis' wife came running to us.

"Alfonsas is gone. Go hide! The forest is already surrounded."

This was the second day of the search for lost Jews.

Just as we hid behind some bushes, we heard the voices of *smaugiks*. We were ready to run but remembered Yankel Bernstein. We awoke him and ran toward the entrance to the forest. Fortunately, Tevie had an excellent sense of direction so he knew exactly where to go. Suddenly he yelled, "Riva, look to the right!"

I turned and made eye contact with one of the *smaugiks* who was lying with the others surrounding the forest.

"Run!" yelled Tevie.

I grabbed Bernstein by his sleeve.

He resisted. "Let go!"

A shot was fired. Bernstein fell to the ground.

I turned around and saw Tevie and my mother running back into the forest. I went after them. Tevie soon realized that we were trapped, surrounded. We turned around and ran toward the fields until Tevie led us to the Chertovo swamp.

"Step only on the tough mounds," he cautioned. "If you miss, you'll get sucked in."

We jumped from mound to mound. The swamp was beautiful at this time of year, with flowers everywhere.

Leaving our footprints behind, we ran deep into the swamp before we stopped to catch our breath.

We heard the sound of horses' hoofbeats. Tevie went to find out what the animals were doing there and returned very pale.

"The Germans have horses and this swamp is surrounded."

Somewhere at the edge of the swamp the soldiers found an escaped Russian POW and Yankel Kovalsky. They shot them on the spot.

We had no way out and spent the rest of the day hiding in that swamp.

At night Tsila and Tevie went to the Maldanis home to check on the situation. On the way they met Gemaitis, a

farmer from Eigerdonis. He had seen us running into the swamp, but when the authorities had asked him, he replied, "No, I didn't see anyone."

The Maldanis family were practical people. That night they partied with the local policemen. Tevie knocked at the door. The owner stuck her head out and said, "The *smaugiks* are here."

Later we were told how the policemen had tortured the wounded Bernstein. They wanted to know who had fed him. They chopped off his fingers one by one, but he didn't give anyone away.

We returned to the forest. Anely Dulsken stumbled upon us in the tall bushes. She had often helped us with our garden, so we knew each other very well. Mother was eating bread, and the rest of us were lying on the ground, resting.

Anely became frightened when she saw us.

I grabbed her knees and cried, "Help us, please. We are very hungry!"

She told us that she would take us to her mother.

In about half an hour she returned with a loaf of bread. That evening she took us to Sakavichius' house in the Eichunai village. They too had some of our possessions. In exchange for these, we asked for bread.

Sakavichius' wife was sleeping in my night shirt. At the sight of me, she jumped up.

"Give me your jacket!"

The jacket had been given to me by one of the farmer families.

"What are you doing?" her husband interrupted. "She'll practically be naked."

"She doesn't need clothes. If she won't get caught today, she'll get caught tomorrow."

I tried to defend myself.

"At least you have a roof over your head. I spend all my time outside."

"Be quiet! There are police nearby. If I call them, you won't need anything anymore."

I left her house wearing only my dress. The saying is true: If a camel asks for antlers, he'll get his ears cut off as well.

Anely was very gracious and took us to her mother's house. And that was where we spent the winter.

* * *

I don't think there was a place in these villages where we didn't try to hide. We looked for spots with as few people around as possible. In the summer we often hid in the rye fields. Of all the shacks in which we hid, I remember Ivanowski's most clearly.

Once, after the war, a Pole gave us a lift to Butrimantz. When we passed Ivanowski's shack, he said, "That's my shack. In the winter Russian soldiers stayed in it. When my wife and I came to the shack in the spring, I saw the body depressions in the hay and figured it out."

I had never seen Ivanowski around the village before.

"We stayed in that shack," I told him.

We knew that no one would be coming there until the spring, so we hid in the hay. We were hungry and thirsty all the time, with only one bottle of water per day for everyone. We ate snow and went outside at night for our body needs.

Tevie and I would go to the neighboring homes to ask for bread. We skirted around the main roads, avoiding the "protectors." People spoke to us without their lights on; otherwise, it was dangerous.

We arrived at the house of one of our friends.

The man shook his head.

"Do you want to kill me? The whole village knows that Jews come to my place."

Tevie was surprised.

"No one saw us."

"You wear those heavy army boots. Everyone around here wears normal shoes. They can tell by the imprints in the snow."

We would have been very happy to wear regular shoes, but we did not have any. Wrapping our feet with pieces of cloth and pushing them into boots was all we could do to save them from freezing.

Thereafter, however, we started to wrap the cloth on the outside of the shoes too in order to avoid leaving tracks.

Ivanowski and his son would come to the shack a few times a day. While they got their hay for the farm animals, we would remain as quiet as we could. Once my mother coughed. The boy jumped up and yelled, "Did you hear that? There must be someone in here."

The father laughed.

"Are you trying to fool me? That was just the wind."

At the end of the third week, gunshots were fired nearby during the entire night. In the morning Ivanowski came into the shack alone.

Tevie greeted him with these words: "I'm going on my way. My wife and her sister are staying with some nice people. I know that you are a good person too. You won't do me any harm. I slept here last night and heard the shootings. Do you know what they were?"

"Five people went into the public sauna," Ivanowski told Tevie. "One of them was a Butrimantz Jew by the name of Strage. They were seen. Activists drove up to the building. Among them was your old friend Rachkiss. The sauna was set on fire and everyone was beaten up. I won't tell anyone about you. Just get out of here as fast as you can."

That night we all left.

* * *

In the summer of 1943 we decided that we should split up into pairs. It was easier to hide that way. My mother and I hid in the rye fields. Tevie brought us food at night.

Once, two farmers who were reaping the harvest appeared in the field. One of them, Jugris Janushauskas, a

drunk and rebel, saw us and grew pale. My mother and I, bruised and emaciated, must have looked like characters out of a nightmare.

"Don't go anywhere," he said. "I'll bring you some food."

Soon Jugris returned with his own dinner - bread and milk.

"I would bring more, but my partner would know what's going on."

I asked if he could bring more food for us the next day. I thought: If he brings something, that means he pities us and probably would not give us away.

The next morning some women arrived with food. They were Jugris' daughter, his partner's wife and two other women whom we knew.

As we started to eat, the partner's wife whispered to me, "You'd better go away. I'm afraid Jugris will report you."

I looked at Jugris' daughter and spoke too loudly:

"I don't believe your father could give us away!"

The girl turned to the partner's wife and yelled, *"My* father is at home, you hear! *Your* husband is the one who left for Butrimantz this morning! You don't think he went to the police, do you?"

When they left, they were still arguing.

We had to leave this place as well. It was dangerous to go anywhere in the daytime, but we had no choice.

After walking about fifty yards we stopped under a leafy tree that concealed us. Suddenly we heard gunshots coming from the site we had just left.

Two people appeared right near us: Stelmahavichius, a policeman from Butrimantz, and Liutsius Konstantinowicz, a teacher. The teacher's suitcase swung a few feet from my leg. Thank God they didn't see us! Stelmahavichius would have shot without blinking. He was solely responsible for many of the deaths around there. For amusement, he fired his gun into the field.

Wandering from place to place eventually led us to Shwabowski's house. A candle was burning on his window sill, and we heard people talking in Polish. We took the chance and knocked.

I asked the owner if we could go into the shack to warm ourselves for just a few days. I offered anything we had and promised to bring more later.

We were allowed to sleep in the haystacks. Once a day the owner's wife brought us some food. Almost every day we had rotten vegetables and a few handfuls of snow from behind the building where everyone went to relieve themselves. My mother made a pair of stockings for the lady, and my sister sewed some other garment.

At that time the Russian army got so close that a battle erupted.

One morning, when most people hid inside their homes, we went out into the street for the first time.

"Look at the sky!" We were so happy. "Look at the red stars on those airplanes. We have reached the end of it!..."

A Russian soldier stopped us in the forest. Judging by our shocking appearance, he understood immediately that he was witnessing the last of the Jews. He took us over to the lieutenant, who happened to be a Jew. He became very excited.

"Thank God at least someone has survived!"

We were given food, but we felt too self-conscious to eat in front of everyone. The lieutenant told the others to leave us alone and gave us some money before he left.

"I want the first money you receive to come from a Jew," he said.

We decided to go back to Shwabowski's and wait for Tevie. He and Tsila had gone to Yankowski to find out what was happening.

The good news awaited them.

"The Russians are in Butrimantz!"

The people with whom Tevie shared the good news

did not seem very happy. Some of those at whose houses we had left our belongings didn't even want to talk to us. Only Trotsky gave Tevie a new hat and a loaf of bread.

In Butrimantz all the Jewish homes were occupied by the activists. When they realized they wouldn't be staying there long, they removed decorations and pictures from the walls in order to sell them. We discovered that later.

While we were waiting for Tevie at the Shwabowski house, they had a guest, Kvedaravichius' youngest son. "How shameful!" he yelled. "You kept Jews in your house. It's because of *you* they survived. I killed someone from their family. Just before she died, she screamed, 'You'll never build an independent Lithuania atop our blood!' I'll show them right now if we'll build it or not!"

We charged outside and ran until we reached the Yankowskis' gate. The owners didn't even recognize us. They thought we were a couple of homeless people.

I started to cry.

"Don't you remember us? We're the Lozanskys."

The Yankowskis cried too when they discovered who we were. They invited us in, but we refused: we were just too dirty.

The woman brought us clean clothes, and we went to the swamp to wash ourselves. Mother fetched water in a fish pail and poured it over me.

I threw off my dress, and Mother picked it up. It is now in Israel in the exhibit "Poison For Your People."

by Dvora Reznik

I was born in Butrimantz. I live in Kovno now, and my sister Shifra lives in Israel. There were seven children in our family. Here in Kovno many people remember the war as a bad dream. It was a nightmare for my mother, my sisters and the rest of my relatives and friends. A never-ending nightmare....

On June 22, 1941, the Germans invaded Lithuania. It was frightening. Everyone tried to escape. We moved to a neighboring village and spent three days with our Lithuanian friends. They did not want us to stay any longer, however, so we had to return home.

Butrimantz looked as though a great fire had swept through it. Everything was ransacked or misplaced. The Lithuanian activists issued commands to everyone. We were no longer regarded as people. The husband of Chasya, my eldest sister, was taken away very soon. He was a teacher. Other teachers were taken to Alyta as well. They were told that they were going to work. My sister stole into Alyta with a package for her husband, but it was too late. She was laughed at.

All the youth were assembled in the town square very soon after that. Komsomol members were sorted out. They told them they would be sent to work. I was selected too, but they let me go. My sister Shifra, along with Kely Dimenstein and Shmuel Donsky, were released also. We were not Communists.

In a few weeks they snatched my father, along with most of the men in Butrimantz. They told them they would be sent to work. No one has seen them since....

The only ones left in Butrimantz were the elderly, women and children. We were assigned to live on two streets in the ghetto - Klidzenys and Tatarys. My mother, six siblings and I moved into Shamson Abramowitz's home.

The ghetto didn't last very long. On September 6 every Jew still alive was ordered to go to the Lithuanian school. Women and children from Stoklishok and Poon had been placed at the school beforehand. Terrible things were already happening: the children were crying; they were hungry and thirsty. There was no food or water to be found. The people were jammed together. Activists went around the school confiscating anything they hadn't yet taken. Only one Lithuanian, Ginkena, a teacher, came with water and bread a few times.

I remember standing next to a window as the Lithuanian activists approached with their shovels.

"Mama, Mama, they're going to kill us all, shoot us!" I yelled. "Look at those Lithuanians with their shovels. They're going to dig a grave for us!"

All the women turned to Mama.

"Chaya, your daughter has gone mad! What is she saying? There's no way they'll shoot us all! She must have gone insane!"

And I kept screaming, "Mama, Mama, they're going to kill us. My heart tells me they'll kill us!"

Then I calmed down a bit and whispered to her, "We have to run away!"

"Who can run?" she replied. "The eldest, Chasya, has her children to worry about. Zlata has a newborn - she won't go either. Aselya, Pesal and Abba are just youngsters. You and Shifra should go. I'll stay here and wait for whatever is going to happen to us."

I had just turned seventeen, and Shifra was a little younger. That night we left the school, as though we were going to the bathroom, and went to hide in the potato fields. We waited a while and then sprinted out of there as fast as we could....

Close to the school lived some Polish friends by the name of Egerski. We spent two days with them, hiding in their shed. We heard everyone from the school being marched

down the central road. Then we heard the gunshots.... I have never cried so hard in my life.

Egerski's wife came the next morning.

"Girls," she said, "my youngest, Manuek, comes home today. He's a policeman and he'll give you away. It would be better if you left."

Next to the Egerski home was a barn that belonged to Adomas, a butcher and good friend of our father. We ran to his house.

"I don't have any customers right now," he told us. "Everyone is busy hunting Jews. You can stay until someone comes."

In three days a cow was brought to be slaughtered. We left Adomas' barn and went to the Asanawicz family. They kept us hidden for three months.

It's a sin to complain, but life there was not sweet. Every day the woman, Valya Asanawicz, told us the same thing: "You're crazy to have run away! Couldn't you just go to your grave with your parents? Where are you going to go now? When spring comes you girls will be nice and warm again. Or maybe I should just buy you some arsenic so you can poison yourselves."

She barely gave us anything to eat. During those three months we lost so much weight that we could hardly hold ourselves up.

Once, when the activists were making the rounds and searching people's homes for Jews, the Asanawiczes' daughter ran into the house, screaming for us to go hide.

"Quickly, hide in the shed! The police are coming!"

Just as we ran into the shed we heard the gate to the front yard open. We looked around the shed but couldn't find any place to go. There was a lot of hay stacked up, but the pile was very high and we couldn't climb over it without a ladder.

Suddenly a shot was fired in the yard - one of the activists killed a dog. I don't know where we found the strength, but we climbed over that stack in less than a second,

or so it seemed. We buried ourselves in the hay and remained there until evening.

"I can't keep you around anymore," Valya Asanawicz told us. "Go wherever you like."

Well, she had hidden us for about three months. We appreciated that.

Looking for another place to hide led us to the Shegunewicz house. It was already dark when we set out on our way. It was also stormy and frightening.

When we finally reached the house, we knocked on the door. The owner, Juozas, came out.

"Who is it?" he asked. "What do you want?"

"We are Reznik's daughters. Can you hide us?"

"All right. Come inside."

My sister and I remained in their shack for a few days. Then Shegunewicz made a hole under his bed for us to hide in. It was very small. We stayed in there for three months.

The Shegunewicz family were extremely kind people. Once, however, in the spring Juozas called us up from the hole.

"It's going bad," he told us. "In the Gelein village they found out that the Golombewskis were helping Jews hide. The Jews were shot right away, and the Golombewskis were taken to Alyta. You girls have to leave."

"If they go," his wife said loudly, "I'm going too. You can't send them away. They have nowhere to go. Let's think of a better way to hide them instead."

We climbed back into the pit. All the holes were sealed, and the owners put lots of potatoes on top of the lid.

After a while I told my sister, "I don't feel good.... I don't know why, but it's getting worse. Shifra, Shifra, I can't breathe anymore!"

We started yelling to the Shegunewiczes to let us out.

"Open the lid, open it!"

But the owners must have left the house and didn't hear us. I thought that was the end of us. We gathered our

strength and pushed the lid up as hard as we could. It opened! The pile of potatoes and junk collapsed on us, but we didn't care. We were able to breathe!

The Shegunewiczes' daughter, Zina, came to see what had happened.

"Oi vey," she sighed. "You've turned blue!"

In a few days Mrs. Shegunewicz returned, bringing us some food. Then she put her hand under my cheek and said, "Dear girls, you have to go. I feel sorry for you, but I'm worried about my own family."

We left that night. We circled round the Shegunewicz house for ten days, hiding in the forest, bushes and their shed. Juozas brought us milk and bread.

My sister and I started thinking, and we decided to go to our mother's friends, the Veronovskys. Mother had given them many of our belongings for safekeeping.

We walked for five miles in constant fear of being caught. It happened that just at that time the Poles were taken to the camps. People stayed at home; the streets were empty.

We were able to reach the Veronovskys' house without being seen. We tapped on the window. The lady lifted the curtain, saw us and let it drop again. She wouldn't open the door.

We stood there, not moving, just thinking: Where do we go now?

To our good fortune, the old man came to the door and we ran inside, crying and begging, "Please save us! We have nowhere to go!"

We remained with these people until the autumn of 1942. At night we hid in their attic; by day, in the rye in their cellar. When fall came it grew very cold. We asked the owners for something warm from the clothing our mother had given them.

"We don't have anything," Veronovsky told us. "My brother's son is wearing the jacket, and the coat went to his daughter."

In a few days they asked us to leave....

That autumn was spent in the forests. We slept in ditches and potato fields. I don't remember that time very clearly. We approached many houses, but all the owners rejected us. They either told us to leave or referred us to someone else.

We knew better than to go to their referrals. We realized that the only reason they would send us to someone else was so that they could later report them to the police and get both their referrals and us arrested.

I remember a certain incident very clearly.

It was a stormy night. We were running toward a shack. The shed was leaking. The wind was so strong that the whole structure moved from side to side. It was frightening and bitter cold. We clung to each other for warmth.

Shifra said, "Dvora, let's go to the owner's house. No one could be mean enough to turn us away in this weather."

And so we ventured to their door. There were three people inside: a father, mother and daughter. The parents did not object to our presence, but their daughter yelled, "Jews in our house! Get out of here! When it stops raining, I'll go to the police to report you myself!"

Out the door we went. The mother followed and gave us a loaf of bread, whispering, "There's a potato field behind the house. Go hide in it."

And so to the field we went. It was very wet, scary and infested with bugs. We spent three days in that field. The woman brought us some bread every day and we shared it. My sister would hold the bread in her mouth and offer it to me at the same time.

"I'm full," I would say. "I don't want any more."

I would later hold the bread in my mouth too and offer it to Shifra. That was how we lived through those days.

After a while we decided that we had to find a safe place to live, no matter what. We went to the Rodlinskis. They were relatives of the Shegunewicz family.

If God had tried to ease our troubles just once during that dreadful war, this was the time!

We spent the rest of the war with these people. In the winter we lived in the cellar; in the summer, in the haystacks. They taught us to sew, and this distracted us from the terror we lived with. Anything we tried to think of would always lead to that night when our mother and sisters died. We learned not to think about the past at all. We just stitched and stitched and stitched....

The Rodlinskis didn't own any land; they rented it. In 1944 their rental agreement expired, and we had to move to another place. Before we left, Rodlinski dug a bunker for us to hide in. I guess it was still better to be alive in the ground than dead on top.

The Russian army was advancing rapidly, and we could already hear the sounds of the machine guns. We could barely wait.

Once, the owner came to us with a smile on his face.

"Girls, I saw the Russian army!"

We were speechless. We just sat there with our mouths open.

"You still shouldn't leave yet. Stay with us another week until things settle down."

We spent that whole week imagining how we would meet the Russians. When we went outside and saw the red stars on the tanks with our own eyes, we started to cry.

What saved my sister and me? The kindness of people. We were two poor girls, barefoot, in tattered clothing. Yet no one gave us away. The people saved us. I owe my life to those people.

by Victoria Golombewski

We, the Golombewskis, have lived in Lithuania for a long time. My grandfather, Raymond, and his brother, Yan, were the first of our family to live here. After the two brothers became quite wealthy, they split the fortune between Raymond's sons - Yan didn't have any children. Raymond had three sons: Bronislaw, Boleslaw and Pieter, my father.

It would have been customary to divide the money three ways, but Raymond had decided otherwise. He didn't give his son Boleslaw any part of the fortune. I don't know why.

Boleslaw was very angry at his brothers. He waited a long time to take his revenge. When the war came, he carried it out.

Our house stood in a forest about three miles from Butrimantz. So there we were, living in our forest house, when we heard about the war. The bombing in Alyta was much too loud to escape us.

On June 22, 1941, a few Jews came to our house to hide, but they left a day later. Then, in a matter of weeks, Father told us of the terrible things going on in Butrimantz. A week later he brought Lipka Garbovsky, son of a close friend, to our house.

"Just remember, all of you," he said, "should anyone ask, this is Mother's nephew. He's going to live with us."

I was ten years old. Lipka was thirteen. We became friends.

In August there were ten Jews helping us. They went to the rye fields with my father. All of them wore a yellow star on the back of their jackets, indicating they were Jews. Eight days later they went to Butrimantz. We never saw them again.

Once, in September, I recall hearing terrible rounds of gunfire. I ran straight to my father. "Daddy, Daddy, what's happening?"

"The Jews of Butrimantz are being killed," answered Father.

Winter came. Somewhere far away the Germans were fighting the Russians. People even said that Moscow had been taken. It didn't interfere with our lives, however. It didn't get in our way.

One night at the end of February 1942, Jews once again appeared at our door. Uncle Bronislaw brought six of them inside. We fed them and gave them a place to sleep. In the morning they went to Father and asked him to hide them. Father thought for a very long time. He looked at me and my sisters, and then agreed.

The Jews didn't get in our way. We were quite rich. We owned about five acres of land and had ten cows. Father felt sorry for these people.

Four of them were hidden in our sauna a third of a mile from our house. The other two, Riva and Tsalka from Stoklishok, remained in our house. Riva was pregnant and delivered in two weeks. I remember that at the time a neighbor of ours went outside for a smoke and stood leaning against the side of our house. Tsalka had to press his hand over Riva's mouth so that her screams would not be heard by the neighbor. And Father went outside to distract the neighbor by talking to him. Riva gave birth to a boy. My mother helped with the birth. She herself had had her first son not quite a year before.

Zelik Shuster, his wife Ada and her brother and sister from Memel lived in the sauna. The brother's name was Borka Boruch; I don't remember the sister's name. Food was brought to them by me and our maid, Kruisa. Father asked Borka to be nice to Kruisa, but what happened is that she fell in love with him. Every day Kruisa would say, "Victia, let's go visit the Jews!" We'd put potatoes and bread into a bucket and

go on our way. We always knocked three times so they would know it was us.

Borka left soon afterward. He confided in me that he was really in love with Zelik's sister Raya, but he made me promise not to tell Kruisa. He had heard that Raya was hiding in Parankava with some Poles. (Jonas, a Lithuanian from Stoklishok, was the one who actually hid her until the end of the war.)

Borka went everywhere looking for Raya until an old Lithuanian woman, Kivilskiene, saw him. She wanted to take revenge on her neighbors and saw her opportunity. She had Borka stay with her for a day, and then she told him, "I'm leaving for a long time. You should go to the Janavichius family. They're good people and will let you stay. When I return, you can come back."

The neighbors really were very kind people and let Borka in. But as soon as he had stepped inside their door, Kivilskiene ran to the police and reported Borka. The *smaugiks* surrounded the house.

"Come out, Jew!" they yelled.

Borka started to throw grenades at them, and the *smaugiks* returned with gunfire. The daughter of the Janavichiuses was killed in the battle, and the policeman Stoshkus was wounded. (After the war, Stoshkus was sentenced to fifteen years in prison.) Borka was fatally shot. He had searched all over for love, but found death....

* * *

Our Jews gathered their weapons and took them to the forest. I remember how Zelik Shuster pulled out rifles and grenades that were hidden in the cellar.

"I won't sacrifice my life for nothing," he said.

Our sauna was a very good one and our neighbors had often used it. When the Jews moved into our house, however, Father started to revoke the privilege. He would say "no"

once, twice, and then "okay" so that they wouldn't suspect anything.

The Jews would leave our house for a day; the neighbors would come to use the sauna. To our misfortune, however, they once spotted some scraps of onion and bread. They started to watch more closely and observed me with Kruisa. They went to Father.

"Pieter, who is hiding in your sauna?"

Father answered, "I don't know anything about anyone hiding in there."

As soon as it grew dark, he ran to the Jews. I went with him. Father asked Zelik to leave at least for a little while, to sleep in the forest for a few nights.

Zelik pulled out a grenade, yanked the tab off and put his hand on the table with it.

"We have nowhere to go," he said. "No one will hide us any longer. If you throw me out, I'll release this. The whole place will be reduced to splinters!"

Why did they not listen to my father? Maybe my whole life would have been different if they had. But it's hard for anyone to blame them. In any event, I would never do so.

The next day the *smaugiks* arrived on their wagon - Stoshkus, Janushauskas, Proshkus and some others. They surrounded the building.

Our Jews fought back. It lasted two hours. Zelik wounded Proshkus with a grenade. The sauna caught on fire. The Jews jumped out and ran toward the wagon. There were four of them left: Zelik, Ada and her sister, and Lipka, the boy we referred to as Mother's nephew. Ada guided the horses; Zelik and Lipka fired at the *smaugiks.*

They might have made it, but the wheels got caught in a hole and the wagon turned over. The Jews sprinted into the woods.

Zelik was killed right away. Ada and Lipka were wounded. Lipka made it to the forest, but the women were caught. They beat them up. Then they went to violate Zelik's

body. He had quite a few gold teeth. Janushauskas attempted to extract them with a shovel. I saw this with my own eyes and rushed over to our neighbor Valangewicz. When she got there, she was furious.

"If you want to desecrate dead bodies," she shouted, "I won't let you bury him here. This is my property!"

Janushauskas dropped the shovel. The *smaugiks* dug a hole and threw the body inside. Afterward they piled rocks on top of the grave.

"That's so the Jew won't escape," they said.

Valangewicz told me later that someone dug up the grave that same night. I guess he couldn't sleep because of Zelik's gold teeth.

As soon as they had covered the hole with rocks, we returned to our house. Tsalka and Riva had escaped into the forest when they heard the gunshots. The bandits came to search the house. In the shed they found a newborn wrapped in cloths.

"Whose Jew is this?" they asked.

"We don't know," we told them. "There are forests all around this place. Someone must have abandoned the boy here."

They started to laugh.

"We have a formal statement that you're hiding someone. We know all about you."

Stoshkus had huge spurs on his boots. He swung his foot and ripped open my father's cheek.

My great-uncle Yan, my uncle Bronislaw and my father were taken to Alyta with the Jews. Uncle Boleslaw was not taken. He was the traitor who had reported his brothers to the police. By getting rid of his brothers and keeping the family wealth for himself, he executed his revenge.

Everyone in the surrounding villages had heard of this event. Shortly thereafter, about thirty Jews gave themselves up to the police because they had been kicked out and had nowhere to go.

It was on April 23, 1942, that my father was taken to Alyta. I never saw him again. Yan was set free in three months. He came home dark as death. He couldn't even speak.

Mother rushed to Alyta to find out what had happened to her husband and his brother Bronislaw.

"The Golombewskis?" they said. "They are not on our list. They were crossed out some time ago."

Lipka was caught at the end of the summer as well. After he left us, he hid in the forest and later went to Rutkowski, the woman to whom his parents had given all their belongings. Rutkowski tried to treat Lipka's injured hand as best she could, but it was only getting worse. Lipka went to the pharmacy in Butrimantz and spoke to Matskevich, who had been a neighbor before the war. Lipka asked for medication, but instead Matskevich reported him to the police. He was executed beside a tree in the town square.

"Tell us, Lipka," they asked, "where did your parents hide the gold?"

"I won't tell anything to my enemy! I won't, even if the damn gold goes to waste."

He didn't shed a tear or make any last-minute wishes. His final words were, "Shoot me in the heart."

The policemen fired, and Lipka's head was blown to bits.

(The details of Lipka's execution were provided by Stashes Cosco during the trial held after the war. Cosco, an activist, had witnessed the murder.)

Tsalka and Riva were able to survive another half year. Once, at night, I heard a knock on the door. Mother went to open it. I heard her say, "What are you doing here? We asked you to leave. This is the end for me and my children. There's nothing left to do. Speak up!"

In response, there was only silence.

Their last half year was spent in the forest, roaming with the rest of the people who were hiding. Then the bodies

of Riva and Tsalka - butchered with a hatchet - were paraded through the village for everyone to see. It is said they were captured when they repeatedly returned to a site in an attempt to retrieve some valuables they had buried there.

The autumn of 1942 came. We, the Poles, were also taken to Alyta. The *smaugiks* came and told us to go to the ghetto just like the Jews. Uncle Boleslaw was with us. His brothers' blood didn't help him....

We were placed in barracks. There were wire fences and watch towers surrounding the compound.

Many Poles who lived in Lithuania had filled out documents giving their children to various Lithuanians. When the war came, many of these "Lithuanians" went to work for the police. Some of them served as guards for our camp. What sometimes happened was that the children worked in the watch towers while their father was behind the fence.

In this way, some of our youth, thanks to their friendships, were able to escape. The rest of us were moved from Alyta to Radvilishok and situated there in place of the Jews who, poor souls, had been taken into the woods and shot in front of our eyes. They left all their items to us as well as their fear. A rumor circulated that we were next in line.

However, in a few weeks small groups of us began to be sent home. My mother and I were in one of the first groups. We returned to an empty house. The neighbors had taken everything. The house itself didn't even belong to us anymore. It had been given to Lithuanians. They were very generous toward us, for some reason, and gave us a room in our own house.

I was later told that our neighbors were standing just outside our house, waiting for the Golombewskis to be taken away. While some endured war and terror, others found paradise.

by Tevie Sheinker

The war had begun. The Germans had come and gone, but traces of their "new order" still remained. How could one be tempted to commit such crimes and live unpunished?

Thefts started from the very first moment of the new order and continued to the very end, to the last gold crown in a Jew's mouth.

One by one new orders were issued for the Jews and the whole country in general. The stores were robbed by June 23 and all the products disappeared instantly. No one knew what to do. The German troops rushed right by, leaving us completely puzzled.

The intellectuals and Communists were taken to Alyta right away. The rest of the population was brought to the town square a week or so later. Chief of Police Kaspariunas appeared with a list and called out the names of about ninety youth, the pride and strength of Butrimantz. My wife's sister, Nehama Lozansky, was taken along with them.

Kaspariunas later told his aide Joseliunas, "Well, you can choose some for yourself now. Take anyone you like."

Joseliunas moved through the crowd.

"That one," he said. "Good! And that other one, and..."

He selected nine people. That whole group was also taken to Alyta.

I didn't go to the square that day. I didn't go anywhere they ordered us to go. I hid in many places and did not spend a minute working for the enemy.

After that first group was selected, I began to stay at Yoshe-Leizer Meirowitz's house. He made saddles for the police, so I figured he would be one of the last ones they would touch. That's exactly what happened. The night that all the men were taken out of Butrimantz, Meirowitz wasn't even disturbed. That night so much blood was spilled because of

one single bastard - Miliunsky, the Jew, leader of the ghetto. Miliunsky went around the town, knocking on windows and exclaiming in Yiddish, "This is Miliunsky. Don't be afraid. Open the door, please."

People opened their doors to their death. That's how my brothers were caught.

After this incident, I stopped hiding in Butrimantz. My wife, Tsila, left with me. We hid with Kovalsky, another Butrimantz Jew, who owned a large piece of land with a house outside of town.

Some time after this, a hundred more Jews were taken - mostly the elderly, mothers and their children.

At night I usually visited my mother and father in the ghetto. Believing that circumstances were only getting harder, I divided my possessions among people I knew. This is what saved us.

On the day that nearly the entire ghetto was taken to the Lithuanian school, death almost found us. Policemen came to Kovalsky's house: Stoshkus and his friends Rameika, Raklavichius and Gramauskas.

Stoshkus asked Kovalsky, "Where is your wife and daughter?"

He knew everyone in the town. He even spoke some Yiddish.

"In Butrimantz," Kovalsky replied.

This was true. His wife and daughter actually had gone there the previous night and hadn't returned. I suppose they were taken to the Lithuanian school with the rest of them.

They didn't believe Kovalsky. Rameika and Raklavichius began searching his house and found Tsila and me.

"Ha-ha-ha," Stoshkus laughed, watching Kovalsky put a piece of bread into a sack. "You don't need to do that. You'll have thousands of loaves where you're going!" With a swing of his foot, he kicked the bread out of Kovalsky's hand.

We were brought before Stoshkus. I understood some-

thing right away: if we didn't get out then, we never would. But I couldn't run very far with Tsila. I asked him to free us, took off my wedding ring and gave it to him along with some money.

"Where will you go?" Stoshkus asked. "We'll kill you all anyway."

But our long friendship with Rameika saved us.

"We can let them go," he said. "Just make sure Gramauskas doesn't see. He'd kill all of us."

Gramauskas was busy searching the house for valuables at the time.

"Let's do it this way," said Rameika. "We'll give Gramauskas the cow. He'll take her home, and I'll free you."

Gramauskas took Kovalsky's cow, along with the owner, to his place. Rameika walked us toward the forest and said, "Run for your lives!"

I saw the smile on Stoshkus' face, and I heard the sound of a gun being loaded. When we ran into the forest, I heard a gunshot, but I think it was fired into the air. We ran a long way until we were sure there was no one pursuing us.

I decided to go to my Lithuanian friends, the Maldanis family. The land that their house occupied was just inside the forest. They had bought this land in partnership with my father. Father took the trees; the Maldanis family, the land.

It was ten and a half miles from the Kovalskys to the Maldanis home. We met a ranger on our way. He told us how all the Yezna Jews were shot before his eyes just a few days earlier. After I heard this, I stopped wondering what had happened to the Butrimantz Jews.

In the evening we reached Maldanis' place. To our misfortune, his house was full of guests and we could not go inside. We went to his neighbor, Danilavichius, who had also purchased land with the help of my father. I asked him to hide us. Danilavichius must not have known about Yezna.

"Fine," he said. "Let's wait and see how things turn out."

The next day Danilavichius' mother-in-law went to Butrimantz to find out the latest news. Even before she returned, we already knew. We had heard gunfire from nineteen miles away. The woman came back terrified.

"They're searching everyone's houses. They'll be here soon. In Butrimantz everyone of your kind has been killed. They said soon there won't be any Jews left in Lithuania. Please leave right now."

Danilavichius took us to his neighbor Kochim. We stayed there in his haystacks, but the following day we went to Gukevich. He was another friend of my father. Gukevich proved to be a very good man, and we remained in his shed for three months.

Once, Gukevich told us what he had heard from others. He said that someone had seen my wife's mother and sister in the nearby woods. Tsila started to cry and begged me to go and find them.

"Let's search for them. Perhaps they have survived!"

I tried to consider where they might be. Two women couldn't survive alone under these conditions. They were probably hiding with one of their Polish friends - perhaps their best friend, Yankowski.

When we reached Yankowski's place, he told us they were hiding at the Shestakowskis. In a couple of days we located them and went to hide with them.

I did not reveal to the women the identity of those who had hidden us because I feared that if they were captured they might be forced to disclose the names.

* * *

In the spring the Golombewskis were caught hiding Jews in their house. Among them was a pregnant woman who gave birth with the help of a midwife who had promised not to tell on them. However, she lied, and almost everyone in that household was taken away.

When they heard about this, the Shestakowskis became too afraid to hide us any longer.

"We'll get killed because of you."

In response to this incident, we left. After spending many days in the forest, I led everyone to the Maldanis house. They were afraid to let us stay in their house, but instead they brought us food on a regular basis. Then someone spotted us in the forest and alerted the police.

About eighty policemen arrived from Alyta. They surrounded the forest and searched all over for us. We fled out of the forest, but four people awaited us.

"Stokit!" they shouted, commanding us to halt.

I turned around and ran in the other direction. The women followed me. Yankel Bernstein, who was also hiding with us, was shot and could not continue. We fled for about a mile, hearing dogs barking and gunshots from behind. Our strength exhausted, we ran into the Chertovo swamp. It was treacherous, but we had no option.

Kovalsky's son, Yankele, and some other Jews were caught. The search for us was abandoned because they confused those people with us. Death had once again brushed us by, tagging someone else; but the only thing on my mind at the time was where to go next.

In the morning I cautiously emerged from the swamp to investigate the situation regarding the *smaugiks.* I went to the Maldanis house and knocked on their door, but no one answered. I knocked louder and the door opened.

"Who is it?" a woman asked.

"It's me, Tevie. Have the police left?"

"Run away, fool," she whispered. "They're here at our house."

I ran away so fast I thought my neck would snap. When I got back to the women, we all went to Gukevich. We spent the next day near his house, and in the evening I asked him to go to the Maldanis family to find out what was happening.

Gukevich returned very quickly.

"Everything's all right. The police just left. You can go back to them now."

He told us how Yankel Bernstein had been tortured when the police interrogated him for the names of those who had hidden him.

(Slavinsky, who lived in the Parankava village, later told how the police had made him dig a hole before they shot Bernstein. He testified that Bernstein was asked who had given him food and shelter from September 1941 until June 1942. The police promised him his life in exchange for this information, but Bernstein refused and was executed.)

From the Lithuanians and Poles I found out how far the Germans had conquered Russia. I heard that the Germans were retreating again. They had reached the very heart of the country. Even if the Russians were to save Moscow, Lithuania would probably remain under German power. What would we do if this happened? I tried not to think about that and concentrated on getting food for ourselves.

From Gukevich we went to Randomanski. He hid us in his field. There, in the rye, we remained almost the whole summer. But when the rye was harvested, we had to leave.

In the fall I divided up our group according to the way it had been at first. Four people in one group were too many.

During those autumn nights I searched for any source of food, often with Tsila's sister Riva. We went barefoot so we could feel tire tracks on the ground. These were usually made by the trucks driven by "protectors." When we reached the various houses, Riva would ask for bread while I inquired about the neighbors.

"Who did you say lives behind you? In front of you? To the side?"

In this way I would recall the people who used to be friends of our family, and I'd go to those houses the following day. I rewarded these people with anything I had that they desired. That was how I bought life for myself.

Many Poles and even Lithuanians helped us out of their good natures. Others helped because they were afraid God would consider it a sin if they refused. Markauskas, a Lithuanian, hid three Jews. After the incident with the Golombewskis, he went to Butrimantz to get advice from Andrikonis, a clergyman, on whether he was doing the right thing by keeping the Jews there.

The clergyman answered, "The Almighty will think good thoughts about you. Keep on helping these people."

Markauskas hid the Jews until the end of the war.

The clergyman Andrikonis was an honest man and a true believer in God. He liked people of all kinds, whether they were Lithuanians, Poles or Jews. After the war he helped us build a memorial on the location of the mass grave of the Jews of Butrimantz. I remember the words he spoke at the site: "When I look at all this destruction, I feel ashamed that I am a Lithuanian."

On the other hand, Kaushila, a pastor from Pivash-unai, urged people to help in the destruction of Jews.

"Go see if you can catch one or two today," he would say. "Make sure there's not a single one left."

Many of those who helped us expected something for their efforts after the war. There was a rumor that American Jews would reward those people generously....

We spent the winter of 1942-1943 with Mamortas Alishauskas in Yanova. He kept us solely for the money he expected to receive. I paid him in small amounts every four days. I told him I had to beg for the money. If he had known that I was using my own funds, he would have taken everything and reported us.

We spent the summer of 1943 out in the fields and woods again. In the winter we returned to Mamortas' house. Once Tsila told me she had overheard him talking with his wife, who was saying, “Go and take a look at her coat. She must have some gold sewn into it. I saw it myself. Don't be a fool, Mamortas. Turn them in.”

We did not stay to find out what Mamortas' decision would be. I gathered the women and we rushed over to Kulesh, an old friend of mine who lived close to Alishauskas. He refused to let us in.

"Go to Shwabowski. He's a good man. He might let you stay."

Shwabowski allowed us in. He sold stolen goods and made alcohol himself. In other words, he was the kind of person who didn't hesitate to take risks. We stayed with him until the end of the war.

In a year the war was over. The Russians came and saved our lives. We Jews must never forget who saved us.

It is very difficult to recollect everything we endured, to recall the faces of those who died and to whom we were so close.... Thank God this won't happen again. We now have Israel.

On September 24, 1941, Hona Boyarsky and his son Avram were still alive. All other members of their family were already in the mass graves in Alyta and Butrimantz. Hiding in haylofts, running, hunted, the father and son created a chilling document of what had happened to the Jews of the *shtetl* Butrimantz. The document was a 40-page letter written in Yiddish depicting the heinous events that were taking place. It ended with a list of the names of the victims.

"To my dear Leahle," wrote Hona to his relative in Palestine. "If through some chance this letter should reach you, I must tell you how the town of Butrimantz and our family and other Jews were destroyed by the Lithuanians and the Germans....

"Alter and Noah [Hona's sons] were taken to Alyta on the 12th of August and were shot to death. Sarah and Chana [Hona's wife and daughter] were taken away on the 9th of September. Avram and I are still alive."

Some time later (the exact date is not known) Hona and Avram were caught in the Daug region and executed. Avram was 15, his father, 53. Their letter to Leahle had ended:

"Now I will write you precisely about Butrimantz, the names of those who were shot in Alyta and those who were shot in Butrimantz. Should this letter reach you, Leahle, or someone, let the relatives know at least where their parents, brothers, sisters perished."

* * *

After the war, the Boyarsky letter was found by a farmer in his hayloft. He forwarded it to Riva Lozansky, one of the small group of Butrimantz survivors. Although the roster of names of the victims is as complete as possible, the Boyarskys noted: "All these that we have listed were killed, except for those who went to Russia, and we do not know whether they are living or dead. More Jews were killed in Butrimantz, but we don't know their names or families."

Ten adults and four children survived in Butrimantz:

DONSKY, Batya Sheinker

DONSKY, Itzhak (Batya's husband)

DONSKY, Leib (son of Batya and Itzhak)

FINK, Yaakov

FINK, Shalom Zeev (Yaakov's son; now named Wilhelm Yozef Zienowicz)

GABAY, Dr. Abel

GABAY, Binyamin (Abel's son)

GABAY, Renana (Abel's daughter)

LOZANSKY, Dora Itskowitz

LOZANSKY, Riva (Dora's daughter)

REZNIK, Dvora

REZNIK, Shifra (Dvora's sister)

SHEINKER, Tevie

SHEINKER, Tsila Lozansky (Tevie's wife)

The Victims

Jews of Butrimantz who were murdered in 1941

(*in Alyta* and *in Butrimantz* indicate where the individual family members were killed)

A

ABRAMOWITZ, Motel, and his wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

ABRAMOWITZ, Shamson (a butcher), in Alyta. His wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

ABRAMOWITZ, Shmuel, in Alyta. His wife, in Butrimantz.

ADELSON, Zlota, in Butrimantz. Her son BenZion, in Alyta.

ALFOWITZ, Motel (a smith), and two daughters and a son, in Alyta. His wife and their other children, in Butrimantz. Their eldest son, Leiba, went to Russia and died there.

ARPAHSANDER (a teacher) was shot on the road to Alyta during a forced march there. His wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

B

BADASH, Alter, and his wife and some of their children, in Butrimantz. Two other children, in Alyta.

BADASH, Berl, and his wife, Chana Malka (Lozansky), in Troki. (At the time they were living in Anushishok.)

BADASH, Moshe, and two sons and a daughter, in Alyta. His wife and their youngest daughter, in Butrimantz.

BAKSHITZKY, Yosef, and his wife and their daughter Rashl, in Butrimantz. His son Boruch went to Russia. Boruch's wife, Miriam (Kalemitzky), in Alyta.

BALASHER, Volpiansky's son-in-law, in Alyta. His wife and their daughter, in Butrimantz.

BARCHMAN, Hinda, in Butrimantz.

BAVER, Aron, his wife, Reizel, and their daughter Asna and son Akiva, in Butrimantz.

BAVER, Sarah, in Butrimantz. Her son, in Alyta. Her daughter Tsvia and family, in Zhezmir. Another daughter, in Butrimantz.

BERNSTEIN, Yankel, was captured while in hiding in Maldanis' forest. Although he was tortured before he was executed - his fingers chopped off one by one - he refused to divulge the names of those who had given him food because the penalty for helping Jews was death. He was murdered by Lithuanians who surrounded the forest, searching for fleeing Jews. He died a hero on April 15, 1942, during his second year in hiding. His wife died in Butrimantz.

BINDER, Meyer, and his sister, in Alyta. Two brothers, in Vilna.

BLOCH, Freida, in Butrimantz. Her son Avraham and his daughter, in Alyta. Avraham's wife and their son, in Butrimantz.

BLOCH, Shmuel, and his wife and children, in Butrimantz.

BOFTER (family name unknown), in Alyta. His wife and their daughter, in Butrimantz.

BOYARSKY, Binyamin, and his son Yosef, in Alyta. Shlomo, who was in the army, was shot by the Germans in the early days of the war. His wife and their son Alter, in Butrimantz.

BOYARSKY, Hona, and his son Avram were caught in hiding and murdered in the Daug region in Sokolowski's fields. Hona's wife Sarah and their daughter Chana, in Butrimantz. Sons Alter and Noah, in Alyta. While in hiding, Hona and Avram compiled this list of victims which was part of a letter/diary written to Leah Boyarsky in Israel.

C

CHAPNIK, Hirsh Yehuda, and his wife and their son Moshe and his family, in Alyta. Their son Dovid and his wife were shot while in hiding.

CHOLEWITZ, Hirsh, in Alyta. His wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

D

DAVINSKY, Leib (a shoemaker), nicknamed "Balcon" because of his height, in Alyta. His wife, in Butrimantz. Their sons Yaakov and Zaiv, in Alyta. Their son Moshe Itzhak, in Yezna.

DAVINSKY, Velvel (son-in-law of Motel Shuster), and his wife, in Butrimantz.

DIMENSTEIN, Shmuel, and his son, in Alyta. His wife and their other children, in Butrimantz.

DONSKY, Shmuel, in Alyta. His parents, Itzhak and Batya (Sheinker) Donsky, and his brother Leib hid and survived the war.

DVOGOVSKY, Hona Velvel, and his eldest son, Zundel, in Alyta. His wife, in Butrimantz. Their second son, Moshe Ephraim, who was in the Kovno ghetto with his family, survived with the partisans.

E

EPSTEIN, Dovid, in Alyta. His wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

EPSTEIN, Hirsh, and his wife and children, in Butrimantz.

F

FINK, Yaakov, hid and survived (together with his relative Dr. Abel Gabay). After the war, he emigrated to the United States where he died a few years later. Fink's three-year-old son, Shalom Zeev, was hidden in Vilna by two young Polish women, Janina Zienowicz-Zagala and her sister Helena Zienowicz (who also saved the lives of the two Gabay children). After the liberation, Shalom Zeev remained with the Zienowicz family and retained the name Wilhelm Yozef Zienowicz, under which he had been registered while in hiding. He later moved to Warsaw, Poland, where he married and had three children. Yaakov Fink's wife, Zlata Riva Menkin, a doctor, had died shortly before the war in a typhus epidemic. The fate of their five-year-old daughter, Tanya Fink, is not known. It is thought she was sent to her mother's family in northeast Lithuania, and died there; others speculate she may have been hidden and disappeared into a new identity.

FINN, Feina, in Butrimantz.

FREEDMAN, Eliahu, and his wife and their children, in Kalvaria.

FURMANSKY, Motel, and his son, in Alyta. His wife, in Butrimantz.

G

GABAY, Dr. Abel, hid and survived (together with Yaakov

Fink). His wife died in the Vilna ghetto. Their two children, Renana and Binyamin, were hidden in Vilna by two young Polish women, Janina Zienowicz-Zagala and her sister Helena Zienowicz (who also saved the life of Yaakov Fink's son). After the war, Dr. Gabay and his children went to live in Israel. Gabay's 90-year-old mother and his blind brother, Shmerl, poisoned themselves when the Lithuanian police came to their house to round them up.

GALUMBOVSKY, Leib, in Ritova. His wife, in Butrimantz.

GARBOVSKY, Itzhak, and his children, in Alyta. His wife, in Butrimantz.

GARBOVSKY, Lipka, was executed in late summer 1942 in the town square in Butrimantz, after a year in hiding. Until they were betrayed, the Golombewskis, a wealthy Polish family, had hidden Lipka and several other Jews in their house. Pieter Golombewski and his brother Bronislaw were arrested on April 23, 1942, and taken to Alyta along with some of the captured Jews they had sheltered. They were never seen again.

GARBOVSKY, Yankel, and his wife and son, in Alyta.

GERSH, Dovid, and a daughter, in Alyta. His wife and their other children, in Butrimantz.

GERSH, Rochel, in Butrimantz. Her son Nissan, in the army.

GERTNER, Israel, in Alyta. His wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

GOLDBERG, Mina, was shot in the Butrimantz Jewish cemetery in September by the policeman Lapinauskas.

GOLDBERG, Moshe, in Alyta.

GOLDSTEIN, Yankel, and his wife, in Alyta.

GORDON, Leah, and her children, in Vilna.

GURWITZ, Itzhak, and his son, in Alyta. His wife and their two daughters, in Butrimantz.

GURWITZ, Moshe Yankel, in Alyta.

GURWITZ, Yosef, in Alyta. His wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

GUTFARB, Baruch, and his wife, Hannah, in Butrimantz. Their two daughters, Yetta and Sarah, in Pren with their families.

H, I

HAISHETZ, Leib, in Alyta. His wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

HALPERIN, Sonya (Lubelsky), and her children, in Butrimantz.

HORVITZ/HURWITZ, *see* GURWITZ

ITSKOWITZ, Shlomo, and two sons, in Alyta. His wife and their other children, in Butrimantz.

K

KABACHNIK, Batya Hinda, and her daughter Tsvia, in Butrimantz. Her son Moshe-Dov, in Kovno. (Three daughters - Liba-Leah, Abigail and Esther - are in Israel.)

KABACHNIK, Meir-Nohem (details unknown).

KABACHNIK, Shimon, and his wife, in Butrimantz. Their daughter Tsipa, in Alyta.

KALEMITZKY, Hirsh, and his son, in Alyta. His wife and their daughters, in Butrimantz.

KALEMITZKY, Yosef, in Alyta. His wife Freida and their daughter Dvora, in Butrimantz.

KAPLAN, Berl, and his children, in Alyta.

KARABAN, Sholom, and two sons, in Alyta. His wife and their other children, in Butrimantz.

KARELITZ, Aharon Boruch, and his son-in-law Meyer Freedman, in Alyta. His wife and their two daughters, in Butrimantz.

KARPAS, Chaim, and his wife Leah (Katzowitz) and their son Shlomo, in Alyta. Chaim's mother, Alte Karpas, and her daughter, in Butrimantz.

KASSEL, Nachum, and his son Meyer and daughter Batya, in Alyta.

KATZOWITZ, Zalman, in Alyta. His wife, Sarah (Kalemitzky), and their daughter, in Butrimantz.

KAUFMAN, Tzalel, and his sons, in Alyta. His wife and their daughter, in Butrimantz.

KEIDANSKY, Chazan (Cantor) Zaiv, and two of his sons, in Alyta. His wife and a third son, in Butrimantz. Their daughter Leah, in Kovno.

KEIDANSKY, Professor, and his wife and their daughter, in Butrimantz.

KIRPICHNIK, Berl, in Alyta. His wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

KORESH, Chaim Moshe, and his son and a daughter, in Alyta. His wife and their other children, in Butrimantz.

KORESH, Leib, in Alyta. His children, in Butrimantz.

KOVALSKY, Leib (location of his death unknown). His wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

KOVALSKY, Paltiel (a merchant), and his wife and their daughter, in Butrimantz. Their eldest son, Mordechai (a doctor), died after the liberation when he went to the village to administer medical treatment. He was murdered by the same bandits he had treated. Two of Kovalsky's sons

(one named Yankel) were caught by the Lithuanians while in hiding and tortured before they were killed.

KOZIOL, Iser, in Alyta. His wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

KRAVITZ, BenZion, in Alyta. His wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

KRIM, Baile, and her children, in Butrimantz. Her husband, in Alyta.

KUGLER, Moshe, in Alyta. His wife, in Butrimantz.

KUTS, Rivka, and her son Aron and daughter-in-law, in Butrimantz.

KUTS, Shmuel, and his wife, in Serhai in the Alyta region.

KWINT, Itzhak, in Alyta. His wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

L

LEIBOWITZ, Reuben, and his son and two daughters, in Alyta. His wife and their other children, in Butrimantz.

LERMAN, Sheina, in Butrimantz. Her son Chaim, in Russia.

LEVINE, Leib (a smith), and his wife, in Butrimantz. Their son Avraham, in Kovno. Their daughter Ida and her family, in Alyta. Their daughter Mariasha Bakalerisky, in Butrimantz. Mariasha's son, in Mariampole. The location of the death of the Levines' daughter Reizel is unknown.

LEVINE, Moshe Yosef, and his wife and their children, in Alyta.

LEVITT, Moshe, and his wife and their daughter Batya, in Butrimantz.

LITVIN (a teacher), in Alyta.

LOZANSKY, Dov-Berl, and his youngest daughter, Nehama, in Alyta. His wife, Dora (Itskowitz), and their daughters Riva Lozansky and Tsila Sheinker hid in the forests and survived the war. (Tsila's husband, Tevie Sheinker, was also among this group of survivors.) The eldest Lozansky daughter, Sara-Basya, and her husband, BenZion Dantsig, and their three young children - Rivka (6 years old), Aharon (4), and Itzhak Yehuda (3 months) - were all murdered in Kushidar on August 28, 1941. (With them also died the father of BenZion - Avraham Dantsig.)

LUBELSKY (given name unknown), in Alyta. His wife, in Butrimantz. Their son Tsvi, in Alyta. Tsvi's wife and their child, in Butrimantz.

LUFTSPRUNG, Paul, and his daughter, in Alyta. His wife and their other children, in Butrimantz.

M, N

MAZOVSKY, Mendel, and his wife Roza and their two children, in Butrimantz. (The clergyman who had hidden the family during the war murdered them only three days before the city was liberated.)

MAZOVSKY, Moshe-Egudu, in Alyta.

MAZOVSKY, Moshe Eliahu (a smith), and his wife, in Alyta. Their son Sanya and his wife, in Butrimantz.

MEIROWITZ, Yoshe-Leizer, and his wife were shot in the Butrimantz Jewish cemetery on October 1.

MICHELMAN, Cheina, and her daughters, in Butrimantz. Her sons-in-law, in Alyta.

MICHELMAN, Itzhak, in Russia. His wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

MIKLESHANSKY, Aharon, in Alyta. His son, in Kovno.

MIKLESHANSKY, Alte, in Butrimantz. Her son, in Alyta.

MIKLESHANSKY, Binyamin, and his wife, in the Crimea. (They never returned after the war. Their fate is unknown.)

MILIUNSKY, Itzhak, and his wife were shot in the Jewish cemetery in Butrimantz on October 1.

MILLSTEIN, Hillel (a teacher), in Alyta. His wife, Chasya (Reznik), and their children, in Butrimantz.

MOSHE (the glazier), in Alyta. His wife, Tsipa-Dvora, in Butrimantz.

MOSTOWITZ, Tsvi-Hirsh, and his wife, in Butrimantz. Their two children, in Alyta.

NAGIN, Shimon, the first victim in the *shtetl,* was killed in Butrimantz by the activist Joseliunas and a policeman.

P

PEKER, Yaakov, in Russia. His wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

PERTZIKOWITZ, Itzhak, and three sons, Koppel, Israel and Feivel, and daughters Sara, Malka and Sonya, in Alyta. His wife, Leah, in Butrimantz. The eldest daughter, Gita, in Kovno. Of the whole family, only one son survived - Zalman who lives in Israel.

PERTZIKOWITZ, Rashl, in Butrimantz.

PINCHAS, Dovid (the sexton), and his wife; their son Hona and his wife, Dina (Bloch), and their children; and their son-in-law Shmuel Bloch and his wife and children; all in Butrimantz.

PITELEWITZ, Ephraim, and his son, in Alyta. His wife and their daughter, in Butrimantz.

PLITISHKY, Hirsh, and his wife, in Alyta.

POCHTIVE, Henoch, and his daughter and son-in-law survived the Kovno ghetto. Two of Henoch's sons died in Kovno.

PRUSS, Chaya-Sarah, in Butrimantz. Her son, in Alyta.

PRUSS, Rashl, and her children, in Butrimantz.

R

RASHKOWITZ, Chaim, and his son, in Alyta. His wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

RASHKOWITZ, Dovid, in Altya. His wife and children, in Butrimantz. (Eight daughters died.) Son Reuven, in Russia.

RASHKOWITZ, Itzhak Leib, in Alyta. His wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

RASHKOWITZ, Yosef, in Alyta. His wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

RASHKOWITZ (a deaf mute) and his wife, in Butrimantz.

RATSIN, Hena Michel, in Butrimantz. Her daughters Chana and Feiga, in Alyta. Her son Zalman, in Russia. Her daughter Sheina was killed while she was in hiding near Anushishok in the Troki region.

REZNIK, Akiva, and his son, in Alyta. His wife and their daughters, in Butrimantz.

REZNIK, Asher, and his son, in Alyta. His wife and their other children, in Butrimantz.

REZNIK, Hitzele, and her children, in Butrimantz. Her sons-in-law, in Alyta.

REZNIK, Shmuel Mona, in Alyta. His wife and their daughter, in Butrimantz.

REZNIK, Yankel, and his son, in Alyta. His wife and their other children, in Butrimantz.

REZNIK, Zissel, and his son, Abba, in Alyta. His wife, Chaya, and four of their daughters - Aselya, Chasya, Pesal and Zlata, in Butrimantz. Their daughters Shifra and Dvora hid and survived. (Dvora lives in Kovno; Shifra, in Israel.)

RUDNIK, Shmuel (the *shochet* of Butrimantz), in Alyta. His wife, Liba, in Butrimantz. Their two sons, Avraham and Dovid and his wife, in Kovno ghetto.

S, T

SHAPIRO, Dovid Shlomo, in Alyta. His wife, Tsila, and daughters, Rochel and Berta, in Butrimantz. His mother, Etel (Marcus) Shapiro, in Butrimantz. Dr. Eliahu Shapiro, brother of Dovid Shlomo, had escaped to Russia with his wife, Hinda Segalovsky (from Kushidar), and their infant son Boris. The family survived, but on July 8,1951, Eliahu drowned accidentally in Polangen while on holiday.

SHEINKER, Chaya, in Butrimantz. Her sons Shmuel and Gershon, in Alyta. Her son Tevie hid in the forests and survived with his wife, Tsila (Lozansky). Chaya's daughter Batya (Sheinker) Gamski and her husband, Max Gamski, and their sons Reuven and Dovid, in Pren.

SHEINKER, Itzhak, in Alyta. His wife, Esther (Mikleshansky), and their daughter, in Butrimantz. Esther gave birth to their second child near the open mass grave where they were all shot.

SHEVAH family (details unknown).

SHIMELEWITZ, Itzhak, was shot while running away; he was buried near the Lithuanian school. His wife and their children, in Alyta. His eldest son, Zalman, was killed in action in the early days of the war.

SHIRER, Shlomo, and his son Nachum, in Alyta. His wife and their daughter, in Butrimantz. Their son Shimon, in Russia. Another son's death location is not known.

SHMERL from Zhusli and his wife, in Butrimantz.

SHOUFER, Yishayahu, and three of his sons, in Alyta. His son Dovid, in Russia. His wife Baile was herded together with a group of prisoners to Alyta because she had given a piece of bread to one of the prisoners. She was shot on the way to Alyta. The younger Shoufer children, in Butrimantz.

SHTUKAREWITZ, Dov-Berl, and his brother Mordechai, in Alyta. Their mother and their three sisters - Zosel, Golda, and the youngest - as well as their children, in Butrimantz.

SHUSTER, Motel, and his wife, in Butrimantz.

SHUSTER, Shimon, and his son and son-in-law, in Alyta. His wife and their daughter, in Butrimantz.

SHWARTZBARD, Chana Gitel, and her daughter, in Butrimantz. Her son-in-law, in Alyta.

SHWARTZBARD, Koppel, and his son, in Alyta.

SIRAYSKY, Yehusha, in Alyta. His wife, in Butrimantz.

SIROTA, Leib, and his son, in Alyta. His wife and their daughters, in Butrimantz.

SIROTA, Nehemye, and his wife, in Butrimantz.

SKLAR, Dovid, in Russia. His wife, Mina, and five of their children, in Butrimantz. Their eldest daughter, Mariasha, in Alyta.

SKLAR, Henoch, in Russia. His wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

SLOBODSKY, Dov (details unknown).

SLOBODSKY, Shmuel, and five grandchildren, in Alyta.

SLOMONSKY, Zelik, and his sons, in Alyta. His wife, in Butrimantz.

SMORGONSKY, Nachum, and his sons, in Alyta. His wife, in Butrimantz.

SMORGONSKY, Velvel, and his wife, in Alyta.

SOFION, Yudel, and two of his sons, in Alyta. Another son, in Russia. His wife and their daughter, in Butrimantz.

STRAGE, Nissan (from Poon), in Alyta. His wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

STRAGE, Reuven, and his wife and their children, in Butrimantz. Their two daughters, Chana and Batya and her child, hid in the forest. A few days before the liberation, they went to a peasant to ask for food. He reported them to the police, and they were shot in the Alyta prison.

SVERSKY, Alter, and his wife and their children, in Butrimantz.

TSAFNAS, Yankel, and a son and daughter, in Alyta. Another son went to Russia with the army. His wife and their other children, in Butrimantz.

V, W

VETSTEIN, Sarah, and her daughter, in Butrimantz. Her son, in Alyta.

VINETSKY, Berl (a teacher), and his wife and their children, in Altya.

VISHAYSKY, Moshe Motel, and his wife and their daughter, in Butrimantz.

VITKIND, Rabbi Avraham-Moshe, and two of his sons and daughters Golda and Mira, in Alyta. His wife and their youngest daughter, Libala, in Butrimantz.

VOLPIANSKY, Dvora, in Butrimantz.

VOLPIANSKY, Feivel, and his family, in Alyta.

VOLPIANSKY, Israel, in Alyta.

VOLPIANSKY, Meyer, was betrayed while in hiding by a Christian whom he had entrusted with his possessions. He was tortured before his death. His wife and their child, in Butrimantz.

VOLPIANSKY, Yosef, in Alyta.

WILENSKY, Golda, in Butrimantz. Her son, in Alyta.

Y

YANKELEWITZ, Yaakov, in Alyta. His wife, in Butrimantz. Their daughters and grandchildren, in Alyta. Of one son-in-law nothing is known. Their second son-in-law, Shimon Shirer, died in Russia.

YANOVITSKY, Etel, in Butrimantz. Her daughter Feiga was caught while she was in hiding at the Parankava village near Visokidvor.

YAVEROWITZ, Pesach, and his children, in Alyta. His wife, in Butrimantz.

YUDKOWSKY, Moshe, in Alyta. His wife, Shprintza (Mikleshansky), in Butrimantz.

* * *

At the beginning of the war, when the Germans invaded Poland, some Jews were either driven out to Lithuania or fled there on their own. Seven refugee families from Poland are accounted for in Butrimantz:

LUBOVSKI, Rabbi (from Pinsk), and his wife and their youngest son, in Butrimantz. Two other sons, in Alyta.

PELTIN family (from Suwalki), father and mother, in Alyta. Their children, in Butrimantz.

PINSKI, Raphael, in Alyta. His wife and their children, in Butrimantz. One son, in Mariampole.

ROGRADSKI family, father and son, in Alyta. Mother and children, in Butrimantz.

SIRAISKI family (from Suwalki), mother and children, in Butrimantz.

SLOMIANSKI, Chaim, in Alyta. His wife and their two children, in Butrimantz.

STRASHZINSKI family, mother and daughter, in Butrimantz. Son, in Alyta.

* * *

Also murdered in Butrimantz were Jews from the nearby shtetlach of Stoklishok, Birshtan and Poon. Their names are not known.

ת'נ'צ'ב'ה'

May their souls be bound into the bond of eternal life.

Photographs

This photo section is a collective memory of the victims of Butrimantz and the shtetl it once was. While the faces are mostly of those who died, there are also faces of those who were saved. Several of the photographs date back decades before the war. A family portrait may include some members who emigrated from Butrimantz before the war as well as those who perished in the war. The same is true of group and individual photographs: they are composites of the faces of Butrimantz before its destruction.



Students with director of school Berl Vinetsky (at right) and teacher Hillel Millstein (at left)



Students with teacher Litvin

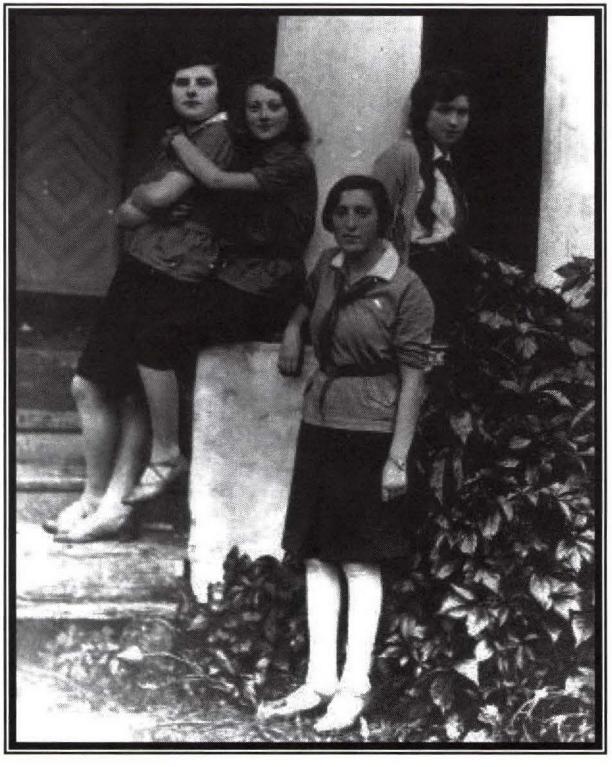


In the Gordon camp in Butrimantz (1932)



A group of Gordonists from Butrimantz in Stoklishok





Above: Butrimantz intellectuals: librarian Dov Slobodsky (second row, second from left); Batya Sheinker (second row, third from left); and journalist Binyamin Mikleshansky (second row, far right)

Left: Gordon members (from right to left): Basya Lozansky, Henya Meirowitz, Rachel Abramowitz, and a girl from another town



Butrimantz Gordons



Maccabees from Butrimantz



Hashara Beitars in Butrimantz



The Butrimantz Beitars (March 31, 1934)



Butrimantz Jews serving their required time in the Lithuanian army



The all-Jewish firefighters in Butrimantz (1938)



Abramowitz sisters Sende (sitting, right), Freida (standing, center), and their brother Tsvi with his wife (sitting, left)



Chaya Abramowitz



Tsvi Abramowitz



Reuven Adelson



Alfowitz



BenZion Adelson



Aron and Shoshana Baver and their children: Asna (below, right); with her brother Akiva (below, left)







Kabachnik family. The parents died before the war. The grandparents raised the children and led them to their death. Back row: the Slobodskys



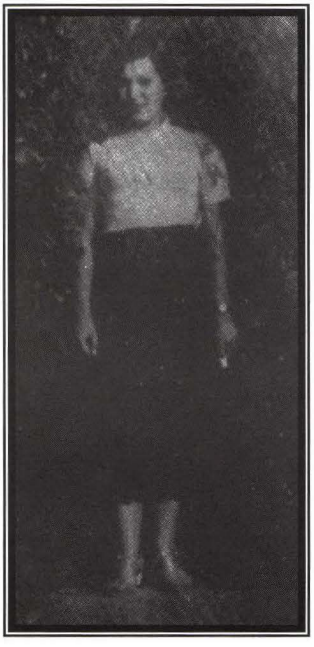
Liba-Leah Kabachnik



Moshe-Dov Kabachnik



Keidansky (third from right), his wife (fourth from right), and son standing with his relatives in Anushishok, his place of birth





The pharmacist Keidansky with his wife and daughter. At left: Leah Keidansky





Left: Sara-Basya Lozansky
Above: Sara-Basya and her husband, BenZion Dantsig



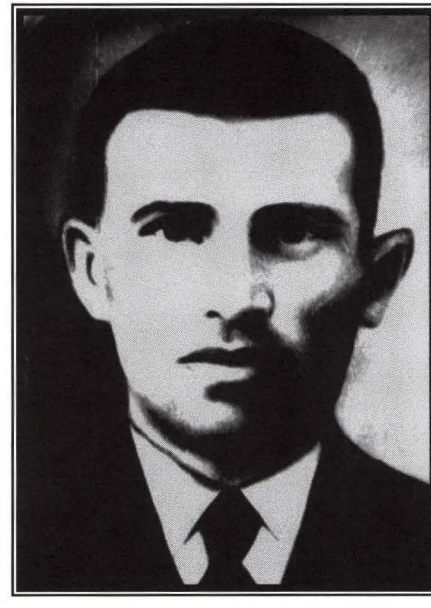
Sara-Basya (Lozansky) Dantsig holding daughter Rivka; her husband, BenZion (standing); Avraham Dantsig (BenZion's father) holding grandson Aharon. The whole family was killed in Kushidar on August 28, 1941. Rivka was six years old; Aharon was four; and the youngest child, Itzhak Yehuda, was three months old.



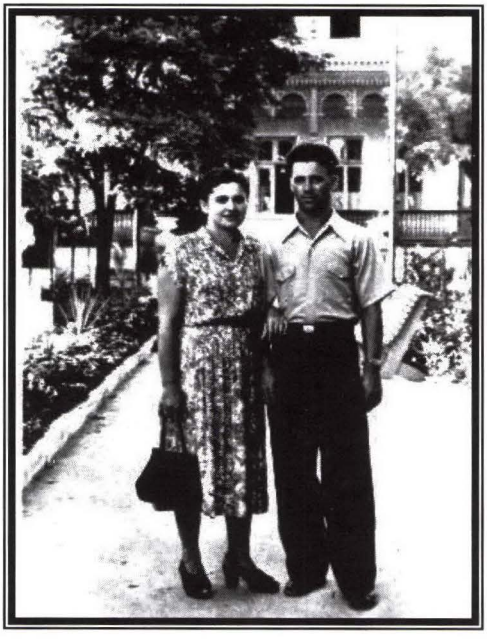
Nehama Lozansky



Dora (Itskowitz) Lozansky



Dov-Berl Lozansky





Riva Lozansky

Left: Riva with her husband, Avraham Bogomolny, 1955



Tevie Sheinker, husband of Tsila



Tsila (Lozansky) Sheinker



Batya (Sheinker) Donsky with husband Itzhak and son



Hillel Sheinker



Shmuel Sheinker (standing)



Akiva Reznik and his wife (April 1, 1922)



Chana Siraysky (at right)



Wife of teacher Berl Vinetsky (maiden name: Reznik)



Etel (Marcus) Shapiro and her children: Dovid Shlomo (standing); Eliahu (sitting, left); Tsvi-Hirsh; and Chaya-Sarah (front) (c. 1912)

Below, left: A group of friends in Butrimantz. Dovid Shlomo Shapiro is seated in the center (1921)

Below, right: Rochel (right) and her sister Berta, the daughters of Dovid Shlomo and Tsila Shapiro
(Photos on this page courtesy of Sarah Shapiro Poritz)



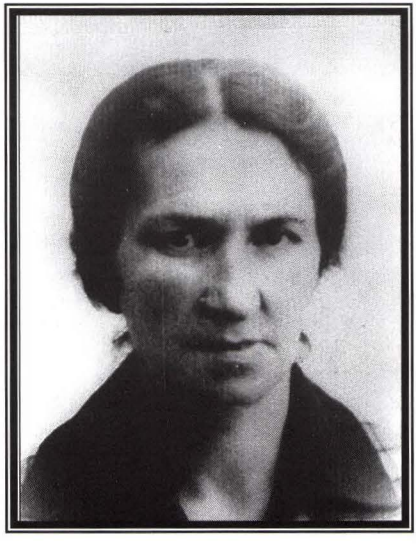




Rabbi Avraham-Moshe Vitkind



Rabbi Vitkind and his sons



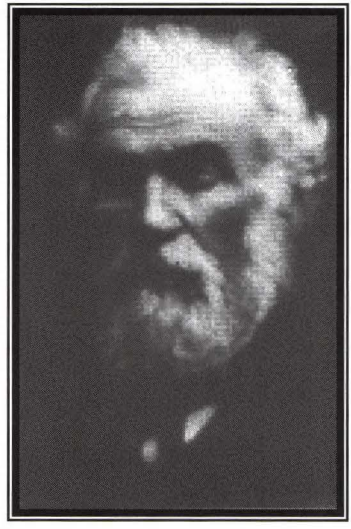
Mrs. Vitkind, wife of the rabbi



Daughters of Rabbi and Mrs. Vitkind



Alte Mikleshansky



Mr. Mikleshansky



Mikleshansky (married name: Goldstein)



Aharon Mikleshansky



Shlomo Shirer



Tsila Shirer



Nachum Shirer



Shimon Shirer



Liba Gutfarb



Chana Strage. She hid until a few days before liberation, when the people who had helped her gave her away to the police.



Boruch Bakshitzky (1944)



Chaim Lerman



Binyamin Boyarsky



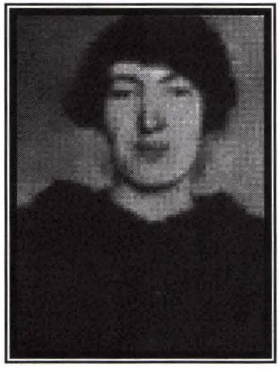
Sarah Boyarsky



Dovid Epstein



Arie Gordon



Sonya (Lubelsky) Halperin



Shimon Kalemitzky



Shoshana Kaplan



Dov-Berl Kaplan



Chana Kaplan



Leah Karpas



Nachum Kassel



Chana Katz



Koresh



Yosef Kroshkin



Alter Wilensky (1939)



Ahuva Kudan



Freida Kudan



Masha Rubinova



Tsipora Levine (1941)



Sarah Stein



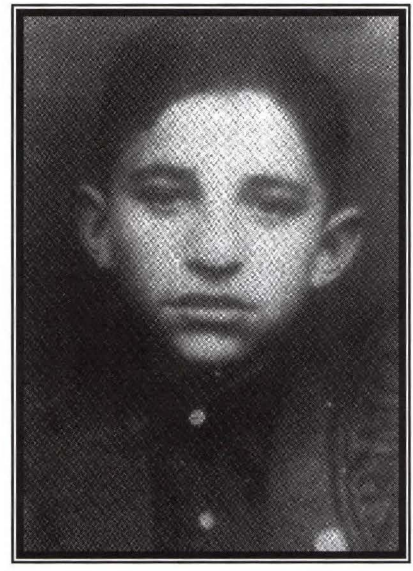
Rochel Putyansky



Alte Putyansky



Sversky (maiden name: Binder)



Gdalia Sofion (1940)



Batya Levitt



Aron Pochtive (1935)



Feivel Puner



Toibe Shabad



Zosel Shtukarewitz (1940)



Sarah Volpiansky



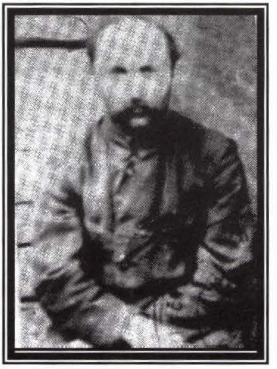
Volpiansky



Yaakov Yankelewitz



Vita Yankelewitz



Shuster



Pieter Golombewski (1940)
On April 23, 1942, Pieter and his brother Bronislaw were arrested and taken to Alyta. They were never seen again. The Golombewskis, a wealthy Polish family, had hidden many Jews on their estate near Butrimantz.



Leonardas Kaspariunas, chief of police in Butrimantz, was one of the major executioners. After the war he vanished from Lithuania.

In October 1962 a Lithuanian newspaper, SVYTURYS, published a story about the 1941 killings of the Jews of Butrimantz. The story disclosed that Leonardas Kaspariunas had fled to Canada after the war and was living in Sudbury, Ontario.

Research on Kaspariunas' presence in Canada showed that he had lived at a number of different addresses in Sudbury from February 1951 until February 1967. Sudbury had a large community of Lithuanian immigrants.

By early 1973, Kaspariunas had relocated to Edmonton, Alberta, where he worked as head orderly at the Misericordia Hospital. He died in Edmonton on April 18, 1974. His identity in Canada had never been questioned.



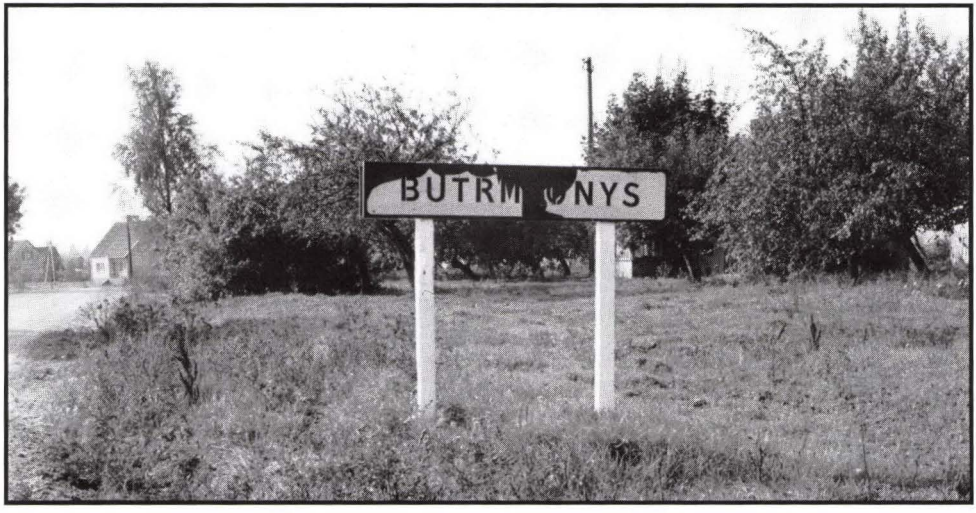
The mass grave of 265 elders and children
(Photo courtesy of Marcia Jaffe)



Here lie 976 men and women

On September 8, 1941, 1,241 Jews of Butrimantz and the neighboring shtetlach of Stoklishok, Birshtan and Poon were murdered. The mass killings took place at two nearby sites: one for the men and women; the other for the elders and children.

Fifty Years Later - September 1992





The center of Butrimantz. Once a shtetl with almost 2,000 Jews, not a single Jew remains.



Most of the houses remain unchanged



Horses and wagons are still the primary means of transportation



From the balcony of this building Leonardas Kaspariunas sorted the Jews



The Lithuanian high school where the Jews were held before their execution



The Butrimantz Jewish cemetery where the last Jews were killed on October 1, 1941



The circle of trees which Avraham Bogomolny planted around the mass grave

Photos on pages 140-143 by Olga Zabludoff, 1992

Glossary

Aliyah: Hebrew word that means "ascension." The phrase "to make *aliyah*" denotes "to immigrate to Eretz Yisrael."

Beitar: Zionist youth movement founded in 1923 in Riga, Latvia.

Challah: a braided loaf of bread used for the Sabbath meal.

Chevra Kadisha: the Jewish burial society. (The Hebrew words mean "Holy Society.")

Gordon/Gordonia: Zionist youth movement founded in 1923 in Galicia. Named for A. D. Gordon (1856-1922).

Goye: Yiddish word that means "gentile woman."

Hachnasat Orchim: a charity shelter for homeless Jews.

Hashara: Zionist youth organization whose goal was to train Jews to work the land.

Komsomol: Communist youth organization.

Lithuanian activists: members of the infamous "Front of the Lithuanian Activists," an organization whose goal was to free Lithuania of Communists and Russians. During Soviet rule in Lithuania in 1940-1941 the "Front" was an underground organization. In the early days of World War II, the activists organized operations and actions for the Germans. Later the Germans mobilized many activists into police. Special military units were formed from the activists whose sole purpose was to destroy Jews. White patches worn on their sleeves were the distinguishing marks of the activists.

Mitzvah: a Torah commandment. The term connotes any good deed or kind act.

Nekome: both a Yiddish and a Hebrew word that means "revenge/vengeance."

Shaulists: members of a right-wing nationalist Lithuanian party which produced most of the murderers.

Shochet: Hebrew word for "ritual slaughterer."

Shtetl (pl. shtetlach): a small market town or village in Eastern Europe which was almost entirely Jewish.

Smaugiks: members of special troops, much like storm troopers, formed from the activists. The Jews and many Lithuanians called them *smaugiks*, which in Russian means "to take one by the throat and strangle him."

Smeton, Antanas: (1874-1944) first president of interwar independent Lithuania. When Lithuania was occupied by Soviet forces in June 1940, Smeton fled via Germany to the United States.

Stokit: Lithuanian word meaning "stop!"

Tatars: Turkic people who lived in the Tatar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, the Crimea, and parts of Asia.

Names of Towns

Wherever possible, the Yiddish names of towns have been used in this book. Their corresponding Lithuanian names are included here. In those instances where no Yiddish equivalents could be found (for names of tiny villages or settlements), the Lithuanian names are used.

Yiddish Name	***Lithuanian Name***
	Allots
Alyta	Alytus
Anushishok	Oniskis
Birshtan	Birstonas
Butrimantz	Butrimonys
	Chertovo
Daug	Daugai
	Eichunai
	Eigerdonis
	Eznasa
	Gelein
	Gerulay
Kalvaria	Kalvarija
	Klidzenys
Kovno	Kaunas
Kushidar	Kaisiadorys
Mariampole	Kapsukas
Memel	Klaipeda
Meretsh	Merkine
Oran	Varena
Parankava	Parankava
	Pivashunai
	Plasauninkay
Polangen	Palanga
Poon	Punia

Yiddish Name	*Lithuanian Name*
Pren	Prienai
Radvilishok	Radviliskis
Ritova	Ritavas
	Rudiskes
Serhai	Sierijai
Stoklishok	Stakliskes
Troki	Trakai
Vilna	Vilnius
Virbaln	Virbalis
Visokidvor	Aukstadvaris
Yanova	Jonava
Yezna	Jieznas
Zhezmir	Ziezmariai
Zhusli	Zasliai

About the Authors

Riva Lozansky-Bogomolny is in her eighties. She walks with a cane and her hands tremble. But her eyes are still bright and her mind is sharp.

Riva lives in Vilna, Lithuania, in a small apartment she shares with her sister, Tsila Lozansky-Sheinker. The two widows are among the last survivors of the *shtetl* Butrimantz. Of a Jewish population that had numbered two thousand before the war, only ten survived in Butrimantz. Five of those are still alive today.

Riva is fluent in six languages. She can switch from Yiddish to Hebrew, from Russian to Polish, from Lithuanian to German. While most survivors ran from Europe after the war, trying to escape their haunting memories and begin new lives, Riva remained in Lithuania.

Driven by a compulsion to avenge the murder of "our fallen ones," consumed by the responsibility to perpetuate their memory, Riva has committed her life to delivering a promise she has carried inside herself for more than half a century.

"I will do whatever is possible until my last breath," she says in a low voice. "Their last wish was that those who survive should not forget or forgive their murder. I was spared and carry the responsibility of their request."

That responsibility has been borne almost entirely by Riva. After the liberation, when she emerged from hiding in the forests, she found the mass graves of Butrimantz. "They were covered with very little dirt - only lime so that no evidence should remain. Dogs dragged away their bones, arms, legs and heads. Many had been buried alive."

She tried to get help from the government to make a proper grave for them, but the Soviets weren't interested in graves. They did not help. She tried to recruit the other

survivors, but the few remaining Jews were afraid of taking risks, of causing trouble. They knew that the Lithuanians did not want Jewish witnesses around who could testify against them. Jews were even being killed in their freedom.

"But God did not forsake me. A few Lithuanians did help me, and my husband Avraham helped. We made two proper graves: one for the 976 men and women, the other for the 265 children and elders. We fenced in the sites and placed headstones there. I had the inscriptions for the headstones made in Kovno. And I inscribed, 'Eternal shame on the murderers.' But this did not please someone, and the inscription was forbidden."

Riva's husband planted trees around the graves. From the outside, the circle of trees look as though they are hiding shame. But when you stand inside the circle, the trees rise up like eternal guards.

For fifty years Riva has hunted for and located dozens of Jewish mass graves throughout Lithuania, so that they could be identified and memorialized. But the targets of her most intense hunt have been the Nazi collaborators who, in the autumn of 1941, following the Germans' instructions and following their hearts, turned on the Jews of Lithuania. It is the spilling of Jewish blood by friends and neighbors - the local Lithuanians - that is Riva's greatest rage. She is the last voice of the ghosts of Butrimantz, the last echo of their cries in the forest.

Dvora Reznik lives in Kovno, Lithuania.

Victoria Golombewski lives in Vilna, Lithuania.

Tevie Sheinker died in Kovno on January 14, 1984.



Riva Lozansky-Bogomolny at the memorial for the mass graves in Alyta where many Jews from Butrimantz were murdered in 1941. The graves are in the huge, dense Vidzgiris Forest where the victims were brought and shot. (photo1996)

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If I forget thee

"If I Forget Thee..., a deeply powerful and moving account of life and death in the shtetl of Butrimantz, does much to cherish and preserve Jewish memory. While the overwhelming enormity of the Holocaust has all too often had the effect of turning victims into mere statistics, this book forces the reader to honor the sanctity of each and every person who found themselves trapped in that nightmare and to better appreciate a vanished existence."

Neal M. Sher, Former Director
Office of Special Investigations
US Department of Justice

"That this work has reached publication is in itself a story of survival and remembrance only slightly less impressive than the testimony of the survivors. Each writer is faithful to the past, each bears witness for the future. Not quite a history of a village, *If I Forget Thee...* adds to our understanding of the relationship between Jews and Lithuanians as well as the struggle to find places to hide in the most dangerous era of Jewish history."

Michael Berenbaum, President
Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation

"If I Forget Thee... is a valuable contribution for a better understanding of Jewish life in the shtetls of Eastern Europe and of our destiny."

Moshe Sanbar, Chairman
Centre of Organizations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel

Front cover: The bridge to the killing fields
Image from a photo by Olga Zabludoff, 1992



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